



Exiles and Citizens: Spanish Republicans in Mexico (Lilas Latin American Monograph)

Patricia W. Fagen

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At the end of the Spanish civil war, Mexico was the only country to offer open refuge to the thousands of Republican emigrés who fled from Spain in 1939–1940. *Exiles and Citizens* is a study of these political exiles, especially those with intellectual and professional backgrounds and ambitions. It focuses on their adjustment to Mexico, on their continued ties to Spain, and on their impact on Mexican development. The critical dilemma faced by the Spanish exiles was that, despite having fought for their political and social ideals in Spain, they forfeited in exile their active role in Spanish history. In Mexico they found a political and social system that seemed to include many of the ideals that had inspired the Spanish Republic; moreover, they were able to incorporate themselves economically, professionally, and intellectually into Mexican national life. Yet, because they were not native-born citizens, they had little or no creative part to play in the politics of their adopted country.

For Mexico, the impact of the refugees from Spain was enormous. Integrated from the first into nearly all intellectual, professional, and cultural fields, their skills proved an important catalyst to Mexican development. Yet, outside these fields, Mexico was never an effective "melting pot." The Republicans themselves were divided in their loyalties, and the Mexicans, from the beginning, were reluctant to encourage the full participation of their guests in national affairs.

Two goals were shared by most of the exiles: to ensure that the world would remember the liberal, creative, and open Spain they had created and thus reject Franco; to show their gratitude by working for the benefit and progress of Mexico. These goals, although frequently contradictory, sustained the emigration and gave meaning to exile. The refugees tried to maintain their identity by coming together in formal and informal associations that were intended either to act on behalf of the homeland or to re-create the Spanish Republican structures and values in exile. To maintain a Spanish identity, however, proved difficult, and for the second and third generations in Mexico, the initial goals had already lost their meaning. For them, economic and professional, as well as familial, ties were strongly Mexican.

Spanish Republicans in Mexico represented a fairly rare phenomenon: a large group of skilled, relatively well educated immigrants to a country where persons of their attainments and status were not numerous. Moreover, as political exiles, they approached the problems of acculturation differently from economic emigrants. Patricia Fagen's study thus offers a further understanding of an important exile community and the characteristics that set it apart from other examples of immigrant experiences. In addition, the study sheds new light on the intellectual history of Mexico and the far-reaching effects of the Spanish civil war.

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