

NUEVAS TIERRAS PARA DON RAMÓN AND THE BADAJOZ PLAN: THE EXODUS TO THE PROMISED LAND*

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INTRODUCTION

The Badajoz Plan (*Plan Badajoz*), a project designed to regulate the waters of the Guadiana River, which entailed the consequent irrigation of extensive areas of the Spanish province of Badajoz for settlement by a significant number of people, was undoubtedly one of the most touted achievements of the Franco regime, which turned it into a centrepiece of its institutional propaganda (Ortega Canadell, 2004: 650). Even before its approval by the Spanish legislature in April 1952, the regime's apparatus used all the means at its disposal, including the press, brochures and books, radio, and especially cinema. This propaganda included newsreels such as the No-Do series—for example, the newsreel titled *La Provincia Resurge, El Plan*

Badajoz [The Province Resurgent, the Badajoz Plan] in 1957—and documentaries produced by the Ministry of Agriculture itself, a paradigmatic example being *El campo de Badajoz se transforma* [The Fields of Badajoz are Transformed] (Marqués de Villa Alcázar, 1961), extolling the wonders of the Badajoz Plan. However, the relatively recent discovery of the German documentary *Nuevas tierras para don Ramón* [New Land for Don Ramon] (Neues Land Für Don Ramon, Ernst Niederreither, 1965) has shed light on the interest that this initiative aroused among foreign documentary filmmakers, some of whom, as in the case of Niederreither, travelled to Badajoz to shoot footage that would subsequently be used to produce films that clearly diverged from the official line of the Franco regime's propaganda.

The aim of this article is to offer an analysis of *Nuevas tierras para don Ramón*, discussing the key features underpinning the production of a film unconcerned with adhering to official Francoist propaganda. This analysis draws on Bill Nichols' work on documentary modes, and considers documents found in the general archives of Spanish government, in the Ministry of Agriculture, and in the Spanish Film Library (Filmoteca Española), as well as various historiographical articles on the Badajoz Plan. In this way, this article aims to contribute to the continuing development of the history of the Spanish agrarian documentary.

ON THE (RE)APPEARANCE OF NUEVAS TIERRAS PARA DON RAMÓN IN SPAIN

In 1964, the German production company FWU asked the Franco regime's Cinematography Service for permission to shoot a documentary, *Plan Badajoz*, about irrigation in the province. It would be used not for commercial purposes, but rather for teaching at colleges and universities, and would also be shown once on German television.¹ The project received support from the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, which was participating in the initiative to settle people in the region under the Badajoz Plan, with plans to interview them in the documentary. In accordance with requirements, the application included a brief plot summary of the film:

The film shows how the Guadiana River in the province of Badajoz has been regulated by building a system of canals fertilising large parts of the province. This has given rise to the creation of new towns, attracting settlers and farmers. Lacking economic means, they have been provided with their own houses, livestock and farming machinery. With their earnings, they pay back their debts to the State in instalments, thereby acquiring ownership. Factories and organisations have also been created, offering employment for the manufacture and sale of agricultural products. In this

way, a once-barren province has become fertile land with flourishing trade and happy inhabitants. (AGA, Cultura, 36/05431)

The film obtained authorisation on 24 August 1964 and shooting started shortly thereafter in the province of Badajoz. Little else is documented about the project, apart from two interviews with settlers who had been involved in the film,² who reported that once they had finished filming the German film crew disappeared with the footage, never to be heard from again. It can therefore be assumed that whole project was a ploy by the production company for the sole purpose of obtaining the filming permit, as the completed film—even including the title—bears no resemblance at all to what was indicated on the application.

While looking for information for one of his projects at the Filmoteca Española, the German researcher and documentary filmmaker Dietmar Post³ stumbled upon *Nuevas tierras para don Ramón*. The Filmoteca's archives included a 35mm print of the film, which Post requested for viewing purposes. He discovered that the film stock was severely deteriorated: its images were so dark that they could barely be discerned, limiting the viewing experience mainly to listening to the voice-over narration in German. Despite this, Post was so impressed by the film that when he returned to Germany, he set out to gather information on it. To his surprise, he discovered that Niederreither's film was going to be auctioned by a company in the business of supplying teaching materials to German secondary schools. Post immediately acquired the rights to it for Play Loud! Productions, a production company he had created with Lucía Palacios in 1997. Also to his surprise, the condition of the print, in this case on 16mm film stock, was flawless. The celluloid reels were accompanied by a brochure published by one of the schools in Germany that had included the film as teaching material for their students. Post then contacted the Spanish

Ministry of Agriculture, whose archives contained no record of this film, which agreed to digitalise and subtitle it in Spanish. The documentary was subsequently disseminated by the Spanish Ministry as part of the DVD collection *Memoria y colonización* (2012).

It is possible that the copy that Post found at the Filmoteca Española had been deposited there by the production company FWU in accordance with ministry requirements, and that it had deteriorated over time into the state in which it was found. However, it cannot be ruled out that the print was intentionally delivered in poor condition by the producer, given the film's negative portrayal of the Badajoz Plan and therefore of the Franco regime. In any case, it is clear that this film was practically unknown in Spain, as there is no record that it was screened even once in the country. In Germany, in contrast, it was included in school materials, as noted above, and it is particularly interesting for the perspective it offers on the Badajoz Plan, decidedly different from that of the Franco regime, at a time when Francoist ideology suffused every aspect of the country's cultural fabric, especially cinema. An analysis of this almost-unknown documentary may therefore serve to expand the history of the Spanish agrarian documentary and the types of documentaries dedicated to the Badajoz Plan.

THE BEGINNING: THE NARRATION AND ITS DISCOURSE

The change of title from *Plan Badajoz* to *Nuevas tierras para don Ramón* points to a shift in the paradigm underpinning the documentary, with Don Ramón as the protagonist, who is to receive new land thanks of course to the Plan Badajoz. The film's images are thus concerned with depicting the journey that this process entails. But before telling this story, a brief introduction reveals to us the type of narrator who will be leading us on this journey.

THIS DOCUMENTARY DEPARTS COMPLETELY FROM THE OFFICIAL LINE, AND FOR THIS REASON IT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN SHOWN IN SPAIN

Indeed, the first part of the documentary functions as a kind of letter of introduction for a narrator who, unlike the typical narrator in Francoist documentaries on the Badajoz Plan, is not an impersonal, authoritative voice speaking to us from on high, but a person living in Badajoz (whose accent reveals that he is a foreigner) who speaks to the viewer in a familiar way.⁴ The use of a narrator who is not omniscient but instead is relatable and personal is surprising, but even more surprising is the discourse of the narration, which is also very different from that employed by the narrators heard in the documentaries of the Franco regime, for two reasons. First, it describes widespread peasant unemployment in Extremadura as one of the consequences of the Spanish Civil War ("after the Civil War, half of the peasants had no work..." says the narrator at one point), contradicting the official discourse that the war, a crusade aimed at *purifying* the nation, could in no case be viewed as a cause of unemployment. And second, the narrator expresses surprise that the Plan ended up becoming a reality ("But what surprised us most," says the narrator at one point, "is not the Plan, but the fact that it was actually implemented..."). Although none are openly specified, there are many possible reasons for this remark, such as the plan's Republican roots,⁵ its audacious objective, or even the fact that the Franco regime often promised much and delivered little. In any case, this comment makes it clear that the narrator is questioning the commitment of the Movement, a commitment embodied in the words of Franco himself when he praised the qualities of his dauntless and unfailing supporters in his inauguration speech in Valdelacalzada in 1951:

Without a National Movement, without a political system of unity, stability and discipline, none of these achievements would be impossible. These achievements are legitimate daughters of the Movement, fruit of the energies of a minority impervious to discouragement, with a great spirit of service to the Fatherland, who give their word and keep it, even if it costs them their lives. (Riesco and Rodríguez, 2016: 10)

It is therefore clear that *Nuevas tierras para don Ramón* departs completely from the official line, and that for this reason it could not have been shown in Spain.⁶ The narrator even makes the point of explaining that the Badajoz Plan would result in a “reduction in poverty,” which, far from completely resolving the rural problem, would never be more than a partial solution. The ending to Villa-Alcázar’s *El campo de Badajoz se transforma* alone makes it clear that the objective of his documentary was to depict the Badajoz Plan as having worked a miracle, completely eliminating poverty and producing newly cultivated lands teeming with beautiful colours, filled with lush trees laden with fruits, along with new industries as a result, and new towns boasting comfortable and clean houses for the region’s settlers. While it is true that in *Nuevas tierras para Don Ramón*, the Plan is depicted as bringing colours to the fields, which are transformed from a monotonous desert ochre to the shades of green and red of the plantations, the change is nowhere near the magnitude conveyed in Villa-Alcázar’s documentary.

THE PEOPLE OF THE MOUNTAINS AND THEIR RESISTANCE TO CHANGE: INTRODUCTION OF THE PROTAGONIST

In a striking change of register, Niederreither’s images then take us to the rocky terrain of a mountain village that we later learn is Orellanita (Figure 1), whose residents have to carry drinking water to their homes in jugs. These

images evoke the photographs of the *La Chanca* series (1956-1962) by Carlos Pérez Siquier (2001), as they share a humanistic perspective inherited from Italian neorealism, calculated to portray the misery of the people of Spain who have been spared from war but not from poverty. It is a town where, according to the narrator, the only person who seems to be doing well is the ropemaker, who is shown engaged in his craft. But suddenly the camera moves away from him to focus on an old woman (Figure 2) standing behind the bars of a house fence. We are struck by her absolute stillness and her forlorn look, before the camera pans down to her hands resting on the bars; they are worn hands, presumably from many years of hard labour. These are silent images (as the narrator does not comment on them) that stray from the topic or idea being dealt with in the scene to enrich the fabric of the documentary, in this case by introducing a contrast to the activity of the rope maker, portraying the paralysis—ultimately suggestive of death—that the town, like the woman, is immersed.

In contrast to the images that serve as mere illustrations of the narrator’s comments, these others are relevant in themselves, reflecting a mode of documentary with features characteristic of what Bill Nichols calls the “observational mode” (Nichols, 1997: 73-75), as they emphasise the filmmaker’s non-intervention, ceding control more than any other mode to the events that unfold in front of the camera. These are thus images that evade narrator commentary, sacrificing the expository dimension of the documentary to the observational dimension, and also to the aesthetic one—evident, for example in the textures captured in the footage of the old woman.

And it is right in this town of Orellanita where we meet Don Ramón, one of the many townspeople who have decided to leave in search of the new land created by the Badajoz Plan. At this point, the narrator cedes the floor to the protagonists, Don



Figure 1. A rocky landscape, Orellanita



Figure 2. A human landscape, Orellanita

Ramón and his neighbours. The film thus creates a space for the peasants to speak, giving them their own voice, in contrast to the regime's official documentaries, where everything—including the thoughts of the protagonists—is subordinated to the narrator's commentary. The universe of the story thus comes to *life* (through sound) to show how by choosing to become a settler Don Ramón will leave his town, and in doing so, will tear up

the roots that other inhabitants of Orellanita are striving to maintain. The film thus seeks to stress that most of the residents, who are proud even of their poverty, refuse to abandon the town that represents their roots. Of relevance to this point is José López Clemente's documentary *Reportaje sindical No. 8: Oliegos* (1950), produced by the Information and Publications Service of the National Trade Union Delegation, which relates how the residents of Orellanita had no choice but to leave their town and give up their roots, in this case being forced to do so by the regime. However, the difference between López Clemente's propaganda film and Niederreither's is that in the former the townspeople-cum-settlers ultimately discover that their hesitation was misplaced, as the new land to which they were forced to emigrate made up for everything, offering them extraordinary wealth.

In any case, the Franco regime's documentaries on the Badajoz Plan generally sought to avoid the question of whether or not the settlers paid a sentimental price for settling on the land transformed by the Plan, as can be seen in the No-Do documentaries made by Villa-Alcázar and even by José Neches.⁷ And when they did, as in the case of *Oliegos*, the new land's many benefits more than compensate for the loss. *Nuevas tierras para don Ramón* is also different from the official documentaries in this respect.

THE JOURNEY: FROM DRY LAND TO FERTILE LAND

With Don Ramón having been singled out as protagonist, his journey from his hometown of Orellanita to his new home is what the documentary uses to structure and even dramatise

its representation of the Badajoz Plan. This is thus a cinematic model with a distant precursor in the anarchist documentaries on the Spanish Civil War, which used situations featuring an actor playing a character, both to dramatise the documentary's expository dimension and to enhance its mechanisms of persuasion, as can be seen in the example of *La Silla Vacía* [The Empty Chair] (Valentín R. González, 1937).⁸ Similarly, Niederreither's documentary uses Don Ramón to stage and dramatise the family's exodus from its mountain town on its way to the irrigated terrain of the promised land (which we later find out is Gargaligas).

The journey taken by Don Ramón and his family is structured around a dry/wet geographical dialectic. The narrator also uses the journey to introduce merely informative content, such as: "In 1946, the land was expropriated as part of the Badajoz Plan, so that fertile land could be prepared for 5,000 settlers, including Ramón Cortés and his family." The narrator fails to add, however, that this expropriation was carried out under very advantageous conditions for the landowners, and as José Antonio Pérez Rubio has demonstrated, "the land expropriated under this 1946 law received

a generous appraisal by the Supreme Court after the large landowners were not pleased with the one issued by the *Consejo Nacional de Colonización*" (Pérez Rubio, 1994: 396-397). In any case, the narrator does not explore this question because it is not among the aims of the documentary, which is focused more on the dialectic around which it is structured.

Indeed, this is evident in the subsequent images, which focus on everything related to the dry, sunbaked land, such as a flock of sheep looking for somewhere to graze under the scorching sun ("the heat is suffocating," remarks the narrator) and a stray dog looking for the shelter of the scant shade to be found on a deserted street (Figure 3). This leads to a series of angled shots bathed in the harsh light of the searing midday sun from which the peasants struggle to shield themselves. None of these images—a peasant sleeping in a cornfield, a window barred and shuttered (Figure 4), a woman washing clothes in a wash bucket, clothes hung out to dry in the sun—are given any specific spatial reference. Skirting around its subject matter, the documentary thus digresses to focus on a unique, almost abstract portrait of a rural Spain practically devoid of water, weighed down by the

Figure 3. Stray dog seeking shade



Figure 4. Window barred shut





Figure 5. A mountain of peppers

drowsiness of the time of siesta, on what could be any summer's day. This crystallises a new component of the documentary, previously suggested, that Nichols (1997) might describe as "poetic". It is a component that endows this fragment—in this case, the soporific afternoon heat in the arid towns of Spain—with both a formal integrity and an aesthetic of its own. Such digressions, which greatly enrich the fabric and aesthetics of the documentary would not have been viable in the documentaries of the Franco regime, whose narratives had to be placed entirely at the service of their sole objective of persuasion, and thus could not be used towards any other ends that might undermine or hamper that aim.

As the Cortés family continues on its journey, the setting shifts from this dry land we shift to a very different one: a land of water and irrigation canals. We are thus presented with a succession of images of bright yellow corn fields, of cobs being shelled and hens gobbling up the kernels in the feeding troughs at the farms. This explosion of colour and fertile fields is immediately called into question, however, when the narrator observes, with reference to a harvest of red peppers: "There aren't enough factories to process them yet. The factories set the prices, which are sometimes very low. The settlers are growing desperate." As

the narrator speaks these words, we are shown a huge pile of peppers almost burying the worker (Figure 5), in an extraordinary visual metaphor that underscores the fact that too many peppers were being grown. Unlike Villa-Alcázar's documentary, Niederreither's film is thus critical of the factories, yet another sign that this is the opposite of a propaganda documentary, as this metaphor of the settler being buried under the peppers impresses upon the viewer the shortage of factories to process them, and the consequent low prices offered for them. Rather than helping to generate wealth, the factories thus make life harder for the settlers, who are not fairly rewarded for their work. In this way, *Nuevas tierras para Don Ramón* anticipates what historians would point out many years later:

The implementation of the [Badajoz] Plan revealed the misalignment between the agricultural plans and the industrial plans, one of the main causes of the poor results achieved, especially in the group of industries that were to process the produce of the new irrigated land [such as tomatoes and peppers]. (Barciela, López and Melgarejo, 1998: 159)

The irregular way in which production was carried out meant that sometimes the factories could not absorb all the production in the region, while at other times there were shortages of produce. The irregularity of production was incompatible with the exploitation of the industry's full capacity. (Barciela, López and Melgarejo, 1998: 149-150)

In opposition to the official propaganda, which claimed that the quantity and quality of the crops had brought factories that "maintain stable prices for the settlers," according to the narrator in the Villa-Alcázar's film, *Nuevas tierras para don Ramón* was more in line with what would subsequently be acknowledged by historians, openly criticising the Badajoz Plan—and therefore the Franco regime—for the disconnect between farms and factories that would thwart one of the Plan's main objectives.

THE NEW TOWN; THE HOUSE AND THE SCHOOL; THE END

Meanwhile, Don Ramón and his family continue their journey to the promised land of Gargaligas. The narrator takes advantage of the next stretch of their trip to comment on emigration: “The youngest of the family wanted to go to Germany, but his mother would not let him. Her motto is that the family must stay together.” But the settler’s family had to stay together not only because it was the mother’s desire, but also because it was required, as the narrator himself immediately notes: “volunteering to be a settler means that the whole family must work; no external help is allowed, as only these families are admitted.” It can be inferred from this that the land granted to the settler was going to demand gruelling labour from the whole family, as a shot evoking Eisenstein’s work seems to foreshadow: the shot focuses on the feet of the man and the woman (Figure 6) as they walk in lockstep beside their cart, as if both were bearing the same yoke.⁹

Finally, the travellers reach the town of Gargaligas, an event given special emphasis in the film by means of sustained close-up shots of the reactions of each member of the Cortés family when they stop to behold what will be their new home. First, the father (Figure 7): the hard features of his timeworn face, his slightly narrowed eyes and the wrinkles drawn across his forehead convey a certain wariness. Then, the family’s firstborn son: although his taut-skinned face bears features similar to his father’s, his expression conveys something closer to indifference. His little brother’s expression, meanwhile, suggests the freshness typical of boys of his age; his is a face of innocence. The older sister’s countenance bears a hint of hope, while the younger sister beside her in the shot has her gaze fixed on where everyone is looking,

but without understanding anything. The mother’s face completes the series (Figure 8): with her serious, imperturbable gaze and the slight downturn of her closed mouth, her visage communicates a mixture of resignation and sadness. Niederreither thus constructs a gallery of faces that contrast sharply with the cheerful smiles shown in Villa-Alcázar’s film. As shown in this scene, far from manifesting a profound satisfaction, these faces exhibit emotions ranging from distrust and indifference to resignation, in a representation markedly similar to what José María Vázquez describes:

The settler and his family [...] were separated from their home, from their native land [...], they had to travel sometimes hundreds of miles from their place of origin to start a new life, in a new town [...] Undoubtedly, there was a fear of the void in these people uprooted by force, a contained fear best expressed in the blank stares of emigrants when they arrive at their destination (Vázquez, 2009: 7).

These images attempt to express the family’s “contained fear” when they reach their destination, in a segment in which the acting work of the documentary’s protagonists is most obvious.

Figure 6. Man and woman walking in lockstep



The images seem to reflect the approach taken by Paul Rotha, who believed that documentaries involved “the use of the cinematic medium to interpret reality creatively and, in social terms, people’s lives just as they exist in reality” (Rotha, 1952: 75). However, unlike Grierson or Vertov, Rotha did not place emphasis so much on the authenticity of the images shown as on the idea of conveying the truth in the broadest sense of the term, leading him to defend the presence of actors and sets. As Sira Hernández points out in her extensive study on the subject, “the dramatisation of different social and political issues had already been incorporated with great success into documentary filmmaking by the singular newsreel series *The March of Time* (1935-1951)” (2004: 94), while Rotha stresses the fact that documentaries should not forgo “trained actors, or the advantage of sets” since “both have an effect on the viewer” (1952: 30-31). The option chosen by Niederreither was actor training, which, as he was working with non-professional actors,¹⁰ required patient effort on the part of both the director and the performers, as some of his actors have themselves acknowledged.¹¹

In contrast to Villa-Alcázar’s documentary, which repeatedly shows the settlers’ new homes, praising them as “comfortable and clean houses” that made their inhabitants happy, Niederreither ignores them and goes straight to the school, the children’s place of learning, in scenes in which the narrator lets the characters (the teacher and Don Ramón’s younger daughter) speak for themselves. This endows the images with a literalness and starkness aimed at highlighting—and in a way ridiculing—the type of indoctrination typical of Spanish schools in the 1960s, based on the propaganda of the Franco regime.



Figure 7. The father in front of the new house
Figure 8. The mother in front of the new house

Like the little children, parents and older siblings also had to undergo learning processes, in their case, at agrarian schools:

Settlers had to face the tough task of starting from scratch, being instructed in a new profession by foremen and experts from the National Settlers’ Council, and gradually learning to work in a productive economy driven by the authoritarian and paternalistic Francoist state. Each settler had to learn to maximise the production of the four irri-



Figure 9. Poverty persists

gated hectares assigned to him, in what was a simple question of survival. (Vázquez, 2009: 7)

This is vividly reflected in the documentary in a scene where the settler is receiving instruction. This scene also conveys the precarious nature of the settler's way of life through a series of images that serve as visual metonyms: the camera shifts from the attentive gaze of the settler participating in his class to show the worn-out cloth slippers he is wearing, and his equally tattered cloth hat (Figure 9). This remarkable editing work was calculated to document the poverty in which the settler's family continued to be mired, even in their new home.

If settlers wanted to survive, they had to get down to work fast to reap as much as possible from the land they had received, as Vázquez points out in the passage cited above. And this is what the film aims to convey in a set of images in which Don Ramón and his eldest son are shown working their new land. "I wish you good luck and success, Don Ramón," says the narrator, by way of farewell. Although Don Ramón can-

not hear him because the two belong to different narrative levels, the narrator seems to want to conclude by proclaiming a sympathetic connection to the world of the story. More concerned with the peasant's fate than with extolling the virtues of the Franco regime, the film thus seeks to convey that the new settlers are not really living in the best of all possible worlds, contrary to what was reflected in the images of the official propaganda films. In addition to hard work, these settlers need luck (something that is never necessary in the propaganda films), and not to achieve a certain degree

of success, but simply to survive.

Niederreither's documentary concludes with a map of Spain showing the province of Badajoz, now coloured green and with a river running through it, represented by a blue line. Between the map shown at the beginning of the film, portraying a grey Badajoz, and this one showing a Badajoz dyed in the green of the countryside, was Don Ramón's exodus from his native land to this new one that he has just begun to farm: the promised land. This is the model used by the film to expose the truth that the Badajoz Plan, although it led to certain improvements, did not result in anything resembling the Edenic paradise proclaimed in the Franco regime's documentaries.

CONCLUSIONS

In its approach to the Badajoz Plan, *Nuevas tierras para don Ramón* is not concerned with documenting the province's flourishing commerce or its happy inhabitants, as claimed in the film's plot summary submitted to the Spanish film censors-

hip committee; nor was it interested in showing the different towns that were settled or the homes said to have made their inhabitants so happy, as Villa-Alcázar did in his documentary *El campo de Badajoz se transforma*. Instead, *Nuevas tierras para Don Ramón* focuses on the settlers' exodus and what it meant for them in terms of losing their roots, everything that they had to leave behind, and their uncertainty (a word never used in the official documentaries) in relation to their new housing and the work that awaited them on their new land. While in Villa-Alcázar's film the Edenic garden was a metaphor used to represent the Badajoz Plan, Niederreither uses the myth of the promised land, a myth that begins to crumble immediately, as before the settler's journey is even over we see that the produce grown in these beautiful new fields are not profitable because of insufficient industrial infrastructure. The myth is then definitively debunked by the poverty that the peasants continue to suffer even after settling in the new land.

In structural terms, the film contains features of different documentary modes, including the expository mode, which predominates in the segments where the images serve as mere illustrations for the voice-over narration. However, the observational mode is also evident, particularly in the footage where the narrator is silent so that the images can speak for themselves; this is the case, for example, of the stray dog searching for shade on a deserted street, an iconic symbol of a rural Spain paralysed by the summer afternoon heat, which is reinforced in the subsequent empty shot of a barred window with its blind pulled right down, the feet of the man and woman walking together beside the cart, suggesting the yoke they both bear, and finally, the man's tattered slippers and hat, reflecting the settlers' impoverished living conditions. Each of these images, taken from the reality of Extremadura's fields, towns and settlers also highlights the documentary's poetic qualities.

Moreover, in *Nuevas tierras para don Ramón* the performative nature of its protagonists' participation is clearly exposed, especially in two segments: the family's arrival at the house, when the camera stops to register the expressions of these uprooted people gripped by fear; and the segment at the school, where the teacher, in her conversation with the Cortes family's younger daughter, imparts a lesson that reflects the pedagogical approach of the Franco regime. This unique hybrid of modes thus becomes the armature supporting this unusual documentary, which, as its title suggests, tracks the exodus of Don Ramón (and family) to the promised land produced by the Badajoz Plan. It is a documentary that has long been overlooked in Spain, but its analysis is essential to an understanding of the history of cinematic representations of the Badajoz Plan, and therefore of the Spanish agrarian documentary.

NOTES

- * This work was written in the context of the *Agrarian Documentaries and Nationalities: A Comparative Study of the Productions of the Ministries of Agriculture of Spain, France and Italy (1930-1970)* research project, supported by the Ministry of Science and Innovation (Reference PID2019-105462GB-I00).
- 1 All these data appear in the *Badajoz Plan* folder at the Spanish government's general archives (Archivo General de la Administración, AGA) in Alcalá de Henares, Fondo Cultura, Caja 36/05431.
- 2 The interviews in question were conducted with Inés Cortés, in Alcalá de Henares (Madrid), on 18 March 2019, and with Diego Cortés, in Orellana la Vieja (Badajoz), on 17 April of the same year.
- 3 All these data were provided by Dietmar Post himself in an interview conducted in Cordoba, on 20 September 2018.
- 4 On the types of narrators see Stam, Burgoyne, Flitterman-Lewis (1999: 118-128).
- 5 José Luis Mosquera Muller points out that "the 1933 Hydraulic Works Plan already contained the regu-

latory reservoirs of El Cijara (its foundations were being laid as early as 1932), Zújar, Alange and Puerto Peña (García de Sola), and the Montijo bypass dam to irrigate the Vegas Altas" (Mosquera Muller, 2009: 13). However, it is reasonable to expect that the Franco regime sought to hide this, as is evident in Francoist documentaries, from the No-Do newsreels to the Marquis of Villa-Alcázar's film.

- 6 In the aforementioned interview, Inés Cortés noted: "once they finished shooting, the Germans disappeared with the film, and we never heard about it again, until a long time later, when my husband acquired a copy privately in Germany."
- 7 Another documentary filmmaker at the Ministry of Agriculture who would work on this same subject of the Badajoz Plan in *La conquista de una vega* [Conquest of a Plain] (1971), a documentary that characterises the settlers as "new conquistadors" in the history of Spain (Poyato, 2020: 17-37).
- 8 An analysis of this documentary can be found in Poyato (2016: 213).
- 9 Like a shot in *The General Line* (Staroye i novoye, Sergei M. Eisenstein, 1929), this shot "unites the man and woman sharing their path and their destiny" (González Requena, 1992: 197).
- 10 In that interview, Diego Cortés stated that the family of settlers was chosen for the film solely because it was a large one, not for their acting skills.
- 11 Both Diego and his sister Inés mentioned in their interviews that the interpreter, following the director's instructions, told them over and over again the expression that they were supposed to adopt, where they were to look, and how they were to move. As a result, some takes had to be repeated dozens of times until the director was satisfied.

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NUEVAS TIERRAS PARA DON RAMÓN AND THE BADAJOZ PLAN: THE EXODUS TO THE PROMISED LAND

Abstract

Nuevas tierras para don Ramón [New Land for Don Ramón] was the last film by Ernst Niederreither, a German filmmaker who directed 24 films between 1936 and 1965. Shot in the Extremadura region in Spain's southwest, it was never released in Spain until 2012, when the German production company Play Loud! Productions, which by chance had acquired the film rights, contacted the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture to arrange Spanish subtitling for the film. The Ministry itself then digitalised, catalogued and distributed this interesting documentary on the Badajoz Plan that depicts the exodus of settlers from their homes to what was to be their promised land. This article submits the film to a comparative analysis, considering other documentaries dealing with the Badajoz Plan that were aligned with the Franco regime's official propaganda, with the aim of contributing to the history of the agrarian documentary in Spain

Key words

Film; Documentary; Badajoz Plan; Settlers; Exodus.

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NUEVAS TIERRAS PARA DON RAMÓN Y EL PLAN BADAJOZ: EL ÉXODO HACIA LA TIERRA PROMETIDA

Resumen

Nuevas tierras para don Ramón fue el último trabajo de Ernst Niederreither, cineasta alemán que dirigió 24 films entre 1936 y 1965. Rodada en tierras extremeñas, la película de Niederreither no se da a conocer en España hasta el año 2012, cuando la productora alemana Play Loud! Productions, que por casualidad se había hecho con los derechos, contacta con el Ministerio de Agricultura para el subtitulado en español de la cinta. El propio Ministerio digitaliza, cataloga y distribuye entonces la película, un interesante documental sobre el Plan Badajoz que indaga en el éxodo del colono desde su lugar de origen hasta la tierra prometida. El presente trabajo se ocupa del estudio de este film a partir de un análisis comparativo del mismo con algunos de los documentales sobre el Plan Badajoz alineados con la propaganda oficial franquista, con el fin de completar así la historia del documental agrario español.

Palabras clave

Cine; documental; Plan Badajoz; colono; éxodo.

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