



Newsletter



Basque Children of '37 Association UK

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María Teresa Grijalba (left) and the Deputy Mayor of Worthing, Christine Brown, unveil the plaque at Beach House, Worthing. See "Blue plaque at Worthing".

News

Blue plaque at Worthing

On 12 May 2007 a blue plaque was unveiled at Beach House, Worthing, to commemorate the stay of 60 Basque children in 1937. At that time the house was owned by the borough council and was lent free of charge. The crowd of about thirty people watched the unveiling performed by the Deputy Mayor Christine Brown and one of the *niñas*, María Teresa Grijalba, who had been at the Worthing colony and had travelled from Venezuela where she now lives. It was the first time she had visited the town since leaving it in 1940.

Jim Jump opened the proceedings, saying it was a very emotional moment for him because his mother Cayetana Lozano Díaz was one of the adult helpers who had come with the children to Worthing in 1937 and his father was a reporter on the *Worthing Herald* when he volunteered to fight with the International Brigades in Spain.

Bill Thornycroft, who initiated the project and whose brother had also been a Brigader, commented that everyone he had contacted, from the mayor and councillors to local people, said they knew nothing about this memorable chapter of Worthing's history. He recalled the reluctance of the government who only allowed the children to come on condition that no public funding was

provided and he paid tribute to the local people from almost all walks of life whose efforts supported the children who were part of the nationwide Aid for Spain campaign led by the Communist Party and supported by other leftwing sympathisers – people who realised that bombs on Madrid today meant bombs on London tomorrow.

A reception was held in Beach House, now converted into flats, hosted by the residents of the ground floor. The Basque Children of '37 Association UK paid for the plaque and mounted a small display of photographs and newspaper cuttings.

Documentary premiere

The theatrical release of the feature-length version of Steve Bowles's epic documentary project "The Guernica Children" played to a



All smiles on the visit to the European Parliament in Brussels in June. See "En el Parlamento Europeo" (right).

packed house at the Harbour Lights Cinema in Southampton on the evening of 21 June.

Hosted by City Eye and with the support of Southampton City Council and Screen South, over 250 people were present to see the film which tells the story of the 4,000 Basque refugee children who were evacuated to Britain in the wake of the bombing of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War. Included in the audience were a number of the *niños* (now matured somewhat since their arrival in the UK in 1937) as well as cast and crew, local media, students, academics and the general public.

In a question and answer session after the screening, Bowles told how happy he was that Southampton was hosting the premiere: "The project has drawn on the skills, support and expertise of many local people, as performers and technicians. This story started here in the city with the arrival of the children from the Basque region 70 years ago, and it is fitting that the film should have its first public showing here."

En el Parlamento Europeo

El pasado 6 de junio una delegación de "Niños de guerra" del Reino Unido vivieron en Bruselas una jornada muy especial al ser invitados por el eurodiputado socialista Alejandro Cercas a conocer el funcionamiento del Parlamento Europeo en un acto extraordinario realizado en colaboración con el Consejero de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales de la Embajada de España en el Reino Unido, Bernardo Fernández, para conmemorar el setenta aniversario del bombardeo de Guernica.

La jornada de homenaje a los "Niños de la Guerra" había comenzado por la mañana, con una agenda que incluyó una visita al Parlamento, una comida en el salón de diputados y diversos encuentros con eurodiputados tanto españoles como de otras nacionalidades. "Mi suegra, ya fallecida, fue también una "niña de la guerra" exiliada en Dinamarca, así que estoy bastante sensibilizado con este tema", explicó Alejandro Cercas. "Creo que fue uno de los capítulos más impresionantes y espantosos de la Guerra Civil, ya que estas

From the Secretary

Five months have passed since we held the very successful 70th Anniversary Commemorative Event at Southampton. It seems that we have needed all that time to recover from the hard work it entailed – we were exhausted! But we can now look back on the event with great satisfaction, in the knowledge that it was an unforgettable day. Even the capricious weather was on our side: the day dawned bright and sunny, and moreover, remained fine.

The programme was full and everything went without a hitch. *Niños* came with their families, wanting them to know about their story; friends and other interested parties came too from all over England. There was a sizeable contingent from Spain, and some came from as far afield as Venezuela, Mexico and Brazil. For name badges, the *niños* were given facsimiles of the hexagonal disks they had had to wear when they arrived as children in 1937, with the correct number. The exhibition of display boards was the focal point at the beginning, as guests met over coffee old friends that they hadn't seen for a long time. Then followed the speeches and the unveiling by the Spanish ambassador Carlos Miranda of the wonderful plaque that Herminio Martínez had designed.

A last minute addition to the programme was a dance group *Kezka Dantza Taldea*, together with two *txistularis* from the Elgoibar band, who lead the assembly to the dining room across the park like the Pied Piper. They danced and played at strategic points in the programme, including after the desert, when they invited *niños* to join them. We were amazed and enchanted by their springiness. Another impromptu event was the erection of

some bell tents and the sign of the children's camp in the park by the scouts, which moved many of the *niños*. After lunch, during the showing of Steve Bowles' re-edited documentary "The Guernica Children", the audience was visibly moved, finding the film disconcertingly heart-rending.

A video was made of the day's events and when it has been copied, it will be available at cost price. All the projects we had planned for 26 May were completed on time: the book "Recuerdos", the CD "Songs of the Basque Children" and the DVD of "The Guernica Children" which is now an hour-long feature documentary. In addition, Adrian Bell produced a second edition of his seminal book "Only For Three Months" which includes much new material.

Another event organised to celebrate the Anniversary was the festival run by Eastleigh Borough Council from 10-13 October entitled "Los Niños de Guernica". The programme was vibrant and exciting and has, again, introduced a whole new audience to the story of the *niños*. You will be able to read all about it in the next Newsletter.

What now for the Association? Various plans are afoot for the future, including a "Viva la República" fiesta with poetry, song and dance in April. Please give us any ideas you might have, and send in contributions for the next Newsletter.

Saludos y agur,

Natalia Benjamin

Natalia Benjamin

▶ personas perdieron su familia, su cultura, en muchas ocasiones hasta su lengua. Organizando este día en homenaje a ellos podíamos darles una pequeña alegría."

A las cinco de la tarde, un grupo de cuarenta "niños" hicieron su entrada en la tribuna del hemicycle. El vicepresidente del Parlamento, el socialista Miguel Ángel Martínez, les dio la bienvenida y les presentó como "unos niños que entre 1936 y 1939 salieron huyendo de España, de los bombardeos fascistas, fueron evacuados y encontraron la solidaridad y el cariño de familias en el Reino Unido. Hoy, con más de 75 años todos ellos, han venido a visitar el Parlamento, a estar entre nosotros y creo que es muy importante que les rindamos homenaje a ellos, y sobre todo, a la solidaridad del pueblo británico que les acogió y les dio la familia que se les había negado en su país". Fue este un saludo realmente excepcional, ya que en el Parlamento Europeo únicamente se saluda a las delegaciones oficiales, nunca a las personas individuales.

Los "niños" se reunieron con los eurodiputados españoles Iñigo Mendez de Vigo y Rosa Díez y con el británico Gary Titley. "Quise elaborar un programa lo más ilustrativo posible de la actual pluralidad de Europa", concluyó Alejandro Cercas. "Sólo puedo decir que para mí a sido uno de esos días en que me he sentido orgulloso de ser eurodiputado."

Remembering the International Brigades

by Marlene Sidaway

The annual commemoration at the International Brigade memorial in Jubilee Gardens, London, was this year particularly moving, with Jack Jones, Life President of the International Brigade Memorial Trust, welcoming the large crowd and IBMT Chair Sam Lesser giving a rousing speech.

Dolores Long, daughter of British Battalion Commander Sam Wild, read the names of all those Brigaders we had lost in the last year and, before the minute's silence, Bernado Fernández laid a wreath on behalf of the Spanish embassy, after which Penny Feiwel and Dolly West laid one on behalf of the Trust.

Roman Márquez, who is one of only three surviving militia men and women who took part in the events in Catalonia and Aragon in 1936, then thanked all those who had volunteered to go to the aid of his country.

He reminded us all how deeply those of his countrymen who were fighting for the Republic valued the sacrifices and bravery of the volunteers, who went to a strange country, knowing little of the language or the dangers, prepared to die for an ideal and to help the Spanish people in their hour of need.

Geoff Cowling, the former British consul-general in Barcelona, spoke of Hitler's bombers who had used the skies of Spain to practise

their later bombardment of Britain and made the point that the last battle of the Spanish Civil War should always be regarded in history as the first of the Second World War.

Finally, singer-songwriter Billy Bragg led the singing of "Jarama" and the "Internationale", the last notes of which rang out over Jubilee Gardens before the rain came down

Oxford day school

by Colin Carritt

The Director of Studies of Oxford University's Department of Continuing Education, Tom Buchanan, is a leading expert on the Spanish Civil War, so we should not be surprised that, in this 70th anniversary of the evacuation of the Basque children to the UK, he should have run a day school, held on 28 April, on the children and their story.

Buchanan presented a paper on



At the Oxford day school (from left): Tom Buchanan, Herminio Martínez and Helvecia Hidalgo.



Friends reunited at the anniversary lunch in May.

“Government, Politics and Humanitarianism” in which, though he is an objective and analytical historian, there were more than a few glimpses of his partisan sympathies towards the Republic and against the aggressive forces of Franco and his sponsors in Germany and Italy. He was particularly forthright about the shamefully inadequate response of the British Tory government to the catastrophic events at Durango, Guernica, and later Bilbao.

The second session, under the title “Bombing Children”, was by Valentine Cunningham, Professor of English at Oxford University, who was scathing in his contempt for the murderous tactics of Franco’s aerial bombardment of the Basque region. He went on to refer to the mountain of poetry, literature and art concerning events in the region, the most famous being the dramatic representation of the destruction of Guernica by Picasso.

Next it was the turn of two witnesses to the evacuation from Bilbao. First to speak was Helvecia Hildago, who was 14 years old when she set sail on the *Habana* with her two younger siblings bound for Southampton. Her father had died four years before in 1933 but the family were well known as committed socialists and Helvecia’s mother feared for the children’s safety if the Basque region was overrun by the fascists. Although Helvecia understood the necessity of evacuation, her younger brother and sister were desperately homesick and deeply traumatised by the events. All three were transferred to the colony in Carshalton where they slowly adapted to life in Britain.

Eventually, the children were adopted by the Cadbury family and provided with a good standard of living and education. Yet Helvecia said she had never really recovered from the enforced separation from her mother for those eleven crucial years of her life. By the time she was reunited with her mother in 1948, she was a mother in her own right.

The second witness was Herminio Martínez, who was just seven years old when he arrived in Southampton with his brother, Victor. His parents had been poor subsistence farmers herding sheep between Castile and Extremadura and they had arrived in Bilbao seeking work in the iron ore mines.

Both boys were sent to the Swansea colony and then to Tyneside. The local press was hostile and the colony was run on a very strict regime.

But then they were moved to Brampton near Carlisle where he came under the influence of Lady Roberts, the wife of MP Wilfrid Roberts – “a lovely buxom woman with a warm and generous heart”. In December 1939 he was due to be repatriated until it was discovered that his mother had been forced to request his return under duress by the local Nationalist officials aided and abetted by a priest threatening remaining family members with imprisonment.

Finally, Herminio was taken under the wing of a Methodist family in Leicester who were loving and kind.

The last speaker was Adrian Bell who spoke about the “Experience of the Basque Children in Britain”, explaining that the children’s experiences were very varied. There were some 70 colonies. Some were model establishments, well run, generous with their affections, and careful to retain the children’s Basque identity. Others were spartan and either lacking any discipline or harsh and inhospitable.

Talks given...

● On 15 May, Herminio Martínez gave a talk about the Basque children at the re-opening of the Blackboys Youth Hostel in Sussex. Built in 1937 by Ettore and Antoinette Sommaruga of Poundsley Manor with the help of local people, the hostel catered for twenty-eight children. When the children left,

the hostel continued to cater for travellers, and was finally auctioned in September 2006. It was bought by Sam Type and Nick Sharples from Brighton, who have renovated the dilapidated building and re-opened it to the public.

● On 21 May at Avenue Campus, University of Southampton, distinguished film maker and member of the Association, Steve Bowles, delivered the annual Pérez de Ayala Lecture, established with the generous support of the Cultural Office of the Spanish Embassy. His subject was “The Guernica Children in Britain: a case of humanitarian need versus perceived political expediency.”

● On 5 September, Natalia Benjamin gave a paper on “The Basque Children in Great Britain” at the annual conference of the Association of Iberian and Portuguese Studies held at Oxford Brookes University.

Anniversary lunch

The annual lunch of the *niños* was organised by Helvecia Hidalgo, helped by Herminio Martínez. This year it was held on 20 May in a restaurant in Bayswater, London, La Maja. About sixty guests came and a good time was had by all.

Research: Hutton Hall

Peter O’Brien, self-styled “opsimath”, former Head of Department at a Sixth Form College and teacher of French and Spanish, is doing research into the Hutton Hall colony, near Guisborough, which was run by Ruth Pennyman. He says the Basque children were fortunate to land up in a well-run colony, and continues: “It seems to me that for a couple of years in the late 30s there was a movement which generated countless examples of idealism being translated into reality through genuine compassion, endless resourcefulness and sheer doggedness. Hutton Hall was one of these”.

Niños gather for 70th anniversary commemoration in Southampton

by Nicholas Rankin

On 26 April 2007, I attended the solemn international peace ceremony in the Assembly House at Guernica in Vizcaya, 70 years after German and Italian planes had fire-bombed the town and machine-gunned its inhabitants. Exactly a month later, I was at Solent University in Southampton to commemorate one direct consequence of that attack – the evacuation of thousands of Basque children to the UK.

A fascinating exhibition of photographs, newspaper-cuttings and memorabilia told some of the story, including a telegram from Leah Manning in Bilbao, dated 14 May 1937, begging the Trades Union Congress in Britain to get British government authorisation for a shipload of Basque children. "STOP German pilot captured yesterday declared intense bombardment Bilbao imminent STOP".

I bumped into my friend Fernando de la Torre, down from Sheffield with his wife Gillian. We first met at an International Brigade Memorial Trust rally where he and Cora Portillo both had Spanish Republican flags draped round their shoulders. There was another Republican flag pinned on the exhibition wall and Fernando explained its castellated coat of arms and what his father Silverio had told him about its red, yellow and purple colours: "un río de sangre, un río de oro, un río de paz". When we went into the theatre, there were flags of three other identities behind the speakers: the British Union flag, the Spanish national flag, and the Basque *ikurrina*.

The Chairman, Manuel Moreno, told us how the Basque Children of '37 Association had been founded in 2002 as an archive, a charity and for the "recuperation of historical memory".

Adrian Bell, author of "Only For Three Months", gave us an eloquent historical account of the coming of the children to Britain and their dispersal to 70 *colonias*. The bombing of Guernica – which Britain's then Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, later called "the first blitz of the Second World War" – changed everything. Stanley Baldwin's government reluctantly overcame its policy of appeasement and non-intervention in the face of humanitarian need, but insisted that not a penny of public money be spent on the refugees. A charitable appeal raised £12,000; the trade unions donated £5,000.

Vicente Cañada gave thanks. He came on the *Habana* aged seven and spent two years in England. Another who was evacuated aged seven was Herminio Martínez. He gave a moving speech of thanks to all the hundreds and thousands of ordinary British people who had helped the Basque children when their government did not want to. They included bakers, housewives, unionists, church-people, poets and politicians.

Miren Azkarate, the spokesperson of the Basque government, said that the dramatic evacuation of 38,000 children had been an extraordinary event in 1937. Most went to France, but 6,000 went to Catalonia, 4,000 to the UK, 3,000 to Belgium and 2,000 to the USSR. She said how her government admired the first Basque government for its political diversity and its administrative ability: the Ministry of Social Welfare managed to get 4,000 children, 95 teachers, 120 assistants and 15 priests onto a ship and safely to England.

Carlos Miranda, the Spanish ambassador, then thanked the committee and said he was honoured to be at the 70th anniversary celebration of the Basque children. He wanted to pay a special tribute to the parents who gave up their children to strangers in a strange land. This heart-wrenching act reminded him of two episodes in the Bible: Moses being put in a basket, and the mother who gave up her child before Solomon's sword.

The ambassador had visited the exhibition with interest, and noted the Spanish Republican flag. "I respect that flag, as a flag of democratic Spain, and as the exiles' flag." The Franco regime had been a dictatorship. "I am 64 years old," he said, "and only this year have I lived an equal time under democracy as I lived under dictatorship." The exiled Basque children lost much, but they had lived in freedom. Spain was now a parliamentary democracy with a constitutional monarchy. "The Spanish flag is not the flag of Franco. It looks with friendship on the Republican flag."

The memorial plaque was unveiled, with the green oak tree of Guernica and a ship on the sea. The *aurrekulari* danced in honour, to *txistu* and *tamboril*. We walked through a re-enactment of the Scout camp at North Stoneham to a big boozy lunch in the canteen, catered for nearly 250 people, including 56 *niños* and *niñas* of 1937. Talking to a few, I gained an impression of enduring vigour, of good lives hard won, and families that were proud of them.

After dancing and drinking, talking and singing, we settled down in the afternoon to watch Steve Bowles's superbly crafted documentary feature film "The Guernica Children", which told the story of the Basque evacuees through evocative black-and-white archive footage, old photographs, excellent interviews and discreetly unshowy re-enactments.

On 24 June 1937 there was a concert at the Albert Hall in London for the Basque children, sponsored by Pablo Picasso (who had just completed his famous painting "Guernica") and Paul Robeson. In Steve Bowles's hands, Robeson singing "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" achieves an even greater poignancy.



What you said about it

● For a small charity with limited resources, to mount a major commemorative event was a significant achievement. The reunion was a great success for the Association. The whole event was well coordinated in the presence of the Spanish ambassador, the Basque Minister of Culture and other distinguished guests.

● Mi madre desea nuevamente agradecerles por las extraordinarias jornadas que vivió en su viaje a Southampton desde Caracas. Para ella ha sido muy emocionante ver lugares donde vivió de niña. Por mi parte, también deseo agradecerles a todos por este momento tan bello que vivimos y por todas las atenciones que nos brindaron.

● I would like to congratulate the committee and all those involved in the tremendously successful event in Southampton. However, there was no mention of the Communist Party, a quite extraordinary omission. It was the Communist Party, together with some members of the Labour Party, the Co-operative Party and trade unions, that was the backbone of the anti-fascist movement of the 1930s. From this movement sprang the Aid for Spain campaign and then the Basque Children's Committee.

● It was a truly memorable, emotionally charged and professionally organised event.



Above: Niños outside tents erected by Scouts.

Left: Natalia Benjamin speaks at the opening ceremony.

Right: Spanish ambassador Carlos Miranda unveils the commemorative plaque.

Top right: Danzaris performed outside the conference centre and at the lunch.

Bottom Right: Some of the more than 200 participants in Southampton.



Being there also made me appreciate how much hard work had been put in to it by committee members beforehand. It was a fantastic success for the Association, and most important of all, hugely appreciated by all the *niños*.

● I want to say thank you, thank you. How well organised it was! My mother was ecstatic. How pleased she was to have come from the south of Spain to experience what happened and to meet a number of her former friends!

● ¡Qué triunfo! ¡Qué día más memorable! ¡Cuanta gente querida del pasado! Tuvimos suerte con el tiempo, nos encantaron los bailes. Muchas gracias.

● I want to congratulate you all on giving us a splendid and memorable day. It was very well organised with excellent speakers and speeches, a first class exhibition, an entertaining lunch and social time, completed with a memorable – and at times very emotional – film. I shall always remember the event and the many lovely people there.

● I wanted to say a huge thank you for a wonderful day – you even arranged good weather. I was there with my mother, uncle and aunt who were all *niños* and it was very special.

● I congratulate you all for organising the gathering. It was the finest assembly that I have attended for a long time.

● Había un ambiente fantástico. La atmósfera se podía tocar.

● We wish to thank you for working so hard so we could have such a wonderful, happy day.

● For me the highlight which stays in my mind is that of over 200 people, led by Basque dancers and musicians, walking across Southampton parks from the conference centre to the restaurant. En route, they were met by a patrol of local scouts who had erected some 1937-style bell tents and recreated the entrance to the Stoneham camp.

● My wife and I enjoyed the day immensely, in particular as it educated our son and his girlfriend: “Nobody taught us this!” Please pass on our congratulations to you all.

● A note to say thank you committee and all the helpers for a well-organised and happy reunion. We enjoyed meeting the other *niños*, but the tears came when the film started and my wife realised the pain that her parents felt on saying goodbye. For many years she felt abandoned... many others shed a tear whilst the film was on.

● Quiero felicitaros de todo corazón por lo estupendo que resultó todo. Ha sido un éxito completo de los organizadores, bien merecido por el trabajo hasta casi la extenuación que habeis realizado y por el enorme entusiasmo y cariño que habeis puesto en el empeño. Yo me

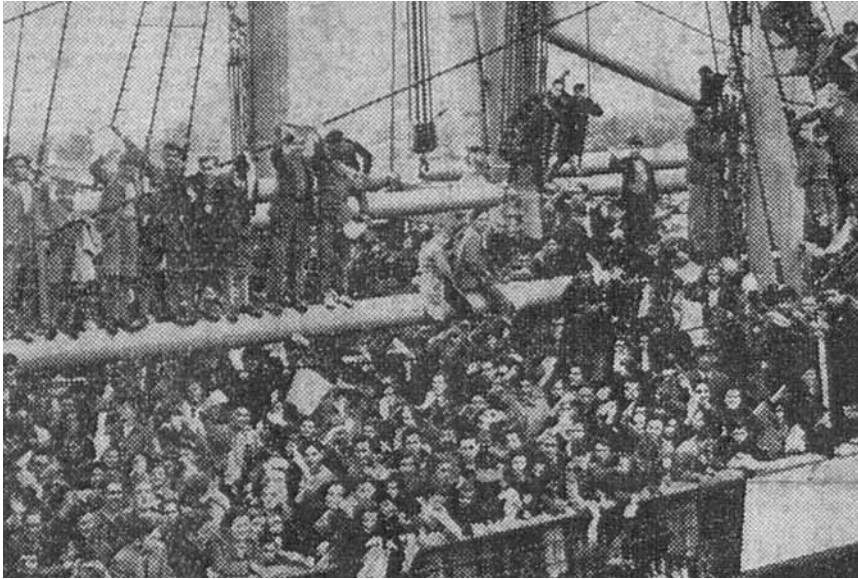
considero muy afortunado y satisfecho por haber tenido la oportunidad de haber podido participar con los niños en los actos del sábado.

● We felt we had to let you know just how much we enjoyed the event. It was emotional, happy and exhausting. The whole programme was splendid.

● We thoroughly enjoyed the whole day; everyone was helpful and friendly and everything had been organised and set out so well, down to the last detail. We met up with old friends but it was sad that some of our dear friends were no longer with us. With our guests, we enjoyed it all, especially seeing the tents and the dancers.

● En nombre de mi familia os damos las gracias por el gran acontecimiento que nos brindasteis, en un ambiente tan alegre y fraterno. Todos salimos muy contentos, con la pena de no poder estar más tiempo.

● What a warm welcome we had, so much was going on! We were led to the dining room across the park by two *txistularis* playing traditional Basque music. And in the park, the organisers, with the help of the boy scouts, had set up some bell tents and recreated the camp at Eastleigh where we first stayed. Photos were taken of all the *niños* underneath the camp banner. What a wonderful surprise and what memories it brought back!



Basque Children of '37 Association UK



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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. These may also be found on the website.

Our aims

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, letters, documents, films, songs, posters, oral testimonies, artwork etc) to be used for educational and historical purposes, eventually to be deposited in the Special Collections Division of the Hartley Library at the University of Southampton.
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.
10. To advance the education of the public, students and academics in the subject of the exile of 1937.

Books

Recuerdos: Basque Children Refugees in Great Britain; edited by Natalia Benjamin with a forward by Tom Buchanan (Mousehold Press, 2007)

Reviewed by Colin Leakey



Historian Tom Buchanan's forward is itself a review. He is correct in describing this book not only as a record of personal first hand experiences of refugees arriving in Britain from the Basque region of Spain during the

Spanish Civil War, but a social history of Britain at the same time. As Natalia Benjamin puts it, there is a "recuperation of historic memory" here which is valuable to place this refugee episode in its appropriate historic context.

The recollections given in 62 testimonies concern many of the same events surrounding the departure on 21 May from the port of Santurce on the *Habana* and arrival in Southampton on 23 May and initial encampment in bell tents at North Stoneham near Eastleigh before dispersal to "colonies" in many villages, towns and cities, for example Aston (near Witney), Brampton (Cumbria), Bray Court (near Maidenhead), Cambridge, The Oaks and The Culvers (both near Carshalton), Langham (near Colchester) and Margate. Experiences recalled suggest that some were happier places than others but that the general good will of most of those of the host country was admirable. The recall of the authors is uniformly appreciative.

Guernica, destroyed by the bombing of 26 April 1936, so vividly recalled for so many by Picasso, had fallen to Franco's Nationalists. The Basque authorities of the democratically elected Republican government had decided to support the evacuation of 33,000 children to escape the continuing civil war. 3840 children came on the *Habana* to Britain virtually as exiles, but supported by the strongly anti-fascist Basque Children's Committee. The fall, in June of that year, of Bilbao to the Nationalist rebels was a turning point for Spain. Some Basque children returned to what had become for them a hostile homeland while others remained, some permanently, in the country where they had been welcomed. Here many vividly recount their experiences of the Second World War.

There are many fascinating insights in this volume into the British as well as the Basques and among these the recognition of the name and background of Michael Portillo, the son of one Cora née Blyth, who helped out at the Aston colony and Luis Portillo, an exiled anti-

Franco lecturer from Salamanca University.

This is a book to be read by anybody concerned not just about the 70 years old reactions of and towards the Basque refugees, but with concern for tolerance and understanding of the problems nearer to our own time.

To order a copy, see "For sale" below.

Poems of War and Peace/Poemas de guerra y de paz; by James R Jump; with a foreword by Antonio Buero Vallejo; edited by Jim Jump (Editorial Piedra de Rayo, 2007)

Reviewed by Manuel Moreno



James R Jump joined the International Brigades to fight for the Spanish Republic after he met and fell in love with Cayetana Lozano Díaz, one of the 105 *señoritas* who arrived in Britain on the *Habana* with the Basque children in May 1937. Their paths crossed at the colony in Worthing, where Jump, a reporter on the *Worthing Herald*, was a volunteer helper.

He went off to fight in Spain, where he was injured at the Battle of the Ebro, and married Cayetana soon after he returned to Britain.

Jump was one of those volunteers in the Spanish Civil War who fitted into the dubious stereotype of it being a "poets' war". He wrote his first poems in Spain, two of which are included in this posthumous collection. The rest were written in the 1970s and 80s, many of them when he and Cayetana moved to live in Logroño, La Rioja, after Franco's death.

Marriage to Cayetana helped make Jump a brilliant Spanish linguist, as is evident from the fact that these poems in this moving anthology were written by him in English and Spanish. He also wrote several books on Spain and the Spanish language, among them the *Penguin Spanish Dictionary*.

As well as nearly 50 poems, the anthology contains a foreword written by the great Spanish dramatist Antonio Buero Vallejo, penned shortly before Jump's death in 1990 when plans for its publication were shelved.

The book is edited by Jim Jump, who has written a fascinating account of his father's life and involvement in the Spanish Civil War and Spain in general. It is accompanied by several pages of photographs. Both the foreword and the biography are in English and Spanish too – you simply turn the book upside down to

consult the other language version.

As the title of the book suggests, many of the poems are about the civil war and others rejoice in vibrancy of post-Franco Spain's *transición* to democracy. The understated emotional force of some of the poems will, I am sure, move many readers to tears. They are a powerful testament to the lasting impact that the war had not just on one individual but a whole generation of Republican sympathisers in Britain.

To order a copy, see "For sale" below.

Los Girasoles Ciegos; by Alberto Méndez (Anagrama, 2004)

Reviewed by Cora Blyth de Portillo

This is an outstanding book. The discovery in the 1990s of many men and women, shot and buried without graves, has inspired a number of books revealing the horrors after Franco's victory. Alberto Méndez describes the fate of victims – individuals, families, groups – whose capture would mean death, in four stories called "defeats".

Each story describes the scandalous persecution and slaughter of the defeated Republicans in all walks of life. This might seem too depressing, but the tremendous courage and ingenuity of those trying to escape and survive, their search for food and shelter, is inspiring.

In the second story a very young man tries in winter to keep a new-born baby alive in wild country. Another very moving and consoling story is the compassion and deep friendship that develops between prisoners facing execution: starving prisoners share their miserable rations with a companion. The filthy conditions, the brutality of the guards, the loss of health from malnutrition, are scandalous; the daily tension of expecting the summons to execution are vividly brought to us, but with restraint.

The last story is about a family, father, mother and seven year old son living in a block of flats, concealing the fact that the father, who had been a prominent Republican, is hiding in a carefully disguised cupboard. The schools are all run by the now all-powerful Catholic Church and the children are told that their parents were sinful, and that they must atone for these sins. The deacon, master of the boy's class, becomes a great danger and his behaviour is far from holy. The tension is vividly conveyed. This boy can resist indoctrination because both his parents are at home, but they all have to appear to acquiesce.

All four stories cover very different circumstances and characters, but the latter all face death. It is a sinister, vengeful, deluded regime that Méndez reveals: the spirits alone of the conquered could survive. Surely such vivid and compassionate books like these will bring shame to the perpetrators and ensure that "never again"?



For sale

Books

Available from Natalia Benjamin: 8 Hermes Road, Oxford OX2 7PU; tel: 01865-459 744; email: [secretary@basquechildren.org]

- "Recuerdos" edited by Natalia Benjamin, £15 including p&p.
- "Poems of War and Peace/Poemas de guerra y de paz" by James R Jump, £12 including p&p.
- "Only for Three Months" by Adrian Bell, £11 including p&p.
- "Leah Manning" by Ron Bill & Stan Newens, £5 including p&p.

CDs/DVD/commemorative envelope



- "The Guernica Children", Steve Bowles' documentary film, is available on DVD for £11.50 including p&p.
- "Songs of the Basque Children", CD reissue of

the original 1938 recording plus new songs recorded for this year's 70th anniversary; £9.50 including p&p.

- "Lo que nadie contó", Dolores Barajuán's life story on CD; £6.50 including p&p.
- Franked envelope with design marking the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the Basque children: £6 including p&p.

Obituaries

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

- Pilar Magdalena (Cowan)
- Federico Magdalena
- Virgilio Molina
- Enrique Jarero
- Rodolfo Vela Santos

1946

The Culvers household

seen by Pirmín Trecu*

This description of the children in The Culvers colony (pictured right) first appeared in the August 1946 number of Basque Home News, produced by the Carshalton Basque Children's Association. How many of these niños do you remember?

Félix: Is hardly ever at home as he works in London and has a lot of activities at the Spanish Club, but when at home, he is a useful member of the community.

Terechu: His sister, is a good mother to us boys, and takes a great part in the running of the home when she comes back from her nursery job. She is a group leader.

Joe: A farmer and the envy of most of us for his suntanned skin. He can be a keen attendant at meetings and discussions, but is too fond of films and of going out in the evenings.

Feliciano: His sister and our shy girl, though she is now beginning to lose some of her shyness.

Coque: Is one of our artists, and the most popular boy at the home. Everyone admires his good heart and sense of humour. He is our President, and is working hard for a forthcoming exhibition.

Javier: His brother, and our shy boy. He has a good job in a garage, where he has been over two years. He cycles to Brighton regularly on Sundays to see his second brother.

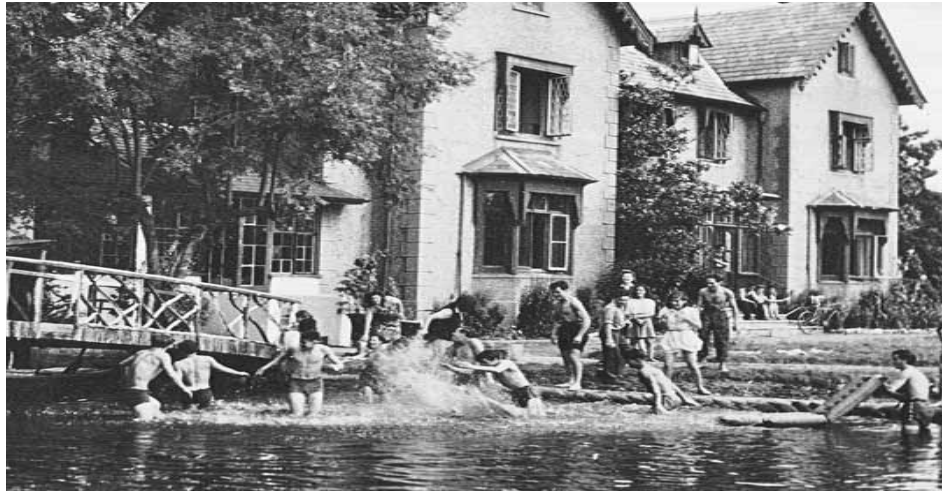
Popeye: An easygoing boy. Fond of music and tennis which he practises on his return from the office in London. A regular Promenade Concert goer.

Caireles: Has lately become a part-time member of the staff, and is also an artist and has an admirable studio made from what was once a pigsty. He is Popeye's brother.

Manolita: One of our only twins now. She seems very happy as she has a position she likes. Her hobby is reading love stories, which she does by the dozen.

Paquita: Is her other half, and is a children's nurse to one of our friends. She too is taking music and practises often. She also reads a lot, but not quite in the same style as her sister's taste.

Lore: She is my sister and is taking a nursing career, hoping to go soon into a hospital. She is a very useful member of the home and helps in all there is to do.



Pirmín:* I am an art student, but hope to become a Ballet dancer at the Sadler's Wells School where I have been attending in the evenings. My only standpoint is that I never seem to be able to find a place to practise my pirouettes.

Eduardo: Is still at school. He was first in English last term! Hobbies: playing cards and other table games, at which he is quite clever.

J Luís (Crio): Also at school. Has a crippled hand, but he does however paint and draw a lot. His best friend is Coque, whom he follows all the time.

Raimundo: Is a very carefree boy who never takes anything seriously, not even his home jobs. He is very fond of flowers, though; and plans to be a grower of rare plants.

Ruben: A new member of the house, who does not talk a word of Spanish. He is a very ardent communist, and a very good person to argue with. He has already become a group leader.

Ramón: The third group leader. He is the only good actor in the home, and takes all the main parts here and in London.

Pepto: We all think that he is the dirtiest of the lot but of course he says it is because he works in a garage!

Herminio: He is a pioneer boy who has of late started a workshop with Javier. His hobby is Electrical engineering, but he works in an office.

Angelito: Joe's pal. He has discovered recently that his real love is farming. Bread rationing has been a big blow to him.

Nicolás: A newcomer too. The most "Spanish looking" of us all because of his black thick out-of-date side-whiskers.

Kerman: Our journalist; he works at Reuter's. Of a rather quiet disposition, but a good sport.

José Luís: At a boarding school in Wales. We only see him in the holidays. He is going to be a doctor.

Cesáreo: He is very worried at the moment as he is going to France to join his family and does not know how he is going to fit with them. He is one of the eldest in the home, and a very useful member of the community.

Mrs Temple: She is the oldest woman member of the staff. I don't mean in age, but in number of years having been at the home. She is, among very many other things, a marvellous cook, and we are very sorry about the flour rationing because she won't make us those lovely cakes for parties.

Laura: She has been with us for about a year as a member of the staff. She married while here and is going to have a baby. We are all very anxious about it. So, of course is:

Jerónimo: the father, who is now living with us until they can find a home of their own. He has just been demobbed.

Pepe:** Is our father, and of course, the main figure in the house. Besides doing a bit of cooking and many other things, he gives us classes in Spanish and produces our plays, and deals with the money, and so on.

* Sadly, Pirmín died on 12 July 2006.

** This is Pepe Estruch, the theatre director.