



# Newsletter

## Basque Children of '37 Association: UK

[www.spanishrefugees-basquechildren.org](http://www.spanishrefugees-basquechildren.org)

No.2

September 2004

### News

#### AGM and members' lunch

The Basque Children of '37 Association: UK held its first annual general meeting and members' lunch on 14 February 2004 in London, at the Mall Tavern, Notting Hill Gate. It was attended by over 20 members, including a number of *niños*.

The Chairman, Manuel Moreno, opened the meeting by welcoming those present. This was followed by the Secretary's report: Natalia Benjamin was pleased to record that thanks to a vigorous recruitment drive, current membership stood at 107. She listed the many activities that had taken place during the year, stressing that one of the highlights had been the unveiling by Cora Portillo of a blue plaque at the Aston colony in Oxfordshire. A minibus had been provided by the Association so that members from London could attend the ceremony. The first Newsletter had come out in August and had been sent to members and interested parties. Feedback had been most positive, and members are to be encouraged to contribute to future editions. The Association had functioned with a minimal committee, and two more members were subsequently voted in, which hopefully will help ease the situation in future.

The Treasurer's report was presented and adopted, then Manuel proposed that Tom Webb, who had acted as Auditor, be appointed Honorary Auditor.

The AGM was followed by a convivial lunch, which gave members the opportunity to get to know each other informally. We welcomed as our guest Xabier Ezeizabarrena, the current fellow in Basque studies at Oxford University.

Later, in discussion, it was felt that the venue, the Mall Tavern, was not entirely appropriate, since the business part of our meeting had to be held in the restaurant with other diners present. It was decided that in future we would try to get a separate room in a restaurant for the AGM and the members' lunch.

#### Oxfordshire colonies talk

On 29 January 2004, Natalia Benjamin gave a talk on the Basque children to the Aston



Left: Herminio Martinez reading a poem on 21 March. See "Poetry reading" report below.

Below: Participants at the "Writers and the Spanish Civil War" talk at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, in May, including (second from right) speaker Professor Valentine Cunningham. See report on page 6.



Historical Society, focussing specially on the colonies in Oxfordshire. The talk was entitled: "You can't help liking them" – the Basque children in Great Britain.

#### Poetry reading

On Sunday 21 March 2004, 21 members attended a Poetry Reading at the Torriano Meeting House, London NW5.

Koke Martinez called for one minute's silence as a tribute to the victims of the Madrid bombings. Amongst those present were Adrian Bell and Paul Preston, as well as some members of the International Brigade Memorial Trust.

The poet Jane Duran, whose father had fought in the Republican army during the Civil War, opened the session by reading some of the poems in her collection "Silences from the

Spanish Civil War". Her father had never talked about his experiences and these poems attempt to retrace his path through the war, even visiting battlegrounds, in an attempt to understand his elusive past.

Others reading poems were Herminio Martinez, Steve Bowles, Koke Martinez, Helvecia Hidalgo, Natalia Benjamin, Marlene Sidaway, Manuel Moreno, Pauline Fraser and Angeles Kerr. Poems were read in Spanish and English, some in translation, and were introduced by those reading them. They ranged from Lorca to the Chilean Neruda and the former French surrealist Paul Eluard, and also included poems written by participants.

The whole event was extremely moving – a measure of its success was that the session lasted for over four hours, and only broke up because the hall was needed for another activity. We greatly appreciate the work of



## From the Secretary

Here, at last, is the second Newsletter of the Basque Children of '37 Association: UK. We are still going strong and attracting many visitors to our website ([www.spanishrefugees\\_basquechildren.org](http://www.spanishrefugees_basquechildren.org)).

First, congratulations go to Steve Bowles for winning the bronze medal in the documentary section of the prestigious New York Film Festival for the film, "La Generación del Guernica", he produced for the Latin America Discovery Channel. It's a wonderful achievement and members will have the opportunity of seeing the film later on in the year.

I am glad to report that following the annual general meeting in February, some more committee members were elected. We now have a Membership Secretary, Carmen Kilner, who together with John Kilner has created a workable database of the membership. She asks that all those who haven't yet renewed their membership (due on 23 May) to please do so! The Association receives no outside funding and we rely solely on your subscriptions and donations to continue the work we are doing. Publications Officer is Jim Jump, who has already designed for us a much more attractive leaflet and application form; he has also undertaken to produce the Newsletter. The committee now meets regularly every two months, and one of the decisions we have made is to bring out the Newsletter twice a year.

The various activities planned for the first half of the year, the AGM and members' lunch, the poetry reading and Valentine Cunningham's perceptive talk in Oxford, were well attended and most enjoyable. The next few months promise to be equally interesting: a blue plaque is

being unveiled at the colony in Caerleon in October and there will be an exhibition at Southampton Civic Centre and then the University in November and December.


We are continuing the practice of publishing short articles by members and we would urge you to contribute to future editions, whether an article or correspondence. We have established links with the Asociación Jubilados Evacuados de la Guerra Civil, and with the Center for Basque Studies at the University of Nevada, Reno.

Perhaps one of the most rewarding aspects of my involvement with the Association has been the unexpected new material which has been discovered: a collection of negatives in the basement of the Oxford Public Library of the children in the Aston colony taken by a professional photographer, Cyril Arapoff, himself a refugee; some 30 pencil drawings by Richard Murry of staff and *niños* in the Langham colony; two short films on the *niños* and colonies; a series of photographs taken at North Stoneham Camp by one of the British helpers when he was 16; "new" *niños vascos* who had lost contact with others in Great Britain; eight negatives of my mother with the *niños* at Langham that I had never seen.

Who would have thought two years ago that we would have discovered so much about the *niños*? One thing is certain – the *niños* are no longer "los olvidados"!

Let us hope the following years are just as fruitful!

*iAgur!*



Natalia Benjamin



Herminio Martinez in organising the event and anticipate more in the future.

*Españoles españoles del éxodo y del llanto levanta la cabeza y no me miréis con ceno porque yo no soy el que canta la destrucción sino la esperanza*

(Leon Felipe)

## Film: 'La Pelota Vasca'

Acclaimed Spanish film-maker Julio Medem turns towards non-fiction to direct this incisive documentary (titled "The Basque Ball" in English) on Spain and the Basque region, looking at the complicated situation between the Basque nationalist movement and the Spanish government. Interviewing a range of artists, writers, politicians, priests, activists, journalists and academics, Medem delivers a torrent of contradictions and opinions, painting a vivid history of both the Basque region and its contested status.

## Laurie Lee in Spain

by Alan Warren

Saturday 6 March 2004 saw a packed audience at the Imperial War Museum, London, attending the 3rd Len Crome Memorial Lecture, titled "Laurie Lee in the International Brigades: Writer or Fighter", hosted by the International Brigade Memorial Trust. Dr Richard Baxell gave a fascinating lecture on the writings of Laurie Lee, focussing particularly on "A Moment of War" (1991), concerning Lee's experiences in Spain and the International Brigades.

Published over 50 years after the Spanish Civil War, despite initial enthusiastic reviews, criticism from International Brigade veterans concerning his account was expressed. Soon after Laurie Lee's death in December 1997, articles in *The Spectator* and later in the letters column of *The Guardian* questioned his role in Spain, wondering whether Lee actually did join the International Brigades.

Dr Baxell ran through Lee's experiences as detailed in "A Moment of War". That he travelled over the Pyrenees at the end of 1937 is not disputed, but his experiences do not always tally with historical fact. His leaving Spain in February 1938 is a fact, but his recollections of fighting at Teruel are probably an invention. Nevertheless, Laurie Lee's name is recorded in a list of British volunteers compiled in September 1938 and his work with Bill Rust in Barcelona is acknowledged as fact.

So "A Moment of War" should perhaps be compared to the first and second books of Lee's trilogy ("Cider With Rosie", "As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning") as works of literature rather than true autobiography. Written so long after the event, memory can

## Basque Children of '37 Association: UK

● Secretary: Natalia Benjamin, 8 Hernes Road, Oxford OX2 7PU

Tel: 01865-459 744

Email: [n.benjamin@ntlworld.com](mailto:n.benjamin@ntlworld.com)

● Membership Secretary: Carmen Kilner

Tel: 020-8224 7959

Email: [membershipsecretary@spanishrefugees-basquechildren.org](mailto:membershipsecretary@spanishrefugees-basquechildren.org)

### How to support the Association

*Niños* and their spouses/partners and widow/ers are honorary members. Annual subscriptions (which are renewable in May) for other family members and supporters of the Association's aims are:

● £10 for individuals ● £25 for institutions.

Contact Membership Secretary Carmen Kilner for membership application forms.

play havoc on what took place, and Lee's account is prone to such inaccuracies.

I must admit I had great respect for Richard Baxell in addressing Laurie Lee's role in Spain, as he provided an appealing and reasoned account of the facts and fantasies of a book whose author has not always found favour with survivors of the International Brigades.

Richard Baxell's new book "British Volunteers for Liberty" is published by Routledge at £60 hardback.

## IB commemoration

by Alan Warren

Luckily the rain held off for the annual commemoration on 17 July 2004 at the International Brigade Memorial in Jubilee Gardens by the London Eye.

A large crowd attended, and Republican flags and the new replica British Battalion flag were on display as those present remembered the conflict in Spain and the International Brigaders, especially those who never returned. After a short introductory speech given by the International Brigade Memorial Trust Chairman, veteran Jack Jones, Secretary Marlene Sidaway introduced Ana Perez, chair of the Spanish *Asociación de Amigos de las Brigadas Internacionales*, who gave an impassioned speech on the role of the Brigades.

After a minute's silence for those who had died in Spain, those attending made their way to the nearby Travel Inn in the old GLC building, where a Spanish buffet was served; an informal social event with many reunions and animated conversations taking place went on into the late afternoon.

We thank the IBMT Secretary, Marlene Sidaway for her untiring work in organising this event, which seems to grow in popularity year after year.

## Anniversary lunch

The annual anniversary lunch organised by Helvecia Hidalgo for all the *niños* took place on Sunday 23 May at the El Prado restaurant in Fulham. *Niños* and their families had come in some cases from afar to be at the reunion and there were several *niños* who had never been before. The Association had prepared some 12 display boards of photographs and newspaper cuttings from many colonies, which were the focus of much interest.

Helvecia pointed out in her speech that there were 67 people present and it was exactly 67 years since they had first left Spain. She welcomed Jim Jump, the son of a British International Brigader and a Spanish *auxiliar* who had been in the Lancing colony, and also Carmen Kilner, daughter of a *señorita* who was not well enough to attend.



International Brigade veterans at the IB Memorial in London's Jubilee Gardens. See "IB commemoration" report.

## El Exilio de los Niños

The exhibition *El Exilio de los Niños*, organised by the Largo Caballero and Pablo Iglesias Foundations, opened for a month on 17 December 2003 in the Palacio Euskalduna in Bilbao.

Representing the Basque Children of '37 Association: UK at the inaugural ceremony was the Secretary, Natalia Benjamin, who had contributed an article on the Basque children in Great Britain to the catalogue of the exhibition. Also present from Great Britain were two sisters, *niñas vascas*, living near Southampton, Josefina Stubbs and Maria Carmen Smith (Antolín).

The exhibition reflected the lives of some of the 33,000 children who were evacuated from Spain during the Spanish Civil War through photos, texts, drawings and other artefacts. Of particular interest was the dance costume that Josefina had made when she was 11 years old and two marbles she had been given at Moor Hill House, Southampton.

The inauguration speeches reflected the desire to learn from the errors of the past. Alfonso Guerra, President of the Pablo Iglesias

Foundation, emphasised that the exhibition was determined to contribute to the healing of the scars of the past. Amongst those present were many of those children, today grandparents, whose life stories had been hitherto virtually "neglected by historians." He added that the children deserved our affection and our respect. In concluding, he said that it was necessary to remember the past in order to "render homage to those who gave up their lives and freedom for us".

The President of the Largo Caballero Foundation, Antón Saracibar, stated that the aim of the exhibition was to situate the exile of the children in its rightful place in history. Everyone knows about the exile, he said, but no one remembers the little ones who had to leave their homes and families, or those who suffered repression within Spain. The exhibition was seeking to inform today's generation about what their forefathers had gone through during the Civil War so that it should not happen again. Bilbao had been chosen for the inauguration of the exhibition because it was the main point of exit for the evacuees.

During 2004, the Exhibition moved from Bilbao to Barcelona, then to Salamanca and Seville; it is presently in Badajoz until 19 September. It will then move to Valencia, Gijón and Madrid.

Jim Jump, son of *auxiliar* Cayetana Lozano-Díaz (Lancing colony), visited the exhibition in Bilbao in January 2004. He writes:

"It was hard to keep a dry eye looking at the photographs which brought home the scale of the emotional pain which must have been suffered by the evacuees. The exhibition also covers the return of the children after the end of the war. Thankfully, many were happily reunited with their families, but many too were sent to Francoist orphanages and prison schools where they received harsh and often inhumane treatment because of the political affiliation of their parents. Some children never returned or, if so, only towards the end



The exhibition catalogue.

by Martin Murphy

Gavin Henderson, the second Lord Faringdon, was a surprising supporter of the Spanish Republican cause. Educated at Eton and Oxford University, he was in his youth one of the “bright young things” later made famous in the works of his contemporary, Evelyn Waugh. But by the time he inherited his millionaire grandfather’s title in 1934, he had become an active member of the Labour Party and a pacifist. At the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, he went out to Aragón to serve in a field hospital, and back in Britain did much to publicise the struggle.

Lord Faringdon found himself the owner of Buscot Park, a mansion and an estate between Faringdon and Lechlade in Oxfordshire. Early in 1938, Poppy Vulliamy – a lady who never took no for an answer – suggested that he might find room for a group of Basque boys in her care. After a cold winter, first at Great Yarmouth, later at Tythrop Park near Thame, they were homeless. Lord Faringdon offered them a lodge beside the lake on his estate, and there they arrived in March 1938. It was in some ways an idyllic spot, but the living conditions were spartan, and the older boys – city lads, old beyond their years, who had shouldered men’s responsibilities under siege conditions – did not take easily to their new status as “children”, or to institutional life in isolated rural surroundings.

One of these boys was José Sobrino Riaño, the 15-year old son of a Bilbao foundry-worker – a boy still remembered for his exceptional intelligence and force of character. Within only two or three weeks of arrival he became seriously ill and was removed to the Radcliffe Infirmary in Oxford, where he died on 31 March. His companions attended his burial at Rose Hill cemetery, Oxford, on 23 April.

The circumstances of this tragic event were recorded, unforgettably, in Luis Cernuda’s poem “Elegía a un Muchacho Vasco, Muerto en Inglaterra”. Cernuda, stranded in England by the war, had joined the colony at Eaton Hastings as a teacher some time in March. Surviving *niños vascos* cannot remember him, but he must have made an impression on José Sobrino, because when the boy was

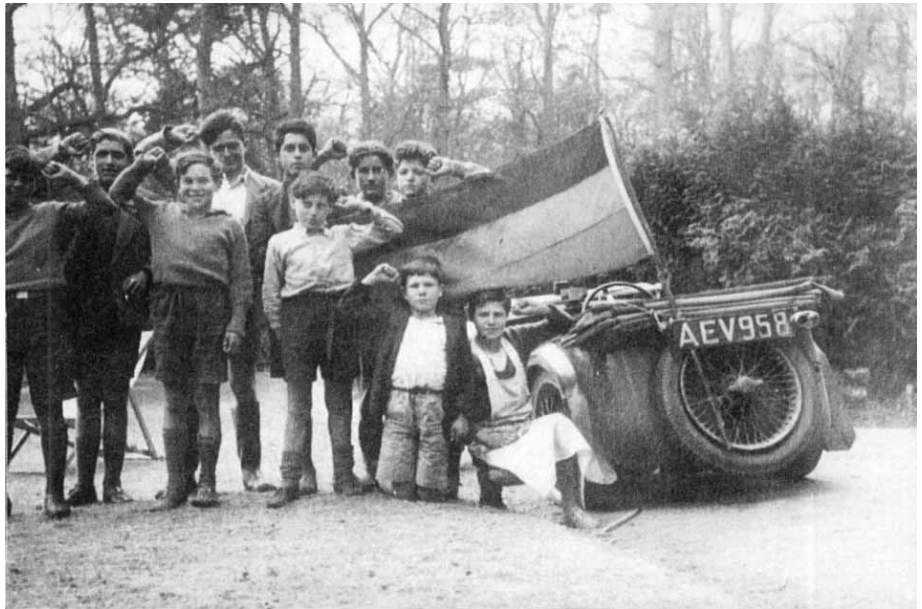


Arturo Barea.



Luis Cernuda.

# The exiles of Eaton Hastings



Some of the *niños* at Buscot Park with a Spanish Republican flag.

dying, he asked to see “Señor Cernuda”, and to hear him read a poem. Then the boy turned his face to the wall, to spare his visitor the pain of seeing him die. All this is told in the poem:

*Volviste la cara contra el muro  
Con el gesto de un niño que temiese  
Mostrar fragilidad en su deseo.*

The experience affected Cernuda so deeply that he could not return to the colony.

In 1939 the boys still remaining at Eaton Hastings moved to Shipton-under-

Wychwood, and their place at Basque House (as the lodge by the lake is still called) was taken by a small group of adult refugees, mainly Catalans. They included the poet Domènec Perramón, the journalist Eduardo de Ortañon, Fermín Vergés, and another poet – Castilian by birth and Andalusian by adoption: Pedro Garfías. Born in Salamanca in 1901, Garfías became a poet and a communist early in life, and made his name as the author of a volume entitled “Héroes del Sur”. With the gift for poetry

went an addiction to the bottle, which made him a genial but quite unemployable companion. His friend Giner de los Ríos later wrote: “A Pedro, el alcohol le daba bondad y hondura. Él, hablando en estado de embriaguez, representaba el hombre sano y honrado que todos hubiéramos querido ser.” Garfías spoke no English, but according to the legend later embroidered by Pablo Neruda, struck

up a friendship at Eaton Hastings with the landlord of the local inn. Long after closing time the two soulmates would pour out their feelings, each in a language unintelligible to the other, and yet communicating with the heart.

In his few short months in the English countryside, Garfías produced what Damaso Alonso once described as “el mejor libro poemático del destierro”, the long poem “Primavera en Eaton Hastings”. In it, past and present continually dissolve into each other. The green lawns and trees of Buscot Park are transformed into the landscape of “mi blanca Andalucía”. Gradually the melancholy nostalgia of the early verse gives way to grief and anger:

*Solo en medio de un pueblo que duerme  
en esta noche*

*Yo he de gritar mi llanto.*

England inspired Garfías not because of what it was, but because of what it was not. Later in 1939 Garfías and his companions left England for a new life in Mexico.

Eight years later Lord Faringdon offered a home to the last of the exiles, Arturo Barea, who spent the final 10 years of his life (1947-1957) at Middle Lodge, down the road from Basque House. By that time, Barea had published his masterpiece, the trilogy “The Forge”, “The Track” and “The Clash” which wove his own life story into the story of Spain in the Twenties and Thirties. The book achieved tremendous success everywhere except in Spain, where it was not published until 1978.

But Barea was also famous in Latin America for the talks he broadcast for the BBC South American Service every week from 1940 until the year of his death. He set himself to be the interpreter of the English character and way of life, and to do this by means of anecdotes: “Cuentecillos de mi Pueblo”. Modern critics might find the picture he paints to be a little rosy, but Barea was an idealist, and he felt profoundly grateful to England for having given him a home, in which he was able to produce his best work.

Of the three writers of Eaton Hastings, he was the only one who put down roots, and so it is fitting that he lies in English ground in the cemetery at Faringdon.

## Further reading

● Rafael Martínez Nadal, “Españoles en la Gran Bretaña. Luis Cernuda, el Hombre y sus Temas”, Madrid: Hiperión, 1983

● Arturo Barea, “Palabras Recobradas: textos inéditos”, ed. Nigel Townson. Madrid: Debates, 2002

● Pedro Garfías, “Primavera en Eaton Hastings”, ed J M Barrera. Málaga: Lopez, 1994.

of the dictatorship or when Franco died. It was moving to see how these exiles in far-flung places like Mexico and the Soviet Union maintained Spanish communities and customs. Congratulations must go to everyone in the UK for ensuring that the story of the *niños* who came to Britain, along with plenty of photos and artefacts, has a prominent place among the displays. An excellent book accompanies the exhibition though, like the exhibition itself, it is only in Spanish.”

## Tree of Guernica



The Tree of Guernica, symbol of Basque freedom and sovereignty, has died. The high temperatures recorded last summer finished off the old oak tree, which had been ailing since 1970. Only the

intensive care provided by the specialists since it had been discovered that the tree was seriously affected by the yellow mushroom fungus had enabled them to prolong the life of the ancient tree. This spring, however, seeing that its leaves had not begun to sprout, the specialists certified its death.

The 146 year-old oak was the third known Tree of Guernica, in a tradition going back to the Middle Ages. Beneath its boughs, successive kings of Spain have had to swear to respect the special rights of the Basque people and all the Lehendakaris have had to take their oaths of office. The Assembly House still preserves the fossilised trunk of the tree's predecessor, known as *El Viejo*, that lived from 1742 to 1892. Moreover, there are records of another, previous tree called *El Padre*, which is said to have lived for 450 years.

The tree will be replaced by one of its 15-year-old offsprings, which is planted in one of the special nurseries belonging to the Provincial Council of Vizcaya. It will occupy the same place as its predecessor, that is, in front of the oath-swearing stand at the entrance to the Assembly House, but it will not be planted until the beginning of next year. Before this, it will be necessary to replace the earth contaminated by the fungi, install a drainage system and provide the new tree with more space.

## Wales and the Civil War

by Alan Warren

Glamorgan University at Pontypridd hosted a Day School on Saturday 31 July 2004 to

publicise Professor Rob Stradling's new book “The Dragon's Dearest Cause: Wales and the Spanish Civil War”.

Those present were privileged to listen to Hywel Francis MP and Professor Stradling debate the matter of Wales and the Spanish Civil War to an audience of approximately 25 people, chaired by Dr Keith Davies from the University of Glamorgan.

The participants engaged in a question and answer session after the debate, which for some strange reason, seemed to focus more on the Irish and the Spanish Civil War than the Welsh!

Professor Stradling's position concerning the role of Frank Thomas in the Spanish Foreign Legion on the Nationalist side is well known, and his more recent work concerned the activities of O'Duffy's Blueshirts on the side of Franco and that of Frank Ryan on the Republican side with fellow Irishmen serving with the International Brigades.

The recent inauguration of the Waterford Memorial to International Brigaders caused Professor Stradling to question why a memorial to O'Duffy's Blueshirts was not present in Ireland. This started a discussion from the floor on the Irish situation, and provided an interesting session.

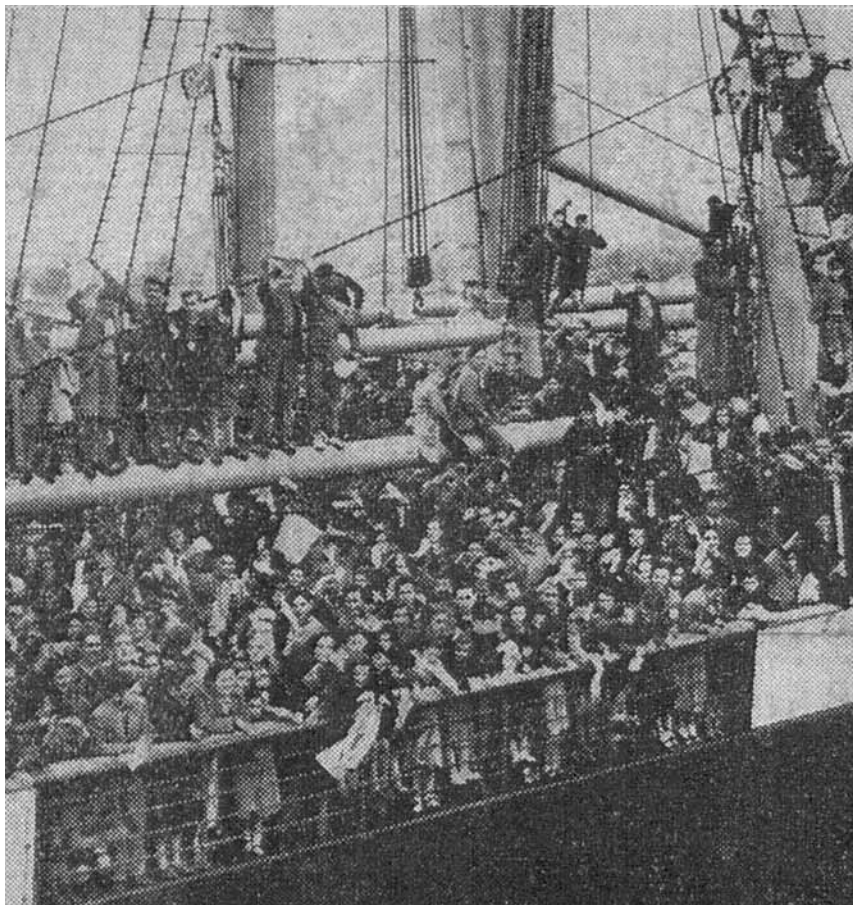
Rob Stradling's new book “The Dragon's Dearest Cause: Wales and the Spanish Civil War” will be published by the University of Wales press in August 2004, price as yet undetermined.

## Overseas Basque benefits

The Basque government has recently approved a set of benefits aimed at Basque people living abroad who are going through times of extreme economic need. The aim of this initiative is to provide welfare benefits and protection to those Basques who live outside the Basque Autonomous Region and in this way meet one of the commitments that appear in the act regulating relations between Basque institutions and Basque groups in centres overseas.

It was precisely to find out more about the socio-economic situation of these Basques and to draw up a list of potential recipients of social benefits that the Basque government sent out a survey to a total of 25,000 people, to which around 12,800 replied. According to the results of this survey, around 2,000 Basques said they were living in extreme conditions with incomes of under 100 dollars.

The survey results show that there are several reasons why people have reached this situation: monetary swings and economic problems in some Latin American countries, as well as age, lack of financial resources, health crises and accidental incapacitation.



Arrival of the Habana in Southampton in May 1937.

## Aims of the Basque Children of '37 Association: UK

1. To reunite the *niños* of the Spanish Civil War who were exiled in Great Britain in 1937 and who did not return to Spain or who returned later, that is, those who had the common experience of being evacuated.
2. To preserve for descendants and future generations, through the collection of oral and written testimonies, the memory of the *niños*' experience of the period and their subsequent life in Britain.
3. To place the experience of the exile within its rightful historical context, so the *niños* should not be "*los olvidados*".
4. To provide a forum for discussion and to promote dialogue between *niños*, researchers and interested persons.
5. To encourage the collection and preservation of archives (photographs, films, songs, posters, oral testimonies, artwork etc) to be used for educational and historical purposes, eventually to be deposited in a specific library/archive in Britain.
6. To locate commemorative plaques and to ensure their preservation and maintenance; to organise the setting-up of other dedicated plaques to commemorate the experience.
7. To liaise and collaborate with related societies of *niños vascos* in other countries.
8. To facilitate and support research into the history of the evacuation of the *niños vascos* who were sent to Britain.
9. To inform members about new developments in the knowledge of the period through publications, bibliographies, web pages etc.



### How to access these benefits

To access them the following requirements must be met:

- Proof of belonging to the Basque community
- Residence overseas
- Lack assets and income that allow you to cover welfare needs or situations of extreme need. When calculating this, all kinds of income the family unit is obtaining will be taken into account, including public and private benefits. This income can be no greater than the amount of the Basic Income currently in force in the Basque Autonomous Region (426 Euros). Benefits covering health needs, however, will not be restricted to this limit.
- Live in private homes and not in organisations or institutions which have to provide the person with care.

### Whom to contact

The Basque Centre, Euskal Elkartea, Oxford House, Derbyshire Street, Bethnal Green, London E2 6HG  
Tel: 0207 739 7339  
Email: London@eukaledge.fsnet.co.uk

## Writers and the Civil War

by Steve Bowles

How cultured the Basque Children of '37 Association: UK is turning out to be! On Saturday 8 May 2004, a second event focusing on the literature of the Spanish Civil War was organised in Oxford. The gathering drew over 50 people to the wonderful Rainolds Room at Corpus Christi College.

The session, titled "Save the Women and Children – Writers and the Spanish Civil War", was led by the very eminent Professor Valentine Cunningham, fellow and tutor in English and editor of "The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse".

Professor Cunningham drew on a broad range of work – WH Auden, Virginia Woolf, Pablo Neruda and "No Pasarán", from the "International Brigade Songbook", to name but a few.

It was good to see that the event pulled in some new faces which, in turn, broadened the discussion.

Perhaps most interesting of all to the impartial observer was how the contribution of Laurie Lee in his final book, "A Moment of War", continues to cause controversy. Lee's grim depiction of the divisions and conflicts on the Republican side does not sit at all comfortably with the International Brigade's portrayal of a valiant struggle against Fascism. As Cunningham said: "The debate will go on and on."

## Obituaries

We very much regret to announce the deaths of the following:

- Ignacio Alfonso
- Laura Martinez
- Maria Angeles Olazaga

## Noticeboard

### Archival material received

- Article on the colonies at Hull (Librarian Sutton-on-Hull).
- Two books – Paul Preston: “The Coming of the Spanish Civil War” and Claude Cockburn: “Despatches from the Spanish Civil War” (Stuart Walsh).
- Catalogue “They Still Draw Pictures”, from an exhibition in New York of drawings by Spanish refugee children.
- Newspaper cuttings about the colonies in Hexham, Guisborough, Worthing and Lancing (Johnnie Johnson).
- Video (three minutes) of Basque children in unnamed colony (Sue Clamp).
- Video of the Hull colony (Rob Wardle).
- Two undergraduate dissertations by mature students:
  - “The Basque Refugee Children of the Spanish Civil War and their Lives in Somerset”, (Sue Morley – University of Plymouth).
  - “Bilbao to Caerleon: The Basque Child Refugees of 1937”, (Gail Giles – University of Wales Caerleon).
- Photographs (Carmen Coupland, Koke Martinez, Elsie Sacristan, Adrian Bell, Pili Merodio, Eli Sanchez, Carmen Kilner, Jack Puntis).

### BBC Legacies website

[www.bbc.co.uk/legacies](http://www.bbc.co.uk/legacies)

In the Archive section, go to “Immigration and Emigration”, then select “Southampton” and you will find the history of the Basque children, which uses information from our website.

### Research

The Association actively encourages research and has produced a bibliography of books and articles in English and Spanish on the Basque children in Great Britain which it will send to interested researchers.

We are pleased to report that French post-graduate Mariam Faziollahi submitted her

thesis to the Université Catholique de l'Ouest in Bordeaux in June and obtained a distinction (Mention Très Bien). The subject was “British Civilian Aid to the Basque Refugee Children”.

Sam Bishop, a research student in the history department at the University of Sussex has been preparing an MA dissertation to be handed in by September 2004, entitled “To what extent was the arrival and care of 4,000 Basque children an example of British benevolence or political manoeuvring?”.

In Hull, two researchers are working on a local history project in relation with the Basque children. The aim is to develop the project into a video documentary.

### Books

- “Miners Against Fascism: Wales and the Spanish Civil War” by Huywel Francis. This book has been reprinted by Warren and Pell Publishing. (Alan Warren is a member of the Association.)
  - Cost: £13.50 (inclusive of p&p)
  - Tel: 01495-775 561.
- “An Imperfect Example: the North-East of England and the Spanish Civil War” by Don Watson and John Corcoran. (Don is a member of the Association.)
  - Cost: £7.00 (inclusive of p&p)
  - Write to Don at 68 Trevor Terrace, North Shields, Tyne and Weir, NE30 20E.

### Books for sale



- “Only for Three Months”, by Adrian Bell, £8 including p&p.
  - Contact Natalia Benjamin (Secretary).
- “Leah Manning”, by Ron Bill & Stan Newens, £3 including p&p.
  - Contact Museum of Harlow, Muskham Road, Harlow, Essex CM20 2LF; tel: 01279 454959.

### Forthcoming events

### Blue plaques

- Caerleon: A commemorative blue plaque will be unveiled on Sunday 17 October 2004 at 12pm at Pendragon House, 18 Cross Street, Caerleon (Newport, South Wales). The first colony in Caerleon was at Cambria House. Shortly after World War II began, the military moved into Cambria House and the *niños* were transferred to Vale View, Mill Street. By then, some of them had returned to Spain and others were placed in private homes. In November 1939 the remaining *niños* were sent to 18 Cross Street. In 1982, Cambria House was demolished to make way for an ambulance station.
- Cambridge: Permission has been granted by the Cambridge Blue Plaque Association to erect a plaque at 1 Salisbury Villas, Station Road, Cambridge. This is where the *niños* went in January 1938 after spending six months just outside Cambridge at Pampisford Rectory. The next stage is to obtain permission of the owners of the building, Jesus College.

### IB Memorial Trust AGM

The International Brigade Memorial Trust holds its annual general meeting at 3pm on Saturday 16 October 2004 in Cardiff. There will also be a rededication of the city's IB memorial and an evening social function. More details from IBMT Secretary Marlene Sidaway, tel: 020 8555 6674.

### Exhibition at Southampton

The Association will stage an exhibition of its display boards, first in the foyer at the Civic Centre, Southampton, from 4-19 November 2004, then at Southampton University, Avenue Campus, from 22 November to 17 December. There will be a reception at 5.30pm at the university, after which there will be a showing of the film “La Generación del Guernica”. Tel: Natalia Benjamin on 01865 459744 for more details.

### Oxford day school

On Saturday 30 October 2004 at Rewley House, Oxford, there will be a day school organised by Tom Buchanan on the theme: “The Spanish Civil War: Atrocities and Propaganda”. Tel: 01865 270360 for details.

### Film showing

Steve Bowles' film “La Generación del Guernica” will be shown in the Spring of 2005 as part of the Imperial War Museum's film programme. Details to be provided later.

## Reflections

# The story of Spain's betrayal must still be told

by Herminio Martinez

It is heartening now, when fewer of us remain, that some younger members of our "family" should feel they want to keep our story and experience alive and have formed the Basque Children of '37 Association: UK. They have put a lot of work into the first Newsletter and other events and are to be congratulated.

The Spanish Civil War is a landmark of the last century that persists in the conscience of Europe. Likewise, the destruction of Guernica is synonymous with barbarity. We should keep alive the memory of this disaster, the betrayal of Spain, how the idealistic dream of the Republic was crushed and our people were repressed. We are but a small part of the events from 1936 to 1939 in Spain and of what followed in Europe and beyond in the Second World War. The Civil War was part of that horror story.

There has been a conspiracy of silence, particularly in Spain, about what happened. It is a disgrace that even under Felipe González the truth was suppressed so as not to antagonise the perpetrators of so many crimes, and of so much killing even when the war ended – all calculated to instill fear and terror as part of Franco's revenge upon those who had defended the Republic. What could we expect of the PP? There are signs that the silence of fear is being broken by those who suffered, but the process has only just begun. The historical record needs to be a true one. Spain has been in a state of amnesia for too long. Will the new PSOE government have the courage to deal with this issue? Some 50 years of history were fabricated by those who held power and who were in control of an iron censorship, by those who were determined that Spain should not think, by those who set out to destroy any trace of democracy and who turned the clock back to the inquisition and religious obscurantism. They have a monument to their barbarity in the *Valle de los Caídos*, built with Republican prisoner labour and crowned with a cross!

We, shamefully, have the remains of one of the best poets of the time buried in exile in France at Colliure. Antonio Machado's remains surely should be brought to Spain and set into a simple monument to the decency, humanity and honour which he epitomised.

At our age it is a time for reflection. I was one of the younger ones who came in 1937. I think now of the events that affected our lives and the many people who crossed our path, some

of them such idealists, some very talented and persons of stature, so humble in the quiet way they worked amongst us. I regret I was too young to understand and appreciate the sacrifices made. Now I reflect on where I am, where the waters of time have cast me.

It has taken me years of reading, studying and listening to understand what happened. It all has a relevance to where we are today. Some names and events were engraved on my mind from early childhood in the village where I lived outside Bilbao. The names Azaña, Pablo Iglesias, Aguirre; the evil ones, Franco and Mola. Events were reinforced by the songs of the time. A very early memory is of the blind ballad singers who came to the village and sang about *la revolución de Asturias* and the repression that followed. It was an old tradition to pass on history and events via the ballad.

The ending of the war in 1945 and the Allied victory was a time of expectation and hope. We expected that the Allies would turn on Spain and deal with Franco as the remnant of fascism in Europe. At the Culvers colony we celebrated the ending of the war. Pepe, wonderful generous Pepe, was all nerves, joy and excitement. We lit a huge bonfire at night. It was only a matter of time, a very short time, and we would return to Spain. How differently things were to turn out!

The Labour government of 1945 was a disaster for us. The Foreign Secretary, Ernie Bevin, was treacherous. Of the Allies, Britain was the only one to oppose going on to end fascism in Spain. The Cold War was about to begin. Franco was saved. The tyrant would be useful in providing military bases. The Spanish people were again betrayed.

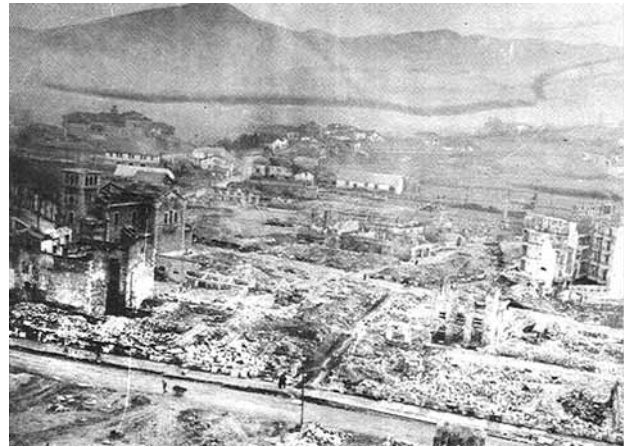
Oh, how much there is to tell.

## Why a second film project is called for

by Steve Bowles

When I read Jim Fyrth's chapter on the Basque children in his book "The Signal Was Spain" I had no idea that I would be embroiled with the story for so long. But perhaps, like a good Rioja, a good project takes a while to develop and to come to fruition!

That's not to say that there is nothing to show for efforts over the last five years! My first film on the theme, "La Generación del Guernica", produced for Discovery Latin America and Basque Television was broadcast at the end of last year. It told the more general story of the



Guernica after being bombed by Franco's Nazi German allies.

children that were evacuated overseas to escape the horrors of the Spanish Civil War – to Mexico, the Soviet Union, France, Belgium as well as the UK. The film won a bronze medal at the prestigious New York Festival and was also nominated for Best Documentary of the Year on Spanish Television.

Spurred on by that success, we are now re-examining the possibility of a second film which exclusively tells the story of the *niños vascos* who came to Britain and the politics that was behind the whole episode. There still remains much to be discovered about what went on during the Civil War and in its aftermath. A book published recently – "Los Niños Perdidos del Franquismo", by Ricard Vinyes tells, for the first time, the appalling stories of children who were confiscated from their families by the Franco authorities and adopted into "suitable" families, or put into orphanages. It includes the accounts of *niños de la guerra* who were originally sent to France and to Russia.

Adrian Bell's wonderful book "Only For Three Months" is the most comprehensive account of the British story. Adrian mentions his conversations with various *niños vascos* who had friends who were repatriated under false pretences and who consequently ended up in convents or orphanages. But putting names (and addresses) to those stories is proving hard. Can you help? Do you know of any *niños vascos* who went back to Spain to a reality that was worse than they ever imagined? If you do, please let me know via Association Secretary Natalia Benjamin (address on page 3). Thanks.



Steve Bowles (right) at his film's premiere in Bilbao.