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Introduction

This volume is the result of a research project that seeks to reconstruct the international career of Spanish socialist trade unionism, from its first appearance in 1888 until the entry of Spain in the Eec in 1986¹. It brings together the work of several scholars covering a wide variety of themes. They all share the common objective of interpreting the importance that international connections have borne in the development of the history of the labor movement in Spain, with special attention to the *Unión General de Trabajadores* (Ugt).

To that end, the first articles by who is writing this introduction, reviews the general context of the Ugt's international relations between 1888 and 1936, with emphasis on the path along these lines that socialist trade unionism followed. Viewed in the framework of the international and transnational organizations that had been created for this purpose, the Spanish socialist labor movement went through periods in which its external action was not particularly relevant or decisive, in spite of the fact that internationalism was, from its origins, one of its principal points of reference. In contrast, at other times, certain strategic and political decisions in Spain were significantly affected by their international connections and by the internationalist paradigms in which the labor organizations of other nations were later developed.

The second contribution is dedicated to the participation of the Ugt in the International Labor Organization (Ilo), during the period from World War I to the Spanish Civil War. Its author, Enrique Berzal, analyzes the relationship that the strong defense of the work being done in the Ilo had with the defense of a particular model of unionism in Spain. Reformism and revolution were two opposing belief systems in the unionist world in the early part of the century, and the Ugt leaned decidedly toward a reformist model, by which light its participation in the Ilo constituted one

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of the elements to take into account to understand the development of a model of participation by the union in such government bodies and forums as opened up to them for representation. The article analyzes the perception that the Ugt had of this process, mainly through the effects that its participation in the conferences and meetings of the Ilo had in the organs of socialist expression.

The article by Pilar Domínguez Prats focuses on the international work of the Ugt during the interwar period, spotlighting the participation of Spanish women in the international bodies. The author concludes that, with the exception of the time period spanning the Second Republic and the Civil War, Spanish women representatives in the supranational unions and in politics were very few. She analyzes the reasons for this scant female international representation from the Spanish labor movement.

Focusing on another era, the contribution by Bruno Vargas analyses on the liaison that the leaders of the Ugt in exile established, between 1944 and 1949, with the French *Confédération Générale du Travail* (Cgt). The relationship between these two organizations, while the Ugt was in exile—broken and divided into different factions - were entangled in an international context in which the international trade union organization of socialist inspiration was also fracturing, to give birth to a globally oriented Communist central union, the *Fédération Syndicale Mondiale* (Fsm), and to another organization that brought together those so-called “free” central unions.

These events have been deeply influenced by the main American labor unions – the American federation of labor (Afl) and the Congress of industrial organization (Cio), which merged in 1955, and some of their affiliated unions like United Automobile Workers (Uaw) – developed in the face of the harsh repression of Spanish unionism by the Franco regime. The article by Francisco Javier Rodríguez emphasizes that, in spite of the negative results of international actions against Francoism, the vigilant stance of the American unions contributed, in some measure, toward moderating government repression of the Spanish unions. With analysis of documents from American archives, as well as various collections in Europe that contain information on the Ugt, it offers a new perspective on a subject of great historiographical interest.

The last contribution intends to fill a gap in the studies on the international dimension of Ugt’s politics, by analyzing its relations with Italian trade union *Unione italiana del lavoro* (Uil). The article emphasizes on the one hand that while Uil always tried to support Ugt’s claims within the international organizations, during both the end of the Franco regime and the restoration and restructuring of Ugt at the time of the transition, it also has to

deal with its strategy of trade union unity. On the other hand, it highlights that the relations between Ugt and Uil moved from actions of solidarity toward a more reciprocal approach in order to build a Mediterranean axis within international organization, at a time in which social issues started to occupy a greater place in European community's politics.

Overall, the volume deals with the international trajectory of socialist trade unionism from different points of view: membership and work in the internationals, bilateral action with other national trade unions, participation of women in those processes, and contributions to the work of the Ilo. Ultimately, the volume reflects the work of a research team that aims to open a door into a realm up until now scarcely explored in the Spanish historiographical landscape, which has been profoundly suffering the decline of the study of topics related to the labor movement in general.

Notes

¹ This text has been prepared as part of a larger research project, *The International Career of Spanish Socialist Trade Unionism (1888-1986)*, Reference: HAR2013-44849-P.