Migration during Spanish Civil War (1936-39)

War Conditions Force People to Leave

The Civil War in Spain created a state of destitution for the estimated 25 million people that lived there. The war was literally in their backyards everyday for three years. Many people could not live in these conditions and sought refuge in other countries, primarily France. As the Republicans faced defeat, many were forced into exile to avoid capture by Franco’s regime. Some Spaniards were even forced to send their children overseas to Mexico to avoid the violence and hunger at home. Other people ended up living out a life of exile in Russia.

1st Wave to France:
Emigrants: 200,000-340,000
Refugees and Republican Soldiers fled to France after Nationalist military gained territory 1936-1938.

2nd Wave to USSR:
Emigrants: 5,000-15,000
Spaniards arrived in Soviet Union under the leadership of Leon Trotsky. They were put to work where the USSR saw fit.

3rd Wave of Children:
500 children sent to Mexico in 1937
1,500 children sent to Soviet Russia in 1937

4th Wave to Mexico:
Emigrants: 15,000-30,000
Spaniards entered Mexico beginning April 1939. In 1940, Mexican President Lázaro Cárdenas granted these exiles full Mexican citizenship.

5th Wave to France:
Emigrants: 500,000
Refugees and Republican Soldiers escaped to France in 1939 after last Republican stronghold in Catalonia was taken over by Nationalists.

The Children's Story

During the civil war, many parents in Spain found it impossible to raise their children safely and to provide them with the needed care. Furthermore, the war itself had created many orphans who, during the hard times, were not being cared for. So in 1937, other countries, it is estimated that 700,000 children of the heavily bombed cities to eastern Spain and to various countries. It is estimated that 700,000 children were sent to “Children Colonies” in eastern Spain.

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Migration during the Franco Years (1939-75)

Economic Hardship Pushes People Out

The post-war years brought with them a lasting economic hardship for Spain. The national income fell back to that of 1914, and with the natural population increase, the per capita income decreased to nineteenth-century levels. Francisco Franco discouraged international trade and therefore cut off the Spanish economy from the rest of the world. The standard of living within Spain’s working class was stagnant for over twenty years. By the end of the Franco epoch in 1975, it is estimated that 8% of the Spanish workforce, or 850,000 people, was working abroad. Between the years 1960 and 1973, over 1.5 million Spaniards left the country in search of work in other European countries, primarily West Germany, France and Switzerland.

"Para vivir aquí (to live here)," as many Spaniards said – “You have to be unable to live anywhere else.”

Emigration Era (1936-1975)
Political and Economic Conditions Push People out of Spain

Migration Patterns Seen in Spain Today

Immigration to Spain has reached unprecedented heights in the last few years. There are now close to 4 million legal immigrants living in Spain. Most of these people come from the European Union, Latin America and Africa, with a smaller number arriving from Eastern Europe. This project focuses on immigrants from Latin America and Africa, because these continents are the origins of most of the immigrants in Spain after the European Union. Large-scale movement of peoples throughout the European Union is free, the context of their migration is unique and outside the scope of this project.

Spain now has a higher percentage of foreign-born residents than any other country in Europe: 11% of its 45 million residents. The number of foreign residents in Spain has grown from a little over 1 million in 2001 to almost 4 million in 2008. Between 1992 and 2005, Spain’s population increased by 4.3 million people, 3.4 million of them being immigrants.

Latin Americans in Spain

Latin Americans make up the largest number of foreign residents in Spain after European Union residents. The people in Latin America today are facing many social, political and economic problems. Many find it necessary to leave their homelands to escape violence in the cities and to find economic opportunity. The failure of many imposed economic reforms and the lack of helpful political action in many Latin American countries force the people to “vote with their feet.”

Immigration Era (1995-Present)
Economic Strength Pulls People into Spain

Africans in Spain

People from Africa make up the third largest group of immigrants into Spain. Many of the reasons for the increased migration in Africa are similar to those in Latin America: political, economic and social problems push many Africans out of their homelands in search of stability. But the situation in Africa is amplified by the extreme levels of poverty facing the continent today. For example, Morocco has 3 million unemployed workers, out of a country total of 26 million. Also, while Ecuadorians earn $2,940 per year on average, Moroccans earn just $1,900 as seen below. This is compared to the $27,570 per capita earnings in Spain. This level of poverty, coupled with the massive population increase in Africa, forces many people over the sea to Spain.

Most people from Africa who enter Spain are from Morocco, as seen in the chart below. This has a lot to do with geographic proximity.

"LOS CATYUCOS" AND HUMAN SMUGGLING

Africans take huge risks getting to Spain. Smugglers charge $5,000 a head for the 9-mile trip across the Strait, and even more for trips to the Canary Islands. When the boats reach the coast of Spain, to avoid getting caught, the smugglers force the immigrants to jump off and swim hundreds of yards to shore. Sometimes smugglers deliberately encourage immigrants to injure themselves upon arrival, so that they can go to a hospital and get papers. The “catyucos,” or old, crooked fishing boats, are often times big enough to hold 200 people at once. Some boats can last up to a week depending on the starting point in Africa.