

Dreams of Development in Mexico and Spain: A Comparative History of Guestworkers and Migration Diplomacy

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INTRODUCTION: “BACK THEN IT WAS INEVITABLE”

Few Mexican statesmen enjoyed more illustrious careers than Jaime Torres Bodet. A son of Spanish and French immigrants, the acclaimed poet, educator, and diplomat headed Mexico’s Ministry of Public Education, directed UNESCO, and served twice as ambassador to France. He also led the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the 1940s, a pivotal period in the contentious history of U.S.-Mexican relations. More than two decades later, when Torres penned his memoirs, he felt compelled to address one bittersweet memory from that era. In 1942, he negotiated Mexico’s first guestworker accord with the United States. It became known as the Bracero Program, for the generic term long used in Spanish America for migrant laborers.¹ At its inception, his government hailed the *braceros* as “citizens on a mission” to alleviate wartime labor shortages. Exporting manpower became Mexico’s most publicized contribution to the Allied cause. Then, in 1948, Foreign Minister Torres approved the program’s postwar renewal. It lasted another sixteen years and allocated 4.6 million seasonal contracts for Mexican men to harvest American crops. This generous subsidy to U.S. agribusiness became the most

controversial policy of its time in Mexico. Its proponents defended the accord for its contractual guarantees on wages, housing, and healthcare. Moreover, the money earned and the skills learned by *braceros* would advance the rural development goals of Mexico's post-revolutionary government. But as recruitment escalated beyond four hundred thousand annual migrants, its domestic critics demonized the Bracero Program as a neocolonial labor regime that enriched American farmers at the expense of hapless peasants and Mexico's national pride.

Ambassador Torres spent those postwar years on diplomatic missions in Europe. Yet upon writing his memoir, this architect of the Bracero Program became the rare Mexican functionary to address its critics publicly. "I know very well that to even mention the term '*braceros*' does not please anyone," he admitted. "Renting out the health and vigor of our countrymen to another nation's employers must be seen, under any circumstances, with sorrow." "But back then," he claimed, "it was inevitable." Statesmen like Torres knew well of the racism their compatriots suffered in the 1920s, before the coercive repatriation of at least three hundred thousand destitute migrants during the Great Depression. But economic recovery sparked a renewed exodus of clandestine migrants north. Then, in 1942, an American government fearful of wartime labor shortages proposed the guestworker program. Led by Torres, Mexican negotiators secured migrants improved conditions of work and punitive protections against racial discrimination. "The advantages obtained by the agreement were obvious," Torres later contended, because "our workers received benefits guaranteed in labor contracts ... [and] they could turn to both our consuls and to North American authorities to protect their rights." He then placed the Bracero Program in a comparative context, reminding his readers that southern European guestworkers also labored in the fields and factories of a more prosperous Europe to the north. "It would be best that a country never faces the periodic need to permit its campesinos' departure," he

insisted. “But it would be foolish to not contractually guarantee them adequate working—and living—conditions while they carry out their tasks.”² His Spanish and Italian contemporaries justified their own assisted migration programs in similar terms.

Upon completing his autobiography, Torres returned to Mexico’s embassy in Paris. His two ambassadorial postings to France (1955–1958, 1970–1972) coincided with the exodus of two million labor migrants from late Francoist Spain to Europe’s industrial heartlands, where they worked alongside Italians, Turks, and others from the Mediterranean basin. Torres could thus compare and contrast these guestworker programs. As did Mexico, sending states like Spain responded to rising levels of clandestine migration with bilateral accords that ideally secured equitable terms of employment while safeguarding their citizens from human traffickers and abusive employers. Emigration officials publicized assisted migration as a safety valve that alleviated unemployment, slowed urbanization, and (hopefully) limited social unrest. They also broadcasted the labor migrants’ role in their nations’ dreams of development. Guestworkers honed vocational skills and remitted their hard-earned savings. Those hard currency flows financed the importation of capital goods to jump-start industrialization back home. Meanwhile, host societies like West Germany all negotiated their access to temporary migrant labor on asymmetrical terms. Yet they earnestly marketed guestworker programs as foreign aid to the migrants’ homelands and as tools of diplomacy that fostered European integration. Ambassador Torres had heard this before. Back in North America, U.S. officials had long justified the recruitment of immigrant labor, and countered nativist opposition, by claiming migration’s beneficial effects on foreign relations and its modernizing outcomes in sending regions. Everyone, from the American and German recruiting states to labor exporters like Mexico and Spain, claimed that guestworker accords produced mutually beneficial effects at home and

abroad.

The comparative history I present here builds on Ambassador Torres's defense of Mexican policy to analyze the accords within the context of Cold War-era migration diplomacy and theories of development. Historical scholarship on these emblematic programs remains limited despite their long-term consequences and ongoing debates about temporary migrant workers. Few English-language histories of the European programs exist. The well-archived case of Germany dominates this historiography with studies of guestworker recruitment, reception, housing, activism, and—consistent with current policy debates—the limits of social integration. Histories from the perspective of southern Europe are much rarer.³ Scholars of the Bracero Program largely narrate the migrant experience in the United States or document “transnational” aspects of policymaking. Only Hahamovitch's pioneering study of a smaller West Indian program places the North American case in a comparative context.⁴ Meanwhile, migration diplomacy begets a footnote, at best, in histories of foreign relations. The present investigation explains how diplomats adopted discourses of development to legitimize guestworker policies. Their modernizing schemes proved neither fixed nor universal, and this essay utilizes archival records, interdisciplinary social science research, and oral life histories to illustrate how migrants negotiated state policy to advance their own dreams of development.

The study contrasts the Bracero Program with the Spanish *gastarbeiter* recruited by the German Federal Republic (hereafter Germany). Why compare these particular cases? While more Spaniards migrated to postwar France, many as undocumented arrivals, Germany edged out Switzerland as the top destination of Spain's *assisted* migrants. Indeed, the Francoist state idealized its bilateral accord with Germany because it promised jobs in advanced industries, and in a country run by staunch anti-communists. Moreover, like the Mexican *braceros* (and unlike

Turkish *gastarbeiter*), nearly all Spanish guestworkers returned home, and ethnographies of their sending communities facilitate a comparative analysis of return migration. The focus here is less on the migrant experience abroad, and the parallel histories of undocumented migrations, than on state policies and comparative outcomes. The United States and Germany both legitimized their recruitment of guestworkers as a form of foreign development aid to their southern neighbors.

This study begins with an overview of those policies, and then summarizes key variances and commonalities between the labor regimes. It places the Bracero Program, and the political debates it sparked in Mexico, in the context of U.S.-Mexican relations during the Cold War. The narrative then follows Iberian migrants to a postwar Germany where Spanish labor attaches developed policies to maintain cultural ties to their homeland and to shield guestworkers from a dynamic community of anti-Franco exiles. Along the way, the study explores social science research on the programs' effects. Lastly, it introduces the protagonists least studied by historians of migration—the returnees—and explores the extent to which the so-called *norteños* and *alemanes* helped Mexico and Spain realize their dreams of development.

BRACEROS AND GASTARBEITER IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

From their inception, modern states legislated or decreed policies to recruit, restrict, integrate, or deport foreign labor migrants. With the advent of guestworker programs, they negotiated bilateral accords by which bureaucrats replaced private contractors in the recruitment and placement of labor, and policymakers fixed hiring quotas, screening procedures, and contractual terms of employment.⁵ Sending states established their own emigration agencies and secured the right to allocate exit permits based on gender, economic need, political loyalties, or regional development goals. Historians date the first bilateral accord to 1919, when France and Poland pioneered a system that delivered migratory labor “in certain numbers at a certain time and for

certain periods ... while avoiding permanent settlement.” The model institutionalized labor market flexibility. Guarantees of return also transferred the social costs of unemployment and pensions back to countries of origin.⁶ By the onset of the Second World War, and the Bracero Program’s inception, nearly two dozen short-lived guestworker agreements had linked Europe’s agrarian peripheries to its industrial heartlands. Their interwar proliferation coincided with newly restrictive immigration policies meant to placate nativists and trade unions in Europe and the Americas. Balancing the interests of bigotry and greed, policymakers created “perfect immigrants,” mobile laborers whose perfection built on restrictive terms of employment, fitness screenings, limited citizenship rights, and their ostensible return home.⁷ Consistent with this final ideal, German propagandists eager to re-frame public discourse about immigrant labor replaced the term *fremdarbeiter* (“alien worker”), and its Nazi-era connotations of forced labor, with *gastarbeiter*, clarifying the newcomers’ status as working “guests” who intended to leave. The euphemistic term ideally distinguished postwar Germany’s more hospitable reception of immigrants, and “guestworker” remains the most commonplace English-language term for a temporary migrant laborer.⁸

Past and present critics of guestworker programs liken their restrictive terms of employment to indentured servitude, due to migrants’ contractual assignment to a single employer.⁹ But sending-country bureaucrats who negotiated the bilateral accords lauded them as diplomatic achievements that remedied historic abuses. Those signed by Mexico and Spain followed decades-long investigations into the risks of unauthorized migration. Both sending states secured consular authorization to monitor guestworker conditions into their agreements. The labor accords also reflected the emergent formalization of research, policies, and then federal agencies—starting with Italy’s influential Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione in 1901—

that regulated emigration, encouraged remittances, protected citizens abroad, and nurtured their patriotism to encourage return. With the advent of mass migration in the 1920s, Mexican consular officials and immigrant rights activists in the United States cited the Italian model when drafting ad hoc proposals for managed migration programs.¹⁰ So Ambassador Torres drew on historic tradition when citing European precedent to justify Mexican policy. Meanwhile, survey research by anthropologist Manuel Gamio depicted the United States as a “free university” for the development of immigrant skills, leading Mexico’s most influential scholar to advocate a “transient migration” program whose key components (pre-departure contracts, medical screening, return transport) foreshadowed the 1942 Bracero Program.¹¹

The Program remains the largest guest worker program in North American history. Some researchers have traced its inspiration to the interwar European model.¹² But Mexican negotiators clearly drew on domestic precedent, both Gamio’s blueprint and Mexico’s far-reaching 1931 Federal Labor Law. They astutely appended President Roosevelt’s wartime anti-discrimination decree to their proposal. The program’s primary intent remained the reliable delivery of mobile farm workers to commercial growers.¹³ Yet it resulted from wartime and then Cold War migration diplomacy. U.S. officials touted the agreement as a mutually beneficial form of foreign aid that also bolstered U.S.-Mexican relations. The Americans discovered such outcomes in the early twentieth century. In a pioneering survey of European sending regions, U.S. investigators found return migrants from Italy, Greece, and Poland investing in new houses and land, introducing “progressive” ideas, and bringing home “a real affection for America.”¹⁴ That migrants developed “a greater appreciation of our culture and ... a better understanding of our country” remained an earnest assumption among U.S. officials. Thus were *braceros* portrayed in the wartime press as “good-will ambassadors” who took American gratitude home

to share with their neighbors, an exchange that did more than “diplomatic conferences or treaties to bring nations together in friendship.” One Mexican consul dismissed such reports as “distorted impressions of reality.”¹⁵ But American presidents from Hoover (1930) to Kennedy (1962) opposed congressional attempts to restrict Mexican migration, in the name of Good Neighborliness and migration’s beneficial effects for Mexico’s rural poor. U.S. agribusiness lobbyists also reminded their congressmen that *braceros* returned home with new skills and millions in savings. In contrast to taxpayer-financed foreign aid, “it is earned money” that “actually puts dollars in the pockets of Mexicans to purchase some land or livestock” and thus “maintains a friendly fence at our backdoor.” Indiana’s tomato canners therefore defended it as “one of our best foreign aid programs ... while helping us, [the *braceros*] are adding to the economic welfare of their own nation and selves.”¹⁶

Eager for steady access to seasonal labor, growers had adopted the prevailing discourse of modernization theory, the Cold War development model designed by social scientists to guide and legitimize American policy from Latin American to Southeast Asia. Earnest, optimistic, and anticommunist, the modernizers plotted the means to launch “traditional” (agrarian) societies on the road to social progress and capitalist democracy. Development experts would deploy monetary aid, technology transfers, and scientific expertise to uplift nations and communities bypassed by modernity. Histories of the theory and its application illustrate the ambiguous meanings of “modernization,” as development projects ranged from highways and dams to agro-export diversification to public health initiatives.¹⁷ The protagonists are agronomists, engineers, or Peace Corps volunteers, but never guestworkers, despite earlier twentieth-century efforts by diplomats and researchers to assign return migrants this progressive role. The latter’s claims predated the enduring debates on return migration that emerged in the 1960s, along with the

broader policy field of development studies. According to “optimists,” labor migrants returned home as agents of innovation and entrepreneurship who diffused modernity in rural communities beset by peasant fatalism. They posited an “equilibrium model” in which repatriates applied the economic and social capital acquired abroad to alleviate credit shortages, acquire land, or develop small-scale business enterprises back home.¹⁸ It was development on the cheap, and offered even greater “aid” to northern host economies. By the 1970s, ethnographers would test the theory in the villages of Mexico and Spain. As we will see, the results published by skeptical “dependency” theorists often debunked the claims of development. But tropes of the progressive repatriate proved durable and served Mexican and Spanish policymakers anxious to defend their governments’ labor exportation schemes. Their ideal guestworkers, subjects of modernization while they toiled in the north, would return home, newly empowered, as transnational agents of innovation and development.

No European labor recruiters adopted the paradigm more fervently than the Germans. Their discourse built on precedent. Since the early twentieth century, when its dependence on immigrant industrial labor began, Germany prided itself as the “apprentice workshop of Europe.” Nazi propagandists revitalized claims that migrants returned home with “admiration” for their hosts and newfound skills. Even a 1945 International Labour Organization report decrying brutal wartime conditions accepted the vocational training claims.¹⁹ Italians were among the erstwhile beneficiaries, and the first to return to postwar Germany as guestworkers. Indeed, even as it upheld highly restrictive immigration quotas at home, the United States expected its allies and Marshall Plan recipients to “absorb Italian labor” so as to foster European integration and combat communism. Germany thus drafted its 1956 accord with Italy “in the spirit of European solidarity ... to strengthen existing ties of friendship ... and to promote economic and social

progress.” Not to be outdone, Canada recruited five hundred thousand Italians in what Ottawa called a “small, but distinctly Canadian, contribution to the strengthening of [Italy’s] present democratic ‘Western’ government.” Solving labor shortages in the name of political solidarity was hardly unique to the Free World. East Germany also welcomed labor recruits from “fraternal socialist countries” like Cuba, Mozambique, and Vietnam.²⁰ Back in the West, bringing Germans and so-called “southerners” together on the shop floor helped promote, according to the labor minister, the “rapprochement between persons of highly diverse backgrounds and cultures,” a laudable appeal to ethnic pluralism given Germany’s recent past. An American architect of the Marshall Plan defined it more bluntly as “an opportunity for [German] atonement of past sins and for understanding cultural differences.” It would mend foreign relations too. “If these guests have positive experiences,” one Hamburg paper believed, “they will be Germany’s best ambassadors back home in their own countries.” But nativist hostility, others feared, would tarnish German efforts to reconcile its racist past.²¹

Historians assert that addressing “the legacies of National Socialism and promoting peace and reconciliation” motivated Bonn’s migration diplomacy as much as labor market imperatives.²² But officials naturally touted the domestic benefits to convince a wary German public. By the early 1960s, Germans enjoyed the world’s lowest unemployment rate. So, a once-resistant union leadership reminded its suspicious rank-and-file that “our economy needs foreign workers.” Their arrival permitted shorter workweeks, longer vacations, and the occupational mobility of more than two million native-born laborers into white-collar jobs.²³ No wonder that German unions integrated guestworkers rather than follow an American model that vilified them as a threat to wages or unionization. German employers expressed their own gratitude by honoring the one-millionth guestworker, a Portuguese carpenter named Armando Rodrigues de

Sá, with a press conference and motorcycle upon his 1963 arrival to Cologne.²⁴ Economists also asserted that their remittances broadened southern European markets for German exports. Others complemented this market discourse, and soothed nativist fears, with surveys proving the guestworkers' intent of return. But more than anything, researchers found widespread agreement with Germany's Labor Minister that "allowing foreign workers to enter ... is probably the most important development aid given by the Federal Republic so far." That bureaucratic idealism belied the franker calculations of a guestworker's costs (housing, training) versus the benefits, securing for employers "the best years of [their] labor power" before sending them home when labor markets tightened. Thus did skeptics lambaste the system as a "a form of development aid given by poor countries to rich ones."²⁵

The richer Europeans seemed committed to these ideals of development, funding surveys and hosting inter-governmental symposiums to investigate and debate the programs' effects on the Mediterranean periphery. Not coincidentally, the impact of return (and its nexus with development) emerged as a timely new sub-discipline in the field of migration studies, especially as guestworker repatriation accelerated after the 1973 oil crisis.²⁶ Even a few historians took the cue, and their research on trans-Atlantic migration turned from New World settlement narratives to histories of Old World departure and return.²⁷ Meanwhile, during the Bracero Program, American scholars, NGOs, and congressional committees published volumes of research on migratory farm labor within the United States. But the Mexican government commissioned remarkably few studies of its policy's effects at home. Nor did social scientists investigate return migration explicitly until the 1970s, when western Mexico became a veritable laboratory of migration studies.²⁸ Meanwhile, journalists reporting from Mexico idealized the *bracero* experience for American readers while others penned disparaging exposes from California that

made the Bracero Program far more controversial than its European counterparts, and it remains so today.²⁹

On the surface, contrasts between the European and North American programs appear far greater than commonalities. Consider recruitment. At their peaks, Mexico and Spain sent equal numbers of guestworkers abroad on a per capita basis, and the disproportional selection of migrants from Guanajuato or Galicia made the regional impact of return greater than the national effect. But their destinations diverged greatly, as *gastarbeiter* occupied one of six German manufacturing jobs. Germany's postwar economy demanded labor in every region and sector, from mining to tourism, for both men and women. Females comprised nearly one in three Spanish *gastarbeiter*.³⁰ Bracero recruitment was restricted to men. Unlike the predominantly urban *gastarbeiter*, *braceros* labored in the rural shadows, harvesting crops in the fields and orchards of Texas or California. Steel, meatpacking, and other Midwest industries that recruited Mexican labor heavily in the 1920s now hired native-born migrants from Appalachia or Mississippi, during a period when restrictive immigration laws pushed the United States's foreign-born population to historic lows. On the other hand, German employers faced the triple threat of postwar demographics, a rural populace reluctant to move, and then a Berlin Wall that halted eastern migration until 1989. So, they recruited labor from the Mediterranean basin, as did Switzerland, Belgium, and others. Competition led recruiting states to sweeten the terms of employment. *Gastarbeiter* soon enjoyed rights to renew contracts, change employers, bring their families, "and the longer they stayed, the more rights they tended to gain."³¹ The Bracero Program, though, faced mounting criticism when wages stagnated, and compliance measures weakened as contracting grew eightfold in the 1950s.³²

Mexican and Spanish guestworkers experienced more in common than these structural and

contractual distinctions suggest. Most departed rural villages where homes lacked plumbing and electricity, and children quit school early to work in the fields. A Spanish consul in 1960s Hamburg lamented “the extraordinary number of guestworkers who can neither read nor write ... or even sign their own passport.” Up to 20 percent of recruits failed pre-departure health screenings in Madrid.³³ Guestworkers all experienced cumbersome recruitment bureaucracies, humiliating medical exams, and exhaustive second-class railway transport. Metaphorical references to livestock transport (Mexican cattle, Spanish sheep) are ubiquitous in oral history accounts. The journeys concluded with one’s arbitrary assignment to a foreign employer. No wonder that roughly one half of Mexican and Spanish labor migrants ventured north to secure jobs through clandestine networks.

Their memories of work and life abroad proved equally comparable, as did the causes of guestworker protest. In the German case, iconic photos of cheerful apprentices on the auto assembly line belie the working reality: the *gastarbeiter* also laid bricks, paved roads, mined coal, and serviced hotels. Most Spaniards (67 percent) labored for a single employer and returned home within three years. Moreover, just as *bracero* wages stagnated during America’s prosperous 1950s, so did Spanish workers protest declining shop-floor conditions with the late 1960s influx of Greek and Turkish *gastarbeiter*.³⁴ Nor did industrial labor promise European guestworkers greater earnings or mobility than Mexican migrants. Veteran *braceros* secured renewable contracts, mastered the harvesting of specialized crops, and saved considerable sums. Each year, a notable percentage “skipped” their contracts to secure jobs in urban America, often via social networks developed by past generations of immigrants.³⁵ Spanish guestworkers lived equally divergent experiences. Those recruited by Philips Electronics to work in the Dutch firm’s company town of Eindhoven fared far better than those housed in German factory barracks.

Expecting lodging in “immigrant hotels,” retired *gastarbeiter* later expressed shock at their deplorable living conditions, which compounded an already difficult adjustment to an alien climate, language, and urban lifestyle.³⁶ *Braceros*’ housing proved equally contentious. But they returned home each harvest, from states called California or New Mexico, with similar climates, and Spanish-speaking cultural enclaves that offered food and music reminiscent of home.

Back in Spain, moviegoers viewed newsreels illustrating “Hispano-German fraternity” with staged clips of guestworkers and their hosts exchanging cultures in a Frankfurt beer hall. But petitions demanding “German Work for German Workers” made national headlines throughout the 1960s, while nativists claimed that *gastarbeiter* harassed local women, strained social services, and spread communism.³⁷ Mexican migrants faced similar charges. But in Germany, local officials encouraged the development of ethnic cultural centers with the explicit intent of discouraging the integration of “southerners” into the German public sphere. Over the years, Spanish workers took silent offense as German merchants addressed them in the informal *du* reserved for children.³⁸ They encountered signs prohibiting their entry into parks and taverns, and landlords who either overcharged or simply refused to rent to foreign-born workers.³⁹ What were the effects of that shared experience of discrimination? Gamio, the Mexican anthropologist, convincingly posited a causal relation between the “bitter humiliation” of racism and national identity formation among migrants of diverse ethnic and regional backgrounds.⁴⁰ That process of interregional exchange continued during the Bracero Program. Whether a similar sense of “*hispanidad*” developed among Spain’s heterogeneous guestworkers remains open to inquiry. Aside from a few big-city *centros gallegos*, they did organize their mutual-aid societies and local football clubs more along “pan-Spanish” than regional lines. The Spanish Emigration Institute’s outreach policies further encouraged this outcome. Meanwhile, one former *gastarbeiter* in

Nuremberg succinctly recollected that “we lived in a world apart.” Aware of the Franco regime’s propaganda films back home, her colleague juxtaposed their lives of isolation with the state’s claims of cultural exchange.⁴¹ But in Francoist Spain, limits on press freedom ensured that few other than family learned this reality. Meanwhile, in post-revolutionary Mexico, a Bracero Program embraced as opportunity by western peasants also provoked the critical public backlash that Jaime Torres Bodet felt compelled to address.

“THEY ARE A HOPE”: MEXICO DEFENDS ITS GUESTWORKER POLICY

In 1947, Foreign Minister Torres hosted Harry Truman, the first U.S. president to visit Mexico’s capital. Thousands turned out to cheer the American leader, who pledged anew America’s Good Neighbor policy with its most steadfast ally in Latin America. Bilateral relations had strained in the 1930s, when Mexico enacted its revolutionary agenda of agrarian reform and the nationalization of oil. The Second World War helped mend the crisis. Mexico joined the Allies, and American loans stabilized the peso and modernized the railways to facilitate strategic exports like cotton, copper, and *bracero* labor. As the Cold War began, Minister Torres astutely defended U.S. geopolitical objectives at inter-American conferences and secured further development aid for infrastructure and public health, and Washington’s acquiescence to the protectionist policies that spurred Mexico’s postwar industrialization.⁴² In this context Mexico agreed to renew the Bracero Program, an act of migration diplomacy that tarnished Torres’s otherwise illustrious legacy. His remains the only official biography of Foreign Ministers to mention it, and in unflattering terms as “a migratory labor accord that failed to deliver the benefits desired for our citizens.”⁴³ The posthumous scapegoating reflected the partisan debates that ensued as an “emergency” wartime program endured two decades and forced Mexico to ponder what critics universally called “the *bracero* problem.”

Controversies associated with the recruitment, medical screening, and transport of *braceros* erupted early, and continued. Some remain inherent to all guestworker programs. Others were unique to Mexico, from the corrupt peddling of *bracero* permits to a forced savings plan whose scandal-ridden administration prompted protests, investigations, and thus its 1948 termination.⁴⁴ In contrast to Francoist Spain, press freedoms thrived in post-revolutionary Mexico. So, readers of muckraking exposes learned of decrepit housing, lousy food, abusive foremen, and inadequate consular protections. One heard similar complaints in Germany. But the greater concern for the Bracero Program's administrators were incidents of racism, which one diplomat considered "the only subject on which Mexicans of all classes and all political persuasions seem to agree."⁴⁵ Throughout the Cold War, the program's American opponents warned that mistreated *braceros* would return home as "ill-will ambassadors." One union official likened the program to an "imported colonialism" that restricted migrant freedoms and "gives powerful propaganda ammunition to our enemies."⁴⁶ Soviet propagandists were certainly eager to tarnish the United States's global image with abundant evidence of racial injustice. During a 1951 meeting of the UN's Human Rights Commission, British delegates charged the Soviets with the ongoing use of forced labor. Their Polish proxies countered with a detailed report on the hardships suffered by Mexican migrants in America. So, Mexico's representatives stepped up to defend their nation's dignity. Soviet charges of abuse reflected past practice, they admitted. But "the times have changed" and the Bracero Program promised equal pay and punitive restrictions against discrimination, thus offering a safer alternative to undocumented migrations.⁴⁷

This became Mexico's official line, drafted by policymakers and spun by their allies in the Mexico City press. Migratory workers were no longer "abandoned to their own resources." The Bracero Program's "collective contract for agricultural laborers" marked the first time that farm

workers enjoyed federally sanctioned labor rights in U.S. history.⁴⁸ This was true. American growers rightly feared its precedent-setting effect on domestic farm hands, while union activists curiously opposed the Bracero Program as a “discriminatory” measure that secured Mexican nationals “protection and guarantees which are not made available to American citizens.”⁴⁹ Investigative reports illustrated the contrast between the *bracero* experience and far more abusive conditions (like child labor) suffered by native-born migrants and Jamaican guestworkers along the eastern seaboard.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, U.S. and Mexican officials genuinely believed the program reduced discrimination. That assumption led even future critics like Ernesto Galarza to support its postwar renewal. Like other Pan Americanists, Galarza also presumed that it “promoted strong and lasting ties” between the United States and Mexico.⁵¹ Down in Mexico, the pro-government press answered the program’s domestic critics by romanticizing *braceros* as “admirably defiant workers” who “will never acquiesce to past forms of labor exploitation.” As sons of revolutionary Mexico, they knew their rights both at home and abroad, and activist *braceros* protested contract violations by striking, skipping out, or filing grievances with Mexican officials. Those protests begot improved food, housing, and transport. Moreover, aside from the money sent home, migrants reportedly returned with new outlooks because “they have seen the world now” and would no longer tolerate “villages without electricity, drinking water, or schools.” “More than a problem,” one writer claimed, “they are a hope.”⁵²

This defense of migration policy first took shape during the war. In those years, appreciative American farming communities praised and feted their Mexican guestworkers. But the United States issued less than 5 percent of all *bracero* contracts during wartime, and the upbeat hospitality diminished when peace arrived. Then, unauthorized migration surged, bilateral

negotiations stalled, and U.S. immigration agents appeased growers (and outraged Mexico) with unilateral recruitment schemes. Domestic opposition in Mexico thus escalated as the Cold War set in. It traversed the political spectrum, from communist militants to the archbishop of conservative Guadalajara. Some opposition reflected classist fears that illiterate *bracero* bumpkins tarnished the nation's image in American eyes. Others decried their abandonment of the homeland for an adventurous pursuit of illusory riches. The rancor reflected a heartfelt mix of shame and bewilderment. Here was the federal government, after all, recruiting their countrymen to harvest crops in North American regions that were once Mexican territory. Intellectuals also lamented the economic desperation that led peasants to risk their lives with clandestine river crossings into Texas. Over in Europe, "irregular" migrants typically traveled on tourist visas and Germany "regularized" their working status. In contrast, the United States responded with deportation raids on workplaces and quasi-militarized border patrolling, a draconian policy that gave way to mass *bracero* recruitment in the mid-1950s. U.S. Embassy officials warned Washington constantly of the negative press about hapless migrants "being hunted down like animals ... on lands that used to be [their] own."⁵³ Theirs was a plight captured in novels, ballads, and award-winning films (like 1955's *Espaldas mojadas*), while journalists exposed the "maltreatment, brutality, and fraud" suffered at Mexico's overcrowded urban recruitment centers. Indeed, the corrupt abuses endured in Mexico at the hands of government officials generated greater press indignity than *bracero* hardships up north.⁵⁴

The widespread opposition explains why Mexican officials, in contrast to Spanish policymakers, abandoned their public defense of the Bracero Program. Emigration was a centuries-long tradition in Spain. In Mexico, it took off in the 1890s and controversy followed. By 1910, revolutionaries were blaming the Díaz dictatorship for the nation's "depopulation."

They promised a developmental agenda of agrarian reform and industrialization to keep erstwhile emigrants home. The social revolution that followed delivered land to some peasants. Industry soon thrived. Yet migrants departed at unprecedented rates as another revolution, this one demographic, doubled Mexico's population during the Bracero Program. For the ruling party's opponents, the *braceros'* annual exodus proved symptomatic of a flawed rural development policy. The Green Revolution of capital-intensive agriculture harvested cheap food for urban Mexico but largely bypassed the densely populated sending regions, whose land-grant recipients now depended more on *bracero* contracts than mistrusted government credit banks. So Mexican statesmen grew notably silent. Only twice during the Bracero Program's history did Mexican presidents acknowledge it in their annual addresses: to remind citizens that only mining and tourism generated more hard currency reserves than migrant remittances. They understood that *braceros'* hard-earned dollars helped correct a precarious balance of payments, stabilize the peso, and offset the costly importation of industrial machinery needed for their model of national development.⁵⁵

As often happens, the ruling PRI party also deployed *bracero* permits as patronage, rewarding loyal unions or relieving communities struck by mine closures or natural disasters. A disproportionate share went to states like Michoacán, in the densely populated emigrant heartland, where the Bracero Program became the first federal policy embraced by its ethnically diverse communities after decades of struggle between conservative Catholic militants and agrarian socialists.⁵⁶ Indeed, the accord's most visible supporters were the hundreds of thousands of campesinos who eagerly awaited each recruitment season. They applied for myriad reasons, from those cited by the political opposition, to their own longings to "get to know" a land they heard of from fathers, neighbors, or Mexican cinema. Their archived petitions never mentioned

youthful adventure. Some sought contractual protection from the abuses they suffered previously as undocumented migrants. Far more pledged to “acquire skills,” purchase farm implements, or pool their savings to build schoolhouses, pave roads, or connect their villages to water and electric services.⁵⁷ The petitions’ scribes proved well-versed in Mexico’s shifting discourses of development, which had evolved since 1910 from a revolutionary commitment to rural social justice to a nationalist project of urban industrialization. By about 1960, national development funds bypassed the western emigrant heartland, so its inhabitants petitioned to migrate north to finance their own community development back home.

The Bracero Program endured because American growers lobbied for it, their congressmen obliged, and Mexico’s government calculated its beneficial effects. Its periodic renewal evolved into ever-more acrimonious debates as Mexican diplomats demanded wage hikes and legislative sanctions against American employers of undocumented labor. (Such penalties finally passed in 1986.) Yet as occurred with the entry of Greeks and Turks into the German labor market, a growing pool of aspiring migrants limited sending states’ capacity to negotiate favorable terms. Mexico hoped that rising anti-Americanism in Cold War Latin America would pressure U.S. officials to “bow to its demands on foreign policy grounds.”⁵⁸ However, the voice of agribusiness trumped that of diplomats concerned more with the U.S. image abroad than corporate profits at home. The last bilateral meeting came in 1961, in Guadalajara, deep in Mexico’s emigrant heartland. Mexican officials enumerated all the shortcomings identified by the program’s American critics: stagnant earnings, dangerous transport, and excessive deductions for food and housing. But Mexico had long lost its wartime bargaining power. The U.S. delegates reminded Mexican negotiators that *braceros* earned hard currency but “are also granted an education on how to cultivate the land, what to plant and when and how to use fertilizers. This

is a very helpful apprenticeship for your workers.”⁵⁹

Through it all, Mexican intellectuals pondered emigration from a global and comparative perspective. They had studied European models to defend early claims about its potential benefits. Come the 1950s, scholars like renowned sociologist Lucio Mendieta countered that “our case is different.” He contrasted the “legal and orderly” guestworker regimes of Europe with an easy target: the tragic spectacle of undocumented migrants “emerging from the [Rio Grande] river ... dirty and suffering,” eluding armed border patrols in search of precarious jobs.⁶⁰ However, that comparative reference actually bolstered claims of Ambassador Torres and his allies. Consider his colleague, Pedro de Alba, a fellow diplomat who hailed from Jalisco. He too observed the parallels with European guestworkers and repeated the claims to Good Neighborliness and monetary stability. An astute reader of the American press, De Alba also resented its often-denigrating coverage of Mexican immigrants as an affront “to our national dignity.” But he reminded his countrymen of a comparative case, closer to Mexico: the Haitian labor migrants who left home unprotected to find themselves exploited on Cuban sugar plantations and then massacred by their xenophobic Dominican neighbors in 1937. De Alba admitted that the Bracero Program “is far from perfect.” But, observing the plight of Mexico’s undocumented migrants, he insisted “that we could not abandon our countrymen to a wicked and unjust exploitation disguised as ‘freedom to work.’” De Alba thus lamented the exodus but reiterated his government’s most enduring defense of the Bracero Program: that for all its faults, it offered contractual protections, produced remittances, and fostered good-willed understanding between Mexico and its American neighbor. So Mexico’s official line paralleled the European case where the contractual guarantees promised by managed migration left Cold War-era guestworkers “better protected and cared for” than prior generations.⁶¹

“CON CONTRATO BAJO EL BRAZO”: MOBILIZING AND ASSISTING SPANISH *GASTARBEITER*

Every week, from 1960 to 1973, a trainload of Spanish guestworkers arrived in Cologne after a grueling, four-day journey from Madrid. The majority hailed from villages in Andalucía and Galicia, provinces targeted for their high unemployment by the Spanish Emigration Institute (IEE). Founded in 1956 as a branch of Spain’s Labor Ministry, the IEE regulated and documented Spanish emigration, and assisted and monitored migrants abroad. Its founding followed the lifting of restrictive emigration laws, and an historic shift from immigration to the Americas to clandestine migrations across the Pyrenees. News had arrived to Spain of abundant jobs, high wages, and a strong Deutsche Mark. So the Franco government intervened to “guide” migrants to Europe’s industrial heartlands. IEE Director Álvaro Rengifo likened the *gastarbeiter* to prior generations of emigrants: both were on “missions” to benefit Spain. But guestworkers differed from the “wanderers of yesteryear” because they departed, as was commonly said, “*con el contrato de trabajo bajo el brazo*.”⁶² Those pre-departure labor contracts assisted migrants by “snatching them from the claws of clandestine recruiters to place them under the State’s guardianship.” In contrast to Mexico, there were no public debates about such migration diplomacy. But Spanish policymakers justified labor exportation in similar terms: “Given that we cannot quickly change the socioeconomic conditions that compel so many men [*sic*] to leave this country, we must provide them the best conditions possible as they face this new future of work.”⁶³ Mexico’s ruling party did not harbor such skepticism about socioeconomic reform. Its revolution delivered schools, land, and some hope to the peasantry. The Franco regime’s drive to “restore feudalism” (as George Orwell foresaw) resulted in the opposite: mass graves, land concentration, forced labor, the regression of women’s rights, and an autarky policy that isolated Spain and impoverished its citizens. Spain’s dominant emigrant-sending regions suffered some

of the highest rates of illiteracy and landlessness in Europe.⁶⁴ Thus would the villagers arriving to Cologne encounter a starkly foreign destination: one of material abundance, occasional hostility, and political freedoms unimaginable back home.

Much like its former colony, Spain's age of the guestworker coincided with the start of a "Spanish Miracle" of sustained economic growth. With similar populations, the Iberian economy of the 1950s lagged slightly behind Mexico's in real and per capita terms.⁶⁵ Spain was recovering from civil war and international sanctions. But its fortunes changed with the Cold War. Beginning in 1953, an American government eager for strategic air and naval bases negotiated the Franco regime's partial integration into an anticommunist alliance of mutual defense, foreign investment, and migratory labor flows. Manufacturing and tourism boomed and encounters with tourists alerted Spaniards to a more prosperous Europe to the north. In 1959, Spain announced an economic liberalization initiative with World Bank approval, and in quick succession, IEE officials negotiated six bilateral guestworker agreements that dispersed Spaniards from Dutch manufacturing hubs to Swiss mountain resorts. The 1960s became the first decade in Spain's centuries-long history of emigration that "Euromigration" exceeded departures for the Americas. In 1960 Spanish diplomats negotiated their guestworker accord with Germany, which they considered "safe terrain." Unlike France, there were few Spanish Republican exiles, and the Adenaur government was led by an anti-communist Catholic who supported Spain's integration into a European Community. The timing was perfect. One year later the Berlin Wall shut the door to an eastern European labor pool that had supplied at least four million workers to postwar German employers.⁶⁶ Germany promised high wages and industrial jobs, and metalworking became a Spanish labor niche.

Advertised at home as Spain's (belated) Marshall Plan, assisted migration promised

development aid via vocational training and hard currency remittances. In contrast to Mexico, Spanish policymakers explicitly tied emigration policy to their dreams of development. Annual “Development Plans” set guestworker targets based on projected population growth, urban job creation, and the rural displacement caused by agricultural modernization. Consistent with its tutelary culture, the IEE distributed a “Guide for the Emigrant in Germany” that encouraged *gastarbeiter* to leave family members home so that migrants spent less and saved more. Outreach officers then facilitated remittance transfers to Spain’s regional savings banks.⁶⁷ By reducing unemployment, assisted migration also became “an escape valve that allows our development plan to move forward without social unrest.” State propagandists balanced that hope with claims that guest working allowed “the common people of Spain to get to know Europe.”⁶⁸ Back home, Spanish moviegoers watched the above-mentioned newsreels of migrants—“well received in German beer halls”—sharing drinks and singing along with their native-born workmates.⁶⁹ The guestworkers thus became vehicles of Iberian development and pan-European integration. The political left therefore decried a Hispano-German accord that helped to legitimize the Franco regime. From their base in Toulouse, Spain’s exiled union leaders protested a policy to “harvest emigrant earnings with no regard for their living conditions or their future destiny.”⁷⁰ But it was there, beyond the Pyrenees, where such activists could challenge Francoist migration policy while also reaching out to their working-class compatriots.

Aside from the Italians, all of Europe’s guestworkers departed from authoritarian regimes. The autocrats in Athens, Istanbul, and Madrid grew anxious about the migrants’ politicization, and rightly so, because Germany became a safe haven for emigre organizers and their local sympathizers. Among the array of activists embracing Spanish guestworkers were the Germans—unionists, feminists, Social Democrats—and then anti-Franco exiles: from Catholic

Youth to Spanish Communist Party (PCE) militants. As the *gastarbeiter* arrived, Spanish exiles moved from France to organize the presumed victims of *franquismo*. They protested less against the guestworker accord than its management: from the “laborious” recruitment bureaucracy to the segregation of *gastarbeiter* into “immigrant worker ghettos” that hampered integration. They even denounced the term “*gastarbeiter*” because its connotation of temporality justified the denial of social services to migrants and their families. Some exiles distrusted the predominantly rural migrants raised in Francoist Spain. Others hoped to teach them the truth about Franco, and thus perceived guestworkers, especially their return home, as “the means by which we can spread our ideas” in Spain.⁷¹ The consequences of their early activism startled Franco’s government. In May 1962, for example, thousands turned out before Spanish consular offices in solidarity with the renowned Asturian miners’ strike. German intelligence reported heavy guest worker attendance. Spanish diplomats threatened to “stop sending Spanish workers if the demonstrations do not come to an end.” Their employers feared “negative consequences for the economy.” But authorities in Bonn refused Spanish demands to prohibit anti-Franco rallies or deny entry visas to exiled PCE leaders.⁷²

The German left, eager to undermine Iberian fascism, embraced the Spaniards like no other guestworkers. Memories of the Spanish Republic motivated some, like Willy Brandt, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) leader who had covered Spain’s civil war as an exiled journalist. Strategic factors and political rivalries also played their part. Trade unions integrated guestworkers to stabilize wages and prevent wildcat strikes from disrupting production. German socialists, like many Spanish exiles, also grew anxious about communist infiltration of guestworker communities. They knew that *gastarbeiter* tuned in to the PCE’s radio broadcasts from Prague. But efforts to limit communist influences failed. The PCE became the dominant

opposition force among Spanish guestworkers, recruiting nearly seven hundred activists in Germany alone. Meanwhile, the exiled factions all shared the German left's determination to teach guestworkers about democratic unionism.⁷³ The Spaniards' disproportionate presence in metalworks granted that opportunity to Germany's largest and most militant union, IG Metall, which promoted three hundred Spanish shop stewards to recruit their countrymen. By 1973, some thirty thousand Spanish guestworkers had joined, a 50 percent unionization rate that superseded that of their German colleagues. Educational seminars taught them about union rights, participatory democracy, and German labor law, while a Spanish-language newsletter reported on politics back home. IG Metall admitted its "explicit intention" of democratizing Spain "from the bottom up," and vacationing migrants did apparently circulate the clandestine press upon return. IEE officials railed against "this anti-Spanish onslaught promoted by the German unions," but to no avail. So, the Spanish state abroad developed countermeasures to limit the assisted migrants' politicization.⁷⁴

In the Americas, generations of Spanish immigrants had maintained homeland ties via mutual aid societies organized along regional lines by *gallegos* or *asturianos*. But assisted migration was a state project, and the IEE followed the migrants north, working with the Catholic Church and pro-Franco emigres to promote Spanish nationalism and limit their exposure to "corrosive and atheist ideas." The regime feared the guestworkers' politicization as much for its potential effects upon return as for Spain's image abroad. Its tutelary paternalism, which began with pre-departure instruction and "emigrant guidebooks," sought to nurture homeland loyalties to sustain a culture of return and thereby maximize remittances.⁷⁵ Among the Spaniards present in Germany, and in guestworkers' everyday lives, were priests, schoolteachers, police agents, and the workplace translators who migrants derided as *disuadores* for their efforts

to temper workplace conflict. Germany refused to limit guestworker freedoms. But German intelligence files illustrate its officers' collaboration with Francoist state vigilance. Spanish "political police" monitored company barracks, confiscated subversive literature, and assisted in the deportation of wildcat strikers.⁷⁶

Spanish officials coupled this coercion with more welcomed means of outreach and assistance. Labor attaches offered legal advice, guidance on family settlement, and assistance with workplace disputes. Backed by their wealthy German co-religionists in Caritas, ninety Spanish Catholic Missions operated charitable programs, opened Spanish-language parishes, and financed Catholic workers' associations. One, a joint venture with the Italians, sponsored excursions to the Berlin Wall to teach the *gastarbeiter* "the evils of the Communist bloc."⁷⁷ Migrants frequented Casas de España, state-financed cultural centers where homesick guestworkers enjoyed wine and chorizo, played dominoes, or cheered on Real Madrid back when Franco's team (first) dominated European soccer. The IEE organized events like Operación Patria, flying Spanish celebrities to immigrant-heavy Frankfurt to stage concerts, visit factories, and deliver care packages of imported goods. Newsreel footage of such endeavors showed moviegoing audiences at home that "Spain never forgets her children." The IEE also distributed *7 Fechas*, the free, Cologne-based edition of the pro-regime weekly of sports, pop culture, and politics. Spanish exiles petitioned unsuccessfully for the magazine's censorship, calling it "unacceptable that a government which denies all freedoms to its own citizens can employ the democratic institutions of a free country."⁷⁸

How did Spain's guestworkers respond to these countervailing pressures and opportunities? Oral histories reveal how and why they saw through state propaganda from the start of their journeys. In one case, migrants jeered an IEE official in Irun who warned, as they crossed into

France to board their Cologne-bound train, “to be good ambassadors for our country ... and to behave yourselves.” That condescending paternalism, familiar to Mexico’s *braceros*, followed them into the lands of freedom beyond the Pyrenees. But migrants let officials know that IEE propaganda about their “mission” contrasted with their experiences: from false promises of vocational training to limited intercultural exchanges with their German hosts. One *gastarbeiter* who settled in Nuremberg recalled the IEE’s objectives clearly: “We were a business transaction. One more Spaniard here meant one less in Spain, and someone who was sending home remittances.”⁷⁹ Yet, migrants certainly utilized the programs developed by the IEE and Caritas. The exile opposition dismissed Spain’s labor attaches as “political commissars” who “worried more about [guestworkers’] exposure to democratic practices than to defending their rights.” However, tens of thousands visited the IEE’s Labor Offices annually, suggesting their effectiveness. And regardless of the IEE’s tutelary prodding, Spanish migrants earned reputations for “sacrificing and denying themselves everything in order to save.” Their self-imposed austerity concerned activists and parents, but their culture of savings explains why many forsook German restaurants for the “Spanish Houses.” The Casas offered a taste of home and more convivial receptions than German beer halls. Moreover, when queried by an American ethnographer, Spanish metalworkers near Stuttgart expressed no interest in “integration.” The Casas certainly limited inter-cultural communication, which some German locals appreciated. But so did IEE officials eager to foster a culture of return and the resultant stream of remittances.⁸⁰ Even anti-Franco activists later acknowledged the appeal of 7 *Fechas*, the legal aid, and the cultural centers, outreach initiatives that far surpassed those of other sending states and reflected IEE anxieties about Spanish exile activism.

Back in Spain, the guestworkers from Germany became known as *los alemanes* (Spanish for

“Germans”). Many resented the ironic moniker, even as some decorated their walls with cuckoo clocks. The political impact of their time abroad remains a topic of inquiry and debate.

Contemporary proponents of the guestworker system, like one Marshall Plan architect, predicted its liberalizing effect after migrants “breathed the more democratic air of northern Europe.”

Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT) activists agreed, claiming that their “acquisition of a union culture was a key factor in [Spain’s] transition to democracy.” Spanish history surveys now assume their experience was “an apprenticeship in democratic and trade union practices.”⁸¹

Pessimists, however, point to guestworkers’ cultural isolation in Germany, their apolitical commitment to work and savings, or a lifelong indoctrination in the Francoist ideology of Catholic nationalism. Many *gastarbeiter* appreciated the opportunity for high wages in cosmopolitan Germany that the IEE made possible. Old-guard UGT activists initially distrusted the migrants as economic opportunists who were “contaminated by *franquismo*.” And sociological surveys never inquired into whether *gastarbeiter* were, like many Spaniards of their generation, loyal fans of Franco. Even the regime’s opponents often shunned exile activism given the IEE’s transparent efforts to monitor dissent, or for fear of reprisal upon return.⁸² After all, none foresaw Franco’s 1975 death or the subsequent transition to democracy.

And yet, *gastarbeiter* returned home with experiences unimaginable to their fellow villagers and neighbors. Tens of thousands had exercised their right to unionize. Indeed, the unions received greater approval in surveys of Spanish migrants than any other aspect of German society.⁸³ Even more joined anti-Franco emigre movements, or at least observed them. Young, single women lived and socialized together free of the draconian restrictions of home, and life in urban Germany exposed them to feminist thought and activism. Sociologists documented the resultant cultural turn in Spain. Spanish employers and regional elites found return migrants to

be “non-conformist” in the workplace and more “politicized” (to the left) than before, an awakening that they attributed to cultural exposure abroad.⁸⁴ The Spanish state certainly feared this politicization. The IEE witnessed its early development and responded with a notable mix of vigilance and outreach. Juxtapose this case to Mexico, where concerns about the political impact of return rarely arose during an era of PRI hegemony. The United States no longer harbored Mexican exiles, as it had before and after the 1910 revolution, and rather than organize them, American farm labor activists lobbied against Mexican migrants as a threat to unionization. Back in Mexico, locals expressed far greater concern with the cultural Americanization of so-called *norteños* than any political radicalization. *Braceros* therefore encountered little diplomatic vigilance. They also received far less assistance than Spanish *gastarbeiter* or the Mexican migrants of the 1920s, when the revolutionary government proved far more committed to an emergent “Mexico abroad.” These distinct political contexts help explain why, in Cold War Europe, Spanish labor attaches better assisted the urbanized *gastarbeiter* with legal counsel. That resulted in greater contractual compliance than what Mexico’s overburdened consular offices secured for the *braceros* dispersed in the rural United States.⁸⁵

RETURN MIGRATION

The guestworkers returned to homelands in transition. Driven by manufacturing and tourism, the “miracle” economies of Mexico and Spain grew sixfold between 1950 and 1970. Each ranked among the world’s ten largest, and cities like Monterrey and Barcelona now attracted the rural migrants who once headed abroad. But a half-century after their demise, these guestworker programs’ impact at home remains—like the process of return more generally—“the great unwritten chapter in the history of migration.”⁸⁶ Neither sending state developed policies of assisted return, as opposed to departure, a shortcoming acknowledged by Organization for

Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) researchers and lamented by Spanish migrants themselves.⁸⁷ Nor did officials commission studies on the outcomes, aside from remittance flows. Historians still dedicate their research far more to the migrants' experience in California or Cologne than their fates back home. Yet what distinguished assisted migration was the contractual obligation of return and the bilateral accords' portrayal as mutually beneficial programs of development aid and cultural exchange. Those lofty objectives did inspire some of the era's social scientists and journalists to investigate how emigration transformed sending regions of southern Spain or western Mexico. That contemporaneous research, and more recent oral histories, offer interdisciplinary insights into outcomes and suggest avenues of further inquiry for historians of return migration.

The policymakers who negotiated the initial terms of departure—statesmen like Jaime Torres Bodet and the IEE's Álvaro Rengifo—could claim some notable achievements. For all its flaws, the Bracero Program improved farm labor conditions compared to past generations and relative to the Mexican migrants who now dominate agricultural work throughout the United States.⁸⁸ Ambassador Torres never foresaw that legacy. At the time of his 1970 passing, rural migrants departed less for the United States than for the industrializing cities of Mexico. Yet a demographic revolution, a prolonged economic crisis, and a culture of migration rooted in the *bracero* years would transform Mexico into the world's premier nation of emigrants.⁸⁹

Meanwhile, Spain achieved its “development” goals of reduced rural unemployment while migrant earnings stimulated local commerce and defrayed social welfare spending.⁹⁰ In both cases, central banks kept tabs as those transfers financed the imported technology upon which industrialization depended. So did the hard currency spent by sun-seeking travelers. But as one American reported from rural Mexico, the guestworker “brings dollars to poor areas where

tourists never come.”⁹¹ Today, sending states export labor to alleviate debt and outsource social welfare to their citizens abroad. Back home, politicians laud the “absent ones” as heroes for their sacrificial labor, immigrant entrepreneurship, and well-publicized remittances.⁹² But, again, Cold War-era labor diplomats foresaw the guestworker as a transnational agent of development rather than a neoliberal solution to its failure. By the 1970s, social scientists, better funded and wary about the policy discourse, set out to investigate the outcomes of return.

The Franco regime achieved some mixed and unexpected results. The Spanish *gastarbeiter* returned with limited vocational skills, few recollections of German hospitality, but with newfound perspectives on life back home. IEE hopes of industrial job training fell short. Spain’s own delegates to an inaugural OECD symposium on guestworkers challenged “the myth of productive return,” a complaint echoed repeatedly by other Mediterranean sending states. Those lofty promises about German apprenticeships prompted surveys, and investigators found that, much like *braceros* in American agriculture, the *gastarbeiter* learned specialized tasks in specific industries with limited transferability.⁹³ In fact, the most revealing study discovered that only 15 percent of Spanish guestworkers even departed with vocational opportunities in mind. An OECD report further discounted their beneficial potential. Nor did it matter since “in any case [return migrants] prefer to set up for themselves.”⁹⁴ Their motivations thus diverged from the developmentalist mission of the IEE. Young men and women went in search of adventure. Others discovered freedom and solidarity. Most went north, like their Mexican counterparts, to secure steady work, at unsurpassed wages, to realize a degree of economic independence back home. The remittances often financed what scholars may dismiss as “cosmetic development,” because the *alemanes* did what return migrants still do: they built or renovated houses, operated taxis, or opened cafes.⁹⁵ For one laborer from quasi-feudal Cádiz, where the civil war had

crushed radical dreams of agrarian reform, annual work on German road-building crews sustained a family of eleven children until they abandoned their ancestral village for access to school and factory jobs in Valencia.⁹⁶ In fact, Spain's era of Euromigration coincided with "the end of the peasantry": a time when land concentration and mechanization drastically reduced the working population employed in agriculture (from 47 to 15 percent). Thus, a common aspiration for many *gastarbeiter* was to escape a life of subsistence agriculture or seasonal farm labor and become city dwellers.

One apprenticeship that Germany delivered was in urban living. Younger migrants, especially, departed Spain with explicit plans of a "*segunda emigración*," saving up to resettle in Bilbao or Madrid. Two-thirds of *gastarbeiter* urbanized upon return. Many placed payments down on their big city *pisos* while still abroad. So, the guestworker program hastened and financed an extraordinary "*éxodo rural*," as returnees joined the one of five Spaniards who abandoned the countryside over a mere fifteen years.⁹⁷ As a result, most Spanish ethnographies of village life focus more on this rural exodus than the reception, experiences, and impact of guestworkers who returned. Once settled, the repatriates could juxtapose notable aspects of urban life with their experience in Germany, where, for example, "the police seemed invisible ... they weren't everywhere as in Spain."⁹⁸ German law guaranteed more leisure time, too. Factory operatives worked forty hours weekly. Back in Spain, they averaged fifty-five, for only half the average European wage rate. Those differentials narrowed gradually as the dark cloud of *franquismo* gave way to a democratic transition.⁹⁹ But the reverse culture shock endured as migrants complained of Spain's late-running trains, blackouts, faulty appliances, and "electricians who never come." Life abroad illuminated their homeland's belated urban development, and thus evoked a nostalgic recollection of the "order, cleanliness, and

punctuality” of Germany. Such memories rarely extended to their German hosts. When surveyed, the few (12 percent) *gastarbeiter* who developed “friendly bonds” with locals did so in the workplace. Otherwise, the Germans’ “pride and sense of superiority” were the national traits least favored by return migrants.¹⁰⁰ But how those contrasting experiences—from nativist hostility to their embracement by union colleagues—shaped the migrants’ views of Germany and their longer-term impact on inter-European relations still needs to be studied.

In contrast to the Europeans, American officials obsessed with the United States’s image abroad did investigate migration’s effect on foreign relations. The results seemed reassuring. One survey in small-town Jalisco found return migrants more likely than other locals to “bear amazing good will toward the country.” Social scientists observed similar sentiments from indigenous Oaxaca to northern cattle-ranching districts.¹⁰¹ Oral history testimonials, while imbued with traces of nostalgia, largely confirm their observations of fair treatment and thus contradict scholarly depictions of a “despotic labor regime.”¹⁰² Thus did one anthropologist assert, as the program expired, that “the U.S. will be denying itself a badly needed device to stem the tide of anti-American sentiment” in Latin America. Pessimism also spread in Mexico, where the press warned of lost remittances, mass repatriation, and social unrest. That concern led the United States to extend its guestworker accord with newly independent Jamaica.¹⁰³ But optimists perceived mid-1960s Mexico, —industrializing and urbanizing, and soon to host the Olympic Games—as the stable and prospering outlier in a region of revolutionary upheaval. While some *braceros* settled in the United States, the majority returned home to pursue their own dreams of development during an era when policymakers forsook rural Mexico to address the challenges of urbanization.

Ethnographies conducted during or just after the Bracero Program illustrated the process of

return and sparked competing (and ongoing) debates about its developmental impact.¹⁰⁴ Some returnees saved just enough to buy new boots and radios, pay debts, and invest in next year's migration. As in the Spanish case, local elites and some condescending researchers dismissed migrant spending on consumer goods or in local cantinas. Others observed more troubling consequences: social stratification between *bracero* and non-migrant households and a "migrant syndrome" that would in fact foster a multi-generational dependency on seasonal work and remittances from El Norte.¹⁰⁵ However, most *braceros* invested in long-term progress, guided by new perspectives. Social anthropologists characterized repatriates as "new men": "They acquired a new dignity and self-respect ... and began to realize it was in their power to change things." Oral histories illustrate the program's "educational" benefits, from knowledge of contractual rights to the value of literacy, and reveal that migrants returned with a "disposition to accept change and adopt new modes of life."¹⁰⁶ As "despotic" as the *bracero* system may seem today, it did offer astute guestworkers the financial means to achieve their own aspirations back home.

Braceros drew upon their own ethnographic observations of North American culture to improve their local economies and communities back home. Like return migrants past and present, they invested in land, livestock, home renovations, and petty commerce. They brought tools to launch new careers as mechanics, carpenters, or cargo haulers. The Bracero Program exposed Mexican peasants to the world's most innovative system of commercial agriculture. Upon return, they introduced new crops and innovations like hybrid seeds in communities bypassed by Mexico's more capital-intensive Green Revolution.¹⁰⁷ Work up north also lessened their dependence on private moneylenders, or the state's mistrusted rural credit bank, or the clientelistic patronage that delivered votes to the PRI. Studies found their knowhow and remittances particularly beneficial to communal farmers who secured land during the 1930s. As

urbanization transformed Mexico, *braceros* also returned home each year to put forth new demands upon the state. Petitions for public works such as schools, roads, sanitation, and electricity grew more frequent and better organized. Indeed, “hometown associations” were already operating by the 1950s, establishing the enduring precedent of emigrants abroad financing community development back home. In stark contrast to Spain, the *braceros*’ earnings allowed them to retain their “rural roots, not to leave them,” an outcome lauded by ethnographers for slowing the tide of rural-urban migration.¹⁰⁸ Their annual exodus thus proved less a symptom of failed agrarian policy, as critics of the ruling party charged, than a means by which it might succeed, making possible the survival of the peasantry in rural Mexican sending regions.

These contrasting guestworker programs now serve as cautionary tales and comparative models of how migration diplomacy operated from the perspective of policymakers, hosts, and sending communities. Then and today, Spaniards extol the *gastarbeiter* for their sacrifices. In Mexico, *braceros* are perceived as victims of gringo exploitation and ruling-party corruption but also as transnational pioneers who forged enduring ties to el Norte. Within the United States, their story remains a footnote in America’s complex nation-of-immigrants narrative, except among the millions of Mexican Americans who trace their families’ roots to the Bracero Program. Germans harbor more ambivalent memories of the once celebrated *gastarbeiter*. They facilitated their economic miracle—a chapter now featured at Bonn’s national history museum—but expectations of return could prove illusory.¹⁰⁹ In both cases, some guests stayed. Social networks developed. Families arrived. And nativists in the United States and Germany protested as temporary workers became settled immigrants who transformed the cultural landscapes of the American Southwest or the Ruhr Valley. Meanwhile, subsequent guestworker programs have long been haunted by critical assessments of the programs’ other real or perceived shortcomings,

from their downward effect on wages (in America) to the failures of social integration (in Germany).¹¹⁰

Today, one still hears voices extolling the developmental benefits of managed migration. Like policymakers in post-revolutionary Mexico or Franco's Spain, economists rarely calculate the psychological toll of absence. They quantify how remittances offset balances of payments, subsidize education, or micro-finance investments in housing or commerce. After decades of studies, the OECD calculates that remittances offer more stable outcomes than foreign direct investment. Much like the American farm lobbyists of the 1950s, influential scholars claim that assisted migrations of "unskilled labor" offer greater returns than "fairer trade, better aid, and debt relief."¹¹¹ Residents of traditional Mexican sending communities also support expanded guestworker opportunities, given their government's neoliberal retreat from rural development and the militarization of the U.S. border.¹¹² Yet today's programs no longer offer migrants the protections secured by diplomats like Jaime Torres Bodet. The United States's seasonal (H2A) guestworker policy builds on *bracero* precedent, with similar guarantees for some two hundred thousand predominantly Mexican migrants. But it bears less resemblance to a relatively "model" Canadian program than to labor exporting systems of Asia or the Middle East, with privatized contracting, employer "sponsorship" of work visas, exorbitant migrant fees, and the absence of Mexican government oversight.¹¹³ For all their shortcomings, the geopolitical context pressured Cold War-era diplomats to act on their citizens' behalf to either minimize racial discrimination in America or limit politicization in Germany, where Spanish *gastarbeiter* further benefitted from union mediation. Modern temporary labor programs are less products of bilateral negotiations than asymmetrical agreements whose migrant protections exist only on paper. Today's sending state governments, desperate to place migrants abroad to channel remittances back home, do

indeed leave them abandoned to their own resources.

Abstract: This history of Cold War-era migration policy compares two emblematic guestworker programs that recruited several million Mexican and Spanish migrants to labor in the United States and Germany. Proponents of the bilateral accords defended them as diplomatic achievements that secured contractual labor rights, improved foreign relations, and sent migrants home with savings and skills to achieve the diverse development goals of the sending states. The study traces the programs' historical and ideological roots, juxtaposes the guestworkers' experiences, and uses the cases of Mexican *braceros* and Spanish *gastarbeiter* to explore the contested nexus between migration and development.

Key words: guestworkers, migration diplomacy, return migration, Bracero Program, Mexico, Germany, Spain

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¹ From the Spanish *brazo* (“arm”), the term now distinguishes formal guestworkers from undocumented migrants who went north without contracts. A brief survey is Michael Snodgrass, “The Bracero Program, 1942–1964,” in Mark Overmyer-Velásquez, ed., *Beyond la Frontera: The History of Mexican-U.S. Migration*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 79–102.

² Jaime Torres Bodet, *Memorias: La victoria sin alas* (Mexico: **Error! Main Document Only.** Porrúa, 1970), 508–9. All Spanish-English translations are mine.

³ I cite the Spanish historiography below. Recent histories of the German case include Jennifer Miller, *Turkish Guest Workers in Germany: Hidden Lives and Contested Borders, 1960s to 1980s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018); Mark E. Spicka, “City Policy and Guest Workers in Stuttgart, 1955–1973,” *German History* 31, 3 (2013): 345–65.

⁴ Catherine **Error! Main Document Only.** Vézina, *Diplomacia migratoria: Una historia transnacional del Programa Bracero, 1947–1952* (Mexico City: CIDE, 2018); Deborah Cohen, *Braceros: Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects in the Postwar United States and Mexico* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Cindy Hahamovitch, *No Man’s Land: Jamaican Guestworkers in America and the Global History of Deportable Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

⁵ The business of private labor contracting still thrived, however, in the placement of clandestine migrants unable or unwilling to enlist in managed migration programs.

⁶ Christoph Rass, “Temporary Labour Migration and State-Run Recruitment of Foreign Workers in Europe, 1919–1975: A New Migration Regime?” *International Review of Social History* 57 (2012): 191–224, quote 195; Stephen Castles and Godula Kozack, *Immigrant Workers and Class Structure in Western Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 410–11.

⁷ Cindy Hahamovitch, “Creating Perfect Immigrants: Guest Workers of the World in Historical Perspective,” *Labor History* 44, 1 (2003): 69–94.

⁸ Robert Rhoades, “Foreign Labor and German Industrial Capitalism 1871–1978: The Evolution of a Migratory System,” *American Ethnologist* 5, 3 (1978): 562–63; Rita Chin, *The Guest Worker Question in Postwar Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 47–50.

⁹ Hahamovitch addresses the distinctions in “Creating Perfect Immigrants,” 71–73.

¹⁰ See the analysis submitted by Mexico’s Chicago consulate: “Mexicanos Emigrantes, medidas sugeridas para controlar sus energias,” June 1922, Archivo General de la Nación: Ramo Obregón-Calles, 711-M-30; Italian policy in Dino Cinel, *The National Integration of Italian Return Migrants, 1870–1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); personal correspondence with Julie Weise, University of Oregon, June–July 2017.

¹¹ Manuel Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States: A Study of Human Migration and Adjustment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930), 176–83.

¹² Julia Henderson, “Foreign Labour in the United States during the War,” *International Labour Review* 52 (Dec. 1945): 609–31.

¹³ While they labored across dozens of states, 80 percent of *braceros* harvested cotton, produce, and citrus in Texas and California. Railway maintenance employed several hundred thousand during World War II alone. Roosevelt's Executive Order 8802 prohibited racial discrimination in wartime defense industries.

¹⁴ Reports of the U.S. Immigration [Dillingham] Commission, vol. 4, *Emigration Conditions in Europe* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911), 231–34, 411–15.

¹⁵ Commissioner of Immigration Anthony Caminetti, 22 July 1918, in Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Mexican Immigration, 1906–1930 (reel 7); “Hi, Amigos!” *Parade Magazine*, 21 Oct. 1945; Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada, Embajada Mexicana, Oct. 1945, 1452–1.

¹⁶ U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture: Hearings on Mexican Farm Labor (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1955, 1958, 1961), 21, 422–23, 11.

¹⁷ David C. Engermann and Corinna R. Unger, “Introduction: Towards a Global History of Modernization,” *Diplomatic History* 33, 3 (2009): 375–85.

¹⁸ Hein de Haas, “The Migration and Development Pendulum: A Critical Review on Research and Policy,” *International Migration* 50, 3 (2012): 8–25; Rhoades, “Foreign Labor,” 553–54.

¹⁹ Rhoades, “Foreign Labor,” 561–62, 570.

²⁰ The U.S. Congress held Italy's annual immigration quota at 5,800 (compared to 158,000 yearly arrivals between 1900–1920). Barry Machado, *In Search of a Usable Past: The Marshall Plan and Postwar Reconstruction* (Garmisch: Marshall Center, 2007), 75–77; Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 25–37; Deniz Göktürk, David Gramling, and Anton Kaes, eds., *Germany in Transit: Nation and Migration, 1955–2005* (Berkeley: University of California

Press, 2007), 27, 67–76, on an East German system that proved far less hospitable.

²¹ Chin, *Guestworker Question*, 47; Charles Kindleberger, *Europe's Postwar Growth: The Role of Labor Supply* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 207; Ulrich Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labor in Germany, 1880–1980* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 226.

²² Kaja Shonik, “Politics, Culture, and Economics: Reassessing the West German Guest Worker Agreement with Yugoslavia,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 40, 4 (2009): 719–36.

²³ Surveys nonetheless found working-class majorities (70 percent) willing to work longer hours “if this made the employment of foreigners unnecessary.” Castles and Kosack, *Immigrant Workers*, 168–69

²⁴ Göktürk, *Germany in Transit*, 36–37.

²⁵ Heike Knortz, *Diplomatische Tauschgeschäfte: “Gastarbeiter” in der westdeutschen Diplomatie und Beschäftigungspolitik 1953–1973* (Köln, Böhlau Verlag, 2008); Herbert, *History of Foreign Labor*, 210–11; Castles and Kosack, *Immigrant Workers*, 8, 180.

²⁶ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (henceforth OECD), *Emigrant Workers Returning to Their Home Country* (Paris: OECD, 1967); George Gmelch surveyed this research, in “Return Migration,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 9 (1980): 235–59.

²⁷ For example, Francesco P. Cerase, “A Study of Italian Migrants Returning from the U.S.A.,” *International Migration Review* 1, 3 (1967): 67–74. That journal notably debuted in 1966 (two years after the *Journal of Development Studies*). Xosé Núñez Seixas surveys the historiography on pre-1930s Europe, especially Spanish Galicia, in “Emigración de retorno y cambio social en la Península Ibérica: Algunas observaciones teóricas en perspectiva comparada,” *Migraciones y Exilios* 1 (2000): 27–66.

²⁸ Beginning with Wayne A. Cornelius, *Mexican Migration to the United States: The View from Rural Sending Communities* (Cambridge: MIT, 1976), an early publication of MIT's Migration and Development Study Group.

²⁹ Fred Eldridge, "Helping Hands from Mexico," *Saturday Evening Post*, 10 Aug. 1957; Ernesto Galarza, *Strangers in Our Fields* (Washington, D.C.: Joint United States-Mexico Trade Union Committee, 1956).

³⁰ Jose Garmendia, *La emigración española en la encrucijada: marco general de la emigración de retorno* (Valladolid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociales, 1981), 250.

³¹ Hahamovitch, "Creating Perfect Immigrants," 86; Rass, "Temporary Labour," 215–18.

³² Don Mitchell, *They Saved the Crops: Labor, Landscape, and the Struggle over Industrial Farming in Bracero-Era California* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012).

³³ Carlos Sanz Díaz, "Un atajo al país del milagro económico: La emigración irregular de españoles a la República Federal de Alemania bajo el franquismo," in Luis M. Calvo Salgado, et al., *Migración y exilio españoles en el siglo XX* (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2009), 127–56.

³⁴ Their social standing improved, however, since Germans saw the Turks "with even greater mistrust." Garmendia, *La emigración española*, 241–43; Guillermo Luis Díaz-Plaja, *La condición emigrante: los trabajadores españoles en Europa* (Madrid: EDICUSA, 1974), 157–60.

³⁵ Consular officials reported annual desertion rates of up to 25 percent, with "skips" returning to trusted employers or settling in cities like Chicago and Denver. Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada: Trabajadores Migratorios, file TM-32-27, 1954.

³⁶ Geertje Van Os, *Me vine con una maleta de cartón y madera: Emigrantes españoles en el sureste de Holanda, 1961–2000* (Cáceres: Museu de Cáceres, 2009); Raika Espahangizi,

“Migration and Urban Transformations: Frankfurt in the 1960s and 1970s,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 40, 4 (2009): 183–208; interviews in the film, *El tren de la memoria*, Marta Arribas and Anna Pérez, directors (Spain: Producciones La Iguana, 2005).

³⁷ Alexander Clarkson, *Fragmented Fatherland: Immigration and Cold War Conflict in the Federal Republic of Germany, 1945–1980* (New York: Berghahn, 2013), 94; *Los trabajadores españoles en Alemania*, R. Simancas, director, produced by Noticieros y Documentales, Madrid, 1963, viewable at <http://www.rtve.es/filmoteca/>.

³⁸ Spicka, “City Policy,” 351; Juan Moreno, “Has Germany Really Changed?” *Der Spiegel Online*, 11 Sept. 2015.

³⁹ José Babiano and Ana Fernández Asperilla, *La patria en la maleta: Historia social de la emigración española en Europa* (Madrid: Fundación 1 de Mayo, 2009), ch. 3.

⁴⁰ Gamio, *Mexican Immigration*, 127–28.

⁴¹ Interviews in *El tren de la memoria*. Robert Rhoades writes, in “Guest Workers and Germans: A Study in the Anthropology of Migration,” that he found Spanish metalworkers near Stuttgart expressed no interest in “integration” (PhD diss., University of Oklahoma, 1976, 129–33).

⁴² Vanni Pettina, “Adapting to the New World: Mexico’s International Strategy of Economic Development at the Outset of the Cold War, 1946–1952,” *Cultural and Digital History Journal* 4, 1 (2015): 1–16.

⁴³ Online bibliographies at <https://sre.gob.mx/cancilleria/reglamento-interno/35-cancilleria/cancilleria/97-cancilleres-del-siglo-xx-> (accessed 8 Mar. 2022).

⁴⁴ José Lázaro Salinas, *La emigración de braceros: visión objetiva de un problema mexicana* (Mexico: Cuauhtémoc, 1955). Some scholars insist the saving scandal persisted, costing several

million unwitting migrants 10 percent of their earnings. Archival evidence indicates otherwise, as would the inexplicable quiescence of *braceros* who clearly knew their rights. One proponent is Mireya Loza, *Defiant Braceros: How Migrant Workers Fought for Racial, Sexual, & Political Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), ch. 4. **Error! Main**

Document Only. Vézina corrects the record in *Diplomacia migratoria*, 162–64.

⁴⁵ Guy Ray, Mexico City Embassy, 6 Oct. 1943, State Department Record Group 84, United States National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA: RG 84), 840.1.

⁴⁶ Joseph Lyford, “An Army of Ill-Will Ambassadors,” *New Republic*, 4 Mar. 1957; AFL-CIO legislative director Biemiller in Committee on Agriculture Hearings, House of Representatives (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1963), 197.

⁴⁷ Pedro de Alba, *Siete artículos sobre el problema de los braceros* (Mexico, 1954), 31–36.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 44–45.

⁴⁹ New Deal labor legislation exempted agriculture. African American cotton workers thus took notice when Mexican consuls intervened to enforce *bracero* rights in the Mississippi Delta. By 1963, civil rights proponents in the U.S. Congress cited the Bracero Program as precedent for federal intervention to curtail racial segregation. Galarza testimony in House of Representatives, Hearings, Mexican Farm Labor Program (Washington, D.C., 1955); Julie M. Weise, *Corazón de Dixie: Mexicanos in the U.S. South since 1910* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 112; B. P. Trussell, “Provisions Protecting Braceros Cited as Rights-Bill Precedent,” *New York Times*, 25 Aug. 1963.

⁵⁰ Dale Wright, *They Harvest Despair: The Migrant Farm Worker* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965); Hahamovitch, *No Man’s Land*.

⁵¹ Ernesto Galarza, in “Tres estudios especializados acerca de los braceros,” *Boletín del*

Archivo General de la Nación 4, 4 (Mexico: AGN, 1980): 38–52.

⁵² *El Popular*, 21 Oct. 1944; *El Nacional*, 2–4 Feb. 1943. See Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada: Trabajadores Migratorios, for grievances filed with Mexican consuls.

⁵³ *Excélsior*, cited in Burrows, Mexico City, to State Department, 7 Mar. 1950, NARA—Braceros 560, box 6. “Lands” refers to states like California annexed by the United States after the Mexican-American War.

⁵⁴ Oechner, Monterrey, to State Department, 26 July 1956, NARA—Braceros 560, box 6.

⁵⁵ James Creagan, “Public Law 78: A Tangle of Domestic and International Relations,” *Journal of Inter-American Studies* 7, 4 (1965): 541–56.

⁵⁶ Michael Snodgrass, “Patronage and Progress: The Bracero Program from the Perspective of Mexico,” in Leon Fink, ed., *Workers across the Americas: The Transnational Turn in Labor History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 245–66.

⁵⁷ Petitions arrived from teachers, parents’ associations, union locals, and communal farm communities (*ejidos*). Archivo General e Histórico de Michoacán—**Error! Main Document Only**. Gobernación, Serie: Programa Braceros, 1959, 1963.

⁵⁸ Rass, “Temporary Labour Migration,” 212; Aristide Zolberg, *A Nation by Design: Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 320–22.

⁵⁹ Primera Reunion Parlamentaria Mexico-Norteamericana, Guadalajara, 6–12 Feb. 1961, in Archivo Municipal de Guadalajara.

⁶⁰ *El Universal*, Mexico City, 15 Mar. 1950.

⁶¹ De Alba, *Siete artículos*, 26–30, 48–52; Rass, “Temporary Labour Migration,” 215.

⁶² “With signed labor contract in hand.” Alvaro Rengifo Calderón, *Técnica y política de la*

emigración española (Madrid: IEE, 1965).

⁶³ Emigration Law of 1970, in Juan Bautista Vilar, *Migración de retorno desde Europa: su incidencia en la modernización de la región de Murcia (1975–2005)* (Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, 2008).

⁶⁴ Antonio Cazorla Sanchez, *Fear and Progress: Ordinary Lives in Franco's Spain, 1939–1975* (London: Wiley, 2010), 107–15; **Error! Main Document Only.** George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*, 7th ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), 74.

⁶⁵ See Maddison Historical Statistics, Groningen Growth and Development Center, <https://www.rug.nl/ggdc/historicaldevelopment/maddison/original-maddison>.

⁶⁶ Göktürk, *Germany in Transit*, 9; overviews of Spanish migration in Joseba de la Torre and Gloria Sanz Lafuente, eds., *Migraciones y coyuntura económica del franquismo a la democracia* (Zaragoza: Prensas Universitarias, 2008).

⁶⁷ Clarkson, *Fragmented Fatherland*, 99.

⁶⁸ Rengifo Calderón, *Técnica y política*, 11.

⁶⁹ Noticiarios y Documentales, “Los trabajadores españoles en Alemania” (Jan. 1963), <http://www.rtve.es/alacarta/videos/revista-imagenes/trabajadores-espanoles-alemania/2852857/>.

⁷⁰ Union General de Trabajadores (UGT) de Alemania, “Ante el alucinante problema de la emigración” (Dusseldorf, 1973), in Alicia Alted, ed., *UGT y el reto de la emigración económica (1957–1976)* (Madrid: Fundación Largo Caballero, 2010), 29–33.

⁷¹ UGT de Alemania, 43 (quoted); Babiano and Asperilla, *La patria*, 127–28.

⁷² Clarkson, *Fragmented Fatherland*, 96–101 (quoted); Antonio Muñoz Sánchez, *Entre dos sindicalismos: La emigración española en la RFA, los sindicatos alemanes y la Unión General de Trabajadores, 1960–1964* (Madrid: Fundación 1 de Mayo, 2008), 20–22.

⁷³ Carlos Sanz Díaz, “Un sindicato en la emigración: La UGT y los trabajadores españoles en Alemania (1961–1976),” in Alted, *UGT y el reto*, 164–80; Clarkson, *Fragmented Fatherland*, 97–100.

⁷⁴ Muñoz Sánchez, *Entre dos sindicalismos*, 20–24.

⁷⁵ Babiano and Asperilla, *La patria*, 272; Garmendia, *La emigración española*.

⁷⁶ Castles and Kosack, *Immigrant Workers*, 126, 158; Díaz-Plaja, *La condición*, 200–2; Manuel Simón, “La acción de la UGT en la emigración económica Española,” in Alted, *UGT y el reto*, 66–67.

⁷⁷ Clarkson, *Fragmented Fatherland*, 89–92.

⁷⁸ Simón, “La acción,” 29–33. Operación Patria appears in “Los trabajadores españoles en Alemania.”

⁷⁹ Virtual exhibit: “We’ve Arrived ... Cologne-Deutz Train Station: Migration Stories over 40 Years.” Museum of Migration in Cologne, Germany (domid.org); interview in *El tren de la memoria*.

⁸⁰ Juventud Obrera Católica report in Babiano and Asperilla, *La patria*, 98; Rhoades, “Guest Workers and Germans,” 129–33; Spicka, “City Policy.”

⁸¹ Kindleberger, *Europe’s Postwar Growth*, 204; UGT de Alemania, “Ante el alucinante problema,” 20; Nigel Townson, “Introduction,” in Nigel Townson, ed., *Spain Transformed: The Late Franco Dictatorship, 1959–75*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 14.

⁸² Antonio Muñoz Sánchez, “El sindicato vertical ‘al servicio del emigrante’: La agregaduría laboral de la Embajada Española en Bonn durante los años sesenta,” *Historia, trabajo, y sociedad* 3 (2012): 115–36.

⁸³ Angel Pascual, *El retorno de los emigrantes: conflicto o integración?* (Barcelona: Nova

Terra, 1970), 135–37.

⁸⁴ Jose Cazorla Perez, *Retorno al sur* (Cadiz: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1989), 154, whereas 37 percent of migrants themselves claimed “more leftist ideas than before” (while 5 percent declared themselves “more to the right”).

⁸⁵ Compliance also reflected distinct business cultures: rural American growers averse to federal intervention versus Germany’s quasi-corporatist employer associations.

⁸⁶ Russell King explains why in “Generalizations from the History of Return Migration,” in Bimal Ghosh, ed., *Return Migration: Journey of Hope or Despair?* (Geneva: International Office on Migration, 2000).

⁸⁷ [W. R. Bohning and D. Maillat](#), *The Effects of the Employment of Foreign Workers* (Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1974); Babiano and Asperilla, *La patria*. 260–67.

⁸⁸ Studies of post-*bracero* conditions include Weise, *Corazón de Dixie*, ch. 4; and Seth Holmes, *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farm Workers in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

⁸⁹ Between 1950 and 2000, Spain’s population grew by 30 percent, to forty million, while Mexico’s quadrupled to one hundred million. As a result, by the century’s end, Spain’s GDP per capita more than doubled Mexico’s. In a related contrast, Spain evolved in a single generation from an emigrant nation to a net recipient of immigrants. See Maddison Historical Statistics.

⁹⁰ Babiano and Asperilla, *La patria*, 247–51.

⁹¹ Eldridge, “Helping Hands.”

⁹² Robyn Magalit Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export: How the Philippine State Brokers Labor to the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Roy Germano, *Outsourcing*

Welfare: How the Money Immigrants Send Home Contributes to Stability in Developing Countries (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); **Error! Main Document Only.** David Pedersen, *American Values: Migrants, Money, and Meaning in the United States and El Salvador* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

⁹³ Díaz-Plaja, *La condición*, 215–20; Cazorla Pérez, *Retorno*, 175–76; OECD, “International Migration of Labour and its Repercussions,” *OECD Observer* 47 (Aug. 1970): 9–12.

⁹⁴ Pascual, *El retorno*, 120; **Error! Main Document Only.** OECD, “International Migration of Labour and Its Repercussions,” *OECD Observer* 47 (Aug. 1970): 9–12.

⁹⁵ Bautista Vilar, *Migración de retorno*, 57–67 (cited); Robert Rhoades, “Intra-European Return Migration and Rural Development: Lessons from the Spanish Case,” *Human Organization*, 37, 2 (1978): 135–37.

⁹⁶ Jerome Mintz, “Trouble in Andalusia,” *Natural History* 81, 5 (1972): 54–63, the ethnographic narrative that resulted in his poignant documentary *Pepe’s Family* (1978), <https://collections.libraries.indiana.edu/IULMIA/items/show/917>.

⁹⁷ Even the regional savings banks channeled remittances from abroad into urban investments in Madrid, rather than rural sending regions, and emigrant associations protested against this divestment policy. Babiano and Asperilla, *La patria*, 244–50.

⁹⁸ Sonia Martín Pérez, *La representación social de la emigración española a Europa, 1956–1975: el papel de la televisión y otros medios de comunicación* (Madrid: Ministerio de Empleo, 2012), 149–64.

⁹⁹ Martín Aceña and Martínez Ruíz, “The Golden Age of Spanish Capitalism,” in Nigel Townson, ed., *Spain Transformed: The Late Franco Dictatorship, 1959–75*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 40–41.

¹⁰⁰ Perez, *Retorno al sur*, 133; Jose Garmendia, *La emigración española*.

¹⁰¹ Norman D. Humphrey, “The Mexican Image of Americans,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, “America Through Foreign Eyes,” 295 (Sept. 1954): 116–125; Leslie Simpson, *Many Mexicos* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 347; Richard H. Hancock, *The Role of the Bracero in the Economic and Cultural Dynamics of Mexico: A Case Study of Chihuahua* (Stanford: Hispanic American Society, 1959).

¹⁰² Douglas S. Massey et al., *Return to Aztlán: The Social Process of International Migration from Western Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). The Bracero History Archive (braceroarchive.org) holds 737 transcribed interviews. Nearly all responded negatively to structured inquiries about employer abuses or discrimination. Contrast that with Ronald L. Mize, *The Invisible Workers of the U.S.-Mexican Bracero Program: Obreros Olvidados* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016).

¹⁰³ Michael Belshaw, *A Village Economy: Land and People of Huecorio* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 130–33, 346–48; Hahamovitch, *No Man’s Land*, 149–50.

¹⁰⁴ Leigh Binford, “Migrant Remittances and (Under)development in Mexico,” *Critique of Anthropology* 23, 3 (2003): 305–36; Jeffrey Cohen, Richard Jones, and Dennis Conway, “Why Remittances Shouldn’t be Blamed for Rural Underdevelopment in Mexico: A Collective Response to Leigh Binford,” *Critique of Anthropology* 25, 1 (2005): 87–96.

¹⁰⁵ Joshua S. Reichert, “The Migrant Syndrome: Seasonal U.S. Wage Labor and Rural Development in Central Mexico,” *Human Organization* 40, 1 (1981): 56–66.

¹⁰⁶ Paul Friedrich, *The Princes of Naranja: An Essay in Anthrohistorical Method* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987); Maria Herrera-Sobek, *The Bracero Experience: Elitelore vs Folklore* (Los Angeles: University of California at Los Angeles, 1979), 122–25; synthesis of the

ethnographies in Snodgrass, “The Bracero Program” (98–101); case studies from Los Altos and Valles regions of Jalisco in Snodgrass, “Patronage and Progress” (256–61).

¹⁰⁷ Diffusion of innovation in Tomás Martínez Saldaña and Leticia Gándara Mendoza, *Política y sociedad en México: el caso de los altos de Jalisco* (Mexico: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1976).

¹⁰⁸ Merilee Grindle, *Searching for Rural Development: Labor Migration and Employment in Mexico* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 38. For hometown associations[←WRITE OUT THE ACRONYM] and examples of productive investment, see David Fitzgerald, *A Nation of Emigrants: How Mexico Manages Its Migration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

¹⁰⁹ The “House of History” now displays the motorbike awarded to the one millionth *gastarbeiter*, Armando Rodrigues **Error! Main Document Only.** de Sá, who passed away in Portugal in 1979.

¹¹⁰ Joshua S. Reichert and Douglas S. Massey, “Guestworker Programs: Evidence from Europe and the United States and some Implications for U.S. Policy,” *Population Research and Policy Review* 1, 1 (1982): 1–17.

¹¹¹ OECD, “Interrelations between Public Policies, Migration and Development” (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2017); Lant Pritchett, *Let Their People Come: Breaking the Gridlock on International Labor Mobility* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Global Development, 2006), 1.

¹¹² *The Other Side of Immigration*, Roy Germano, director (New Paltz, NY: Team Love, 2009)

¹¹³ Hahamovitch, “Creating Perfect Immigrants,” 89–94; Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export*, ch. 6; Leigh Binford examines the Mexico-Canada program in *Tomorrow We’re All Going to the*

Harvest: Temporary Foreign Worker Programs and Neoliberal Political Economy (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013).