

DEAR COMRADES: ANALYZING LETTERS TO *LA*  
*PIRENAICA* AS MIGRANT NARRATIVE

by

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A THESIS

Presented to the Department of Romance Languages  
and the Robert D. Clark Honors College  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Arts

May 2021

## **An Abstract of the Thesis of**

Brenna Barton for the degree of Bachelor of Arts  
in the Department of Romance Languages to be taken June 2021

Title: Dear Comrades: Analyzing Letters to *La Pirenaica* as Migrant Narrative

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This thesis evaluates a collection of 25 letters written in the 1960s by Spanish emigrants to France for *Radio España Independiente (La Pirenaica)* developing the writers' firsthand accounts of their experiences as Migrant Narrative. Fleeing General Francisco Franco's military-fascist regime, hundreds of thousands of Spaniards left their country to seek protection and work in France. Once across the border, these men and women looked to a clandestine, communist-run radio station known as *La Pirenaica* for comfort and community to combat their feelings of isolation in their new place of residence. The radio station offered programs dedicated to reading mail from its listeners, and through these programs the letters to *La Pirenaica* were born. In these letters, migrants detail the hardships they experienced as foreign workers in France, offer counsel to the station's audience, and air their political grievances against Franco. The forthcoming pages investigate the migrants' narratives surrounding community and work to develop the history of this decade as the letter-writers experienced it.

## **Acknowledgements**

I extend my sincerest gratitude to my primary advisor, Professor Gina Herrmann, whose dedicated and inspirational mentorship allowed me to make this thesis a reality. Similarly, I would like to thank my second reader, Professor Julie Weise for providing me with the incredible opportunity to work on this project and for her unwavering support throughout this long process. Thank you as well to my CHC representative, Professor Dare Baldwin for generously volunteering to take on this task, and to Miriam Alexis Jordan of the CHC for her understanding and accommodation in these complicated times.

I will also take this opportunity to thank my parents for supporting and encouraging me when I needed it most. Finally, I would like to thank my sister, Jordan. This thesis would not exist without your steadfast support.

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## Introduction

After years of violence, the Spanish civil war (1936-1939) ended with a military coup that placed General Francisco Franco-*El Caudillo*-in charge of the country. The war left hundreds of thousands of Spaniards dead, and its survivors would be haunted by political repression, state-sanctioned murder, and torture for decades to come. Despite *El Caudillo*'s claims that he brought peace to his country, his 35-year regime was anything but peaceful and prosperous for the average citizen. Franco's evolving military-fascist regime, which lasted from 1939 until his death in 1975, initially drove Spain into severe poverty. Towards the later years of the regime Franco worked to motivate economic revival and the country recovered from nearly a decade of starvation, but unemployment and political repression still plagued ordinary citizens.

Finally, fed up with hunger, unemployment, and Francoism, thousands of Spaniards who had remained in the country after the civil war began to leave in droves. Even as Spain recovered from its highest levels of poverty, migrants left for a variety of reasons from looking for work to escaping political targeting. Popular narratives of this migratory wave categorize migrants as either laborers or refugees, but often these statuses intertwined. For example, some migrants were forced to look for work outside of Spain even when work there was available because they had lost the favor of Franco's government and were in danger in Spain, making them refugees but also laborers. Between 1950 and 1968, record numbers migrated in search of work and political asylum. Due to the undocumented and seasonal nature of much of this migratory wave, estimates that over 300,000 migrants entered France during this period likely miss the real total by thousands. France received a large portion of these migrants

due in part to a strong tradition of Spanish migration there, particularly as political refugees during the Spanish civil war and the early, most repressive years of Franco's regime. Spaniards represented the largest portion of migrants in France during the 1960s.

This project investigates the experience of the hundreds of thousands of Spanish transplants who migrated to France during the 1960s to enter the French labor market and escape Franco-ism in terms of their own self-created Migrant Narrative. Estimates suggest that over 300,000 migrants entered France during this decade settling primarily in urban areas like Paris, or in agricultural country like the departments on the Rhône river or the south of France. Many of these migrants came to France without official papers, forced to live and work in hiding from the authorities, and most lacked more than an elementary education. For this reason, the data that exists about this migratory wave lacks a personal perspective. It has been difficult to find written records about the migrants' experiences—as mainly working-class people, they did not consider themselves writers and thus they hardly published autobiographies. How did the migrants feel about Franco-ist Spain? What were their working conditions like? How did they develop a sense of community or feel alienated in France? Until recently, it has been difficult to answer these questions because these migrants left very little trace. However, the Archive of the Spanish Communist Party in Madrid has recently made available a substantial archive of letters written by these very migrants about their experiences in exile. I use sources from this archive, "*Correo de la Pirenaica*" [mail from the Pirenaica], personal letters which were written by Spaniards who emigrated to

France to *Radio España Independiente (La Pirenaica)*, to investigate the interactions between the migrants and their new community.

*La Pirenaica* was a clandestine, anti-Franco radio station run by members of the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) that began broadcasting out of Moscow in 1941. One month before its first broadcast, the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union roused the Communist International (Comintern) to develop plans for a means of communication between the various exiled and scattered fragments of European Communist parties in countries occupied at the time by the Nazis or their sympathizers. Due to the second World War, Communist parties almost totally lacked the ability to communicate with each other and existed in hiding in many countries where, as followers of an opposing political ideology, members' beliefs put them in grave danger. The radio station began as a plan to reunite these communist groups through a shared means of communication. The Comintern worked with a Soviet radio company with the approval of the Soviet government to found the radio station's headquarters in Moscow, Russia. The headquarters moved between Moscow, Ufa, and Bucharest, Romania during its lifetime, moving when necessary to protect its anonymity and secure safer airwaves. From these headquarters emitted several communist, anti-Fascist, and anti-Nazi radio programs directed throughout Europe including *Radio España Independiente*. *La Pirenaica* put out its first emission on July 22, 1941, just one month after the Nazi invasion, broadcasting tirelessly until its dismantlement in 1971 after the first post-Franco democratic elections in Spain (Zaragoza Fernandez).

Throughout its early years, *La Pirenaica* served as a vehicle for communist propaganda led by the charismatic Dolores Ibárruri (*Pasionaria*). *Pasionaria* (1895-

1989) was a prominent Spanish communist and journalist known for her inspiring speeches and for her ability to unite Spaniards under the communist mission. As the first director of *La Pirenaica*, she became legend among the station's listenership. Correspondence to the station frequently praised *Pasionaria*, idolizing her as "una especie de santa laica, madre de los oprimidos, encarnación de los sufrimientos del pueblo español," [a saint, mother of the oppressed, incarnation of Spain's suffering] (Zaragoza Fernandez ch.1). She embodied the station, broadcasting or working behind the scenes almost daily until she left the Soviet Union for France in 1945. Her voice on the airwaves crucially inspired women to join the anti-Fascist movement, motivating correspondence from a female listenership and working in tandem with women-led anti-Fascist organizations. *Pasionaria* eventually returned to the Soviet Union and in the station's later years her voice remained present but not prominent (Zaragoza Fernandez).

*Pasionaria's* work for the station exemplifies the resistant spirit of *La Pirenaica* that guided its messaging and inspired its listeners in the anti-Fascist cause. Due to a lack of accessible letters, the forthcoming research does not speak comprehensively to the feminine aspect of the anti-Francoist movement or to the experiences of female migrants. However, migrant women certainly interacted with *La Pirenaica*, albeit in smaller numbers than migrant men. Published literature cited in the literature review provides more context for migrant women's role within the context of the station. Similarly, *Pasionaria's* vital roles the Spanish Communist Party and at *La Pirenaica* demonstrate the prominence of women in the anti-Francoist movement.

In the late 1950s, the radio station shifted towards a more interactive format and began its calls for correspondence. *La Pirenaica*'s express mission was to contribute to the demise of Franco-ism which it worked towards in this decade through the use of listener intel (Zaragoza Fernández). The station operated the way a call-in radio show would today, asking its listeners to send in letters that would often be read on air. In fact, the station developed several programs specifically dedicated to reading portions of listeners' letters. One of these programs "*España Fuera de España*" [Spain outside of Spain] was created for letters written by emigrants about their newfound conditions. The station received over 15,000 letters throughout its lifetime (1941-1977) written by Spaniards from all walks of life about a variety of different topics (*Las Cartas de La Pirenaica* 12, 57).

Since Franco's regime severely limited freedom of speech, Spaniards listened to the clandestine radio station on secret channels, frequently interrupted by government censors. Additionally, anyone caught writing to the station could have been imprisoned, so most of the letter-writers were Spaniards writing from outside of Spain. The majority of letters originated from France which in 1967 boasted 42% of the total correspondence to the station compared to just 4.8% out of Germany or 32.2% from inside of Spain (*Las Cartas de La Pirenaica* 119). Through the station, Spanish migrants developed a sense of community as they heard their own words and the words of their comrades read on air every night. Due to language barriers and labor exploitation in their new places of residence, and often as seasonal migrants, many of whom did not develop fluency in French, the Spaniards did not tend to integrate into French society. Their isolation left them vulnerable to exploitation as they were afraid

or did not have the proper papers to seek help from the French government. Their messages to the station, then, represent a form of resistance against this isolation. The authors sought to feel part of a community of Spanish anti-fascists at home and abroad to mitigate the toll of their daily lives.

Since the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) maintained the station, most of the writers held communist ideologies themselves. This ideology colored their writing and inspired many of them to use the station to talk about their experiences working in France. Because it would have been extremely dangerous to openly express communist sentiment and resist Franco's regime inside of Spain, letter-writers sent a significant portion of the letters that reached *La Pirenaica* from France or other European countries. Not every letter-writer held strong communist ideologies; some writers discovered communism, or simply anti-Francoism, upon arrival in France where for the first time they were free from the political repression in Spain that barred them from engaging with politics. Indeed, every letter represented in this thesis originated from France.

As these authors turned their stories into letters, they contributed to a type of history called Migrant Narrative. Researchers at the University of California, Davis Global Migration Center use this term to define accounts of migration-related events as they are described by the migrants themselves ("Migrant Narratives"). The writing encapsulated in this archive of letters represents a deeply personal account of the migratory wave of the 1960s, a Migrant Narrative. The authors' voices and experiences shine through in the text as they develop a personal history that only they could write. My thesis addresses a selection of the letters from the PCE's archive, focusing on those

that talk about community and work, to get a sense of the migrants' experience and to explore the role of *La Pirenaica* in spreading their messages.

Due to the individual nature of the migrant stories within the letters, one cannot always ensure the veracity of each of the claims of exploitation therein. Regardless, the value of this source material lies in its ability to enlighten us about personal experiences and emotions. The macro-historical data that exists about this period suffices to give us a sense of the factual history that accompanies the vital personal history in these letters. The genre of Migrant Narrative represents history as it perceived by the people who have lived through it. Thus, the perspective of Migrant Narrative offers the perspective of lived experience which is particularly valuable to the study of a historical period.

I have compiled a collection of Migrant Narratives from this archive by sorting the contents of my selected letters into broad thematic categories and drawing conclusions about these authors' experiences based on what they had to say about these themes. These narratives speak about two primary themes: community and work. In the community section of this thesis, I determine what role the *Pirenaica* radio station played in facilitating the formation of a migrant community. I do this by analyzing migrant letters that speak about how the letter-writers rely on the station, as well as looking at the messages of authors who asked for their letters to be read on air to determine how migrants communicated to their audience through this medium. The radio station played a crucial role in these authors' lives as it helped them overcome the isolation they experienced abroad and provided advice and warnings for future migrants.

The second section develops the topic of work, a subject which almost every letter in this selection mentions. Work was the defining factor of these migrants lives since the majority of them migrated to France to find better employment than that available in Spain. Consequently, these letters provide a wealth of knowledge about conditions under which foreign laborers, especially undocumented laborers, lived in France in the decade of the 1960s. In this section I also speak to the forces that drove migrants out of Spain including poverty, false promises of prosperity for emigrants in France, and political danger.

Often writing anonymously and free from the omnipresent censorship in Spain, authors resist the peaceful and prosperous narrative of Spain under Franco and use their personal experiences to criticize the dictator. The unrest in Spain and a falsely prosperous image of migrant workers in France contextualize the migrants' work experiences in there where they tended to take difficult jobs for low pay with shoddy contracts because these options were still better than their options in Spain. At the same time, these workers fled to France because they did not anticipate that the reality of life in abroad would be so trying. In these difficult situations, the letters reveal migrants' resilient spirits, providing evidence of their work with communist-leaning French labor unions to try to improve their circumstances. These two large themes of community and work guide my analysis of the narratives contained in these letters, forming a nuanced picture of the writers' lives that other sources cannot provide.

## Background

Between the start of Francisco Franco's regime and the end of World War II, hundreds of thousands of Spaniards starved to death due to inability to afford food and poor government rationing practices. Historian Antonio Cazorla-Sánchez uses official documents and anecdotes from survivors to describe this horrifying experience in his book, *Fear and Progress: Ordinary Lives in Franco's Spain, 1939-1975*. His research explains what drove Spaniards away from their beloved *patria* [homeland], rejecting the official narrative of Spain's success under Franco. In June of 1964, Spain officially celebrated *Veinticinco Años de Paz* [25 years of peace], but abject poverty plagued ordinary Spaniards. In fact, Cazorla-Sánchez places the death toll from starvation at around 200,000 during the "hunger years" (Cazorla-Sánchez 9) between 1939-45. He explains the toll this took on Spanish society as some towns were decimated by death and others left almost empty from migration. Looking at the educational gaps and the effects of the absence of the migrants, Cazorla-Sánchez suggests that "not only do poor people pay the tax of migration, poor regions do as well" (Cazorla-Sánchez 95). Poorer regions tended to send more workers away, whether towards urban Spanish cities or out of the country and suffer from significantly worse famine and loss of education.

On top of these emotional and economic traumas, Franco further damaged Spain's future by failing to invest in education. Cazorla-Sánchez blames Franco's under-funding of education for the record-low literacy in Spain under his regime (Cazorla-Sánchez). Students dropped out of school in droves to join the workforce to support themselves and their families. Cazorla-Sánchez's focus on Franco's Spain from the perspective of ordinary Spaniards provides an optic similar to that I hope to achieve

with my thesis. The text of the letters demonstrates this educational gap as almost every author writes with significant spelling and grammar mistakes.

### **The State of Migration to France in the 1960s**

The letters from *La Pirenaica* represent a history of Spanish migrant workers in France in the 1960s, which illustrate, among various issues, the longevity of Francoist economic and social repression of the vanquished classes of the Spanish Civil War. To contextualize the information in these sources, we must understand the patterns of Spanish migration to France before and during this period, as well as the treatment and involvement of Spanish migrant workers in France. A strong tradition of Spanish migration exists throughout Europe, but specifically in France. According to research in the essay “Entre mercados laborales y fronteras estatales. La emigración de trabajadores españoles a Francia (1955-1982)” [Between Labor Markets and State Borders. The Emigration of Spanish Laborers to France] by María José Fernández Vincente, in the mid-1950s a sizeable colony of Spanish migrants estimated at around 288,000 people already existed in France. This colony evolved from the fall of Barcelona to Franco’s forces at the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939 which sent some 500,000 political refugees fleeing to France where they established the first notable Spanish migrant community in the country. The migratory wave that these letter authors were part of roughly began in the late 1950s, building upon this existing colony as emigration into France skyrocketed throughout the early 1960s and eventually tapered off towards the end of the 1970s (Vincente 239). The Spanish population in France more than doubled as a consequence of this massive migratory wave, with the number of Spaniards in France in 1968 estimated at around 600,000 (Vincente 239-240). The migrants who

comprised this wave, particularly those emigrating to France in the decade of the 60s, were the authors of the letters in this selection to *La Pirenaica*.

The above data represents the broad strokes of Spanish migrants in France, but a narrower study from José Babiano's article "El vínculo del trabajo: los emigrantes españoles en la Francia de los treinta gloriosos" [The Bond of Work: Spanish Emigrants in France during the Thirty Post-war Years] looks at actively working migrants, particularly in the agricultural sector. His data gives a more specific image of the distribution of Spanish migrants in different types of work and gives a preliminary image of the treatment of Spanish migrants in terms of their work contracts and social experience in France. The agricultural sector here refers mainly to the production and harvest of crops like beets, rice, and wine grapes. Babiano finds that Spaniards tended to favor agricultural work over other sectors much more than other nationalities working in France. In 1968 although there were only around 39,820 Spaniards working in agriculture, that figure represented 14.5% of all Spaniards working in France at the time (Babiano 14). Spaniards also maintained a notable presence as part of the seasonal agricultural workforce with the annual average influx estimated to be around 98,404 seasonal workers between 1962 and 1974 (Babiano 14).

Some of the most popular destinations for Spanish migrants were the areas near the Rhône river, Lyon, Paris, and some departments in the South of France (Vincente 241). These areas housed many of the letter-writers from this selection. The more southern departments and destinations near the river tended to take in the seasonal agricultural migrants, while work for those in Paris were year-round service-oriented jobs. A good portion of letter authors worked in agriculture, sectors which naturally

tended to be more rural, but we observe a strong Spanish presence in more urban industrial and service industries as well. Spanish women worked at a rate of 46% in the service industry according to Babiano's article (Babiano 14). These data give a clearer picture of the distribution of Spaniards throughout France, providing more context for the letter writers personal accounts.

The letter-writers' immigration statuses frequently contributed to their mistreatment as reported by several of the letter authors. Babiano and Vincente provide more context regarding the ways Spaniards arrived in France, with both historians agreeing that unofficial "tourist visa" migration was one of the most popular pathways for this group (Babiano 14, Vincente 246). Vincente describes how the Spanish and French governments collaborated to open "official" migrations pathways between Spain and France in 1961 upon noticing the need for workforce in France and the migratory wave leaving Spain. In France, the *Office National d'Immigration* (ONI) and in Spain the *Instituto Español de Emigración* (IEE) were the immigration offices involved in officially organizing the workforce transfer. Vincente explains how the IEE offered two main types of contracts: nominative and anonymous, and which hired workers based on specifically named recommendations or numerical quotas respectively (Vincente 245).

Although migrants could avail themselves of these immigration routes, citizens knew them to be extremely slow and inefficient, and there were frequent instances of problems with contracts or mistakes in the number of migrants sent on a contract. Due to these problems, a large portion of migrants turned to unofficial methods, the easiest and most popular of which entailed sneaking into France and overstaying a tourist visa. These visas proved relatively easy to acquire and if one had enough money for a car or

train ride it was fairly simple to get into France where the next step in the immigration process was simply to stay put. Babiano explains that France's immigration policy perhaps inadvertently encouraged this method of migration due to a policy of naturalization *a posteriori*, meaning that it was much easier for migrants already living in France to become naturalized citizens and acquire the appropriate documentation (Babiano 16). So many migrants took advantage of this policy that in 1966, only 24% of non-seasonal workers had entered France through the official channels (16). In 1968, the French government closed this loophole, terminating the *a posteriori* naturalization process and thereby incentivizing migrants to return to using the official pathways, although migration was already significantly declined by this time (Vincente 247). Since it took until 1968 for this regulation to change, a good portion of those who wrote to *La Pirenaica* had taken advantage of the tourist visa method and were undocumented migrants.

These undocumented Spaniards in France in the '60s experienced significant exploitation due to their immigration status. Bosses in France found that hiring undocumented workers presented an excellent way to cut costs as migrants accepted lower salaries than the native French workforce due to their pressing need to find work (Babiano 17). This gave the migrants a reputation as desirable hires due to their "alto rendimiento y docilidad" [high quality of work and docility] (Babiano 20). Scholars Pierre Carrière and Robert Ferras support this finding in their article "Les vendangeurs espagnols en Languedoc et Roussillon" [Spanish Grape Pickers in Languedoc and Roussillon] explaining that the foremen of French vineyards liked Spanish workers for their work ethic and "la manière dont ils s'accrochent, au début tout au moins, des

médiocres conditions de logement qui leur sont offerts, ainsi que la modestie de leurs exigences en matière de rémunération” [the way they accept, at least initially, the mediocre housing conditions that they are offered as well as the modesty of their demands in terms of remuneration] (Carrière and Ferras 8). This instance refers specifically to research about the wine industry, but the statement applies more broadly as it summarizes the French bosses’ attitudes towards Spanish workers.

A few authors to *La Pirenaica* were aware of this damaging stereotype and denounced the bosses for hiring at such low salaries and taking advantage of the desperate migrant workforce. The language barrier and their immigration status were the major factors the left migrant workers open to being taken advantage of in France. One common example of this was with their work contracts which, besides entailing extremely low salaries and high work expectations, were written in French and were thus unreadable for most migrants. Sometimes, migrants did not even receive a copy of their contracts until after their contract was up, making the workers essentially hostage to the bosses without their paperwork in hand (Babiano 20). The letter-writers frequently talk about these problems with their contracts, personalizing this practice as described generally in Babiano.

One of the migrants’ main remedies against this exploitation was the help of labor unions, although legal barriers discouraged such association. Until 1968, unions were not legally allowed to publish material in foreign languages in France, meaning that pamphlets and meeting information would have been difficult to access for Spanish migrants who rarely boasted the ability to read French (Babiano 27). Similarly, emigrants could not hold union office, leaving them disempowered within the union

structure. Despite these obstacles, one union stands out in this history for the incredible work it did to help Spanish migrant workers. The CGT or the *Confédération Générale du Travail* [General Confederation of Labor] was the most powerful union in France for decades after the WWII (Babiano 31). The CGT union recognized that French bosses exploited foreign workers as a strategy to keep workers of all nationalities on extremely low salaries since it created competition between foreign and domestic workers fighting for the same jobs. The union organized against this practice, fighting for “[l]a igualdad salarial y el acceso al disfrute de los derechos colectivos” [equal pay and access to the enjoyment of collective rights] victories which the union believed would bring together French and foreign workers uniting the working-class against the exploitation of the ruling class (Babiano 31).

Evidence suggests that the CGT did publish materials in Spanish to attract migrant workers, and many letter-writers praise the union for the work it did to protect them and their countrymen against their bosses’ malpractice. The relationship between this union and Spanish migrants features significantly in the migrant narrative encapsulated by these letters of which a great portion include stories of exploitation and victories against exploitative bosses through union assistance. This close relationship also drew on the CGT’s ties to the French Communist Party (PCF). The Spanish Francoist government outlawed the Spanish Communist Party in the early 1950s, so Spanish communists in France seeking a new community for their political ideals gravitated towards the CGT union for its close PCF ties.

The previous depiction of the state of Spanish migrant workers in France does not tell us enough about what it was these hundreds of thousands of migrants actually

went through. For the purposes of this research, all of this information will contextualize the stories of the letter-writers to *La Pirenaica*, serving as a background to the wealth of feeling, memory, and personal truth that the letters represent.

## Literature Review

Very few academic projects have worked with this collection of letters from the *Archivo Histórico del Partido Comunista Español* (AHPCE) [Historical Archive of the Spanish Communist Party] to publish the Migrant Narrative contained therein. *Las Cartas de La Pirenaica: Memoria del antifranquismo* [Letters of *La Pirenaica: Memory of Anti-Francoism*] by Armand Balsabre and Rosario Fontova offers the most thorough available analysis of these letters. The book comprises primary source material from a large portion of the over 15,000 available letters and provides historical context to accompany its findings. This book proved critical to my own research and represents the type of work my thesis aims to produce in miniature. *Las Cartas de La Pirenaica* takes a much broader focus than my own, and it often delves deeper into the political sphere while neglecting to talk about my primary focus of narratives of labor. Nevertheless, *Las Cartas de La Pirenaica* represents significant progress towards making the contents of these letters accessible to historians and trying to get these important firsthand messages recognized.

The authors organize their volume by important themes represented in the letters that deal with Franco, exile, the Cold War, strikes/labor, hunger, and education. In each of these sections, the authors combine historical background with the letter-writers' own descriptions. Balsabre and Fontova have done extraordinary work researching the identities of the authors about whom they could find information and compiling those details with excerpts from their letters to create a complex picture of their experiences. And most crucially, the authors assert the value of this unique radio station, describing

it as “la primera depositaria de la memoria histórica del antifranquismo” [The primary depository of historical memory of Anti-Francoism] (*Las Cartas de La Pirenaica* 7).

Although not directly related to the focus of my research, Balsabre and Fontova’s article “Las mujeres de La Pirenaica. El primer feminismo antifranquista de la radio Española” [The Radio Pirenaica women. The first anti-Franco Feminism in the Spanish radio] which investigates the role of women in the anti-francoist movement also provides valuable context surrounding the demographics of La Pirenaica’s correspondents. Balsabre and Fontova used around 16 letters sent to the Pirenaica program “Página de la mujer” [women’s page] to explore the role and identity of women who engaged with the station. They found that the radio station strategically engaged women in the 1960s to add volume to their anti-Francoist complaint. While the traditional image of the woman in communist circles was that of a rare and highly educated academic, the women who corresponded with La Pirenaica tended to be part of the working class. Balsabre and Fontova cite the passionate appeals of the radio station’s female broadcasters for securing this new demographic. La Pirenaica’s legendary director Dolores Ibarruri (Pasionaria) and the host of “Página de la mujer,” Josefina López Sanmartín (Pilar Aragón) worked tirelessly to recruit women to the anti-Francoist movement by appealing to everyday women with simple yet passionate language. Like the men, the women who corresponded with La Pirenaica crossed several lines of identity. They were wives and mothers, family members of political prisoners, refugees, and workers. Thus, their letters speak to everything from political sentiments to concerns about their children’s education (“Las mujeres”). Using a

collection of letters written by women to which I do not have access, his article offers the feminine perspective that my research does not.

Historian and journalist Mario Amorós also delves into the archived letters in his book, *El correo del exilio. Cartas a Radio España Independiente (1962-1964)* [Mail from Exile. Letters to *Radio España Independiente*]. Working with 112 letters written by Spaniards in exile in different European countries, Amorós offers social, cultural, and political insights. He emphasizes personal experience and the sentiments of everyday men and women resisting Franco's regime from abroad (Amorós). This illuminating book employs a narrower focus (albeit a larger geographic frame) than Balsabre and Fontova and produces a more intimate social history.

Another crucial work that provides a basis for my research is *Pirenaica. La voz de la esperanza antifranquista* [*Pirenaica. The Voice of Anti-Francoist Hope*] by Luis Zaragoza Fernández. This work establishes the history of *La Pirenaica* from a sociological point of view. As opposed to previous research on the station which tended to focus on its political work, this book evaluates the radio station for its social value to Spain and the emigrant community. In two sections Zaragoza Fernández draws from the AHPCE archive, using the letters to draw conclusions about the quantity and demographics of writers to *La Pirenaica* (Zaragoza Fernández). This resource evaluates the letters as sources of information about the radio station itself and does not necessarily attempt to provide the social history that Balsabre and Fontova's book and my project present.

Two notable films also explore the experience of Spanish migrants during the 1960s, representing social history in a unique way to published literature. The

documentary *Tren de la memoria* [Train of memory] (2005) directed by Marta Arribas and Ana Pérez uses archival footage and testimony from several emigrants to document the realities of leaving Spain in the 1960s. Since this migratory wave occurred just 60 years ago, some emigrants or their family members are still alive to tell the story today. *Tren de la memoria* interviews some of these survivors, giving them an intimate platform to describe their experiences. Consequently, the documentary also offers a chance to discover what happened to some emigrants upon their return to Spain after years living in exile, information which the anonymous letters cannot provide. The documentary focuses primarily on men and women who emigrated to West Germany and other parts of Europe, so it does not offer the French perspective of the letter-writers from this project. However, the value of documentary film as a medium for storytelling and the production of Migrant Narrative cannot be overstated.

Another film, *Un Franco, 14 pesetas* [One franc, 14 pesetas] (2006) directed by Carlos Iglesias explores the experience of emigration in a more creative, feature film style. The movie follows two young Spaniards who emigrate without papers to Switzerland in the '60s, leaving their families behind. The young men carry on affairs with two local women until their wives and children arrive. Once again, this film focuses on the Spanish migratory wave outside of France, but still offers valuable insights into the migrant experience. The migrants' struggle to assimilate and adapt to their new place of residence stands out in this film, just as this struggle stands out in the letters. While these films do not deal with the archived letters, they do provide a new and unique image of the experience for these migrants which contextualizes the experiences described in the letters.

Balsabre and Fontova's and Amorós' works takes a more politically focused approach than mine, and Zaragoza Fernández uses the letters to discover demographic information, rather than social history. Therefore, my project presents a more focused interpretation of a small selection of letters as Migrant Narrative based around the themes of community and work. My work also stands out as the only one of these projects to be written in English. I hope that writing in English and providing translations of Spanish quotations where I use them will make this work accessible for English speakers as an opportunity to become more familiar with a fascinating but underrepresented piece of French and Spanish history.

## Methods

In order to write about the migrant experience of this period, I have engaged with migrant voices. I work with letters written by Spanish migrants during the 1960s to develop my analysis. These handwritten letters were saved by *La Pirenaica* when they were sent in and are now in the hands of the Archive of the Spanish Communist Party as a collection entitled “*El Correo de La Pirenaica*.” This globally unique archive may be the largest existing collection of letters such as these. The testimonies stored here represent a singular opportunity to explore one migration from thousands of different perspectives; data like this simply does not exist for other migratory waves.

The original letters are accessible only at the PCE archive in Madrid, but Professor Julie Weise in the University of Oregon’s History Department personally traveled to Spain before the pandemic and took digital scans of a selection of the letters which she has generously shared for my research. The archive in Madrid contains thousands of letters, but the collection Professor Weise pulled from the archive represent only about 200 of these. Professor Weise selected these 200 letters based on her research on global migrations with a focus on work, so the selection represents a work-oriented portion of correspondence with *La Pirenaica*. While working with Professor Weise and then on my own, I narrowed that selection down to the much more manageable number of 25. The letters appearing in my thesis are 25 letters which represent a good cross-section of the larger selection, but which I know speak for only a minute portion of the information available in this archive.

The letters were handwritten by authors who tended to be functionally illiterate, so one of my greatest challenges, and certainly one deciding factor in which letters I

chose to use, was my ability to decipher the handwriting, grammar, and unique orthographical choices of letter-authors who often had little to no experience writing. It took me several readings per letter to decipher as much as I could and then, with the help of Professor Weise, I created translations and summaries of their contents which I searched for common themes. Using these summaries, I sorted the letters into the broad categories of my thesis which are approximately the community and work categories. Within these categories I use the migrants' own words via the letters to give a picture of their experience centered around the themes of community and work.

In order to use the migrants' own words, I quote the letters directly from the original Spanish and provide access to the letters themselves as part of this thesis project. While quoting from the original letters, I try to maintain the original spelling and grammar that the authors used as I feel that the unique spelling and grammar features of each author offer crucial insight into the author's experiences. This may make some of the quotations difficult to understand, but I have provided my own English translations of each quotation. Unfortunately, the unique grammar and spelling of each author do not translate in the English translations.

After sorting out the illegible or largely unintelligible letters, I looked through the remainder of the collection for letters that touched on the broad themes I addressed in my research questions such as the migrants' social experiences, the role of labor and labor unions, exploitation, and communist values. I based my research questions on these broad categories when I redeveloped them upon finding that my original questions were simply not relevant to the selection I had at hand. Professor Weise scanned 200 letters that spoke to her research focus of migration centered around work, so the

themes that I discovered in my own project speak to the bias within this selection. I acknowledge that by choosing my source material under these criteria and with the bias of having done a portion of my research before developing my final research questions, I may end up with a skewed perception of the migrants' experiences and may miss dissenting or outlying voices. Similarly, the entire archive of available letters represents its own form of selection bias regarding its narratives about Francoist Spain and the experience of emigration because not every Spanish emigrant in the 1960s wrote to *La Pirenaica*, meaning that I only have access to the voices of those who wished to (or had the means and opportunity to) share their stories.

Nevertheless, I have chosen to take this approach because of the sheer number of available letters. I do not have the access, nor the time nor the resources to deeply explore all of them. Regardless, I believe value still remains in taking a close look at these particular areas that I chose.

As I read the letters and began to organize their content in terms of broad topics, I took a qualitative approach. Rather than cataloging the number of times a term appeared, or the number of letters from a specific province or author, I focus instead on the content of each piece and the truths it could reveal about the migrant's experience. A qualitative approach best serves my project due to the small selection of letters I am investigating. Without the time, funds, or ability to access the entire archive in Madrid, it would be impossible for me to draw quantitative conclusions about the letters in the archive based on just the few in my possession.

Additionally, we already have access to a number of published works which take on a great portion of this task, as mentioned in my literature review above. I hope,

then, to supply a thorough picture of the migrant narrative available to me in my selection of 25 letters via qualitative analysis of their content which I sort into broad thematic categories in the pages ahead.

## Community

“Queridos camaradas,” [dear comrades] a man known as El Dos Veces Emigrante addresses the directors of the radio station in a letter dated May 26, 1964, “os saludo con todo el cariño que os merecéis, porque llebais un trabajo incansable para la causa del pueblo Español” [I greet you with all of the warmth you deserve for your tireless work for Spain’s cause] (PCE, *Letter from El dos veces emigrante to REI*) he praises the radio station’s patriotic work. Several letters began just like this, with a familiar, yet formal, greeting before the author dives into the subject of his letter. This greeting suggests a strong feeling of solidarity between this author and the station’s directors, the word comrades specifically indicates their shared communist values, and represents the theme of the forthcoming section: community. When *La Pirenaica* read migrant letters out on air, they built a community by sharing the advice, warnings, political declarations, and personal stories of their audience. Their listeners felt solidarity with the stories they heard over the radio despite often being geographically far from one another. This section analyzes the discourse around the station in selected letters, using examples of authors praising or making requests of the station to identify how the migrant authors valued *La Pirenaica*.

*La Pirenaica* sponsored a community of politically like-minded Spaniards by offering programming like non-censored news, and above all listener testimonials. These listener testimonials united Spaniards at home and abroad as they gave the audience an opportunity to spread information to a geographically widespread network of other migrants or potential migrants without endangering their identities. Based on testimonies from the letters, these authors felt a sense of responsibility towards their

fellow Spaniards since many letters include explicit requests to be read on air or references to spreading whatever information they submitted in their letters.

### **Advice and Warnings**

Authors frequently used their letters to give advice or warnings to listeners, using their personal experiences to help potential future migrants. Calls to join up with French labor unions were one of the most common pieces of advice. In a February 25, 1963 letter, Enrique, an agricultural worker in Carpentras and frequent letter-writer, tells of a case where a French union helped a couple receive their pay after their boss shorted them. He states “considero que *La Pirenaica* debe publicarlo para que los que venimos a trabajar al extranjero sepamos que en Francia hay sindicatos que nos defienden,” [I feel that *La Pirenaica* should publish this so that those who come to work abroad know that there are unions in France who will defend us] (PCE, *Letter from Enrique to REI*) asking the station to help him spread the word about French labor unions, thereby making it easier for Spanish migrants to find such help if they needed it.

Likewise, a frequent letter-writer by the pen name El Dos Veces Emigrante in Saint-Chamas supplies another story of some friends who received help from the same labor union along with a similar request. In a letter from May 26, 1964, he states that the French union proved to be so valuable to Spanish migrants that he wants all Spanish workers who came over to associate themselves with it immediately. To this end, he requests that the station read his letter on air, “quiero que hagáis publico lo que os mando,” [I want you to publish what I send you] (PCE, *Letter from El dos veces emigrante to REI*) so that this advice reached the widest audience possible. These

examples offer friendly advice to try to make the process of emigrating and finding work easier on future migrants.

However, there were sinister forces at play in France that migrants needed to watch out for like exploitative bosses, bad contracts, or poor working conditions. For these things, advice would not suffice, so some authors took on a serious tone, hinting in their requests for publication that the reality of emigrating to France was not what it seemed. For example, a young carpenter called García Sánchez in Carpentras writes in a letter from April 5, 1964 “quisiera si es posible que radiaras mi carta para decirles una vez mas a todos mis ermanos de clase la bida que llevamos todos los españoles cuando salimos al extranjero en calidad de emigrantes” [I would like, if possible, for you to broadcast my letter to tell my brothers once again what kind of life all Spaniards have when we go abroad as emigrants] (PCE, *Letter from García Sánchez to REI*). Here, Sánchez refers to the network of migrant listeners as his “ermanos” [brothers] showing his feeling of intimacy and solidarity with his countrymen, specifically those who are planning to migrate to France towards whom they directed this information. However, he also talks about what “clase de vida” [kind of life] he and fellow migrants experience in France, a phrase supplied without positive adjectives that hints at a poor quality of life. With this statement he also sets up rest of his letter as an example of the life of a migrant worker, using his personal experience as a warning. The rest of his letter talks about the conditions for agricultural workers in his area. Although he himself does not seem to be in this line of work, he has thought to warn the audience of the station that he has witnessed these workers’ conditions to be difficult.

An author with the initials F.T. similarly used the station to send an ominous warning to the network about the realities of being a migrant worker in France. In a letter from July 19, 1962 he writes “[h]os escribo esta carta con el objeto de que los trabajadores españoles que ban al extranjero sepan como se les trata” [I write you this letter so that the Spanish workers who go abroad know how we they will be treated] (PCE, *Letter from F.T. to REI*). In this example, F.T. describes the conditions at a mining operation high in the French Pyrenees mountains where workers barely make enough money to cover the cost of their gear despite working every day even through storms and complain of almost total isolation at the mining camp. By prefacing this example with the above statement, F.T. disputes the popular conception that work in France paid more and provided better opportunities than were available in Spain. These two examples explicitly warn potential migrants that the stories they may have heard about migrating to France were wrong. By writing to the station, the authors reform this narrative to try to provide a more accurate picture of a migrant’s options for the station’s listeners. Above all, statements like these demonstrate the solidarity among this migrant community where authors hoped to help their countrymen via honest, experience-based advice that would have been extremely difficult to come by without the station.

While migrants felt disillusioned upon arrival in France, the situation in Spain often proved to be worse. One anonymous author wrote from France on June 2, 1962 to inform the station of a few problems back in his home city of Moratalla, Spain. Primarily, he sought to denounce a man whom he claimed was hated in Moratalla for his base moral character. Again, this anonymous author explicitly states the purpose of

his letter to warn or “hacer savel al pueblo” [let the town know] about this man who “tiene aspecto de griminal” [looks like a criminal] (PCE, *Letter from anónimo to REI*). He reports that this rich landowner was overheard chatting with some friends about the recent miners’ strike in Moratalla when he said that the striking miners should have been “dejado dentro de las minas” [left inside the mines] with their mouths covered up “para que se murieran” [so that they died] (PCE, *Letter from anónimo to REI*). This appalling declaration demonstrates the tensions between the working and upper classes, a sentiment that occurs frequently in the letters due to the station’s communist identity, and represents the danger for workers in Spain, particularly workers who attempted to fight for better conditions. Although this incident occurred in Spain and this thesis focuses primarily on immigrant experiences in France, the emigrants’ experiences were influenced by the factors in Spain that drove people to migrate and the culture of mistreatment of laborers that was present in both countries at the time. This example speaks to those factors and provides context for the letters that speak about France. Additionally, regardless of its geographical subject this letter represents more evidence for the trend of migrants using the station to warn fellow migrants about poor conditions.

Another popular motivation for writing to the station was to speak about politics free from the repression of Franco-ist news outlets in Spain. Issues like accounts of workplace accidents that befell migrants or the migrants’ political opinions would not have received attention in Spanish news as such information worked against the regime’s propaganda campaign. However, migrants felt a duty to their countrymen, especially those still trapped under Franco’s regime, to keep them informed about the

way the regime endangered Spaniards both at home and abroad. In a letter from March of 1963, exiled Spanish civil war veteran, Frauveros dedicates a few lines in solidarity with his countrymen fighting the good fight in Spain to encourage them to keep up their attack: “aprovecho la oportunidad por mediación de la misma, para decirle a mis camaradas que quedaron, que continúen su labor en pro de la democracia” [I will take this opportunity to tell my comrades who stayed to continue their labor for democracy] (PCE, *Letter from Frauveros to REI*). As a listener of the *Pirenaica* he has this unique opportunity to speak to those remaining in Spain with his letters. In fact, throughout his letter he comes out in support of general strikes and documents his hopes for Spain’s future including the removal of American military bases and freedom from the poverty and exploitation of the regime.

El Dos Veces Emigrante also takes advantage of this censorship-free channel to talk about the tragic murder of three fellow migrants in France. When he did not see the tragedy mentioned in any Spanish publications, El Dos Veces Emigrante took matters into his own hands and spoke directly to his people to warn them about the danger of Franco and his collaborators. He asks the station in a June 8th, 1964 letter to spread the news “para que vean todos los españoles que ni dentro ni fuera de nuestra Patria tenemos paz” [so that all Spaniards see that we have no peace in our outside of our country] (PCE, *Letter from El dos veces emigrante to REI*). Fidel Trujeda similarly used *La Pirenaica* to reveal the criminal activity of the regime. He describes in a letter from Marseille on January 2, 1967 how money orders sent by his group to political prisoners in Burgos were returned without justification, enclosing proof in his letter to the station and imploring them, “Os dejo a vuestro cargo estas letras os senalan lo ocurrido,

denunciarlos” [I leave you these letters that tell you what happened. Report them.] (PCE, *Letter from Fidel Trujeda to REI*). These authors recognized that writing to *La Pirenaica* gave them a chance to distribute the truth to Spaniards like themselves who might otherwise be unaware of the hardships faced by workers within Spain or simply blinded by the disconnect between what workers experienced and what the censored news reported in the Spain of Franco’s regime.

### **Home Away from Home**

These weighty examples demonstrate the responsibility that these migrants felt for their community via the station, but the station was more than a burden on migrants who felt the need to correspond, it also represented a home away from home for migrants feeling isolated. A woman going by Señora Morales corresponded multiple times with the station to discuss work, education, and her family, and she often praised the station as a source of comfort. In a June 22, 1962 letter she describes herself and her husband as “somo asiduo ollente y gran entusiasta” [we are regular listeners and big fans] (PCE, *Letter from Señora Morales to REI*) of the station and claims that they never miss a single broadcast. All this because hearing from the station, the voice of home speaking in their native Spanish, is a “consuelo” [comfort] that “nos da aliento y valor para poder seguir adelante sufriendo” [brings us courage and bravery to keep moving forwards through our suffering] (PCE, *Letter from Señora Morales to REI*). Although Señora Morales felt unhappy in France, the station gave her and her family some solace through its familiar language and sense of community.

The radio station also proved important to an author using the pen name Radio Escucha Perpetuo who writes about his difficult times in France but mentions that he

listens to the station with his children during family time. In a letter from Bordeaux dated April 15, 1962, this author writes that when he listens to radio with his family, his children object to “Radio Mentiras” [Radio of Lies] (the slang name of the Radio Nacional España station which according to this community broadcasted Francoist lies) and ask him to “pon nuestra Pirenaica” [put on our *Pirenaica*] (PCE, *Letter from Radio Escucha Perpetuo*). He has raised his kids to share his political sympathies, bringing them in as part of the *Pirenaica* community and simultaneously finding something to share with his family to unite them while abroad. Although he speaks of hardships in France, his adoration of the radio station shines throughout the letter.

Community proved crucial for *La Pirenaica*'s audience. The preceding testimonies demonstrate the way migrant letter-writers used the station to their advantage as both a source of solace and a bulletin board. Several authors took advantage of the opportunity to speak to their community over the airwaves, making specific requests of the station to publish pieces of their letters. Others praised the station for its personal impact on their lives. These letters provide a clear image of the importance of the radio station, and the community it fostered for its listeners in a time of loneliness and hardship.

## Work

The second major theme in this selection of letters entails work. Work was one thing almost all of the authors had in common, spread as they were all across France and experiencing quite different employment and housing conditions. Although the letters in my collection come from a selection focused specifically on labor, literature on the archived letters as a whole suggests that the theme of work features prominently across most of the missives. Migrants who entered France during this decade represented a wide variety of identities. Political and economic motivations combined to drive emigrants out of Spain, so to reduce their identities to a laborer or a refugee would lose this complexity. The following testimonies define the writers by their work experiences, but the reader must remember that these men were more than laborers.

Empirical data tells us that a significant portion of Spanish migrant workers did not secure legal documentation, which suggests they could have been vulnerable to exploitation due to their tenuous immigration status. The migrants' own testimonies of their work experiences paint a much clearer picture of their realities. Migrants describe abysmal housing and employment conditions as well as complaining about unfair or nonexistent contracts and absent pay. However, many note that these hardships were nothing compared to the ones that had driven them into exile. Several authors argue ardently against the myth of Spanish peace and prosperity under Franco, using their letters to express political opinions that would have been criminal offenses inside of Spain. Uncensored Spanish political speech of this nature from everyday men and women is rare. Additionally, several authors speak the praises of French labor unions that helped fight for foreign workers both with and without legal documentation. The

narrative of work in this section tells a complicated story of workers struggling to get by, trapped between France and Franco, and fighting for the chance to simply earn a living with dignity.

### **Driven out of Spain**

These migrant authors' journeys began when they made the decision to leave Spain, but from the way they describe the political and economic situation, it sounds like the decision to leave hardly represented a choice. Writing to *La Pirenaica* from the relative safety of France, hundreds of miles removed from Franco's censorious government, many migrants took the opportunity to blame Franco for their inability to make a living at home. One group of co-authors describe how they left their families behind to emigrate after working 14 hour days in Spain yet no longer making enough money to feed their children (PCE, *Letter from 25 Españoles to REI*). Another writer going by Pe Ga from Vaucluse found himself in the same situation, writing on June 29, 1962 "me encuentro fuera de mi nación por poder criar mis hijos" [I find myself far from my home so that I can take care of my children] (PCE, *Letter from Pe Ga to REI*). Pe Ga was a 30-year-old father of three who emigrated without his family to make money to send back home. He also describes how he had been raised in severe poverty, saying that his family never lived in a house, "no se lo que es bibir en una casa toda mi vida a sido bibiendo en cuevas" [I don't know what it is to live in a house, all my life I have been living in caves] (PCE, *Letter from Pe Ga to REI*). This extreme experience of poverty speaks to the early years of starvation under Franco's regime. Although extreme poverty dissipated moving into the 1950s, this difficult period left its mark on migrants who cite it as a challenge to Franco's claims of Spanish prosperity.

While she did not have to live in a cave, a mother of four says that she was fed up “de no tener pan para nuestros hijos ni una escuela donde aprenden a leer y escribir” [with not having bread for my children nor a school where they can learn to read and write] (PCE, *Letter from Señora Morales to REI*) so she and her husband moved to France. Despite their abiding love for their country, she vows that they will not return to Spain while Franco remains in power (PCE, *Letter from Señora Morales to REI*). Señora Morales is one of the few women who wrote to *La Pirenaica* as she and her husband and children all emigrated together. This statement comes from a letter she wrote on June 22, 1962, one of multiple letters she and her husband sent in.

Spanish men commonly emigrated without their wives and children during these years, usually due to safety concerns or the difficulty of moving an entire family across the border, so Señora Morales’s perspective remains somewhat unique in this collection. She cites the same concerns as many of the male authors including criticizing Franco’s regime, but she mentions that her inability to feed and educate her children concerns her the most. As these letters were written in the 1960s, the responsibility for raising children would have traditionally fallen almost entirely on Señora Morales’ shoulders as her husband took up the mantle of breadwinner. This explains why she writes of her concerns about feeding and educating her children, and why out of the entire collection, only Señora Morales mentions childrens’ education.

Returning to Franco, J.G. cite Franco’s obsession with military power as the reason for Spain’s ruination, suggesting that “si en vez de traer bombas para matar jente mostrara industrias para dar vida al pueblo pues nosotros no ubieramos venido aquí abandonando la familias” [if instead of bringing bombs to kill people he supported

industries to give life to our towns then we would not have come here and abandoned our families] (PCE, *Letter from J.G. to REI*). These migrants did not make the choice to leave Spain lightly, but they felt they had no other choice than to abandon their starving country before they starved with it. Señora Morales, calls this forced migration “uno de las mayores crímenes que a cometido nuestro dictador” [one of the worst crimes our dictator has committed] (PCE, *Letter from Señora Morales to REI*). Although they fervently criticize Franco’s government, J.G. and Señora Morales’ loyalties still lie with Spain. They suffer deeply at the loss of their country and they turn their pain into accusations against Franco for stealing it away from them.

### **Greener Pastures**

As poverty in Spain dragged on throughout the ‘60s, citizens looked for greener pastures across the border in France. The Spanish government and sometimes former migrants themselves encouraged some of this migration, tending to paint a prosperous picture of life for migrant workers in France. According to several migrant authors, though, this illusion led many migrants into poverty and exploitation. One young man was recruited to France by a friend whom he says gave him the wrong impression of what he would find there. “Pues ami todo melo puso de color de rosas” [well he described it to me through rose-colored glasses] (PCE, *Letter from Eugenio Andrés Sotero (El madriles) to REI*) he says of his friend’s story, but once he arrived in Carpentras he realized that everything was full and he waited months before he could find a job.

Señora Morales, on the other hand, admits that this move allowed her and her husband to feed their children, but laments the loss of her familiar home as the isolation

of being an emigrant weighs on her. She writes sadly that “aquí todo es rigidez y disciplina después del tormento de no poder hablar de no entender ni comprender a nadie” [here everything is rigid and disciplined as well as the torment of not being able to speak to or understand anyone] (PCE, *Letter from Señora Morales to REI*). Although she and her husband had no choice but to emigrate, they were not prepared for the harsh reality. Speaking to this reality, an anonymous writer in Paris describes the suffering that surrounds him as disillusioned migrants languish without work but unable to return home in a letter from February 7, 1965: “Ir por los barrios populares de París, por Bruselas, por los barrios de Ginebra, y veréis esos trozos vivos de España [...] en busca de trabajo, viviendo mal, luchando y, algunas veces también, muriendo desesperados” [walk through the working-class neighborhoods of Paris, Brussels, or Geneva, and you will see shards of Spain ... searching for work, living rough, struggling, even dying disillusioned] (PCE, *Letter from Anónimo to REI*). These accounts suggest that escaping to France was not the salvation that many expected.

A man by the pen name of Rebolledo A in Bellegarde offers his own thorough analysis of the way this migratory wave preyed on unwitting Spaniards through false promises of a way out that wounded an already suffering country. He explains in a letter from February 21, 1963 that the *Oficina de Emigración* encouraged potential migrants to apply for tourist visas “que les permite salir de España con la ilusión de poder mejorar sus vidas” [that allowed them to leave Spain in hopes of improving their lives] (PCE, *Letter from Rebolledo A. to REI*). The tourist visa was the primary way undocumented workers got into France during this time with men easily acquiring the visa and then simply remaining in France once it expired. Already Rebolledo A’s use of

the word hopes hints at his point that the men who made it to France this way often found themselves “rechazados y despreciados al mismo tiempo por no poseer un contrato de trabajo [...] tirados sin dinero y sin que comer” [rejected and despised for not having a work contract ... left without money nor food to eat] (PCE, *Letter from Rebolledo A. to REI*) due to their inability to find work. Rebolledo A finds this process a deplorable waste of potential and claims that the tourist visa system specifically takes advantage of “gente sencilla y humilde” [simple and humble people] with its “falsas y continuas promesas” [continuous false promises] which have “desgraciado y envenenado a una generación que podía haber sido la honra de España” [disgraced and poisoned the generation that could have been the pride of Spain] (PCE, *Letter from Rebolledo A. to REI*). He wishes these young working men would stay at home where he believes they could work hard and return Spain to its former glory.

However, Mensajero de Gard suggests that people had to leave Spain to make a living, and he writes from Nîmes on March 30, 1967 that it was almost impossible to come to France to work via the official contracted pathways. Migrants who came without a contract in hand did so because “saben la muerte que tienen los españoles que vienen con contrato de hemigración” [they know the death for those who come on an immigration contract] (PCE, *Letter from Mensajero de Gard to REI*) showing that the official migration pathways led to poor pay and sometimes lost work. Instead, Mensajero de Gard advocates getting a contract directly from a boss in France. Mensajero de Gard agrees with Rebolledo A though, that “la culpa que muchos españoles se ven desesperados en el extranjero sabemos positivamente que la tiene Franco” [we are certain that it is Franco’s fault that many Spaniards find themselves

down on their luck abroad] (PCE, *Letter from Mensajero de Gard to REI*). Whether for creating unlivable conditions or developing an infeasible emigration program, letter-writers blame Franco for their hardship.

Some migrants worry they were fed a lie about France, but they remain certain that the Spanish government perpetuated the greatest lie of all. Despite the abject suffering of working-class Spaniards, Francoist newspapers continued to spew propaganda touting the rebirth of the Spanish economy and claiming that Franco had led the country into a prosperous era. This propaganda angered the anonymous author in Paris who says he was going to keep his opinions to himself until he saw a newspaper headline proclaiming “el floreciente renacimiento de España y su milagro económico” [‘the blossoming rebirth of Spain and its economic miracle’] (PCE, *Letter from Anónimo to REI*) which forced him to speak up and set the record straight, even if he was only speaking to the *Pirenaica* listeners. “¿Dónde está ese floreciente renacimiento de España y su milagro?” [where is this blossoming rebirth of Spain and this miracle?] (PCE, *Letter from Anónimo to REI*) he demands, looking around him at his suffering countrymen. J.G. also vehemently dispute Spain’s claims of success, saying on May 1 1964 that when they hear of this supposed “25 años de paz y progreso” [25 years of peace and progress] they respond with “25 años de martirio, de hambre, de miseria” [25 years of martyrdom, hunger, and misery] (PCE, *Letter from J.G. to REI*). These claims subvert the officially prosperous Spanish narrative during the 1960s.

The data in Cazorla-Sánchez’s work supports the migrants claims of false prosperity, but the statements from the letters’ firsthand perspectives echo the personal sentiment of disillusion. The repressive and censorial nature of Franco’s government

makes these accounts a rarity as such speech, had it been published inside of Spain, was punishable by law. For this reason, the *Pirenaica* plays a critical role in documenting the firsthand migrant experience of these men and women and providing a new narrative about Franco's Spain. One of the main features of this Migrant Narrative entails the accusation of workplace exploitation by French bosses. The following section discusses accounts of exploitation from low or unpaid salaries to dangerous housing accommodations and generalized workplace mistreatment.

### **Housing Exploitation**

Migrant workers frequently lament being paid less than they deserve, or in some cases not being paid at all. However, housing complaints provide a more tangible measure of exploitation since it is easier to identify an unlivable room than to quibble over appropriate salaries by region and job.

As part of their critique of the working conditions for undocumented migrants in France, a few authors report receiving inadequate housing from their bosses on whom they depended for shelter. For example, Eugenio Andrés Sotero accuses his boss, a foreman from Spain working on a French estate, of making him leave his previous housing to sleep in a pigsty at his worksite. On April 6, 1964 he complains “llo tenia una habitación bueno pero el español este me apuesto a dormir en una pocilga,” [I had a nice room but that Spanish foreman made me sleep in a pigsty] continuing on to explain how he must use a ladder to get in and out of his room so that “cuando subo o bajo toda la ropa me mancho.” [whenever I go up or down my clothes get stained] (PCE, *Letter from Eugenio Andrés Sotero (El madriles) to REI*). According to his letter, Eugenio was literally treated like livestock. Earlier in his letter, he explained how a friend convinced

him to come to France by painting him a wonderful picture (PCE, *Letter from Eugenio Andrés Sotero (El madriles) to REI*). Imagine Eugenio's disillusionment when, after waiting months to even find a job, he finds he must sleep with the pigs.

However, Eugenio does not mention leaving this job despite the abhorrent conditions, demonstrating his desperation to find work, no matter what the toll. Plagued by the fear of losing his only source of income, Eugenio could not lodge a formal complaint against his employer due to his immigration status. When his friend brought him to France, Eugenio says he did so in his car, implying that the group entered France independently, likely on tourist visas, rather than as part of a government-sponsored work exchange program (PCE, *Letter from Eugenio Andrés Sotero (El madriles) to REI*). Overstaying a tourist visa or somehow entering without official paperwork would have left Eugenio open to deportation and legal trouble, a fact which the French bosses knew and took advantage of when paying and housing migrant workers.

Although this stands as the most extreme example of improper housing practices that appears in this selection, other authors offer similar accounts. One group of co-authors in Vaucluse recount in a letter from January 10, 1965 how a friend was sent to a room "con jergón, sin mantas ni más nada" [with a mattress with no sheets and nothing else] (PCE, *Letter from 3-H.C. to REI*) and say that this was not uncommon in the region of Vaucluse where they worked. A third example better illustrates the way that the bosses abused workers through living conditions; Francisco Guillén Moya's boss held him financially hostage, informing Moya upon the completion of a season's work in Bouillargues that he would deduct a portion of his salary essentially to cover rent, "porque bibo en su casa no me a llegado a pagal" [because I live in his house he has not

paid me] (PCE, *Letter from Francisco Guillén Moya to REI*) Moya writes in a letter dated January 23, 1967. Moya claims his boss did not tell him that living at the farm, a requirement of working at the farm, would cost him wages at all. These accounts once again demonstrate the way French bosses would take advantage of this group of workers, a theme evident across this selection of letters.

Authors in this selection report that they left Spain when it became impossible to make enough money to feed themselves or their families. With this level of desperation to find work, many naturally took any job that was offered to them in France without taking the time to vet the working conditions, some may not have even gotten the chance to read their contract before beginning work. Due to this need to find a job, workers would have been wary of lodging complaints against their conditions or quitting exploitative jobs. For example, when two migrants tried to leave a job where they experienced “toda clase de abusos” [all manner of abuses] (PCE, *Letter from J.G. to REI*) before their contract ended they were fined 80 francs and lost the right to sleep in their beds in the unit housing. The night before they left the foremen “le sacaron la ropa de las camas para que durmieron en el suelo” [took away their bedding so that they had to sleep on the floor] (PCE, *Letter from J.G. to REI*) as further punishment. Workers who could leave and decided not to put up with this abuse could be met with even worse treatment as a sanction for breaking their contracts.

### **Bad Contracts**

Migrant workers experienced financial mistreatment as well. Several authors pair accounts of housing malpractice with claims of improper contracts and paperwork scams. A few even claim they were held hostage when their bosses refused to provide

their paperwork (ie proof of employment), something the largely undocumented migrants relied on for protection. Eugenio Andrés Sotero never received a physical copy of his contract, “melo an echo pero llo en mi poder no lo tengo,” [they drew it up but I do not have possession of it] (PCE, *Letter from Eugenio Andrés Sotero (El madriles) to REI*) which kept him captive on the ranch. Without the papers that his boss refused to provide, he could not go anywhere for fear of being caught and deported. Similarly, when a woman working as a maid fell ill on the job she struggled to get her former boss to sign the paperwork to cover her medical bills and missed salary, eventually going to so far as to threaten her with union lawyers before she signed (PCE, *Letter from Don Curioso to REI*). Although this woman was fortunate to have union connections that protected her in this instance, migrants like Eugenio stood at the mercy of their boss’s word when it came to their work contracts.

In another case, jobs tempted workers with the promise of good pay and help with their papers, but too late workers discovered that this promise was empty. The author who tells this story in a March 17, 1967 letter says he heard it directly from the men involved but he notes that the rice farm in question had a bad reputation. When he heard this story from his friends “me holió a chamusquina porque llo conocia la planta” [something smelled fishy because I knew about the plant] (PCE, *Letter from Mensajero de Gard to REI*). Indeed once his friends finished the three-month-long harvest, “el tio les dijo que si quieres arroz, Catalina” [the foreman told them to get lost] (PCE, *Letter from Mensajero de Gard to REI*). “Si quieres arroz Catalina” is an expression used when someone purposefully does not listen to or do what is asked of them (“Que si”). The boss in this scenario did not follow through by signing their paperwork or paying

them, and the men missed out on 9,000 pesetas. The author insinuates that this farm had a reputation for pulling stunts like this one and was likely not the only farm to do so.

Even with proper contracts, migrants report that they did not always receive the agreed upon wages. Like the rice-harvesters who were shorted 9,000 pesetas, another author reports in a letter dated May 24, 1962 that his friends received just over half of what they were promised. These beet-harvesters came to France as part of the Spanish government's official immigration program, "vienen contratado a 312 francos por ora" [they came on a contract for 312 francs per hour] (PCE, *Letter from Un camarada del año 33 to REI*) he explains, but they received only 162 per hour instead. This situation was actually part of a larger government sanctioned immigration debacle in which 4,000 workers were sent to Trun, France for the seasonal beet harvest. The author reports that the workers "venían engañados por el servicio de Emigracion" [they were deceived by immigration services] (PCE, *Letter from Un camarada del año 33 to REI*) because the government had sent more workers than there were available contracts. Those left without contracts scrambled to find work in nearby factories, and those who could afford the trip returned back to Spain only to have their passports taken away as a sanction for returning early (PCE, *Letter from Un camarada del año 33 to REI*). This scenario demonstrates the gamble that migrant workers took when they left home, and it also explains why many migrant workers came to France unofficially, rather than taking advantage of the official immigration programs. This government-sanctioned program was known for mistakes like this one, and when these mistakes occurred, the workers turned out to be the biggest losers as the office did not try to make up for their lost contracts or return them to Spain.

Undocumented workers experienced high rates of exploitation but did not have many viable options to come work in France legally, or to report unfair treatment. In fact, the bosses' failure to provide adequate housing and fair working conditions reported by the authors in this section was undoubtedly related to the workers' status as (often undocumented) migrants. Their lack of bargaining power as foreigners, the language barrier, and the reputation of working at lower wages than French citizens that plagued Spanish migrants all made them vulnerable. *El Dos Veces Emigrante* explains the reputation that Spanish workers had for being discrete and accepting low pay, saying in a letter from June 8, 1964 that he and his fellow migrants generally “no nos preocupamos si la vivienda es buena o es mala” [we don't worry about whether the living is good or bad] and that unfortunately “de esto se aprovechan los Epresarios Franceses” [French bosses take advantage of that] (PCE, *Letter from El dos veces emigrante to REI*). Migrant workers had few options available to them to combat abuse. If they complained they risked deportation, if they left, they risked unemployment, but sharing their stories with *La Pirenaica* was one way for migrants to report their grievances, even though they knew was highly unlikely that writing to the station could change anything.

### **Xenophobia**

Unfortunately, bad contracts and shoddy housing were not the only types of abuse migrants experienced. The language barrier caused great trouble for a few migrants, with one mother writing of the “tormente” [torment] (PCE, Letter from Señora Morales to REI) of being unable to communicate with anyone in France. She felt isolated by the language barrier, but another migrant experienced xenophobia

because of it: a miner going by the name El Minero de la Huella in Bagnères-de-Luchon was called out in a shop for speaking to a friend in Spanish and was told he had no right to speak Spanish now that he was living in France. El Minero tells in a March 31, 1963 letter how the man told him “llevando aquí cierto tiempo no hay derecho a que usted hable el español.” [You have been here long enough that you have lost your right to speak Spanish] suggesting that El Minero should attempt to assimilate more thoroughly. El Minero argued back that it was not against the law to speak his native language among his countrymen, but the man insisted that he was only trying to give friendly advice and accused El Minero of becoming confrontational. El Minero fired back at this critique, referencing France’s unfriendly stance towards migrants saying “además de hechar a los obreros de España vengáis a pretender impedirles hablar el idioma patrio” [not only do you throw Spanish laborers out, now you try to stop them from speaking their native tongue] (PCE, Letter from El Minero de la Hulla to REI). This exchange exemplifies language-based discrimination against migrants based off of xenophobic assumptions. No legal or official basis existed for the man in the shop to tell the Spaniard he should not speak Spanish, but he nevertheless stepped in to criticize El Minero as he tried to go about his shopping.

French history about this period suggests that by and large, migrants assimilated and quietly fit in to France. These stories suggest that migrants actually experienced discrimination due to their status. The above interaction will sound familiar to immigrants who may frequently experience this type of thinly veiled xenophobia through language discrimination if they do not learn the dominant language in their new location.

## **Accusations of Slavery**

Writers leveled another accusation at the French bosses that is so grave it deserves its own section: they compared their conditions to slavery. Given the extreme poverty and corruption that defined Franco's regime, it should not come as a surprise that refugees and migrant workers accused the dictator, whom they sometimes referred to as the "verdugo" or executioner (PCE, *Letter from M.L "Hoz y Martillo n° 3" to REI*) of heinous crimes. A small collection of authors compare Franco's immigration policies to slavery, describing how they feel their working bodies have been auctioned off to foreign bosses.

A group of authors signed J.G. who came to France on an official contract for seasonal agricultural work decry the official immigration contracts saying "emos sido vendidos y igual que antes los negros en africa" [we have been sold like the blacks in Africa before us] (PCE, *Letter from J.G. to REI*)(150). With this comparison they emphasize the hardships Spanish migrants endured including poor working conditions. They also imply that they have lost their agency as men to choose their work and to earn a living as poverty forces them to sell themselves for a contract.

Another author, García Sánchez, doubles down on this sentiment in a letter dated April 5, 1964 as he compares a plaza in Carpentras where a large colony of Spanish migrant workers live to "el mercado de esclavos" [the slave market] (PCE, *Letter from García Sánchez to REI*). He also uses this language to describe his work under what he calls "las mismas condiciones que un esclavo." [the same conditions as a slave] (PCE, *Letter from García Sánchez to REI*). Since his pay is so poor and he would be sent back to Spain if he quit, he feels he has no choice in his work situation.

Yet another letter from April 18, 1962 references slavery, this time speaking of the conditions within Spain that drove these men away. The letter thanks the radio station for reporting the truth of “lo que ocurre en nuestra patria, bajo la esclavitud del dictador franquista,” [what goes on in our country under the slavery of the Franco-ist dictator] (PCE, *Letter from 25 Españoles to REI*) this time likening conditions under Franco to slavery in contrast to the previous letters which compared their working conditions in France.

Many French bosses who benefitted from exploiting migrant workers were Franco-ists themselves who benefitted from Franco’s abuse of his own citizens. By driving his people out of Spain, Franco sent cheap, desperate labor to other countries where they were easily taken advantage of. Franco also developed the highly inefficient government-sanctioned work immigration program between Spain and France to try to gain some government control over the huge wave of escaping migrants, and this work exchange often benefitted French bosses financially. An author using the name Pepito en la Camarga in Perpignan wrote the station on March 14, 1965 to report on a meeting between the heads of several large estates whom he calls “fariseos franquistas” [Franco-ist pharisees] (PCE, *Letter from Pepito en la Camarga to REI*) who would rather line their pockets than protect their workforce. He accuses them of taking advantage of the cheap labor of Spanish migrants, calling them “traficantes de exportation de obreros españoles,” [traffickers of Spanish labor] (PCE, *Letter from Pepito en la Camarga to REI*) a term which emphasizes the way French bosses took advantage of Spanish migrants as cheap labor to the point that their working bodies became trafficked property rather than human life.

The firsthand accounts of poverty, exploitation, and manipulation contained in this selection of letters challenge the official historical narrative of economic prosperity in Spain, and the notion that migration was the solution to suffering. These narratives show the personal impact of the broken immigration system and the factors that drove people to emigrate. Migrants report being mistreated both at home and abroad, but tend to agree that the fault rests with Franco for neglecting his people.

### **The CGT**

In the previous section the migrant authors gave their accounts of exploitation and abuse on French soil with the caveat that although they suffered in France, it was nothing compared to the poverty and injustice that compelled them to leave Spain. Nevertheless, migrant workers did experience workplace abuse in France that forced them to reach out to local French labor unions in search of help. The response they received from these unions, specifically one union going by the acronym CGT for *Confédération Générale du Travail* was overwhelmingly positive. Although French unions prohibited the publication of union material in foreign languages and did not allow emigrants to hold union office, migrant letter-writers frequently praise the CGT for its willingness to help them.

Founded in 1895, the General Confederation of Labor (*CGT*) was the largest and most powerful union in France for decades. As a labor union, the organization's goal was to fight for better working conditions for its members through collective action like strikes and advocacy. Historically, the CGT was ideologically torn between competing interests from socialist, syndicalist, anarchist, and communist factions. With all of these warring interests, the CGT has long boasted an almost-radical dedication to

empowering the working-class, at times even seeming to advocate the overthrow of the so-called ruling class. Although the communist and anarchist sections were largely expelled in the 1920s and went on to form their own competing unions, these ideologies reentered the CGT organization during a merge in 1936. At this time, the communist offshoot rejoined the CGT in the name of creating a united front against fascism. From the time of this merge until the 1970s, the CGT displayed strong communist sympathies. As the communist party accrued power in France during WWII, the stage was set for communist leadership to take control of the union in 1947. By 1947, the CGT represented over five million members and it used this massive base to sponsor strikes. Although these strikes alienated the union's base somewhat, and a socialist faction branched out to form its own union around this time, the CGT remained the country's most powerful labor union for a long period of time, up through the 1960s when the Spanish migrants spoke of it (Britannica).

Since the CGT union maintained an anti-fascist stance from 1936 forwards and boasted strong connections to the French Communist Party, it was an ideal organization for these Spanish migrants fleeing fascist General Franco who were themselves generally members of the Spanish Communist Party. Through shared communist values, CGT union and the migrant workers united to fight for the working-class's rights and to organize to liberate Spain from fascism.

In the following section, I submit migrant accounts of their experiences with the CGT union in France and evaluate both the union's work for the migrants as well as the migrants' opinions about the union. The letters tend to speak positively of the CGT

despite the fact that migrants could not hold union office and therefore lacked official power in the union.

### **Critique of Spanish Unions**

Coming from Spain where there was only one legal labor union which was associated with Franco's government and was unhelpful or even predatory towards workers, many migrants hesitated to contact French labor unions, expecting more of the same treatment. After the Spanish Civil War, Franco established the Spanish Syndical Organization, a sham trade union that eliminated the free labor movement. In the *sindicato vertical* or vertical union, workers and employers supposedly enjoyed equal bargaining power. While striking was prohibited, it was also extremely difficult to fire employees. These rules theoretically protected workers but in practice they disempowered employees because they took away their chance to organize and fight for better conditions (Witney).

In his letter, *El Dos Veces Emigrante* critiques the vertical union in Spain, describing how the "Sindicatos Franquistas" [Franco-ist unions] (PCE, *Letter from El dos veces emigrante to REI*) were in league with the government. Enrique seconds this observation, comparing French unions to Spanish and explaining that in France there are unions that defend the workers, unions that "no son como los que desgraciadamente conocemos en España" [are not like those we had the misfortune of knowing in Spain] (PCE, *Letter from Enrique to REI*). *El Dos Veces Emigrante* offers a further analysis of the Spanish unions, saying that in his experience these so-called unions are more interested in protecting the bosses' interests than the working-class: "no defienden a los Obreros sino a los Patrones." [they don't defend the Workers but the Bosses] (PCE,

*Letter from El dos veces emigrante to REI*). This observation explains why some migrant workers hesitated to get involved with French unions, even while they endured inappropriate working conditions. According to these sources, the unions in Spain did not fight for the rights of workers who needed them.

### **Praise for the CGT**

However, during this period in 1960s France there were labor unions dedicated to helping French and international workers alike that received high praises in these migrants' letters. The CGT was widely praised for its willingness to help foreign workers despite the language and nationality barriers. For example, Enrique observes that those at the CGT “tienen mucha simpatía a los Españoles y comprenden y conocen nuestra mala situación” [are very welcoming to Spaniards and they understand our difficult situation] (PCE, *Letter from Enrique to REI*). The situation of course refers to the experience of the migrants who, having taken a great risk escaping Spain, now found themselves just as impoverished in France where they also lacked community. These men had nowhere to turn, especially those who had come to France by overstaying tourist visas or sneaking in. Thus, the CGT was a welcome respite from the unforgiving economic landscape in France when workers found that the organization helped them despite, or even because of, their foreign status. In fact, the CGT union went out of its way to welcome Spanish migrants, even printing pamphlets in Spanish which one author got a hold of and promised to send to the radio station as proof (PCE, *Letter from El dos veces emigrante to REI*). He made sure to emphasize the CGT's willingness to help any worker, saying “nos defienden sin discriminación de ninguna clase lo mismo a los Españoles que los Franceses” [they defend us Spaniards the same

as Frenchmen without any kind of discrimination] (PCE, *Letter from El dos veces emigrante to REI*). Since migrant workers faced social and work-related discrimination, a friendly welcome at the CGT union would have felt like a gift, especially if that welcome came in their native language.

Enrique also noted that the help he and his countrymen received was not contingent on their joining the union, a practice which suggests that the CGT strove to make itself accessible to workers like him. He explains that the union never demanded that they apply for membership, and he calls this decision “muy bien” [very good] (PCE, *Letter from Enrique to REI*) showing his appreciation for the ease with which he and his friends were accepted into and helped by the union.

### **CGT Versus Exploitation**

Several authors corresponded with the station to report interactions between themselves or their countrymen and the CGT union. They praised the union, providing examples of cases that they helped win against exploitative bosses and legal advice they received like recommendations for reasonable salaries. Enrique writes that he knows of many successful interactions between the CGT and migrant workers in his area of Pernes. He describes one specific instance of a married couple who worked all summer in Pernes but did not receive their promised pay until they took their grievance to the CGT. Enrique says the couple met a Spaniard who took them to the union himself once he heard of their situation. He praises the CGT for thoroughly taking care of this couple’s case, which the union helped bring to and defend before the work inspector so that “el patrono tuvo que abonar hasta el ultimo franco lo que debía.” [the boss had to pay them every last cent that he owed] (PCE, *Letter from Enrique to REI*). The CGT

wielded its power to help the powerless migrant couple despite their status as non-citizens.

Enrique's example also demonstrates a practice which other authors speak to in their own stories of fellow migrants recruiting them to the unions after having positive experiences themselves. Eugenio Andrés Sotero, the man who complained that his boss forced him to sleep in a pigsty, wrote about a Spaniard "que para mi hoy no es un amigo sino un hermano" [who is like a brother to me now] (PCE, *Letter from Eugenio Andrés Sotero (El madriles) to REI*) who came looking for him on his day off and took him into town to introduce him to union members. In town Eugenio was informed that according to industry standards he should have been making around 45,000 francs instead of the 30,000 his exploitative contract stipulated (PCE, *Letter from Eugenio Andrés Sotero (El madriles) to REI*). Eugenio says this experience helped him realize just how badly his boss was taking advantage of him. Although he does not mention whether the union got involved and took on his case, Eugenio's letter shows the practice of Spaniards helping their countrymen by taking them to see the C.G.T members, opening their eyes to a type of help they did not know was available to them.

Like Eugenio, a letter-writer and exiled Spanish civil war veteran using the pen name Don Curioso in Aubagne also supplies a story of union members helping Spaniards get the salaries they deserve, rather than the ones they were tricked into accepting on bad contracts. In a letter dated January 24, 1967 he provides the example of a Spanish *terrassier* (a French term for workman, usually an excavator) who presented his paystubs to the CGT and asked them to look at his salary. He had worked as a *terrassier* for months and was well qualified for his job, and his paysheet showed

that he made 241 francs per hour of work. The CGT representatives told him he was right to come to them, “tienes razón en venir amigo, porque te roba 19 francos por hora” [you were right to come friend, because they are robbing you of 19 francs per hour] (PCE, *Letter from Don Curioso to REI*) and they advised him that his pay was significantly short of to what a qualified excavator should make. Don Curioso reports that the CGT intervened so that the man was paid what he was owed (PCE, *Letter from Don Curioso to REI*). Apart from exemplifying the good work that the CGT union did for migrant workers, Don Curioso mentioned this case as part of an indictment of French bosses’ exploitative practices. In his words, “la sed de provecho no tiene limites” [their thirst for profit knows no bounds] (PCE, *Letter from Don Curioso to REI*) among the French bosses for whom no level of exploitation was too much to justify making a few extra bucks. Worse than exploiting, though, “además de explotar, algunos roban” [not only do they exploit, some rob] (PCE, *Letter from Don Curioso to REI*) Don Curioso asserts, leveling this particular accusation at the bosses of the *terrasier* who made less than he deserved. The CGT union crucially helped protect migrant workers from being taken advantage of by French bosses who knew that the often-undocumented workers were likely to accept bad contracts and bad conditions without putting up a fuss for fear of losing their meager pay or being turned in to the authorities.

## **Join Us**

Since writing to *La Pirenaica* meant a chance that their letters would be read on air for a large audience of migrant workers and workers in Spain, many authors used their potential platform to advertise the CGT union to their countrymen. They needed to

combat the stigma around unions that the Francoist institutions in Spain had created and they hoped that these messages could save future migrants from suffering the indignities that they may have upon arrival in France. *El Dos Veces Emigrante* specifically requested that his letter be read on air for this exact purpose, advising migrants “cuando lleguen a Francia, lo primero que tienen que hacer, es lo primero, es buscar donde los sindicatos CGT” [when they get to France, the first thing they must do, the very first, is to look for the CGT unions office] (PCE, *Letter from El dos veces emigrante to REI*). He counsels potential migrants to affiliate themselves with the union as soon as possible so that they can protect themselves from unjust conditions in France.

Even those authors who did not explicitly ask for their message to be read on air unmistakably advocated for the CGT union. One author, García Sánchez, writes that unions are the best form of protection against abuse by bosses. The CGT was friendly towards “paisanos nuestros” [our countrymen] and explains that in his view, working with a union was the “única forma positiva de poder hacer frente al abusos de los patronos” [the only positive way to confront the abuses of the bosses] (PCE, *Letter from García Sánchez to REI*). Don curioso also prefaces one of his letters with the suggestion to join up with the unions. “Mi consejo de invitar a los trabajadores inmigrados a organizarse en los sindicatos de la CGT lo justifica a parte de las mejoras que se obtienen de condiciones de vida y de trabajo,” [I advise immigrant workers to organize with the CGT unions because of the benefits they will obtain in their living and working conditions] he justifies his praise of the CGT by looking at the victories the union has won for various migrant workers, praising the “autoridad y firmeza” [authority and firmness] (PCE, *Letter from Don Curioso to REI*) with which the union got things done.

The constant praise of the CGT union coupled with some explicit appeals to join up would have given *La Pirenaica* listeners some idea of how to help themselves in France, making the migrant experience a little easier.

The above testimonies tell a complete story of the danger that drove migrants out of Spain, the disillusionment they experienced in France, and their attempts to protect themselves through organization. Despite geographical and demographic separation, these letter-writers recount remarkably similar experiences. The details vary, but these men and this woman develop a narrative that rejects Spanish prosperity under Franco's regime, proving the contrary by means of personal experience. However, although Spaniards suffered during this decade, they found solace in each other via the community of *La Pirenaica*.

## Conclusion

These letters offer a Migrant Narrative centered around the values of community and work. The clandestine radio station crucially organized a community among a widespread diaspora of migrants who found solace on the airwaves when they suffered from the burden of leaving their beloved Spain. Although the country, for working-class citizens at least, was in ruins after 30 years military-fascist rule, letter-writers remained staunchly devoted to their *patria* and hoped to return once Spain was freed from Franco. In this regard, the radio station offered a political community. The *Pirenaica* strove to contribute to the end of Franco-ism, a stance which attracted listeners with this common goal. With this goal in mind, authors expressed anti-Franco sentiments via the station, blaming the *El Caudillo* for neglecting his people.

Once the station's audience began to grow after 1962, its purpose evolved to provide information about what life was like for men and women resisting Franco-ism at home and abroad. Emigrants who had left Spain in search of work or as political exiles painted a picture of scarcity and exploitation, writing that France fell far short of their expectations. Here, writers also addressed working-class issues particular to a foreign workforce like exploitation due to the language barrier, stereotypes, and xenophobia. Their struggle to find safe, well-paid work controlled their experience abroad. These accounts put a human face to the historical study of 1960s France, reminding us to be wary of official narratives that do not account for marginalized experiences like these.

Letter-writers' values of community and work intertwined in many cases when they used the radio station's community to discuss their work. The radio station offered

an opportunity for writers to unburden themselves of complaints from poor working conditions to loneliness. It also gave them the chance to submit advice to total strangers, suggesting opportunities for workers' protection and giving examples of exploitation as warnings. Due to the varied locations and demographics of the writers to *La Pirenaica*, we can be sure that most of them would never have met in real life. This makes the advice they sent through the station an example of compassion and patriotism inspired by their fervent desire for a reunited, healthy Spain.

Historian Gérard Noiriel says of industrial societies, “es el trabajo el que hace nacer al inmigrado, el que le hace ser” [it is work that gives birth to the immigrant, it is what makes him be] (qtd in Babiano 10). This assertion applies to *La Pirenaica's* writers whose descriptions of work dominated their testimonies and built their immigrant identities. Work brought them to France, work allowed them to feed their children, work mistreated them, work defined them. The dominant narrative of work throughout the letters speaks to the way these migrants saw themselves, as people for whom work was not auxiliary to their being but necessary—so necessary that they wrote about it over and over when given the chance. Their focus on work primarily represents a function of the poverty they sought to overcome, but it also speaks to their resilient spirits. Through work, they maintained their national pride as hard workers, even when it endangered them, and they dedicated their bodies and their minds to the working-class struggle against fascism and inequality.

As source material regarding the effects of Franco's regime, these letters offer a remarkably uncensored image. Since the radio station broadcasted in secret and authors wrote under pen names while abroad, these letters avoided the Spanish government's

censorship. The political complaints and observations about the reality of Spain in these letters may be some of the most unaltered material on the subject. To be sure, the radio station's anti-Franco-ist stance and communist political leanings would have biased the material it received. Communist emigrants or those who had particularly suffered at the hands of the regime would have been more motivated to write to such a station than those who felt less dissatisfied with Franco's government. The selection bias of the radio station notwithstanding, these letters represent a uniquely uncensored perspective on life for Spanish citizens and emigrants in the '60s.

My thesis presents a thorough investigation of a limited selection of letters and draws conclusions about migrant values based on deep analysis of that selection. However, the vast wealth of perspectives hidden away in the AHPCE's "*El Correo de La Pirenaica*." archive remains largely untapped. I hope that future historians will follow the directions of my work and of Balsabre and Fontova's *Las Cartas de La Pirenaica* and engage with this collection to develop the social history contained within. Such analysis will not only benefit Spanish and French history, but it can contribute to the genre of Migrant Narrative as a whole.

The letters to *La Pirenaica* contribute to the genre of Migrant Narrative by describing history through the lived experiences of migrants. These perspectives are difficult to come by as migrants are habitually marginalized in their new places of residence. Marginalization silences their voices when they try to speak about their experiences, particularly their experiences with discrimination or exploitation on the basis of their foreign identity.

Through this project, I reclaim migrant voices and offer a platform for the everyday men and women who lived through this migratory wave in the 1960s to tell their stories of community and work.

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