

A METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE SPANISH REPUBLICAN EXILE RETURN UNA APROXIMACIÓN METODOLÓGICA AL RETORNO DE EXILIADOS REPUBLICANOS ESPAÑOLES

Resumen

Este artículo examina las estrategias que los republicanos exiliados de la primera generación seleccionaron para repatriarse a España. Reúne los tipos de retornos que tuvieron lugar entre 1939 y 2010, analizando las estrategias de repatriación. Los datos provienen de dos base de datos compiladas a través de trabajos académicos y una encuesta de redes sociales completada por los descendientes. Concluye con nueve tipos de retornos y sus correspondientes estrategias.

Palabras clave

Exilio, Franquismo, Guerra Civil Española, Tipos de retorno.

Mauricio Escobar Deras

Universidad de Granada.
Instituto de Migraciones.

Currently working on a Ph.D University of Granada, focusing on combining immigration studies with history. Previously, MA Université de Savoie in communications; MA California State University in History, Northridge; BA University of California, Santa Cruz in History.

Abstract

This paper examines the strategies that first-generation exiled republicans selected to repatriate to Spain after the end of the Spanish Civil War. It asorts the types of returns that took place between 1939 to 2010, analyzing the repatriation strategies and noting the challenges they navigated. The data is from two sets of databases compiled via scholarly work and a social media survey filled out by the descendants. It concludes with nine types of returns and their corresponding strategies.

Key words

Exile, Francoism, Repatriation, Spanish Civil War, Types of return.

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A METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE SPANISH REPUBLICAN EXILE RETURN

1. INTRODUCTION

With the fall of the Spanish Republic in 1939, more than half a million people were exiled from their homeland. As exiled refugees, the end of war signaled the possibility of repatriation, prompting exiles to adopt various strategies to navigate the numerous challenges impeding the possibility of a safe return¹. Some opted to stay in exile, while others were immediately and forcefully deported back. In between, the vast majority waited for the right window to repatriate, becoming returnees². In this paper, we will address the various types of return and the corresponding strategies as defined by the individuals collected in two datasets.

A strategy of return deals with the temporal space before, during and after the arrival in Spain. They are the direct and indirect actions or encounters that ultimately lead to a successful return. This in turn becomes a permanent, temporary or failed return strategy. Strategies were also dependent on the individual's education, experience or mental state. This is to say that a

former combatant's return strategy in the mid 1950s would differ from the strategy employed by an adult "Niño de Guerra" (translated as a child exiled during the war). For this reason, strategies of return must also incorporate the desired objectives of the return.

The primary impediment to a safe return was the Nationalistic government of Francisco Franco. Following the end of the civil war and during the Second World War, Spain was to be an exemplary nation of authoritarian rule like Nazi Germany. According to Michael Richards, Franco wanted to purify his nation of undesirables³. To accomplish this, support of the Republic was turned into a crime, punishable by prison or death. For 30 years, the government treated and viewed anyone associated with the republic as an enemy of the state, while society at large referred to them as a "Rojo". Furthermore, the state institutions used punitive policies to identify and root out domestic enemies. This meant that for exiles hoping to return, one of the fundamental strategy was simply not to be harm or imprisoned by government agents.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1. Returnee Data in Literary Studies (RD-LS)

Strategies of return for Spanish exiles were highly individualistic and varied. However, due to the majority of them being dead, we first assembled a database drawing on the data of individuals already mentioned in scholarly works. The mined data created the Returnee Data in Literary Studies (RD-LS) database. Other individuals from the Exiliad@s Project were also added⁴. The data fields entered were: year and place of birth, education, marital status, profession and destination of exile, as well as the year and city of their return. In total, 200 individuals were recorded with as much quantifiable information as was available. Of these, 187 were first-generation exiles, 12 were second-generation and one was a third-generation. Of the first generation group, there were 104 males and 83 females. Of the total, the average first generation individual was born in 1912 and was exiled in 1939 at the age of 27. They would have spent an average of 26 years in exile, gotten married with children and returned in 1965 at the age of 54. Typically, exiles returned to Spain as a family rather than as individuals.

A limitation to the RD-LS dataset is the fact that many of the individual's data was incomplete. It also does not include their formal educational level, but this is inferred by looking at their professions or ways of earning a living. For example, if an individual held a skilled profession, like teacher or engineer, they were classified as "advanced". Oppositely, an unskilled job like "day laborer" was classified as "elementary". If the job was unknown, the classification was left empty. Likewise, politicians and artists were also not given an educational classification due to their respective uncertainties. Generally, however, there is enough quantifiable data to address the various strategies and types of return. The purpose of the dataset is, firstly, to

categorize individuals and their return strategies, and secondly, to become a sample baseline to be compared with a second dataset, one directed and filled in by the descendants of returnees.

2.2. Returnee Data in Social Networks (RD-SN)

The Returnee Data in Social Networks (RD-SN) dataset is a second database compiled on first generation individuals who returned to Spain, based on information collected via a Google Web-form questionnaire and filled out by descendants. The data was derived through questions focusing on identifying exiled individuals, their personal, qualitative and chronological data, much like in the RD-LS dataset. Following Lidia Bocanegra Barbecho's approach, the questions were organized in such a way so as to trigger a linear recollection and ease the post-data analysis⁵. Once completed, the questionnaire was emailed in bulk to various organization connected to "exiles" or descendants of Republican refugees. After a period of two months, 42 individuals were recorded, 36 first generation and five second generation and one third generation. Of the first generation exiles, 22 were males and 14 were females. Combined, the average first-generation returnee was exiled in 1940 at the age of 25, spent 28 years in exile and returned married with kids in 1968 at the age of 52.

The RD-SN also included questions relating to the educational level and chosen profession of returnees. These represented key data points to discern the relationship between their education level and the job opportunities they had, both in the receiving countries and upon returning to Spain. Moreover, we wanted to see how these categories may have influenced an individual's strategy and type of return.

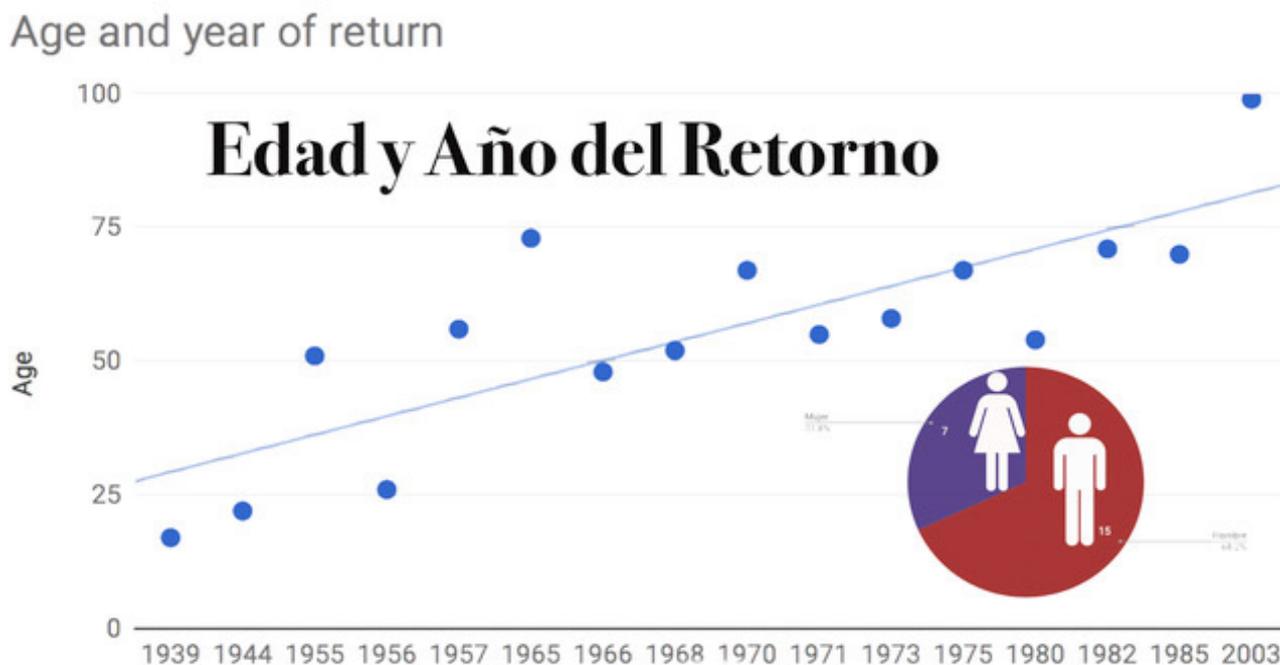
A limitation to this dataset is that it is entirely dependent on the data provided by those filling out the questionnaire. As relatives of the

first generation, their recollections of events are often oral stories that have been passed down. These narratives form part of a collective family memory that was originally constructed by an individual who later transmitted it to the descendants.

2.3. Online Data

Online historical data collection can be challenging: Information is often dispersed across various obscure sites, is blocked behind paywalls, or simply does not exist in the digital domain⁶. The creation of both the RD-LS and RD-SN datasets are ways of proving the viability of learning untold historical narratives and as a means to “discover” untold primary sources. Once the RD-LS database had a sample size of over 150 individuals, survey questions were written, establishing what would become the

RD-SN dataset. After the latter questionnaire was completed, a sample introductory letter and request messages were written in English, Spanish and French. The email was sent to several Republican exile networks via their “contact” section. The majority of these messages were sent to Spanish associations and their corresponding social networks on Twitter and Facebook. The first email had no images attached and only included two links: the first to the survey questionnaire and the second to the larger Republican exile project, Exiliad@s⁷. In the closing lines, there was a call to actions requesting that the message be shared with as many people as possible. After one month, all responses arrived via Facebook. Consequently, it became the platform of choice to send all subsequent message-posts. In the following shorter messages through the “post” option, an image was added with a small amount of general infor-



Ayúdanos y rellena la encuesta

Fig. 1. First image used to engage people on social media.

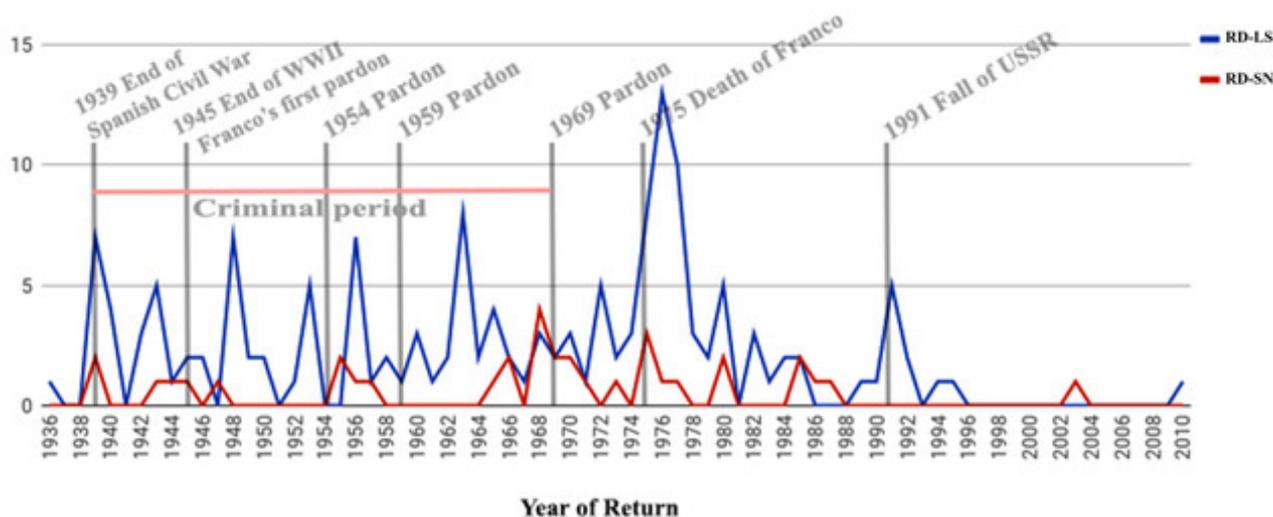


Fig. 2. Total number of returns by years and database.

mation like gender and age and the number of returnees. At the bottom of the image, a Spanish message said “Help us and fill out the form!” This was a deliberate attempt to invoke images of the Spanish Civil War era posters.

3. STRATEGIES OF RETURN

The strategies of return varied based on the life condition of the individual, like in any plan, deviation and unexpected contingencies alter the ultimate executable strategy. Alicia Pozo-Gutierrez and Scot Soo in *“Categories of return among Spanish refugees and other migrants 1950s-1990s”*, illustrate the highly individualized phenomenon of the return and the often-complex challenge in discerning a clear picture of the individuals, their numbers and life back Spain⁸. This had to do with the fact that returnees, specifically their strategies, were radically different depending on whether they returned during the 1940s, ‘50s, ‘60s or after Franco’s death in 1975. The strategies depended on a multitude of factors ranging from age, sex, health, wealth and even the mental well being of the returnee; and whether they were single, married, with or without kids, etc. In short, the logistical timeframe of the planning to the eventual arrival

(planning-arriving), including the transit and the cost, would vary from one person to the next. Based on the collective datasets of the RD-LS and RD-SN, the planning-arriving strategy timeframe took the longest and was the most dangerous in the first five years after the Spanish Civil War finished⁹. With each succeeding six-year period, the process became much shorter and relatively easier. For this reasons, we will address the strategies of return with their corresponding types of return and divide them into two separate periods.

3.1. Strategies: 1940-1975

The various strategies of return and types of return differed greatly during the time Franco was in power. These varied from difficult to less so due to Franco’s subsequent pardons and Cold-war politic. After 1939 and prior to 1945, anyone crossing the border back to Spain, repatriated or not, was a criminal until proven innocent. Fearing for their lives, individuals returning to Spain had to develop strategies just to avoid arrest and incarceration. In October of 1945, Franco issued his first limited pardon to exiled “enemies” who had tentatively supported the Republic against the Nationalist front¹⁰. In 1954

he allowed a 30-day visit visa to “non-criminal” exiles wanting to return and who had not yet been sentenced to death in absentia. Later, in December of 1955, the Soviet Union voted for the inclusion of Spain into the United Nations, paving the way for the repatriation of many Spanish-Soviet exiles. There were other subsequent decrees that further eased the return of exiled individuals, for example, in 1959 when the 30-day limit was lifted and in 1969 when it was no longer a punishable crime to have supported the Republic. The 1950s is important because it was a radical shift away from the autarky economic policies to a joint-global economy, and for the first time, exiles could freely visit family¹¹.

With the context of this historical backdrop, we can begin to analyze the individual strategies of return as first outlined by Alicia Pozo-Gutiérrez and Scott Soo: 1. Permanent. 2. Failed. 3. Involuntary. 4. Temporary. 5. Clandestine. 6. Imagined. We adopted these categories as a starting point to discuss some of the various strategies of return. As the focus of this paper deals with the various strategies of a physical return, number six was excluded and other types of returns were added. Furthermore, because the aforementioned authors have previously defined the first five types of return, we briefly defined what they are and detailed the corresponding strategy. The latter types of returns have been numerically added to the list and explained in detail therein.

3.1.1. Permanent return

These individuals include but are not limited to those wanting the restoration of their lands, reuniting with family, being in their country or working “from the inside” to undermine Franco. The RD-LS database identified 104 first-generation individuals while the RD-SN identified an additional 26. Of the RD-LS, 47% had “advanced” education and 74% were identified as working upon their return. The individual’s educational level proportionately corresponded with their rate of

success in reestablishing themselves upon their return¹². The strategy was to first clear all bureaucratic cost and paperwork to then legally return; a planning-arriving timeframe process that ranged from six months to two years. These returnees would have also prearranged temporary lodging with a relative and later used the family network to find long-term housing and employment while economizing their savings.

3.1.2. Failed return

A failed return is an individual who intended to return permanently but failed to integrate back into Spanish society. Consequently, the individual is then forced to once again leave for another country, usually their last country of residence. This subsequent migration is a subject for further research but falls out of scope of this paper. However, we can surmise that the return strategy to Spain is the same as that of a Permanent return.

3.1.3. Involuntary return

By its definition, exiles who were repatriated via an involuntary return had no strategy or agency. Hence, it also falls outside the scope of this work. These returnees were given very little choice in the matter. They were simply repatriated, extradited, or forcibly expelled back to Spain. Any strategy in this return would be truncated or nonexistent and would rely on survival rather than planning. Such were the case for the children of war, Juanita Asensio Riaño who returned in 1939 (hence forth written as “R. Year”) and for Isabel C. N. (R. 1991), who in both cases were repatriated by governmental agencies¹³.

3.1.4. Temporary return

With a one-year average planning-arriving strategy timeframe, these returnees were primarily motivated to visit family. They faced all the

same external bureaucratic challenges and cost experienced by the permanent returnees, only to then stay for a short period of time. They did not plan for longer-term housing (only a short-term stay with family), nor sought employment through the family network.

3.1.5. *Clandestine return*

By its nature, undercover return operations of exiles in Spain are difficult to document. The principal goal was to visit family members, while also gather information and engage in anti-francoist activities¹⁴. The time duration of this category of return was often temporary and thus longer-term strategies did not usually apply. However, these returns took the highest risk and would have required the most in information gathering, document falsification and logistical preparation to illegally move around once in the country¹⁵. Lastly, the planning-arriving timeframe would be independent of bureaucratic procedures, time and cost.

3.1.6. *Economic return*

In the 1960s, compared to various exile-receiving countries, Spain was economically flourishing and even celebrated its “aperture”¹⁶. Upon returning, many exiles succeeded in obtaining better jobs, opening businesses or advancing their studies and trainings. These returnees were akin to economic migrants who happened to choose their country of origin as their final destination to pursue a better life. Their primary focus was to professionally or financially improve themselves and not just to establish a life back in their birthplace¹⁷. In the RD-LS dataset, 13 individual returnees fell under this category, 85% of which returned in the 1960s and ‘70s. Such was the case of Aurora de Albornoz Peña (R. 1968), who after her divorce, took a professorship at the Autonomous University of Madrid (UAM) and also taught at the New York University, Madrid campus (NYU)¹⁸.

The strategies of return for economic returnees revolved more around the logistical side of employment. The planning-arriving timeframe was the same as that of permanent returnees, during which, they acquired the necessary documentation and did their bureaucratic due diligence before and during their return phase. However, the economic component served as their central motivation, and all subsequent strategies revolved around it.

3.1.7. *Jailed return*

Political prisoners can also be considered to be exiled individuals in that they have been physically isolated from the general population and forced to live in a different society. Prisons are environments that have their own system of rules, work, time, language and punishments. Upon their returned to the world at large, if not killed, political prisoners encountered a changed society¹⁹. Most were also followed by state agents and were regularly required to report their whereabouts. When they were freed, or able to obtain a passport, many former prisoners chose to permanently leave Spain²⁰. Of those that did return, they did so after 1975.

Prior to their liberation, they would have had news and information from the “outside” and would have devised an exit strategy. After their release from prison and return to Spanish society, former prisoners experienced a more limited mobility than an involuntary returnee. Employing their personal network of friends, they would either stay or leave Spain²¹. Ramon Rubial Cavial for example, was in prison for 19 years, from 1937 to 1956. Upon his release, he continued working for his prison-initiated underground socialist movement and network, and chose to stay and clandestinely work in Spain²². For others like Fernando Macarro Castillo (Pen name, Marcos Ana) who was imprisoned at the end of the war till 1961, prison was virtually all he knew. Once freed, he used his prison network of friends and fled to France.

3.1.8. Dead return

By the 1970s Franco had ruled Spain for over 30 years' outliving many of his adversaries abroad. Some exiles, unable to safely return and unsure if a return would ever be possible during their lifetime, set about repatriating their mortal remains back to Spain should they died before Franco²³. Individuals like Clara Campoamor Rodriguez, who died in 1972, stated in her will to have her body repatriated and cremated in San Sebastian, the place where she was living when the second republic started²⁴. Likewise, Diego Martinez Barrio died in 1962 but was only repatriated in 2000²⁵. For these individuals, Spanish soil was their ultimate and permanent resting place, even though they died in exile.

The postmortem strategy of return revolved around the transport of the body and the burial or dispersion of the remains of the individual. A close friend or relative would do the procedural and logistical paperwork and usually traveled

back with the body²⁶. According to Rosy Rickett (2015), Jose Montesinos along with his wife, planned to have his body returned to Spain. However, it was an exhaustively bureaucratic procedure with unforeseen paperwork, costs and time²⁷.

3.2. Strategies: 1975 - 2010²⁸

3.2.1. Political Return

These individuals were a new type of permanent returnees, generally highly educated with a passion to share their Republican memory in order to rebuild from the past their future nation. They would not have returned while Franco was in power and many would have had a small sample of Spanish soil in exile²⁹. Politically driven, their goal was to influence Spanish politics and help to recover some of the Republican heritage.

Their political zeal was the result of 35 years of waiting. At the end of the Second World War

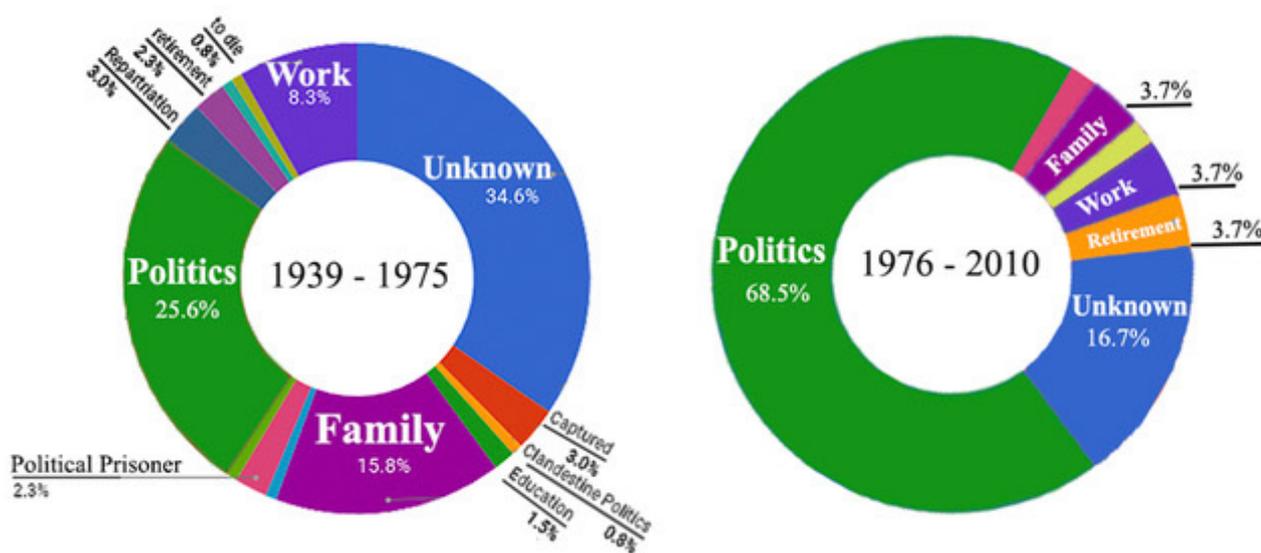


Fig. 3. The reasons for repatriation during Franco and after his death.

and start of the Cold War, ardent Republican exiles played a waiting game³⁰. They would wait and hopefully outlive Franco and return after his death³¹. However, many died in the wait and were buried in their last country of residence. Those that outlived the dictator returned with the intention of influencing the politics of their homeland. The RD-LS dataset identifies 54 individuals that returned at this time and almost half of them returned within a two-year period after Franco's death: 28% in the first year and 21% the following year. These prominent returnees included Marcos Ana ('76); Rafael Alberti ('77); Maria Teresa de Leon Goyri ('77); Dolores Ibarruri ('77); Victoria Kent ('77) and Federica Montseny ('77), among others.

For these returnees, their politicized objectives defined their permanent strategies of returned. Some sought to add their "grain of sand" to the changing political environment, while others like Enrique Lister ('77) and Rafael Luis Fernandez Alvarez ('77) sought to take charge and lead the transitional period³². All of them had a high level of accurate information about the then existing conditions of the government and would have used their extensive network of friends and colleagues to move to capital cities. These returnees were the most focused on what they wanted from their return and conscious of the historical importance to do so.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Upon the death of Francisco Franco and soon after, all the lingering external political and bureaucratic impediments blocking exile's return were essentially nullified. A series of pardons (in particular the 1969 one) had previously lifted most legal restrictions and exiles, barring those who still needed a passport, could return to Spain as easily as booking a holiday vacation. The planning-arriving timeframe was reduced to a personal choice and were entirely depended on the individual's needs. However, the short and long term planning in terms of housing and work still applied for those seeking a permanent return. Depending on their temerity, their return would lead to a Permanent or Failed case. Little changed for temporary returnees, except perhaps that they no longer had police surveillance³³. The other forms of repatriation also no longer applied. Involuntary returns, barring economical needs such as the case of the Soviet Spanish adults in the 1990s or clandestine returns, ceased to exist because there was simply no need to return by such measures³⁴. In the case of jailed returnees, all political prisoners directly linked to the civil war had been freed by the late 1960s. As for expatriation of bodies, it is unknown how many willed their remains returned to Spain after the death of Franco. It is a subject for further studies. However, the death of Franco created a new type of returnee, one who was exceedingly political and driven by a desire to return and to be a part of the new Spanish political landscape and the transition back to democracy.

NOTAS

¹From the outbreak of the war, fear of retaliation by Franco's soldiers or police was widespread. See GRAHAM, Helen. "The Spanish Civil War, 1936–2003: The Return of Republican Memory". *Science & Society*, 68, (2004), págs. 313-328.

²From now on, the use of "return" will mean a self willingness to repatriate and the term Repatriation will be used when a governmental body is used in order to return to Spain.

³RICHARDS, Michael. "From war culture to civil society: Francoism, social change and memories of the Spanish Civil War". *History & Memory*, 14 (2002), pág. 97.

⁴This project is directed by Lidia Bocanegra Barbecho, <http://exiliadosrepublicanos.info/en/project>, retrieved on [Access date:12/05/2018].

⁵BOCANEGRA-BARBECHO, Lidia. "La web 2.0 y el estudio del exilio republicano español: El análisis de la movilidad social y el retorno a través del proyecto e-xiliad@s". En: BELLVER LOIZAGA, Vincent. *Otras voces, otros ámbitos: Los sujetos y su entorno. Nuevas perspectivas de la historia sociocultural*. Valencia: Universidad de Valencia y Asociación de Historia Contemporánea, 2015, págs. 59-65.

⁶BOCANEGRA-BARBECHO, Lidia y TOSCANO, Maurizio. "The Spanish Republican Exile: Identity, Belonging and Memory in the Digital World". *Cultural Heritage in a Changing World*, (May, 2016), pág. 245.

⁷*Solicitud de colaboración: investigación acerca del retorno del exiliado republicano*, <https://www.facebook.com/exiliados.republicanos/posts/1730437286995203>. [Access date: 06/04/2018].

⁸POZO-GUTIÉRREZ, Alicia y SOO, Scott. "Categories of return among Spanish refugees and other migrants 1950s-1990s: Hypotheses and early observations". *Les Cahiers de Framespa. Nouveaux champs de l'histoire sociale*, 5 (2010), pág. 10.

⁹This is based on account descriptions, number of repatriated individuals and Franco's first pardon decree in 1945.

¹⁰PUJADAS, Roser. "Memoria y retorno del exilio republicano catalán". *Portal*, 1 (2004), págs. 1-15.

¹¹RICKETT, Rosy. *Refugees of the Spanish Civil War and those they left behind: personal testimonies of departure, separation and return since 1936*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Manchester, 2015, pág. 120.

¹²Ibidem, pág. 78.

¹³MARTÍNEZ GONZÁLEZ, Carmen. "El Retorno a España de los Niños de la Guerra civil". *Anales de Historia Contemporánea*, 19 (2003), pág. 88.

¹⁴POZO-GUTIÉRREZ, Alicia y SOO, Scott. "Categories of return among Spanish refugees and other migrants 1950s-1990s: Hypotheses and early observations". *Les Cahiers de Framespa. Nouveaux champs de l'histoire sociale*, 5 (2010), pág. 12.

¹⁵GARCÍA BIENZOBAS, Felicidad. *Testimony of the Spanish Civil War and the Francoist Dictatorship*. Interview with Luis Martín-Cabrera and Andrea Davis. San Diego: University of California, 2008. Retrieved from <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb6110313r>. [Access date: 05/10/2019].

¹⁶RICHARDS, Michael. "From war culture to civil... Op. cit., pág. 100.

¹⁷Of the 13 economic returnees, 62% chose Madrid as their residence.

¹⁸See: <http://www.huellasdemujeresgeniales.com/aurora-de-albornoz-pena/>. [Access date: 05/10/2018].

¹⁹BRAVO GÓMEZ, Gutmaro. "La política penitenciaria del franquismo en la consolidación del Nuevo Estado". *Anuario de derecho penal y ciencias penales*, 61 (2008), págs. 165-198.

²⁰RICKETT, Rosy. *Refugees of the Spanish...* Op. cit., pág. 178.

²¹MATEOS LÓPEZ, Abdón. *Exilios y retornos*. Madrid: Eneida, 2015.

- ²²HEYWOOD, Paul y RUBIAL CAVIA, Ramón. "Spanish socialist who survived Franco's jails to pioneer reform". *The Guardian*. 08/June/1999. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/news/1999/jun/08/guardianobituaries2>. [Access date: 30/05/2018].
- ²³Based on RD-LS number of returns, 69% of all returns after the death of Franco were politically motivated.
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- ²⁵ALVAREZ REY, Leandro y MARTÍNEZ BARRIO, Diego. *Diccionario Biográfico Español, Real Academia de la Historia, vol. XXXII, 2010*. Retrieved from <https://www.nubeluz.es/personajes/barrio.html>. [Access date: 20/06/2018].
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- ²⁸2010 is the last return year in the RD-LS database.
- ²⁹RICKETT, Rosy. *Refugees of the Spanish...* Op. cit., pág. 219.
- ³⁰CABALLER ALBAREDA, Gemma y SOLÉ, Queralt. "La voluntad del retorno: correspondencia desde el exilio catalán". *Bulletin of Spanish Studies: Hispanic Studies and Researches on Spain, Portugal and Latin America*, 7-8 (2012), págs. 201-213.
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