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Scott Kloeck-Jenson Fellowship (2023)

Pre-Dissertation Fieldwork in France—Summer 2023

I applied for fieldwork funding from the SKJ Fellowship to study the press and correspondence of teachers who fled Spain after the Civil War (1936-1939) and settled in France and Mexico. The secondary literature notes that educators were one of the groups most affected by the violent reshaping of the Spanish state after 1939. The Franco dictatorship purged schools of trained teachers who did not follow the new regime's nationalist, far-right Catholic doctrines, and put an end to efforts to promote working-class literacy and gender equality in access to education. However, much less is known of the cultural and institutional history of teachers in exile, and even less about how educators established networks of communication that connected the diasporas in France and Mexico. After browsing through archive databases, I selected locations in Paris and Toulouse where I hoped to find letters, school diaries, and published press to study these transnational communication networks during the early period of exile (1939-1955).

I spent my first month of research in the Paris metropolitan area, exploring the collections of the Library of Contemporary International Documentation (nicknamed *La Contemporaine*) and the National Archives in Pierrefitte-sur-Seine. In the first location, I was pleased to find several individual collections from refugee teachers, some of which included teaching diaries (see image c below) and correspondence with diplomatic authorities (image d). I also found institutional collections of French student unions like the UNEF, which campaigned on behalf of Spanish refugees, and press published by exiled intellectuals themselves, including teachers and pedagogues. In the National Archives, I found official government sources concerning immigration decrees, border crossings, and police surveillance of refugee groups.

For my second month of research, I was based in Toulouse, seat of the Haute-Garonne *département* and of the Occitanie region. This city was the unofficial capital of the Spanish diaspora in France between 1939 and 1975, hosting most headquarters for trade unions, political parties, and cultural associations of refugees from Spain. These refugees also played a key role in the resistance and liberation in the French Southwest between 1942 and 1944. I spent two weeks

consulting the Municipal archives of this city, where I examined the institutional collections of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party and the Federation of Spanish Education Workers in exile. These collections contained not only official party or union publications, but also individual files for affiliated members. The individual files were particularly interesting because they included correspondence from non-elite refugees with the party and union leaderships, which provided the perspective of lesser-known historical actors.

For the following two weeks, I visited the departmental archives of the Haute-Garonne, which contain French government sources, clandestine publications of the German occupation period, and documents from refugee aid organizations. I was also able to spend two days in the departmental archives of the Ariège in Foix, a one-hour train commute away from Toulouse. These archives were particularly relevant for border crossing registers and the refugee settlement application process, as the Ariège is just north of Andorra and the Catalan province of Lleida.

Thanks to the generous funding of UW-Madison's IRIS and the Kloeck-Jenson family, I was able to have my first extensive archival research experience, which provided me with necessary skills and helped me clarify my dissertation project. Thanks to this trip, I learned how to navigate French archives and how to communicate effectively with archivists. I established a rapport with one of the municipal archivists in Toulouse and joined the email list for a local history journal in the Ariège, which I hope will be important resources for future research, publishing, and collaboration. I was able to improve my written and spoken French, which is helping me prepare for longer research funding application, especially an application for a Chateaubriand scholarship for which I am having to correspond with French scholars from the Université Paris Cité.

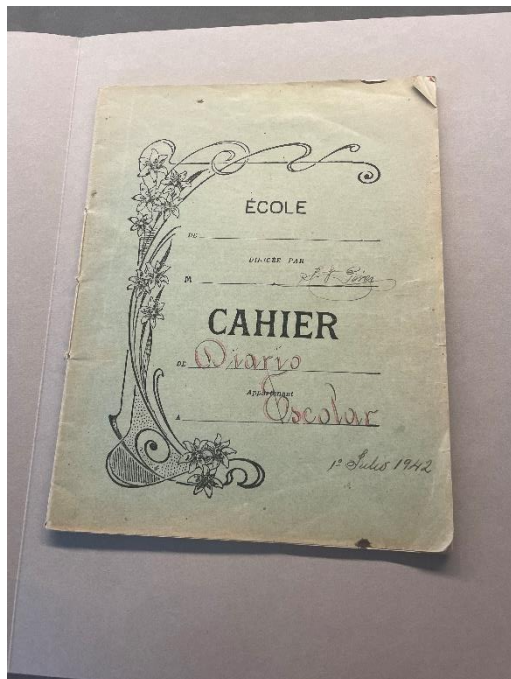
Please find below these lines a few pictures of my travel and documentation findings in France. I am happy to provide more upon request.



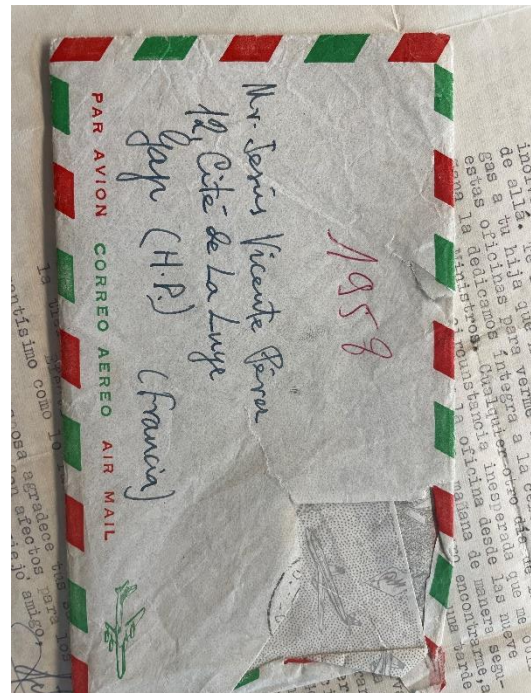
a) Me next to a monument to French *evadés*, those who escaped during German occupation. The location is at the Port de Vénasque, a Pyrenean crossing connecting Bagnères-de-Luchon (Haute-Garonne) with Benasque (Huesca). Date: July 29, 2023



b) Monument to Spanish refugees of 1939, in the same location as previous picture. Author is me. Date: July 29, 2023



c) School diary of Jesús Vicente Pérez Melón, consulted in *La Contemporaine* library. Reference: ARCH0239/2



d) Letter from Spanish diplomat in Mexico Félix Gordón Ordás to Jesús Vicente Pérez Melón. Reference : ARCH0239/3