

Saving the Children

The coming of the Basque children in England affords an opportunity to everybody to give practical expression to humanitarian feelings.

We are all capable of such feelings. Our emotion rises when there is a particularly glaring example of man's inhumanity to man. The recent bombing of Guernica, indeed the whole savage process of the rebel troops towards Bilbao, makes every decent citizen feel a desire to help the innocent victims of the Spanish tragedy. And, while the struggle in which the Basques are involved occupies the centre of the stage at the moment, no humanitarian forgets the population of Madrid, living in a nightmare city which is shelled every day.

But let us be careful not to let our humanitarianism drain away in a lot of fine talk and sentiment. Here is the chance to do something to help in the work of caring for these children who have had to come to a foreign land in order to escape from bombing aeroplanes. These children, when they return to Spain, will be part of the nucleus out of which that nation will be reborn. To make them as happy and comfortable as possible while they are here is a public duty.

Oxford Mail, Monday 24th May 1937, p.4

Basque Children

To the Editor of the Oxford Mail

Sir – The arrival of over 4,000 Basque children at Southampton will be welcomed by all fair-minded people no matter what their political vein.

It should be appreciated that the Government, in protecting all refugees from Bilbao on the high seas, and in giving consent to an influx into this country of the innocent victims of the war, has, perhaps, opened itself to misunderstanding in some continental quarters: and for this reason the gesture is all the more worthy.

I feel it cannot be emphasised too strongly that in giving shelter to the Basque children we are favouring neither the Government Forces nor the insurgents in Spain. The Basques have always been an independent democratic moderately conservative people. But the work of evacuating women and children so that they may escape the horrors of bombardment is not a question of politics.

It is a simple humanitarian issue: and one in which we should all take the opportunity to cooperate, if only in view of Britain's traditional policy in this matter.

I am etc

W.Craven ELLIS MP
House of Commons

Oxford Mail, Tuesday 25th May 1937, p.4

Oxford Union decided Spain concerns us

Isolationist motion rejected

Oxford Union last night rejected the motion "That this House maintains that Spain is no concern of ours". Voting was 50 in favour of the motion and 57 against.

Oxford Mail, Friday, 11th June 1937, p.3

Witney To Take Basque Children

A meeting of representative bodies at Witney last night definitely decided to have a number of Basque children, probably about 50, accommodated in the near future.

The nucleus of the necessary committee was formed with a view to making arrangements for the housing of the children and another meeting will be held over the weekend at which more detailed plans will be discussed.

Oxford Mail, Tuesday, 15th June 1937, p.3

Basque Children

Sir,

Perhaps because the Basques are a small and peace-loving people, it does not matter what they think but nevertheless, they must be dismayed at the attitude of some sections of the British public over the hospitality given to 4,000 of their children. Those who grudge these children their stay seem to forget that the Basques came to our aid during the Great War and lost many men and ships in using the blockade to bring us food. We, for our part, wished nothing except an insignificant call on charity-minded people, yet even this would be denied by some. Is this a proud showing for Great Britain?

I am etc

F.Gordon Howard

120a Baker Street
London W1

Oxford Mail, 23rd September 1937, p.4

Witney and District Gossip

Progress at St. Joseph's

The North Oxfordshire Basque Children's Committee and its voluntary helpers are making considerable headway at Aston, in the face of innumerable difficulties, in making St. Joseph's a comfortable house for the little refugees under their care.

When I paid the house a visit at the weekend, I found much progress had been made since the children arrived on Wednesday.

The smaller children were in the garden, the girls amusing themselves with some old tennis racquets and balls, while the boys indulged in a game of football with home-made goal posts and an old rugby ball.

Inside the house, three or four helpers were cleaning the home and preparing the mid-day meal, assisted by several of the older girls, who were singing their native folk songs while they worked.

Lack of Resources

The volunteers are handicapped by lack of resources of every kind, and are also unlucky to be losing Mrs Kong Sin, a Chinese matron who has lived for many years in Spain, who is unable to remain in St. Joseph's.

Money, equipment and such commodities as vegetables, of which one generous gift had already been made, are urgently needed. Anyone who could see these homeless little children, with nothing in the world and yet indomitably cheerful, would find it hard to refuse to help them. I am told the teacher with them, Maria Teresa Magral, has lost her parents and two brothers in the war and has a third brother still with the Basque army. By far the largest proportion of the children are orphans.

What their future will be is pathetically uncertain, but it is expected that they will remain in St. Joseph's for at least six months.

Oxford Mail, Wednesday 30th June 1937, p.3

SPANISH CHILDREN

Five Adopted After Oxford Meeting for Faringdon Home

At a meeting yesterday afternoon at the Warden's Lodgings, New College, Oxford, by invitation of Mrs Fisher, Miss Vulliamy, who has just returned from Spain, spoke of the sufferings and privations of the Spanish people. The meeting was in aid of the Faringdon home for Spanish children, which is supported by Oxford help.

Miss Vulliamy pointed out that the majority of the children there have parents who are enduring all the horror of which she spoke. She therefore urged that help for the home should be forthcoming in order not to add to the starvation in Spain in the conditions already prevailing.

Amongst those present were Viscountess Chetwynd, Counc. Mrs Stevenson, Mrs Holroyd, Miss Derbyshire, Principal of Somerville, Lady Margaret Murray and Mrs Hooper.

The result of the meeting was that five boys were adopted.

Oxford Mail, Friday 9th December 1938, p.7

Basque Children

It is good news that the Basque children, who are still living in this district, will be well provided for this Christmas. Again the Oxford Covered Market Tradesmen, led by Messrs. Charles Evans and Smart, have shown their great generosity by giving large quantities of meat and vegetables, whilst Messrs. Ryard, who have provided fish twice a week since the children arrived at Aston, have now added a turkey to their invaluable gifts.

Meanwhile many private individuals have rallied round with games and toys, while many contributions have been earmarked for crackers.

It is good to know of so much kindness, especially at a time when it is not easy for anybody.

Oxford Mail, Saturday 24th December 1938, p.4

SOUTH OXFORD CONCERT FOR BASQUE CHILDREN

There was a large audience at the variety concert held in the South Ward Guildhall, Lake Street, Oxford, last night, in aid of the Basque children at Aston, whose singing and dancing in national costume were a feature of the programme.

Councillor Mrs S Bowerman and Mr Ronald Tandy were the joint organisers, and an attractive programme included some well-known local artists. Popular medleys on the piano were given by Mr Ron Ward, and selected songs were admirably rendered by Mr Eugene Grant, baritone. The farmyard was brought to the stage by Brian Toy, whose animal impersonations were cleverly done, and Clarence Roberts (tenor) and Billy Brooks (comedian) made their presence known. My tandy was at the piano.

The concert was an unqualified success, as the applause showed, and during an interval, Mr Abe Lazarus made an appeal.

Oxford Times, Tuesday 24th May 1938, p.3

Basque Children

Sir – During the last anxious days, hundreds and thousands of British parents have, for the first time in history, been brought face to face with separation from their children, owing to evacuation plans under the direct threat of war.

This must have brought home to many of us, more poignantly than ever before, the tragedy of the 1,700 evacuated Spanish children who are still with us. They were obliged to part from their parents during actual conditions of warfare, and have now been separated for more than a year. These children are entirely dependent upon us for security, food, shelter and the opportunity to lead, as far as possible, the normal life of childhood.

May we therefore appeal to your readers in this moment of relief at their own children's safety, to help us to go on maintaining these unhappy child victims of the Spanish civil war, until we are able to return them to their parents, which is being done where possible?

I am, etc.,
Cecil
Eleanor F Rathbone
Wilfrid Roberts
H V Tewson

Basque Children's Committee
4 Great South Street
London SW1

Oxford Times, Wednesday 5th October 1938, p.4

Oxford Times Friday 11th June 1937

Lord Mayor's Spanish Relief Fund

Meeting held previous Friday, chief speaker Duchess of Atholl

Mayor presided ()

Deputy Mayor: Ald. Mrs Townsend

Sherrif: Counc. Cripps

Bishop G B Allen (Archdeacon of Oxford)

Sir Arthur Salter MP

Sir Alfred Zimmern

Dean of Christchurch (Dr A T P Williams)

Professor Enrique Moreno

Sir Hugh Hall

Dr Gilbert Murray

Prof J I Brierley

Mr A Barratt (Principal of Ruskin College)

And members of city council