

## MIRELLA PRIMAVERA SANTAMARÍA BONILLA MBE

### OBITUARY

Mirella was born in 1958. Her parents were Basque children evacuated from Bilbao in 1937 - her father to Britain and her mother to France. Mirella maintained a strong Spanish identity and her parents were her initial tutors of Spanish. She tirelessly promoted her father's book about the Basque children's exile. In her late teens Mirella started her teaching career in Bilbao, which in the 1970s was a hotbed of resistance to the dictatorship and in which she participated in the iconic *barrio* of Recaldeberri, famously known as *Lenin's cradle*.

In the UK, she became an academic at Nottingham Trent University and an external examiner. She was project manager for *Routes into Languages* for the East Midlands. Her contribution to work on *Widening Participation*, was well regarded by colleagues. She taught languages in an internationalist context and worked with the *Goethe Institut*, the *Instituto Cervantes* and the *Institut Français*. She saw language teaching as recognition of and a contribution from a diaspora originating in child exiles. Commenting on Mirella her former Head of Department and Dean spoke of her gift for communicating languages "especially to younger audiences". Her former Dean recalls attending an event at which children were presented with certificates by a local dignitary after completing one of her courses.

When Nottingham Trent announced that Mirella was to receive an MBE they stated "She has worked tirelessly to promote the memory of the Spanish Civil War amongst young adults and school children, organising events to commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> anniversaries attended by Basque refugees who remained in the UK after the war". In 2006, she organised an exhibition on the Basque Children at the University attended by Michael Portillo (his mother Cora who opened it) and the Vice-Chancellor.

On her passing the Vice-Chancellor of Notting Trent University paid extensive tribute to Mirella as an academic in the School of Arts and Humanities. Professor Peck described her teaching as 'inspirational' and said "she brought sunshine and laughter to so my peoples' lives". I would add this as Mirella's eternal footprint.

Luis Ángel Santamaría.