

The great exodus of 1939 and other exiles of the 20th Century

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ABSTRACT

In spite of being a historic constant and a characteristic phenomenon of the 20th century, the subject 'exile' is still little valued by contemporary historiography'. The civil war from 1936 to 1939 and the Francoist triumph provoked an exile without precedent in recent Catalanian history. This exile was decisive in the preservation of Catalan culture (persecuted by the Franco regime in Catalonia itself), as well as for the continuity of Catalan self-government, the 'Generalitat of Catalonia'. It was also an extremely important platform for the democratic opposition to Francoism, although it lost its political weight around the nineteen sixties. At that time, though, new waves of exiles took place caused by the fight against the dictatorship, but they were in no way related to the scale of those from the civil war in the thirties. At the dictator's death many people returned home, but the fragility of the democracy born from the political transition process brought new exiles. In order to know more in detail on such an important subject it is necessary to promote a culturally institutionalised process that makes possible its systematic study, and it is also necessary that the analysis of this phenomenon become a top priority aim of study for historiography and for all human sciences.

KEY WORDS: exile, historiography, Civil War from 1936-1939, Francoism, Second World War, anti-Francoism, democratic transition, cultural institutionalisation.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE PHENOMENON OF EXILES

Exile, understood as migrations caused by political, ethnic, or religious persecution, are a constant in the history of humanity. Outstanding personalities and whole populations had to suffer exile at different times in either their remote or recent history. It is not surprising therefore that even in the most ancient texts exile plays a relevant role. In the Bible, for instance, it is not only prominent because of the exile of the Jewish people, but it is even considered comparable to the human condition itself.

Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden of Eden, and humanity had to live an earthly life that was in fact a continuous exile from the initial paradise. According to this Judeo-Christian cosmic vision, by simply being human we were all exiled from the very beginning of history. In other religious views we also find the relevant presence of this phenomenon, although maybe not with such a central role. In certain cases it even appears as the historical genesis of these religions because their founders went through exile as

a real or imagined experience. Let us recall – to mention only examples from three very different cultural worlds – the case of Buddha (who went into voluntary exile searching for a new spirituality), of Mahomet (who had to exile himself because of the fighting he had to do to impose the new religion), or of Quetzalcóatl (king and god of Mexico pre-Columbus, who announced a return that never occurred).

Besides the creators of religions, the list of historical personalities of all times and of different countries who experienced exile would be endless. But it has been in more recent times that this phenomenon has acquired unexpected dimensions. Never before the 20th century was any experience so extended due to the great political convulsions of the time: two world wars, huge revolutions such as the Soviet and the Chinese, de-colonizing processes that affected entire continents and made possible the emergence of new states, etc. We can state without exaggeration that being an exiled and experiencing exile have been essential circumstances that characterize contemporary times. In spite of this, very few historical synthesis of the 20th century deal with exile in a relevant way. This is a phenomenon that still deserves to be the object of a historiographical vindication. It occupies the place that a historical phenomenon on such a scale deserves only in the particular histories of a few countries. And it is often circumscribed to a particular exile (such as the one

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of German and Central-European Jews), or to a very specific historical area (the impact of European exiles on North-American film industry, for instance).¹

Catalonia and all the regions where Catalan is the spoken language have not been an exception to this general trend. In fact, exile has been a historic constant which at certain times acquired massive dimensions. During the 20th century a radical change took place because the Civil War from 1936 to 1939 gave rise to a massive exodus that had no precedent in our modern history. Nothing like it had been experienced before, neither in its quantity nor in its quality. We should probably have to go many centuries back to the great expulsions of Moriscos or Jews to find a similar exodus. Political circumstances derived from the eradication of Francoism explain the little attention it has received until very recently. Fortunately things have started to change.

CATALAN EXILES IN THE MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY TIMES

As previously said, exile is a constant in Catalan history. If we limit ourselves to the modern and contemporary periods we find a great number of exiles that, although they were related to very important events in our past, did not become part of collective memory. This is the case, for instance, of the exile from 1652 to 1661 in the wake of the Catalan Revolution of 1640 (the so-called Harvesters' War, or War for the Separation from the Spanish Crown), which is only now beginning to be studied specifically. Some time ago the calculations fixed at some six-hundred the number of people exiled on that occasion, but today this figure has been greatly increased. Òscar Jané has stated that it exceeded the number of fifteen hundred, pointing to the fact that this figure is very significant because they were people from the leading elite.² In fact it was an exile practically circumscribed to the old counties of Rosselló (Fr. Roussillon) and Cerdanya (*grosso modo* the present French department of Eastern Pyrenees), which as a consequence of the conflict fell into the hands of the French king.³

The exile in 1714 caused by the end of the War of Succession to the Spanish Crown is, due also to quite recent research, better known. There are already some monographies on this exile, such as that by Agustí Alcoberro, that has calculated that almost 30,000 people went into exile to places such as Vienna, Sicily, Naples, Sardinia, Milan, Flanders or Hungary (where the Catalan refugees founded a new Barcelona).⁴

It is obvious that exiles were abundant in the 19th century. The whole century was a kind of permanent civil war in which, depending on the political situation of each period, republicans, liberals, monarchists, absolutists, Carlists,⁵ and anarchists too (in the last decades of the century) had to go into exile. Great figures of the time had to emigrate, such as the author and historian Víctor Bala-

guer, the republican politician Abdó Terrades, or the Carlist leader Ramon Cabrera, to mention only three important figures with very different political options. Ramon Arnabat has estimated the number of exiled people from all these options put together as 40,000 Catalans who whether voluntarily or by force had to emigrate from the Principality of Catalonia during the century.⁶

At the beginning of the 20th century exiles began to multiply as a result of the colonial wars. Just by looking through the levy sheets of that time we realise that desertion was nothing exceptional, at least from those counties where ways to escape were available. For instance in the High Empordà (a maritime county bordering the French Republic) a remarkable number of those that were called up during the periods of warlike conflicts escaped either to France (most of them to the neighbour Catalan speaking counties) or to America.⁷ The Cuban and Philippines Wars, first, and the Morocco War, next, caused a not insignificant number of deserters who went into exile.

The Morocco War provoked a considerable revolt as the Tragic Week of 1909, which in its turn was the cause of more exiles.

Also the working class conflicts of the first third of the century, and the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera (from 1923 to 1930) provoked a great number of exiled people which has not yet been precisely quantified; it affected in particular what are now known as political and intellectual «*quadres*» (leaders) from all over the Catalan Countries, as is witnessed by the great number of books (such as that by Francesc Madrid, *Els exiliats de la dictadura. Reportatges i testimonis*),⁸ mainly published during the nineteen-thirties, when the memory of that dictatorship was still very much alive. Some leaders built their stature in great measure precisely during that exile. This was the case of Joan Comorera, Bonaventura Durruti, Joaquim Maurín, Jaume Miravittles and, above all, Francesc Macià (head of the short-lived Catalan Republic of 1931 and later first president of the modern Generalitat de Catalunya); in the wake of the international impact caused by the frustrated revolutionary attempt of Prats de Molló in 1926 (and his subsequent trial in Paris) he became a truly symbolic figure.⁹ High standing intellectuals of that time such as Ventura Gassol, Lluís Nicolau d'Olwer or Vicent Blasco Ibáñez also emigrated, and from their new homes undertook a remarkable activity against the dictatorship.

But no exile during the first decades of the 20th century nor any from those previously mentioned is comparable in magnitude with the one at the end of the civil war (1936-1939), which can be truly qualified as an exodus. The geographer Marc Aureli Vila, himself exiled, had no qualms in calling it by that name in his book *Aportació a la terminologia geogràfica catalana*; he uses it as an example of the term «exodus».¹⁰ He writes: «On the population issue, the result in Catalonia after the 1936-1939 war was a huge exodus».

THE EXILE OF 1936

The Civil War from 1936 to 1939 provoked two great series of exiles.¹¹ At the beginning, in 1936, a great number of people (not known with precision) were forced to leave the Principality of Catalonia to escape from the reprisals that were let loose at the initiation of the war and of the revolutionary process that followed it. It seems that nothing similar, not even remotely so, happened in the Valencian Country, which also remained loyal to the republican regime. The situation was very complex in the Balearic Islands and in the Pitiüses: in Majorca (as in Eivissa (Sp. Ibiza) and Formentera) where the uprising of the Spanish nationalist military was successful, already in 1936 the exile was a republican one, whereas Minorca remained loyal to the republican cause.¹²

The main bulk of this exile, then, came from the Principality and had a clear anti-republican character; it was essentially made up of people from the right (many of them members of the political party *Lliga Catalana* –Catalan League–), employers, land owners, men of religion, who saw at that time their lives under threat. The figure varies between 20,000 and 30,000 people, although it could be higher (although, according to present estimations, not exceeding the figure of 50,000). The cases best documented are of those people that left by ship because there are lists where they can be counted (and it is possible besides to see how many of them were Catalan). Albert Manent has dedicated several studies to this theme and has broken down the figures as follows: «The French made an inventory of some 6,000 embarked people, and Italian ships carried some 4,000 people. There were also German and English ships taking some. To these we have to add the people who crossed the French border by land».¹³ Rubèn Doll has thoroughly analysed the case of the «Genoa Catalans», in particular leaders from the *Lliga* party who were able to escape thanks to the protection of the Government of the Generalitat that was initially surpassed by the revolutionary impulse of the first months.¹⁴ The study, then, of those who emigrated by land to the French State, a group that might be quite numerous, remains to be studied. But it has to be taken into account that this exile was in many cases very brief because it often was only a short passage through to the Francoist zone. This way of escape from one side of the fighting to the other through the French border, which lasted the whole war, has been little studied, and may probably only be studied through personal witnesses.

Although we have politically characterized this 1936 exile from the Principality of Catalonia as one of right wing and religious people (because most of them belonged to these groups), the whole number of exiled was rather more complex. We find among them some very remarkable names that do not belong to the group of right wing people but who in a very short time gave their support to Franco. Among people who were explicitly right wing or conservative we find personalities such as Rafael

Patxot, (the Empordanese Maecenas, who escaped from the revolutionary process that started in 1936, but who from his Swiss exile was always very belligerent against Francoism), Cardinal Francesc Vidal i Barraquer (who refused to adhere to the Francoist cause and died in exile), Canon Carles Cardó (author of *Histoire spirituelle des Espagnes*, published in 1946, during his exile, a work very critical of the Spanish ecclesiastical hierarchy), or Josep Puig i Cadafalch (former president of the Mancomunitat of Catalonia, one of the few *Lliga* leaders who did not sign the manifest in support of Franco). Besides these, in the group of fugitives there were also people who were manifestly republican and left wing, such as Ventura Gassol (poet and Culture Councillor of the Generalitat of Catalonia), Josep M. Espanya (Councillor of Interior of the Generalitat), Josep Dencàs (former Councillor of the Generalitat and leader of the party Estat Català), or Claudi Ametlla (former civil governor of Barcelona), many of whom had to escape precisely because of their involvement in saving the lives of people who were persecuted. And we should also consider another sub-group of people who simply wanted to escape war and revolution and keep themselves on the margins of the conflict, without throwing their lot with either side. This attitude was clear in the case of the author Carles Soldevila, who managed to be sent to Paris in a theoretical delegation from the Generalitat, but who in fact tried to maintain a position *au dessus de la mêlée*. His behaviour provoked an (epistolary) clash with his brother, the historian and also author Ferran Soldevila, who stayed in Barcelona and gave full support to the cause of the republican Generalitat.

THE GREAT REPUBLICAN EXODUS OF 1939

But the first exile of 1936 is in no way comparable to the magnitude of the republican exile of 1939.¹⁵ Let us emphasize: the latter has no precedents in our modern history. We are talking about hundreds of thousands of people who at first were affected. From the almost 500,000 people who crossed the border of the French Republic during the last days of January and the first days of February, the estimate is that more than 200,000 of them were Catalan, Valencian and Majorcan.¹⁶ The percentage is very high because this great exodus occurred directly in the wake of the collapse of the Catalan front, while Madrid and Valencia still resisted for a few more weeks; this is why in March 1939 there was still another exile of a few thousands from Valencia who left by sea or by air for Algeria. The great exodus of January and February did not affect just the soldiers, but also a great mass of the civil population. Contemporarily to the events, the author and historian Antoni Rovira i Virgili wrote the great chronicle of this massive retreat: *Els darrers dies de la Catalunya republicana* (The Last Days of Republican Catalonia), published in Buenos Aires in 1940. An eye witness of that tragic event, the author intended to show «the Catalan



Figure 1. The photography of this man and his lame daughter in Coll d'Ares, Catalonia (1939) was published by *L'illustration* and it became the symbol of the tragic Republican exodus.

exodus seen through a soul». ¹⁷ Many other written witnesses from that flight were published later, whether as factual chronicle or under recreated novel form, written by relevant men and women authors. Among those that wrote their texts contemporarily with the events but took many years to publish them, we have to mention Artur Bladé i Desumvila, author of *L'exiliada* (The Exiled Woman, 1976), and the previously mentioned Ferran Soldevila who in his *Dietaris de l'exili i del retorn* (Diaries of Exile and of the Return, 2000) described the impression made on him by that massive flight: that of a carnival parade with even the presence abundance of the curious, disguises and masks: «all the masks of fatigue and abandonment, disappointment and despair». ¹⁸

Many people returned during the same year 1939; at the end of the year the total figure of exiled was slightly above 200,000, more than 70,000 of whom were Catalan. In spite of this large fall in numbers in relation to the initial months, we are talking of extraordinary, unusual figures. And to this quantitative evaluation must be added a qualitative one: the political representatives of a whole people went into exile, accompanied by the cream of Catalan intellegencia of that time. Names such as those of the linguists Pompeu Fabra and Joan Coromines, the writer Mercè Rodoreda, the musician Pau Casals, the poets Carles Riba and Agustí Bartra, the geograph Pau Vila, the archaeologist Pere Bosch Gimpera, the scholar Lluís Nicolau d'Olwer, and many others of first magnitude prove the high standing of this collective. During the republican period the Generalitat had inaugurated a process of recovery of the autochthonous political institutions that was expected to spread to all the other Catalan lands of the Spanish State, which came to nothing because of the defeat in the war. In the same way, the process of cultural and political recovery (and its corresponding institutionalisation) also came to nothing; from the beginning

of the century it had spread with renewed vitality throughout the Catalan speaking zone from Fraga to Maó (Sp. Mahón) and from Salses to Guardamar, transcending all provincial and state boundaries. Politically, the result of the war and the establishment of the dictatorial regime of General Franco implied the total extinction of all kinds of autochthonous political power in the Catalan territory, a power that was not going to be restored until almost forty years later, with the dictator's death. In the cultural and linguistic aspects the consequences were equally dreadful. At the start, the Francoist regime initiated an authentic cultural genocide that did not succeed because it met with popular resistance. During the whole dictatorial period the Catalan language and culture were subject to all types of restrictions, having no public recognition nor any legal protection. In this repressive context, exile was maintained as an (extraterritorial) space of political, cultural and linguistic survival. The Generalitat of Catalonia succeeded in continuing to be a political referent in spite of the abduction (in France) and execution (in Barcelona) of its president, Lluís Companys, in 1940. Also, particularly in the first decades, Catalan publishing flourished in exile, when it was either forbidden or subject to restrictions that made impossible any normal development in Catalonia itself. ¹⁹

The human avalanche of refugees who entered the French Republic at the beginning of 1939 had to be settled at first in improvised concentration camps set up particu-

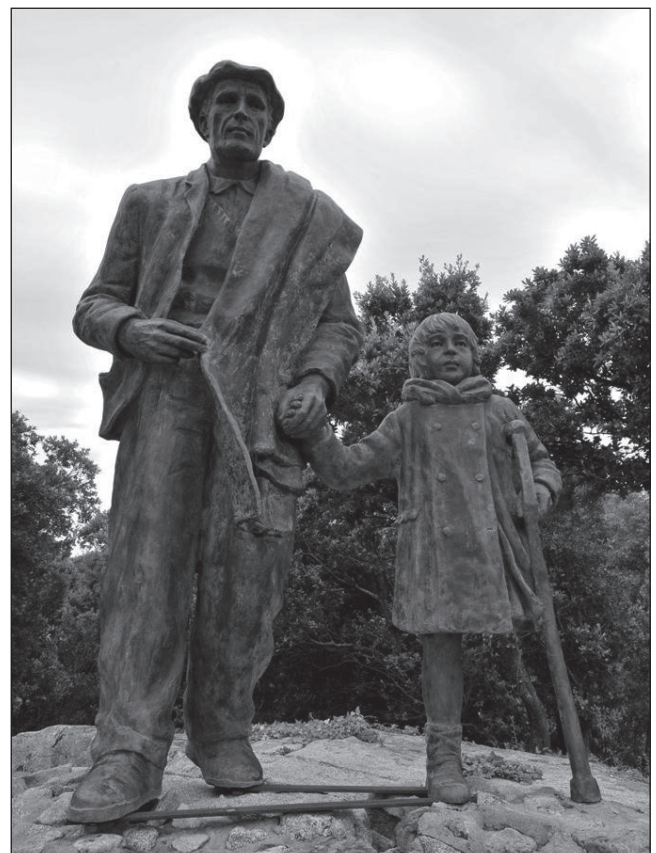


Figure 2. Republican exodus. Commemorative statue in La Vajol, Catalonia, inspired by the photography in Figure 1.



Figure 3. Republican refugees in a French concentration camp (1939).

larly in Northern Catalonia, near the border (Argelers, Sant Cebrià, Cotlliure, El Barcarès...), but also a little farther, in other zones of Southern France, such Occitania as in Gurs, Bram, Set-Fonts, or Agde (called «the Catalans' camp»).

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The minimal conditions for life were non-existent: this explains the high mortality that prevailed: the French authorities estimated it in almost 15,000 victims, but some present day scholars raise this figure to 50,000.²¹ There are also numerous very poignant literary and drawing witnesses of life in these camps. Among the former we should mention *Crist de 200,000 braços* by Agustí Bartra, and the moving *Cartes des dels camps de concentració* by Pere Vives i Clavé.²² Among the plastic arts, we have to mention the extraordinary drawings by Josep Bartolí, the enthralling shapes by Josep Franch Clapers, and the revealing photographs by Agustí Centelles.²³ The internment of men, women and children in the camps was initially a provisional solution, expecting to settle them under better conditions, or to be able to return them to the Spanish state. Many of these camps, especially those near the border, in Northern Catalonia, became empty in the summer of 1939 due to the great number of people who returned (many of them by force) at that time. The beginning of the Second World War in September 1939 filled them again.

Although the main initial receiver of the mass of refu-

gees from the Civil War was, as previously said, the French Republic, other destinations such as México, Chile, Northern Africa, the USSR, Andorra, Great Britain and, in a smaller measure, other European countries, received refugees from the very beginning. The possibility to embark for the Americas was perceived by the Republican exiles as a liberation, both for those who emigrated before the World War as for those who left the country when the war had already started. México in the first place, The Dominican Republic, and in a clandestine way Chile, were the countries that from the very beginning more openly accepted and collaborated in the evacuation of political refugees. From April 1939 to 1948 México gave shelter to 21,750 refugees, 20% of them Catalan. Some 3,500 went to the Dominican Republic in 1939. Argentina and Colombia also accepted them although in smaller numbers. Because during the retreat, in the town of Figueres, the Generalitat had to deliver to the central Government its funds, the Catalan Government did not have the economic resources to finance those journeys. That is why it had to ask for help from two politically opposed organizations that were in charge of organizing the expeditions: SERE (Evacuation Service of Spanish Republicans) and JARE (Board of Assistance to Spanish Republicans). The names of the ships that carried the refugees to America became legendary in the memory of the republican exile. The *Sinaia* (1939), *Flandre* (1939), *Ipanema* (1939 and 1940),

Mexique (1939), *Cuba* (1940), *Quanza* (1941), and *Nyassa* (1942) went to México. The *Winnipeg* (1939) went to Chile. The *Flandre* (1939), *Salle* (1939 and 1940), and *Cuba* (1940) went to Santo Domingo. During the World War the journey became much more dangerous because of the German navy. The ship *Formosa* found herself involved in the battle of Río de la Plata, near Montevideo (Uruguay), in which the German battleship *Graf Spee* was sunk.

THE PARTICIPATION OF THE EXILED IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939 and the occupation of France by the Nazis had extraordinary consequences for the refugees. In the new war situation, a great majority returned to Franco's Spain; they were driven by their difficult situation in the camps, by the pressure of French authorities, and by the hope (which proved vain) that the Francoists would keep their promises of not exerting any repression against them. As we have seen, a small part could emigrate to the Americas, but the great majority of the exiled stayed in Europe, particularly in France, in spite of the surrounding dangers. The fact that a great majority of the republican refugees who stayed on the continent during the war belonged to left-wing parties and to democratic movements provoked their decided collective siding with the Allies. This stance was also stimulated by General Franco's attitude in favour of the Axis forces, which became evident in his sending the Spanish Blue Division to the Russian front, or in the very persecution suffered by the exiled in the territories controlled by the Nazis. In this sense, we have to mention again for its symbolic value the illegal arrest in France of Lluís Companys by the Gestapo, who delivered him to Franco to be shot in Barcelona in 1940.²⁴

The participation of the republican exiled in the French resistance against the Nazi occupation as well as in the troops of Free France was remarkable, although until recently it has not began to be recognized. Also the participation of Catalan republicans within the British and Soviet armies was relevant; some of them have left us the record of their experience. This is the case of Sebastià Piera who described his personal experience in the Soviet army in his book *El soldat de Pandora*.²⁵ Or the case of Joan Pujol, *Garbo*, the double spy who, working for the British, played a decisive role in the success of the landing at Normandy.²⁶ Many died in combat. A collective tribute that was not acknowledged at the end of the Second World War.

The number of republican victims in the Nazi Holocaust was also remarkable. The total figure of exiled people that were interned in extermination camps was almost nine thousand, two thousand of them Catalan.²⁷ Some remarkable fruits of this were the Catalan witness to such horror, among them the book *K.L.Reich* by Joaquim Amat-

Piniella. This work, written a few months after leaving the camp, but not published until 1963, is a harrowing dramatic account comparable to those by Primo Levi, Jorge Semprún, Imre Kertész or Jean Améry (Hans Mayer). As striking witness, it is also worth mentioning the series of pictures issued from the laboratory of the SS in the extermination camp and kept by the Amical of Mathausen. Photographic prints and negatives were preserved because some of the prisoners, such as Francesc Boix, who worked as photographers, risked their own lives by stealthily taking them away from the premises.²⁸ Boix, author of some of these pictures, took also part in the trials of the Nazis in Nuremberg at the end of the war, and his testament, with the witness of the pictures that were shown, was decisive to clarify the true character of those places as extermination camps.²⁹

During the world conflict, the Generalitat of Catalonia was able to maintain an institutional continuity because at the death of Lluís Companys, Josep Irla, who lived in the French Republic, was appointed the new president of the Catalan Government. But in that same year a National Council was designated in London under the presidency of Carles Pi i Sunyer, with Josep M. Batista i Roca acting as secretary; they wanted to be able to act politically more effectively and to keep a close relationship with the Catalan exile communities in the Americas. In 1945, when France was liberated, the London Council dissolved itself and president Irla appointed a new government with the hope that the victory of the Allies would inevitably produce the fall of General Franco's dictatorship. This belief was shared by the huge majority of exiled who were convinced that the anti-Nazi and anti-Fascist militancy would be acknowledged by the winners, who were in theory defenders of democracy. Reality, though, was quite different.

THE GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT

There certainly was a formal condemnation of the Francoist regime by the new born United Nations Organization, set up in San Francisco in June 1945, but this measure and all the other boycott measures that were later adopted did not help to end the dictatorial regime. The end of the Second World War initiated a new period of radical confrontation between the old allies, and divided the world into two great areas of influence, led by the USA and the USSR respectively. In this new context Franco (who was politically very weak) behaved as a docile ally to the interests of the Atlanticist block, and this ensured his survival in power thanks basically to the support of Britain and the United States. No need to say that this was the great disappointment of the exiled who had been sustained through the war years by the hope in the fall of the dictatorship at the end of the conflict. This new reality provoked different reactions. A few tried armed struggle (especially from liberated France) as one way to over-

throw the dictatorship; communists led an attempt to occupy the Vall d'Aran that failed catastrophically and forced them to a radical reconsideration of their strategy on a medium term, whereas the anarchists multiplied their sabotage until well into the sixties. The strictly political pressure by the rest of democratic, basically republican, parties proved also to be sterile.³⁰ There were also some personal stances that received international attention. This was the case of musician Pau Casals who during a concert tour in Great Britain in 1945 declared he had decided not to play again in that country (as he had previously decided not to do in Hitler's Germany) due to the connivance of the British government with Franco's dictatorship.

The consolidation of Franco's power and, as a consequence, the prospect of a long exile caused many of these exiles to decide to return. There was therefore a significant decrease in the number of exiled, although the figure has not been quantified. But at the same time there was an increase in the number of those exiled derived from the reunification of families that occurred at the end of the war. This phenomenon has been very little studied up to now; we know about it thanks to the existence of many personal witnesses.³¹ Some of these witnesses are oral, but there are also written ones, such as that of the autobiographical novel by M.Àngels Vayreda, *Encara no sé com sóc*.³² In this narration the author tells us her life wanderings which took her from Catalonia (where she had entered illegally coming from the French Republic, where her family had emigrated to during the 1939 retreat) to Cuba and México to meet her husband again.

Another phenomenon resulting from the end of the world war as well as from the re-establishment of communications and international transport affected the world of exile: the numerous displacements that took place. Many people returned from the Americas to Europe (and vice versa), and many changed from one country to another. Focussing only on the Americas, many countries such as Cuba and Venezuela which had not previously opened their doors to refugees, now allowed their entrance. The Catalan presence was very high in Venezuela: they were the majority of the 20,000 republican refugees that established themselves there at that time.

Also in the strictly political arena, the survival of the Franco regime required the democratic opposition to make a very serious strategic rethink. Action within the country began to be privileged, in spite of the fact that the political direction and the propaganda apparatus remained, for obvious reasons, abroad. Even the Generalitat suffered a substantial mutation. The government formed in 1945 was dissolved in 1948, and none other was appointed. Old and ill president Irla resigned, and in 1954 Josep Tarradellas was elected; he led a one-man, little operative Generalitat but with a great symbolic significance that in 1977 played a politically decisive role in the process of liquidation of the dictatorship.³³

Although on a strictly political dimension exile lost a

considerable part of the leadership that it had held until then, its weight in the cultural dimension continued to be remarkable until well into the sixties. It was not for nothing that exile enjoyed a freedom of expression never imagined in the Catalonia subject to Francoism.; this is why the exiled were more directly influenced by the new philosophic, aesthetic, and cultural currents emerging from the ruins of the Second World War, without the censorship and the restrictions imposed by the Francoist regime. Outstanding intellectuals from the interior were interested in establishing close contact with exiled personalities, and these contacts proved very fruitful. This was the case of the great historian Jaume Vicens i Vives who around 1954 established an interesting epistolary relationship with Josep Ferrater i Móra, who convinced him to incorporate in the second edition of his famous *Notícia de Catalunya* (Information on Catalonia, 1960) some of the conclusions from his (Ferrater's) own book *Les formes de la vida catalana* (The Forms of Catalan Life), published in Santiago de Chile in 1944.³⁴ Even more important was the influence that some outstanding representatives of the exiled intellectuality (especially Vicenç Riera i Llorca) exerted by means of their letters on Joan Fuster, a great referent during the sixties and seventies, and the creator of the concept «Catalan Countries».³⁵

THE NEW EXILES OF ANTI-FRANCOISM

Beginning in the sixties, the growing organization of the anti-Francoist opposition inside the country provoked a new wave of political exiles that had no direct link to the twenty years prior exodus of 1939. The anti-Francoist dynamics of the sixties and seventies forced people from very different social sectors (trade-unionists, political militants, student leaders, intellectuals, even men of religion) to leave the country to escape repression.³⁶ One of the most significant cases showing the emergence of deep contradictions inside the dictatorial regime was that of the abbot of the monastery of Montserrat, Aureli M. Escarré, who in a declaration to the French newspaper *Le Monde* in November 1963 criticised the Franco regime, causing his forced removal in 1965 to the Benedictine monastery of Viboldone, near Milan (Italy). His declaration had an extraordinary transcendence. At the individual level, it showed the political evolution of an outstanding personality who had initially been close to the regime and who had evolved towards public criticism. But it was still more significant from a collective perspective, since it revealed the existence of a deep and growing dissatisfaction among important sectors of the Catalan Church who perceived the flagrant contradiction between the profession of the regime and its practice against human rights and against the right to existence of the Catalan Nation. The anti-Francoist stance of one sector of the Catalan Church meant a radical change in the political logic established in the wake of the Civil War. As a matter of fact, this profound mutation of

the political parameters derived from the civil confrontation was also stimulated by some important organizations of the anti-Francoist opposition. In concordance with this, many sectors opted for giving up the logic of armed confrontation, although this continued to be followed by others, especially by the anarchist movement which had some legendary figures such as Quico Sabaté (who was shot in 1960 in Sant Celoni), and Ramon Vila, *Caracremada* (killed in 1963 by the Guardia Civil, in Castellnou de Bages). What prevailed was what was then called «the fight of the masses», involving many organizational changes during these two decades. The formation of unitary agencies was stimulated (such as the Assembly of Catalonia, that headed the Catalan democratic opposition from 1971), the emergency of new forms of trade union fighting (with the constitution in 1964 of *Comissions Obreres*), the reorganization of the student movement (with the creation in 1966, during an assembly in the Franciscan (*Caputxins*) convent in Sarrià, of the *Sindicat Democràtic d'Estudiants*), or the implication of intellectual and professional sectors in the anti-Francoist fight (in 1970 they took refuge in Montserrat protesting against the court-martialing of ETA militants).³⁷

Of course, the new exiles from the anti-Francoist fight could take advantage of the supportive structures of those exiled previously, many of whom were still expatriates even if many others had returned. Most of them were exiled in Europe, with France as one of the great bases for their operations. The closeness of the two countries made easy the clandestine entry of people and propaganda material. The leaders of the most relevant parties, as well as the Generalitat, were established in France, which allowed the reception and emission of instructions and news otherwise obstructed by the rigid Francoist censorship. Although France played this pre-eminent role in the anti-dictatorial fight, other countries played also a role no less significant. That was the case of some of the so-called «Eastern Countries»; they were inside the Soviet orbit, and welcomed in particular communist militants, although in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 a rift started to grow between Moscow and the main Catalan and Spanish communist organizations, which became an irreversible break in the second half of the seventies. Besides the Soviet Union we should mention the German Democratic Republic (with important nuclei in Berlin and Leipzig), Czechoslovakia, Poland, and above all Romania, where the radio popularly known as «Radio Pirenaica» (Radio España Independiente), linked to the PCE-PSUC, had its base. In Western Europe, besides the important nuclei established in Switzerland and Belgium, other countries such as the United Kingdom, the German Federal Republic, Sweden, Andorra, and especially Italy, played a very relevant role in anti-Francoist solidarity, also welcomed Catalan exiles. International solidarity (from the peoples rather than from the governments) was one of the essential pillars to sustain the exiles during so many years; the other pillar was the

stubbornness of the exiles themselves. This double strength made of exile a nightmare for the dictator who was forced never to cross the frontiers of his own state.

The Americas that had had such importance during the exile of 1939, now also played a symbolic role in welcoming some relevant personalities, such as the singer Joan Manuel Serrat. In 1975, while Serrat was on a professional tour around Central and South America, the dictator (in pre-agonic phase) signed death sentences for five anti-Francoist activists from ETA and the Marxist-Leninist group FRAP; this provoked a series of massive demonstrations of protest in France, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Portugal and other European capitals. In Mexico, Serrat made a public declaration against the death penalty and against the dictatorial regime, which caused the prohibition of his return and the broadcasting of his music on all the media of the Spanish State. In the same year 1975, just after the executions, Franco was hospitalized and died after a long agony on the 20th November.

AFTER THE FRANCOIST DICTATORSHIP, AND FRAGILE DEMOCRACY

The dictator's death in itself did not imply the end of dictatorship. The confluence of popular pressure with those sectors of the regime who wished a democratic transformation, made possible a compromise solution that brought about the liquidation of Francoism. This process, known as «the Transition», lasted for some years and was not an easy one: it took the toll of some victims and implied important renunciations from the democratic forces, with repercussions in the configuration of the new regime. Among the renunciations that hurt the exiled most was the fact of not achieving a full amnesty and, above all, of not questioning the monarchy of Juan Carlos I (appointed as successor by Franco himself), renouncing thereby to the institution of a republican regime. Although the exile celebrated the dictator's death as a moment of great joy, it also followed with great attention and preoccupation the whole process. While (starting in 1976, with the Law of political reform) a fragile democracy was being consolidated and the main political parties and trade unions were legalized, the return (especially in 1977) of outstanding leaders began to grow; this was the case of the anarchist leader of the CNT, Frederica Montseny, or the communist leader of the old UGT, Rafael Vidiella. That was related to the legalization, in 1977, at the time of the celebration of the first legislative elections, of practically all democratic political parties, except Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya due to its explicit republicanism and its implicit independentism. From all returns of the exiled, the most politically momentous was that of Josep Tarradellas, exiled president of the Generalitat of Catalonia, because it implied the legal restoration of the Catalan government. The demand for the re-establishment of an autonomous Catalan Government with powers and a legal framework (a

Statute of Autonomy) similar to that obtained before the war was a central claim of the Catalan democratic forces. But not all of them agreed on the legal recognition of Josep Tarradellas as the legitimate representative of that institution (that he had managed to keep alive during exile, even if reduced to a single-person presidency).³⁸ As a consequence, his return was surrounded by political controversy, but also by an unprecedented popular mobilization. A mass demonstration took place in Barcelona on September 11th, 1977, that gathered together almost a million people in favour of self-government. A fortnight later, a royal decree re-established the provisional Generalitat under the presidency of Tarradellas. And on October, 23rd of that same year the president returned to Barcelona and from the balcony of the Palace of the Generalitat addressed the crowd with words that have become famous: «Citizens of Catalonia, I am back». His return was the return of self-government. The Generalitat of Catalonia and the Basque Government were the only institutions legitimized by the republican regime of the thirties that were restored after the dictatorship. The Spanish Republic itself, that had managed to survive in exile during all the Franco years, was dissolved during this period of transition towards democracy, lacking the political support of the majority democratic parties that were committed to their agreements with the reformist sectors of Francoism.

The democratic limitations derived from the Transition caused some exiles to decide not to return because of their disagreement with that process. Others did not return simply because they (or their families) were already rooted in their new countries. We can therefore speak of a prolongation *sine die* of an exile that in some cases began in the distant 1939. These democratic limitations of the process provoked a series of contradictions that on its turn caused new exiles, although now from an already established democracy internationally recognized, even if still very fragile.³⁹ The restrictions to the freedom of expression were grave, particularly in the first years, affecting not only the criticism of the monarchy but also those addressed to the army which acted as a guardian of the whole process. In 1977 the theatre group Els Joglars produced *La Torna*,⁴⁰ a play denouncing the fact that the execution of the anti-francoist militant Salvador Puig Antich (occurred in 1974, causing a great social commotion) had been masked under the appearance of a capital offence. The military authorities forced the suppression of the show and set up a war council against the leaders of the drama group, some of whom fled the country. This was quite revealing of the leading role of the military as agents of contention against the democratic and popular demands during the transition years. Their desire to control became even more explicit in 1981 with the frustrated attempt of a military coup, which marked the end to their political intervention.

There were also critics against the slowness of democratic consolidation among those that had been in the Catalan anti-Francoist opposition. Certain sectors of the Libertarian movement who were in favour of direct action

have continued their activity until recently, which has caused new imprisonments and exiles, affecting certainly a very limited number of people. Another political current very critical of the regime that was born at the end of the transition process was that in favour of independence. It was not for nothing that the new Spanish democratic regime did not recognize the right to self-determination, in spite of the fact that this had been a very generalized demand among the Catalan parties; even the most important unitary organism from the transition period, the Assembly of Catalonia, had adopted it as one of its main claims. Although it was the first time since the 18th century that all Catalan territories of the Spanish State had the possibility of an autonomous government and a statutory framework (the Principality of Catalonia in 1979, the Valencian Country in 1982, and the Balearic Islands and the Pitiüses in 1983), almost at once the limits of these institutions were felt, and the attempts by the Spanish Government to curtail the most important autonomic powers were also very soon perceived. This gave rise in the eighties to a remarkable growth in numbers and in complexity of the independentist movement. On the one hand it took forms of a peaceful and democratic character, such as *La Crida* (The Call) (a group founded in 1981 and dissolved in 1993), *Nacionalistes d'Esquerra* (Nationalists of the Left) (a group founded in 1979 and dissolved in 1986), or later, around 1989, ERC (the historic party of the Catalan left that in its XVI Congress adopted the fight for independence as its defining political target).

But on the other hand it gave rise to radical groups, some of them centred on the political fight, such as *Moviment de Defensa de la Terra* (Movement for the Defence of the Land) (founded in 1984), and other centred on the armed fight, such as *Terra Lliure* (Free Land) (formed in 1979 and practically dissolved at the beginning of the nineties). The latter suffered the police repression that produced new exiles who took refuge mainly in the French State. The total figure of the independentists that were persecuted has been estimated in almost a thousand from 1974 to 1994, but apparently the number of exiled were only a very small part of them.⁴¹

CONTEMPORARY EXILES IN CATALAN LANDS

In the same way that the ensemble of Catalan territories have produced very significant exiles during the contemporary times, they have also served as a place of shelter. In this sense, Northern Catalonia (the present French department of Eastern Pyrenees) is a special case, a long time privileged sanctuary for the Catalans from South of the Pyrenees. Considering only the 20th century, it welcomed at the beginning deserters from the colonial wars, and at the end it welcomes political refugees from the re-establishment of democracy after the Francoist times. But it was in the exile of 1939 when this territory played a central role. Until now the dominant trend for most historians

and social analysts has been to study the phenomenon from the perspective of those Catalans that left, not from the perspective of the Northern Catalans who received that human avalanche.⁴² This exodus had very important consequences in that area, consequences that continued far beyond the initial years (when the refugees were secluded in newly set up concentration camps). The demographic consequences were very important and are still perceptible today. Although their number is not yet known with precision, there is a significant amount of population today resulting from the republican retreat; this helps to explain the persistence in memory of that event, still remembered today with a surprising vehemence.

Because of the official neutrality during the first and second World Wars, the ensemble of Catalan territories assigned to the Spanish State were a shelter for many people. As they were a shelter too during the Civil War of 1936-1939. As the historian Joan Serrallonga has been able to prove, during the whole conflict, but especially at its end, the republican Generalitat welcomed almost 600,000 people who fled from the zones occupied by Franco (people from Majorca, the Basque Country, Aragon...)⁴³ Another researcher, Francesc Bonamusa, has observed that if we compare the number of refugee or displaced population that the Principality of Catalonia welcomed at the beginning of 1939, with the figures from the ten countries that at the beginning of the year 2000 occupied first places in the number of refugees in the world ranking, only Afghanistan (with 758,600) and Sri Lanka (with 706,500) surpassed it in absolute figures. Catalonia's figures are ahead of those from Azerbaïdjan (572,500), Colombia (525,000), Bosnia and Herzegovina (518,300), Russia (490,700), Eritrea (366,800), or Sierra Leone (300,000).⁴⁴

During the Second World War, the Northern Catalan territories (including Andorra) were a key zone for the series of escapes of Allied soldiers and air pilots (where the actions in Andorra by Francesc Viadiu were outstanding), as well as for the networks such as the Varian Fry (the Emergency Rescue Committee),⁴⁵ that made possible the evacuation from the war in Europe of Jews and other persecuted people. But not all the fugitives of that conflict came through safely. Some died during their flight and rest in Catalan land, as is the case of the author Walter Benjamin buried in Portbou. Although some cases are known, we have no data about those who belonged to the other side of the world conflict (Germans, Italians, and their allies) and found refuge in the Catalan Countries.⁴⁶

More recently, in the seventies, when the Francoist regime started to decay and several dictatorial regimes took power in Central and South America (such as Chile (1973), Uruguay (1975), Argentina (1976)), a very remarkable number of political exiles from those countries as well as from other Latin American countries suffering from political violence (such as Colombia or Perú), or from previous dictatorships (such as Brazil, from 1964), came to stay in the Catalan territories. Some outstanding

cultural personalities came among this group of exiled: above all, writers, such as Gabriel García Márquez or Mario Vargas Llosa, or filmmakers such as Glauber Rocha. They made Barcelona the Latin American cultural capital, the promoter of the so-called «Latin American boom» and of bold film projects within the militant political cinema of that time.

Finally, we should also consider a series of exiles that affected a relatively small part of the territory, as was the case of Alacant (Sp.Alicante) that at the beginning of the sixties, in the wake of the Algerian decolonizing process, received a large group of *pièds-noirs*, calculated in some 28,000 people, which meant a 20% population increase. Since many of them were originally from the Valencian Country we can see this phenomenon, at least in part, as a kind of away and return emigration.

COLOPHON: AN IMPERATIVE INSTITUTIONALISATION

Due to the importance of the phenomenon of exile in Catalan and universal contemporary history, it is necessary to bring about numerous works and studies to fill the still existing gaps (some of them pointed to in the present article), as well as to collect those oral testimonies that can still be useful for the construction of history. In order to make this possible, we need the creation of specific organisms dedicated to the research and to the preservation of the memory of this central phenomenon of our recent history. Some steps have already been taken in this direction, such as the Museum of Exile in La Jonquera.⁴⁷ But even more, it would be convenient that this phenomenon (linked, of course, to the general phenomenon of migrations)⁴⁸ could become a powerful research line for historiography as well as for all Catalan social sciences. Our historical experience in this field could be very useful in the present globalising world in which the massive migrations of people (including those caused by political, religious or ethnic persecution) are not a hindrance from the past but a painful reality and, sadly enough, also a more than probable expectation for the future. In this sense, it could be said about contemporary exiles what Imre Kertész said of Auschwitz: «When I think on Auschwitz I have the probably paradoxical impression that I am thinking of the future rather than of the past».⁴⁹

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