

# **IN DISTANT LANDS**

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# **PART 1**

## **In Distant Lands**

**A Basque child refugee's account of his stay in England during the Spanish Civil War**

## Chapter 1

'Get up, get up lazy bones! It's a beautiful day!'

'Leave me alone, I'm sleeping!'

'It's nearly 6 o'clock... get up!' Urbano uncovers Ernesto and drags him out by the legs.

In the next bed Enrique wakes up with a deep yawn and stretches out as far as he possible can.

Ten minutes later, the three brothers come down the stairs along with all the other boys and go out to the terrace for their morning exercise. The mister (as they called the teacher) opens the door and out they all troop, form four lines and begin their push-ups and stretches according to the instructions they are given. Next to Urbano is José, the second born of the brothers Echaide who hates gymnastics and is dying for the mister to blow his whistle and end the exercises. Urbano encourages him:

'Up you get José, we've nearly finished! We will soon be at breakfast.'

Every morning they venture outdoors, do gymnastics and after showering, there comes what they all really love: breakfast. The freezing cold water of the showers deadens their thinking for a few minutes. Then the reddened bodies from the reaction to the cold are grateful for the warmth of their clothes: shorts, cotton vest and striped or checked shirts. Well-combed and famished they approach the dining room where steaming mugs of milk make their stomachs rumble in anticipation of that pleasure of feeling full. In an orderly fashion, one by one they take their seat then instantly not a single voice is heard. They all devour their breakfast in silence whilst many remember the days of hardship just before their arrival. Urbano, who is never full sees Tomás, the boy sitting next to him, who has drunk his mug of milk but has left a piece of bread uneaten. He asks him for it and when he gives it to him, he eats it gleefully. In San Sebastian at his home they always had to do without: four brothers without a father and their mother having to work hard to be able to feed them well but not always able to achieve this. Thus he and his brother Enrique were taken in at the age of six by the charity home in Zorroaga situated in the outskirts of the city. That is where they were living and educated until the beginning of the war.

His memories of this place are not good. Many of the carers confused discipline with violence and some of his classmates complained that the priests who taught them were too 'affectionate.' As there was no alternative, everyone remained silent. Urbano was a strong and rebellious character and when he experienced or witnessed injustices would rebel for which he received more than just a slap but although they were not severe punishments, it was on the whole disproportionate. He still remembers the time he protested because a priest beat a classmate without due reason and was made to stay a whole day outdoors in the patio despite the freezing cold of that winter.

Here in England everything is different. There is discipline but he feels that they are being treated well and with respect.

'Look Urbano, listen to what José says: after our jobs we are going to be taken to the river to swim just like we did the other day.'

Urbano comes out of his trance and brightens up giving his brother Enrique a cheerful look. They will certainly have a great time there again.

That night in bed, exhausted and happy after a day of bathing and playing in the river, he cannot help remembering what they had to live through since the beginning of a war that brought them here to a place so far away from home and their loved ones.

## Chapter2

*The fateful day came when they had to leave their home in San Sebastian all in a hurry because we were told that the rebels were near and we were all going to be killed. Mother, my sister Teresa and I gathered all we could and made a bundle of clothing for each of us. Before leaving, mother put the food we had into a bag as well as all the important papers. We joined our friends: Juan, José, María and her mother Isabel. None of the fathers were there: our friends' father had gone as a soldier to fight at the front and as for our father, the fact is that we did not know him. Mother would tell people that she was a widow but we, at least Teresa and myself, knew that it was not true; she had told us that our father lived in another part of the city, but she did not want to say any more about it. We respected her wish and we did not ask questions.*

*With our bundles over our shoulders and together with many other families we headed for the gardens by the beach to wait for the lorries that would take us to Bilbao. We were fleeing from the enemy troops, the coup plotters who, so we heard, were advancing very rapidly. When at last the vehicles arrived, it was hard to stay calm and collected whilst waiting our turn to get into one of them. It was a long journey, stopping continually because the road was full of fleeing families.*

*When we arrived in Bilbao, we saw that all was in turmoil. People loaded with their possessions were walking through the streets; many of them looking lost not knowing where go. We were put into a group at an old market place from where we were distributed to various accommodation venues that had been organised for us and there we waited seemingly forever. We had already eaten the little we had brought from home while en route and were now hungry again. The hours passed but no one told us anything. We waited sitting on the floor until finally we were ordered to form a queue. Because we were travelling with friends we did not want to be separated when the distribution began. Our turn came to have our names written down and were then told where we had to go. We were lucky. They were able to give us two households with the same entrance. It was two flats in Siete Calles: the Echaide family on the second floor and our family on the third floor. We hugged each other crying with joy: we would be staying together.*

*The joy did not last. The war was approaching Bilbao and the bombings began. We had to spend the day near the shelters as we never knew when the bombs would drop. Luckily, at night, since the planes could not fly then, we could go home to sleep. I remember that one day a bomb landed very close to us just as Teresa had gone out into the street. We thought she had been struck full force seeing that the next door building had been destroyed and were distraught as we went out to find her. As luck would have it, despite the debris from the destroyed house that fell on her, Teresa was not seriously hurt. With the passing of time our fears grew. The news that reached us was very bad. Nearby towns had been bombed including Guernica and Durango and we knew that many civilians had died. Then more and more streams of people arrived in Bilbao fleeing from the bombs. This made us all very anxious.*

*As a result, when a lady called Isabel Eguren came to tell our mothers that the children could go to England whilst the war lasted, after mulling over it for a while, both mother and Isabel decided to go ahead with this offer so that the children could be safe. That night I heard mother cry. I knew she did not like the idea of us separating but after the fright with Teresa, she thought it would be the best for us. Our sister, who was already sixteen years of age, would not be able to go: only those children between the ages of five and fifteen could go. I was fourteen and my brothers Enrique and Ernesto thirteen and ten respectfully. Our three friends could also go: Juan Echaide was thirteen, María ten, and José, the youngest was eight. All six of us would go and be of support for each other.*

*A few days later, on the 20<sup>th</sup> May 1937 at dusk, we boarded the 'Habana' at the port of Santurce. From what we were told, we were almost four thousand children with some teachers, priests, nuns and doctors who were to accompany us and take care of us.*

*The farewell at the port was very sad and everyone was in tears. We parted and did not know when we would see one another again. The 'Habana' was waiting for us at the dock to take us very far away to a place that was England of which we knew very little about. I remembered having seen it in a map at school, a big island, but that is all.*

*We boarded with the sensation of being taken away from reality to an undefined life. Everything we were experiencing seemed strange: parting from mother and Teresa; not knowing where we would sleep; not knowing anything about sailing and being in the middle of a sea. Whilst we walked up the gang plank we turned to look back over and over again to see them one more time. They waved their arms continuously and shouted at us: 'Agur, agur maitiak, kontuz ibili!' (Goodbye, goodbye my loves, take care). We finally reached the deck and tried to say goodbye again but those who came behind us pushed us on and we had to keep going to the heart of the ship.*

*Although the ship was enormous, it was full of children like us and the place was packed. The six of us, ourselves and the three Echaide brothers looked for a space on deck; inside looked as if it was completely full and in any case we preferred the fresh air. Making every effort to stay together and not be separated, we found a space somewhat sheltered and having huddled together we covered ourselves with the blankets we were given. We would spend the night there. It was cold and the dampness from the sea seeped through the blankets. I could hear Ernesto crying and I searched for words that would comfort him, words that I did not even have for myself. The night stretched out infinitely. I only managed to sleep a little while after my brothers, overcome by exhaustion, had fallen asleep.*

*The ship set sail at dawn the next day. We woke up and saw how we were moving away from the coast. We were afraid that the rebels would attack us from the land but we were spared. To protect ourselves from any possible attack, at first we were escorted by some small boat from the Basque Navy but later, on the high seas they returned and two English destroyers took on the role. Shortly afterwards a creeping fear took hold of us. A great ship could be seen in the distance. Someone shouted 'The Cervera'...the feared war ship of the rebels approached us but at the point when we feared the worst it turned around and sailed away from us. According to what the carers with us said, we were now in international waters and they could not attack us. The cries of joy that ensued when we saw it sailing away helped us to release the tension that gripped us. From then on we sailed happily along without fear of an attack. Yet soon we had a different worry. The sea was*

*rough and in no time we were all sea sick and began to vomit. At times we did not even have time to get to the side of the boat. With the deck full to bursting it was rather like tackling an obstacle race. The smell of vomit and rubbish was horrendous. Apart for the afternoon of that day, the wind and the waves were with us for most of the time. Despite this, that night we slept well. We were exhausted.*

*When the sun came out I woke up but it took a few seconds for me to remember where we were and realise that something had changed: there was a great silence. I soon found out why: most of the children, including my brothers were still asleep, and the sea was calm. I got up carefully and made my way to the bow of the ship. From there I could see the infinite sea straight ahead. 'Does it actually have an end?' 'Is there land somewhere? What will happen to us if we are left adrift in the middle of this immense space?' I asked myself. The idea of it made me feel dizzy but I soon put it out of my mind with the thought that the captain and the sailors knew for sure what they were doing.*

*The rest of the morning passed away peacefully sailing onwards over a calm still sea and everyone was happy. Elbowing and pushing our way forward, we went down to see the holds of the ship. Children were everywhere. It smelt worse than above. It was better to stay on deck, at least during the day. Nevertheless, at midday, just after eating the sandwiches we were given, the wind once more raised enormous waves. The sea sickness repeated itself and the laughter and exploration of the great ship came to an end. We ourselves tried to stay put in our little niche but the nausea made us get up and run incessantly. We ended up vomiting everything we had eaten. At about five in the afternoon the wind ceased and little by little the waves too became still. We had time to recuperate and for our stomachs to get back to normal. Although we tried not to lose sight of each other, at one point I could not see where Enrique and Ernesto were. Thank goodness that by then we could orientate ourselves well. In time they appeared. They had gone with the Echaide boys to where other friends were and had remained playing with them.*

*Finally, at about six in the evening we saw land. 'Land, Land!' someone shouted. We all wanted to see it; we rose to our feet and veered towards the sides. The adults in charge ordered us to return to our places and calmed us down. Over the speaker a voice informed us that in half an hour we would arrive at the port of Southampton. The nearer we got the more excited we became. We were filled with curiosity to see how this land of refuge looked like. Now that the sea was calm and the sun was shining we could see our destination. It dawned on me that this adventure was worth the while and I felt glad I was taking part in it from the start.*

*The arrival at the port was incredible; no one wanted to miss a thing. The deck was jam-packed. Some of us climbed up the masts to get a better view. On land there seemed to be the same expectation. The dock was full of people who greeted us waving their arms. We responded in the same way. When the ship docked we all pushed each other and fought to be the furthest in front to get down as soon as possible. The sailors carried on with their duties. We watched impatiently. A moment later we saw at last the lowering of the gang-plank, but... what a let-down! Instead of us going down, several elegantly dressed people came up carrying black briefcases. We soon learnt that they were doctors. Apparently, before disembarking they were going to check each one of us to see if anyone was ill. 'Oh no!' I thought to myself, 'with so many of us they will never finish.'*

*Over the speakers they told us to return to our places, that they would call us for our medical check up. Nobody was to leave the ship if they did not pass the test. A thunderous 'Oh' of surprise and disappointment was heard. It was tremendously frustrating. Some of us, including Ernesto and José, were upset and began to cry; others grumbled but there was nothing they could do and that was that. We returned to our places in resignation and concentrated in passing the time by telling each other stories. Night was falling and the checks were going slowly. It was clear that we would have to spend another night on board. Having laid down ready for the night on deck whilst the ship at the port was not in motion and all the activity at the dock had stopped, we fell asleep. Once we had arrived, we succumbed to exhaustion.*

*At last we were able to disembark the next day after the medical checkups. On our wrists they had put a white ribbon which indicated that we were healthy. The authorities were waiting for us on land and with a few words in English shook our hands as we came down. We were happy and felt important. Afterwards we climbed into buses and as soon as they were full they left for our new destination. The streets, decorated with welcoming banners and streamers, were full of people that greeted us. 'Look, look how beautiful it is, we are famous here!' exclaimed some of us. In reality, we got to know later that the English had adorned the streets to celebrate the coronation of their new king which had taken place a few days before.*

*Soon we arrived at a huge campsite. At its entrance a banner was hung with the words 'Basque Children's Camp', and beyond this were lines and lines of shining white camping tents in perfect order. It was enormous. Undoubtedly this was the place we were being taken to. My friends felt they had been deceived because they thought they were going to be put into a school or in houses. As for me on the other hand, I really liked the idea of staying there: sleeping in tents was more exciting.*

*Once inside the camp, they distributed sweets and chocolate to all of us. Yum yum. They were delicious! And after the hardships we had gone through they tasted especially glorious. They also gave us clothes, shoes, waterproofs and rain hats. Once we were registered, they separated the boys from the girls and led us to our tents in groups of eight. I was with my two brothers, Enrique and Ernest together with our friends Juan and José Echaide and the three brothers Berasategui from the Amara district. When we went into our tent, we organised our sleeping area. To one side was a pile of hay and eight sacks. Each of us had to put the hay into his sack. That was to be our bed. Enrique, Ernest and I would be sleeping near the door. Then the Echaide brothers and further in the tent the Berasategui boys. There was hardly any space left for anything else in the tent and so the day to day living would take place outdoors.*

*The first days were hard because the toilets had not yet been installed but little by little the organization of the camp was put to rights. As explained by the carers in charge of us, the Committee of Aid for Basque Refugee War Children was taking in funds from many organizations, among them the Welsh unions, who made a donation of £5,000. With this and further funds the installations improved. The camp was organised among others by the Boy Scouts, older boys who worked as volunteers.*

*We were fed well every day. What I liked the best was the white bread; whenever we could we would take more of it to hide under our jackets. For the main meal we were given*

meat, rice and vegetables which we would eat sitting down on the ground. We were many but there was food for all. During the day we did not have much to do and sometimes we were bored. To entertain ourselves we would invent games or create rivalry groups either because some children were from other towns or provinces, or because their parents were from a different political stance despite the fact that the tents were grouped in three big groups: nationalists – our group, socialists and communists; more than once we ended up fighting each other or playing tricks on them. To keep ourselves busy, the organisers put on activities: football games, domestic chores, class lessons – either with the teachers that came with us or by English volunteers – and included the setting up of a cinema in the bigger tents where we could watch films of Charlie Chaplin, Keaton, or the Adventures of Popeye the Sailor Man; then the atmosphere improved.

Despite all of this, Ernesto and José, the youngest of the group, were having a very hard time: the nights were cold, and at times it rained in such a fashion that the water would seep through the canvas and ended up with everything getting wet. Because of this, when the carer Rosa summoned me along with other boys in charge of tents to let us know that we were going to leave for a colony (as they were called) in the north and that we would be housed in a school, it made me very happy, especially at the thought of how glad my brothers and friends would be when I passed on this message.

I returned to the tent excitedly. I remember they were all waiting expectantly. When I told them, they jumped up in joy. José threw himself around my neck in a big hug as if I had been the one to decide on this change of circumstances.

‘Calm down José, you’ll break my neck. We have been lucky, we are some of the first to be sent and from what I have been told, ours is a good centre. As we are Catholics, the church here has taken action so that some of their schools can accommodate us.’

‘When are we going Urba?’ asked young Ernesto.

I looked at him and saw that he was looking sad. At ten years of age he was the one that most missed mother. I immediately intuited what he was thinking... ‘We are going even further away...’ and all he wanted was to go back home to be with her again.

‘I have been told the day after tomorrow. But before we go we have to gather all our belongings, leave everything tidy in the tent and take the blankets we have been using to the central tent so that they can be washed and used by others.’

‘And our mother, how is she going to know of this change?’ asked Enrique with a worried look on his face.

‘I think the best thing to do is for us to write a letter telling her. We will ask Rosa for a pencil and paper and if you like, each family can write to their mother. I will give you the names of the school and the town.’ It occurred to me to say this so that they could relax a bit.

‘Yes, good idea, I will come with you to get it.’ replied Juan Echaide; and the two of us together with the Berasategui boys went to the tent where the teachers who had come with us were gathered. When we saw Rosa, we asked for what we needed. She was more than

happy to give the items to us and told us that when we had finished, she herself would hand over the letters to the camp office to have it sent to Spain.

*'In any case, she said, you don't need to worry; the organization that will take you in will always take responsibility for informing your families of your new location. But I'm sure your families would be even happier if you yourselves wrote to them.'*

*The three of us went back to our tent and each family began their letters. I wrote to mother and Teresa about the camp, what we ate and what we did daily but omitted to write about the fights, the little pranks, the inconvenient times at the beginning nor how everything got wet every time it rained. I did not want to worry them. At the end I explained that we were very happy because we were going to go to a very good school and wrote down the name and address so that they could write to us: St Peter's School, in the town of Gainford. Then Enrique and Ernesto also added a few lines. At the end we told them that we were all very well but that we missed them and loved them very much.*

*After writing the letters, we all felt a deep sadness: We suddenly felt the need to be close to our families. At this point, the fear of the war seemed less important. I looked at Enrique and saw the tears sprouting. I knew that although he hardly complained he was having a rough time.*

*To calm this critical moment I proposed that after taking the letters to Rosa we could play a game of football. Ernesto who had also burst into tears immediately agreed but Enrique refused. I understood he needed a bit more time to get over his grief and I did not want to insist but when we came back after handing in the letters, he also came with us. The game was just what was needed to distract us and overcome grief.*

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*The train journey from Southampton to Darlington was long and tedious. We chatted, sang, played but as the hours passed we got bored with everything and silence reigned. Whilst looking out of the window at the landscape of green fields and hills it reminded me of our homeland, also green but much more mountainous. Seeing this made me feel nearer to home.*

*At midday, we were each given a huge sandwich and water to drink. Afterwards with the rattle and jolting and with the heat we became rather drowsy. It was getting dark and we would soon be there. Suddenly a loud whistle was heard: 'whooo whooo....' The train announced the arrival at the station in Darlington. We jumped to the windows. Just as in Southampton when we arrived there, there was a multitude of people that were waiting for us. Ladies and gentlemen elegantly dressed took off their hats and waved them in greeting. We opened the windows and waved back. The train stopped and we all took our coats or jackets. We had no other luggage. At the camp, they had explained to us that on arrival at our new home we would be given whatever was needed.*

*We got down in a state of exhilaration. We were greeted by the local authorities and a photographer took a few photos. Later they showed us some of these photos that were published in the local newspaper: you could see many of us on the station platform looking at the camera together with the people who came to welcome us. The mayor elegantly dressed in a suit with a flower in the jacket buttonhole rested his hand on the shoulder of*

*one of the children and was smiling down at him. Once more we were well received but...what would our lives be like there?*

## Chapter 3

The first month of the children's stay at St Peter's turns out to be marvellous, much better than the camp. The dormitory assigned to the three brothers Iturriza is situated on the third floor. From the windows of the room looking towards the east they are able to see the bend made by the River Tees and at the distance the hills and woods which fade away in the distance. In the immediate distance is the gymnasium building and the sweeping games field of the orphanage school.

St Peter's is an orphanage made up of three red-brick buildings. The main one is very grand with large windows, chimneys and facades which at the height of the roofs end in steps. The dormitories' building is bigger but simpler than the main one. Next to this is the gymnasium at a lower height than the others. Behind the buildings there is a large open space with trees around it and a great big football ground in the centre. From there you find your way to the Tees which right at that spot as it passes by Gainford, curves twice and continues straight across the distant landscape. Urbano looks out of the window at this whole picture and he feels he is living a dream. His imagination fires away and he imagines himself being in a castle full of nooks and crannies ready to be explored both in and around it.

On a late July day, the light comes pouring through the windows of his dormitory. It is a fine day and so Urbano is sure that the mister will take them to swim in the river. The *mister* as they called Mr Donaham his teacher at St Peter's, although he is very strict and makes them get up very early every day, had surprised them when on the week they had arrived he said they could go to the river and once there with the same serious voice as always said to them:

'Now you can take off all your clothes and into the water!'

The boys looked at each other confused.... 'Had they understood him right?' Just in case, no one made a move. Yet the mister repeated himself:

'I said all in the nude and into the water!'

So that there was no doubt at all, for he spoke to them in English and perhaps they had not quite understood him, he began to take off his shoes, jacket, shirt...when they saw him take off his trousers and underpants they timidly copied him.

The river water was cold but after the first contact with the water it seemed to warm up and soon the excited children began shouting, splashing and swimming. It was a delight. They all enjoyed having fun at the river and it was most of all enjoyed by the serious Mr Donaham who would not stop going in and splashing them all. In that part of the river the current was not very strong and the river was not very high but further on the water was deep and you could swim better there. The mister gave permission to go there only if you were sure you were a good swimmer and after having been fully warned not to go in too far: he did not want anyone to get a fright.

Urbano in his exuberance was quick to challenge Agapito, one of his new friends, to see who could reach the other side of the bank first. They were both good swimmers but Urbano, who as well as being two years older was used to swimming like this at the beach in Ondarreta had no problem in being the first. Agapito wanted a rematch on the return stretch but lost again. If they were to go more often to the river he could train and beat that *giputxi*: he was Biscayan from Ortuella, he had his pride and he was not going to be beaten so easily.

In high spirits the boys spent the morning in and out of the water until the mister blew the whistle and ordered them to come out of the river. It was the end of sport for the day. They dried in the sun, dressed and joyfully returned to St Peter's.

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Urbano feels sure that as it is a splendid morning they will go again to the River Tees. It is nearly six o'clock and as all mornings at that time they have to go down to the terrace to carry out the morning gym exercises. It is the end of July and very good weather but according to what the mister said, they will go out every day to exercise whatever the weather or season. This did not bother Urbano; he is strong and likes physical exercise..... 'Gero, gerokoa' (that's life) as his mother would say.

They get dressed quickly and go down the wooden stairs excitedly. Their movement and voices echo throughout the building. In all of the floors there are six bedrooms each with eight or ten beds. The boys pour out of the dormitories onto the passage and some head for the stairs on the right and others to the ones on the left whichever are the nearest to them. At quarter to six the ones on the last floor come down, at ten to six the second floor and finally at five to six the first floor. At the terrace they get into three groups with their respective teacher according to their floor. The three quarters hour of gymnastics always finish with ten runs around the field. Then in perfect order, they enter the gymnastics building where they shower before entering the dining room for breakfast.

Urbano and his brothers sleep in the same room together with their friends Echaide and another five refugees. The brothers Berasategui were put in a room on the second floor. They all continue to be friends and when they have free time they come together to play. Another boy has been added to this group; Agapito from Ortuella who finds himself quite alone and although he has a slight quarrelsome and nervous disposition he is a good person. He is twelve years old, two years older than José and Ernesto but soon the three are to be seen together: they like to explore the nooks of the orphanage, play chase and hide and seek as well as football. At times, when they are too bothersome they get reprimanded and the occasional punishment.

Among the child refugees there are others from other countries: Abyssinia, (Ethiopia) and some from Italy. There are also English orphans, some hundred and forty, who sleep in the other building and with whom there is little relationship. Apart from the difficulty of language, these children feel more connected to the home and look down at the refugees with an air of superiority. The Abyssinians and Italians on the contrary, have become friends with the Basque children. Their situation is similar and they understand each other better.

Soon after our arrival, whilst playing in the terrace, one of the English children, no one knows why, takes hold of an Abyssinian by the shoulders and shakes him fiercely. Urbano, who witnesses this, cannot contain himself and goes to defend the child who is silently crying. The English child called William, pushes him and pokes fun at him as he turns to go towards his friends. Urbano consoles the Abyssinian as much as he can and remembers what his mother used to say....'*Bihotz ona, baina burua beti zutik*' (Good heart, but your head always high) He looks at William with contempt thinking he needs a good spanking. 'One of these days you will be dealing with me', he tells him in Spanish. He does not know how but he is sure that he will find a way of putting that boy in his place.

## Chapter 4

A couple of weeks after this incident with the Abyssinian, during the midday meal, the cook came to the table and asked:

‘Is there anyone here who knows anything about farm animals?’

‘Me’ replies Juan immediately, the elder brother of José. He is only thirteen years old but back home he used to catch thrushes in traps and he seems to think that it is all relative and knows enough about animals.

‘Then you will be my helper with the hens and chicks. They buy them live and someone is needed who can kill them and feather them.’

Thus from that day Juan becomes the cook assistant. For the group of friends brought together by Urbano, Enrique, Ernesto, José, and Agapito, there is a window of opportunity for new exploration. The cook, Pierre, is French and was once a boxer so in his spare time, he loves to show the young men how to throw right and left punches and how to manoeuvre with the legs and protect themselves with their arms from an opponent.

The ones that most enjoyed these lessons were Urbano and Agapito. Urbano still remembers how he ‘converted’ one of the ‘atheists’ who had travelled with them on the ‘Habana’ to ‘the real religion’. At the camp in Southampton, with the organisers knowing that many of the children were Catholics, they arranged for them to go to Mass on Sundays. This was celebrated in a great tent led by the religious officials that accompanied them to England. The rivalries that arose among the children in the camp often reflected the ideological differences of the families they came from: there were nationalists, socialists, communists and anarchists.... Most were Catholics but also atheists or agnostics and a few were of other religions. When children fight among themselves, they insult each other in the way they heard the adults do... ‘Reds, you’re reds’, ‘Vaticanista’, ‘sanctimonious.’

Over various Sundays when the Catholic children headed for the tent to celebrate mass, they would be followed by a group of ‘reds’ calling them ‘vaticanistas’ and poked fun at them. On one of these days as they were going into the great tent Urbano stayed at the back against the canvas. The mass started but still you could hear the voices outside that had followed them. Urbano is increasingly irate and when he hears yet another insult, unable to contain himself, he throws a punch at the lump he feels behind the canvas. At once someone falls down to the ground and a voice is heard in between sobs calling ‘Lord, forgive me, I believe in you...’ The child, not knowing whence the punch came, believed it was the hand of God that punched him. As Urbano recounts puffed up in pride, since then, thanks to that little help from the divine, no one insulted them again.

At St Peter’s, Urbano and Agapito both have a new goal: to learn to box and put William in his place. Whilst making the most of their free time after meals, they go into the kitchen and having greeted Juan and Pierre and helped them tidy up, the boxing lessons begin. Pierre gives them several basic lessons in manoeuvres and defence, how to throw a punch, pushing with the arm from the shoulder for it to have more force and the

importance of staying alert to stop the possible reaction of the opponent. Pierre corrects their postures and asks them to punch his hands. They are both ecstatic with the lessons. After a few lessons the cook tells them they are ready to go out to any contest with flying colours.

Soon the opportunity arises. The August afternoons are hot and they continue going to the river to swim. By then most have learnt to swim but one of the African children still has not succeeded: he can only splash about without going anywhere. He soon tires and gets out of the river.

That afternoon they notice that their Abyssinian friend leaves the river sooner than usual. Urbano carries on swimming and playing for longer but just as he is coming out of the water, he sees that Agapito is going towards the group of English children and is arguing with William. Without thinking twice he quickly approaches them. His African friend is next to Agapito. It seemed as if William kept poking fun at the Abyssinian about the way he was swimming. Urbano, now quite cross, confronts them. He cannot abide the abuse towards the weaker ones. William, instead of holding back, continues to laugh and at that point Agapito throws him a punch, just as Pierre had shown him. Taken aback, William pounces on him but Urbano, who is taller and stronger gets between them, holds his hands off and shouts to him that he had better not dare poke fun at Jember, the Abyssinian, again as otherwise he would have to deal with his fists. The mister, seeing there is trouble, comes up, makes sure the three of them break it up and sends them to the headmaster's office. After being reprimanded without having been able to explain the situation the conflict is ended. Since that day William never again confronted any of the refugees. Agapito and Urbano celebrate the event telling their friends how they clipped the wings of that little English boy.

That Sunday the dinner is exceptionally good. The three Iturriza boys love Shepherd's pie – what the English call that mound of potatoes covering the mince meat. Ernesto is soon full and Enrique and Urbano share out his left-over's after having eaten all theirs. The big dining room is full of hungry boys that are only quiet as long as they have food on their plates. As soon as they finish, the hubbub explodes again.

From that day onwards, Urbano sits beside Jember, his African friend with whom he increasingly gets on well. Their level of English is still quite low but Jember manages to explain that his father is the chief of his tribe and that when the war there ends he will come to find him. He does not know much about what is going on in his country. Only that the Italians have invaded Abyssinia and that Haile Selassie, the emperor and many chiefs have had to flee. The reality is that the emperor solicited help to confront the Italians but the English Government, although against the invasion, did not want to intervene for fear that Mussolini would extend links with Germany's Hitler- something that was soon to happen.

Although Urbano knows nothing about this, he has understood from his friend the words 'war, father, chief, emperor.' He thinks about it and sees that when he stops speaking, he starts playing with the salt. He scoops a full spoonful of salt and brings it towards his mouth. Urbano, as a joke, taps his hand and all the salt falls into his mouth. Jember closes his mouth and swallows a good mouthful. Everyone stares at him and see he is turning all colours; he has to get out quickly to the toilets unable to hold down the nausea. Urbano, worried about what he had done runs after him like a shot. He sees him leaning over the toilet bringing up everything he had eaten. 'Sorry, sorry...I didn't mean it.

Are you OK?' He asks with worry. Jember who is a good sort looks at him and then smiles at him. 'Yes, I'm all right.' But as soon as he said this he retches again and leans over the lavatory till everything is out. When he has finished vomiting, Jember refreshes his face and the two friends return together to the table. To compensate for his prank Urbano offers him the apple they have for dessert. Jember accepts it and with this gesture, the incident is resolved.

## Chapter 5

The days fly by although the children find them a bit monotonous. They do their morning exercises, have breakfast. They attend mass and after tidying and cleaning up their room they go out to the terrace to play. Football games and other games of that age are organised among themselves. At twelve they go in for lunch. Following this they have a break during which they can write to their families and play quieter games such as chess, drafts, cards etc. In the afternoon they sometimes go to town in groups or go for a walk around the place. At seven they have to be back in time for a wash and supper. By nine o'clock they are in their rooms, they talk about their day and at ten it is lights out. A prefect is chosen by the children in each of their rooms whom they can go to if there is a problem. They are in charge of passing on requests or reports to the two teachers in charge of each floor when needed: a broken bed, a sheet, a light bulb that burns out, children who cry or scream in their sleep. The trauma of the war remains in their young minds: the bombings they experienced, the grief of separating from their parents, not knowing when they would see them again...problems that materialise in the darkness and silence of the night which torments them. The three brothers have each other, they help and comfort one another; they often remember their mother and their older sister who remained in Bilbao.

At last one day a letter from their mother and sister Teresa arrives. It is a moment both of joy and relief: They tell them that they are both well; that before the arrival of the rebels in Bilbao they had fled to Santander; that they were taken in at a town just at the border with Cantabria called Villaverde de Trucios; that Isabel, the mother of their friends José and Juan is also with them and all is fine; that they are all safe and well and there are no bombings there; that they miss them very much; they must take care and behave well and that they will soon be together again. They ask Urbano to look after his brothers.

*Agur maiteak, laster berriro elkar ikusiko dugu. Asko maite zaituztegu (Good bye my loves, we will see each other soon. We love you very much.)*

After reading these words, the three boys shed quiet tears. The three of them feel the same way: they only want to go back, return to their home and throw their arms around their mother and Tere, play in their neighbourhood, bathe at their beach... That night their sleep was disturbed. They wish this damned war would end as soon as possible.

Their friends Agapito, Juan and José also received letters from their mothers and they are just as depressed. Thus when they hear from the mister that the following Saturday they are to go on an outing they brightened up a bit. They were going to visit an ancient castle which is in a very beautiful city called Durham. They would go by coach and each of them would take a bag of sandwiches, as they were called there, and they would play near a river. At hearing this they all shouted for joy.

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Saturday dawns a little cloudy but although it is September, the temperature continues as if it is summer, one that was warmer than normal and it looked as if would carry on this way. After breakfast and taking their bags with their lunch they go out and wait

in a queue for the coaches to arrive. They have been put into three groups of fifty. At the head of each group is one of the misters that look after them: Mr Bread, Mr Donaham and Mr Clifford. Urbano is happy because he is with Mr Donaham who, despite being a serious kind of man, is a very good man: he always lets us off the hook when punishment is due and he has fun with them, especially when they go bathing in the river.

When the coaches arrive, the commotion begins as they push to get in. Then suddenly a shout is heard:

‘Stop! Get out! Everybody out!!!’

Mister Bread is cross and makes everyone go back, orders everyone to form a queue and only when they have calmed down they are allowed to get into the coach in an orderly fashion and in silence.

Ernesto and Enrique sit together. Behind them are Urbano and Agapito. Juan and José are also quite close to them as well as two Abyssinians and two Italians. Mister Donaham speaks and tells them in English to remember who they are sitting next to as they will be sitting next to them again on their return. Urbano perks up as he understands all of the English. He would have liked to have had English lessons so that he could write it and speak it but they were so many children and not enough teachers to give them lessons plus the teachers also did not know how long the children would be there – not much longer it seemed. Thus the organisation decided that most important at present was that they have somewhere safe to live and be well looked after whilst waiting for the war to end.

The journey to the castle takes a long time: It takes two hours to get there. The children look out of the windows and take in the landscape and from time to time the mister describes the places they go through, what the larger buildings are, and talks to them of English kings and queens and their famous battles.

Urbano pays attention and tries to understand everything he says. Sometimes he does and sometimes not and then he despairs. ‘I will never understand this language; it seems as if they eat their words.’ Each time the mister or one of the employees asks him something, he tries to answer as well as possible but many times his tongue gets tied up in knots and he is not understood. ‘I must put this right’, he tells himself. He likes this language, he likes the English who treat them so well and this would be a way of showing them his gratitude.

When the mister is not speaking, Agapitos comes out of his daydream:

‘Just look at that bull over there’ he says pointing to an animal with enormous horns. ‘I have never seen a bull that big. Our bulls are very different. When we get back I’m going to ask the cook if you can eat that meat. Perhaps it is the same meat which we eat in that pie that you like so much Urbano!’

‘That’s probably the case. That is why we are all becoming like bulls. *Begira, begira.*’ (Just look at this.) Urbano rolls up his sleeve and bending his arm he flexes his biceps which then swell up with the tension.

‘Wow...! You’re so strong! How do you get it like that? Look at my arms...’ Agapito tries to flex his biceps but his are tiny in comparison.

'I like doing gym as often as possible. I do the fitness exercises that the mister shows us' answers Urbano, proud of the admiration he has awakened in his friend. 'Before I get into bed I do push-ups on the floor by the bed and when we go down to the river I have a special branch and I hang on it for exercises. I try to do some before going in to swim in the river.'

'I want to do them too so that I can be stronger. The cook sometimes carries on with boxing training but this is becoming less and less.'

'Right, the next time we go down to the river you can come with me and I will show you.'

The two friends carry on chatting until the group sitting at the back of the bus start singing in Basque. The whole of the bus joins them: '*Boga, boga, Mariñela...Mariñela. Joan behar degu urrutira, urrutira...Mariñela!*' They sing one song after another and in this fashion they are taken unawares by the sudden arrival at their destination. Before getting out, Mr Bread gives instructions: 'always stay together; don't touch anything when inside the castle; at twelve o'clock you must all be in the garden by the river.'

The castle is enormous, the kind you would find in a film. It has huge towers and walls from which battlements rise up. They go up the steps till they reach the first tower and from there you can see the fields and woods around it and below the river meanders and flows under a stone bridge. Inside, they wander through various rooms with high ceilings, with fireplaces and some furniture until they come to the main hall which according to what they are told was the biggest in the whole of Great Britain and although at one time it was made smaller, it still measures fourteen metres high and thirty metres long. This area is used as a dining room for the students of the University of Durham. From 1840 the keep of the castle has been a hall of residence for students of the university. Because of this, access to this tower is not allowed. They parade through rooms made of stone and decorated with flags or some medieval armour. The boys can imagine the scenes of battles and conquests whilst they wander up and down and through passage ways. From a section of the defence wall they shoot at the supposed enemies who are besieging the castle.

In no time the visit ends, they troop down to the terrace and go out through the main door opposite the cathedral. Once there, they are organised into their groups and head towards the river. Here is a little garden where they have their lunch. This was followed by play fights and battles till the time came for them to go back to the coach. They felt themselves to be gentlemen of another period and with the roar of the imagined battles, time just flew. When the time came to go home, they were reluctant to leave, to obey the teachers and to return to the coaches.

The trip could not have been more fun. Everyone is now sitting down when someone sounds the alarm: two boys are missing, Pedro and José Mari, from the second bus. The three misters, ask anxiously if anyone has seen them. Some of them say they had been playing with them in the garden while they were having lunch but after that, no one saw them again. Mister Bread orders three of the older ones to come with him, one of them Urbano, and they go in search of them. They retrace their steps and go back to the garden. They look everywhere but cannot find them. Time goes by and you can see their worry reflected in their faces. It is getting dark and there is no sign of the boys.

In despair Mr Bread proposes going back to the castle. They start going uphill further towards the esplanade between the cathedral and the castle. When they get there they see two figures fighting with swords at the castle door. The shout of the mister makes the people around him turn to him astonished. The two boys on hearing him immediately stop and look at him in surprise. In a no-nonsense voice Mr Bread demands that they come instantly:

‘Come here, come here! You stupid silly boys... we are in the bus waiting for you ... and you are here playing...Come here immediately!!!

The frightened boys run towards him...‘sorry, sorry...’

The mister is so cross he can’t stop himself from clipping them over the ear. Then in a bad temper he makes them run back to the bus at full speed. They would be spoken to on arrival at St Peter’s. Those two brats have given them a rough time and deserve to be taught a good lesson.

They journey back in silence. It is night time and the boys, tired after the trip, fall asleep. It was also not advisable to make much noise given the mood of the misters. That evening two boys are missing for supper: Pedro and Miguel who, not just this evening but for the rest of the week, will go to bed without supper.

## Chapter 6

*I look upwards as I am doing fitness exercises from my favourite branch. 'One more' I reflect, and I raise myself again with my arms. I've already counted eleven but I want to get to fifteen. I know that if I keep going I know I will get there. That's another afternoon when no one has seen me go to the river. I will finish my pull-ups and go back before anyone notices. I love those moments of solitude so much! It means I can concentrate and take on more challenges, that's thirteen... and anyway there's the trees, the river, the ceaseless sound of the water, the smell of grass... fourteen... Where would mother and Teresa be now? Are they safe? ... I don't know why mother is always so cross with me, perhaps I answer back too often. She doesn't tell the others off so much. In Bilbao it was different; we were brought together by difficult circumstances. What a fright we had when the bomb fell so close to Teresa and the debris fell on top of her – she nearly died! She was so scared, well we all get scared sometimes if truth be known. I pray to God they are being protected. I should be there with them, I am already fourteen, and I could fight at the front. I could help save my country; finish off those assassinating swine that are killing us.*

*The anger stops my concentration and I cannot do another lift. Tired out, I let myself fall gently onto the grass. I try to forget the war and my mind returns to the present. I fix my eyes to the sky and remain a while lying down drinking in the many different colours of the leaves: Above them the soft white clouds on a blue sky move slowly to the pace of the running river. The sound of the water melds with the sweet trill of one or two birds. I try to single them out among the leaves and after a short spell I see two of them flying at a frantic speed and disappear into a throng of trees. My soul is calm once more.*

*The sound of lapping water makes me sleepy. I remember the times we went bathing during the summer. The weather has been so good that we bathed in the river right up till September. In this month of October, although it is warm some days, the nights are very cold and the rains keep coming. For now I can enjoy these precious moments like this one- who can tell what the future will hold. I breathe in deeply and let the air out. I feel happy. I stay a while longer lying down until I begin to feel the cold. It is time to go back to the school. I might come back tomorrow.*

*When I arrive, I notice that Enrique, Ernesto, José and Agapito are playing a game of football with other companions. When they see me they ask me to join them. Without stopping I say: 'No, I want to go to the library and continue reading the book I've started.' Although all the books in the library are in English, I want to read and understand them and in this way I can learn the language. I take out the English-Spanish dictionary and I have no problem in spending hours reading my chosen novel. When I get stuck on a paragraph I ask Peter who is in charge of the library to explain it to me. He speaks to me slowly and clearly and I progress little by little. I am increasingly enjoying my reading time. I like the idea that because I will not be going down to the river as the winter rolls on I will have more time for reading.*

*The book I am reading is called 'Tom Sawyer' by Mark Twain. When Peter lent it to me he told me it was written by an American and it is a story of the adventures of a young lad from a poor background just before an American war started. When he told me this I felt it*

*to be like my own life and so I began to read it with enthusiasm. Later, as I read on, I realised that the novel reflected a world that was quite different to mine but I didn't mind. I love how brave and daring the protagonist and his friend Huckleberry Finn both are. Although I don't understand it all I am so immersed in their adventures that my problems are forgotten. The librarian Peter always tells me when it is supper time. Then with a great effort I have to leave the world of the Mississippi, 'Indian' Joe, the treasures, islands and caves, and come back to reality. Suddenly I feel hungry and make straight for the dining room. The instant my brothers and friends see me come in they straight away start asking me about the adventures of Tom. I am delighted to do so without telling them that I add my own stash of facts and figures of the passages I did not understand. The illustrations give me many clues and they help me to conjure up what is happening to my friends of the Mississippi.*

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*After clearing up the supper we make our way to the games room. We are going to play ludo. Agapito wants to come too and so Ernesto lets him take his place. He prefers to amuse himself with a counters game. The younger ones love to play at this. Each time they find a counter they cover them up with glittery paper and race with them. The counters move on printed circuits when they are flicked with the middle finger. You are not allowed to push them and this causes a lot of arguments:*

*'That doesn't count; you cheated. You pushed it'*

*'No I didn't push it. I flicked it with my finger.'*

*'I saw you. You thought I was looking the other way but I saw you. Put it back.'*

*'That's not true, I won't put it back. I won.'*

*'Well I'm not playing with you again. I'm taking my counters away; you're a cheat.'*

*The floor of the games room was made of wooden planks with parallel lines which could be used as race tracks. You can put any object at the end or at the beginning to show the start and finishing point. You put the counters at the start point and the race begins. There are times when a whole group of boys play together and the number of counters and race tracks are extended. At those times it is a good idea to name someone to be the arbitrator to avoid cheating as far as possible. The counters have been a real hit among the younger ones throughout the whole of September until they got tired of it and started on 'play fights'. At present they are a little quieter and play with us at Ludo and card games. We will see how long this lasts!*

*This evening we play two games. Enrique wins the first one and I win the second one so it proved to be a family win. Agapito and José rather miffed by this, ask for another try. I tell them we can't have another go as it is getting late and we have to go upstairs to bed. They sulkily accepted this. We tease Agapito because he is such a bad loser. He grumbles after losing and says that we are always taking his counters. In the end we agree to play another round the next day. By the time the carer comes to turn out the light in the dormitory we are once more at peace with each other. In the dark I figured that we all dislike losing... though some more than others.*

## Chapter 7

It is now December and getting close to Christmas. The boys soon see that English people celebrate this with as much or more pleasure than in the Basque Country. From the first week of the month they begin to put up Christmas decorations everywhere throughout the whole school: dormitories, dining room, leisure room, games room... etc. They adorn the entrance and the windows of the orphanage with lights and in the dining room they put up a grand tree.

The teachers tell them that on Christmas Eve they will gather together in the assembly room to celebrate and that the boys of each dormitory will be contributing with a performance: songs from their country, dances or theatre scenes. Mr Donaham proposes to those in Urbano's and his brother's dormitory that they present a story from Dickens which he will adapt by simplifying the sentences so that they can tell it in English. Volunteers are needed to prepare the event.

Straight away several children put up their hands. The mister chooses six of them who will then dedicate every afternoon of the month to this performance. In the meantime, everyone else can put up the Christmas decorations while listening to carols through the speakers. Little by little the school assumes the warm atmosphere that Christmas brings. Guilford town is also well decorated and the display windows of its small number of shops are filled with Christmas gifts. St Peter's receives offers from this town as well as from Darlington for children to spend Christmas in their family homes. They particularly welcome children aged ten or under for which Ernesto as well as José would be eligible. The three brothers decide not to separate and instead spend Christmas together at the centre.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> the children are excited when they wake up: The grand Christmas performance will be taking place that morning. After breakfast, the performing groups go to the gym for their last rehearsal. The performance begins at eleven. The local authorities, the headmaster of St Peter's and the representatives of the organisations that have contributed funds for the care of the Basque children would be attending. There is no gymnastics on this day but everyone showers with great care, they put on their best clothes and all spruced up they head for the assembly hall where the performance is to take place.

Many of the guests are already there. Dressed in their elegant clothing they smile kindly as the boys come in. Some ladies approach them and ask... 'How are you?' They now know how to respond... 'Very well thank you.' They are pleased to shake their hands. They are happy to help keep these children safe and to see them looking good and smiling. At the same time they understand how difficult the situation is for them, both because of the continuing war in their country and also for the grief these children must be feeling being separated from their parents and not knowing when they will be together again. As supportive people they are ready to do everything they can to help especially during these very important days.

After the welcome, everyone sits down and the performance begins. The Headmaster of St Peter's, Mister Graham, gives thanks to the authorities and the donors for their generosity and their help. He talks about the efforts made at this centre to care as best they

can for these children and emphatically shows gratitude for the work of the educators and staff. Then on to Mister Fall who is in charge of the performance and he talks through the order of the presentations to come.

There are ten distinct ones in total, all of which have been prepared with enthusiasm and dedication on behalf of the children. Some groups sing English songs, others sing the best known Spanish carols and others sing Basque songs. There is also a group that dances the *Ezpatadantza* and the *Aurresku*, two typical Basque dances, and a couple of them present two theatrical performances.

Urbano's dormitory group is a great success with its theatrical show and are applauded. At this point, Urbano laments not having participated in this work; he is too timid for these things not having ever been on stage and thinks he would not be able to control his nerves. Sport, quiet reading and study is more his thing. What he liked the most of all of the presentations was precisely the theatrical, now that he has immersed himself totally in the stories presented as if they were real. He now really wants to read Dicken's stories and savour slowly what his friends have so well put on stage.

When the show is over, everyone claps with gusto. They are delighted. It was all worth the effort. The tone of the mood has made them feel valued and cared for and more than ever, that they are not alone, that they are part of a community of generous people who have taken them in, look after them and feed them and on top of that it seems they truly appreciate their abilities. Everyone is touched by the Christmas spirit.

Nevertheless, that Christmas Eve the boys are frustrated when they see that there is nothing special at supper. Our friends knew about it already- Juan, who is still the assistant in the kitchen, had told them: the English are accustomed to making especial meals on Christmas day and the next day, Boxing day, as they say but not on Christmas Eve. However, this disappointment of the supper was compensated the following morning. When they wake up they find that they all have a small present on their bed; they open the parcel and they show it around. They are simple toys donated by the local people so that the children would not be let down: balls, small cars, a bag of marbles, slingshots... The morning is free time so with their excitement, after washing and dressing, they go to the games room to play with their brand new gifts. And on Christmas day 1937 they see that the meal is to be special. The tables in the dining room appear to be covered with things to eat. They eat a delicious turkey garnished with glorious looking sausages wrapped in bacon, Brussels sprouts- that nobody eats, and delicious roast potatoes that disappear instantly, all splashed with a strong sauce called gravy which is poured over the turkey and is mouth watering.

The cooks have truly excelled themselves! From what Juan says, they were preparing it the whole week and the kitchen staff had to be bolstered up. There are so many people to serve: children, teachers and carers who journeyed with them from Bilbao, the centre staff...

Then a dessert to boot: a 'very delicious' pudding as Ernesto says who has a sweet tooth and has eaten his piece and his brother Enrique's. It is made with a cake mixture with raisins covered with a sweet white sauce and chocolate. 'Yum. It's so delicious!' In the end poor Ernesto has eaten so much that he ends up vomiting and with an aching stomach has to go to bed.

Everyone else finished the day singing their hearts out both in Spanish and Basque. Only when they go to their dormitories, in the loneliness of their beds, more than one of them lets a tear drop when they remember their homes and their loved ones.

## Chapter 8

Christmas goes by too fast for his liking. The children that had been taken in by families to celebrate it return to St Peter's and many of them arrive with presents for their brothers and friends; simple presents such as spinning tops, chocolates or other sweets. Whatever it is, it is a treasure and is the envy of everyone else.

Life in January is harder. It is very cold and at times the water pipes freeze and they have no water. Almost everyone has chilblains on their toes and many boys catch colds. The three buildings are difficult to heat because they are so big, especially the corridors, the stairs and dormitories. At bed times they cover themselves with a pile of blankets right up to their eyes and in the morning it is a great effort to get up and lose the warmth they have maintained. But Mr Donaham is unforgiving and we have to get up early. During these cold days they are allowed more time in the games room and they hardly go out in the fresh air. They have also begun English and mathematics lessons, the latter given by the Basque teachers who came with them.

January also brings an important change: Some children are requested to return home by their parents. The war in Spain has not finished but after the fall of Bilbao, the fighting in the Basque Country does not last long: by September 1937 the Northern Front has already fallen. The situation for the defeated side is very complex with many a man in jail or dead, many people who have fled and many families that have been separated. Little by little, as soon as their parents or mothers are able to return to their homes, they start to request the return of their child refugees in France or England.

In the orphanage, at breakfast time in January, boys are beginning to be called to the headmaster's office. There they are told that their parents have requested their return and therefore they would be returning to their homeland at the end of the month. Before going they would have to get their belongings together, strip their beds and empty and clean their lockers to prepare for their journey. They would be travelling by train to Dover accompanied by members of the Red Cross or representatives of the aid organisation for child refugees. Once there, they would go by ship to Calais, France. And then to the Irún border by train where the organisation would be responsible for handing them over to their parents.

When the first group of boys that have been repatriated depart, the ones left behind experience a combination of different feelings: many feel sad because they have not been called or because they will be separating from their friends; others are happy for the ones going away and one or two breathe with relief because they are not yet returning.

Urbano is one of these last ones. He is very happy in England and is not in any hurry to go back. Not long ago they received a letter from their mother and sister Teresa saying that they have returned to Bilbao from Santander, that they will soon return to their home in San Sebastian and that they will then make a request for them to be returned. Thus, knowing they are well and thinking that maybe there is little time left in England, he decides to make the most of the situation. He eats as much as he can thinking that food in his homeland is scarce; he does as much physical exercise as he can because he wants to be strong for when he gets there as he does not know what kind of work he will have to do;

then being aware that his great passion of studying would most likely be curtailed, he decides to carry on with his studies in the library and to go to all the lessons organised in this community.

The maths lessons are very easy and meant only for the younger ones learning the four basic rules and numbers. Sometimes Urbano comes to these lessons to help the teacher but he does not learn anything himself. Where he succeeds in learning is in the English lessons with Mister Riley who is in charge of the second floor and who had been a teacher at another school. He teaches them the verbs, basic vocabulary and special English phrases. He also gives them texts to read which they then translate to Spanish. Urbano will always be grateful to Mister Riley for the interest he takes in them and above all because he is so good natured. When he sees someone is worried or sad he understands the situation perfectly and tries to cheer them up: 'cheer up, cheer up' are the words he repeats the most.

Playing in the games room still continues. One day in February when it was very cold, Agapito, frustrated because he is losing then says: 'I need air, I need air', opens the window near him and unfortunately the wind pushes it so hard against the wall that the glass breaks and falls to the floor with a resounding crash.

Silence reigns in the room and the mister comes in:

'What happened?' He sees the glass on the floor and adds: 'Who broke it?'

No one answers. The five friends, Ernesto Enrique, Urbano, José and Agapito, seated on the table next to the window direct their gaze down to the floor. No one wants to rat on Agapito.

'Who broke it?' the mister repeats.

No one answers. Mister Bread gets more and more angry. The functioning of the establishment is based primarily on discipline. The boys are used to it and they are no longer the boys that arrived at a strange place in a state of apprehension. Mr Bread knows they are a good lot but nevertheless they are children that need to be guided by adults as to what is and what is not acceptable. The care of the Centre that has taken them in, the respect for everyone, the rules that are to be respected are all essential for the running of the place. And so once more he asks who did it, who was the one that broke it. When he receives no answer he decides to punish them with whatever comes to mind first. They will pick up the broken pieces taking care not to cut themselves, and then they will stay standing there facing the wall till supper time.

The boys obey without a grumble. After twenty minutes standing there, Agapito, ashamed of not having said anything is about to confess when Mister Bread in a serious tone cancels the punishment. They are allowed to sit down but told that next time they should be more careful and not open the windows. Mister Bread is severe but has a good heart.

In their dormitory that evening the four friends pound Agapito with their pillows:

'Take this you beast!!! Because of you we had to stay standing for nearly two hours facing the wall. You are going to pay for it. This is what's coming to you... and they thump him with their pillows, tickle him, they pounce on him whilst he tries to defend himself.

'Stop it, stop it, I didn't do anything. I only opened a window. It is the wind that did it. The wind broke it.'

'Wind? We'll give you wind!'

Agapito manages to free himself and it is him who goes after them. They hide behind the beds. And then with all against one they catch hold of him again and throw him onto the bed. The rest of the boys in the room look on in amusement and shout:

'Keep it up – give it to him!'

With the continuous laughter and shouts they did not hear the corridor attendant who checks the rooms. He looks in and sees the friends on top of Agapito. He thinks it is a real fight but on reaching out to separate them he sees that they are pretending and having a great time.

'Stop - it's enough. Go back to bed.'

When they hear his voice the boys stop, pick up their pillows and get into bed. A few giggles are still heard but with Thomas staying at the door putting on a serious face and watching them, they gradually calm down and there is silence.

'Keep quiet and sleep! Good night.'

He turns out the light and soon the room fills with the sound of a snoring symphony as one by one they fall sound asleep.

## Chapter 9

It is still very cold in February and the water in the pipes freeze so that when they wake up there is not a drop of water to wash the sleep crust from their eyes. That month the mister softens up a bit and tells them that they will do their morning exercises in the gymnasium until the temperature is above zero. He is not about to let them freeze he says with a half smile.

The number of boys staying there have dwindled due to the return home of the first group as requested by their parents. The previous night the headmaster called another four brothers to his office and told them that as soon as another journey was organised they would be able to leave at the end of February.

Today the exercises consist firstly of a warm-up for arms and legs and then all kinds of races down the length of the gymnasium: with short steps, then long strides, backwards, on one leg, on the other leg... all without stopping for at least half an hour until we are drenched in sweat. Following this we lie down on the floor and helping each other two by two we start doing sit-ups. Urbano always tries to do this with Jember who is the same age and with whom he continues to get on well. Now that they both know more English, they understand each other better. During the races outside in the field, Jember stands out from the rest: he is very fast and has a lot of energy. He is used to running many kilometres to attend school or to fetch water from the pond. He is thin but strong. Other types of exercise he is not so keen on. He feels they are too rigid although he does them willingly.

During Christmas he stayed with one of the exiled Abyssinian families staying in England. From what he heard from the adults, it looks as if England is finally going to help the Ethiopian government with the war. Everyone knows that without the help from Western powers they can hardly face Mussolini's Italian army. Not having modern arms or aviation, the Italians have easily defeated them. They have invaded their country and have taken to looting, destroying their towns and killing their people. When they came to his town they killed his father and one of his brothers. He hated them and Jember cries as he tells it. He, his mother and another brother were able to flee. With help, he doesn't know how they were able to escape to another country. There they took refuge at a camp where his mother and brother were staying and as for himself he was sent together with other children to England for the duration of the war. As a result and because he is Christian like them, he is at St Peter's.

Urbano looks at him puzzled but Jember tells him that Abyssinia has been Christian from a long time back and they have many beautiful churches painted in many colours. When he was younger, he went to a town called Góndar with his father where every year the Timkat (the baptism of Christ) is celebrated. 'Very important for us,' he says. People from all over Ethiopia come to pray and receive the beneficial waters. The faithful dress in white, they pray, sing and some submerge themselves in a huge pool that is put there for that purpose by one of their kings. This year, the exiles have also celebrated the Timkat in one of the English rivers and have prayed to God for protection; perhaps it will help the

situation. Jember looks at Urbano with a hopeful smile. 'I'm sure it will', says the latter trying to cheer up his friend.

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The days of February go by sluggishly. The second Friday of that month they get up with no enthusiasm. It is again very cold and as you let the breath out it almost freezes in the room. Enrique is the first to jump out of bed. He goes to the window and shouts:

'Look – take a look, everything is white- it has snowed loads.'

Whenever it snows they feel enlivened. They quickly get up and go over to the windows to see the snow which covers the sports field and is quite deep. All the branches of the trees are covered; even the very thinnest ones and the roofs are topped with a few centimetres of white snow. The children are amazed by the beauty of the landscape.

'Let's hope they will let us go out to play in the snow after breakfast!' says Ernesto delighted at the very idea.

With that in mind they dress quickly and go down to the gymnasium. They do the exercises with enthusiasm and ask the mister to let them go outside after breakfast. He gives them permission but fair enough, after their chores, cleaning and tidying their rooms and bathrooms.

'Yes mister, of course, Mister' they all shout in unison.

As soon as they finish their chores, they go out excitedly onto the terrace. The laughter and shouts and the impact of the big snowballs are heard all over the orphanage. Years later, now back in their country, the boys often remember the pleasure of those games in the snow.

Time passes rapidly and lunch creeps on them unexpectedly. As they arrive at the dining room, the smell of hot soup and toast makes their mouths water. The fresh air and exercise has made them feel ravenous. They quickly devour the meal and when their stomachs are completely full, the din kicks in again; they don't stop laughing and commenting on the races and snow fights and to illustrate this, bits of bread fly into the air from one table to another.

Suddenly the speakers crackle and the voice of the headmaster is asking for their attention. The racket takes a while to quieten down. The voice has started to read out the names of the next group of children requested by their families to be returned.

'Hey! Hey!' someone shouts. 'Be quiet, we can't hear!'

Finally quiet pervades. This time the list is very long. After naming some fifteen of them, they hear: 'José Echaide, Juan Echaide... and three more.

At first, the five friends do not react, but after a pause, the eldest stands up then jumping for joy shouts:

'*iGu gara, gu gara... etxera goaz!*' (It's us, we're going home!)

He walks over to his brother and hugs him, full of emotion. The others join in the excitement.

*'¡Zorionak, lagunak, etxera zoazte!'* (Congratulations, you're going home!)

Urbano walks over to Juan and gives him a big hug and then hugs José. Enrique and Ernesto do the same. At this point Ernesto stops and looking hurt blurts out:

*'Eta gu... zer? Nik ere etxera joan nahi dut!'* (And what about us? I want to go home too!) He is no longer able to hold back his tears. Enrique is more controlled and says nothing but he too cries. Urbano, being the eldest makes an effort and with a lump in his throat manages to stay calm. The fact is that he does not know what is best. When he sees how happy his friends are, he envies them and can't understand why their mother has not requested their return. He feels it would be good to return with them, all together. So far it has been this way: together they fled from San Sebastian to Bilbao; then together they went to Southampton; and together they arrived at Gainford. And now his friends are going and they stay... He comes back to himself and tries to comfort his brothers:

*'Laster gu ere bueltatuko gara... Ikusiko duzue!'* (We'll go back too. You'll see!)

Juan and José go to the headmaster's office who tells them that they will be taking a train to Dover the following week, on the 17th of that month. First they must clean and tidy everything well, and on the last evening they can pack their suitcases and take all their belongings. They will be travelling with a group of girls and boys from other establishments and at all times they will be accompanied by the people from the aid organization. Once they go through the border in Irún, they will be taken to San Sebastian where their mother will collect them.

When they come out of the office, the two Echaide brothers go up to their room and stay there for a long time exchanging their emotions: they are so happy to be going home to be with their mother and sister Maria who would also be going back. They also speak of the sadness they feel because they will not be able to see and embrace their father.

Their sister Maria has kept them informed of everything. She had come to England with them, but as she was a girl, she was taken to an establishment for girls in London. After a month at St Peter's, her first letter arrived. She was with another twenty girls in a very big beautiful house with a garden and tennis court and she was happy there as they looked after them well. Shortly after that, another letter arrived with sad news: their father had died at the front. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of July, during one of the battles for the defence of Bilbao, in Carranza, the Basque soldiers suffered many casualties inflicted by the rebel forces and among them was their father. Juan, who was reading the letter to his brother, had to stop because his voice broke at this point. He could not believe it:

*'Ez, ez da egia, agian oker daude.'* (That can't be right; perhaps they have made a mistake.)

*'Bai, José, egia da, aita hil da, amari esan diote.'* (Yes, José, it's true, father is dead. They have informed mother.)

María told them they had to be strong, that mother was not alone, that she had help and consolation from Urbana and Teresa and that they were the only ones left in her life. She told them to take care of themselves and that when things calmed down a bit she would request their return so that they could all be reunited.

Finally the awaited moment came. The two brothers look at each other and after an embrace go out of the room and look for everyone. They find them in the field throwing snowballs at each other. As soon as they see them, they walk over to them and ask them what the news is. When they hear it, sadness comes over them: they are going to go earlier than they thought. In a week's time they will be separated from all at the centre without knowing for how long. After talking for a while, Juan goes to the kitchen- he is still the cook's assistant- and José stays with his friends to play football in the snow. The cold air and the exercise help them all to sooth their feelings.

The 17<sup>th</sup> soon comes. All the boys who are going home come to say goodbye to their friends at the entrance of the building that has sheltered them all these months. Before getting into the bus, Juan shakes hands with the three Iturriza brothers, Agapito, the three Abyssinians, and of course, Peter the cook with whom he has made such a good friend. He has learned so much from him. He does not know what life will bring but he would like to be a cook.

*'Bon voyage, Jean, et bonne chance!!!'*

His heart full of emotion, Juan gets on the bus that will take them to the station in Darlington. In the meantime, José also says goodbye to his friends. Everyone cheers him on. José is happy but when he comes face to face with Ernesto, the younger Iturriza hugs him and bursts out crying. He too wants to go:

'I want to go too, I want to go with you..!' he tells him between sobs.

Urbano calmly takes hold of Ernesto and comforts him telling him that they too will be going soon. Deep inside, he is fearful because it has been a long time since they have heard from mother and Teresa. He is surprised that they have not requested their return at the same time as their friends since both mothers have always acted together. He does not know why and he is worried. At last José gets into the bus and leaves for the station.

'Have a good journey my friends, I hope we will soon see each other again,' says Urbano trying to be optimistic.

## Chapter 10

Ernesto and Enrique roam through the various corridors and nooks and crannies used as bedrooms. As it is free time in the games room there is no one around these parts. They go up the stairs on the left, the one not usually used as their bedrooms are on the other side. The two stairways, one at each end of the corridor are exactly the same: dark wood, wide steps and a railing with balustrades; the hand rail made of the same wood is blackened by continual use. The two brothers reach the first floor and walk into the lengthy dormitories where their companions sleep. They are exact replicas of their own: beds with white painted rails separated from one another by a few centimetres; narrow wardrobes at each corner of the entrance, windows at the front looking out into the sports field and the river. They go in and take a look at the objects on the beds: clothing, exercise books, and letters. They are careful to leave everything as it was. They wander through all four of the dormitories on that floor (there are also two other small rooms that are locked where the supervisors sleep), and they go up the steps to the second floor. Here they only go into the dormitories on the left; they see a really good counter on the floor and cannot help but keep it. They go out pleased with themselves and their pocketed treasure then without pausing on their own third floor, they go up to the attic.

The reality is that this was what they left the games room for with the excuse of going to the toilet. They are curious to know what is up there. Someone said that it was full of toys that people donate to them but have not been distributed.

The stairs stop at a wooden door that seems to be locked. Enrique holds the handle and tries to open it. As luck would have it, it does not open. Ernesto has a try but again no luck. Just at that moment, they hear voices. They stand still and listen – it could be two boys coming up to fetch something from their dormitory. The persons coming up the stairs do not stop on the first floor, they continue to the second floor. As they get closer they realise they are adults, not children. They believe the voices belong to Mister Donaham and the feminine one to the supervisor Miss Katy, the one that gives them their medicine and gives out their clothes. The boys are a bit afraid of her because she has a very bad temper. If anyone asks her for a new item of clothing when the one he is wearing has holes, she first gets annoyed and then she gives him a needle and thread to mend it. Only when the piece of clothing is truly on its last legs or it is too small does she agree to exchange it.

The two brothers are in a fix when they hear that without stopping on the third floor, Mister Donaham and Miss Katy keep going up towards the attic. At the point when they see there is nothing they can do, when they are going to find them out red handed, the couple pause and remain a while deep in discussion. Panicking, Enrique reaches out for the handle again holding it with all his might and with a sudden push he is able to open the door. With relief they quickly get inside the attic. There is total darkness, there are large piles of things but can't see what they are. For fear of being discovered, they move towards the back of the loft and hide. Just then they hear sounds of surprise with the words such as 'open' and 'door'.

Mister Donaham and Miss Katy switch the light on and look around to see if anyone is there but as they do not see anyone they go towards one of the boxes on the right. The two brothers hear sounds and the voice of Miss Katy saying:

‘Here they are! We need four pairs of boots and... ‘

From their hideout the two brothers see them move other boxes and finally they leave. ‘At last!’ they say to themselves as they sigh with relief. They have been lucky, no one has seen them. Then suddenly they hear the sound of the key in the lock... Oh no, they will not be able to get out! Feeling their way in the dark, they come to the door and what they feared had happened was in fact a reality. They are locked in! The door is definitely locked.

They no longer care if they are found out or not and they begin to shout and bang on the door. No one hears them. The voices of the two carers have faded away and not a sound from outside. They keep banging the door but nothing happens. Now they are worried that no one will find them. Enrique, being the eldest, switches on the light and tries to calm down so that he can think. Above all he must not lose his nerve so as not to worry his brother even more.

When the light illuminates the attic, they can see that it is full of boxes and old pieces of furniture. They open the boxes: there are no toys there at all, only blankets, clothing and shoes. They sit down on the floor and Enrique speaks:

‘Don’t worry Ernesto! No one can hear us just now because there is no one around. We’ll wait patiently and when we hear our school mates coming up to bed we can then shout and bang on the door. I am sure someone will hear us.’

‘It’s all very well but what if they don’t hear us? Are we going to stay here forever? It’s cold and we have nothing to eat... we will die.’

‘Ez, ez kexkatu – (Don’t worry), Urbano will come to find us. He will realise we are missing and he will look for us – you’ll see.’

While his brothers were exploring the building, Urbano was in the library reading another novel but as usual when he begins to read a new novel it takes him ages to understand it. He knows that it gets easier as he goes along partly because he adapts to the particular language of the writer or by reading on he has more of a picture and can understand the plot better. Then he can begin to enjoy it. Today this is not the case and after struggling to read a couple of pages he decides to leave it and make his way to the games room.

When he arrives there he notices his brothers are missing. He asks around and Agapito says they went to the bathroom quite a while ago. Urbano checks it out but there is no one there.

‘That’s strange! Where on earth are they? Normally they are together with all the rest of them, they never go anywhere on their own. I shall go and find them in case they have got themselves into trouble’ he thinks to himself.

First he goes out into the terrace to see if despite the cold they are playing there. There is no one there. Then he goes into the main building to see if they are in the main

toilets next to the dining room. Not there either. He wonders if they went upstairs to their room to fetch something. He walks into the building and goes up the stairs to the dormitory. On one is there. 'Would they be in another room playing with some friend?' he says to himself, each time more surprised they are nowhere to be seen. Sometimes although it is not allowed to be in their rooms till after supper, some leave unnoticed and go up anyway. He searches all the rooms on the third floor, calling out their names from time to time whilst making sure he is not making too much noise in case the misters are nearby.

He walks into the last room on the other side of the corridor, still no one there. He sets his mind on going down the stairs to go through the same ritual in the lower floors when he sees the stairs that go up to the attic... 'These brothers of mine, they wouldn't have gone up there would they? He thinks. Although it seems a bit strange, he will have a look. He goes up the stairs and calls them in a guarded voice:

'Ernest, Enrique! *Hor zaudete?* (Are you there?) Whenever the boys are a bit nervous or emotional they speak in Basque.

He finds that the door is locked and just as he turns to go downstairs again he hears Enrique's voice:

'Who is it? We're here! We're locked in!'

'Enrique, Ernesto *hor zaudete? Urba naiz.*' (Enrique, Ernesto, are you there?) It's Urbano).

'*Urba, bai, hemen gaude.*' (Yes we're here!)

Through the door Enrique and Ernesto explain what has happened. Ernesto is sobbing with relief. Soothingly Urbano tells them he is going to find Miss Katy so that she can let them out.

This lady finds it hard to believe what he is telling her. At first she thinks Urbano is not speaking English well and she has not understood him but as he insists that she goes with him, she agrees to go. She is greatly surprised when on opening the door she sees the two brothers coming out of there looking scared. The surprise turns to anger that increases as she becomes more and more conscious of what could have happened if they had not been found. With a serious look on her face, this rather strict supervisor who does not like childish pranks sends them to the headmaster's office. The latter ushers them in and listens in alarm as the angry Miss Katy tells him what happened. Instantly he punishes the two brothers by setting them with the task of cleaning all the dormitories on their floor for a whole week. Normally they would only have to clean their own room. The headmaster notices how worried the two boys are and feels they have had enough of a lesson of their own making and thinks that a reprimand would be enough. The lady, being strict, wants more than that. 'After all' she says with a sigh, 'it is not a bad thing for them to do extra chores, it will make them think again when it comes to messing around the place.'

That night in their dormitory, the two brothers are the centre of attention as they tell their eager friends of their great adventure. Just the same, they were all very disillusioned when they were told that there were no hidden 'treasures' upstairs, no toys. When the mystery was unfolded, the attic lost all its magic.

## Chapter 11

*I really like listening to our English teacher Mr Riley. Especially when at the end of a grammar lesson he tells us a bit about England: the history, important persons, books, and its colonies that spread out to other continents. I think I understand most of it. Thank goodness that when our stay was extended they decided to give us these lessons! We were some forty boys and most of us listened intently; he seems to be so focused on the stories he tells us that he almost forgets we are there. He fascinated me.*

*We have learned that the English have dominated the seas; that they defeated the Spanish in a great naval battle; that they have had many kings but that they have also been the first to form a parliament elected by the people to limit their power; that they have had many years of freedom. We also know that at present there is a lot of industry in this country and that they need lots of iron and coal. They have coal but not iron. Due to this, a few years ago they went to Bilbao because we have a lot of it there. And so there are ships that bring iron to England and on their return journey they take coal. The teacher says that there is a strong connection between Bilbao and England. Now I know why many of the buildings here remind me of home. Mr Riley has taught us that a certain man named Newton studied the movement of bodies and discovered the laws of gravity. He filled the blackboard with formulas but we hardly understood any of it. Having heard about this from him I think that one day I will study all of that and will be able to understand it fully. He also talks of democracy and of 'Freedom' which he states is very important and tells us that it is a shame that in Spain a few people now want to end this Freedom.*

*After the lesson the words of the mister continue to plague my mind. He is absolutely right! I wish our people could win in the end and we could live like this. If only they could help us so that we could defeat the rebels!*

*When we arrive at the dining room I greet my brothers distractedly and I help myself to a large slice of bread. All this mental activity has made me feel hungry. Soon they serve us soup and sausages and mash though not too many sausages. Recently there has been less food but we do not complain. The months roll on but the donations do not always cover everything. Because of this, in our establishment as in others, some of the boys and girls have formed dance groups and perform in the towns to raise funds. Enrique is also involved in this as he has always loved these typical dances and he is over the moon. On some of weekends they leave the home (called a colony) to go to a town to perform. They come back feeling happy as they are very much appreciated and people applaud enthusiastically. The money they raise helps towards the costs of keeping them. The winter is a hard one and at times the heating cannot be put on because of lack of funds.*

*I am thinking of all of this while eating the apple for dessert. Suddenly we hear the sound of the speakers gearing up and then begin...*

*'Urbano Iturriza – Enrique Iturriza- Ernest Iturriza please make your way to the headmaster's office.'*

*My heart skips a beat. I look in surprise at my brothers and we all remain paralysed, unable to speak. Ernesto is the first to respond – he gets up and shouts:*

*'Gu gara... It's us!'*

*'Yes it's us, they've called our names out.'*

*'We're going!!! We're going!!!'*

*Enrique and Ernesto start jumping and clapping.*

*'Urba, we're really going, etxera goaz!!!'*

*I look at them in amazement not being able to move or say anything. I wasn't expecting them to call us. At hearing our names, my heart started to beat so fast I couldn't speak. I don't know what to think, or what to feel: if they have requested our return it means that mother and Teresa are well, they have returned home and we will be reunited with them again. This makes me very happy but...*

*Finally I come out of my daze and join my brothers' rejoicing. I embrace them and jump up and down.*

*The train is arriving at Hendaya. The journey has been very long. The three Iturriza boys along with other boys and girls from various colonies have journeyed from the north to the south of England and after crossing the English Channel on a ship they take another train that takes them to the station in Hendaya. They have been travelling for two days and are exhausted. Despite this, as soon as they realise they are almost there, they leap up from their seats and with excitement and emotional turmoil run to the windows. They can't wait to see the border and their country again. As the train enters the station platform they spot some people holding up a placard: Basque Children –these are the people of the organisation that are going to take the children across the border.*

*The children gather their few belongings and jump out. After gathering together at the placard they make their way to the international bridge that joins Hendaya to Irún. And there at the border are two police authorities: a French one and further along a Spanish one. The first one looks at the children indifferently and lets them pass; on the other hand the second one with their serious faces and rough gestures, stop them, check their names on the list the organisation has given to them and orders them in a rude manner to go ahead. They are the ones winning the war and in the Basque Country they are the ones that now rule.*

*The children and youths that are returning know that these are their enemies and that they have to be careful: best not to say anything and pass through unnoticed. The way the children are looked at, the uncertainties of their new life here and needing to know how their parents and siblings are, the tension in the air; the shouting issuing from time to time from the impatient guardias when someone has not got the right papers... all of this was making the children very nervous. They have left behind a life that was safe and peaceful with nothing to be alarmed at, a life where the fears of war were forgotten. They have also left behind many good friends whom they may never see again.*

*With all of this tension Ernesto ends up crying. Urbano takes his hand and gives it a hard squeeze:*

*'Lasai, you will soon be home and together with mother and Teresa. Don't worry. Everything will be alright.'*

*Enrique holds on to his other hand, and in this fashion the three brothers go through the police control without any mishaps and carry on walking across the bridge. They are now in Irún, they are in their beloved Basque Country and they will soon be home again. They will soon see their mother and sister again.*

*All three are now crying as they embrace each other at this intense emotional moment. The adventure in England has finished.*

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Photo – deck of the Habana 21<sup>st</sup> May 1937

Photo - Camp at Stoneham

Photo - Arrival at Darlington Train Station

Photo – St Peter’s, Gainford

Photo – River Tees, Gainford

### **Sources**

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