



Churchill's Spaniards

Continuing the Fight in the British Army 1939 – 1940

Sean F. Scullion

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I have been looking forward to reading Sean Scullion's study of the Spaniards in the British Army in World War 2 and now the book is published! and what a delight it is! From the experiences of the child refugees to members of the defeated Republican Army in exile the experiences and motivations of this very brave group of men are told with great detail and sympathy. The context is the strategic and political history of World War Two and its aftermath. This is a military history of the men who having fought in or been exiled after the Spanish Civil War joined the British Army. Their bravery, camaraderie and in some case their deaths are told with great detail. The book examines the role of these Spaniards and sets them in the Spanish / British / International contexts as they evolved between 1936 and 1946. Lucio Sauquillo Echevarria and José Maria Irala Vara two of the Basque Children feature. When they left Spain on the *Vapor Habana* on the 21 May 1937 Lucio was 14 years and he travelled with his 11 year old brother Gabriel and José Maria was 13 years and travelled with his 12 year old brother Rafael. Both Lucio and José Maria died in the fighting following D Day in 1944.. Personal memoirs previously unpublished, interviews undertaken by Daniel Aras and published in *Los Españoles de Churchill*, archival material, and interviews with family members are woven throughout the text alongside military archival documents to tell this remarkable story and Sean Scullion tells it very well.

Other boys who served in the Army, Navy, and Air Force who travelled to Britain on the *Habana* were Victor Anduiza Campillo, Theodore Antolin Cordovilla, Alejandro Arana Gallareta, Camilo Casado Martínez, Octavio Casado Martínez, Antonio Fernandez Groba, Ramiro Fernandez Groba, Ignacio Gomez Sobrino, Virgilio Molina Leturia, José Luis Revuelta Pineiro, Alfredo Ruiz Lopez, Benito Tome Fernandez, and Rodolfo Vela Santos. Some of the girls on the *Habana* married men whose stories are told in *Churchill's Spaniards* so amongst the children and grandchildren of the *Niños Vascos* are descendants of those who served in the Army many of whom settled in England. Through the lives of Lucio and José María the stories of the *Niños de la Guerra* are told as they live through two wars and accept their permanent exile.

At 268 pages with comprehensive footnotes and appendices the book also has chapters explaining the men's time between 1936 and 1939 during the Spanish Civil War and their life in post war Britain

including their support for the resistance to Franco and their attempts to gain recognition particularly at the Cenotaph from the Royal British Legion and governments. No memorial to this group of brave Spaniards exists.

Were these men known to Churchill? And could they be considered to be Churchill's Spaniards? Well Sean Scullion is unable to assert yes to either question but for the first historian to pose these questions he does ask and others will turn up the evidence. For the descendants of these brave men the context in which their husbands, fathers, brothers, grandfathers fought is for the first time recorded here by Sean Scullion. After 1945 the divisions of the War in Spain on the Republican side are represented with *el Hogar Español*, the *Casal Catalá*, and the *Eusko Extea*, and in the community at schools the children of the veterans were attending or Spanish restaurants where they met for reunions.

For the descendants of the Basque Children this is an important book which tells us about the experience of exile and defeat and through shared heroism and bravery and ends in finding a new and meaningful place in the world and this book is a step towards their recognition. This is a story that starts with defeat and exile following the end of the Spanish Civil War but through the experiences of World War 2 shaped a community which had found a not entirely welcoming home.

Simon Martinez
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