

ISIR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (ISIRJAHSS)
ISSN: 3048-7463 (Online)
Frequency: Bimonthly
Published By ISIR Publisher
Journal Homepage Link- https://isirpublisher.com/index.php/isirjahss

FOR ADOLFO SÁNCHEZ VÁZQUEZ AT HIS 110th BIRTHDAY

Reflections on the live and intellectual development of the precursor for a Critical theory from the Americas

By

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Abstract

110 years after his year of birth, we want to remember one of the most important Marxist philosophers in Latin America: Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez, who has contributed central elements to the development of an independent and critical Marxism on this continent and in the Spanish language. With this, he is the most important precursor of a Critical Theory from the Americas.

Sánchez Vázquez was one of the thousands of Spaniards that spontaneously threw themselves into opposition against Franco's coup d'état, and, before suffering ultimate defeat, prevented the Francoite invasion of significant sections of Spain for almost three years, and from 1937 on he was in charge of editing Ahora, the central publication of the JSU. In the same year he was invited to the Second International Congress of Antifascist Writers in Madrid. After the defeat of the Civil War in February 1939 Sánchez Vázquez crosses the border to France and left the Mediterranean port of Sète in May with the first ship sent by the Mexican government under president Lázaro Cárdenas, the Sinaia, headed toward Mexico.

The 1959 Cuban Revolution, which broke with traditional thinking and models, and the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact states were two historical events that changed Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez's theoretical perspective.

In January 1959 he obteined the position of full-time professor at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), that made possible what had become impossible in his country of origin to intensely study Marx toward an open and critical mode of thinking. Sánchez Vázquez's first scientific text in which this understanding of Marx's theory features appeared in 1961: the essay 'Ideas estéticas en los 'Manuscritos económico-filosóficos' de Marx', was received with interest in Cuba, and led to a invitation to the island, during which he had the opportunity to meet Che Guevara.

Until he was alive, Sánchez Vázquez taught postgraduate seminars in Philosophy at the UNAM and struggled for a world free of exploitation and oppression, as well as for the theoretical understanding necessary to bring it about, setting the foundations for a Critical theory from the Americas.

Keywords: *Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez Spanish civil war Non dogmatic Marxism Philosophy of praxis Critical theory from the Americas*

Article History

Received: 07/10/2024
Accepted: 21/11/2024
Published: 23/12/2024

Vol – 1 Issue – 3

PP: -37-49

INTRODUCTION

110 years after his year of birth, we want to remember one of the most important Marxist philosophers in Latin America: Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez, who has contributed central elements to the development of an independent and critical Marxism on this continent and in the Spanish language. With this, he is the most important precursor of a *Critical Theory from the Americas*.

Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez was born on 17 September 1915 in Algeciras, a coastal city in the Andalusian province of Cádiz. He is the son of María Remedios Vázquez Rodríguez and Benedicto Sánchez Calderón. His father, lieutenant of a

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detachment in the Civil Guard, saw his career abruptly cut short at the outset of the Spanish Civil War: detained when Málaga was occupied by Franco's troops, he is condemned to death, a sentence which is commuted to many years in prison. Adolfo was his second child, preceded by his sister Ángela and followed by his brother Gonzalo, who would later be a member of the Communist Party of Spain (PCE).

After some time in El Escorial (a province of Madrid), in 1925 the family moved to the southern city of Málaga.[1] There, he studied middle and high school, and from 1932 to 1934 he studied to be a teacher [*magisterio*]. Life in this powerfully politicised city would leave its mark on his first incursions, in literary and poetic, as well as in political respects. Around 1985, Sánchez Vázquez retrospectively recalled this period: 'This "fierce city", which had given the Republican Courts their first communist deputy, due to the combativeness of its youth and its working class, was at the time called "Malaga: the Red", and was also characterised during the prewar years by its intense cultural life'.[2]

There he was educated in literature and poetry alongside Emilio Prados and the 'thriving poetic group' of Málaga.[3] In 1933 the journal *Octubre*, edited by Rafael Alberti, published a first poetic text by Sánchez Vázquez.[4] That same year, he joined the Revolutionary Student Bloc within the Spanish University Federation (FUE) and then joined the Communist Youth. This 'precocious' political development – as Sánchez Vázquez would later call it – began with the birth of the Second Spanish Republic on 14 April 1931 and emerged through the hopes that the student youth, above all, had placed in it.[5] Some 52 years later, he would write about the Communist Youth of Malaga: an organisation of fewer than a hundred members: 'With its cult of action which bordered on adventurism it could scarcely be distinguished from the (anarchist) Libertarian Youth with which its relations were, conversely, not at all cordial. Its richness in terms of violent praxis corresponded to its poverty on the theoretical terrain, but in those moments that poverty did not concern me'.[6]

It was in these days that his uncle Alfredo Vázquez ('more a romantic rebel than a revolutionary, [who] never wished to be subjected to any party discipline'), who would later be executed by firing squad by the Francoists during the first days of the coup, introduced him to his first Marxist- and anarchist-oriented theoretical texts.[7]

In October 1935, Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez moved to Madrid to study at the Central University. Once in the capital, he joined some of the flourishing literary circles: there, for example, he would come to know Pablo Neruda and befriend José Herrera Petere. He frequently wrote for the literary section of *Mundo Obrero*, the PCE daily, and is listed as responsible for two ephemeral periodicals: *Línea*, with a 'political-intellectual' orientation, edited in Madrid, with José Luis Cano, and *Sur*, edited in Malaga: with Enrique Rebolledo. On the eve of the Spanish Civil War, between Madrid and Málaga he wrote the manuscript for his first book, a collection of poems entitled *El Pulso Ardiendo*. The text, rescued by the Spanish editor Manuel Altolaguirre, was brought to Mexico and published there in 1942.[8]

He entered the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts [Facultad de Filosofía y Letras] of the Universidad Central after passing an entrance examination whose failure rate of 80 percent meant that it was known as an 'academic massacre',[9] while the '*spiritus rector*' of the Faculty – José Ortega y Gasset – saw therein the possibility of accomplishing his idea of the university as a 'breeding-ground for "distinguished minorities"'.[10]

Studying there satisfied Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez on an academic level, given the high level of many classes and seminars, especially those given by José F. Montesinos, Juan de la Cruz, and Ortega y Gasset himself, but he was not satisfied on the ideological level.[11] He found nothing even remotely like Marxism, at which he arrived through 'two practices'', poetry and politics.[12] He was thus required to perfect himself on this terrain as an autodidact, outside of the university and in conjunction with his political activities. In this, he found help in 'some classic texts [by Marx] in the first and excellent versions of Wenceslao Roces'.[13]

At that time, the Spanish university was the arena of political battles. The FUE student union, controlled by the Left, was fought by the far-right National-Syndicalist Offensive Juntas, founded in Valladolid in 1931 and which simultaneously trained its members militarily.[14] The far-right Falange here found one of its most important sources: 'The Falange and its student sector, the SEU (Sindicato Español Universitario) were, in the words of one of its prominent leaders, one and the

[1] *See Lucas 1987, p. 219.*
[2] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, p. 11. The central theme of this edition of Anthropos (no. 52) is the life and work of Sánchez Vázquez and it contains, among other things, three autobiographical texts.*
[3] *Caffarena Such 1960, p. 167.*
[4] *'Romance de la ley de fugas': Sánchez Vázquez 1933.*
[5] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, p. 11.*
[6] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, pp. 10–11.*
[7] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, p. 11.*
[8] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, p. 10. The text mentioned is Sánchez Vázquez 1942.*
[9] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, p. 11. Sánchez Vázquez would use this designation in Mexico years later against José Gaos, then a confidant of Ortega y Gasset and jointly responsible for these examinations: Ibid.*
[10] *Ibid.*
[11] *Ibid.*
[12] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, p. 10.*
[13] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, p. 11. The impediments to carrying out studies on this terrain also result, however, from the 'traditional disdain of the Spanish workers' movement and its parties for theory': Ibid.*
[14] *See Thomas 1961, p. 69.*

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same, since the Falange was born with the "mark of the university youth"'.[15]

The Central University campus would be, shortly thereafter, 'one of the fiercest battlefields',[16] with 'Nationalist' efforts to enter the capital militarily held back there for months, with a large portion of the FUE participating in the struggle on the side of the Republic.[17]

The Spanish Civil War

The Civil War began between 17 and 18 July 1936, with the uprising of the military units under General Franco against the Popular Front government of Azaña, elected on 16 February of the same year, and the spontaneous resistance of large sectors of the population against the coup attempt. This war has been characterised by various authors as the 'first battle of the Second World War', due to its international significance and involvement (the military support provided to the Francoists by fascist Italy and Nazi Germany), as well as the indirect support provided by the 'politics of non-intervention' of the English and French democracies, for example, in not letting arms shipments pass, as well as the support provided to the Republic by the Soviet Union and Mexico – in the case of the former, also through sending troops – and finally, that of the International Brigades.[18] The behaviour of the European democracies with regard to the Spanish Civil War, as well as the internal struggles in the Republican camp (particularly between socialists, communists, and anarchists) and the fatal role played by the Soviet Union, shed light on the combination of political and social events contributing to making possible that which – as the *rupture of civilisation* – would rewrite history. With the fall of Madrid and the Nationalist triumph on 1 April 1939, the German Luftwaffe (Air Force) considered their task to be over, and exactly five months later, with the attack on Poland, the German advance on the East began.

Sánchez Vázquez was one of the thousands and thousands of Spaniards that spontaneously threw themselves into opposition against this coup d'état, and, before suffering ultimate defeat, prevented the Francoite invasion of significant sections of Spain for almost three years. He did this as a member of the Unified Socialist Youth (JSU), which emerges in April 1936 from the union of the Socialist and Communist youth sections.[19]

At the outset of the War, he was a member, in Málaga – where he had recently returned – of the Regional Committee of the JSU, and was editor of its publication *Octubre*. In mid-January 1937, he participated as a delegate to the National Conference of the JSU, held in Valencia.

After the fall of Málaga at the end of January, he moved to Valencia, where Santiago Carrillo, in the name of the Executive Committee of the JSU, put him in charge of editing *Ahora*, the central publication of the JSU. Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez would later write of this position: 'Bearing in mind that we are talking about the central publication of the most important youth organisation in the Republican zone, with more than 200,000 members, and the enormous influence that it exerted through these members on the Popular Army, this was an enormous responsibility given my 21 years of age'.[20]

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[15] *Germani 1970, p. 359. Germani here quotes according to Jato 1953, p. 62.*

[16] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, p. 11.*

[17] *See, for example, regarding the death of the acting general secretary of the FUE, Juan López, in the battles in the University City: 'Héroes de la Juventud. Ha muerto el camarada Juan López de la Unión de Estudiantes', in Ahora. Diario de la Juventud, Madrid, 2 April 1937, p. 5.*

[18] *Lister 1966, p. 4. 'The Second World War began in Spain', wrote Bowers, at that time ambassador of the United States in Spain (Bowers 1955, p. viii. Cited according to Álvarez 1989, p. 21).*
A connection between the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War can be established, moreover, by the fact that, as a result of the long resistance against the Francoite coup, Franco's Spain was so weakened and unstable after the Spanish Civil War (1939) that, despite the request from the government of the German Reich, it did not enter the Second World War, and as a result the Allies were able to cross the strategically important Strait of Gibraltar unhindered (author's conversation with Santiago Álvarez, political commissar of the V Army Body of the Popular Army during the Civil War. Madrid, 22 March 1991).

[19] *See Cortada (ed.) 1982, p. 282. Santiago Carrillo Solares, who as president of the Socialist Youth drove the unification, mentions among his motives the following: 'We were convinced [in 1934], after seeing what was happening in other European countries, that fascism was rising everywhere without anyone doing anything to stop it. The Socialist youth and the Socialist Left of the period were convinced that we needed to fight and that in order to win we needed to unite with the Communists', and later: "there is an event that shocked me … it was the rebellion of Vienna [in February of 1934] and their failure. … In 1936, after two years of united action, the unification of the Socialist and Communist youth was established' (See Carrillo 1974, especially the chapters: 'Vingt ans en 1936' and 'La guerre d'Espagne: réflexions et remontres', p. 32 and p. 42.*
In the literature, the JSU is granted a curious double-role: J.W. Cortada highlights the function of the JSU in the divisions and internal confrontations of the anti-Francoites, among socialists, communists, and anarchists: 'In the course of the Civil War, the JSU fought in various military units, while offering the Communist Party an armed wing to reduce opposition within the Republican zone' (Cortada [ed.] 1982). Ramón Casterás, on the other hand, in the introduction to his work on the Unified Socialist Youth of Cataluña (JSUC), takes a good look at the history of the JSU (throughout Spain), emphasising that the youth organisations of the Civil War, with absolute independence from their adult parties, practiced a politics of collaboration and unity (Casterás 1977, p. 16).

[20] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, p. 12. Casterás advances in his aforementioned work the following working thesis: through the political unfolding of the Second Spanish Republic and the significant importance that youth movements gained, we can redefine the role of the youth on Spain's historical stage of that moment as another principal actor (Casterás 1977, p. 15). Understood in his way, the great responsibility that Sánchez Vázquez had to assume at the age of 21 was not an isolated experience, but rather part of a general development. In reality, he himself already expressed this when he suggests in the cited text that the JSU, among other things, achieved great importance through the considerable military role it assumed during the Spanish Civil War.*
A coeditor of Ahora's twin publication, La Hora, which appeared beginning in the summer of 1937 in Valencia, was evidently Sánchez

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And on his working situation in the embattled city of Madrid: 'Our [editorial] building was situated between the Republican artillery installations and those of the enemy, and this is why I had to get used to writing leading articles and editorials amid the deafening duels of the cannons'.[21]

Sánchez Vázquez functions from March to September of 1937 as editor of *Ahora*, published every day except Sundays, and which during that period generally consisted of eighteen pages with abundant photographic material from the Republican territories and from the front.[22] In early July of 1937 he was invited in this capacity to the Second International Congress of Antifascist Writers in Madrid. At the International Congress for the Defense of Culture, he meets, among others, Juan Marinello,[23] Louis Aragon, Anna Seghers, André Malraux, Ilya Ehrenberg, and Octavio Paz.[24]

On the importance of cultural work in the Republican zone, a Spanish historian would later write the following:

> A symptomatic fact is that during the first year and a half of the War the number of primary schools increased, on top of the 800 created in the fronts of the 'cultural militias', in whose work more than 2,000 educators participated (in October 1937 more than 75,000 soldiers had learned to read and write). A thousand libraries were established in hospitals and barracks, and 150 newspapers were published regularly by military units, in many of which young writers regularly participated.[25]

In September of that same year, after a polemic between the newspaper and an international socialist delegation, Sánchez Vázquez withdrew from his position as editor and requested that the Executive Committee of the JSU transfer him to the front.[26] He joined the 11th Division, which was already legendary for its defense of Madrid and was at that point located on the eastern front under the orders of commander Líster;[27] he thereby, under the command of the political commissar of the division, Santiago Álvarez,[28] assumed the leadership of the press and propaganda commissariat,[29] and published the newspaper of that unit: *¡Pasaremos!*[30] In mid-August, the 11th Division had already carried out an act that would provoke polemical debates in the historiography of the Spanish Civil War: the dissolution of the 'Council of Aragon', an anarchist-oriented regional government in that region of northern Spain, by order of the multi-party central government.[31]

On 15 December 1937, the 11th Division played a central part in an important military victory: the siege and liberation of the city of Teruel, located 100 kilometres to the northwest of Valencia, seat of the threatened government of the Republic.[32] As an eyewitness, Sánchez Vázquez wrote a very valuable report on this event, which was so important for the 'morale' of the Republic.[33] Four months later, on 27 April

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Vázquez's brother, Gonzalo (See 'Gonzalo Sánchez Vázquez, our beloved director', photo caption accompanying the article: '20 months of a youth daily', in La Hora, Diario Juvenil, year 3, no. 526. Valencia, 19 February 1939, p. 1.).

[21] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a.*

[22] *See Ahora. Diario de la Juventud. Madrid, 1 March to 30 September 1937. Regarding the dates, see A. Sánchez Vázquez, letter to the author, Mexico City, 22 February 1991, p. 1.*
Aside from the enormous importance that Ahora had in informing, politicising, and mobilising members of the JSU and other Spanish youth, it is also worth mentioning its role in debates with opposing leftist currents. What stands out in this sense is the battle against Trotskyist groups or those characterised as such by others. In this regard, see for example, 'La juventud del POUM continúa su política de chantaje [The POUM youth continue their politics of blackmail]', in Ahora. Diario de la Juventud, Madrid, 31 March 1937, p. 5, and 'Marxismo-Leninismo, Lenin y el trotskismo. Cómo pensaba el líder de la Revolución rusa del jefe de las bandas contrarrevolucionarias, Trotsky [Marxism-Leninism, Lenin, and Trotskyism. What the leader of the Russian Revolution thought of the boss of the counter-revolutionary gangs, Trotsky]', in the same issue.

[23] *See Sánchez Vázquez 1978, p. 113.*

[24] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, p. 12. Moreover, Sánchez Vázquez mentions the following literati who he met there: Tristan Tzara, Stephen Spender, César Vallejo, Alejo Carpentier, Félix Pita Rodríguez, Rafael Alberti, José Bergamín, Ramón José Sender, Corpus Barga, Arturo Serrano Plaja, as well as Nicolás Guillén (Sánchez Vázquez 1978, p. 113).*
Moreover, the following people also participated in this Congress: Pablo Neruda (Chile), Egon Erwin Kisch (Czechoslovakia), Córdoba Iturburo, Sara Tornú, Pablo Rojas Paz (Argentina), J. Braus (Netherlands), Vicente Huidobro, and José Bergamín (Spain) (See Líster 1966, pp. 139–40).
Santiago Álvarez mentions another hundred participants, including Alexei Tolstoi (USSR), Ernest Hemingway (United States), and Wenceslao Roces (Spain) (Álvarez 1989, pp. 367–8).

[25] *Tuñón de Lara 1966, p. 213. Tuñón goes on to list those 'young writers' involved: 'Rafael Alberti, Miguel Hernández, Serrano Plaja, Herrera Petere, Emilio Prados, Garfias, Chabás, Altolaguirre, Izcaray, Sánchez Vázquez, Rejano, etc.' On the same topic, see also Álvarez 1989, pp. 143–55.*

[26] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a.*

[27] *On the history of the 11th Division, see Líster 1966, pp. 79ff, and Álvarez 1986, pp. 121ff.*

[28] *In conversation with the author, Santiago Álvarez indicates that Sánchez Vázquez had already arrived at this Commissariat some weeks previously (S. Álvarez, conversation with the author, Madrid, 22 March 1991).*

[29] *Sánchez Vázquez, letter to the author, Mexico City, 22 February 1991, p. 2.*

[30] *See Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, p. 12. This newspaper, which almost always consisted of eight pages, generally appeared weekly or biweekly (see Pasaremos, March 1937 to September 1937).*

[31] *In this regard, see, for example, Álvarez 1986, especially chapter XVII: 'The most difficult mission of the civil war: the dissolution of the Regional Council of Aragon', pp. 259–71. The newspaper Pasaremos emphasised this event, for example in the article entitled: 'The people of Aragon can breathe freely. A new life begins for them' (signed by E. Líster, in Pasaremos, Órgano de la 11a. División, year 2, no. 38, Caspe, 22 August 1937, p. 1).*

[32] *See Líster 1966, pp. 171ff.*

[33] *See A. Sánchez Vázquez, 'El Cerco de Teruel', in Pasaremos. Órgano de la 11 División, year 2, no. 67, Teruel Front, 28 December 1937, p. 2. (This is one of three texts that we have found signed by Sánchez Vázquez with his own name in the newspaper he directed.*

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1938, also thanks to Teruel, Enrique Líster and Santiago Álvarez were promoted, respectively, to head and political commissar of the 5th Army Corps, and with them, Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez to press and propaganda commissar and editor-in-chief of the publication *Acero*.[34] The soldiers called the Commissariat to which Sánchez Vázquez belonged, half in jest and half seriously, the 'Talent Battalion'.[35] Enrique Líster would later speak of the Commissariat in more eulogistic terms:

> The 'Talent Battalion' was a magnificent combat unit; each of its men, firing with his pen and his word, represented many times more than ten and more than even a hundred combatants firing their rifles. The group of combatants that the soldiers and commanders had affectionately dubbed the 'Talent Battalion' was made up of poets, journalists, artists, sculptors, drivers, and liaisons who brought the materials to the front line of combat. … The men of the 'Talent Battalion' used not only the pen but also the bomb and the rifle when the situation demanded it.[36]

Sánchez Vázquez participated in the Civil War as a member of the 5th Army Corps, where he became a battalion political commissar,[37] until – after serious defeats on the Ebro – the Corps crossed the French border on 9 February 1939.[38] For the majority of the survivors, crossing the Pyrenees took them to French concentration camps, in which they were detained by order of the government in Paris, and had to attempt to survive under extremely miserable circumstances.[39] Sánchez Vázquez, who was supposed to carry out a special mission for the General Staff, remained in Spain. When he attempted to make it to the French border, he nearly fell into the hands of the Francoites. Evading the severe French border checkpoints, he managed to reach Perpignan.[40] He stayed in the Spanish consulate of that city until the fall of Madrid, and with it the definitive seizure of power by the Francoites, who were immediately recognised by the French government. Before the consulate was handed over to the new government, he travelled to Paris with Santiago Álvarez.[41] From the French capital, from which Spanish fugitives are banned, he travelled with Juan Rejano to Roissy-en-Brie, where the Union of French Writers was sheltering some Spanish intellectuals.[42]

Sánchez Vázquez would later summarise his role in the Spanish Civil War in the following terms:

> For me, the Spanish Civil War was a very important life experience, but (naturally) not very favourable for the enrichment of my meager theoretical-philosophical baggage. For a young rank-and-file militant like me, to be a Marxist meant at that time grasping the justness of our fight and the need to act by subordinating everything to a primary objective: winning the War. … Bound up in the struggle, and on the other hand lacking the necessary information and indispensable theoretical-critical equipment and still dazzled by the myth of the 'homeland of the proletariat', it was difficult to see clearly through veil which … Stalinism had woven at that time.[43]

After three months of waiting, the announcement by Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas that his country would take in the Spanish refugees promised a new beginning. In late May 1939, Sánchez Vázquez left the Mediterranean port of Sète with the first ship, the *Sinaia*, headed toward Mexico.[44] The author of this book finds the concept of homeland suspicious, but with regard to the author we are discussing, who after abandoning Spain was only twenty years later again able to see his father – consumed by Francoite humiliation and long years of imprisonment[45] – for two days in Biarritz, and who himself could only visit Spain again thirty-six years later,[46] allow us to cite the following autobiographical note: 'It was very moving for me to cross the Strait of Gibraltar after seeing Spanish land for the last time'.[47]

Beginning with this issue, the paper changed its subtitle to Órgano de la 11 División).

[34] Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, and his 'Pasaremos a Líster y Rodríguez', in Pasaremos, year 3, no. 80, 27 April 1938, p. 2. See also E. Líster, '¡Bajo nuevos jefes, hacia nuevas victorias! Líster, jefe del 5º Cuerpo, Rodríguez, de la 11ª. División', on p. 1 of the same issue. See also Álvarez 1989, pp. 133 and 135.

[35] Sánchez Vázquez 1985a. Santiago Álvarez would later explain, with a smile of satisfaction, what it was that distinguished Sánchez Vázquez above all within that Talent Battalion. 'Many of them knew how to write well, but only Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez could do so without drinking. This was occasionally very important' (S. Álvarez, conversation with the author, Madrid, 22 March 1991, cited liberally according to the authors' notes).

[36] E. Líster 1966, p. 66. In his detail-rich eyewitness report, Líster mentions Sánchez Vázquez by name: 'The names of Miguel Hernández, Herrera Petere, Adolfo S. Vázquez, Juan Paredes, José Ramón Alonso, Paco Ganivet, Ramón González, the sculptor Compostela, the poster makers Esperet and Briones, the photographer Faustino Mayo, and other intellectuals from the 5th Regiment, will always be wedded to the history of the struggle … of the 11th Division and the 5th Army Corps'.

[37] Sánchez Vázquez, letter to the author, Mexico City, 22 February 1991, p. 1. On Sánchez Vázquez's role in the Civil War, see Álvarez 1989, for example, pp. 133–5. See also in this regard Sánchez Vázquez 1970, p. 490.

[38] Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, p. 12.

[39] See, for example, Líster 1966, pp. 140–1 and Sánchez Barbudo 1975.

[40] Sánchez Vázquez 1985a.

[41] S. Álvarez, conversation with the author, Madrid, 22 March 1991.

[42] Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, p. 13.

[43] Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, pp. 12–13.

[44] Ibid. General Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, president of Mexico from 1934–40, would be remembered by the Spanish refugees with respect and gratitude long afterward for taking this position. In Mexico City, in a classical exile neighbourhood, the Spanish refugees would erect a monument to this important promoter of the right to exile.

[45] Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, p. 15.

[46] See the journal Anthropos, no. 52. Barcelona, August 1985, p. 31 (photo footer).

[47] Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, p. 13.

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The first period in Mexico, exile

The arrival after this crossing and the first years in the country that received him were described later by another Spanish refugee, Antonio Sánchez Barbudo: 'On 13 June 1939 the *Sinaia*, an old ship previously used to transport pilgrims to Mecca, entered the port of Veracruz. With it, the first few hundred Spanish refugees arrived in Mexico from the southeastern coast of France. Many thousand would arrive later'.[48]

Mexico, which during the Spanish Civil War was, aside from the Soviet Union, the only country in the world that supported the Spanish Republic, among other things through its arms shipments, took in the Spanish government in exile after the Francoite victory, provided unlimited work permits for all Spanish refugees, and granted citizenship to those desiring it.[49] In contrast to what happened in the Soviet Union, here the refugees needed not fear a second political persecution, and aside from a shared language, these were the reasons that the majority of those who fought against the Francoites and were able to flee came to Mexico.

When the Spanish exiles arrived in Mexico, the internal relationship between Spanish settlers and their descendents and the indigenous and mestizos was altered. Prior to 1939, 'being Spanish' in Mexico was more or less the same thing as being politically conservative and on the side of the owners of the means of production. The majority of the population, made up of indigenous people and poor mestizos, maintained a powerfully anti-Spanish attitude. 'But', as Antonio Sánchez Barbudo wrote retrospectively in 1973: 'when we arrived, these traditional attitudes were transformed radically. Those who tended to sing the praises of the Motherland attacked us as "reds" and lamented our arrival in Mexico in the press. And in contrast, the leftists and workerists, who were the indigenists and "anti-Iberians", took us in as brothers and comrades in their press and their unions'.[50]

Six of those thousands of refugees, young writers and artists, founded the journal *Romance, Revista Popular Hispanoamericana* around six months after their arrival, the first issue of which appeared in Mexico City on 1 February 1940. Sánchez Vázquez was among them. The other five founders and editorial board members were the painter Miguel Prieto, who took charge of the journal's graphic design;[51] Lorenzo Varela and Antonio Sánchez Barbudo, who had served as editors of *Hora de España* up to the end of their time in Spain;[52] Juan Rejano, who was simultaneously an editor of *Mundo Obrero*,[53] and José Herrera Petere. As we have said, Sánchez Vázquez came to know the latter two while in Spain Rejano from the period in which he sought refuge with the Union of French Writers in Roissy-en-Brie; with him and with the writer Pedro Garfias he had shared a cabin on the *Sinaia*,[54] on whose first crossing Varela and Sánchez Barbudo also came,[55] and he knew Herrera Petere from the period of the Madrid literary circle and the Commissariat of Press and Propaganda.

Among the 'Collaborators' Council' appeared Pablo Neruda and Juan Marinello, among others.[56] Octavio Paz, who edited the journal of young Mexican writers *Taller*, in which Sánchez Vázquez would also write,[57] published texts in *Romance*.[58] The editorial board presented their intentions as follows:

> Purpose. As neither a group nor a tendency, but clearly supportive of an essential aspect of culture: its popularisation, *Romance* aspires to gather in its pages the most significant expressions – in terms quality of thought and sensibility – of the Hispano-American cultural movement.
>
> We do not claim that the concept: *Hispano-America*, defines the existence of a culture that responds to the tradition of a single race or to the absolute spiritual unity of a group of peoples. And in referring to Hispano-American culture we intend nothing more than to qualify in this way that which has the Spanish language as its means of expression, whatever the racial or national circumstances giving it life may be.[59]

The journal, which sought to be more cultural than political, therefore had as its intention, while maintaining the highest level of artistic and literary quality, to move at the same time far beyond the framework of existing literary and artistic circles, and thereby to be a 'Popular Journal'. This effort was expressed, among other things, by the laborious and amazing design of its large-format pages (which were approximately double-sheets); one artist attended exclusively to the aesthetic quality of the magazine.[60] The journal was published by EDIAPSA,[61] which in that period was run by a Spanish exile in Mexico City, Rafael Giménez Siles, who while in Spain

[48] *Sánchez Barbudo 1975, p. 1, column 1.*
[49] *Sánchez Barbudo 1975, p. 1, column 2. After the Francoite triumph, in 1939 Mexico broke off diplomatic relations with the Spanish state, only reestablishing them in 1977 with the democratisation of the old 'motherland'.*
[50] *Sánchez Barbudo 1975, p. 1, column 3.*
[51] *Sánchez Barbudo 1975, p. 2, column 2.*
[52] *Sánchez Barbudo 1975, p. 3, column 1.*
[53] *Sánchez Barbudo 1975, p. 2, column 3.*
[54] *See Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, p. 13.*
[55] *Sánchez Barbudo 1975, p. 2, column 3.*
[56] *See Romance. Revista Popular Hispanoamericana, year 1, no. 1, Mexico City, 1 February 1940, p. 2. Other members of the Collaborators' Council included Enrique González Martínez, Martín Luis Guzmán, Enrique Díez Canedo, Pedro Henríquez Ureña, and Rómulo S. Gallegos.*
[57] *Sánchez Vázquez 1970, Vol. II, p. 490.*
[58] *Sánchez Barbudo 1975, p. 3, column 2. See also, for example: Octavio Paz, 'El testimonio de los sentidos' (an article on Rainer Maria Rilke), in Romance. Revista Popular Hispanoamericana, year 1, no. 1, Mexico City, 1 February 1940, p. 10.*
[59] *Romance. Revista Popular Hispanoamericana, year 1, no. 1, p. 2.*
[60] *Sánchez Barbudo 1975, p. 1.*
[61] *Edición y Distribución Ibero Americana de Publicaciones, S.A.*

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had been editor of 'communist and leftist books',[62] as well as the journal *Cenit* (Madrid).[63]

The first sixteen issues appeared bimonthly between 1 April and 15 September 1940. Issue 17, announced for 1 October, appeared three weeks late and the issues that followed also appeared irregularly; the number of issues sold and distributed across the entire American continent would fall sharply after having at one point reached 50,000,[64] and *Romance* would cease appearing on 31 May 1941 after issue 24.

The break following issue 16 was due to the fact that the editorial board, after having refused to accept a manager with broad powers as proposed by the publisher, found the doors of their workplace closed one morning. From then on until the end, the journal would remain under the direction of Martín Luis Guzmán. A decisive contribution to the new period of the journal came from Juan José Domenchina, a Spanish exile who tended to blame the 'reds' for the defeat of the Second Spanish Republic and who was a fierce adversary of the founding board.[65]

Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez, who at the age of 25 was the youngest member of the editorial board, was described by Sánchez Barbudo as 'informed, serious, intelligent, and hard-working'.[66] He left the board on 1 July of 1940.[67] But as long as the old editorial board remained, he continued to contribute to *Romance*. He published two articles in this journal under his own name ('La decadencia del héroe'[68] and 'En torno a la picaresca')[69] and a total of twelve reviews of books by various authors, including Juan Marinello, Manuel Ponce, Martín Luis Guzmán, Gil Vicente, Juan Bartolomé Roxas, and Henri Lefèbvre, as well as an anthology of young Colombian writers.[70] We should mention, moreover, that Sánchez Vázquez made many contributions to the journal that were not signed with his name, above all in the film and music sections, which Sánchez Vázquez and Herrera Petere coordinated.[71]

In one of these texts, 'La decadencia del héroe', Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez speaks of the meaning for him of defeat in the Spanish Civil War and exile, in being torn away from Spain and from the struggle against fascism, as well as the role that the discussion of modern literature had in these moments:

> When I left Spain, surrounded by those authentic heroes, I found myself alone once again with my memory. Upon leaving that immense and living ocean that had been my homeland, I felt an anguishing emptiness. … In order to move away from that nightmare that surrounded us in real life, I submerged myself as much as possible in reading. Three years of literary insomnia pushed me passionately toward this. And I began to read Celine, Giono, Jean-Paul Sartre, Kafka, Snoth, Queneau…[72]

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[62] *Sánchez Barbudo 1975 p. 2, column 2. In contrast to Sánchez Vázquez, Sánchez Barbudo writes the name of the editor 'Giménez Siles'.*

[63] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, p. 14.*

[64] *Sánchez Barbudo 1975, p. 3, column 1.*

[65] *Sánchez Barbudo 1975, p. 3, column 3. On the possible motives for this rupture between the editorial board and the founders of the journal, Sánchez Barbudo wrote the following: 'Moreover, why did Giménez Siles and the businessmen want so badly to impose Guzmán on us? … They were looking for and finding new capital to expand the editorial business, and perhaps Guzmán's leadership—which was leftist but not "red" at all, very much a product of the Mexican Revolution – was a condition imposed by the new shareholders. This probably also responded to some complaints, which held that journal should express a more purely national, Mexican character. They explicitly declared only "economic" reasons, but we suspected that they wanted to use the journal, which had come to be an important propaganda vehicle throughout Latin America, freely toward their shady economic and political ends'. Sánchez Barbudo 1975, p. 4, column 2.*

[66] *Sánchez Barbudo 1975, p. 2, column 3.*

[67] *In issue 11 of the journal, appearing on this date, the editorial board communicated a concise, untitled note to their readers: 'Due to causes beyond our will, José Herrera Petere and Sánchez Vázquez have left the editorial board of Romance. In giving this notice to our readers and friends, we note, however, that they will continue to collaborate with Romance, and that we continue to consider both writers, founders with us of this journal, to be colleagues' (in Romance, year 1, no. 11, Mexico City, 1 July 1940, p. 2).*
Regarding the possible background, Sánchez Barbudo wrote in 1973: 'I do not recall the causes for that premature expulsion of Petere and Sánchez Vázquez. Perhaps it had to do with the tension that already existed between ourselves and the company, but it most likely had to do principally with the business owners' desire to save some money, and the fact that they seemed to be the least indispensable of the writers' (Sánchez Barbudo 1975, p. 2, column 3).

[68] *Sánchez Vázquez, 'La decadencia del héroe', in Romance, year 1, no. 4 (Mexico City, 15 March 1940), p. 10.*

[69] *Sánchez Vázquez, 'En torno a la picaresca', in Romance, year 1, no. 8 (Mexico City, 15 May 1940), p. 6.*

[70] *We refer to the following books, which Sánchez Vázquez reviews in Romance (we indicate in parentheses the exact location in year 1, 1940, of Romance):*
André Maurois, Eduardo VII y su época (no. 1, 1 February, p. 20); Juan Marinello, Ensayos (no. 2, 15 February, p. 19); Juvenal Ortiz Soralegui, Flor Cerrada. Poemas (no. 5, 1 April, p. 18); Manuel Ponce Ciclo de vírgenes (no. 6, 15 April, p. 18); Armond and Maubliac, Fourier (no. 6, 15 April, p. 19); Martín Luis Guzmán, Memorias de Pancho Villa. Tercera parte: panoramas políticos (no. 7, 1 May, p. 18); Gil Vicente, Poesías de Gil Vicente (no. 8, 15 May, p. 18); José Ma. Arguedas, Pumaccahua (no. 9, 1 June, p. 19); Juan Bartolomé Roxas, Tres en uno. Auto sacramental a la usanza antigua, en cinco cuadros y tres jornadas (no. 12, 15 July, p. 18); Francisco Giner, La rama viva (no. 13, 1 August, p. 18); Antonio R. Manzar, Antología del cuento hispanoamericano (no. 14, 15 August, p. 18); Henri Lefèbvre, Nietzsche (no. 16, 15 September, p. 18); and a collection of texts by young Colombian writers entitled Piedra y cielo (no. 10, 15 June, p. 18).

[71] *Sánchez Barbudo 1975, p. 3, column 2.*

[72] *Sánchez Vázquez, 'La decadencia del héroe', in Romance, year 1, no. 4 (Mexico City, 15 March 1940), p. 10. The quotation continues: 'I came from the absolute and total encounter with the hero of life.*

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That same year, Sánchez Vázquez participated in the journal *España Peregrina*, produced by the *Junta Cultural Española*.[73] In 1941, he moved to Morelia, capital of the state of Michoacán de Ocampo, situated to the west of Mexico City, 'a city of scarcely 60,000 inhabitants but with an intense university and cultural life',[74] to teach undergraduate level philosophy.

There he married Aurora Rebolledo,[75] who he had already known during his youth in Spain,[76] and it was also there that his first son Adolfo was born.[77] In Morelia he once again enjoyed some spare time to perfect his philosophical education and, 'to the degree possible given the scarcity of reliable texts', also to advance on the Marxist terrain.[78] He maintained a lively exchange, for example, with Alfonso Reyes, Xavier Villaurrutia, José Gaos, and Joaquin Xirau, and discussed intensely with Ludwig Renn, a German combatant in Spain, who was then located in Mexico.

In 1943 he was forced to resign from his position as a lecturer in the Colegio de San Nicolás de Hidalgo when, during a conflict within the local University, he took the side of the leftist side there under attack, affiliated with Cárdenas.[79] Soon thereafter, he returned with his family to Mexico City and 'did a little of everything' to make a living: he translated[80] and taught Spanish to employees of the Soviet embassy. During this period he resumed his university studies (interrupted in 1936) in the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts [Facultad de Filosofía y Letras] of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico (UNAM), and prepared a master's thesis in Spanish Literature on *El sentido del tiempo en la poesía de Antonio Machado* [*The Sense of time in the poetry of Antonio Machado*].[81] Machado had belonged to the Spanish literary current known as the Generation of 98; during the Spanish Civil War he committed himself to the Republic and its defenders, and was recognised for his role, in this regard, more than any other man of letters. Sánchez Vázquez visited him several times during the Civil War by charge of the 5th Army Corps in order to bring provisions to him and his mother.[82] Due to his work as a translator, which occupied much of his time, as well as his intense political activity among émigrés, he became increasingly distanced from the Faculty and did not complete his thesis.[83]

At the beginning of the 1950s, the Cold War and the concomitant increase in US support for Franco, definitively destroyed any hope that his exile would soon end, this having previously remained a hope of his. Yet with this, a sort of calm came to Sánchez Vázquez's life; the struggle for a prompt return was transformed into more long-term political work, theoretical reflection again gaining importance and space, and he returned once more to the University. Thus he would later write of this era:

> The prospect of a long exile did not in any way entail for us an abandonment of our political work, but it did allow – at least in my case – a greater degree of serenity and a greater demand for rationality. I thus felt the need to dedicate more time to reflection, to providing a reasoned foundation for my political activity, above all when deeply-rooted beliefs – in the 'homeland of the proletariat' – began to fall apart. For this reason I decided to improve my understanding of Marxist theory and, as a result, to pay more attention to philosophy than to literature.[84]

In the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts, German idealist philosophy – which had been revitalised by exiled Spanish philosophers, and José Gaos in particular – predominated. Inspired by the latter, a group of young philosophers called the 'Hiperión' attempted to develop a 'filosofía de lo mexicano [philosophy of Mexicanness]'. French existentialism was to serve as a theoretical instrument toward this end. Sánchez Vázquez engaged in a "fertile dialogue" with this group, which forced him to "sharpen [the] theoretical tools of Marxism."[85]

Among those teaching in the Faculty there were few Marxist academics; among the first were the exiled translator Wenceslao Roces in the history department, and in the philosophy department the Mexican Eli de Gortari, with his course on dialectical logic. His teaching assistant was Sánchez

Now, in opening my eyes to this new world, I found its death, its transfiguration, or its escape'.

We are not going to enter here into a discussion of his critique of the 'death of the hero' or of the difficulties in his handling of the texts, above all the work of Sartre and Kafka, as well as the fact of simply equating authors as different as Celine and Sartre; nor will we deal with Sánchez Vázquez's later positions with regard to Sartre and Kafka in articles, speeches, and a prologue he wrote.

For this, see, for example, Sánchez Vázquez's following texts on Kafka: 'Un héroe kafkiano: José K' (speech given in August 1963 at the UNAM), Sánchez Vázquez 1963; 'Prólogo' in Franz Kafka's El proceso [The Trial] (Sánchez Vázquez 1967a), and on Sartre: 'Marxismo y existencialismo' (Sánchez Vázquez 1960); 'Sartre y la música', El Universal, Mexico City, 26 September 1977); 'La estética libertaria y comprometida de Sartre (Sánchez Vázquez 1980a), and the speech 'La estética de Sartre', given in November of 1969 (Sánchez Vázquez 1985b, esp. p. 22).

[73] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, p. 14.*

[74] *Ibid.*

[75] *Ibid..*

[76] *S. Álvarez, conversation with the author. Madrid, 22 March 1991.*

[77] *His children Juan Enrique and María Aurora were born later (Sánchez Vázquez 1985a).*

[78] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a.*

[79] *Ibid.*

[80] *Over time, Sánchez Vázquez did translations from Russian, French, English, and Italian; in the bibliography we have noted the texts translated by Sánchez Vázquez in to Spanish.*

[81] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a.*

[82] *S. Álvarez, conversation with the author, Madrid, 22 March 1991.*

[83] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a.*

[84] *Ibid.*

[85] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, p. 15.*

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Vázquez from 1952 to February of 1955.[86] During this period he published the bulletin of the Union of Spanish Intellectuals in Mexico, for which he served as vice president for several years, a journal that was distributed in Spain and stood in solidarity with persecuted intellectuals there.[87]

In October of 1955 he obtained his Maestría [Master's] Degree[88] in Philosophy with a thesis entitled *Conciencia y realidad en la obra de arte* [*Consciousness and reality in artwork*]. Sánchez Vázquez, who by that time already had problems with the predominant Marxist philosophy – Soviet *Diamat* – was in this text still faithful to 'socialist realism'. On this topic, he would later write: 'My thesis, without yet breaking with this framework [of *Diamat*], sought to find more open answers; however, those responses moved definitively within the channels of Diamat which was – and is – the aesthetic of "socialist realism"…'[89] Some time later, the author would move away from the aesthetic perspective represented there. The publication of this work as a book in 1965 took place without his approval.[90]

In the practical-political sphere conflicts developed which shifted this first anti-dogmatic impulse onto the theoretical terrain. In 1954 a confrontation emerged between the Mexican branch of the Spanish Communist Party and its central committee with regard to the Party's authoritarian internal structures. During this conflict, Sánchez Vázquez represented on various occasions the 'Mexican wing' in Europe: in 1954 at the Fifth Party Congress, held secretly on the outskirts of Prague, and in 1957 at various meetings with the PCE Political Bureau in Paris.[91] Certainly, the events of the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1956 (the Secret Report on Stalin's crimes), would shock many PCE members living in Mexico, but not the leadership in Paris that predominated over the 'malcontents' in Latin America. Sánchez Vázquez resigned from his Party posts and returned to the unavoidable need to question on a theoretical level this type of 'Marxism' and its practical implications, which had now become known.[92]

The 'new theoretical and practical posture'

The 1959 Cuban Revolution, which broke with traditional thinking and models, and the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact states were two historical events that changed Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez's theoretical perspective.[93] After these moments, what most mattered to him was to abandon the theoretical framework within which he had up to that point sought innovation. Hence, in this regard, the retrospective assessment: 'After that point, I was at pains to abandon the materialist metaphysics of *Diamat*, to return to the original Marx, and to take the pulse of reality in order to thereby gain access to a Marxism which was understood above all as a philosophy of praxis'.[94]

Both his withdrawal from his activities in the PCE as well as the fact that he obtained, in January 1959, the position of full-time professor at the UNAM, made possible what had become impossible in his country of origin to intensely study Marx 'toward an open and critical mode of thinking guided by these two principles of Marx himself: "doubt everything" and "criticise all that exists"'. This 'all that exists' should also include 'naturally … not only Lenin but Marx himself and, especially, that was theorised or practiced in Marx's name'.[95]

Sánchez Vázquez's first scientific text in which this understanding of Marx's theory features appeared in 1961: the essay 'Ideas estéticas en los 'Manuscritos económico-filosóficos' de Marx [Aesthetic ideas in Marx's "Economic-philosophical manuscripts"]',[96] was received with great interest in post-revolutionary Cuba, and led to a first invitation to the island, during which he had the opportunity to meet Che Guevara in person.[97]

In 1965, his first book appeared in Mexico: *Las ideas estéticas de Marx* [published in English as: *Art and Society.*

[86] *Ibid.*
[87] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, p. 14.*
[88] *The Maestría [Master's Degree] in Mexico is similar to the Magister Artium in Germany.*
[89] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a p. 15.*
[90] *See Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, p. 19. For the published book, see Sánchez Vázquez 1965a.*
[91] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, p. 15. He later recalled this Parisian encounter: 'In those meetings Fernando Claudín and I were the leading voices on either side'. Ibid.*
Regarding his adversary of the time, it is worth noting that Sánchez Vázquez had already had more serious encounters with him during his time in the JSU. Claudín was his predecessor as editor of Ahora and later editor of its sister newspaper La Hora, which appeared from 8 June 1937. This JSU publication was founded in Valencia when the government and JSU headquarters were moved there, while Ahora remained in Madrid (see the joint extraordinary issue of La Hora and Ahora on the anniversary of the beginning of the War: Valencia and Madrid, 18 July 1937, illustrated page 'Fighters for unity', as well as 'For unity, toward victory. Taking stock of three months of unity', in Ahora. Diario de la Juventud, no. 107, Madrid, 1 May 1937, p. 10).
Moreover, beginning on 20 September 1936, Claudín (from the Communist Youth) was press director for the Unified Executive Commission of the JSU alongside Serrano Poncela (from the Socialist Youth). See Viñas 1978, p. 64, n. 53.
In 1980, in the second edition of his book The Philosophy of Praxis, Sánchez Vázquez spoke in the most laudatory tones about Claudín's theoretical work: 'On the Communist Manifesto as a theory of social revolution, and on the concepts of class consciousness and the party therein, as well as on its linkage with the economic, social, and political situation of the period, and in particular on the trial by fire that was the Revolution of '48 for this general text by Marx and Engels, the reader can very beneficially consult Fernando Claudín's excellent work Marx, Engels y la revolución de 1848, (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1975) which on more than one point we have followed closely'. Sánchez Vázquez 1980b, p. 187, n. 111.
[92] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a.*
[93] *Ibid.*
[94] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, p. 16.*
[95] *Ibid.*
[96] *Sánchez Vázquez 1961.*
[97] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a.*

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Essays in Marxist Aesthetics],[98] which bore a dual relationship to the Cuban Revolution: it made use of its first experiences on the terrain of art and cultural policy and, with its re-release in Havana in 1966, 'contributed to a certain degree to driving the open, plural, and anti-dogmatic course of its artistic policy'.[99] He would continue travelling frequently to Cuba to give speeches (and to no other country as frequently), participating for example in the Cultural Congress of Havana in 1968.[100]

In March of 1966, he presented his doctoral thesis in philosophy under the title *Sobre la praxis* [*On Praxis*], from which his 1967 book *Filosofía de la praxis* [published in English as: *The Philosophy of Praxis*] emerged, a text which Sánchez Vázquez classified as 'fundamental',[101] and which would reappear in 1980 considerably reworked and expanded by two chapters.[102] 'In it, the point to which my understanding of Marxism had arrived – above all in its philosophical and theoretical-political aspects – is crystallised'.[103]

In 1985, Sánchez Vázquez would describe two noteworthy aspects of his examination, in which José Gaos, the former collaborator of Ortega y Gasset, participated as his advisor, as well as translator of Marx Wenceslao Roces, Marxist logician Eli de Gortari, Luis Villoro, and Ricardo Guerra: 'first, its duration (it still holds the UNAM record in this respect), and secondly for the toughness of the judges' replies, which converted the long examination into a veritable pitched battle of … ideas'.[104]

His subsequent theoretical development is also influenced by the stimulation of his students, 'in particular, that of those attracted to Marxism'.[105] In this sense, the student movement of the summer of 1968 was a crucial moment, which is still today the country's richest political movement in terms of consequences since the Mexican Revolution. In a letter to *Le Monde* this movement was characterised as follows:

> This was a movement, which was very different from May 1968 in France. In Mexico, there were practically no scholastic or academic demands, only political ones: freedom for political prisoners, the dissolution of the 'cuerpo de granaderos' [a militarised police unit deployed for 'internal security'], the dismissal of the mayor of the city, the police chief …
>
> Is it possible to speak of solid democratic traditions when there is really nothing more than one political party?[106]

Sánchez Vázquez joined the student movement along with the majority of UNAM professors. On 15 August, the highest body of the UNAM – the University Council – agreed to support the student demands[107] and when on 18 September the army seized the University City, the rector Javier Barros Sierra publicly protested by repudiating the occupation.

Sánchez Vázquez, aside from his solidarity with the teaching staff, was connected to this movement through various personal contacts. His assistant, Roberto Escudero, was imprisoned; his former colleague and friend Eli de Gortari was unjustly detained and his son Juan Enrique experienced the 'Night of Tlatelolco'.[108] As evening fell on 2 October 1968 – ten days prior to the beginning of the Olympic Games – the police and the army put an end, through an hour and a half of machine-gun fire, to a student demonstration surrounded by tanks in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas in Tlatelolco, killing – according to investigations carried out by the English newspaper, *The Guardian* – more than 325 people, wounding a far greater number, and detaining some two thousand survivors.[109] This event, to which the then Mexican Ambassador to India, Octavio Paz, responded with his resignation,[110] put an end to the student movement. But its political and theoretical effects cannot be underestimated; Sánchez Vázquez later wrote in this regard:

> Although it was crushed, the movement of '68 changed the political physiognomy of the country, and from that point onward the Universidad Nacional was never the same again. Marxism with a critical and anti-dogmatic edge became one of the most vigorous currents of thought in the institutions of the UNAM and especially in the humanities. … [M]y Ética [Ethics] … was inspired in its elaboration by the objectives, achievements, and sacrifices of that student movement which taught not only political but also moral lessons.[111]

Between the years of 1973 and 1981, Sánchez Vázquez was editor of the *teoría y praxis* [*theory and praxis*] book series of

[98] *Sánchez Vázquez 1965b.*
[99] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a.*
[100] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985c, pp. 18f.*
[101] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a. In 1996 Sánchez Vázquez also considered The Philosophy of Praxis to be his main work (Sánchez Vázquez, conversation with the author, Mexico City, September 1996).*
[102] *See Sánchez Vázquez 1967b (the book version of the doctoral thesis entitled On Praxis, presented in 1966 to the UNAM), and the second edition, Sánchez Vázquez 1980b. See in English: Sánchez Vázquez 1977a.*
[103] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a.*
[104] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a.*
[105] *Ibid.*
[106] *M. Mayagoitia, letter to Le Monde, 7 October 1968, cited according to Poniatowska 1989, p. 20.*
[107] *See Poniatowska 1989, p. 278.*
[108] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a.*
[109] *Poniatowska 1989, Part II: pp. 161–273, here: p. 170. According to traditional belief, it was exactly there that the final battle against the Spanish conquistadors occurred in 1521 under the legendary Cuauhtémoc.*
[110] *See, for example, Jean-Claude Buhrer, 'Les yeux ouverts sur le monde' (homage to Paz on the occasion of his winning the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1990), in the 13 October 1990 Le Monde, p. 12.*
[111] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a.*

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the Mexican publisher Grijalbo. In that post, he made emancipatory European thinkers – for example, Rossana Rossanda, Henri Levèbvre, Karel Kosík, Adam Schaff, Louis Althusser, Jindrich Zelený, and Bertolt Brecht – more widely known in Mexico and Latin America. Furthermore, he published contemporary contributions to local discussions of social theory and philosophy, such as those by Rosa Krauze, Enrique Dussel, María Rosa Palazón, and Leopoldo Zea.[112] The book series, entitled 'tp', was presented as follows:

> tp. We propose to make known, in the Spanish language, texts which elucidate the two dimensions – theoretical and practical – of social praxis.
>
> tp. Rejects all speculation, or theoretical activity closed upon itself, and accepts theory which, linked to praxis, contributes to its enrichment or promotion.
>
> tp. Addresses the reader who, not satisfied with the simple divulgation, with no need for prior specialisation, aspires toward a serious knowledge of the corresponding topics.[113]

In 1974, Sánchez Vázquez served on the organizing committee for the Fifteenth International Philosophy Congress in Varna.[114] Already previously, and also afterward, he participates in international conferences on philosophy and aesthetics. His first public appearance in the German Federal Republic occurred in 1976, at the Seventh International Aesthetics Congress, in Düsseldorf.[115]

With Franco's death in 1975, ETA's previous 1973 assassination of his designated successor Luis Carrero Blanco, and the beginning of the process of democratisation in Spain, the possibility opened up for the first time of a lasting and legal return to his home country. In 1978, Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez gave his first public speech in that country since his flight through the Pyrenees, doing so at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid on the topic of 'Las revoluciones en la filosofía [The revolutions in philosophy]'.[116]

He decided to remain in Mexico, the country that had in 1939 'made possible his escape from anguish and desperation',[117] where he took the path of science, and on the continent where he had come to be one of the most recognised intellectuals of emancipation. He discovered that a return to Spain could not simply erase his existence as an exile. 'And then the exile discovers, first with astonishment, then with grief, and later with a degree of irony, at the very moment that his exile objectively comes to an end, that the time has not passed with impunity, and that whether he returns or does not return, he would never cease to be an exile'.[118]

In 1976–7, he became president of the Mexican Philosophical Association and, respectively, the vice president and president of the organising committees for the two first National Philosophy Colloquia (Morelia, 1975, and Monterrey, 1977).[119]

Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez kept up with the pulse of the times, and thus the Nicaraguan Revolution represented an important historical event for him. He engaged in a lively theoretical-political exchange with prominent Sandinista leaders and, in 1983, gave speeches in Managua, in the Ministry of Culture and in the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua, on the topic of Marxist aesthetics (for example, on Brecht and Lukács)[120]; as well as giving a speech on the topic of 'Democracy, revolution, and socialism' on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the fall of the Somoza régime in 1989.[121]

On the centenary of Karl Marx's death, a public commemoration was organised in the Palace of Fine Arts, presided over by Sánchez Vázquez, among others.[122] In 1984, he received a doctorate *honoris causa* from the Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, and on 15 May 1985, by a vote of the University Council of the UNAM, he was named professor emeritus.[123]

The legal successor to that state against whose founding Sánchez Vázquez had fought in his youth, in 1989 honoured him in the person of King Juan Carlos I, conferring upon him Spain's highest cultural award: the Gran Cruz de Alfonso X el

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[112] *A complete list of the book titles that appeared in this series up to 1980 can be found in Sánchez Vázquez 1980b, pp. 465ff. On the last four authors cited, see the anthology La filosofía actual en América Latina, Vol. III, on Mexico's 'First National Philosophy Colloquium' (Ardao et al. 1976).*
The fact that Sánchez Vázquez also ordered the translation and publication of a declared theoretical adversary like Louis Althusser shows a liberalism that would benefit some German gentlemen of science. See Althusser 1976.

[113] *Sánchez Vázquez 1980b, back cover.*

[114] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985c, p. 18.*

[115] *Ibid. The complete list of these appearances up to 1985 can be found therein.*

[116] *Anonymous 1985, p. 22.*

[117] *Sánchez Vázquez 1942, p. 3. The dedication we here cite, which Sánchez Vázquez added to this book in 1942, says: 'These poems were written in Spain, already vigilantly and dramatically awaiting the collective tragedy of my homeland. Now that they come out into the light, I dedicate them to the people to whom I owe my most valued treasure: an exit from anguish and desperation. Morelia, May 1942'.*

[118] *Sánchez Vázquez, 'Cuando el exilio permanece y dura (a manera de epílogo)', in the collective volume ¡Exilio! Cited here according to the reprint in Sánchez Vázquez 1985c., p. 18.*

[119] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985c, p. 18.*

[120] *Anonymous 1985, p. 22. Thus, for example, his speech 'Brecht and Lukács' conceptions of realism', given at the Ministry of Culture, Managua (29 April 1983).*

[121] *Sánchez Vázquez 1989.*

[122] *See Anthropos, no. 52 (Barcelona, August 1985), p. 48 (photo caption). See also Sánchez Vázquez 1983a (a speech given on the occasion of the centenary of Karl Marx's death, 14 March 1983, at the Palace of Fine Arts in Mexico City).*

[123] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985c, p. 18.*

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Sabio [Great Cross of Alfonso X the Wise].[124] Two universities in his native country conferred upon him *honoris causa* doctorates: the Universidad de Cádiz in 1987, and the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia [National Distance Education University] in 1993.[125] Sánchez Vázquez also achieved increasing institutional recognition in other European countries, for example in the German Federal Republic, where he signed on as a member of the Advisory Council of the Berlin Institute of Critical Theory (INKRIT, by its German acronym).[126]

Sánchez Vázquez was invited as an advisor to the Special Forum for State Reform, called for July 1996 by the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional [Zapatista Army of National Liberation] (EZLN), and he participated by sending a contribution to the discussion of the question of human rights in Mexico, on the basis of the Zapatista rebellion and its causes. In 1998, the UNAM honoured him with an *honoris causa* doctorate.

Until he was alive, Sánchez Vázquez teached postgraduate seminars in Philosophy at the UNAM and struggled in various settings for a world free of exploitation and oppression, as well as for the theoretical understanding necessary to bring it about. Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez concluded his 1985 autobiography as follows:

> Many truths have come to earth; certain ends have not resisted contrast with reality and some hopes have vanished. And, nevertheless, I am today more convinced than ever that socialism – linked with those truths and those ends and hopes – continues to be a necessary, desirable, and possible alternative. I remain likewise convinced that Marxism – those elements of it that must be criticised or abandoned – continues to be the most fertile theory for those of us who are convinced of the need to transform the world in which today there exists not only the exploitation and oppression of men and peoples, but also a mortal risk for the survival of humanity.
>
> And although the path toward the transformation of this world today presents reversals, obstacles, and sufferings which we did not suspect in our younger years, our objective continues to be that other world which, since our youth – as socialism – we have conceived, dreamt, and desired.[127]

Sánchez Vázquez taught philosophy in the UNAM up to 2003 and participated until 2005 in academic events, such as the homage on the occasion of his ninetieth birthday, arranged at the UNAM that year in October. With his way of thinking independently and always critical towards everything that exists, which also implies: towards the contradictions of the reigning social form, and – at the same time – also towards the political and social powers that have been established in different moments with an anti-capitalist or anti-neoliberal orientation, what does not automatically mean that they have been free of contradictions, always far away from repeating or reinventing, in their own way, some anti-emancipatory elements, Sánchez Vázquez is without any doubt one of the most lucid and important precursor of a *Critical Theory from the Americas*.

[124] *'Por decreto del rey Juan Carlos I', in La Jornada (Mexico City, 22 July 1989), p. 17.*

[125] *Vargas Lozano 1995, p. 9.*

[126] *See "Hilferuf für das Historisch-Kritische Wörterbuch des Marxismus," in Das Argument. Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Sozialwissenschaft, year 38, no. 217, issue 5/6 (Hamburg, 1996), pp. 662f, here: p. 662.*

[127] *Sánchez Vázquez 1985a, p. 16. For additional reflections on the work and life of Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez, see: Gandler 2011.*

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