



Newsletter

Basque Children of '37 Association UK



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April 2008

News

AGM and members' lunch

by Nerea Mendicutte

This year's annual general meeting was held on 16 February. The Association was fortunate in being able to use a committee room in the Consejería de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales in London. There were 22 people present.

The Secretary, Natalia Benjamin, opened the meeting with a full report, summarising the events that the Association had embarked on during this exciting 70th anniversary commemorative year, including the day school in Oxford jointly organised with Oxford University, the event in Southampton attended by 250 guests and an impressive list of dignitaries, the erection of a further two blue plaques at Worthing and Southampton and many other events. The Association was grateful to the Spanish and Basque governments for grants it had received, without which the events and special projects could not have been undertaken. An attractive list of forthcoming events was proposed for the coming year.

Carmen Kilner, Membership Secretary and



Association President Manuel Moreno (right) and Secretary Natalia Benjamin at the AGM.



The Kukai dance company from San Sebastián performed at a week-long series of events at Eastleigh to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the niños vascos. See page 3: "Los Niños de Guernica Project, Eastleigh".

Treasurer, followed with the year's membership statistics followed by the annual accounts, which showed that the Association was in a healthy position (see Summary of Accounts). At the end of the meeting, there was the opportunity to hear the new song: "Solo Por Tres Meses" by Roberto García, the son of a *niño vasco*.

After the meeting, the Member's Lunch was held at The Mall Tavern in Notting Hill Gate.

Fundación Idi Eskerra

We were approached in December 2007 by Mauro Calvo, one of the directors of the above-named foundation which works for human rights and activities to do with la *memoria histórica* and the Spanish Civil War. He wanted to involve the Association in two projects. The first one was their plan to create an audio-visual archive which would include interviews with *niños* who had not returned to Spain to live but who had made their lives in the host country. Herminio Martínez managed to muster some twelve *niños* who were interviewed in December. When the recordings are finished, we shall

be sent copies. For the second plan, see "Forthcoming events" section.

Stalin and the Spanish gold

by Colin Carritt

Did Stalin expropriate the Spanish gold reserves during the Spanish Civil War or were his motives towards the Republic more honourable? It has been one of the myths of the war that the Republic was cheated. In fact, according to Ángel Viñas, this year's guest lecturer for the International Brigade Memorial Trust's Len Crome Memorial Lecture at the Imperial War Museum, London, on 8 March, Moscow behaved quite properly in its handling of the Spanish gold reserves

Viñas is professor of Political Economy at Madrid's Complutense University. He also has had a distinguished career as a diplomat serving as European Ambassador to the United Nations and holding other diplomatic posts in Washington, Bonn and Brussels.

He explained that the role of the Soviet Union during the civil war has often been



From the Secretary

This time last year we were in the thick of preparations for the anniversary commemorative event at Southampton. In some respects this year has been quieter, although still packed with interesting events. One of our members has produced a CD of the Southampton conference. It is well worth getting hold of, especially as most people who attended appear on the CD! As well as an overview of the whole occasion, the CD features speeches and dancing.

It is great news that "The Guernica Children", the film re-edited by Steve Bowles last year, has won a prestigious television documentary award. Well done Steve! It is a fitting accolade for this sensitive and moving documentary.

We very much look forward to the ¡Viva la República! fiesta at the end of April (see page 5). Designed for all the family to enjoy, the fiesta hopes to attract Spaniards living in London (and further afield). The delightful choir from the Spanish School in London will be performing (this is the same choir that recorded

the CD "Songs of the Basque Children"). Other treats in store include poetry readings, folk dancing and songs accompanied by guitar. Roberto García, one of our members and the son of a *niño*, will be performing his song "Solo por tres meses" at the fiesta.

One of the aims of the Association is to collect material about the *niños* and their experiences for our archive. We would be very grateful to receive any photographs or press cuttings that you would like to give. Eventually, the archive will be deposited at Southampton University, where it will be catalogued and made available for relatives of the *niños* and researchers to consult.

It has been snowing in Oxford over Easter, although as I now gaze out of the window, a few sunbeams are struggling through. I hope you all enjoy a bright and hopeful spring.

Saludos y agur,

Natalia Benjamin

Natalia Benjamin

► misunderstood, but 35 years of research using original source documents and the opening of archives in Russia, Spain and throughout the wider world has thrown new light on this role.

Viñas conceded that even as early as the end of 1936, the Franco coup had all but succeeded, because of the western powers' policy of non-intervention. For a year Stalin did almost nothing for the Republic. While Hitler and Mussolini were supplying Franco with armaments, ammunition, aircraft and manpower, his main concern was supporting the Chinese in their on-going war with Japan.

During this period, the reaction in Republican sectors to fascist advances was for the communists to enjoy increasing public support, which alarmed many of the other political groups in Spain. But Largo Caballero and Negrín contained the disquiet,

which only became unmanageable during the final year of the war, when the Republic began suffering multiple defeats. Viñas dispelled the myth that discord and strife within the Republican parties in Spain was a significant factor in Franco's eventual victory: it was simply a desperate reaction to fascist successes rather than a contributory cause of them. Ángel Viñas repeatedly underlined the overwhelming significance of the non-intervention policy of the western powers and Negrín's pleadings for more Soviet military support. But Stalin could see the looming crisis of WW2 and wanted more leverage with the western powers, leverage that direct intervention in Spain would have denied him. Eventually, after Munich, Stalin began to act more positively. But by then it was too late.

Another myth that Viñas exposed as false is the belief that Stalin was determined to

create a communist state in Spain. His studies of archives in Britain, France, Germany and Spain show no evidence that this was Stalin's motive. By contrast, there is overwhelming evidence that despite the apparently passive policy of non-intervention, the British government was actively supporting the Spanish coup leaders through its secret services: it knew of Franco's coup well in advance but did nothing to alert the Spanish government.

And the gold? The Republic first sold some 25 per cent of Spain's reserves through French banks, to pay for weaponry, supplies and to maintain industrial production, but much of it was subsequently frozen by the non-intervention policy. In the end, most was transferred to Moscow banks for safe deposit. This was properly agreed by Negrín, his Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers. Most was in the form of gold coins and it took time for the Moscow authorities to count and assess the gold content and to establish an agreed value. Despite the complexity of the task, the Soviet authorities completed the valuation within three months. Any discrepancy between the actual and assessed value was probably less than 10 per cent. The gold was then sold to the Soviet Union in return for credits, which remained the situation until the end of the war.



Symposium at the Eastleigh commemoration, including (left) Association Honorary President Helvecia Hidalgo and (right) organiser Alicia Pozo-Gutiérrez of Southampton University. See "Los Niños de Guernica Project, Eastleigh".

Los Niños de Guernica Project, Eastleigh

by Crispian Cook

This project was a large-scale multi-art form commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the evacuation of the *niños* to Great Britain and was presented at The Point in Eastleigh,

Hampshire from 10 to 13 October 2007. Managed by Eastleigh Borough Council's arts unit, the project worked with artists from a number of disciplines to create a week-long series of performances inspired and informed by the events of 1937.

Throughout the event there was an exhibition at The Point, which included artefacts, displays, living history and film provided by the Basque Children's Association, The British Red Cross, Eastleigh Museum and Josefina Antolín. The exhibition was visited by over 1000 people.

The first session of the project started with Natalia Benjamin giving an introduction to the story of the *niños* and the Association, followed by a free screening of Steve Bowles' film: "The Guernica Children", which he introduced. The screening, which had a capacity audience, was followed by a question and answer session led by Steve.

The second night saw a performance of the new and specially commissioned play: "Javier, María and Me" which used young actors in their first professional roles to tell the story of the children. The play, funded by The Heritage Lottery Fund, had previously toured 15 local schools, performing to 800 children; an education pack had been produced so that the schools could tie the project in with the curriculum.

Over the summer of 2007, Lila Dance, one of The Point's professional associate dance companies, worked with Basque dancer/choreographer Jon Maya from the Basque dance company Kukai. The group also worked with three young apprentices from one of The Point's senior dance groups.

Together they devised a new piece of dance using the events of 1937 as inspiration. They worked together to integrate elements of Basque dance, movement and culture into the piece. It was a great instructive exchange and allowed dancers from different disciplines to create new work and experience new styles. The finished dance was premiered in the week and was accompanied by a new piece of music by composer Isa Suarez.

To crown the week's events, there was a performance of the dance/theatre production of "1937: Along the paths of memory", by the Kukai Tanttaka company. The performance combined traditional Basque music and dance with archival film footage of the flight of the *niños* from Spain. It was introduced and preceded by a presentation by Michael Portillo. The whole project was very well received by the large audiences and prompted comments such as:

– "Absolutely wonderful – the combination of the two was so good that I feel strongly that the play and dance should be shown in other areas of the country where *niños* were sent to live."

– "Well thought-out event, very emotional, of great historical interest."



Bernardo Fernández (right), Labour and Social Affairs Attaché at the Spanish Embassy, opens the art exhibition at the Miguel de Cervantes Social Centre. With him are (from left) Herminio Martínez, Dalia Guzman and Koke Martínez. See "Exposición de pintura".

– "I attended all the performances and the symposium. Many thanks for organising a most wonderful experience."

– "The dancing was unbelievable – they should be world famous! I could have watched it for ever!"

– "An extremely well run week with an excellent programme."

The experience of exile

by Alicia Pozo Gutiérrez

On the last day at Eastleigh, the Spanish Section of Modern Languages of the University of Southampton, in collaboration with Southampton City Council Oral History Unit, organised a very successful one-day symposium that brought together a group of surviving *niños*, members of the second generation, university researchers and representatives of local asylum and refugee organisations and groups.

The symposium consisted of three panels, the first included presentations by Basque refugee children who settled permanently in the UK, and a *niña* who was evacuated to Russia and currently lives in England. Using photographs, posters, art work and poetry, the *niños* explored and shared memories of their exile trajectories and lives in the countries that granted them refuge.

The second panel was formed by some of the *niños'* own children, who reflected on the extent to which the experiences of their parents had been transmitted to them, and on the different ways in which their parents' exile may have had an impact on their own lives. According to one of the participants,

this was probably the first time that members of the second generation had reflected upon these issues.

The final panel brought together professionals working in media and film, representatives of the Haslar and the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group, and two young asylum seekers from Afghanistan and Zimbabwe who talked about their difficult experiences of seeking refuge in contemporary Britain.

In listening to the stories of the *niños* of yesterday, the young refugees of today were also able to establish a connection between the past and the present, and, perhaps, for the first time too, begin to think about the possibility of a future, as one of them expressed after the event:

"Will I, in many years time, be sitting on a panel like this telling people and my own children about how and why I came to England as an asylum seeker?"

Exposición de pintura

por María José Sanchez

El 23 de enero, dos "*niños*", Herminio Martínez y Koke Martínez, junto con otra socia del Centro Social de Mayores "Miguel de Cervantes" (Dalia Guzman) realizaron una exposición de pintura. Fue interesantísima porque cada artista tenía un estilo muy diferente.

Se inauguró con una conferencia de Carmen Padilla Montoya sobre tres grandes pintores españoles: Velázquez, Goya y Picasso. Asistieron más de 100 personas y

▶
contó con la presencia del Consejero de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales, Bernardo Fernández que inauguró la exposición.

La exposición permaneció abierta dos semanas. Durante este tiempo, continuó recibiendo visitas, entre ellas la del Embajador de España, que junto con su esposa, disfrutaron de los cuadros expuestos.

Spanish TVfilm

A Spanish film-maker, Roberto Menendez, came to Eastleigh last October and filmed the events and many of the Basque children for a documentary sponsored by the "Sexta" channel on Spanish television. The film will be shown on 25 or 26 April. We shall be getting copies of the film.

'The Guernica Children' wins TV award

After all the excitement of last year's 70th anniversary commemorations and the premiere of the new feature-length version of "The Guernica Children", film-maker Steve Bowles at Eye Witness Productions thought that perhaps he might be allowed to draw a line under the project! But no ... the saga continues...

We reported in the last Newsletter on the theatrical screening of the film at the Harbour Lights Cinema in Southampton. Present in the audience were representatives from the British Federation of Film Societies who were so impressed with the film that they requested that they be allowed to distribute the film via the BFFS's network of community cinemas.

In December, Steve Bowles and Association stalwart Herminio Martínez travelled to Sheffield to present the film to the BFFS's annual conference. The film has subsequently gone nationwide and has been shown at a number of cinemas around the country bringing the story of the Basque children to a whole new audience.

The reaction has been tremendous. Comments have included 'A superbly assembled documentary – we knew nothing about the events described. Great stuff!' and 'Outstanding research put together to produce a most moving account'. If you are a member of your local community cinema then you might like to ask for a screening of "The Guernica Children" via the BFFS in your area.

But the story doesn't end there. On 28 February the film won the award for Best Non-Broadcast Production at the Royal Television Society Awards held in Southampton.



Steve Bowles with his award. See "The Guernica Children' wins TV award".

At a packed event, Steve said how pleased he was that the film should be recognised in the city where the story had its beginnings just over 70 years ago. He dedicated the award to the memory of the Basque children and the ordinary people of Britain that cared for them.

Book launch

On 12 November 2007, members were invited to Daunts Bookshop in Holland Park Avenue where a new publishing house, Reportage Press, was holding a book launch for the reprinting of John Langdon Davies' book "Behind the Spanish Barricades". It is a fascinating eye-witness account of the early part of the Spanish Civil War. In 1937, John Langdon Davies co-founded Plan International whose aim was not only to provide food and shelter for refugee children but also to give them the knowledge that someone cared for them. Several of the *niños* in our Association were adopted by Plan.

Cardiff conference

The Welsh Centre for International Affairs, Cardiff University, organised a conference from 8-10 February on the theme: "The Spanish Civil War: History, Memory, Representation". The four keynote speakers and the titles of their talks were: Julián Casanova: "Franco, the Catholic church and the martyrs", Angela Jackson: "At the margins of mayhem: soldiers and civilians", Helen Graham: "The memory of murder: mass killing, incarceration and the making of Francoism", and Paul Preston: "We saw Spain die: foreign correspondents in the Spanish Civil

War". In addition, there were 50 different papers presented, for which there were five parallel sessions.

Exhibition touring Wales

"Wise and Foolish Dreamers" is the title of a touring exhibition on Wales and the Spanish Civil War to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the war which opened at the Rhondda Heritage Park on 7 May 2007. *Niñas vascas* Pili, Fita and Mila Rodríguez attended the event along with families of local International Brigaders who volunteered to fight against Franco in the conflict. There are six large panels which tell the story of the war and explore themes of tolerance and nationalism. Pupils from three schools helped elaborate the project, and there is an education pack for teachers to use with schools, including a workbook and DVD. The exhibition is touring to 20 venues in every area of Wales and will finish in November 2009.

Spanish citizenship

As a result of the passing of the law on "La Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica", the children and grandchildren of exiles, including *niños de la guerra* will be able to claim Spanish citizenship.

Talks given...

● Steve Bowles and Herminio Martínez hosted question and answer sessions after the showing of "The Guernica Children" at the

BFFS in Sheffield on 1 December 2007, then on 4 December 2007 at the Bournemouth Media School (Steve Bowles) and on 12 February at the LSE (Herminio Martínez).

● Natalia Benjamin gave the opening talk at The Point, Eastleigh on 10 October 2007. She also gave a paper on 10 February on "The Basque Children in Britain and Memory" at the international conference on The Spanish Civil War: History, Memory and Representation held at Cardiff University.

Forthcoming events

Viva la Republica!

A fiesta to celebrate, commemorate and mourn the Spanish Republic of 1931-39 is to be held at the Yaa Asantewaa arts centre near Paddington, West London, on the evening of Saturday 26 April.

Viva la República will feature, poetry, prose, music and dance and aims to bring together those individuals, families and communities whose lives have been influenced or inspired by the Republic and its resistance to fascism.

The date chosen for the event is the anniversary of the bombing of Guernica. It is also close to the 14 April Day of the Republic which is marked in many towns and villages in Spain.

The fiesta is being organised by Manuel Moreno, chair of the Basque Children of '37 Association UK and committee member Jim Jump, who is also a trustee of the International Brigade Memorial Trust. Both organisations are supporting the fund-raising and educational initiative which, if successful, will become an annual event.

Admission is free, though places can be reserved in advance to guarantee entry. There will be a Spanish menu and a bar.

The Yaa Asantewaa Centre is at 1 Chippenham Mews, London W9 2AN and proceedings will run from 6.30pm to 11.30pm. Register in advance to guarantee entry at [vivalarepublca@hotmail.co.uk].

Homenaje in Bilbao

Mauro Calvo, of the Fundación Idi Ezkerra, is planning a "Homenaje" for the *niños de la guerra vascos* who never returned to live in Spain, inviting *niños* from the different countries they were evacuated to. It will take place in Bilbao from 11-15 June; if any *niño/a* is interested in going, please contact the Secretary.

Talk in London: change of date

On Saturday 21 June (not 14 June, as previously advertised), Professor Michael Alpert will be giving a talk at the Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU (Tube: Faringdon). The talk starts at 2.30pm and is entitled: "The

Blockade of Bilbao". Please let the Secretary know whether you will be coming.

IBMT ceremony at Jubilee Gardens

On 19 July, the IBMT will be holding a ceremony at the monument in Jubilee Gardens, London, in honour of the British International Brigaders. It starts at 1pm and all are welcome. Tube: Waterloo, Southwark. Afterwards there will be a lunch and social at nearby Premier Inn (former Travel Inn), Belvedere Road, London SE1 7PB.

Blue plaque at Montrose

Following the AGM of the IBMT in Dundee on 11 October, it is hoped on the following day to unveil a blue plaque at the colony in Montrose. We hope *niños* living in Scotland will be able to attend the ceremony. Please contact the Secretary nearer the time for further details.

Sussex and the Spanish Civil War

Poetry, Prose and Songs on Saturday 21 June at 2pm, Southover Church Hall, Lewes, East Sussex. Explore the connections between Sussex and the Spanish Civil War, including the Basque refugee children and the International Brigades. Spanish food and wine. Entry free. Further details Mike Anderson Tel: 01435-864 978 or [mike.c.anderson@talktalk.net].

Accounts

Abridged version of accounts for the year ended 30 November 2007 and adopted at the Annual general Meeting on 16 February 2008:

	2007	2006
	£	£
Income		
Subscriptions and donations	1700	2125
Grants	25318	1752
Commemorative events, fees and donations	4346	-
Sale of books and DVDs	7967	3907
Totals	39331	3907
Expenditure		
Commemorative event	12417	-
Film	11508	-
Cost of books and DVDs	5256	49
Blue plaque	267	721
Newsletter, postage and other costs	1989	1254
Totals	31437	2024
Surplus for the year	7894	1883
Bank balance	9121	3413

Copies of the audited detailed accounts with the trustees' report may be obtained from the Treasurer. Tel: 020-8224 7959.

Letters from the archives...

This letter was sent on 24 May 1937 to Sir Walter Citrine, TUC General Secretary, from a London W1 address.

Dear Sir Walter

I have instructed my bankers to send my "poor mite" of 10/- a week to you on the understanding that this amount is only to be used in the interests of the Basque children landed in England this weekend.

If there is a general fund which provides not only for this but for propaganda or any other political support for the Communists and Socialists in Spain, I am not in the slightest bit interested. My desire is simply to help these children to have a comfortable and happy time in England.

Will you please confirm that this money will only be used for this purpose, and I on my part only wish I could send more.

Yours truly

When many of the *niños* had returned to Spain in 1939 and most of the colonies had closed down, the British public was asked to "adopt" the remaining *niños*. Here is a letter from a prospective adopter.

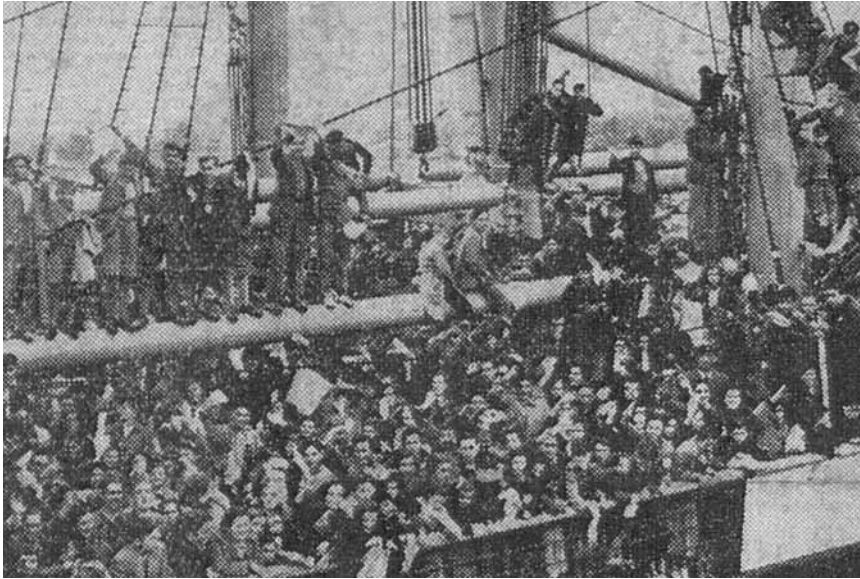
Dear Sir

Just a few lines to know if you can help me. I want to know if your committee has an orphan little girl I could adopt age about 8. Bright and healthy with no Consumption or Mental or other hereditary disease (and I prefer one not wearing glasses). I have had a bereavement and lost Mother and my Father died when I was 7 years old. I have no sisters or brothers and I was Mother's inseparable companion. Now I find life very lonely as I am left alone. I am 40 years of age live in my own house and have a good and modern home. I am healthy and strong and good character and my income comes from investments. I love children and could give one every comfort. An answer will oblige.

I am yours respectfully

P.S. I would like a Protestant as I am Church of England Religion.

The original of this letter is held at Warwick University Modern Records Centre from the papers of Wilfred Roberts MP (ref MSS.308).



Basque Children of '37 Association UK



- Honorary President: Helvecia Hidalgo
- Chair: Manuel Moreno
- Secretary: Natalia Benjamin, 8 Hernes Road, Oxford OX2 7PU. Tel: 01865-459 744. Email: [secretary@basquechildren.org]
- Membership Secretary: Carmen Kilner. Tel: 020-8224 7959. Email: [membership@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. 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.

Membership renewal

21 May 2008 – 20 May 2009

General members: Your subscription is now due. The rates remain the same, £10 for ordinary membership and £25 for institutional membership.

Niños: Although *niños* and their spouses are exempt from dues, if you wish to receive Newsletters and details of forthcoming events, you must re-register every year to keep our information up to date.

All: There is a form printed on the loose sheet insert to send with your subscription/donation to the Treasurer, Camen Kilner at the address on the form. We welcome your contributions towards postage, printing etc, especially if you live abroad.

If you keep forgetting to pay, why don't you pay by standing order? If you circle YES on the membership renewal form, then you will be sent the form.

We will only send a receipt if you request one; if we have your email address, then we will send the receipt by email. Please make sure you write your email address clearly and update it if it has changed.

We would like to ask all UK taxpayers to sign the Gift Aid Declaration on the back of the membership renewal form. It doesn't cost you anything. This only has to be done once, so if you have already signed a form and sent it to us, it will be valid until you cancel it.

All the forms are also available on our website [www.basquechildren.org].

Poem

1937-2007 Mayday 70th Diaspora Synopsis by Koke Martínez

O Captain! Our Basque Children, SS *Habana*
brave Master:
Ricardo Fernández anxiously waiting at Port
Santurce,
To load his cargo of four thousand weary
children –
From Guernica-Bilbao Condor firebombs 26
April disaster.
Away sailing early morning Atlantic epic tumult
21 May.
While in the sad horizon,
Our fathers silent lament.
Mothers stood fragmented,
And sisters-brothers too –
Suffering but unforgotten.
O Captain! Our *Habana* Liner Master. Shall we
land behold?
Four thousand rocking souls, sleeping on deck
and hold;
Such ferocious Ocean waves, to overloaded
crossing boat:

Brought sickness, sobbing, nostalgic undue weeping eyes,

O *Habana!* Piercing, rollicking through night stars of 37.

Escorted by British battleships:

The *Royal Oak* besides *Forester*,

Our Basque children guide foster.

Meanwhile that Bilbao's blockade...

Scarred our minds and hearts void.

O Captain! The epic voyage done. Dock at Southampton 23 May,

And it was Coronation year, flags were out on Mayday of 37.

1939 to 45 WWII, again repetition, Condor fire-blight war years!

And wherever Captain Ricardo bravo

Republican camarada fell,

In our skulls memory foremost be this hero's burial dwell.

Master of the epic stormy seas,

And shiploads carrying refugees.

Your courageous blithesome spirit –

Struggle to save children merit,

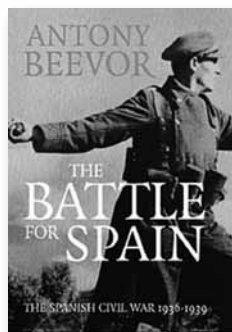
From the shackles of oppression.

O to be in England! "If only for seventy Spring traumatic years."

Book review

The Battle for Spain, by Anthony Beevor (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2006)

Reviewed by Herminio Martínez



As a historian, Beevor cannot cast aside his class prejudices. He shows partisanship posing hypothetical questions calculated to undermine the Republic. The Spanish right is lapping up the book and the same seems

to be happening here. Beevor confirms their contention that Republican Spain was in the hands of Communists and Russia. The review from the Catholic paper "The Tablet" with their record, is enough to condemn him: "Every Spaniard now has a brilliantly written, judicious and non ideological history of the civil war to contemplate... That is the scale of Antony Beevor's achievement".

Beevor appears to suffer from McCarthyism. Alvarez del Vayo, Republican foreign minister is a secret communist supporter. Margarita Nelken, a socialist MP is a secret communist. The "News Chronicle", Beevor describes as left wing. Not so. It was a liberal paper.

To Beevor, individuals who felt the Republic needed central administration, control of war industry and a professional army rather than the militias, were "communist fellow

travellers". Prime Minister Negrín becomes one of these in Beevor's opinion.

Beevor attempts to denigrate Negrín. Most viciously, he says Negrín suspected Casado and other army officers were about to stage a coup but preferred to take no action so that he would be cleared of the responsibility for the collapse of Republican Spain. This, like other accusations is not substantiated.

Beevor also denigrates the International Brigades, giving the impression that many brigaders were executed by the communists and their secret services. George Orwell is described as a brigader who voiced his disagreement over efforts to curb the militias. Orwell served with POUM militias, not the International Brigades.

Beevor's apparent sympathy with the Anarchists is strange but seems a way of heaping still more thuggery on Negrín who tried to exercise control over them. He uses examples of Stalin's brutality as though relevant to Republican Spain.

Beevor cannot and does not whitewash the brutality of Franco and his military regime. He makes a fair assessment of Spain at that time and is critical of the role of the Catholic Church. He brings out the disaster that the Treaty of Non Intervention was for the Republic, but I cannot accept his views that the part played by the British government with this treaty was not calculated to destroy the Republic.

Beevor's Negrín is not the man we knew in London during the last war. To us, Juan Negrín came over as a caring person. He funded scholarships for Republican exiles, created the Instituto Español which provided educational courses for, amongst others, the young exiles, and took out a lease on a large house in London which became the Hogar Español, a cultural, recreational and social centre and a home for Republican exiles. He also visited the colonies in Barnet and Carshalton and provided funding for The Culvers.

Volunteers needed

Soy una profesora de Linguística de la Universidad de Southampton y estoy buscando Españoles que lleven viviendo más de veinticinco años en el Reino Unido para un proyecto de investigación sobre las características del habla de los Españoles en el extranjero.

Me gustaría contactar con Españoles que durante su estancia en el Reino Unido hayan usado el inglés bastante, en el trabajo, en casa con su familia, etc. Lo único que tendrían que hacer es hablar conmigo de los temas que ellos quieran. Por supuesto, yo me desplazaría donde hiciera falta cuando fuera conveniente.

Muchísimas gracias por cualquier ayuda que puedan ofrecerme. Laura Domínguez Tel: 07913-379 650 o [ldo@soton.ac.uk].

Forsale

DVD of Southampton May 2007 event

We are pleased to tell you that we now have a DVD of the Southampton Event commemorating the 70th anniversary of the evacuation of the Basque children to Great Britain in May 2007 which was made for us by one of the guests. It includes some of the speeches and the dances, and above all, we see the people who were present at this memorable occasion. Most of those who were there are somewhere on the film! Copies cost £3.50 including p&p and can be obtained from the Secretary. There is also a DVD solely of the *danzaris* which can also be bought.

Books

Available from Natalia Benjamin: 8 Hernes 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:

- Juanito Moreno
- Carmen Walker (Gil)
- José Alberdi
- Angelita Clarke (Felipe)
- Carmen Díaz

Personalities

Remembering Pepe Estruch

by Herminio Martínez

Pepe was born in Alicante in 1916. His father was a prosperous *médico-dentista* who also acted as Consul for a number of Latin-American countries, including Uruguay. The family formed part of that progressive movement sweeping Spain since the Generation of 1898. Azaña who became Prime Minister and President of the Republic would stay with the family when he visited Alicante.

As a child, he contracted polio and this affected one leg so that Pepe referred to it as his *pata chula*. This disability affected his walking but certainly not his swimming, for he was an excellent swimmer and swam with extraordinary grace.

He started his university studies for *ingeniero agrónomo* in Madrid, staying at the Residencia de Estudiantes which was the centre of the progressive student movement and where he met people such as García Lorca and others of the Generation of 27. He toured Alicante province with Lorca's group La Barraca.

The Spanish Civil War started in July 1936. Pepe left his studies and worked at the Ministerio de Propaganda. Eventually he crossed over into France from Cataluña in 1939. He was interned in the dreadful concentration camps of St Cyprien and Barcarès on the beaches of southern France. Before the outbreak of WW II, Alec Wainman, an English Quaker, took out a group of the internees, including Pepe, and brought them to London.

Like other young exiles such as Jose Mari Lora, Luis Portillo and Cernuda, Pepe started working and teaching in the colonies. He went briefly to The Oaks Park in Carshalton and when this closed, went to The Culvers. There, he did a bit of everything. Above all he brought that wonderful aspect of Spanish life and all encompassing culture to the life of the colony. In the evenings when we returned from the secondary modern school that most of us attended, he gave us Spanish classes. He was a wonderful natural teacher. There was always something going on: folk dancing, singing, painting, poetry, gardening; but most importantly, theatre and acting. Pepe produced plays of the Spanish classical theatre, of Valle Inclán and Lorca with the *niños*, which were staged with great success before audiences in London. He also directed the theatre group at the Hogar Espanol in London. He took this group consisting mainly of *niños vascos* on tour to Prague. He was an inspiration to all.

Pepe left for Uruguay in 1949 to be with his sick father and mother who were exiled there. He devoted himself to the theatre, founding two theatre clubs, taught at the music

conservatory and took over at the Escuela de Arte Dramático in Montevideo.

In 1966 He returned to Madrid. Blocked by the regime in his first efforts in film directing, he began teaching at the Real Escuela Superior de Arte Dramático. Fraga Iribarne, the then Minister of the Interior, sent a telegram that read: "Un republicano hijo de republicano nunca dirigirá la Real Escuela de Arte Dramático." So Pepe did not take up the post of Director, but taught there and performed many theatrical works which he took on tour throughout Spain. He wrote a Spanish adaptation of Shakespeare's "King John", but with an ending suited to the political situation in Spain at the time. His students worshipped him. In recognition of his work for the Spanish theatre, he was awarded the Premio Nacional de Teatro in March 1990.

He died aged 74 on 23 July 1990. His ashes were scattered in the sea of the coast of La Albufera in Alicante as he had wished, where he had swum as a boy.

by Nigel Dennis

Like many Spaniards forced to flee Spain at the end of the Civil War, Pepe's life and career followed an uneven, zig-zagging path. He ended up in England in 1939 and began work as a theatre director soon after arriving, by arranging performances with the Basque *niños* of some of the *pasos* (short comic interludes) of Lope de Rueda as well as an adaptation of Alarcón's story "El Sombrero de Tres Picos" and a number of pantomimes.

In 1949 Pepe moved to Uruguay where he found work first as a drama teacher at the Escuela Municipal de Arte and then as performance director for the singers at the Conservatorio de Música. His most innovative work in Montevideo, however, was with the Club de Teatro which in the 1950s, under Pepe's

expert direction, put on challenging works such as Bergamín's "Medea", Valle-Inclán's "Los Cuernos de Don Friolera" and Aristophanes's "Lysistrata".

Pepe returned to Spain in 1966 and soon became involved in the theatre world. His approach to the business of acting was recognised in Spain for its originality. He believed that actors had to be rigorously trained, acquiring a range of techniques in order to become detached from themselves, leaving behind an empty space that could be inhabited by the character they had to play. It was in that space that the key encounter between actor and character occurred, leading, ideally, to the most compelling of stage performances.

I met Pepe in Madrid in the early 1970s, at the house of the great cultural activist of the pre-war period, Arturo Soria y Espinosa. Arturo had generously taken me under his wing at that time, helping me with the thesis I was writing on the work of his friend José Bergamín. I remember Pepe as a warm, affectionate and modest man. Despite his distinction as a theatre director, he never boasted of his achievements. He readily answered my questions about his views on Bergamín's theatre but rarely talked about himself. In our conversations he switched nimbly from Spanish to English, the latter as a thoughtful concession to my wife, who spoke very little Spanish. At the end of our first meeting, he asked us: "Would you like to come to my house for tea?" We gladly accepted.

Pepe lived at the time in López de Hoyo, a busy street in an elegant and fairly central part of Madrid. His flat, as I recall, was on the top floor: a small, tranquil, simply furnished refuge from the traffic in the street below. True to his word, he served us an English tea and we talked animatedly about my research on Bergamín's work and what it was like to be a British student living in Spain under Franco. I think he found it oddly fascinating that a young Englishman could be so passionately interested in one of the most radical and dissident figures of Spain's cultural world, a person he himself admired too, as much for his courage and integrity as for the originality of his writing.

I remained in intermittent contact with Pepe subsequently, after I returned to the UK in 1974. Our last meeting took place a year or so later, on the outskirts of London. Pepe's mood struck me as more sombre that day as we talked of the experience and consequences of exile, the vices of rigid party politics, the unending legacy of the Civil War ... Then I moved to Canada to begin my first teaching job. Although I followed Pepe's career and movements in the press and heard news of him through mutual friends, I never saw him again. My lasting memory of him is as he was that day: thoughtful and intense, kind and considerate, alert and curious. Looking back now, I see Pepe, with his quiet, self-contained dignity, as a fine representative of that "Pilgrim Spain" created by the Civil War.



Portrait of
Pepe Estruch
by Koke
Martínez.