

# Emilio Kosterlitzky

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**Emilio Kosterlitzky**, also known as **Emil Kosterlitzky**, (1853–1928) was a Russian-born polyglot linguist and soldier of fortune who eventually became a spy for the United States.

Emil Kosterlitzky was born on November 16, 1853 in Moscow, to a German mother and Russian Cossack father. He was noted for his language ability; he spoke English, French, Spanish, German, Russian, Italian, Polish, Danish and Swedish.

In his teens, Emil joined the Russian Navy as a midshipman. By 1871, at the age of 18, he deserted his ship in Venezuela. Kosterlitzky then traveled to the Mexican state of Sonora, where he changed his name to *Emilio* and joined the Mexican Army. During the 1880s he fought in the Apache Wars on the side of Mexico. He also assisted American troops pursuing Apaches across the border under the 1882 United States–Mexico reciprocal border crossing treaty. Kosterlitzky became known to the American troops, who called him the "*Mexican Cossack*". In 1885, Kosterlitzky became a member of the *Gendarmería Fiscal*, the customs guard for the Mexican government.

In 1913, Kosterlitzky was captured in Nogales, Sonora, by revolutionaries during the Mexican Revolution. He was jailed until 1914, when he, his wife, Francesca, and two daughters moved to Los Angeles, California, in the United States, where he became a translator for the U.S. Postal Service. During World War I, he pretended to be a German physician. He returned to Mexico in 1927, to investigate a plot against the government of the state of Baja California.

Kosterlitzky died in Los Angeles in 1928 and is buried in Calvary Cemetery in East Los Angeles.

## References

- Samuel Truett, "Transnational Warrior: Emilio Kosterlitzky and the Transformation of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands", in *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History*, ed. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004, p.241-70.
- Cornelius Smith, *Emilio Kosterlitzky, Eagle of Sonora* (<http://www.eximiousbooks.com/cgi-bin/exb455/000371.html>) (1970)

## External links

- FBI General Estrada (<http://www.fbi.gov/page2/aug03/estrada081503.htm>)
- *The Situation in Mexico* (<http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/comment/huachuca/HI1-08.htm>)
- Emil Kosterlitzky, the Mailed Fist of Diaz ([http://www.tdasys.com/the\\_bengal\\_club/tbc\\_kosterlitzky.asp](http://www.tdasys.com/the_bengal_club/tbc_kosterlitzky.asp))

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