

## Blue Victors & Red Losers. Returned Spaniards from the Soviet Union

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**Abstract.** The topic of Spanish Civil War refugees in the Soviet Union has been dealt with at length in scholarly literature. Previously published studies include eye-witness memoirs, oral testimonies, and essays, but to date nothing has been published on the media approach to those refugees. In the framework of a crucial historical moment that marked the end of the country's isolation under Franco, news treatment of those refugees' repatriation played a key role in the shaping of public opinion, their narrative abiding by the social platitudes and stereotypes of those years. Based on Spanish and international press reporting on this historical episode, this article constitutes the first piece of research analysing the language and the visuals in various newspapers of the 1950s, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Using the length of the news coverage as an objective indicator, we have measured the degree of relevance the event was given. Through this analysis we have confirmed that the informative treatment was not adequate; the return of the anti-Communist ex-combatants in the *División Azul* was exalted, while other returning expeditions of refugees were clearly discriminated.

**Keywords:** Exile; Spanish Civil War; Return; Spaniards in the Soviet Union; Cold War.

### [es] Rojos y vencidos; el retorno de los españoles refugiados en la Unión Soviética

**Resumen.** Durante los años cincuenta tuvo lugar un tipo peculiar de re-emigración a España procedente de la Unión Soviética. El colectivo de repatriados era muy heterogéneo; los primeros en llegar fueron los miembros de la *División Azul* anticomunistas prisioneros en los campos soviéticos y pocos años más tarde algunos de los tres mil niños enviados durante la Guerra civil junto a adultos muy comprometidos con las ideas de izquierda, los *Rojos*. El tratamiento de las noticias de su llegada a España muestra grandes diferencias dependiendo del colectivo al que se pertenecía, discriminando de forma clara a los que llegaron en las últimas expediciones. El estudio, primero en su género analiza las noticias aparecidas en la prensa de la época nacional e internacional, las emisiones de Radio Moscú y documentos de archivo y bibliografía y como éstas influenciaron en el imaginario colectivo de la de la época.

**Palabras clave:** Exilio; retornos; guerra civil Española; Españoles en la Unión Soviética; Guerra Fría.

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## 1. Introduction

During the Spanish Civil War, and especially in its aftermath, many left-wing sympathizers and committed supporters of the Second Republic went into exile. The Soviet Union was seen as a privileged destination since Stalin's country was a role model for the left. Numerous left-wing families imagined the Soviet Union to be an idyllic place to send their children temporarily to keep them safe while the Civil War was being fought. It was also the country chosen as a refuge by the top leaders of the Communist Party of Spain —Dolores Ibarruri, Jose Diaz and Jesus Hernandez—, who were followed in their exodus to the Country of Workers by many lower-ranking politicians and members of the Republican military who decided to go into exile themselves, since they were potential targets for Franco's repression. A few years later, during World War II, a very different set of stranded Spaniards was added to this core group: over 500 volunteer anti-communist fighters from the *Blue Division* who were kept prisoner in Soviet camps for having fought against the Communist army alongside the Nazi Germans<sup>2</sup>. There were about 4,500 Spaniards on Soviet soil, between the two groups<sup>3</sup>. The deep ideological and circumstantial differences between them are very important, since, upon their return to Spain the repatriates were treated differently depending on what side they had been on.

A consequence of the Civil War was a rupture of the diplomatic relations between the two countries, due to their deep ideological differences. This hostility and the general post-World War II scenario initially made it impossible for any Spaniard in the Soviet Union to return, eliminating any hopes for a prompt homecoming. It was only in the 1950s that repatriation began to be considered, due to the conjunction of several historical circumstances: first, Stalin's death in 1953, which caused a thaw in diplomatic relations between the two countries, followed by an amnesty from the new government that allowed World War II prisoners to return to their homelands. Franco's government took advantage of this golden opportunity, since its primary interest was the return home of the prisoners from the *Blue Division*. Spain had requested their release several times, seeing them as heroic anti-communist fighters, the "Spanish heroes in Russia", but had previously had no success. The "red" Spaniards, on the other hand, were regarded poorly: they were left-wing sympathizers, most of whom were opposed to Franco's regime.

## 2. The return of the Blue Victors

On March 28<sup>th</sup>, 1954, Russian Newspaper *Pravda*<sup>4</sup> published a brief report announcing the departure of the first group of 268 Spaniards, commenting on the work carried out by the Red Cross, which had acted as a mediating entity, and which had also been in charge of giving assistance during the journey back home. In Spain, in con-

<sup>2</sup> During World War II 45,000 Spanish combatants went to fight at the side of the Germans against the Soviets. The initiative was a humiliating defeat, since half of the volunteers paid with their own lives, health or freedom. Spain withdrew the *Blue Division* from the Soviet Union in November of 1943, after two and a half years of fighting, thus ending Franco's most important collaboration with Nazi Germany. For further information, see Moreno Julia, Xavier (2005): *The Blue Division, Spanish Blood in Russia. 1941-1945*. Barcelona: Crítica.

<sup>3</sup> Alted Vigil, A. (2002) "Los exilios de la España contemporánea". In *Revista Ayer*; Madrid. p.135.

<sup>4</sup> *Pravda*, "Group of Spaniards repatriated home" (Translated from Russian), 03-28-1954. p.4.

trast, the arrival was heavily covered in the news. All these men were seen as heroes who had been held captive in a Communist hell for nearly twelve years. On board the docking ship, the idolized *Blue Division* arrived in Barcelona on April 3rd, 1954, an event that was heavily reported in all the media. Their liberation would have wide-ranging international repercussions, and the British press reflected this in their reporting that same day. However, the positive effect of the news was dampened by the anti-British and anti-French demonstrations that took place the following day<sup>5</sup>. Their reception on the pier of Barcelona was an authentic festival, full of emotion and exhilaration, with the highest authorities and clergy taking an active part. The newcomers were treated by the media as “icons of the Spanish race”<sup>6</sup> that had managed to flee a Communist hell: they were the spearhead of anticommunism, not just in the national sphere but also abroad. The news coverage fed a big propaganda campaign against the Soviet Union, with the Cold War as a backdrop. On April 3, on the other side of the ocean, *The New York Times* described the reception in the following terms: “*Enthusiastic and very moving welcome, with hundreds of thousands present at the port of Barcelona to receive the heroes*”<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore, the NYT, along with other newspapers in Spain itself, gathered several testimonies that attested to the poor living conditions in the Soviet camps: “*Incredibly poor living standards in a country full of concentrations camps... Inmates died daily from hunger*”<sup>8</sup>. In the ensuing days, the information about the repatriates’ arrival was accompanied by articles signed by the returnees who told of their fear, the destitute and painful life they had led in the prisoners’ camps, all of it clearly propaganda directed against the Soviet Union in order to rally support for military collaboration with the United States. By this time Spain had become an important ally in the Mediterranean, and the year before the two countries had already signed the agreements that led to the use of territory for military bases, at a moment when Western help was crucial for Spain. The United States’ ambassador in Madrid lamented the untimeliness of the release and on April 4, 1954 *The New York Times* published an article that betrayed scepticism, seeing the change of attitude as a direct attempt to convince the Spanish people that the Soviet Union was willing to be friendly: “*Neither Spanish nor International Red Cross officials were able to explain why the Spaniards had been suddenly repatriated... The question is Why did the Kremlin make a friendly gesture to a government that came to power by defeating Communism?*”<sup>9</sup>.

Still, the government acted cautiously, and neither General Franco nor the Air Minister were present at the celebrations, nor did they even send a message to the repatriated men. In addition, an extensive interrogation by the police cast a shadow over their arrival. This fact was omitted by the Spanish press, but *The New York Times* reported that “*The repatriated men were carefully examined by army intelligence officers to ensure that no Communist agents were hidden in the group, and these officers also wanted to know the exact circumstances in which the returnees fell into Soviet hands*”<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> According to author Moreno Julià (2005) the returnees included 248 Blue Division prisoners, 19 merchant sailors, 15 Republican pilots and 4 *Children of the war* (pp. 336 and 339).

<sup>6</sup> *La Vanguardia*, 04-03-1954.

<sup>7</sup> *New York Times*, “Free Spaniards report on Russia”, 04-03-1954

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>9</sup> *New York Times*, “Spain is Skeptical on Soviet Release”, 04-04-1954.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*.

### 3. The Return of the Red Losers

This successful repatriation made the “other Spaniards” living within Soviet borders hope for a return, and two years later the two governments signed several agreements, with—once more—the Red Cross funding the trip and ensuring against reprisals towards the *Reds*, who in Franco’s autocracy—were the losers of the Spanish Civil War.

In all, seven repatriation expeditions took place during September, October, November and December of 1956, January and May of 1957 and May 1959. Per official figures from the International Red Cross, between the second and fifth expeditions 1,692 Spaniards returned, accompanied by 87 Russian wives and 667 Soviet born children. There is no data-regarding the other groups<sup>11</sup>. It has been estimated that only about 60% of the entire exiled Spanish population returned home, while the rest decided to stay in the Soviet Union, at least for the time being<sup>12</sup>. Additionally, not everyone was able to leave the country. Franco’s regime set certain requirements, notably that return was available only for the group of so-called “refugee children”, and not for just any Spaniard, since most of the expats in the USSR were opposed to Franco’s regime<sup>13</sup>.

In contrast with what happened to the returnees from the *Blue Division*, there was total ignorance about the whereabouts of this latter group. Hardly any letters arrived from Russia or any other source and the Russian main newspapers did not even mention it<sup>14</sup>. The information was imprecise and no list of names was given to the press, as had been the case two years before. Except for the broad coverage given to the arrival of the first “Red” expedition on September 28th, 1956, the pro-Franco press paid scant attention to the second and further groups of these returnees. Only brief references are printed, perhaps a few lines on inside pages, without any photos or headlines. It was second order news, and many newspapers and radio stations simply omitted this kind of story. *The New York Times* also barely mentions these returnees. All those coming from the Homeland of Socialism even the ones from the Blue Division—were seen as suspicious, but it was especially hard for the *Rojos* (the Reds) who triggered much mistrust. According to statements by State Security and Information, most of them were “ex-convicts”. *The New York Times*, on April 4th, shows caution: “*There is a possibility that some of these men might purposely have been sent to Spain as Soviet agents*”<sup>15</sup>. This caution and puzzlement were exacerbated by the fact that the Soviet Union not only lifted all objections to their return but even organized farewell celebrations and parties all around the country.

On Radio Moscow, there were programs aimed at a Spanish left-wing audience abroad. One of these was “Spanish Youth in the Soviet Union”<sup>16</sup>, broadcast weekly,

<sup>11</sup> González Martínez, Carmen (1999) “El retorno a España de los niños de la Guerra civil” in Altied Vigil, A y Nicolás Marin, E. *Los niños de la guerra de España en la Unión Soviética. De la evacuación al retorno*. Madrid: Fundación Largo Caballero, p.82.

<sup>12</sup> Colomina Limonero, Immaculada (2010), *Dos patrias, tres mil destinos; vida y exilio de los niños de la guerra civil española en la Unión Soviética*, Madrid: Ed. Cinca, p. 70.

<sup>13</sup> Colomina Limonero, Immaculada (2010), *Op. Cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>14</sup> There is no information regarding the repatriation of 1956 in newspaper *Pravda* nor *Izvestia*.

<sup>15</sup> *New York Times*, “Spain is Skeptical on Soviet Release”, 04-04-1954.

<sup>16</sup> Archives of the Communist Party of Spain. Fund: Spain, 99 1.5 “Correspondencia”. Sec: Broadcasts of “Radio Moscow International” 98 4.5. This information can be also found in the Private Archive of the “Centro Español de Moscú”. Moscow, Russia.

which reported on how the young exiles were doing there, and what their ordinary life, studies and work were like. Listening to them speak in their own words about their return, one can infer the frame of mind of those who were leaving: the huge desire to return to the motherland, the nervousness and anxiety lest something unforeseen go wrong and destroy their years-old dream of returning home. Recordings from the days prior to the first “return expedition” of the Reds in September 1956 reported on farewell celebrations in workplaces with Spaniards that would be soon leaving the Soviet Union. A broadcast from September 18, 1956, reported on an official event at the social club at the “Sickle and Hammer” factory in Moscow. On that special day, all the workers met to say goodbye to their companions. After the speeches by the director and other local authorities, goodbye gifts were given out (such as photo cameras and watches) and as a closing ceremony songs were sung, accompanied by both Russian and Spanish dances. At the end, all cheered the “long friendship and brotherhood between Spaniards and Soviets”.

Two days later, another broadcast reported on the farewell given at the Moscow railway station to a group leaving for the port of Odessa, on the Black Sea. During the trip the returnees were accompanied by various authorities, such as the Vice-President of the Red Cross and the Soviet Half Moon, as well as several journalists who broadcast their interviews the next day. When talking about their hopes and fears most of them expressed uncertainties about beginning a new life from scratch. The final report was broadcast on September 22, 1956, concerning more official events that took place in the port of Odessa in a jubilant atmosphere: *“These were moments of farewell. A rain of flowers falls down on the crowd together with fond memories of their years alongside the affectionate Soviet people”*. And the narration continues: *“The ship moves away from the port, taking these Spaniards that the Soviet people sees off with the same fondness and the same love with which we welcomed them twenty years ago.”*

Meanwhile, during the days immediately before the arrival of the first “Red” expedition, Spanish newspapers published brief articles that told of the imminent arrival of this group, highlighting the negotiations carried out by the Red Cross and Spain’s successful diplomacy. However, the absence of any reliable official information about names or family ties led many family members to travel countless kilometers in vain; for many, when they arrived at the port, their relatives ended up not being on the passengers’ list. In a short article on July 29, 1956, *The New York Times* relayed information from the Soviet Red Cross about this group’s permission to return, but the source did not give the exact number of returnees nor did he or she add any other details<sup>17</sup>.

Upon arrival, the news media reported on emotional moments with friends and family and emphasized the presence of relatives coming from different parts of the country, who had traveled to Barcelona to meet the returnees after twenty years in exile. The media were used to offering negative images of the exiles and of the Soviet Union, with the clear aim of eliciting pity and provoking rejection. The photographs showed graceless individuals, and the press coverage frequently remarked on their out-of-date clothing. In the newspaper *Ya* on September 29, 1956, the comments followed this pattern: *“Judging by their outfits, they certainly make up a most modest crowd ... It is very rare to find a woman’s outfit that the average Spanish*

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<sup>17</sup> *The New York Times*, “Moscow to free many Spaniards”, 07-29-1956.

girl could wear with discretion and without standing out in the course of daily life. Certainly third or fourth class”<sup>19</sup>. On September 29, 1956, the newspaper *La Vanguardia* reported: “The group looks quite good but they all dress very cheap and modestly...”<sup>20</sup> On October 1, 1956, was still a hot topic. In newspaper *Ya* in page 2 published a large page and as a minor headline wrote: “They do not know how to roll their own tobacco”<sup>21</sup>.

From the beginning, the returnees were considered to be very dangerous and were subjected to intense police surveillance that sometimes lasted years. An article from *Ya* on the day of the *Rojos*’ first arrival asked the following rhetorical question: “Could a Trojan horse have come in with these returnees? It seems very likely. The police have started that this is a possibility for at least a dozen “Reds”, who, given their training and some of the statements that they have made, could be now, or might turn into active and dangerous elements who might try to resuscitate dormant communist organizations”<sup>22</sup>.

There was fear that an organized opposition might develop, and therefore the returnees were watched very closely and forced to sign an agreement not to engage in political activism. Each of the returnees was considered a potential spy, a Soviet agent that posed a threat to the dictatorship and as a result, all their movements were carefully monitored. On June 11, 1959, *The New York Times* reported that: “Government agents seized nine agitators, including a Communist Party leader. One of the arrested men is one of the many sent as children to the Soviet Union and later repatriated, well known as a Communist Party agitator”<sup>23</sup>.

It was little covered in Spain, but on March, 5th 1960 *Pravda*<sup>24</sup> reported on a letter of protest that was delivered to Franco from 213 of the repatriates (with a copy sent to major international organizations), demanding the immediate release of the detainees that were held in custody for having attended the Sixth Congress of the Communist Party held in Prague in December of 1959<sup>25</sup>. This incident led to the arrest and later deportation of those in charge of personally delivering the letter: 18 adults and 10 children accused of being “Soviet subjects” on a special mission in Spain. In March 1960, Radio Moscow International reported on a “failure of repatriation since the returnees have fallen victim to political revenge”<sup>26</sup>.

Life was particularly difficult in that first period, since the returnees faced not only new challenges of a practical nature (meagre employment opportunities and difficulties finding jobs that matched their education and training—since their qualifications could not be verified until many years after their arrival—harsh economic situations, no official support with resettlement, etc.) In addition, their manners and behaviour were closely examined. This extreme social pressure led to maladjustment

<sup>18</sup> *Ya*, “Llega a Zaragoza un grupo de repatriados de Rusia”.09-29-1956. p.2. By Logos.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>20</sup> *La Vanguardia*, “Regreso a la patria veinte años después”, 09-29-1956. p.2.By Chanza.

<sup>21</sup> *Ya*, “Emoción en el reencuentro de los repatriados con sus familias”, 10-01-1960.p.2.By Manuel Calvo.

<sup>22</sup> *Ya*, “Llega a Zaragoza un grupo de repatriados de Rusia”. 09-29-1956.p.2. By Logos.

<sup>23</sup> *The New York Times*, “Spain holds agitators” 06-11-1959.

<sup>24</sup> *Pravda*, “No more harassment! Spaniards in the Soviet Union Claim”. (Translated from Russian) 03-05-1960, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RTsJIDNI).Fond: 360 Folder 30-32 Moscow, Russia.

<sup>26</sup> Report dated March 6th 1960. AHPCE, Archivo Historico Partido Comunista Español. Fund: Spain, 99 1.5 “Correspondencia” and Archives 98 4.5 of “Radio Moscú”. Private Archive of the “Centro Español de Moscú”. Moscow, Russia.

with their families as well as with the homeland they had idealized as a wonderful place to live.

Police harassment was constant because the fear of communism. On January 1958, The New York Times released the news that forty four persons, most of them returnees from the Soviet Union were arrested charged with communist propaganda and agitators<sup>27</sup>.

The surveillance and social pressure were the main reasons why, after spending a short period struggling to adapt to their motherland, some returnees saw clearly that their definitive place was no longer Spain, and decided to return to the Soviet Union in what we can only consider to be a second exile.

By 1959 six hundred and thirty-five had asked the Red Cross for help with returning to the Soviet Union, and three hundred had already resettled and were working again within Soviet borders<sup>28</sup>. The double-returnees told their companions first-hand about their experiences, explaining to them that after an initial period of euphoria all had had problems with adaptation, suffered police harassment and estrangement from their own families. For the ones who had stayed in Russia, this kind of news was very disappointing and discouraged any thoughts of return.

This re-return was not easy either, since the returnees had to find new jobs and new places to live. However, the Soviet Red Cross helped them to resettle. In 1967 fifty Spanish families were assisted, with twenty families being relocated to all over the country<sup>29</sup>. All of these extreme difficulties in resettlement, together with the political context of the Cold War and the convoluted relations between the two countries, led the Soviet Union to stop official repatriations to Spain in May of 1959.

#### 4. The final years

Despite all their problems, for those returnees that remained in Spain these many barriers were slowly overcome and they were finally able to develop professional careers: in 1960s Spain their technical and professional backgrounds were needed to aid with the country's process of economic growth and industrialization. Also, thanks to their knowledge of the Russian language and culture they created a whole new area of academic studies, where little had been known before. When they embarked on their original journey the Spaniards had taken with them the culture of their homeland; upon their return, they brought with them Russian literature, music and gastronomy<sup>30</sup>.

In the late 1970s, following the death of General Franco and Spain's opening to democracy, the first steps were taken toward freedom of movement. This event resulted in a revival of hopes for a quick return home of those Spaniards who remained in Soviet exile. In July of 1976 King Juan Carlos I issued a Royal Decree of Amnesty which allowed the return of certain important figures of the left who had been stranded in exile. In February 1977, diplomatic relations between Spain and the Soviet Union were restored, and in April of the same year the Spanish Communist Party

<sup>27</sup> *The New York Times*, "Madrid arrest 44 On Red Plot Charge" 01-19-1958.

<sup>28</sup> ANC. National Archive of Catalonia. Fund nº 555. Folder. 111. "On the returned Spaniards", interview held on May, 1959 with Gregori Dimitrov, president of the Soviet Red Cross.

<sup>29</sup> Golgov, A.M (1990) *Po dolgu internacionalisma. (On Duty for Internationalism)*. Ed. Soviet Red Cross p. 9.

<sup>30</sup> Colomina Limonero, Immaculada (2010) *Op. cit.* p.64.

was legalized. All of this led to the first of two further waves of returnees from the Soviet Union. This time the returnees were mostly from the group that in the 50s had not been able to return home due to their past political involvement with the Spanish Republic<sup>31</sup>. The main difference was that this repatriation was different, a matter of individual families or persons, no sponsored groups, and was very staggered. A third wave returned at the end of the 20th century, prompted by the difficulties resulting from Soviet Perestroika. In those critical years, the exiled Spaniards were about to retire when their living conditions suddenly worsened. To help them and make it easier for them to return, bilateral agreements were established between the two governments. Consequently, in 1991 a group of forty-seven returned and the following year the number increased to fifty-three. In this case, these were late homecomings coming after more than fifty years in exile, prompted not by a mere desire to die in the motherland, but were primarily due to the economic and social breakdown that Russia was going through at the time<sup>32</sup>. Even today, a small group of ninety former “Spanish War Children” remain in Russia. Now in their nineties, they have decided to stay and die in the land that welcomed them almost eighty years ago.

## 5. Conclusion

In the 1950s the country was under the thumb of the strongly repressive and autocratic Franco government, the Catholic Church and the Army still played a prominent role being Communism the major threat that had to be avoided at all costs. Spanish media were under the influence of tenacious directives governing the tone and ideological bent for and/or against the protagonists. Thus, they shaped reality to conform to the platitudes and social stereotypes of the time. Furthermore, our analysis shows that the consequences of repatriation of refugees differed, and that media treatment was not adequate. In the case of the “reds” that returned in 1956 and after, treatment was neither objective nor integrating. The language used in headlines and in the body of the news stories was especially negative. The narrative supported the image of the newly arrived as poorly dressed, ignorant and poor, creating a sense of detachment between them and the reader. Our contention is that such news coverage contributed to their discrimination and decelerated their integration. The images of those returning from the Communist hell that the media presented were strongly distorted, and the news coverage differed from one group to another. The *Blue Victors* were the great idols. Much photographic and film footage provides an unequivocal testimony to the admiration that these heroes inspired and to the intense news coverage that was granted to their arrival. After a few prior attempts at repatriation, the Franco regime turned their return into a new political success, and the widespread enthusiasm and broad mass media coverage became a celebration of patriotism, while news sources painted a picture of a duel: capitalism versus communism. Upon their arrival and in the first few days thereafter, the newspapers reported on the returnees daily, giving them a media treatment that was far better than that given to any later repatriates. Moreover, in addition to the abundance of festivals and official acts that celebrated

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem.* p.82.

<sup>32</sup> González Carmen. (2003) “*El retorno de los niños de la guerra civil*” in *Anales de Historia Contemporánea*. Murcia: University of Murcia: 19, p. 83.

their arrival, the “Blue Victors” received considerable State help in finding jobs and integrating back into society.

Through our analysis we have confirmed that the informative treatment was not adequate; the return of ex-combatants in the Blue Division was exalted, while other returning expeditions of refugees were discriminated. For those considered to be *Red Losers*, since they were “undesirables in every way”, the news coverage of their arrival was tendentious and the scarce information provided was confusing and ambiguous. After the first and second repatriations, the rest were covered with a cloak of silence. The political motivation was clear: the fear of any kind of political activities directed against Franco’s regime led to a campaign of discrediting, surveillance and control with the dual purpose of monitoring all their daily activities and obtaining first-hand information about the former exiles. There is not much news about this harassment in the Spanish press but the problem was widely covered in the Soviet Union. The heavy police surveillance had a serious impact on their daily lives, affecting their personal relationships and often harming their professional careers.

For them, returning home was both physically and mentally challenging. Unlike the Blue Victors, the Red Losers were not helped with resettlement, nor were they offered jobs or a place to live; they had to rely on their families and in most cases ended up being a burden on their relatives. It ended up being disappointing, and it was impossible to re-establish relationships as they had been before the Civil War. With the passage of the years, the conditions improved but it always remained hard for them. In their memoirs, they vividly record the detentions and the difficult reunions with relatives left behind who were now strangers. This whole cocktail of family and occupational problems, police control and socio-cultural circumstances led some of them to return to the Soviet Union and rebuild their lives there. In these cases, the process of again putting down roots in the land that welcomed them became irreversible.

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