EXILE and Cultural Hegemony

Spanish Intellectuals in Mexico, 1939–1975

SEBASTIAAN FABER

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Sebastiaan Faber

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Sólo se juzga el ayer a la luz de cuando sea y con un conocimiento de causa del que carecía el autor. No es justo.

[The past is only judged in light of the present, and with a knowledge of the facts that the author did not have. It isn't fair.]

—Max Aub

Exiles, émigrés, refugees, and expatriates uprooted from their lands must make do in new surroundings, and the creativity as well as the sadness that can be seen in what they do is one of the experiences that has still to find its chroniclers. . . .

—Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*

Contents

Preface

This book is about Spanish intellectuals who were exiled to Mexico during the dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1939–75) that followed the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), and about their struggle for cultural hegemony based on the claim that the Republic, not Francoism, represented the "true" culture of the Spanish nation. The account of the Spaniards' cultural production presented here will be, above all, critical; it will attempt to avoid the mythifying tendencies that have marred much of the existing work on Spanish Civil War exile. Starting in the years of the Popular Front, this book analyzes the Spaniards' changing conception of their social role as intellectuals, the relation between culture and politics, and Spain's position in the modern world. I argue that the Spaniards' dependence on the increasingly authoritarian Mexican regime, their misplaced illusions of pan-Hispanist grandeur, and, more in general, the international climate of the Cold War caused them to abandon the Gramscian ideal of the intellectual as political activist in favor of a more liberal, apolitical stance favored by, among others, the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset.

What distinguishes this book from existing studies in English or Spanish is, in the first place, its critical framework, which combines methods of literary criticism with insights from history and political science. The thought of Antonio Gramsci is of central importance to my argument. Gramsci functions both as the historical representation of Popular Front philosophy and the theoretical reference point against which to measure the ideological evolution of the Spanish exiles. Second, *Exile and Cultural*

Hegemony is the first study of its kind to place the exiles' ideological evolution in a broad historical context, taking into account developments in both Spanish and Mexican politics from the early 1930s through the 1960s and 1970s. In the third place, this book gives ample attention to the hitherto untouched topic of Spanish left-wing nationalism, pointing out its sometimes awkward overlaps with the rhetoric of pan-Hispanist glory employed by the ideologues of the Franco regime. *Exile and Cultural Hegemony* tells a story of intellectual retreat and eventual political paralysis. It shows how the Republican defeat and the subsequent political exile thwarted the development of a group of intellectuals who, in the 1930s, had battled for a new conception of culture, a new political system, and a new relationship between intellectuals and the masses.

Aside from its contribution to Spanish intellectual history, this book hopes to be more generally relevant to exile or diaspora studies as well. An important underlying argument is that exiles' cultural production cannot properly be understood within the framework of traditional literary studies. To be sure, it is never possible to separate literature proper from the sociological and political context of its production. Exile, however, connects those fields in a very explicit way. For the exile, the simple act of writing becomes expressly political—sometimes to the point that literary fiction gives way to autobiography and memoir or to the polemic immediacy of the essay or the pamphlet. At times, the conditions of exile even made epic realism impossible, as I will argue for the case of Max Aub. Correspondingly, the body of texts studied in this book is quite heterogeneous; it includes editorials, short stories, novels, diaries, poems, and journalism.

But the phenomenon of exile not only transcends disciplinary boundaries. It also supersedes the national borders that literary studies have tended carefully to respect. This is one of the reasons, incidentally, why many exile writers have fallen through the cracks of literary history. One of the aspects that distinguishes this book from previous scholarship on Spanish Republican exile is that it places the phenomenon in the political, social, and institutional context of both the home and host country, that is, of Spain and Mexico. In most studies on the Spaniards in Mexico, for instance, Mexican politics are either absent or reduced to superficial references to noble leaders whose consistent refusal to recognize Franco

is adduced as sufficient proof of their good faith. This study does not take that good faith at face value.

The overall aim of this book, then, is to suggest ways in which one might develop a more nuanced and critical view of the exiled intellectuals' place and role in the complex constellations of both Spanish and Mexican history. It does so, among other things, by emphasizing the importance of the *national* to the exiles' cultural production and, more specifically, by analyzing that cultural production as a coming to terms with what one could call the *impossibility* of the Spanish nation—or at least the nation as the different Republican factions imagined it. This *aporia* was represented by the apparent impossibility of left-wing unity, symbolized in turn by the breakdown of the Popular Front coalition during the Spanish Civil War and the repeated but failed attempts at its resuscitation in the years following. But the impossibility of the Spanish nation was represented, above all, by the Civil War itself. The war was, among other things, a struggle between two heterogeneous alliances grouped around sets of polarized conceptions of Spain's character, its political organization, and its past, present, and future role in the world; two diametrically opposed coalitions which nevertheless coincided in their dream of a harmonious, unified, and glorious national community. Ironically, of course, the conflict itself proved the utopian nature of that dream. With every battle and every execution national harmony drifted more into the distance. The war's tragic aftermath—a wholesale persecution of the defeated, portrayed as the embodiment of the "anti-Spain," and a massive exile movement which itself was plagued by continuous internal divisions—further questioned the possibility that a national Spanish community could ever really exist.

Nevertheless, the utopia of national harmony was not given up. On the contrary, one of the responses to the trauma of the Civil War, among both the victors and defeated, was precisely an intensification of exalted nationalist mythologies. The mythifying thrust of the official nationalism propagated by the Francoist state has been amply studied (Richards, "Terror"; Herzberger; González Calleja; Preston, *Politics*). Less attention has been given to similar tendencies among the exiles. In fact, however, both bands cherished illusions of national grandeur. These illusions stood in sharp contrast with their actual position on the margins of international

politics and can be seen as an ideological compensation for that marginalization. As we will see, a large part of the exiles' texts is informed by the tension between the dream of a unified, glorious Spain and its continuous frustration due to both internal and external obstacles.

Among the exiled intellectuals, this tension gave rise to different reactions. Some turned to cynicism; others continued to conduct national self-analyses in the style of turn-of-the-century writers such as Unamuno, Mallada, and Ganivet. In the case of the intellectuals who were exiled to Spanish-speaking countries, the tensions between the national ideal and the apparent impossibility of its realization also motivated compensatory strategies such as *hispanismo*—a particular form of cultural pan-nationalism based on the idea that the former Spanish empire constitutes a unique cultural whole, believed to embody a series of "spiritual" values whose preservation is of crucial importance to the future of human civilization.

This book consists of three parts, containing three chapters each. The first part offers a series of general reflections on intellectual exile and its effects, as well as some historical background information on Spain, Mexico, and the circumstances of the Spaniards' massive displacement. It also introduces the concept of cultural hegemony and explains why it is specifically appropriate to understand the ideological dynamics of exile. This, in turn, leads into a discussion of Spanish nationalism and its manifestations in the discourse of both the exiles and the Franco regime.

The second part covers the Second Republic and the Civil War, as well as the first years of exile. In spite of the recent defeat, this was a time when optimism prevailed, sometimes to the point of delirium. Chapter 4 assesses the political and cultural project of the Popular Front before and during the Civil War, pointing out both its contradictions and the innovations it fostered. Chapter 5 focuses on texts by Paulino Masip written between 1937 and 1944, highlighting their regulatory character and their use of nationalist rhetoric. The attempts undertaken in the early 1940s by José Bergamín, Juan Larrea, and others to create an anti-Francoist countercanon are the focus of chapter 6. This chapter also critiques common mystifications about the presumedly "spiritual" character of Hispanic

culture. We will see that many exiles held an exceptionalist vision of Spanish history that was strangely similar to the one propagated by Francoism. This vision, it is argued, reintroduced an idealist separation of spirit and matter, thus undoing in part the progressive thrust of the Popular Front.

The third and last part of this book covers the political reorientation of the exiles in reaction to the international recognition of the Franco regime and changes in the political landscape "at home." Chapters 7 and 8 investigate the shift in attitude among the exiles resulting from the fiasco of exile politics and the emergence, in the 1950s, of a dissident intelligentsia in Spain. The exiles' appropriation of Spanish conservative liberalism, it is argued, was made possible by a return from Popular Frontist tenets to more elitist positions. This return corresponded to a similar change in the educational and cultural institutions of Mexico, which allowed for a co-optation of both the Mexican intelligentsia and the Spanish exiles, and thus for the continued, nondemocratic hegemony of the Mexican ruling party. Chapter 9 presents exile writer Max Aub as the embodiment of the political deadlock of exile. This resulted, in Aub's case, in a "realism of *aporia*" characterized in his novels by the absence of a plot structure. Aub's ambivalent relationship to both Spain and Mexico is presented as an example of the uneasy political position of the exile writer in general.

Finally, it is important to indicate what this book leaves out. The phenomenon of Spanish Civil War exile is so enormous and diverse that it is almost impossible to avoid the trap of generalization, of confusing the whole with what is only a part of the matter. Even narrowing the field of study down to "the Republican exiles in Mexico" deceptively generalizes a tremendous diversity in political orientations, regional affiliations, professional interests, and personal reactions to exile. My focusing on a limited group of exiles—mostly male, Spanish-speaking intellectuals of the first generation—does not significantly reduce this risk. Furthermore, it once again ignores those groups that traditionally have been underrepresented in the bibliography and who were, in a sense, doubly exiled. The most important of these are women, Catalans, Basques, Galicians, and the second and third generation of exiles. Recent scholarly research fortunately has started to fill this gap.[1] The justification for my one-sided ap-

proach is that it is, to a great degree, precisely this one-sidedness—the central role attributed to intellectuals, and the return to more conservative ideologies—that is the focus of this book.[2]

In this context it is also important to note that my assertions regarding the lack of political participation on the part of the Spanish intellectuals in Mexican domestic politics specifically pertain to the first generation. Their children and grandchildren arrived in Mexico at a young age and completed their education in exile, many studying at the National University (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México [UNAM]) during the 1960s. Like many of their Mexican peers, they have tended to be more active in Mexican politics and less supportive of the regime (Fagen 202–3). But even among the first-generation exiles there are exceptions to the rule that the Spaniards must abstain from sociopolitical criticism. The uproar that accompanied the appearance of filmmaker Luis Buñuel's *Los olvidados* (1950) was due, precisely, to the social criticism implicit in its ruthless depiction of the life of the Mexican urban poor. *Los olvidados,* Víctor Fuentes points out, scandalously broke with the triumphalist version of revolutionary Mexico dominant in the Mexican films of the time ("Hispano-mexicano" 275). Buñuel himself recalls that the audience reacted quite violently to the film, and he believes that its general rejection in Mexico—it was initially shown for only four days—was symptomatic of one of Mexico's major problems: an extreme form of nationalism ultimately rooted in a massive inferiority complex (Buñuel 235). Only after being awarded the prize for best director at the Cannes film festival in France and receiving the backing of Octavio Paz, was the film reissued in Mexico and shown for two months (237).

Moreover, my arguing that the presence of Spanish exile intellectuals has strengthened the hegemony of the Mexican revolutionary regime does not mean that I exclude the possibility that the Spaniards' presence and activities might not also, in different ways, have undermined that regime or, in a more general sense, invigorated the Latin American left. Mexican intellectual Gilberto Guevara Niebla argues, for instance, that the Spaniards' presence contributed to Mexico's democratization ("Cultura" 177). Once exiled, many Spaniards used the intellectual and political experience accumulated during the years of the Republic and the Civil War as teachers, translators, and even military trainers. When Fidel Castro and

Che Guevara met in Mexico in 1955–56 and started preparing for the overthrow of Batista, they and their men were drilled by Alberto Bayo, a former officer in the Spanish Republican army who, in the late 1940s, also played a role in attempts to overthrow Nicaraguan dictator Somoza (Castañeda, *Compañero* 94; Ameringer 81–3). But Bayo's boldness is an exception; most exiles, though active in their own political struggle, kept an exceptionally low profile where Mexican or Latin American politics were concerned. Still, the ideological baggage they carried with them from the "Spanish revolution" had an important impact on their host societies. This fascinating topic has not yet been thoroughly studied, however, and I, too, will have to leave it for future research.

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PART I

Exile and Cultural Hegemony: Intellectuals and Nationalism

1

Introduction: Intellectuals in Exile

> [Y]ou will find few of the wisest and most intelligent men buried in their own countries.
>
> —Plutarch, *De exilio*

What is it about exile that makes it such a catalyst for cultural production? The list of major literary and academic works produced in situations of displacement is seemingly limitless, ranging from Ovid's *Tristia* and Dante's *Il convivio*, to Auerbach's *Mimesis*, Adorno's *Minima moralia*, Mann's *Doktor Faustus*, Cortázar's *Rayuela*, and García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad*. There is something undeniably heroic about these works of art and learning, often created under the most precarious of circumstances, turning daily-life needs into literary or scholarly virtues. Exiled intellectuals find themselves severed from the institutional infrastructure that normally supports them; they oftentimes do not even have their books, manuscripts, or notes from which to work. But they seldom lack a pen, paper, time to write, or, for that matter, things to say: a cause to defend, an enemy to denounce, or a lost land nostalgically to evoke. This book about exile and cultural production cannot but recognize the heroism inherent to exiles' intellectual endeavors. Yet it also aims to describe and criticize the ideological consequences of exile, and to relate them to the institutional ties exiles establish in their host environment. By nature, exiles are vulnerable. Their cultural products are easily silenced by their enemies; however, as we shall see, they are just as easily mythified—by the exiles themselves or by others—or appropriated to serve the interests of their hosts.

Ideological Aspects of Exile

Of the many ideological consequences of exile, I will highlight one in particular. The case of the Spanish Republicans suggests that exiled intellectuals, while courageous cultural producers, can also be prone to overestimate the importance of their practice. When a large part of the Spanish intelligentsia left Spain in early 1939, they claimed to carry the life of the nation with it, reducing the Peninsula to a dead territorial body without culture. "Allí quedó el cuerpo físico de España," exile writer Paulino Masip argued in 1939, "nosotros nos trajimos su alma, su espíritu" [The physical body of Spain remained behind, but we took with us its soul, its spirit] (*Cartas* 42). And poet León Felipe famously wrote:

> Hermano . . . tuya es la hacienda . . .
> la casa, el caballo y la pistola . . .
> Mía es la voz antigua de la tierra.
> Tú te quedas con todo
> . . .
> mas yo te dejo mudo . . . ¡mudo! . . .
> Y ¿cómo vas a recoger el trigo
> y alimentar el fuego
> si yo me llevo la canción? (9)
>
> [Brother . . . the estate is yours . . .
> and so are the house, the horse, and the gun . . .
> But mine is the ancient voice of the land.
> You are left with everything
> . . .
> But I am leaving you speechless . . . speechless!
> And how are you going to harvest the wheat
> and feed the fire
> if I am taking the song with me?]

Spanish culture as embodied by the exiled intellectuals was equated with the nation's being as a whole. While there was a great deal of truth to this—after all, very many intellectuals did side with the Republic in 1936

and did, three years later, prefer exile to living under fascism—the double assumption that *all* intellectuals had left and that they represented *all* of Spanish culture was, of course, unfounded. In the end some 160,000 people went into exile, only a minority of whom can be classified as having been intellectuals (Pla Brugat 218; Tusell, *Hijos* 236–7; Romero Samper 24–5).

The kind of idealism which identifies the being or essence of the nation with the "spiritual"—that is, learned and artistic—activities and products of its intellectuals is an ideology of culture that I will call *culturalism*. It was a characteristic especially of the first years of Spanish Republican exile. But this fetishization of culture as the "spirit" of the nation is only one of several ideological effects of exile on intellectuals' discourse that I will identify in the course of this book. Along with culturalism, there was a tendency to fetishize the intellectuals themselves as embodying and protecting that national spirit. Moreover, exile discourse tended to invoke romantic, essentialist notions of the nation, accompanied by sentimentalist or paternalist notions of the people or folk as both the provider of cultural "raw material" and the receiver of the intellectuals' refined cultural product. And finally, many exile texts take recourse to a certain nineteenth-century bourgeois moralism, emphasizing duty, sacrifice, service, containment, decency, moral purity or health, and overall proper behavior.

Obviously there is a tension between these ideological tendencies, especially that of culturalism, and the progressive cultural politics of the 1930s in which most exiled intellectuals were involved. On the one hand, the exiles' ideology of culture can be viewed as a relapse, a step back from the advances made during the years of the Popular Front toward a conception of culture in nonelitist, nonidealist, and more or less collective terms. Ultimately, after all, culturalism builds on a Platonic, idealist dichotomy between the purity of spirit and the baseness of matter, between the realm of disinterested intellectual activity and the worlds of business, politics, or manual labor. As we shall see, a tension between "Arielist" idealism and the Popular Front imperative of social commitment—a commitment that aimed precisely at transcending the dichotomy of spirit and matter, and superseding the division between intellectual and manual labor—is discernible not only in many exile texts, but already in much of

the discourse on culture and nation produced during the Popular Front period itself.[3] In fact, I will argue that the most important ideological tendencies of the Spaniards' discourse in exile—be it their cultural nationalism, their moralism, their mythification of the folk or *pueblo*, or their fetishization of the intellectual—can be seen as an intensification of certain traits already present in that of the Popular Front.

It is not hard to understand why exile should exacerbate these ideological tendencies. The painful absence of the nation and its people makes them welcome objects of nostalgic idealization. Moreover, exiled intellectuals, cut off as they are from the daily life and the social reality of their national community, have nothing left *but* their cultural activity: writing, studying, and publishing. "For a man who no longer has a homeland," Theodor W. Adorno famously noted, "writing becomes a place to live" (87). Another way of expressing the same idea is to state that the exile ceases to live in the present. The moment of territorial separation signals a stopping of the clock. One of the effects of exile, Ugarte suggests, is "the inability to observe one's own life in terms of a chronological whole" (23). Denied the right to participate further in the history of his or her community, the exile starts living in and off memory. And insofar as identity is a function of one's community and its history, the exile's identity becomes unstable, threatened. The solid ground of the homeland and the physical contact with the home community dissolve into pure representation, into a discourse without referents. Hence exiles' feverish urge to write: they feel a need to record, to solidify, if only discursively, what they have lost or left behind—only to find out, of course, how precarious a foundation discourse really is.

Under these circumstances it is no wonder that, for the Spanish intellectuals, "culture"—understood as the intellectuals' activity par excellence—came to encompass or displace everything else. Interestingly, Terry Eagleton observes a similar tendency with regard to exiled intellectuals from Central Europe. Pointing to the examples of Lukács, Benjamin, and the Frankfurt School, he observes that "much of the best Marxist criticism has been the product of a cultural displacement occasioned by political deadlock" and that "one effect of political downturn for the left was to wonderfully concentrate the critical mind, or at least to creatively deflect it." He also underscores, however, that "this deflection was not with-

out its penalties. It is hard to concern yourself with ideologies, even from a materialist standpoint, without slipping unconsciously into the idealist faith that ideas are what finally count" (12).

Institutional Aspects of Exile

The institutional consequences of exile are as paradoxical as the ideological ones. Auerbach, exiled in Istanbul, had to work outside of his normal institutional infrastructure, but it was exactly that detachment that allowed him to write *Mimesis*. In the same way, it is unlikely Américo Castro would have written his monumental, and in many ways revolutionary, work *La realidad histórica de España* if he had stayed in Spain after the Republican defeat. On the other hand, however, his living and working in the United States during the years of the Cold War might have helped determine what John Beverley criticizes as the one-sided approach of his historiography, particularly his "lack of concern with class and class struggle" and the "denial and deferral of the specifically collectivist character" of the social forces he describes (141, 147). "Castro arrived to the United States on the eve of the Cold War," Beverley writes;

> He offered a vision of Spanish history and civilization which, particularly in its active repudiation of a Marxist or class-based historiography, fitted both the private and public assumptions of U.S. liberalism in the post-World War II period. In that sense, his historiography could be said to have constituted *an ideology* of North American academic hispanism. That was perhaps the source of its power to attract and influence, to create a school, but also its ultimate limitation. (148, emphasis in original)

In the same way, I will argue that the Spaniards' institutional position in Mexico encouraged a certain depoliticization and strengthened certain elitist conceptions of culture. While a strong tendency to elitism had, of course, been present in Spanish liberal and left-wing thinking ever since the heyday of the Institución Libre de Enseñanza (see chapter 4), it had been significantly mitigated after the proclamation of the Second Republic in 1931 and especially after the outbreak of the Civil War in 1936.

In the second place, I will suggest that the Spaniards' peculiar circumstances in Mexico, where they sometimes occupied important posts in official cultural and educational institutions but were not allowed to participate in domestic politics, might very well have helped strengthen the prolonged authoritarian hegemony of Mexico's Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). The epilogue briefly shows how, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, the Spanish Republicans' presence and sustained loyalty to the PRI provided the regime, which was by then not only authoritarian but at times fiercely repressive, with welcome opportunities to "prove" its leftist and democratic credentials.

The case of the Spanish Republicans suggests, then, that exile can be both liberating and confining. It frees intellectuals from the frequently repressive institutions of their homelands, but more often than not they are forced into new relations of institutional dependence with the foreign states that take them in. Political exiles are, in a way, the homeless of the international community. They need foreign governments to give them refuge but cannot afford to be picky about who is going to provide them with shelter and political protection. Many times, moreover, the host expects some sort of loyalty or allegiance in return. "Exile groups," Yossi Shain observes, "are often constrained by the political and ideological debts imposed on them by their international 'creditors' (their host state and other international patrons) so as to support their international benefactors on issues unrelated to their home cause" (83).

To be sure, the Spanish Republicans' fate in Mexico is not, by far, the most conspicuous case of the awkward ideological commitments exiles are sometimes forced to contract. That categorization would be probably more in order for their compatriots who had the doubtful honor of enjoying the hospitality offered by Rafael Leónidas Trujillo. The infamous Dominican dictator had decided to give left-wing Spaniards refuge not only to score good marks with the democratic West, but also to "whiten" his nation's "race."[4] Compared to political perversities such as these, the Spaniards' allegiance to their Mexican host regime seems, initially at least, much more justified. Mexico's refugee policies, as well as the general sociopolitical orientation of the Mexican regime in the 1930s—something of a Popular Front formation itself—had politically much more in common with the Republican cause than Trujillo's right-wing dictatorship

(Schuler 60). However, the Spanish intellectuals' allegiance to the PRI would become markedly less comfortable as subsequent Mexican presidents veered away from the Popular Frontist tenets of *cardenismo*, toward a form of industrial state capitalism backed by an increasingly authoritarian political structure. The regime's most resounding accomplishments were explosive economic growth—the "Mexican miracle"—and sustained political stability of a nonmilitary character, which was unprecedented in a Latin American context. At the same time, however, the regime's commitments to political participation, social justice, and individual liberties left, to express it mildly, much to desire. The values for which the Spanish Republicans had fought—political participation of the working class, fair distribution of income, freedom of expression, and the like—were paid ample rhetorical lip service but were not, in practice, among the regime's priorities. What did remain constant, however, was the PRI's international support of the Spanish Republican cause and its refusal to recognize Franco as Spain's legitimate head of state. For many exiles, including Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez, this stance alone justified the Spaniards' allegiance to their hosts (74).

In reality, however, the Mexican government's stance toward Spain was less principled than the rhetoric would make it seem. As María Escudero points out, presidents Ávila Camacho (1940–46) and Alemán (1946–52) were wary of alienating the large group of conservative Spanish immigrants in Mexico ("la Antigua Colonia") and thus avoided a too explicit commitment to the Spanish Republicans. Under their presidencies, Escudero explains, the exiles lost most of the government protection Cárdenas had granted them. In addition, for both Ávila Camacho and Alemán it was more important to reestablish economic ties with Spain than to maintain Cárdenas's idealist stance, and they even allowed the Franco regime to maintain a semi-official diplomatic presence in Mexico ("Relaciones" 306).

Finally, a bibliographical note. Even though the impact of Spanish Civil War exile on Mexican society since the 1930s and 1940s is comparable in size and scope to that of Central European exile scholars in the United States during the same time period, very little has been published on it in English. Patricia Fagen's *Exiles and Citizens* (1973) gives a thorough so-

ciological account of the Spanish exile community in Mexico, but fails to provide an adequate analysis of the intellectuals' changing ideology. Michael Ugarte's *Shifting Ground* (1989), on the other hand, focuses mostly on the literary aspects of exile, connecting Spanish writers to Vladimir Nabokov and Thomas Mann, among others.

While the bibliography in Spanish is much larger and steadily expanding,[5] little of it critically evaluates either the nationalist and idealist strain of exile discourse or the role of the host governments in determining the attitude of exiled intellectuals. Especially in the case of Mexico, most authors scrupulously respect political taboos and confine themselves to repeating obligatory words of praise and gratitude for the governments of President Lázaro Cárdenas and his successors. But however deserved this praise may be, it is not very useful as an analytical tool.

A related problem is that Spanish exile studies still suffer from the strong interference of what one could call "official" or "diplomatic" discourse. In the case of Mexico, this discourse emphasizes Mexico's hospitality, the nobility of Cárdenas's gesture, the exiles' gratitude, their harmonious integration into Mexico, the many services rendered to the host country, and the Spaniards' unwavering loyalty to both Mexico and their homeland. This tendency is no doubt related to the fact that a good part of the bibliography on Spanish exiles' presence in Mexico has been commissioned or financed by Mexican or Spanish government institutions. But the persistence of this diplomatic discourse also has to do with the fact that Spanish Civil War exile has been subject to attempts at appropriation by those government institutions (see epilogue). In a related development, many exile writers have by now been "adopted" by the autonomous governments of the regions where they were born or with which they are closely associated. This has mostly occurred through the creation of foundations dedicated to the promotion of a particular writer through the funding of academic studies, as well as cultural activities such as contests and exhibitions. While these institutions encourage research by providing scholarships and opportunities for publication, they also tend to generate rather hagiographic accounts of writers' lives and works, with little critical import.

Nevertheless, a great deal of vital research has been done by Peninsular scholars of exile, and this book would be impossible without it. The

amount of work is especially astonishing when one takes into consideration that, with Franco in power until 1975, Peninsular exile research got off to a late start. The first comprehensive studies did not appear until the mid-1970s: José Luis Abellán's collaborative six-volume *El exilio español de 1939* (1976) and Javier Rubio's three-volume *La emigración de la guerra civil de 1936–1939* (1977). Still, the long period leading up to this serious beginning of Peninsular exile studies saw the appearance of a small number of key texts such as philosopher José Luis Aranguren's "La evolución espiritual de los intelectuales españoles en la emigración," published in *Cuadernos hispanoamericanos* (1953). Some groundbreaking work was done in the 1960s by José R. Marra-López (*Narrativa española fuera de España*, 1963) and especially by Abellán, who is originally a historian of philosophy and whose *Filosofía española en América* appeared in 1966 (the careful titles of these two works betray the pressures of Francoist censorship). Since his first book, Abellán has become perhaps the most prolific scholar in Peninsular exile studies, though his productivity is closely matched by that of Francisco Caudet. Caudet's *El exilio español en México: las revistas literarias* (1992) has been of great use to this book.

In view of Spain's political history, one could say that the scholarship on Spanish Civil War exile has two main functions to fulfill. Its first task is one of recuperation, of undoing the massive oblivion imposed by Francoist censors and, in a sense, by the particular dynamics of the transition to democracy (Naharro-Calderón, "Para qué" 63). The six-volume collaborative project headed by Abellán is typical of this recuperative strand, whose ultimate purpose is to re-include hundreds of Spanish writers, poets, painters, and scholars into the national canon or academy. The studies included in this series, therefore, are mostly encyclopedic, containing long lists of names and works that remind one of certain war monuments listing all the fallen soldiers by name (Ugarte 15, 125). The second task of exile studies is that of critical analysis, of determining the political and ideological consequences of exile on the intellectuals' discourse and worldview, and evaluating their significance and role in Spain and their host societies. Although recent scholarship by Caudet, Llera Esteban, Naharro-Calderón, Rehrmann, and others has started to develop in a more critical direction, much remains to be done in this area. It is here that I hope this book has something to contribute.

2

Mexico and the Spanish Civil War

For twentieth-century Spain and Mexico, the arrival of thousands of Spanish Civil War refugees between 1938 and the early 1940s was the most important but not the first moment of mutual contact and influence. In fact, Spain became for postrevolutionary Mexico, and for Latin America as a whole, something of a political mirror image in which both conservative and progressive groups saw their objectives being alternately threatened and realized. After the revolutionary turmoil of 1910–20, many conservative Mexicans looked back in nostalgia toward the stable social order of the postindependence period or even colonial rule, where church and state had not yet been separated and social hierarchies were respected. This nostalgia for order spurred an exaltation of presumedly Spanish cultural and political values, a tendency customarily referred to as *hispanismo*. Around 1917 both the Russian Revolution and the outburst of social tensions in Spain added to the consternation of the Mexican upper classes, apprehensive of global social upheaval (Schuler 57). Correspondingly, six years later the coming to power in Spain of military dictator Primo de Rivera, who promised to protect social order, monarchy, and privilege, was cheered by conservatives across Latin America.

It was widely assumed that whichever political or ideological tendency got a foothold in Spain would soon spread to its former colonies, and the perception of Spain as both a mirror of Latin American politics and an important door to the Hispanic world was not exclusive to conservative groups. Starting out from a very similar premise, progressive forces in Latin America placed their hopes on Spanish liberal and left-wing movements. The ousting of the Spanish king in 1931 and the abolition of

monarchy were celebrated by them as a triumph. Specifically in Mexico, Schuler writes, "revolutionary politicians felt a special kinship to the . . . Second Spanish Republic" (56), with which they appeared to share many concerns: agrarian reform, social justice, and separation of church and state.

When in 1934 General Lázaro Cárdenas assumed the Mexican presidency, tensions between the revolutionary and conservative sectors further polarized. Cárdenas's general shift to the left antagonized the still large and influential reactionary groups. The general expanded the political system to include peasants and workers and implemented a "socialist education." He also redeemed revolutionary promises, which until then had been largely ignored, particularly regarding agrarian reform and land collectivization. In addition, he redesigned Mexican nationalism by founding it on the country's indigenous heritage, thus going against the *hispanismo* prevalent in conservative sectors.

Two developments in 1936 would add to the conservatives' alarm. First, Cárdenas confirmed his break with the relatively right-wing line of previous revolutionary governments by exiling Plutarco Elías Calles, the patriarch of the postrevolutionary system. And when, in July, part of the Spanish military rose against the recently elected government of the Popular Front, Cárdenas did not hesitate one moment in siding with the Republic, sending arms to Spain, and defending the Republican cause in the League of Nations (Matesanz, *Raíces* 243–4). "By 1936," Schuler concludes, "the front line in the struggle between Mexican conservatives and liberals had been relocated to the battle fields of the Spanish Civil War" (57). While Cárdenas and other left-wing Mexicans feared that a Republican defeat would open Spanish America to fascism, conservatives placed their hopes on Franco's ability to stop Communism from taking over the Hispanic world.

In another side effect, the Spanish Civil War served to further harmonize relations between Cárdenas and the Mexican left. Since the adoption in 1935 of the Popular Front policy by the Communist International (Comintern), the left had given up its fierce initial opposition to the Cárdenas government. The call now was for unity and to work from within the ruling party in order to rid it of its reactionary elements and thus turn it into a progressive alliance of the kind proposed by the Commu-

nist International (Herman 107; Carr, *Marxism* 74). This change of strategy made possible the foundation in 1936 of the Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos (CTM), headed by union leader Vicente Lombardo Toledano (who could count on the unconditional support of the Partido Comunista Mexicano [PCM]), which unified the Mexican labor movement and incorporated it into the official party.

Ultimately, the Communists' strategy misfired; Cárdenas succeeded in creating a front, but not under the aegis of the Communists. The Communists' failure was signaled, first, by Cárdenas's decision, in 1936, to grant asylum to Stalin's archrival Leon Trotsky. A second indication of the PCM's mistake in allying itself with the Cárdenas regime was the regime's shift toward conservatism, initiated in 1938 and further confirmed in the 1940s (Carr, *Marxism* 50). The leadership of the PCM would pay dearly for its strategic mistake; an extraordinary congress in 1939 resulted in a major, Comintern-prompted purge in which Secretary-General Hernán Laborde was forced to resign, along with labor leader Valentín Campa and several others (Carr, *Marxism* 69–79).[6] Still, if it had not been for the Popular Front policy adopted by the PCM in 1935, Cárdenas would not have been able to secure the support of the labor unions and to incorporate them into the official party. The Popular Front strategy also made it possible for the Communist-supported CTM to become "Cárdenas's most committed supporter of his anti-Franco policy" (Herman 126).

From the outset of the Spanish Civil War, the role played by Mexico was crucial. As early as 1937, for instance, Cárdenas's wife Amalia took the initiative of arranging refuge for five hundred Spanish children—the famous *"niños de Morelia"*—many of whom were orphans of the war (Fagen 29–30). More importantly, Mexico had been the only country to provide the Republic with armaments even before the Soviet Union started helping in September 1936. As is well known, England, France, and the other Western democracies had agreed not to intervene in what they had labeled—for strategic or opportunistic reasons—an "internal" conflict. They thus ignored the fact that the military rebels sought to overthrow a democratically elected government—with the help, moreover, of Hitler and Mussolini.

The besieged Republic, in turn, could count on the support of a large

part of the Spanish population, though not as large a part as was claimed; after all, the electoral victory of the Popular Front coalition in 1936 had been a narrow one. It could also count on the support of most of Spain's writers and artists, whose political engagement had been steadily increasing since the early thirties. In addition, there were many foreigners from all classes and backgrounds who, ashamed by their governments' passive stance, went to Spain on their own account to help in the fight against fascism. Among these international volunteers were many prominent intellectuals, including Ernest Hemingway, André Malraux, Arthur Koestler, Joris Ivens, César Vallejo, Egon Kisch, and George Orwell, to name only a few. Their presence helped create the false impression of an "intellectuals' war" (Hopkins 4; Cunningham 30). Indeed the argument has been made that the war's political importance is overshadowed by its impact on the cultural field (García Queipo de Llano 609).

For those supporting the Republic, the Spanish Civil War was conceived of as the ultimate battle of democracy against fascism. It was the first and last great cause of the Popular Front: the three years from 1936 to 1939 marked both the high point and the end of that extraordinary period during which it seemed feasible to unite the progressive forces of Communism, socialism, and liberal democracy. Starting in 1937, however, the internal tensions within the Spanish Republican camp began steadily growing. Trotskyists, anarchists, and bourgeois democrats resisted the increasing power and intolerant political methods of a Stalinist faction whose authority was largely based on the military aid supplied by the Soviet Union, which was essential to the strength of the Republican army. The fierceness and injustice of these internal struggles famously destroyed Spanish and foreign intellectuals' confidence in the utopia of Soviet Communism. The cases of Octavio Paz, George Orwell, Stephen Spender, and Arthur Koestler have been well documented.

In hindsight it is clear that the Republic's defeat in April 1939 and the Hitler-Stalin pact signed later that year damaged the antifascist unity of the 1930s beyond repair. The mutual trust was gone and, in a way, the dark night of the Cold War had already begun to fall. Still, during the eight years or so that followed—during World War II and the years immediately after—a red glow lingering on the horizon seemed to indicate a possible revival of left-wing unity.[7] For the 160,000 Spanish Republi-

cans who had gone into exile, whose fate was inextricably tied to that of the Popular Front, those years were a time of hope. Soon enough, however, they realized that the Republican cause—its defenders themselves as hopelessly divided as ever—would once again fall victim to the strategies of international politics. Franco's entry into the United Nations in December 1955 sealed their political fate.

Spanish Refugees in Mexico

In early 1939, when the Republican defeat seemed unavoidable, thousands of soldiers and civilians, including many intellectuals and political leaders, crossed the Pyrenees in an attempt to flee Franco's revenge. By April the number of Spanish refugees in France was an estimated five hundred thousand (Smith 207). France received the refugees reluctantly, locating them in hurriedly mounted concentration camps in which they were treated as prisoners. Food was scarce, conditions were appalling, and in six months some fifteen thousand people died. The survivors tried to get out, the majority returning voluntarily or being forced to return to Spain. Many were in fact extradited by the authorities of Vichy France. Some managed to stay in France; a large group ended up in German concentration camps. Many Communists left for Russia. A minority of the refugees were lucky enough to get onto a ship to the Americas; the largest group of these went to Mexico. When it was clear that the Republic was going to lose the war, Mexican President Cárdenas once again lived up to his reputation. In 1938, he had declared that Mexico would admit as many as sixty thousand Spanish refugees. In April 1939 Bassols, his French ambassador, extended this offer, announcing that Mexico would accept all the refugees for whom the Republican authorities would carry the cost of transport and accommodation (Fagen 35–6). In total, between fifteen and thirty thousand Spaniards took advantage of this generous offer.[8]

Cárdenas's motives for receiving the Spaniards displaced by the Civil War were in great part, but not solely, humanitarian. Since the Revolution (1910–20) Mexico had prided itself on being a haven for political refugees (Trotsky's example has been mentioned already). Aiding the Republican refugees also seemed to follow naturally from Mexico's pre-