Title: 'Reformers and revolutionaries: the battle for the working classes in Gibraltar and its hinterland, 1914-1921'

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Abstract: This article examines labour organisation in Gibraltar and its hinterland from c.1914-1921. It demonstrates that the traditionally strong links which had existed between organisations in Gibraltar and neighbouring Spain, links based upon a shared belief in anarchist ideas and practices, had, by 1921, broken down due to the adoption of gradualist and constitutionalist politics and industrial relations by workers on the Rock. Two principle agents drove this change. First, in 1919, the British Workers' Union established a branch in Gibraltar which successfully worked to establish itself as principle negotiator and representative of workers on the Rock. Second, a reforming governor in Gibraltar undertook to open up political spaces in Gibraltar which offered the potential to work with, rather than against, the state in the colony. By the end of the period, anarchism, and anarchist ideas, were not extinguished in Gibraltar, but they would never again serve as the inspiration for industrial and political campaigns on the Rock, much to the delight of both Gibraltarian employers and the British colonial authorities. This case-study invites further consideration of how British style trade union activity in the empire displaced indigenous forms of organising, a subject which has heretofore received scant attention.

Key Words: Anarchism, Spain, Gibraltar, Trade Unions, British Workers' Union, Imperialism, Transport and General Workers' Union

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‘Reformers and revolutionaries: the battle for the working classes in Gibraltar and its hinterland, 1902-1921’

On 9 October 1902, a meeting of anarchist workers in La Línea de la Concepcíon, Spain, culminated in a state-sponsored bloodbath. The meeting had been called by the local Círculo Obrero, an umbrella organisation which had coordinated workers’ groups in the area for over a decade. It was called to mark the end of a six-month general strike of workers in both La Línea and the neighbouring British colony of Gibraltar, and to discuss plans for future agitation. Though the strike had ended in defeat, local workers were not deterred from showing their support for the Círculo. When the mayor of La Línea, Juan Fariñas, refused permission for the meeting to take place in the town’s bullring, thousands proceeded instead to the ‘Las Pedreras’ district of the town to hold their rally. There they were met by a detachment of Civil Guard, whose warning shots prompted the crowd to throw stones and anything else to hand in response. Amidst the chaos, a handful of workers made for the house of Fariñas with the intention of storming it, only to find a detachment of infantry lying in wait. The infantrymen opened fire. At least five workers were killed in the exchanges and many more were injured. For their part, several Civil Guards and one local official suffered cuts. Unsurprisingly, this incident remains etched in local folk memory in La Línea.

In a telling sign that the Spanish authorities understood the potential reach and success of the Círculo beyond simple labour disputes, they moved quickly to put an end to its cultural and educational activities which it organised on behalf of the local working classes. The Círculo’s offices in La Línea were closed down, and the Círculo’s leaders were charged and fined for failing to keep proper financial records. Meanwhile, the Círculo’s cultural centre was also closed down, depriving thousands of local workers of its facilities, and likewise depriving some 400 children of the free schooling that had been offered there.[1]

The details of this incident are unlikely to shock those familiar with the historiography of Spain’s Restoration Monarchy. By the early twentieth century, the regime was already displaying serious social, cultural and political fault lines.[2] In times of crisis, whether on a local or national level, the Spanish state was quite prepared to use force against its own civilians in a bid to maintain ‘order’, with anarchist militants and groups an early and consistent target for state surveillance, harassment and even violence.[3] October 1902 nonetheless marked the start of a much more aggressive posture from the Spanish authorities in this region of Spain – the Campo de Gibraltar – towards local workers’ groups.

Across the border in Gibraltar, which was, by some distance, the largest source of employment in the region, the general strike of 1902 and its bloody epilogue had also marked a change. Both the colonial authorities and the principal Gibraltar merchants had been accused in sections of the Spanish press of having a hand in the events of 9 October in La Línea. In subsequent years, officials in Gibraltar worked closely with their counterparts in the Campo to monitor labour activists on both sides of the border.[4] For their part, the Gibraltar employers had emerged victorious from the general

[1] Grocott, Stockey, and Grady, ‘Anarchy in the UK(‘s Most Famous Fortress)’, p. 17. For some context see also Yeoman, ‘Print Culture’, pp. 153-156.
[2] A measured appraisal of the regime’s virtues and failings is Romero-Salvado & Smith, *Agony of Spanish Liberalism*.
[3] See for example, Ealham, *Class, Culture & Conflict*, pp. 15-17; González-Calleja, *En nombre de la autoridad*, ch. 1.
[4] Gibraltar National Archives (GNA), World War One Files 3/1919, ‘Bolsheviks and anarchists with Bolshevik tendencies residing in the neighbouring Spanish District’.

strike of 1902 owing in no small part to the use of a 'lock-out' and their ability to draft strike-breakers at short notice from Morocco. They used the demise of the Círculo to roll back the workers' advances made in the previous decade. However, of even greater significance to the prospects of organised labour in the region, the events of 1902 marked the start of a process by which workers in Gibraltar would begin to act independently of their counterparts in the Campo.

This article explores the development of labour relations in Gibraltar, and the neighbouring region of Spain in the two decades after 1902. It demonstrates how the revival of Spanish labour militancy in the Campo de Gibraltar in this period saw several episodes of cooperation between Gibraltarian and Spanish workers. What it did not see, however, was a consolidation of the previous pattern of easy and frequent cross-border cooperation between workers' organisations in Gibraltar and Spain, where the actions of the former were very much influenced by the thinking and actions of the latter. Indeed, Gibraltarian workers had already begun to organise independently of Spanish unions in the 1910s. By the end of our period, they were almost exclusively organised through the British-based Workers' Union, which eschewed radical and revolutionary industrial action that had typified that of the region, in favour of a more gradualist and constitutionalist approach. Accounts of post-Second World War labour movements in the colonies have tended to emphasise the role of trade union organisations in independence movements. Drawing upon extensive archival research in Gibraltar, the National Archives, and upon local Spanish newspapers from the time, we show that for all the contributions of the Transport and General Workers' Union in Gibraltar to achieving greater internal self-government in Gibraltar, in the first instance it was established on the Rock at the expense of indigenous forms of labour organisation. This 'industrial relations imperialism', as the phenomena could be termed, deserves greater attention from historians of British imperialism and labour history, with this article offering a first step.

Crucial to understanding the demise of cross-border solidarity in this region is the impact of the First World War, and the economic dislocation it occasioned on both sides of the frontier. But also decisive, as we shall see, was the co-incidence of two individuals on the Rock of Gibraltar as the war came to a close. First, from July 1918 Gibraltar possessed a governor in the shape of General Sir Horace Lockwood Smith-Dorrien, who was intent on widespread social and political reforms. Just as importantly, in September 1919, the British Workers' Union made the decision to export British trade unionism to the Rock when it sent an organiser there, Matt Giles, to found a branch. So successful was the new union in organising workers that by 1922, not only had the Workers' Union achieved hegemony amongst organised labourers in Gibraltar, it had successfully campaigned for a partially-elected municipal council in the colony and won a majority of the seats open for election.

Writing the history of labour organisation in Gibraltar and the Campo

This article sits at the intersection of three historiographies that are usually considered separately, namely studies of Spanish anarchism, of Gibraltar, and of British trade unionism. There is certainly no shortage of literature on the subject of Spanish anarchism, which continues to prompt fascination (and inspiration) well beyond academic circles. The history of the movement during the First World War has seen useful interventions of late,[5] and the historian is particularly well-served for studies of the growth of anarchism in the region of Andalucía.[6] Nonetheless, and despite its reputation as a

[5] Darlington, 'Re-evaluating syndicalist opposition to the First World War'.; Yeoman, 'Spanish Anarchist movement at the outbreak of the First World War'.
[6] Esenwein, *Anarchist Ideology;* Kaplan, *Anarchists of Andalusia;* Maurice, *El anarquismo andaluz.*

stronghold of anarchist sentiment, the movement in the Campo de Gibraltar remains little studied in this period.[7] Since the Campo represents (unusually) both an agricultural and urban setting for labour and social relations, and (uniquely) one that is dominated by an imbalanced economic relationship with a neighbouring colonial power, the present article sheds light on anarchist organisation and agitation in very different circumstances to most present works. While motivations, material realities and power relations that fostered anarchism in the Campo reflect similar dynamics elsewhere in the region, the shadow of the Rock as both employer and potential source of workers' solidarity loomed large over the movement.

In general, the historian is badly served for histories of the Campo de Gibraltar, but the period under review here represents a particularly historiographical blind-spot.[8] Likewise, the historiography of Gibraltar is lacking for the first two decades of the twentieth century. Our analysis of the origins of Gibraltar's labour movement in the period 1890-1902 serves as prequal to the present article, and elsewhere we have analysed the debates surrounding the proposed trade union ordinance of 1920 (for more of which, see below).[9] Most general histories of Gibraltar pay scant attention to labour relations – and indeed, the working classes – and even a special edition of the *Gibraltar Heritage Journal* devoted to the theme of Gibraltarian labour history begins its interventions in 1945.[10] The present article thus aims to address this gap, but also crucially to demonstrate a fundamental switch in the nature of the Rock's industrial relations – a move away from anarchist (and Spanish) inspirations for industrial organisation and action, and towards a (British-inspired and imported) constitutionalist, legalist and gradualist approach. Understanding the origins of the Workers' Union branch in Gibraltar is essential to understanding later developments in the development of representative and, ultimately, internal self-government in Gibraltar because of the central role the Workers' Union and later the Transport and General Workers' Union (upon amalgamation in 1929) played in the political life of the Rock.

Finally, there has been less written about the role of trade unions in the empire than there has about other political, economic and cultural aspects of British imperialism. The *Oxford History of the British Empire*, for example, does not contain a chapter of the subject.[11] Notable contributions from scholars such as Roberts, with *Labour in the Tropical Territories*, exist but naturally do not examine the Mediterranean colonies of Malta and Gibraltar, whilst studies of trade unions in African territories tend to focus on the post-war period. Likewise, the British trade union studied here, the Workers' Union, has only been treated to one substantial history, that of Richard Hyman.[12] Yet even Hyman's book, whilst mentioning the attempt to organise in Gibraltar in passing, and indeed outlining in somewhat more detail the activities of Matt Giles, nevertheless does not dedicate much space to the union's activities in the empire. As such, this article advances our understanding not only of trade union organisation in the empire more broadly, and Gibraltar specifically, but also enhances our understanding of the Workers' Union itself.

[7] There is some discussion in García Sanz, 'Gibraltar y su Campo'. Crucial to the present work has been the regional study the labour movement in Cádiz province – Trinidad Pérez, *Los trabajadores gaditanos*.
[8] Luis Alberto del Castillo Navarro in Ocaño (eds.), *Historia de Algeciras*, offers a useful survey of local economic conditions in the first two decades of twentieth-century but says almost nothing about labour relations.
[9] Grocott, Stockey, and Grady, 'Anarchy in the UK('s) Most Famous Fortress'; Grocott and Stockey, *Gibraltar: A Modern History*.
[10] *Gibraltar Heritage Journal*, Vol. 15, 2008.
[11] Brown and Lewis, *Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. iv; Porter, *Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. iii.
[12] Hyman, *Workers' Union*.

Labour Organisation in Gibraltar and the Campo, 1902-1914

The tragic end to the 1902 general strike in Gibraltar did much to halt the momentum of organised labour that had been built in the preceding decades. Prominent activists saw themselves blacklisted by employers on both sides of the Gibraltar frontier for their role in the strike, and as we have seen, several activists were charged and fined by the Spanish state as part of the dismantling of local anarchist educational and cultural centres in the Campo. Many left the region entirely, and they were joined by thousands of other local workers as the labour opportunities presented by the construction of Gibraltar's naval dockyard were reduced after its completion in 1906.[13]

The movement may have been dispersed, but the vision lingered on. To some extent, the decade after the general strike was, by necessity, a period of rebuilding for the anarchist movement in the region, and one which took place in the face of a more aggressive posture on the part of the Spanish state. Shortly after the incident at Las Pedreras, for example, two prominent anarchist propagandists, Teresa Claramunt and Leopoldo Bonafulla, travelled to the Campo to speak to local workers, and at least one meeting, in the town of Los Barrios, was prohibited. Undeterred, the pair continued to organise meetings of local workers and they were later arrested and imprisoned for their actions.[14] In workplaces, too, certain workers would persist in their efforts to organise fellow labourers, and more broadly to lead by example in defying hierarchy. One Spanish worker was banned from entering Gibraltar in 1907, for example, because of his 'riotous behaviour' and for being a 'dangerous person'.[15] The Gibraltar police also noted that this individual was 'fond of using the knife'. In June of the same year, another Spanish worker, Manuel Romero, was excluded for using 'foul and obscene language' towards a foreman who was attempting to clear a dockyard mole of workers (who had, presumably, not been selected for work that day).[16] Twelve months later, another man, Sanchez Rodriguez, was excluded for disseminating literature that called for workers to boycott one of the dockyard employers, Messrs. Ballistinos.[17]

The partial revival of the anarchist movement in the Campo de Gibraltar was confirmed in October 1910, when La Línea and Algeciras were the only places in the entire province of Cádiz to send delegates to a national conference of anarchists in Barcelona.[18] The conference met on 31 October and 1 November and led to the formation of the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT), a grouping of myriad anarchist bodies aiming to coordinate anarchist activities nationally.[19] A year later in September 1911, when the CNT held its first annual congress in Barcelona, several workers groups in the Campo sent representatives, including the corkmakers' and breadmakers' syndicates of Algeciras (boasting 50 and 67 members respectively), as well as the stevedores and dock-carpenters unions in the city (87 and 22 members respectively).[20] The growing number and confidence of anarchists in the region was further evidenced by two strikes, both of which straddled the Gibraltar frontier. The first, in September 1911, involved Spanish tobacco workers employed by Gibraltarian merchants.[21] The

[13] 'Anarchy in the UK('s) Most Famous Fortress', p. 17. Tornay de Cózar, 'La Línea y Gibraltar, puentes de la emigración'.
[14] Prieto Borrego, 'Las mujeres', p. 56.
[15] GNA, Exclusion Books. 1907. (Particulars illegible due to damage.)
[16] GNA, Exclusion Books. Entry against Miguel Romero. 12 June 1907
[17] GNA, Exclusion Books. Entry against Sanchez Rodriguez. 24 June 1908.
[18] Trinidad Pérez, Trabajadores gaditanos, p. 166.
[19] Ealham, *Class, Culture and Conflict*, pp. 32-33.
[20] Trinidad Pérez, Trabajadores gaditanos, p. 167.
[21] *Tierra y Libertad* (Barcelona), 10 April 1912, gives a summary of the earlier dispute.

second, in October 1911, brought out coalheavers in the commercial (as opposed to the Admiralty) portion of the Gibraltar dockyard. One Spanish newspaper claimed that the coalheavers' union boasted 750 members and further suggested that they met in a 'Centro Obrero' in La Línea; a clear parallel with the 'Círculo Obrero', which had coordinated workers groups and educational activities in the city before 1902.[22]

Certainly, there is evidence that local anarchists were once again looking far beyond individual labour disputes and towards a deeper engagement with local people's material conditions and aspirations. In December 1911, an 'Association of Instruction and Recreation' was founded in La Línea with the aim of promoting 'the broadest cultural principles of instruction and illustration, the most elevated spirit of free thinking and modern pedagogy, to all in general and in particular to the workers, with the aim of cleaning and purifying our moral, intellectual and philosophical conditions'. Evening classes and talks were available four nights each week, and subjects offered included 'art, literature, general cultural, sciences, rationalism, solidarity, philosophy, sociology and societarism'.[23] The cultural, the economic and the political were intertwined in anarchist thinking, and the founders of the La Línea association made clear that the workers 'have to convince themselves that learning and enlightenment are the primordial base of the victory obtained in every fight'.[24] Needless to say, the association received no aid or encouragement from the Spanish state or its agents but rather it relied upon volunteers, donations and occasional fundraising competitions to keep afloat.[25]

Indeed, anarchism's revival in the region should not lead us to conclude that local authorities, on either side of the frontier, were moderating their attitude or tactics towards workers' organisations. We have already noted, for example, how the Gibraltar authorities were quite prepared to exclude Spanish activists from the colony (and leave them jobless) if they were deemed to be causing trouble. In a strike of tobacco workers of September 1912, the Campo authorities had refused permission for the workers to form their own organisation. Undeterred, and mimicking anarchist organisational tactics from the years before 1902, the strike was coordinated instead through the La Línea 'Society of Professions and General Workers', an umbrella organisation for local syndicates. One local activist reporting for the national anarchist newspaper *Tierra y Libertad* (Land and Freedom) later claimed that the authorities had tried to use the September strike of tobacco workers to 'annihilate' (aniquilar) local workers' groups. In April 1912, when the tobacco workers of La Línea again came out on strike, the Campo authorities responded by banning workers' meetings, posters and publications, and declaring a proposed boycott of the goods of one Gibraltar tobacco merchant, Gueta, to be illegal.[26]

The tobacco workers' strike of April 1912 highlighted two important features of labour relations in Gibraltar and the Campo. First, and significantly, the strike, comprising mainly Spanish workers, had been called in response to the sacking of a Gibraltarian by the Gueta concern. After all, as the La Línea activist writing for *Tierra y Libertad* highlighted in his report of the dispute, the town's 'Society of Professions and General Workers… does not recognise frontiers'. Second, the strike saw some Gibraltarian workmen and their representatives keen to distance themselves from the anarchist groups across the border. Already in January of that year, several Gibraltarians had signed and published an open letter calling upon the Gibraltar tobacco merchants to meet with them 'to see if we can put an end to all the abuses and outrages that we and you see these organised workers in La Línea

[22] *El Liberal* (Madrid), 15 October 1911.
[23] *Tierra y Libertad* (Barcelona), 7 February 1912. Societarism ('societarismo' in Spanish) referred to a method of organizing workers by trade and locality, and coming together for mutual assistance.
[24] *Tierra y Libertad* (Barcelona), 7 February 1912.
[25] *Tierra y Libertad* (Barcelona), 24 June 1912.
[26] *Tierra y Libertad* (Barcelona), 10 April 1912.

committing, who, properly speaking, are not tobacco workers, but rather carpenters and construction workers, as well as those others who truly guide them…'. The La Línea tobacco workers would thus prosecute this second strike without the support of fellow workers from Gibraltar belonging to 'the socialist group'.[27] Increasing in strength and confidence, anarchists in the Campo could perhaps be forgiven for failing to see this as a dangerous precedent.

Key to understanding the solidarity that had existed between Gibraltarian and Spanish workers up to this point was a sense of shared experiences and grievances. Much of the working population of the Campo, particularly the town of La Línea, drew its living from the British colony of Gibraltar; principally in the Royal Navy and commercial dockyards and the concerns that supported both, but also through the Gibraltar tobacco industry, service sector and in domestic service for the British garrison and the Gibraltarian moneyed class. As such, Gibraltarian and Spanish workers experienced similar working conditions, laboured under the same bosses and foremen, and fell prey to the same fluctuations in the market that created jobs and saw them shed. On neither side of the frontier did the existing political structures allow much room for legitimate and legal representation of workers' interests *vis-a-vis* employers or the state. Nor could Spanish or Gibraltarian workers expect much attention to be paid to their educational and cultural aspirations. In such a context, it is perhaps understandable that anarchist ideas proved attractive to so many on both sides of the Gibraltar frontier in this period. Not only did anarchist critiques chime with the lived experiences of local workers, but the flexible tactics and direct action of anarchist groups brought immediate and tangible rewards in the years before 1902, not least of all the eight-hour day for many workers, increased pay, and recognition of workers' representatives in certain industries.[28]

Given this context, the outbreak of war in August 1914 ought to have offered both Gibraltarian and Spanish workers renewed opportunities to press their interests, and renewed impetus for cross-border solidarity. On the one hand, Gibraltar's economic potential was significantly increased in wartime, since the Rock proved crucial to Allied operations: as a coaling station, as a port with a modern and recently upgraded dockyard capable of repairing Royal and merchant navy vessels, and as the gathering point for conveys travelling across the Atlantic or, in the later war years, to Italy to supply troops there. With demand for labour plentiful, and with many local industries so crucial to the war effort, the bargaining hand of labour grew stronger. On the other hand, spiralling living costs in both Gibraltar and neighbouring Spain, coupled with spiralling profits for local merchants and business owners, offered obvious opportunities for organised labour to press their own interests. Local anarchists of course had concrete ideas about how to improve working life – the right for their organisations to be recognised by employers; the right of workers to elect their own delegates to monitor the behaviour of foremen and owners; and the limiting of the working day to eight hours, amongst others. As we have seen, they also had broader educational, cultural and recreational ideas for improving lives, while for some the ultimate goal remained revolution and the end to all forms of hierarchy. Irrespective of these positions, workers required opportunities to press these claims, and the war ostensibly offered several good reasons for local workers to agitate.

By the end of the war, as we shall see, the industrial relations scene in Gibraltar and the Campo appeared radically different, however. To be sure, the war saw several major strikes take place on both sides of the border, and in Spain workers' unrest escalated to such a degree that the period has been dubbed the 'trienio bolchevique' (Bolshevik triennium). But far from reviving the solidarity of old between Spanish and Gibraltarian workers, the First World War saw the latter moving away from

[27] The letter is republished in full in *Tierra y Libertad* (Barcelona), 10 April 1912.
[28] Grocott, Stockey, and Grady, 'Anarchy in the UK('s) Most Famous Fortress'.

anarchist tactics and organisations altogether, and embracing a very different form of labour organisation to press their interests.

The Gibraltar Local Dockyard British Workers Association

In July 1913, a new organisation was formed in Gibraltar for dockyard workers, styling itself The Gibraltar Dockyard Local British Workers Association (abbreviated here to the less cumbersome 'dockyard association'). The name itself suggests a conscious attempt to organise workers on one side of the border alone, and perhaps a deliberate attempt to prise Gibraltarian labourers away from the influence of organisations across the frontier. Nonetheless, at first glance, the association appeared to have much in common with its anarchist-inspired predecessors on the Rock. For one thing, the association housed itself in offices at 95 Main Street, the building which had also housed the Gibraltar branch of the Círculo Obrero in the 1890s and early 1900s. The president of the Association, W. J. Lewington, was a British worker who had been posted to Gibraltar by the Admiralty in October 1913, and he caused the colonial authorities some concern. Governor Miles, for example, complained almost five years later that since Lewington's arrival 'there have been constant troubles and difficulties'.[29] In April 1918, under the guise of providing afternoon teas and providing food for children, Lewington had entered into a contract with the Gibraltar Assembly Rooms to hire the main hall. However, Governor Miles suspected that these events were a cover for the association's rallies (which were not allowed during war time). Indeed, Miles reported to the Secretary of State for the Colonies that when the manager of the Assembly Rooms had discovered this pretext he had tried to withdraw the booking, only for Lewington to threaten the manager, and by proxy, therefore, the colonial authorities, with a strike in the naval and commercial dockyards.[30] Miles asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies to request that the Admiralty move Lewington to another dockyard.[31]

Despite Lewington, the dockyard association was distinctly more inclined towards accommodation with the colonial authorities than its anarchist forbearer the Círculo Obrero. They organised, for example, patriotic events on the King's Birthday and on Empire Day, events which anarchists would never have been associated with. In 1918, Manuel Sanchez took over as Secretary General of the Association (and would go on to be secretary of the Workers' Union branch in 1919). A dockyard worker since June 1916, Sanchez had previously been in the dockyard police. After leaving the force he had gone to Morocco to establish a business but the enterprise had run into financial problems, forcing Sanchez to return to Gibraltar and take up the position of store houseman in the Admiralty dockyard.[32] Sanchez pursued several initiatives to move the association's tactics and aims away from those used in previous industrial disputes; tactics that were still in use by anarchist syndicates across the frontier in La Línea.

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[29] GNA, Depatches. Secret despatch from the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. 23 January 1918.

[30] TNA/PRO, CO 91/467, Despatches. Letter from the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. 15 April 1918.

[31] Lewington's fate is not extant in either the GNA or TNA/PRO, but it can be assumed that the Admiralty did move him to another dockyard as his name is not mentioned again after April 1918. If he did remain, his name does not feature on the letter head of the Workers' Union once established in 1919, suggesting an out-of-character retreat from union organising.

[32] TNA/PRO, CO 91/470, Despatches. Letter from the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. 1 April 1918.

In January 1918, Sanchez had called two public meetings to be held on the 30 and 31 January to discuss workers' grievances. Both meetings were banned by the governor on the grounds that a large and emotionally charged rally during war time in a fortress would pose a security risk.[33] The association's response was unusually tame when judged against the standards of Gibraltar's earlier industrial relations; months later, in April 1918, a petition protesting against the limitation of freedom of expression by the colonial authorities was submitted to the Governor for transmission to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, from whom it received short shrift.[34]

Likewise, a series of other campaigns bore the hallmarks of more constitutionalist industrial relations. In April 1918, the association pressed the Governor for representation on the Food and Markets Prices Committee, which had been formed for the purposes of limiting the upper price levels of key foodstuffs from war-time inflation.[35] At the same time, two other requests were notable because their implications were limited to Gibraltar-domiciled workers – the extension of British rent restriction legislation to Gibraltar, and the fixing of the price of foodstuffs and other consumables in Gibraltar in sterling.

Requests to be part of the machinery of government hinted strongly at a departure from anarchist suspicions about the state. An even sharper indication of the ideological drift came in April 1918 when Sanchez and two other workers, Mackintosh and Federico, travelled to Britain for an 'interview [with] the Admiralty, War Office, and the Secretary of State for the Colonies on matters "relating to the general welfare of the working classes of Gibraltar"'.[36] The visit was recommended to the Secretary of State by the admiralty in Gibraltar on the grounds that it would ensure on-going good relations with the dockyard association. Whereas workers had travelled to London during the 1902 strike to raise funds and seek help from organisations sympathetic to the coalheavers' cause, the dockyard association saw negotiation with government itself over wages and terms and conditions as a more desirable tactic. If negotiations with government were a new departure in Gibraltar's industrial relations scenery, it also undermined the tactics which local syndicates had used in the past – the calling of strikes at short notice in order to prevent strike-breakers being sourced by the employers in advance of a dispute. Alongside considering the dockyard association's claims in relation to wages and conditions, the Senior Naval Officer in Gibraltar, Rear Admiral Grant, with the blessing of the Governor and Colonial Secretary, took the time to source strike breakers from Morocco and find accommodation for them should they need to be called upon.[37]

The Gibraltar dockyard, both naval and commercial, represented the largest single source of employment in Gibraltar, and by extension, represented the principal employment opportunity for thousands of Spanish workers in the Campo as well. It is no surprise, therefore, that the dockyard had long been the focal point of workers' agitation and organisation – both Gibraltarian and Spanish. The same would prove true in the years after the outbreak of the First World War, but already fault lines

[33] TNA/PRO, CO 91/467, Despatches. Letter from the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. 13 April 1918.
[34] Ibid. The petition also protested at the banning of an 'afternoon tea' earlier in April, see above for the Governor's views on these occasions.
[35] TNA/PRO, CO 91/467, Despatches. Letter from the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. 15 April 1918.
[36] TNA/PRO, CO 91/470, Despatches. Letter from the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. 1 April 1918.
[37] The term 'Colonial Secretary' refers to the head of Gibraltar's civil government (who would, in any other than the fortress colonies, normally be the governor's deputy though in Gibraltar this fell to the next highest ranking senior officer in the garrison). The term Secretary of State for the Colonies refers to the political head of the Colonial Office in London.

were opening up between workers' organisations, and the tactics they used, in Gibraltar and the Campo.

The Brewing Storm: The Gibraltar Economy and Industrial Relations in the Early War Years

Economic conditions in Gibraltar had changed dramatically following the decision of the British government to dramatically expand and re-model the naval dockyard on the Rock. Transforming and significantly expanding the local economy, creating large commercial concerns employing significant numbers of workers, had offered opportunities for local workers' groups to press their interests at a time when labour was in high demand. But one significant long-term implication of this economic development was a growing distinction between the ways that Gibraltarian and Spanish workers were paid. During the Spanish-American War of 1898, for example, the depreciation of the peseta against sterling had prompted local workers' organisations to campaign (successfully) for some workers to be paid in mixed peseta/sterling wages, or else to increase the amount paid to those workers (typically Spanish) who only received pesetas. Crucially, however, in negotiating with employers in this period, including the British colonial administration, Spanish and Gibraltarian workers had found common cause. In the decade following 1902, however, the economic pressures created by Gibraltar's growing economy fell particularly heavily upon Gibraltarian workers. The massive expansion of the dockyard from 1895-1906 had required large numbers of skilled workers to be sent from Britain. On its own, this influx of workers would have placed pressure on a severely limited housing stock and necessarily forced up rents in the colony. Moreover, since these workers were paid according to rates used in British dockyards, they were relatively much more affluent than their Gibraltarian (and Spanish) co-workers. Therefore, not only could these imported British workers afford to pay higher rents, but as one Gibraltar Government enquiry ventured in 1906, local merchants were keeping prices for consumables deliberately high, knowing that these relatively affluent British workers could afford them.[38] The result of this process was that a number of Gibraltarians were forced to live across the border in La Línea, where housing and the cost of consumables had traditionally been much cheaper.

The pressures upon housing in Gibraltar continued into the First World War, and despite the introduction of rent caps early on and for the duration of the war, the fact that demand far exceeded supply meant that rents had already increased substantially before the cap was implemented. Naturally, the war added to the cost of food, drink and other basics owing to problems of supply. Whilst the decline in the value of sterling alleviated to some extent the inflationary forces which had stoked rents and prices pre-war, nevertheless local workers, paid less than British visiting workers, were seeing 'real' wages falling quickly in wartime. This situation was further exacerbated by the decline of sterling against the peseta. Whereas the pound had at one stage bought 31 pesetas, it dipped below 25 pesetas by 1915 and continued to fall from there. Since many workers were paid either wholly or partly in sterling, as noted above, this proved calamitous for many.[39]

Conditions in neighbouring Spain were no less desperate for many workers as the war progressed. Neutral Spain was experiencing its own economic boom as a result of the war, but throughout the country wages were failing to keep up with the rising cost of living, particularly on basic consumable goods. This economic dislocation goes some way to explaining the massive influx of new members to Spain's two principal workers' organisations during the conflict – the anarchist CNT and the Socialist

[38] TNA/PRO, CO 91/433, Despatches. Letter from the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. 18 June 1906.
[39] TNA/PRO, CO 91/460. Increases of pay to Dockyard Employees. April, 1915.

Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT) – and increasing workers' agitation.[40] In this regard, the Campo was no different. Indeed, despite being a traditional hotbed of anarchism, the Campo also saw a growing interest in socialist organisations as the war continued. The Spanish socialist movement campaigned hard during the war years over the cost of living crisis, including in the Campo, and its efforts bore fruit in terms of new members. In December 1914, for example, the coalheavers' society of La Línea, which had long been organised by local anarchists, changed its affiliation (albeit temporarily) to the UGT.[41] Such was the authorities' disquiet about the rising socialist presence in the Campo, a proposed meeting in La Línea in March 1915 to discuss the cost of living crisis was banned; a measure that local anarchist groups had long experience of.[42] When the leader of the Spanish Socialist Party, Pablo Iglesias, gave an address at La Línea in October 1915, over 2000 people were in attendance, and that same month La Línea was one of only two towns in the whole of Cádiz province to send delegates to the PSOE's national congress.[43]

In short, wartime economic conditions in the Campo had prompted thousands of local workers to organise, as they had done throughout Spain. In due course, those same conditions could lead to workers' agitation. In January 1916, for example, La Línea's carpenters won a strike over pay. In June 1916, the bakers of San Roque staged a two-week strike over wages, which they lost.[44] By October, however, the sheer scale of the cost of living crisis had prompted a remarkable (and unprecedented) alliance between the CNT and the UGT in a campaign for 'work and essentials'.[45] Simultaneous public meetings were organised throughout Spain to discuss the subject, with one such event held in La Línea on 26 October. This was followed on 12 November by a mass public demonstration in the town, which managed to close all business in La Línea for the day.[46] A month later, the CNT and UGT coordinated a national general strike over the issue of 'essentials'. While turnout was patchy in Cádiz province, 'complete paralysation' was reported in La Línea, with over 600 individual union affiliates, and as many as 7500 non-affiliated workers taking part. In San Roque, where turnout was also strong and effective, the local mayor was forced to order local bakeries to reduce the price of bread. In Gibraltar, too, Spanish socialist groups reported that they had achieved 'absolute paralysation'.[47]

Prompted largely by conditions in Spain, this was nonetheless the first significant industrial unrest in Gibraltar during the war. Despite similar pressures upon Gibraltarian workers over the escalating cost of living, industrial relations had remained relatively stable on the Rock since August 1914, not least owing to the efforts of the British authorities to add war bonuses onto workers' wages, which had in turn also forced local merchants to increase their wage levels. Certainly, the dockyard association had been pacified by such measures, but doubtless they also partially explain the quiescence of Spanish-based unions as well. However, by 1917 and into the early 1920s, the cost of living in Gibraltar increased faster than the British imperial state could react by increasing wages to match. In these conditions, and with Spanish unions growing in strength and militancy with each passing day, industrial unrest was almost certain.

[40] A useful overview is F. Romero-Salvado, *Spain 1914-1918*.
[41] Trinidad Pérez, *Los trabajadores gaditanos*, p. 175.
[42] Trinidad Pérez, *Los trabajadores gaditanos*, p. 116.
[43] Trinidad Pérez, *Los trabajadores gaditanos*, p. 177.
[44] Trinidad Pérez, *Los trabajadores gaditanos*, pp. 242-250.
[45] Romero Salvado, *Spain 1914-1918*, pp. 31, 35-39.
[46] Trinidad Pérez, *Los trabajadores gaditanos*, p. 117.
[47] Trinidad Pérez, *Los trabajadores gaditanos*, p. 118-119. See also the summary report in *El Socialista* (Madrid), 22 December 1916.

Burgeoning Discontent, Industrial Action in the Dockyard 1917-18

In January 1917, the Gibraltar authorities attempted to stave off a potential strike of coalheavers in the naval dockyard by increasing wages.[48] As we have seen, this tactic had helped to avoid serious industrial unrest on the Rock since the start of the war, but this time the tactic failed. A strike was declared on 23 January in the naval dockyard and quickly spread to the commercial dockyard as well. Spanish newspapers claimed that the coalheavers' union had at least 5000 members, and some evidence of the disquiet of the local Spanish authorities can be garnered from the fact that the Military Governor of the Campo, General Luis Martí Barroso, called immediately for reinforcements of Civil Guard.[49] Martí also intervened directly to negotiate with union leaders in the Campo in the hope of ending the strike, and it is likely that he remained in close contact with the Governor of Gibraltar while he did so.[50]

The demands facing the colonial authorities in Gibraltar were not confined to wages. In a belated report of the start of the strike for the anarchist newspaper *Tierra y Libertad*, a local anarchist referred to 'the intolerable abuses committed... by the subalterns of the British Admiral in the dockyard'. But also drawing the ire of the coalheavers was the 'pack of contractor wolves formed by the businessman's federation' (by which he meant the Gibraltar Employers' Federation) on the Rock.[51] In more reserved tones, Gibraltar's governor suggested that the grievance was about how the amount of work undertaken by labourers in the dockyard was tallied.[52] Whereas the naval dockyard allowed workers to nominate representatives to count the number of men per gang and the amount of coal manipulated, the commercial dockyard firms did not, having fought the 1902 General Strike precisely to derecognise union representatives.[53] It is telling that the coalheavers' continued their strike in the commercial dockyard until 2 February, even though they had come to an arrangement with the British Admiral in charge at Gibraltar over the original dispute in the naval dockyard on 29 January.[54] Ultimately, the union failed to move the Gibraltar merchants on the demand for workers representatives in the commercial dockyard, and this would remain a source of dispute in several strikes until 1920.

Throughout the strike of January 1917, there were rumours that German agents were facilitating unrest amongst Spaniards who worked in the Gibraltar dockyard, and certainly this rumour was relayed in the Spanish press.[55] Clearly, the coalheavers' union was sensitive to the accusation, and took the time to contact several Spanish dailies to stress that the dispute was 'of a purely labour character'.[56] The strike was heavily inspired by the oratory of an activist called Antonio Toral, but the British acting vice-consul in La Línea, a Gibraltarian businessman named Joseph Patron, noted that Toral lived hand-to-mouth and was unlikely to be in receipt of funds from German agents.[57] Rather,

[48] TNA/PRO, CO 91/466, Offices and Individuals. Letter from the Admiralty to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. 29 January 1917.
[49] *ABC* (Madrid), 24 January 1917; *La Correspondencia de España* (Madrid), 24 January 1917. On the Civil Guards see *ABC* (Madrid), 26 January 1917.
[50] *ABC* (Madrid), 1 February 1917. On Martí's career, see Liria Rodríguez, 'El general Luis Martí Barroso (1849-1927)'
[51] *Tierra y Libertad* (Barcelona), 31 January 1917.
[52] TNA/PRO, CO 91 464, Despatches. Governor's Telegram to the Colonial Office. 3 February 1917.
[53] See Grocott, Stockey, & Grady, 'Anarchy in the UK(s) Most Famous Fortress', for the 1902 General Strike.
[54] *ABC* (Madrid), 29 January 1917; *Solidaridad Obrera* (Barcelona), 30 January 1917.
[55] *ABC* (Madrid), 24 January 1917; *La Correspondencia de España* (Madrid), 24 January 1917.
[56] *ABC* (Madrid), 27 January 1917; *Solidaridad Obrera* (Barcelona), 27 January 1917, 28 January 1917; *Heraldo de Madrid*, 27 January 1917; *El Día* (Madrid), 28 January 1917.
[57] TNA/PRO, CO 91/466, Offices and Individuals. Letter from the British Vice-Consul in La Línea to H. M. Consul General in Seville. The Seville Consul General was given the impression by the British Ambassador in

his motives were ideological. Toral, a painter-decorator, had moved to La Línea (earning Patron's judgement that Toral was an 'adventurer') to organise a local campaign against municipal taxation. He had expanded his remit to, as Patron put it, encouraging workers by his 'convincing and eloquent' oratory to join 'socialistic' and 'anarchistic' organisations. Certainly, on 7 January, Toral had organised a large public meeting at the Teatro Cómico in La Línea, where he had railed against the high cost of consumables. His aim, however, was almost certainly to rally local workers to support anarchist, rather than socialist, organisations and tactics. The correspondent of the anarchist newspaper *Tierra y Libertad* which carried an account of the meeting dismissed the aims of socialist organisations as simply 'knocking down one *Cacique* [boss] and building up another', and despite Patron's characterisation of Toral as a socialist it was in this anarchist spirit in which Toral spoke. Ironically, given the recent success of joint CNT-UGT campaigns, Toral warned local workers against the 'daring traps' of those who sought to break local workers' solidarity. He also called upon 'the traitors who try to divide us by spreading calumnies' to come to the meeting and expose themselves as 'false prophets'.[58]

The La Línea coalheavers called a further strike in Gibraltar from 20 June, which lasted almost three weeks. Mr. A. Watson of the British intelligence services in Gibraltar attended a rally by the coalheavers held at the Teatro del Parque in La Línea on 20 June 1917. He reported that the meeting was 'of an unprecedentedly stormy nature', and at the end of the meeting a general strike had been declared.[59] The next day, a delegation of Gibraltarian workers who lived in La Línea visited British Vice-Consul Patron and informed him that whilst they would be prepared to work, they did not dare to cross the picket line and enter Gibraltar for fear of violence. This time, Patron did suggest that strike funds were being supplied from unknown sources, a clear hint at German interference. Belying this rumour, one of the principal reasons the strike ended in failure for the coalheavers on this occasion was precisely because they lacked strike funds. The coalheavers had also been unable to persuade other local unions to join them in their 'general strike', while to some extent the Gibraltar authorities blunted the discontent of other dockyard workers in July 1917 through the introduction of further pay rises to combat the rising cost of living.[60]

For many anarchists, strikes were useful regardless of the outcome. The experience, both collective and individual, of confronting hierarchy offered a form of 'revolutionary gymnastics', as well as encouraging others that victory against oppression was possible, that is to say the 'propaganda of the deed'.[61] To judge by their reported rhetoric, this would certainly have been the motivation for men such as Toral, but many workers in both Gibraltar and the Campo sought more immediate and tangible success in order to risk the loss of wages (and possibly future employment) in pursuit of strike action. In order to rally sufficient workers to make striking effective, even the most convinced activists required causes that chimed with individuals' grievances. As such, until the end of 1917, progressively upgraded wage deals for Gibraltar's dockyard labourers weakened the ability of anarchist activists to press for industrial action. They were also very much distracted by events in

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Madrid (acting on information from the Algeciras deputy in the Cortes) that Torrall was a potential German agent because he had been reported to have been seen being profligate with money. Patron had the local pro-consul, Scanigula, follow Toral and in doing so disproved the allegation to Patron's satisfaction.

[58] *Tierra y Libertad* (Barcelona), 17 January 1917.

[59] TNA/PRO, CO 91/466, Offices and Individuals. Letter from Patron to the Governor of Gibraltar. 21 June 1917.

[60] See TNA/PRO, CO 91/466, Offices and Individuals. Letter from the Consul General in Seville to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 9 July 1917 for the official report of the end of the strike.

[61] Though strike action through syndicates represented a mild form of both concepts, in comparison to the violent tactics of some anarchists. See Ealham, *Class, Culture and Conflict*, pp. 113, 130-138.

Spain. In August 1917, the CNT and UGT had once again collaborated to call for a national general strike, but this time overtly political, with the aim of overthrowing the Spanish government, not simply over wages and the cost of living.[62] The Spanish state had declared martial law in Andalucía, where workers' activism was particularly strong, and many prominent anarchist activists were taken into custody in this period. Not only were several Campo workers' organisations thus deprived of key activists, but their attentions were subsequently diverted into securing the release of comrades.[63]

For the coalheavers, the situation was further complicated by a battle for control of the local movement. We have already noted the rise of the Gibraltar Local Dockyard British Workmens' Association since 1913, and the unease with which some Gibraltarian coalheavers had viewed the strike of June 1917. But even on the Spanish side of the border, the warnings of men such as Toral highlight the fact that many coalheavers were being persuaded of the merits of socialism rather than anarchism as the war progressed. As we have seen, in December 1914 the La Línea coalheavers' union had briefly affiliated to the UGT, and on 18 January 1918 the coalheavers' renewed this affiliation.[64] Two days earlier, a prominent anarchist named Manuel D'Lom had been arrested in La Línea by the authorities, 'a victim of constant and unjust persecution by the policemen dogs' according to *Tierra y Libertad*, who blamed the arrest on D'Lom having organised several meetings in favour of the release of political prisoners.[65] It was not until the local anarchist movement had recovered its leading activists that it would regain supremacy over Spanish dockyard workers.[66] When it did so, employers and authorities in both Gibraltar and the Campo could expect renewed agitation.

1918 Coalheavers' Strike

In April 1918, not least of all in an attempt to seize the initiative back from the Gibraltar dockyard association, the Spanish coalheavers hired an office in Cannon Lane in Gibraltar and attempted to form a joint Gibraltar-La Línea coalheavers' society. Notices were placed in local newspapers to advertise the new union, and within a month the group, styling itself 'El Progreso', had shown its ideological and tactical preferences by affiliating to the newly constituted Andalucia Federation of the anarchist movement.[67] The union now looked for an issue to mobilise behind, and almost immediately, one such opportunity presented itself. The sheer volume of coal being manipulated in Gibraltar's dockyard for supply to Royal and merchant navy shipping created an unusual shortage – due to excessive use, the wooden baskets which coalheavers used to transfer coal from stores to ships had become so damaged that they had to be replaced with esparto grass baskets imported from Italy. These baskets reduced the amount of coal that could be carried in one journey. As the coalheavers were paid in piece rates, this had a negative knock-on for earnings too. The baskets were much disliked, and not simply because they reduced the amount of coal that could be carried from store to ship. They were uncomfortable for workers to hold on their shoulders and also provided less

[62] Romero Salvado, *Spain 1914-1918*, pp. 120-134.
[63] Trinidad Pérez, *Los trabajadores gaditanos*, pp. 261-266.
[64] Trinidad Pérez, *Los trabajadores gaditanos*, p. 175.
[65] *Tierra y Libertad* (Barcelona), 16 January 1917.
[66] On the importance of activists, see Ealham, *Class, Culture & Conflict*, pp. 37-28.
[67] GNA, Special File 23, Gibraltar Coalheavers' Meeting 1918. The address of the office and the purpose of the union were placed in a local newspaper but which one is not recorded. On the affiliation see Trinidad, *Los trabajadores gaditanos*, p. 168.

protection from burning coal (coal bunkered in large quantities was liable to spontaneously combust and often workers were carrying smouldering coal to and from coal bunkers).[68]

A strike in protest at the continued use of the new baskets began on 21 August 1918, and was led by the Spanish coalheavers in La Línea. Crucially this time, Gibraltar coalheavers, including members of the dockyard association, refused to join the strike.[69] The tactics employed were familiar in terms of reflecting previous anarchist practice. In the first place, the strike was called at extremely short notice. On the morning of 21 August, the Chief of Police received a letter from Juan Moreno, the syndicate's president, requesting a meeting with the Senior Naval Officer and representatives of the commercial employers 'before 2pm as we greatly feel being obliged to declare the general strike at 4pm'.[70] The short notice made the request impossible to comply with, and this use of 'the impossible demand' was simply designed to put the blame for the start of the strike on the employers. In addition to the short notice, the syndicate's demands were broadened out. Whilst the baskets were the principal cause of the strike, a number of additional demands were made. Claims for the recognition of the Spanish coalheavers' syndicate, the right of its delegates to tally the work undertaken in the commercial mole, and the abolition of piece rates, were all added to the syndicate's goals (and as the strike progressed, a call for strike breakers to be denied work was also added).[71]

But the strike was fundamentally weakened from the very beginning. As noted above, in April 1918 the Dockyard Association had travelled to London for meetings with the British government relating to Gibraltarian workers' grievances. However, in so doing they had tipped the hand of local workers and allowed the Gibraltar authorities time to prepare for renewed industrial action, not least by sourcing strike-breakers from Morocco. Once the strike was called in August 1918, the Senior Naval Officer flatly refused to renegotiate wage levels whilst workers were on strike, and for good measure gave notice that Moroccan workers would be brought in if the labourers did not return to work on 26 August.[72]

At a rally for striking workers held on 23 August in La Línea, at which the British intelligence officer present estimated there were 1300 people, one of the strike's organisers, Lorenzo Rueda, informed the assembled pickets of the Senior Naval Officer's threat to bring in Moroccan strike breakers. The reply, 'let them bring them!'.[73] Rueda then stoked the crowd's ire by informing them that the Governor of Cádiz had issued a statement in the local press there, to the effect that that the syndicate's committee had been denounced by the workers and that poverty would surely mean that the striking workers would have to emigrate to South America. Moreno then spoke and put the crowd in good spirits when he outlined that there were strikes in Jerez, Badajoz, and forty-nine other provinces in

[68] GNA, Special File 23, Gibraltar Coalheavers' Strike 1918. The issue of the baskets was noted by the Senior Naval Officer in a telegram to the Admiralty on 21 August 1918.

[69] TNA/PRO, CO 91/468, Despatches. Letter from the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. 24 August 1918. That the Gibraltar workers were not on strike was confirmed by an investigation undertaken by the Chief of Police, see, GNA, Special Files, Coalheavers' Strike 1918. Telephone message from the Chief of Police to the Governor. 23 August 1918.

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[71] GNA, Special File 23, Gibraltar Coalheavers' Strike 1918. The issue of the baskets was noted by the Senior Naval Officer in a telegram to the Admiralty on 21 August 1918.

[72] GNA, Special File 23, Coalheavers' Strike 1918. Telegram from Acting Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. 23 August 1918; GNA, Special File 23, Coalheavers' strike 1918. Public notice issued by the Senior Naval Officer. 22 August 1918.

[73] The organisers of the rally cautioned the crowd, noting that they were 'surrounded by spies'. Such paranoia was not without good cause, the account in this paragraph comes from a report submitted to the Colonial Secretary by a British intelligence operative in the Campo. See, GNA, Special File 23, Coalheavers' strike 1918. Report of meeting of Coalheavers' society. 24 August 1918.

Spain. Strike-breakers were denounced, and the crew of a barge in the commercial dockyard, the Java, were to be sent a message to the effect '"that they have been traitors" and must not be so again'. Moreno then called for a protest on the following Sunday at the frontier, where they would 'Not allow a single Flower woman, nor Milk nor anything through that gate'.[74] If the strike were to be continued, then a blockade of the frontier combined with a general strike would be the ultimate weapon to bring the Admiralty and the commercial employers to heel.[75]

Moreno appears to have held differing views on quite how the campaign should proceed. At the meeting held on 23 August he proposed that the workers should focus on the issues of the baskets and piece rates. The crowd shouted Moreno down at this suggestion, and two other members of the syndicate's committee, Rueda and D'Lom, moved that instead the coalheavers' strike should be broadened out into a general strike of workers on both sides of the frontier. The disagreement on tactics did not bring forth grudges, however – Moreno was elected head of a general strike committee whose job it was to broaden out the industrial action (he nevertheless declined the appointment on the grounds that he did not believe it was tactically astute to press for a general strike at that time). Moreno tried once again in 24 August to limit the strike action to the coalheavers but events had gotten away from him. On 25 August, Rueda gathered together other worker's societies in La Línea and held a rally at the bull ring which attracted 5000 people.[76] With the exception of the carpenter's society, the other societies agreed to support the coalheavers' strike.

Rueda and D'Lom were clearly successful orators. The industrial action had now broadened out into a social movement, the tool of which was the general strike. According to British intelligence, Rueda, aged 32 and from Malaga, was a plate roller by trade but in 1918 was working as a coalheaver in the commercial dockyard. He was characterised as a 'well known Anarchist of revolutionary and propagandist ideas'.[77] D'Lom was slightly older, 38, and from Huelva. A photographer by trade, he too was working as a coalheaver. Apparently, he was 'continually under police supervision in Spain and is on their books as a 'provoking, insulting, and revolutionary anarchist'. Whilst the British authorities in Gibraltar tended to confuse and mix-up their left-wing ideologies, the intelligence officers seem to have captured Rueda and D'Lom's ideas fairly well.

By 26 August, numbers of pickets were good amongst Spanish workers, with only fifteen per cent estimated to have returned to work. Nevertheless, imported Moroccan workers, housed in cattle sheds at the North Front, combined with the lack of solidarity among Gibraltar workers, meant that nearly 700 men were at work.[78] By 29 August, added to this were several hundred men from the British military and twenty-five men from the local Gibraltar Volunteer Force (ironically, this detachment was commanded by Lieutenant Lionel J. Imossi, whose family owned a sizeable commercial coaling operation). Thus, in total on 26 August the dockyard could call upon 1321 men.[79] On a normal day the need for workers stood somewhere between the 2000 to 2500 men mark, but nevertheless those at

[74] Ibid.
[75] On 22 August and 23 August 1918, the Chief of Police made detailed investigations as to whether or not goods were being prevented from coming over the frontier. None was found, and it does not appear that a blockade was effectively mounted in the course of the strike. GNA, Special File 23, Coalheavers' Strike 1918. Memorandum from the Chief of Police to the Governor. 23 August 1918.
[76] GNA, Special File 23, Coalheavers' Strike 1918. Report of meeting held on 25 August 1918.
[77] These pen-sketches of Rueda and Delen come from, GNA, Special File 23, Coalheavers' Strike 1918. Report on coalheavers' meeting. Undated, but likely to be from 21 August 1918.
[78] For the housing arrangements of the Moroccan workers see, GNA, Special File 23, Coalheavers' Strike 1918. Letter from the Senior Naval Officer to the Acting Governor. 22 August 1918.
[79] GNA, Special File 23, Coalheavers Strike 1918. Memorandum from the Senior Naval Officer to the Governor. 30 August 1918.

work managed to keep the naval dockyard open and commercial coaling continued, albeit at a slower rate.

The strike lingered on and the Senior Naval Officer was soon keen to resolve the dispute, given the pressing need of the war effort. One major concession had already been granted when the dockyard association was recognised in the naval dockyard as having a right to organise and to provide tallymen. As we have seen, this had been a long-standing claim of coalheavers from both sides of the border, and dated back as far as the failed General Strike of 1902. Given this concession, the reluctant, and somewhat un-pressed, inclination of the Senior Naval Officer was to suggest that the Governor use his executive powers to force the Gibraltar Employers' Federation into recognising the Spanish coalheavers syndicate as well, in the hope that recognition would be a significant enough concession to bring the strike to an end. However, the GEF fought a crafty double game with the Admiralty. On the one hand, the GEF offered to accept union recognition if the Senior Naval Officer felt it necessary. On the other hand, Gibraltar's dockyard merchants emphasised to the Colonial Secretary and the Governor that such a move would be likely to encourage activists, whose attitude 'cannot always be said to be one of conciliation'.

Indeed, in the spirit of not being conciliatory, as the strike continued pickets were now attempting to keep non-military personnel from working in the dockyard through drastic action. Threats to Spanish workers who did go to work necessitated that they be temporarily housed in Gibraltar during the course of the strike. Eventually, Rueda was arrested for his part in these acts of intimidation and naturally a demand for his release was added to the coalheavers' grievances. Also in-keeping with traditional anarchist tactics, the Spanish syndicate encouraged the families of those on strike to steal in order to feed their families. But local women needed little male encouragement to act in defence of their interests. Already, in May of that year, around a thousand women had gathered at the La Línea market in protest that certain traders were refusing to accept foreign currency. Since many of their husbands working in Gibraltar were paid partly in sterling, this was yet another burden to add to the existing cost-of-living crisis in the town. Many women took to throwing rocks at the market stallholders, including that of Señor Pérez, who called immediately for the Civil Guard to disperse them.[80] Collectively, such acts put enough doubt in the mind of the Senior Naval Officer in Gibraltar about recognition of Spanish syndicates. He continued to dither on the matter in to September.

At the end of August, a bizarre episode threatened to bring the strike to an abrupt holt. Whereas the idea that German agents were active in stirring up discontent in the dockyard had previously been speculation, on the morning of 27 August, two Spanish men acting as German agents visited a syndicate in Algeciras hoping to make contact with the coalheavers in La Línea to bribe them into maintaining the strike for as long as possible. On the evening of 28 August, to a packed crowd at the Parque de la Victoria in La Línea, members of the coalheavers' committee outlined what had transpired as part of this 'criminal deed'.[81] When the German operatives appeared at the offices in Algeciras, the committee there sent two men to La Línea to warn them about the plot. The Algeciras committee then sent a further two representatives to meet with the agent's handler at a house in the Saccone's Garden area of La Línea, and gain whatever information they could in order to expose the

[80] *La Acción* (Madrid), 3 May 1918.

[81] The account given in this, and subsequent, paragraph is taken from two sources. The first is a report of Rueda's speech, published by the Union whilst the second is a report from the Acting Vice-Consul in La Línea to the Governor of Gibraltar. See GNA, Special File 23, Coal Strike: Statement by the Strike Committee, Public Statement issued by the Coalheavers' Syndicate. Undated, but filed by the Chief of Police on 5 September 1918; and, GNA, Special File 23, Coal Strike: Statement by the Strike Committee, Letter from the Acting Consul in La Línea to the Governor, 31 August 1918.

plot. It transpired that the agent's handler was a Spaniard working in the arsenal of the Gibraltar dockyard. Reflecting upon the experience, one of the committee asked, rhetorically, of the admiralty in Gibraltar how they had allowed 'a workman, or better said, a snake, to…draw a salary as a workman in the arsenal being at the services of Germany?'. (A question which the Senior Naval Officer no doubt asked himself once he received a report of the meeting from the British consul in La Línea.) The coalheavers' committee speculated that either the Admiralty had allowed itself to be undermined by a serious security risk, or else might well have charged this man with attempting to frame the workers as being in the pay of Germany. On this point, the committee was clear – 'the workmen reject money which has not been earned by their labour, whether it comes from England or from Germany'. And then, dramatically, one of the committee pointed out in to the crowd at one of the two agents who had originally visited the Algeciras union. Local police swooped in to arrest the man (though whether this was to punish, or to cover-up, the conspiracy can only be speculated at).[82]

Denouncing the attempt to subvert the principles that underpinned the strike was essential, not only because those principles were deeply held by the organisers, but also because they were the basis of the support that people in La Línea, and elsewhere in the Campo, were offering the coalheavers. The committee underscored that the syndicate's statement was not an act of taking sides, states of whatever type or nationality being anathema to anarchist thinking. As the committee's statement put it, this was not 'a sentiment of animosity or sympathy towards any groups of belligerents [which] induces us to give an account of this unworthy deed, it is only our love of…the proletariat that imposes this duty on us'. And, to be clear on the matter, 'whoever believes after…this statement that we are not faithfully prosecuting our ideal of emancipation of the working classes, freeing them from a degrading and ominous guardianship is a miserable blackguard'.

With the drama regarding the German agents at an end, at the close of August the strike was reasonably solid with around 230 men (about a quarter of the usual total) being employed in the commercial dockyard. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that the Admiralty dockyard was at work, and that soldiers, the Gibraltar Volunteer Force, imported Moorish labour, and – after 29 August – volunteers seconded to the Admiralty from government jobs where these jobs could be temporarily filled by women, were still at work.[83] Moreover, this number began to increase as September opened. On 4 September, nearly 300 workers were employed, slightly fewer on 5 September – 274 – though there were none on 7 September, when a threatening letter was sent to the Spanish foremen by the coalheavers syndicate. Nevertheless, with safeguards in place, recruiting at the docks recommenced on 8 and 9 September, employing 283 and 271 men on those dates respectively.[84] In other words, there were just enough men to keep the Admiralty and commercial dockyards open, even if they were not working at capacity.

After eighteen days, on 9 September, the strike came to an end and the men undertook to return to work the following day to facilitate negotiations over terms and conditions with the Admiralty and the employer's federation.[85] The syndicate's lack of strike funds played a role. In addition, the time of

[82] The Vice Consul at La Línea noted that no charges were brought, despite overwhelming evidence – not the least of all Rueda's statement – which hints at the idea that the Spanish authorities had reason to allow the men to go free.

[83] An appeal for volunteers was put in the local press on 29 August 1918. See, GNA, Special File 23, Coalheavers' Strike 1918. Letter from the Senior Naval Officer to the Acting Governor. 28 August 1918.

[84] GNA, Special File 23, Coal Strike: Statement by the Strike Committee. Memorandums of the GEF to the Colonial Secretary. 2-9 September 1918.

[85] GNA, Special File 23, Coal Strike: Statement by the Strike Committee. Telegram from the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. 9 September 1918; GNA, Special File 23, Coal Strike: Statement by the Strike Committee. Letter from the Coalheavers' syndicate to the Governor. 9 September 1918.

year was significant – as the nights drew-in the amount of coaling that could be undertaken was reduced due to lack of natural light by which to work. Workers needed to earn extra money in the summer months, therefore, and the on-going strike ran the risk of becoming an act of self-harm. Perhaps more importantly, the Admiralty also showed willingness to negotiate on the issue of pay and terms and conditions. The esparto grass baskets had been retired during the course of the strike and replaced with sturdier wooden ones. Even more promising, the Senior Naval Officer made it clear that he was prepared to direct the commercial firms to recognise the coalheavers' syndicate.

For the Senior Naval Officer, the main concern was ensuring that the coalheavers returned to work and, indeed, stayed in work whilst the war effort continued. He therefore forced the Gibraltar employers to concede a number of points. For those workers in the commercial dockyard, if esparto baskets needed to be used they would be granted a war bonus of 50 centimos (increased from 30 centimos) per ton. In terms of tallying the work, whilst union officials were not given the right to enter the commercial dockyard to tally the work done, workers would be allowed to elect one of their own number from each work gang to monitor the tallying of the work. The amounts recorded were then to be displayed publicly at the employer's federation's offices. Finally, Grant undertook to ensure that there were no reprisals on those workers involved in the strike.

Where Grant struggled was on the subject of employer recognition of the La Línea union. On this, the GEF consistently pushed back against the proposal for recognition. Attempting to by-pass Grant, the GEF wrote to the Colonial Secretary in no uncertain terms:

> The organisations which are formed in Línea from time to time are not Trade Unions or at all similar to Labour Associations in the United Kingdom but are political and at times revolutionary societies entirely in the hands of anarchists under the control or direction of unknown Directors at Barcelona and other places and of late mostly under enemy influence.[86]

Providing the Colonial Secretary with a history lesson, the GEF pointed out that in the twelve years before 1902, when they had recognised the coalheavers' syndicate, 'strikes were frequent and absurd demands were continually put forward…stoppages of work on particular jobs were of almost daily occurrence on the most trivial pretexts'.[87] The GEF also tried to make an attempt to portray recognition of the syndicate as being an infringement of civil liberties as, they argued, recognition would compel all the dockyard workers to join the syndicate. Worse still, a large membership could lead to the building-up of a strike fund, which would allow for more prolonged industrial action. But Grant's resolve on recognition had hardened and he remained unmoved. In the first instance, he had been forced to abandon contracted-in services from the commercial firms in the Admiralty dockyard due to 'irregularities' in the work provided.[88] To this end, he no doubt thought that the coalheavers might well be within their rights to demand that their work and pay be overseen by the syndicate's officials. And second, concerned about a further strike should the syndicate not be recognised, Grant made it clear to the employer's federation that he would, effectively, nationalise the commercial dockyard if they were not prepared to recognise the syndicate. Finally, faced with expropriation, the GEF relented.

[86] GNA, Special File 23, Coalheavers' Strike 1918. Letter from the GEF to the Colonial Secretary. 11 September 1918.
[87] Ibid.
[88] TNA/PRO, CO 91/468, Despatches. Memorandum on coaling in Gibraltar by the Senior Naval Officer.

The Trade Union Ordinance (1920)

In extremely difficult circumstances, the coalheavers had achieved some impressive concessions. These came despite the authorities' advanced warning of industrial action to come, despite the extensive use of strike-breakers, and despite the refusal of hundreds of Gibraltarian workers, principally organised through the dockyard association, to join the strike. If anything, anarchist agitation in the Campo would only escalate further in the years to come. But the refusal of so many Gibraltarian coalheavers to join with their Spanish co-workers was a further sign that divisions were emerging between workers on either side of the border.

In military terms, this division was summed up starkly in a 'Scheme for Dealing with Disturbances in Gibraltar' submitted by Governor Smith-Dorrien to the Secretary of State to the Colonies in March 1919. Dividing the local population into two distinct categories, the Governor outlined his belief that 'the inhabitants of Gibraltar are very peaceable and law-abiding. Experience also shews that they are timid and easily overawed'.[89] Smith-Dorrien did not think it likely that Gibraltarians would combine with the Spanish workers who came across the frontier daily, thus allowing the scheme to focus solely on the times of day frontier in which Spanish workers were likely to be in Gibraltar. In large part, this assessment proceeded from an understanding of the different organisational and ideological positions that workers on either side of the frontier were taking in the final years of the war and its immediate aftermath. These differences suggested to Smith-Dorrien and his Colonial Secretary, Major Charles Orr, that it might be possible, through trade union legislation, to detach still more workers from Spanish anarchist syndicates. If successful, such legislation would not prevent disruption during a strike but it might weaken the ability of Spanish workers to bring the dockyard's work to a halt during strike action, by keeping at work most of the skilled workers and a limited number of unskilled workers (whose number, in an emergency, could be supplemented by members of the garrison).

Smith-Dorrien was no doubt to some degree moved to act by a noticeable increase in labour agitation on the Spanish side of the frontier. A major port workers' strike in Algeciras in February 1919 was quickly followed by a general strike in the city at the end of March, after the Military Governor of the Campo had ordered the arrest of several prominent anarchists on 27 February. So successful was the general strike in paralysing operations in the city that the President of the Algeciras Chamber of Commerce wrote to Madrid to urge the government to order the Governor to release the prisoners. The Algeciras municipal council petitioned the Civil Governor of Cádiz in a similar vein, and the strike was ended on the 29 February when the Governor ordered the prisoner's release.[90]

At the very moment that Smith-Dorrien was sending his scheme to London in March 1919, the La Línea coalheavers were staging their own walkout in Gibraltar. This was followed in August by another major strike of coalheavers over wages, a strike of Spanish tobacco workers in Gibraltar in September, and a prolonged strike of coalheavers from 27 October until 24 November.[91] The Rock's Chamber of Commerce was keen to point out that securing the operation of the dockyard was not merely a question of defence and naval operations, but crucial to the colony's economy as well. In a letter to Gibraltar's Colonial Secretary in November, the Chamber cunningly drew links between

[89] TNA/PRO, CO 91/470, Despatches. 'Scheme for Dealing with Disturbances in Gibraltar'. 6 March 1919. This may have been either a modest underestimation of Gibraltarian's willingness to use violence during industrial action – troops had been used to put down disturbances during strikes in the 1890s and the 1902 General Strike – or it may have been a comment on the immediate past.
[90] Trinidad Pérez, *Los trabajadores gaditanos*, pp. 272-273.
[91] Trinidad Pérez, *Los trabajadores gaditanos*, pp. 242-250.

labour disputes on both side of the frontier 'which unhappily have been so frequent of late', and conceded that they now felt obliged to raise the possibility of limiting labour organisation on the Rock. Whilst normally, labour matters were 'left for settlement in the capable hands of the Committee of the Gibraltar Employers' Federation…the strike of coalheavers still pending has caused a wholesale dislocation of all the leading interests of the port'.[92] The position of the Chamber of Commerce was that: no labour organisation which was headquartered outside of Gibraltar should be recognised on the Rock; those who wished to work in Gibraltar should be registered with the police for that purpose and provided with a token that must be produced before work would be issued; that any worker found to have refused a 'reasonable' offer of work or else guilty of misconduct should have their token removed; and that an arbitration court should be established to oversee disputes and rule in favour of one side or the other.[93]

Smith-Dorrien was thus faced with the prospect of a resurgent anarchist movement in the Campo; the potential to weaken that movement by detaching a large number of workers from it; and a unified mercantile community in Gibraltar, which was concerned about its ability to carry out its trade without legislative support. He and Orr tasked Gibraltar's attorney general, Maxwell H. Anderson, who was also a naval captain, to draw up draft legislation for a Trade Union Ordinance (an ordinance being Gibraltar's equivalent of a government act).

Framing the legislation as being necessary to protect personal liberty, Anderson's starting point was that there were in Gibraltar and the Campo a number of British subjects who 'are compelled to follow the dictates of a Spanish Union in La Línea'.[94] He framed the ordinance in such a way that only Gibraltar-born workers or Spanish workers who were allowed into Gibraltar by the police for the purposes of work would be allowed to join unions recognised on the Rock. The hope being that within Gibraltar's industrial relations scene there would be, alongside Gibraltarians, only the 'best type of Spanish workmen', which would 'render it strong enough to defeat the machinations of the alien union in La Línea'.[95] He then constructed clauses enforcing compulsory registration for unions and enforcing the right of the government to seize union assets in the case of illegal conduct. In a second part to the ordinance, Anderson provided for an industrial court with powers to summon employers, union representatives and witnesses in order for a panel of three, a representative of the employers and of the unions alongside 'an independent person', to adjudge on disputes which the governor put before it. The industrial court's decisions would be binding. Interestingly, given the way in which the ordinance was framed, refusal to comply on the part of the employers would only have attracted a fine whereas refusal to comply on the part of the union would have led to seizure of assets and the union being declared unlawful.

The trade union ordinance was not designed to be a progressive piece of legislation, it was fundamentally about altering the types of activities which organised labour undertook from violent and revolutionary strike action to constitutionalist negotiations over issues of pay and terms and conditions. However, from the perspective of the Colonial Office and the War Office, introducing legislation that would recognise the right to establish trade unions, in a fortress colony where no such right existed, was concerning. Moreover, Smith-Dorrien had introduced a number of other proposals – a city council with (some) members elected by popular franchise, the extension of the Workmen's Compensation Act to Gibraltar, and the introduction of compulsory schooling, which all had a popular

[92] TNA/PRO, CO 91/471, Despatches. Letter of H. J. King to the Colonial Secretary. 7 November 1919.
[93] Ibid.
[94] This source material for this paragraph is contained in TNA/PRO, CO 91/471, Despatches. Draft Trade Union Ordinance 1920. 15 December 1919.
[95] Ibid.

feel to them. A trade union ordinance appeared in that context a step too far. To this end, both the Colonial and War Offices used their best weapon against disliked legislation – they stalled; or, as one official at the Colonial Office put it, 'This is a very important bill and we ought to be cautious over it'.

The Colonial Office requested that the Gibraltar Attorney General draft a guide to the ordinance, outlining paragraph by paragraph which precedents he had drawn upon to frame the legislation (the ordinance was a conglomeration of legislation from Britain, principally the 1871 Trade Union Act, and from parts of trade union legislation from New South Wales, Queensland, Newfoundland, and Victoria). They then questioned the fact that the proposed ordinance had not been seen by representatives of local businesses or by, bizarrely, given that they were not legally recognised (and this being the very purpose of the ordinance), trade unions in Gibraltar. There was further back-and-forth between the Colonial Office and the Governor throughout the year and then a hiatus; the War Office had conveniently lost the file relating to the ordinance and so had not supplied the Colonial Office with crucial information required before the measure could be approved. The War Office requested a copy of the file, and an official at the Colonial Office noted in February 1921, 'It's no use hurrying. ? [sic] Wait another month'.

With prices still rising in both Gibraltar and the Campo throughout 1919 and 1920, the threat of industrial action in the region was never far away. That this might lead to violent and revolutionary action, including in Gibraltar, was something that very much concerned the Rock's attorney general. In one note defending the framing of the proposed ordinance, which included the right of the government to seize a union's assets, Anderson stated his opinion that the 'non-protection of funds of a union is the only efficient deterrent against combined action with the Spanish anarchical and bolchevik [sic] unions'[96]. He might have pointed to several further strikes in the Campo during 1919 as evidence of revolutionary feeling in the air. The Algeciras port workers were again on strike for nearly two months from early November 1919, for example. They were joined briefly by the city's bakers from 29 November until 1 December. Meanwhile, La Línea's confectioners won an eight-hour day after a strike in November.[97] Strikes were not the only sign of increased working-class agitation. In July of that year, the leader of the socialist UGT, Francisco Largo Caballero, had addressed a meeting of 7000 in La Línea.[98] On 26 October, the anarchist carpenters' union in La Línea called a mass meeting at the town's bullring in order to declare a rent strike unless landlords reduced rents 'to just and normal rates that prevailed before the world war' and until 'hygiene facilities and comforts' were improved to standards 'demanded by virtue of humanity and conscience'. To push the campaign, the anarchists created a 'Defence Committee against the Outrages of the Landlords'.[99]

Despite the perceived necessity of a trade union ordinance in Gibraltar in order to create a legislative framework in which Spanish syndicalist unions could be excluded from organising in the colony, the ordinance did not materialise. As we shall now see, the unexpected arrival of the Worker's Union in Gibraltar totally changed the industrial relations landscape on the Rock, much to the satisfaction of both the colonial authorities and employers and negating the need for legislation.

Matt Giles Arrives in Gibraltar

[96] TNA/PRO, CO 91/474. Trade Union Ordinance: Memorandum by the Attorney General. 3 May 1920.
[97] Trinidad Pérez, *Los trabajadores gaditanos*, pp. 242-250.
[98] Trinidad Pérez, *Los trabajadores gaditanos*, p. 180. The original report of the meeting is in *El Socialista* (Madrid), 13 July 1919.
[99] Trinidad Pérez, *Los trabajadores gaditanos*, p. 110. See also *El Socialista* (Madrid), 4 November 1919.

The arrival of the Workers' Union in Gibraltar came about abruptly in September 1919, but its achievements in recruiting members and, ultimately, becoming the Rock's strongest (and, today, oldest) trade union built on some of the developments of the final years of the war and on the union's strategies in organising. The Workers' Union was a good fit for Gibraltar's workers. It had organised unskilled labourers in British Admiralty dockyards throughout the war and Gibraltar's Admiralty dockyard remained one of the most strategically important in the empire. The Worker's Union was also used to organising large unskilled workforces who had little money to draw upon, but nonetheless gathered together strike funds and used these judiciously to support strike action. Since even skilled workers in Gibraltar were relatively low paid – in comparison to Britain – and since the lack of union subscriptions to pay for a strike fund (and bureaucracy) had always been a major attraction, and potential weakness, of anarchist organisations, the experience of the Workers' Union in organising low-paid workers was crucial to its success on the Rock.

Giles arrived in Gibraltar at a moment when the existing local alternative to Spanish unions, the dockyard association, was already gaining ground and was moving to organise other trades. Moreover, as noted above, the dockyard association was already demonstrating an increasingly constitutionalist tone in its interactions with employers and the colonial authorities. They had not participated in the 1918 coalheavers' strike, and on principle the association rejected the tactic of the 'impossible demand', preferring instead to negotiate with employers and the colonial authorities over grievances. The Association could also point to a good record, during the war, of securing pay increases and war bonuses for organised workers. For salaried workers, for example, a 20% bonus on salaries under £150 per annum was granted in June 1917; a 10% bonus on the first £300 for those salaried at over £300 per annum; and a bonus of 60% on salaries up to £150 per annum, 50% on salaries over £150 but under £200, on so on progressively, in October 1919. For waged workers, day rates were doubled in May 1918.[100] Constitutionalist and gradualist tactics marked a radical departure from earlier anarchist-inspired union activity for Gibraltarian workers, but doubtless the argument of men such as Manuel Sanchez would be that such tactics were working.

Significant too for the Workers' Union's swift rise in the colony was that the governor of the time, Smith-Dorrien, was personally committed to widespread reforms. We have already noted Smith-Dorrien's support for trade union legislation, even in the face of a hostile government bureaucracy in Whitehall. By 1920, the Governor had even become sympathetic to worker's calls for pay increases to match the rising cost of living. Following a petition presented by Workers' Union representatives in 1920, for example, a pay increase offered by the Admiralty was described by Smith-Dorrien as 'so ungenerous as merely to aggravate the situation' and a revised higher sum was offered.[101] The reforms extended beyond the workplace into cultural and educational provision. For example, Smith-Dorrien ordered that some of the land reserved for the services be handed to the civilian population for sporting activities.[102] More striking still, under Smith-Dorrien's governorship, education was extended and made compulsory for children in Gibraltar (only a decade before, one of Smith-Dorrien's predecessors, Archibald Hunter, had attempted to enact the same policy but was prevented

[100] War bonuses were the preferred way to account for the rise in the cost of living, rather than increasing basic pay which might then have to be reduced after the end of the war if prices returned to pre-war levels. TNA/PRO, CO 91/475, Despatches. Report on salaries in Gibraltar by JWF Flood. 25 October 1920.
[101] TNA/PRO, CO 91/473, Despatches. Telegram from Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. 27 January 1920.
[102] GNA Year Files, MP C/16/1923. Smith-Dorrien to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 11 May 1923. See also Smith-Dorrien, *Memories*, ch. 12. On the importance of recreational facilities for Gibraltarian identity, see Stockey, 'Sport and Gibraltar'.

by vocal objections directed to the Colonial Office by local merchants).[103] One of the attractions of anarchism across the border had long been its willingness and ability to provide educational, welfare and cultural services where the state was largely absent.[104] The state's willingness after the First World War to intervene decisively in such matters in Gibraltar thus worked to reduce anarchism's appeal. But above all, as we will see below, it was the opening up of political space for the representation of working-class concerns in Gibraltar that proved decisive to the early success of the Workers' Union. In Spain, including the Campo, anarchism thrived in a context where a nominally democratic system had no means of, nor interest in, representing working-class concerns. There, anarchism's lessons of solidarity, mutual assistance and direct action made sense to many outside of the system.[105] In Gibraltar, for the first time, Smith-Dorrien would raise the prospect of inviting working-class representatives *inside* the system.

If conditions were made favourable for the Workers' Union by Smith-Dorrien's governorship, they were also helped by the man sent to build the organisation in Gibraltar. Matt Giles had been a regional organiser in the UK with responsibility for organising in the South-West of England, but he had struggled to make headway against the Dockers' Union.[106] This may well explain the Workers' Union's move to organise dockyard workers outside of Britain and why Giles was available to undertake work overseas.[107] Starting with Gibraltar in 1919, Giles attempted to extend the influence of the Workers' Union throughout the Mediterranean and spent time in 1920 organising in Port Said, Malta and even Tangiers. But it was in Gibraltar that Giles and the Workers' Union met with most success.

Giles arrived amidst the coalheavers' strike of October 1919. Called at short notice by the La Línea coalheavers' syndicate, the strike was in protest of the treatment of a worker by a foreman, who had lost his temper with a Spanish coalheaver and struck him. With the help of the coalheavers' syndicate, charges were brought before the Police Magistrate and the foreman was fined £1. Emboldened, the syndicate demanded that the foreman be boycotted for two weeks and also fined the sum of 300 pesetas by the GEF. When the GEF refused, a strike, which subsequently became a lock-out, began. But, unable to sustain strike action for long, the syndicate's members had to return to work within a few days. As the Colonial Secretary put it, 'the deadlock, in fact, ended in a complete victory for the employers'. Having seen the coalheavers' syndicate in action, Giles called a meeting of the newly formed Workers' Union branch and made it clear to all assembled that from now on workers in Gibraltar were to disassociate themselves from the syndicates across the frontier. Displaying also the confusion and muddle of ideologies that colonial officials had routinely observed for some time, Giles simultaneously declared the syndicates were 'syndicalist, bolshevist, and anarchist'. Quoting from a report of the meeting, the Colonial Secretary outlined Giles's line of argument:

> The bedrock principle of the Workers' Union was, he declared, to abide faithfully by any agreement made by them: the Spanish Unions on the other hand proclaimed openly, he said, that they had no intention of abiding by any of their agreements one moment longer than suited their convenience, and with such a policy he would have nothing to do. His policy, therefore, was to induce all members of the labouring class to join the Workers' Union, but not to co-operate with the anarchist Unions over the border.

[103] See, Grocott, 'A Fine Soldier but a Maligned Governor'.
[104] Ealham, *Class, Culture & Conflict*, pp. 41-43.
[105] Ealham, *Class, Culture & Conflict*, pp. 31-48
[106] Hyman, *Workers' Union*, 111.
[107] Ibid., 112.

By March 1920, Orr described the relationship between the organised Gibraltar workers and the syndicates in La Línea to be one where the two were 'at loggerheads'. And in this spirit, a coalheavers' strike in late March 1920 was easily broken by 5 April using Gibraltarian workers and by housing willing Spanish workers on the North Front temporarily.

Reflecting this new circumstance, the colonial authorities moved ahead with bringing the Workers' Union within the limited structures of power on the Rock. The union was consulted about draft legislation, including the extension of the Workmen's Compensation Act to Gibraltar (ultimately they agreed with the government that the act would only displace 'generous' schemes already on offer from the Admiralty and Gibraltar's employers). Later, in 1921 the union ran for office in the elections of the newly inaugurated City Council, winning three of the four seats open for election, and – remarkably – supporting the fourth elected candidate, one of the Rock's employers, James Andrews-Speed. It was even anticipated by Smith-Dorrien that a new Executive Council, inaugurated in 1922, would always contain a Workers' Union representative as one of its nominated officials (subsequent governors felt differently and this did not transpire). But crucially, in April 1920 the Workers' Union successfully pushed both civilian employers and the Admiralty in their respective dockyards to allow their representatives access to the docks to monitor the work of all their members there.[108] Having recognised the Workers' Union in early April, on 23 April the Gibraltar Employers' Association annulled its recognition of the coalheavers' syndicate in La Línea and explicitly recognised only the Workers' Union. For its part, the Admiralty did not have to act. In the absence of any trade union ordinance there was no legal body in La Línea to recognise, nor on the Rock for that matter. But, as a modus operandi, it was the Workers' Union whose representatives were called upon in future to represent Admiralty dockyard workers.

Conclusions

Within a remarkably short time, the Workers' Union, and its subscription to British style trade unionism, had effectively displaced Spanish workers' organisations on the Rock, certainly in regards to Gibraltarian labourers, and had monopolised the roles of representative and negotiator for all workers in both the naval and commercial dockyards, that is to say the colony's principal employers. Anarchism, and anarchist ideas, did not end in Gibraltar in 1919, but they would never again serve as the inspiration for industrial and political campaigns on the Rock, much to the delight of both Gibraltarian employers and the British colonial authorities.

On the Spanish side of the border in the Campo, anarchist groups and activists were fighting their own battles, which severely curtailed the ability of the La Línea coalheavers to push back against the Workers' Union in Gibraltar. For one thing, anarchists in the Campo faced their own challenge for workers' minds from a more legalist and gradualist approach – favouring conquest of the structures of the state on behalf of the working classes – in the form of the Spanish socialist party and its union arm the UGT. On 22 January 1921, for example, one major workers' federation in La Línea took its 8 sections and 493 members into affiliation with the UGT.[109] Meanwhile, the Spanish authorities in the Campo began a much more aggressive campaign of repression against anarchists in the new decade. In February 1921, against a backdrop of increasing 'red and white' violence in Cádiz province between anarchists, employers and state officials, the Military Governor of Algeciras, General José

[108] GNA, Special File 23. Representation of Workers' Union Officials. See letter of 6 April 1920; minute of 1 April.
[109] Trinidad Pérez, *Los trabajadores gaditanos*, p. 395.

Villalba Riquelme, ordered the closure of several anarchist syndicates in La Línea and Algeciras, arresting and imprisoning several known activists. By July, the curtailment of the activities of organised labour even extended to socialist groups in the Campo, who were not as accustomed as the anarchists to such extreme measures from the Spanish state.[110]

Anarchism's battle for survival in the Campo made it easier for the Workers' Union in Gibraltar, but as we have seen, the origins of a split between Gibraltarian and Spanish workers went back much further. To be sure, differences over tactics and whether to observe strike action had occasionally punctured cross-border solidarity in previous years, but the creation of a distinctive Gibraltar dockyard association in 1913 marked an important moment in the divergence of Gibraltarian and Spanish workers. The circumstances occasioned by the First World War – above all the rising cost of housing and basic consumable goods – affected workers on both sides of the border. While the Gibraltar authorities could use bonuses to raise nominal wages, helping to stave off industrial unrest, yet the constant fluctuation of prices meant that real wages decline from time-to-time. From 1917, as nominal wages increases struggled more than usual to prevent declining real wages, the colony played host to several bitter strikes, which mirrored the increasing workers' agitation in neighbouring Spain and drew inspiration once again in aims and tactics from anarchist groups. This was, on the face of it, a familiar story for Gibraltar's employers and colonial authorities.

What explains the decisive split between Gibraltarian and Spanish workers in the years after the First World War is a coincidence of presences and absences. The presence of a reforming governor coincided with the presence of an able organiser, and both were determined to break the hold of Spanish anarchist unions (and ideas) over Gibraltarian workers. Crucially, Smith-Dorrien's reforms removed one of the major attractions of anarchism for ordinary Gibraltarians. The state was now intervening actively for the first time to provide educational, cultural and recreational services for the civilian population of the colony. The state was seeking ways of legislating and facilitating trade union activity (even if this legislation was later abandoned). Finally, the state was opening up political space for ordinary Gibraltarians through a partially elected City Council, the prospect of working-class involvement in an Executive Council, and the expectation of consultation in numerous other economic, societal and workplace legislation. In other words, Giles' calls to adopt a more legalist, constitutionalist and gradualist approach to engaging with the existing hierarchy, came at a time when those avenues were finally opened to working-class Gibraltarians for the first time.

Such avenues remained closed for Spanish workers for some time. This helps to explain anarchism's resilience in Spain, and indeed the Campo de Gibraltar, even in the face of persistent state repression of activities and activists in the early 1920s, and later, after September 1923, in the face of formal prohibition and persecution of the CNT under the military dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera.[111] For their part, the Spanish socialist movement was welcomed within the formal state structures of the Primo dictatorship, but workers in the Campo would see little economic benefit from the regime's policies.[112] Anarchism remained strong in the region, even if it could no longer count on its former base of support amongst workers in Gibraltar. Lacking Gibraltarian comrades in the ranks did not stop the CNT holding a mass rally in La Línea in July 1922, nor calling a strike of Spanish coalheavers in Gibraltar, which lasted into August. A principal, but now futile, demand was that

[110] Trinidad Pérez, *Los trabajadores gaditanos*, pp. 389, 392, 396. See also *El Socialista* (Madrid), 14 February 1921.
[111] Ealham, *Class, Culture & Conflict*, pp. 31-48.
[112] Stockey, *Gibraltar*, ch. 2.

Gibraltarian employers recognise Spanish anarchist union representatives in the Gibraltar dockyards.[113]

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