

THE FIRST EXILE OF THE BASQUES. 1936-1939

Jesús J. Alonso Carballés

University of Limoges-EHIC

Nor could he have guessed that everything would disappear; that the houses and roads as well as the people, would not be the same.

Sancho de Beurko

In a volume intended for an overall assessment of the Civil War seventy years after the bombing of Guernica, as a foremost objective, this article attempts to portray an overview of what was the first Basque exile; the flight of tens of thousands of people going to other countries at different times of the conflict between 1936 and 1939. Within this chronological framework, we endeavour to tackle the different phases of this phenomenon which began with the flight of thousands of Basques to France due to the francoist offensive on Guipúzcoa in 1936, and continued with an enormous number of evacuations from the Northern Front between March and October 1937 and then finished with the great exodus of January and February of 1939, which marked the final campaign of Catalonia. We will analyse the specific nature of each of these waves, how the Basque Government organized each wave and cared for the refugees, the solidarity and aid from the various governments and humanitarian organizations whilst not forgetting the refugees' presence in Catalonia. In short, we will try to give an overview of this key episode of the history of the Basque Country, with particular attention to the exodus of the children as the main subject in this process, the innocent victims in war who are rarely given their rightful place in history.

1. The varying phases of exile

At the start of the conflict there was hardly any real movement of populations other than the movement undertaken by people from abroad who were living in the north of Spain, those who were on holiday there and some Basque families whose high profile political ideology implied a heightened level of danger when faced with the new authorities. It is well known that the military uprising left the Basque territory divided into two areas right from the start of the conflict and as the war progressed, it meant that those territories favouring the Republic, Guipúzcoa and Vizcaya (Biscay), were the ones that would most suffer the consequences of exile.

1.1. The 1936 wave

The first significant exodus of the Basque people to foreign lands took place a few weeks after the start of the war during the Guipúzcoa campaign. The fear instilled in the people by the rapid advance of the rebel troops at the Front and the proximity of the fighting provoked the flight of a considerable number of women and children towards France. In less than two days, between the 30th of August and the 1st of September, 2,272 people crossed the frontier on foot carrying a few belongings and some clothes. After the fall of Irún, the pressure was directed towards San Sebastián. Before the fall of the city on the 13th of September 1936, the Defence Board and the military commanders organised the evacuation of part of the civil

population in order to avoid military clashes and possible reprisals by the rebel troops. Some heavy tonnage ships together with numerous fishing boats were chartered from the port of San Sebastián. On the whole, this event was characterised by its recurring nature, motivated by the fear of fighting and reprisals, together with being able to count on family or friends already at the other side of the frontier which was an equally decisive factor for at least a thousand people. Overall, the number of exiles that went to France from Guipúzcoa in this first exodus was over 16,500 people, women and children for the most part and some elderly people; while the soldiers that were evacuated numbered between 2,000 and 3,000, most of whom were rapidly repatriated to Catalonia via the Port Bou¹ frontier.

Initially, the Department for the Lower Pyrenees, now the Atlantic Pyrenees, took in the major part of the refugees, more than 4,000, in places not far from the frontier such as Bayonne where 2,000 people were taken in. Hendaye took in 600 refugees, Anglet 400, Urrugne 150, and San Juan de Luz one hundred. Immediately after, a larger contingent of Basque exiles was transferred to places more to the north such as Gironde, Landas, Lot-et-Garonne or Lot-et-Indre². The accommodation and sustenance of these people was undertaken by the French authorities and the French people in the different local intake areas, by political groups and left-wing trade unions, as well as by some Catholic establishments. With regard to the refugee population, it is worth pointing out that political motives at this stage were of secondary importance and, because of this the tendency to return was expected. Approximately half the refugees returned to their homes over the next few weeks after the Deva line frontier became stable. One half returned to Guipúzcoa, while the other half went to Catalonia, mainly to Barcelona, according to the figures put out by the Euzkadi Delegation in Catalonia, which in January 1937 registered a significant number of people from Guipúzcoa. In this wave, the number of Basque refugees that remained in France for a prolonged period of time would be up to 5,000, most of them living in the neighbouring region of the Atlantic Pyrenees.

1.2. *The reception of the refugees from Guipúzcoa in Vizcaya (Biscay)*

Parallel to this migration to France, the advance of Franco's army caused the first great wave of more than one hundred thousand Guipuzcoans fleeing overland towards the republican territory of Vizcaya. Whole families of women, elderly people and children, along with their few personal belongings and, occasionally with their animals, moved towards the west as the troops advanced. The arrival of these refugees initially fuelled fear of the advancing rebels, but above all it gave birth to a response of solidarity by the people of Vizcaya, who took in many displaced people into their homes. It also prompted the setting up of a huge reception effort initiated by the *Asistencia Social de la Junta de Defensa de Vizcaya*, (Social Assistance of the Defence Board of Biscay) which was continued and successfully expanded by the Department of Social Assistance of the Basque Government, which was formed in the first week of October 1936. This implementation was directed and efficiently coordinated by the socialist councillor Juan Gracia Colás, head of the Social Assistance Department. Very quickly, this Department succeeded in controlling, accommodating and supplying provisions in a satisfactory manner under war conditions, for the huge number of Guipuzcoan refugees. They acquired vast buildings, business centres, schools, convents, religious establishments and property belonging to people on the rebel side. In less than three months, the Department of Social Assistance was able to set up a firm network of social assistance at all levels which included food centres, collective accommodation and medical services, allowing for dignified living in the stated circumstances of more than 70,000 refugees. As recorded in the report on the work carried out by the Department up to the 31st of December 1936, the capital took in a total of 35,000 people (15,000 children, 12,000 women and 6,500 elderly men), whilst a

similar number was housed over the rest of the Basque territory³. In the census of refugees carried out by the Department from the month of October 1936 recording the requests made by these refugees, we can confirm that almost 90% of the refugees requested clothing due to the proximity of the winter and the rush they were in to leave their homes, with only a 7% request for accommodation and a lower figure of 3% for food⁴. In the light of these findings, it is not an exaggeration to say that most of the refugees' needs for accommodation and sustenance were met by the Basque Government's Department of Social Assistance.

Parallel to this, most of the Department of Social Assistance's initiatives were aimed at keeping the children safe from the hardships of war. To this end, they set up Homes for Militia Orphans and Children's homes with the purpose of providing education and shelter as a solution to the unique problem of the needs of 30,000 refugee children, a figure the authorities themselves estimated. One of the most important ones was the home installed in the old Olavarri Palace, number 41, Campo de Volantín, Bilbao, where the residents were children of deceased militia and *gudaris* (Basque soldiers). The building, having been adapted for this new use, was equipped with 150 beds, with several dining rooms, sitting rooms, visiting rooms, studies, a surgery, and a bomb shelter for the ever increasing frequency of bombings. It takes little imagination to see that the creation of this authentic network of aid demonstrates that the Basque Government with the Department of Social Assistance at its head made a tremendous effort to alleviate the situation of the refugees as a whole and of the children most in need. While this was possible, this educational aid work was carried out in the Basque territory; when Franco's troops advanced, it was no longer possible and the Department organised the evacuation of the civil population to places far away from the Basque Country.

1.3. *The evacuation of the civil population in 1937*

To understand the extraordinary facets of the exodus of the Basque civil population in 1937, it is essential to briefly remind oneself of the circumstances brought about by war wherein the different phases of the expeditions took place during that year.

1.3.1. The first children's expedition

The first expedition took place in March, even before the beginning of Franco's offensive on the territory of Vizcaya. From the forming of the first Basque Government in October 1936 until Franco's offensive against the territory of Vizcaya on the 31st of March 1937, the autonomous Basque population underwent a period of relative calm, maintaining a fairly stable Front. Nonetheless, the people suffered the scarcity of some basic food, the children stopped going to school, and the Condor Legion bombed the Basque population sporadically. It was precisely the bombing of Bilbao on the 4th of January 1937 that left a deep impression on the population and led the Basque Government to consider a previous proposal from the Republican Embassy in Paris, for France to temporarily host the children living closest to the conflict zone. It was the first time, immediately after this bombing, that the Department under Juan Gracia offered Basque families the possibility of registering their children aged 5 to 12 years for evacuation. The shock from this aerial attack was so great that in less than a week, between the 9th and the 16th of January 1937, there were more than 1,600 applications from parents asking for their children to be sent abroad temporarily⁵.

After two months of negotiations, at the beginning of March, the Basque Government succeeded in getting support and protection from the British navy, French trade unions and humanitarian groups in charge of taking in the children. The Department of Social Assistance wanted to organize an evacuation modest in numbers but exemplary in its implementation.

The number of applicants was a reduced number of 450 minors of both sexes from the Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa area. The expedition set out on the 21st of March 1937 from the Basque port of Bermeo on board two British destroyers, HMS Campbell and HMS Blanche, for San Juan de Luz. From there they were taken to the Isle of Oléron, north of Bordeaux where they were temporarily taken into the magnificent vacation colony *La Maison Heureuse* (The Happy House).

1.3.2. The great wave: The evacuations of May and June 1937

A few days after the departure of this first expedition, on the 31st of March 1937, Franco's offensive began on the territory of Vizcaya (Biscay), with the bombing of Durango, which razed to the ground a good part of the town and resulted in 300 victims. In the following weeks numerous Basque areas, including the capital, were bombarded with relative frequency by the Condor Legion causing many deaths and a considerably increased collective unrest. The dramatic Bombing of Guernica, on the 26th of April 1937, was the pivotal point for sounding the alarm regarding the capacity of destruction of the German Air Force and was considered by the Basque authorities as the next level in the scaling up of terror as announced by Mola, and which began in Durango and appeared to be heading for Bilbao as its next target. It was in these last days of April, with the constant threat from the air, when the Basque Government, headed by the Department of Social Assistance, gave its final push for the organization of a large scale evacuation of the civil population in order to avoid what could be foreseen as an imminent catastrophe. In the last days of April, and the beginning of May, the requests of parents for the evacuation of their children rose exponentially. Apart from the bombings, there were other factors involved such as the increasing difficulty in locating food and the fact that in principle, it was only a matter of temporary evacuation which would last some weeks or at most some months, until Franco's offensive could be halted.

To move forward with the strategy of evacuating the civil population, it was essential to have the support of Great Britain and France since Franco's navy was radically opposed to it. Initially, both countries were reticent in offering support since there were obvious risks to which can be added the economic costs of the operation. At the beginning of May, after the sympathy provoked by the bombarding of Guernica, both governments agreed to escort the expeditions of civil refugees on humanitarian grounds but would give their support on condition that for each expedition there would be around 20% of passengers who were conservative political prisoners, 'hostages' in their own words, who were shut away in various jails in Bilbao⁶. France pledged to take in refugees on a transitory basis and the British Navy pledged to escort the expeditions which would be undertaken under the supervision of the British consulate in Bilbao, Ralph Stevenson. This support from both the democratic powers and the effective involvement of the Royal Navy in the evacuation provoked a rage reaction from the francoist authorities who considered this action as "an intolerable foreign interference" and they threatened to sink the boats which came out of the port of Bilbao carrying refugees and yet not even this threat could halt the process. The evacuation was open to elderly men, women and children under fifteen years of age who wanted to abandon the Basque territory regardless of their ideology and their social status, as required by the English and the French. This at least in principle, given that the parents had to enlist their children at the headquarters of the political parties and unions who were in charge of processing them at the Department of Social Assistance and which determined the composition of people on this passage while it is also true that in nearly all expeditions there were small contingents of those who appear in the French records as 'paying refugees', people with means who once they arrived in France could freely dispose of their assets and

could also return to the national zone if they wished. Regarding the adults and elderly men, the applications were processed by the Department of the Interior (Home Office) headed by the nationalist Telesforo Monzón. When the time came to fill in the application forms, the parents could choose the destination of their children, mainly France, Great Britain or the USSR, although in some application forms there also appeared requests such as 'abroad' or 'wherever possible', which truly reflects the uncertainty among Basque families at that point as to the fate of their offspring. Days before the evacuation, the children were called up for a medical examination during which they were measured, weighed and vaccinated against smallpox. In order to move forward with this mass evacuation, the Basque Government turned to the transatlantic SS Habana which was moored in the outer port of Bilbao and had been requisitioned in the month of January 1937 with the intention of converting it into a hospital ship⁷. This ship was joined by various other merchant ships which sailed under the Republican, British and French flags and had succeeded in reaching Bilbao despite the alleged port blockade and were joined also by the Goizeko-Izarra, previously the pleasure yacht of Sir Ramón de la Sota.

Although it was envisioned that their stay would be for a limited time, the Basque Government attached the greatest importance to the education and welfare of the children during their exile and all the expeditions could count with the presence of both teachers as well as auxiliary helpers to provide for their education, care and medical attention. It is difficult to know the exact numbers, mainly women, that accompanied them and saw to their every day needs as 'mothers' of many children. In France this number was more than 500 people, whilst in the case of Great Britain, Belgium and the USSR it would have been around one hundred teaching and auxiliary personnel.

The mass expeditions began the first week of May 1937, when the neighbouring country had put everything in place for their reception. Less than four days after the bombing of Guernica, the French Ministry of the Interior sent the first communication to the coast guard officers of the SS Gironde and the SS Charente indicating the possibility of receiving a large contingent of several thousand refugees coming from Bilbao imminently. At the beginning, it was indicated that the ports of Pauillac around Bordeaux and La Pallice in La Rochelle were the mandatory destinations for the expeditions. In the following months the ports of Nantes and Saint-Nazaire more to the north were added, whilst the nearest ports of San Juan de Luz and Bayonne were reserved for urgent cases. The French authorities also established a first series of reception centres for the intake of the refugees, a list that was extended on further occasions to cover most of the French territory apart from areas bordering Germany.

At the beginning of May 1937, the Basque Government's Social Assistance and Health ministers Juan Gracia and Alfredo Espinosa moved to France to better coordinate the arrangements of the evacuation, the reception centres and the distribution of the refugees in France. An evacuation Committee was set up at the Basque Government Delegation in Paris with sub-delegations in Bayonne and Bordeaux, which, under the chairmanship of José María de Izaurieta, aimed at coordinating all the action undertaken abroad in relation to the evacuation, the search for shelters and reception centres, as well as the monitoring of the refugees. Juan Gracia himself, by express decision of the Basque Government, remained in France for the rest of the war coordinating the work in his Department.

At this stage, the most important expeditions were mostly, but not exclusively, made up of minors. The first expedition left from the port of Santurce on the 6th of May 1937 with 2,483 refugees on board the SS Habana heading for the port of La Pallice in La Rochelle. On the 9th of May an expedition took place on board three French merchant ships, the Carimare, the

Château-Palmer and the Margaux, which had arrived the day before with several tonnes of provisions and food supplies for Bilbao, made available with donations and contributions from the French public. Once unloaded, the ships returned to the French coasts with a new contingent of 2,000 evacuees on board, a good part of them from well-to-do families who had paid for their passage. According to the French authorities, the majority of these passengers, having disembarked, headed for the zone bordering the Basque Country and crossed the frontier to San Sebastián. On the 21st of May the only expedition that was bound for Great Britain was organised, comprising of 3,861 children, again on board the SS Habana, after which other expeditions followed to France on the 1st and the 6th of June. The following week, on the 10th and the 13th of June, the evacuation of the 270 children hospitalised in the Sanatorium in *Górliz* was organised but the largest expedition took place on the 13th of June, hardly a week before Franco's troops entered Bilbao, with 4,500 children on board the great transatlantic ship: 2,900 bound for France and another 1,600 bound for the USSR. These last ones were transferred onto the French SS Sontay, which was to take them to Leningrad where they arrived a week later. They were accompanied by 72 teachers and instructors, two doctors and numerous auxiliary helpers.

The following schematic table shows the main expeditions undertaken from the start of Franco's offensive on Vizcaya till the fall of *Bilbao* on the 19th of June 1937.

Evacuation expeditions from the port of Santurce between May and June 1937

SHIPS	DEPARTURE DATE	ARRIVAL PORT	REFUGEES	CHILDREN
SS Habana	6-V-1937	La Pallice	2,483	2,273
Goizeko Izarra	6-V-1937	Pauillac	163	163
Carimare, Margaux y Château-Palmer	9-V-1937	Pauillac	2,000	500
SS Habana	16-V-1937	Pauillac	3,869	2,185
SS Habana	21-V-1937	Southampton	3,861	3,861
Cabo Corona	22-V-1937	La Pallice	1,174	737
SS Habana	1-VI-1937	La Pallice	3,728	2,318
SS Habana	6-VI-1937	La Pallice	4,251	2,337
Goizeko-Izarra	10-VI-1937	Bayonne	139	139
Goizeko-Izarra	13-VI-1937	Bayonne	131	131
SS Habana	13-VI-1937	Pauillac	4,500	4,500
Total			26,659	19,144

In this phase there were more than 26,000 exiles, of which 19,000 were minors and over 7,000 adults, women and elderly men, as well as the accompanying personnel as mentioned before.

1.3.3. The final phase: The evacuations from Santander and Asturias

Days before the fall of Bilbao, a part of the population and thousands of refugees, at the express instructions of the Basque authorities, began their flight to Las Encartaciones where

the temporary buildings for the refugees had been already constructed. The subsequent advance of the Front in that same zone converted the area into an arsenal and the refugees there were obliged to continue their flight westwards first towards Santander, and then to Asturias further on. Whether by sea or by land, the number of Basque refugees that fled from Vizcaya when Franco's troops arrived, was over one hundred thousand, with a significant percentage of women and young children among them. At that point in time, evacuation abroad was something the refugees, especially mothers with little ones, did not even contemplate when they began their flight. Nonetheless, in most cases the embarkation for France was experienced as somewhat of a relief after the uncertainty of the previous weeks. This is how these times are remembered by the leader of the *Emakume Abertzale Bazta*, (Basque Women's Nationalist Support Group) Polixene Trabudua:

After a year of anguish and, above all, after those last days when the terror of knowing that we could be blown to pieces at any time by a bomb or a bullet was so great, suddenly finding ourselves to be safe in that French boat, with that crew of men dressed in their impeccable uniforms who treated us with total consideration and respect despite our dirty appearance and bad smell...was something that surpassed our ability to be surprised⁸.

Both from Santander and Asturias, during the months of July and August till the fall of Gijón in the month of September, it was the Ministry of the Interior, led by Monzón under the supervision of Fidel Rotaèche that organised the refugee evacuation expeditions. On this occasion, it was more of a family affair with a majority of women, sometimes accompanied by their children, and some elderly men, to which can be added the members of the Basque Government and those soldiers that continued to fight until the final fall of Asturias.

With the SS Habana anchored in Bordeaux, it was mainly the English and French merchant ships such as the Marion Moller, the Perros Guirec, the Tregastel and the Ploubazlanec among others that were used for this exodus. On the whole the voyages on these ships were undertaken under harsh conditions with crowded decks and poor sanitary facilities. In the months of July and August 1937, the main port used for evacuation was Santander, from where more than 31,000 refugees set out. The start of Franco's offensive on the capital of Cantabria on the 14th of August led to the definitive transfer of the embarkations to the Asturian ports of Ribadesella, Gijón and Avilés. From then on and until the fall of Gijón towards the end of October, a total of 62,000 refugees left for exile. The reports by Fidel Rotaèche from the Basque Government put the number of exiles that left from the end of June to October at 116,746 of whom 103,115 were Basque citizens⁹. In our modest opinion, this figure seems somewhat inflated due to the fact that most of the people on these expeditions after the fall of the Basque Country were classed as Basques. According to other statistics concluded through an analysis of those listed on the expeditions departing from Santander and Asturias, in many cases the number of Basques in reality would have been between half and two thirds of the above mentioned expeditions, thus the figure given would in fact be much lower¹⁰. Undoubtedly there are times when it is difficult to distinguish those people who originated from the Basque Country from those from other republican parts of the north listed there but one must also take into account that there were expeditions that are not in the Rotaèche list, making it difficult to give an exact figure of the Basque exiles in this last phase of the evacuations. According to Basque Government sources, the number of Basque exiles during the whole year of 1937 would be around 130,000. Nonetheless, if we take into account the number of refugees that were later repatriated from France to the Basque Country as well as to Catalonia, we consider it necessary to reduce the final number of Basque exiles and put it around one hundred thousand for the whole year of 1937¹¹, of which around 32,000 were minors¹².

2. The Basque people in exile

Did the Basque Government ever think that the exodus of the Basque people would reach such proportions? Was it prepared and did it have enough resources for the care of those exiles outside the Basque Country? These two questions are undoubtedly difficult to answer. We must not forget that it was expected there would be a quick return of the refugees, but in fact the seizure of the Basque Country and the rest of the republican north by Franco's troops and his repressive and exclusive politics meant that the exodus that was to be for a few weeks turned for many into a lengthy exodus which did not end until 1939, whilst for others it was extended until the death of Franco himself and for some it has even lasted till today.

Having lost the homeland, whilst in exile the Basque Government began a new critical stage during which it questioned its very existence especially after what happened in Santoña. The Basque authorities, with the *lehendakari* (Basque leader) Aguirre at its head, defended the need to continue with their work, now focusing their efforts on the Basque exiles and refugees. This assistance for the refugee population thus served as a solid argument for what Aguirre and his executive considered to be 'Basque interests':

categorical and concrete needs of the Basque people wherever they may be... These interests exist whether abroad or in territory loyal to the republican cause, but if there is a law for them, a right recognised in the autonomous text, as is the case, the management of these interests cannot be entrusted to anyone else but the Basque Country¹³.

During the rest of the conflict a large part of the resources of the Basque executive was allocated to the needs of the exiles and to secure its legitimacy and its presence in numerous places, of which two are of a priority nature: France and Catalonia. In France, the country that at the beginning took in most of the refugees, a tremendous effort was made to care for the exiles and an efficient and intense propaganda campaign was initiated which sought to make the uniqueness of the Basque people known. In Catalonia, having now become the new headquarters of the Basque executive, the aim was to consolidate and strengthen their presence in republican politics and at the same time respond to the needs of the ever growing numbers of refugees that were moved on from the other side of the Pyrenees under pressure from the French authorities.

2.1. *The Basque exiles in France*

Right from the very beginning, the Basque Government had to withdraw its plan to control the fate of the refugees and it was the French authorities and the supporting committees that took on the role of their initial reception in the neighbouring country. When they arrived at the French ports, they were vaccinated, registered and examined in order to detect any infectious illnesses which would put the French public in danger such as the measles, rubella, chicken pox or tuberculosis: "It was as if a ship with an exanthematic typhus infection on board was docking", was the information given to the doctors of the steam-ship Cabo Corona referring to the excessive sanitary precautions installed in the port at their arrival¹⁴. Having set up these precautions, the French doctors in charge were positively surprised at the state of health of the exiles as they had expected them to be much weaker under the hardships of war¹⁵. After going through the controls and having been given food, the refugees were taken by train to the designated reception centres in France and some thousands of children were taken to neighbouring countries.

The organising of reception centres, food, education, the provision of clothes and other needs for the proper sheltering of refugees whose numbers only in this country, France, rose to over eighty thousand, was an arduous and complex task in which numerous official bodies, private organisations and families took part. In 1937 the French Government established a series of specialised help to cope with this temporary reception by giving funds of between 7 and 8.50 francs per person for people over two years of age and about 5 francs for each child under that age. This amount that had been established to deal specifically with unemployment benefit was distributed by local committees made up of the mayor, representatives of humanitarian organisations, as well as Trade Unions, political and religious organisations. Thanks to these funds many reception centres were established up and down the country of which one of the most outstanding ones, due to the volume of refugees, was the one in the Michelin Factory blocks in Clermont-Ferrand where 548 Basque refugees were housed. Similar shelters, though rarely so well provided for, were organised all over France. The conditions and the equipment of these centres were generally satisfactory although there were significant differences as one would expect bearing in mind that in some cases they occupied abandoned industrial or military buildings whilst elsewhere palaces with extensive gardens, stately homes or well equipped communal buildings were used. However, their existence did not last very long.

Towards the end of September 1937, concerned that the refugees were becoming a permanent feature in France and with the high cost of their upkeep, the French authorities decided to dismantle most of them. The refugees were then forced to return whether to Franco's Spain or republican Spain. This "covert expulsion" reduced most significantly the presence of Basque refugees on French territory. It is enough to say that the total number of 1,207 refugees taken in by the Department of Vaucluse in mid August 1937 was reduced to 52 refugees in October of the same year¹⁶. The report from *Euzkadi Buru Batzar* (the Executive Council of the Basque Country) relating to this process, gives us a glimpse of the immense pressure imposed by the French authorities when they affirmed:

Our people did not wish to return to Catalonia nor to the Basque Country. Necessity forced them to choose between Catalonia and the Basque Country. Yet all of them were resigned and disaffected, forced as we have said, by necessity¹⁷.

As a result of this pressure, in mid 1938, most of the Basque refugees were repatriated and only some 19,000 remained in France under the control of the Basque Government¹⁸ whilst the number of minors in that same period would have been around 11,000. That is to say, on the whole we can deduce that at the beginning of 1938 there were 30,000 Basque exiles to be found in France.

Despite the fact that their ability to control the situation was taken to its very limits due to the magnitude of the exodus, the Basque Government continued with their outstanding work of assistance taking thousands of adults under their wing. Many refugee centres were established in Chatenay-Malabry, Château-du-Loir, Enghien-les-Bains, Narbonne, Sète, Pezenas, Compans, Noyon and Montauban. Most of them were functioning well until they were requisitioned by the French authorities in 1939 to house the troops and the French refugees coming from Sarre, Alsace and Lorraine, who were now beginning to be numerous after the outbreak of the Second World War. Parallel to this, the PNV (*Partido Nacional Vasco*- the Basque National Party), set up the *Euzko-Anaitasuna* (Basque Brotherhood) assistance programme, aimed at giving assistance to nationalist refugees through funding and aid, but it also organised a dozen shelters and colonies, mostly in different areas of the Atlantic Pyrenees and the Landes region.

The subject of health-care for the refugees was also given particular attention by the Basque Government and in the colonies they organised, all medical aid was undertaken by the Department of Health and in the French Basque Country the exiles were even able to have home health care. They also set up many hospitals for the care of the wounded in war, the Roseraie Hospital near Biarritz being one of the best known ones where refugees that needed surgery were attended to¹⁹. In short, we are of the view that with regard to assistance the Basque Government did an outstanding job in the field of health-care regardless of the drawbacks due to the huge number of exiles and the funding needs they themselves had to afford, a situation that drastically limited their initial objectives.

As far as the younger ones are concerned, the Basque executive came up with a two-pronged action plan according to the different political leanings coexisting in their midst. On the one hand, the Department of Culture headed by the nationalist Jesús de Leizaola, focused its sights in the setting up and maintenance of Basque children's colonies with the fundamental goal of continuing with the educational and cultural work developed in the Republic. These centres developed a type of education inspired by the Basque schools, prioritising the recovery of their Basque language, promoting traditional Basque folklore and the teaching and practising of religion. Most of the colonies under this Department were set up in the parts of the French Basque Country such as Cagnotte, Ixassou, Ciboure, Cambo-les-Bains, Ustaritz, Armendaritz and Saint-Jean-de-Pied-de-Port. This last place was the colony with the largest number of children amounting to 419 minors, comprising of 213 boys and 206 girls, up until the beginning of 1939. On the other hand, the Ministry of Social Assistance, headed by the socialist Juan Gracia, organised the children's colonies and residences in Orthez, Ghétary, Arraute-Charritte, Saint Christau and Dax, where it promoted Basque lay teaching, reflecting the socialist leanings of the Department and expressly excluded religious teaching during official times.

With regard to the children that were not dependant on the Basque Government, a large number of about seven thousand, were taken in by adoptive families in France. Most of them were French families, but there were also several hundreds of Spanish families that were already in France, mainly in the region of Languedoc-Rousillon. The rest of the children were taken in by different colonies under the guardianship of the Spanish Government of the Republic, the *Comité d'Accueil aux Enfants Espagnols* (CAEE) – (Aid Committee for Spanish Children), created by the CGT (Trade Union Confederations), the French Socialist Party (SFIO) and the *Comité National Catholique d'Accueil aux Basques* (CNCAB)-(the Catholic National Committee of Aid for Basques), created in 1937 by monsignor Clément Mathieu, the bishop of Aire and Dax, and also by various other humanitarian institutions from countries such as Holland, the United States, Norway, Sweden..., that opted to subsidise the setting up of children's colonies all over France²⁰.

Lastly, the Basque authorities were quick to realise the potential importance of the presence of refugees in France which would shape the image of the Basques among the French populace. In the recommendations to the teachers appointed to go with the refugee children in France in May 1937, the following considerations were put forward:

One must endeavour to show total respect for the traditions, customs, and special characteristics of France and its people, and at all costs leave well ingrained our reputation as serious, democratic and respectful to all [...] Always avoid doing anything in public that could in any way damage the reputation of the country, behaving both in public and in private in a way befitting a dignified people. Everything in an orderly fashion, the house, streets, gardens, walks, etc...and respect for everything around them, must be the standard rule of the

refugee children. *Keep in mind that the world is looking at them and that what the world sees can influence for or against our prestige*²¹.

Now aware of the opportunity of spreading the word about the uniqueness of the Basque people, Aguirre's Government carried a series of moderate propaganda activities which had a strong impact on French public opinion. One of the most important of the various initiatives that were undertaken was the sending to France and other European countries of two artistic groups of Basque folklore: *Eresoinka*, performed by adults, and *Elai-Alai*, performed by children from Guernica. Both put on numerous performances all over France and in other European countries, the most notable being the performances in the Chaillot Palace and in the Salle Pleyel, the concert hall in Paris²². The *Euzkadi* (Basque) football team also made a great impact having played in four matches in France and several more in other European countries and in America. Most of the players were from the Athletic Bilbao and played against various professional teams with great game results and many write-ups in the press where they were represented as the Basque national team. Another element that stands out in this political propaganda abroad was the production of the newspaper *Euzko Deya* (Basque Voice) which was published continuously from the 29th of November 1936 until the 10th of May 1940. Despite a modest print run, it was influential to a certain degree by becoming an important source for the history and current affairs of the Basques for all French newspapers. The newspaper, which came out twice a week, was thus used to uphold the nationalism and Catholicism of the Basque people. Lastly, it is worth highlighting the work carried out by the *Ligue Internationale des Amis des Basques* (the International League of Basque Friends). Created in 1938, its membership was made up of a group of influential personalities from all spheres of French society; from members of the ecclesiastic hierarchy, to outstanding writers such as François Mauriac or Jacques Maritain, and politicians and MPs such as Ernest Pezet or Edouard Herriot, no less, an authentic group that defended the interests of the Basques in political, social and cultural spheres in France²³.

2.2. The Basque exile in other countries

As we have already pointed out, a great part of the Basque exiles were initially taken in by the French before they went to other destinations. Although a few isolated groups left from as early as 1937 mainly on route to Venezuela and Argentina, it was not until the end of the conflict when there was an organised evacuation of thousands of Basques who went from their old continent to different American countries such as Mexico, Argentina or Venezuela among others. In some of these countries there already existed a well established Basque community which sometimes took part in facilitating and integrating the arrival of the Basque exiles²⁴.

During the war, it was due to the children alone that a significant number of refugee groups were formed in different countries. In the case of Great Britain, almost 4,000 minors arrived in May 1937 at the Stoneham camp in Southampton. This camp was their base for a few weeks before they were sent to one of the numerous colonies set up by various organisations which together with the Salvation Army, the Labour Party, Trade Unions and other institutions linked with the Catholic Church, constituted the Basque Children Committee in charge of all the necessary funding for the youngsters. These children were distributed over a variety of colonies all over the United Kingdom, from the south of England right up to Scotland. One of the most important colonies was the Salvation Army in Clapton, London which at the beginning took in some 400 youngsters over a few weeks before they were transferred to other places such as Hadleigh, Brixton and Ramsgate. In most cases, the children were well placed pedagogically thanks to the presence of the Basque teachers and

auxiliaries which also allowed for, among other activities, the forming of traditional dance groups²⁵.

In the USSR, it was the Soviet authorities that were in charge of all the exiled Basque children's needs. The nearly 1,500 Basques, together with those that arrived from Asturias, Madrid and Valencia raising the figure to over 3,000, were shared among fourteen houses which depended on the People's Commissariat for education and were established in Moscow, Leningrad, and other places in the Crimea and the Ukraine. In these generally well equipped colonies, the children studied with Russian and Spanish teachers and received an elite education within very small groups of between 6 and 8 pupils. The Soviet Commissariat of Culture even published an Anthology of Spanish Literature thus generally it can be seen that they were educated as Spanish children; it was a case of familiarising them with the Russian culture rather than assimilating them into it. It was meant to form the future elite which would lead their country once they returned to Spain although this return would be prolonged. As the historian Daniel Kowalsky points out, "the intention of the Central Committee was to give the Spanish children a pure communist training, instilling them with the respect and esteem needed for collective work and, to conclude, to turn them into the building blocks of communist society"²⁶. Nevertheless, the children suffered for quite some time from having to adapt to a system that was alien to them, thousands of kilometres from home. As Manuel Tagüeña would later state, in schools for Spanish children the main problem was a psychological one:

Uprooted from their homes because of the war, most of the children and youths were more or less consciously resisting being educated by foreign people and often put up a mental barrier which not even the Spanish teachers could cross [...] it was difficult to gain their trust²⁷.

In Belgium, it was the reception committees, especially the adoptive families that supported the refugee children with funding since the Belgium Government stayed on the sidelines during this process. Their reception involved political, social and religious organisations and a widespread range of Belgium people, from socialist families and communists to strict Catholic families and of course, the call for solidarity was answered as much by both Walloon and Flemish families.

The Belgium Socialist Party (POB-BWP) that towards the end of 1936 had already formed the *Comité National pour l'Hébergement des Enfants Espagnols en Belgique (CNHEEB)* – (the National Committee for the Housing of the Spanish Children in Belgium), was one of the best reception organisations. Thanks to their involvement between the months of April and July 1937, this organisation undertook the distribution of thousands of Basque children among like-minded families. As a response to this socialist solidarity, Cardinal Archbishop of Malinas, monsignor Van Roey, formed the organisation *Baskisch Kinderwerk-L'Oeuvre des Enfants Basques* (Basque Children's Support), which brought Catholic families and various other religious orders and institutions together in solidarity to take charge of the reception of 1,300 Basque children. The Basque Government itself established a shelter in the Fourneau castle in the province of Liège, where 120 refugees were taken in; women, children and elderly men. Over and above these institutions, they were also supported by the communist International Red Relief, the Red Cross of Belgium, and the *Grupo Español para la Defensa de la República*²⁸ (Spanish Group for the Defence of the Republic). All together, the number of Basque refugee children in Belgium for the year 1937 was around 3,300 of which more than 3,000 were taken in by families, a figure that shows the strong commitment of the Belgian people to the victims of the Spanish Civil War²⁹.

The aspect that best characterises the life in exile of these Basque minors was without doubt the high degree of integration thanks to being taken in by families and their admission into official schools. Nearly all of the adoptive parents were responsible guardians and it was precisely these people who most insisted that these children should keep in touch with their true parents through habitual and continuous correspondence. Nonetheless, there were also families who by temporarily adopting the children were searching for the personal satisfaction of filling the empty gap of the children they never had or had lost. In the fictionalised autobiography of his work *El Otro Árbol de Guernica* (The Other Tree of Guernica), Luis de Catresana is fully immersed in these circumstances. However, these ‘branches’ should not prevent us from seeing the ‘forest’ of human solidarity which drove most of the families to shelter these young refugees in their homes with no other thought in mind other than that of helping them³⁰.

Immersed in the world of family and school, the relationships among the Basque children themselves were very limited and despite the efforts of the Basque Government and the Republican Government to remedy the situation, the fact is that most of them, especially the younger ones, ended up fully integrating into the host society. Doctor Samperio, the refugee inspector appointed by the Basque Government, indicated his concern on the matter in a report referring to the environment the children were in during their stay in Belgium:

The children go to school and they learn French or Flemish but forget Spanish. They are missing the necessary schooling in the Castilian language and most of them have lost touch with all that could be recalled as their nationality³¹.

2.3. *Basque people in Catalonia*

The *refoulement* enforced towards the end of 1937 by the French authorities led to a mass return of the Basque refugees to Spain. At the beginning of 1938, there truly existed a Basque colony in Catalonia with numbers varying according to the sources used. Gregorio Arrien and Iñaki Goigana, using the documentation from the Basque Government, quote around one hundred thousand Basque refugees living in Catalonia, although there are other reports handled by these two authors that reduce that figure down to 80,000³², a figure we think is still very high if, as previously mentioned, we take into account the high percentage of Basque refugees who chose to go in the direction of the Basque Country from France.

Like the refugees from other parts of the republican territory, the Basques were distributed all over the Catalanian lands in homes, shelters and other establishments organised by different bodies and institutions, such as the Basque Government, the Republican Government and the Generalitat of Catalonia, as well as various other international organisations such as International Red Aid, the International Antifascist Solidarity, The Red Cross, *L'Office International pour l'Enfance* (International Children's Office) or the International Committee of Friends of Quakers, among others.

With regard to the Basque Government, from the final days of 1936 the Delegation of the Basque Country in Catalonia was functioning at its headquarters based in the Paseo de Gracia in Barcelona with Ricardo Altaba Planuc as the secretary general whose aim, among others, was to collaborate with the reception and care of the growing number of around 20,000 Basque refugees which from September 1936 had arrived in Catalonia. However, it was from the 15th of April 1937 that the Delegation acquired a veritable degree of importance with the

naming of Luis Areitioaurtena as the delegate general in charge of organising the reception of the refugees coming from France.

According to Jiménez of Aberasturi, From October 1937, Catalonia also became the seat of the Basque Government, a decision made by Aguirre himself at a meeting which took place in Bayonne at the beginning of September 1937. The installing of the executive in Catalonia was a decision made on the basis of the growing number of refugees which continued to arrive in that country with its particular brand of politics, and the fact that they could rely on an established government which had a good relationship with the nationalists. Aguirre also took up residence in Barcelona together with Julio Jáuregui, Manuel Irujo, Eliodoro de la Torre and numerous other representatives of the PNV (Basque National Party) as well as the Basque socialists, republicans and communists. At the stated meeting it was also decided to maintain certain institutions and a strong presence abroad, especially in France, with Juan Gracia and Jesús María Leizaola in Paris, Monzón and De los Toyos in Brussels, while the counsellors De la Torre, Nádiz and Astigarrabia, were also installed in Barcelona.

Among the different initiatives promoted in Catalonia on account of the presence of the Basques, we can point to the publication of the weekly newspaper *Euzkadi en Catalunya* (The Basque Country in Catalonia), which gathered together and upheld the views of the Basque Government from December 1936 until December 1937 when the *Euzkadi* newspaper came out again with a nationalist approach. Later, at the beginning of 1938, the communist weekly *Euzkadi Roja* also reappeared. In April 1938, a cooperative was formed to facilitate the provisioning of the refugees and in the month of July the *Eusko-Etxea-Hogar* (Basque Home Centre) was formed as a meeting and exchange venue for all the Basques living in Catalonia. Nonetheless, the fundamental work of the Delegation of the Basque Government was to take in, bring together, control, help and protect the thousands of Basque refugees as well as the wounded and the soldiers that had got there, with whom Aguirre tried to form a Basque army despite the fact that with the progress of the war and the misgivings that led to this idea would make it unviable. Just the same, he managed to consolidate the legitimacy of the Basque Government and uphold its autonomous position within the Republican Government.

In the same way as in the Basque Country, the Department of Social Assistance also promoted numerous shelters, child centres and a network of more than twenty canteens distributed all over Catalonia, as well as clothing and footwear distribution centres for the refugees. Towards the end of 1937 the Health Department set up a home medical health system and in November of that same year it opened the Euzkadi Hospital in Barcelona as a maternity and surgical operations centre, the Gernika Hospital in Granollers for the treatment of children who were ill and anaemic as well as the Otxandiano Clinic and a hospital for the treatment of tuberculosis. Overall, the Department of Health was able to install more than 300 beds to alleviate the situation of refugees with ill health.

Nonetheless, just as with the Basque exiles abroad, the Basque executive was only able to deal directly with a small number of refugees. It established various children's colonies in Sitges, Barcelona, Berga, Torrembó, Arenys de Mar and Caldetas where the youngsters continued to attend classes with their Basque and other teachers and Basque language lessons were also organised even though the funding for materials and schools was very limited for the establishing of a truly effective pedagogical system. On the other hand, the situation of the Basque refugees and of those from other territories continued to worsen throughout the year 1938 due to the difficulties resulting from the fact that Catalonia was isolated from the

rest of the republican territory. At times the reports from the Basques themselves describe a truly dramatic situation:

We have such painful impressions [...] But for a few exceptions, the lives of our refugees in the region of *Garrotxa* are unfolding in the midst of all kinds of difficulties particularly in respect to the provisions of food for those in ill health, the elderly and young children [...] the clothes are so old they fall off them [...] Most of the people sleep on floors³³.

From December 1938, the situation was to degenerate even further when Franco's troops began their irrepressible offensive on Barcelona which concluded with the fall of the city on the 26th of January 1939. This offensive gave rise to a mass exodus of both the civil and military population, made up of the rest of the republican army, the more politically inclined people of Catalonia and tens of thousands of refugees who had come to shelter in Catalonia. In the last days of January and the first weeks of February, half a million people, amongst them thousands of Basques, crossed the French border through the snow-covered Pyrenees.

It is very difficult to know the exact number of adult and child Basque refugees that crossed the border in 1939 on another new flight to French territory. Authors differ in their calculations. Koldo San Sebastián noted in his time the figure of 80,000, a figure that can clearly be considered as excessive if we take into account that the presence of Basque refugees in Catalonia would never have reached such high numbers and if we recognise that not all Basques present in Catalonia crossed the border. Many families of no strong political leanings considered it an opportunity of stemming the flow of flight which for some had began two years earlier and they returned to the Basque Country during the following weeks, in cattle trains crammed with people, often in inhumane conditions.

The most recent historiography of the exile (the studies of Arrien-Goigona and of Jiménez de Aberasturi previously mentioned) refrains from estimating the number of Basque exiles in 1939. However, so as not to sanctify or disdain the question, we can gather that in the light of the figures produced in other works on the territorial origin of that human tide of nearly half a million people, there could never have been more than 50,000 Basques. Everyone knows of the dramatic reception by the French authorities with their installation of badly equipped internment camps along with the beach camps in Argèles-sur-Mer, Barcarès, St Cyprien..., or ones on unsuitable land such as in the case of Gurs. In this last camp more than 6,500 Basque refugees coming from the *Argèles* were interned in considerable hardship³⁴.

The harsh living conditions in these camps with the strenuous work imposed on the refugees and above all, the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, made for a significant and rapid return to the Basque Country by many refugees. Just the same, for several thousands of them, mainly because of their political beliefs, there was not even a thought of returning³⁵. The only choice for them was to remain in France or flee to America if they were to continue with their lives which had been so disrupted since they left the Basque Country. Right up to the end of the world war many Basques hoped to return to the Basque Country only to have their hopes well and truly dashed from 1945 onwards when despite the victory of the allies, Franco continued to lead the country.

3. Brief historiographical note

Without any doubt, over the last two decades the exiles have ceased to be the very much forgotten ones of the conflict. The exiles themselves, the newspaper reporters, historians, writers and film directors..., each in their own way, have contributed in saving this chapter in history from the hold of oblivion, even though there is still a lot of work to be done.

The historiography of the Basque exile has continued, albeit with some tardiness, in the same way as for the studies dedicated to the Spanish exile. From the first works that fiercely focused on the study of an exile of a political nature and clearly partisan, fundamentally of the nationalists that characterised the seventies and beginning of the eighties, in the next decade they became studies of a more critical nature and centred in new themes which had hitherto been forgotten or neglected. In this sense, it is worth pointing out the works on the cultural side of exile written by Professor José Ángel Ascunce which have contributed to the highlighting of the intellectual and literary importance of some exiled Basque authors who were ignored or little valued by the Basque society of that time. We know much about the children's exile, to which many works have been dedicated, even though there is still a missing monograph that studies in detail the presence and progress of the Basque minors in the Soviet Union. The exiled woman, nevertheless, is the most absent in exile studies. Although there has been a few interesting monographs recently³⁶, there are no in-depth historical works which would allow us to understand better the point of view of the women in this process, the multiple causes that without doubt influenced their decision to exile or not, the intrinsic history of this flight which was frequently linked with the fact that they were mothers though not exclusively, or the consequences of this episode for the Basque women as a whole. In politics, undoubtedly the area most studied, the evolution of the PNV is well known but that is not the case for the rest of the parties which made up the executive of Aguirre, and there are still very obvious gaps such as the absence of a monograph dedicated to Juan Gracia, the socialist adviser whom Aguirre leaned on in the Basque World Congress (1956), classifying him as "a whole man", and who still today continues to be the least known politician despite his brilliant work within the Department of Social Assistance right up to his tragic death in Paris in 1941.

The question of figures, that this study does not fully elucidate either, continues to be a problem in that the authors concentrate entirely on the data provided by the Basque Government. In my opinion, anyone researching exile should, in the next few years, be looking at foreign documentation to compare with and get to know other possibilities and facts which up till now have not been well studied. The interesting works of Jiménez de Aberasturi on the evolution of Basque politics during exile, or of Santiago de Pablo on the films made in other countries on the war in the Basque Country, show it is the hard but fruitful path to follow.

¹ Pyrénées Atlantiques Departmental Archives, 1 M 258, *the Spanish Civil War. Miscellaneous matters*.

² Pyrénées Atlantiques Departmental Archives, 1 M 289, *Digital Records of the Spanish Refugees coming from Hendaye to mainland France, 1936*.

³ *Report on the work carried out by the Department of Social Assistance, 21st October-31st December 1936*, published by the Basque Government in 1937.

⁴ General Archive of the Spanish Civil War, Political-Social Section, Santander, series "O" files 146 to 158. Census records of refugees, carried out by Social Assistance.

⁵ Basque Nationalism Archive. Sabino Arana Foundation, S.K. 191, C.5. Account of the requests for evacuation. Department of Social Assistance, January 1937.

⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives, Series Z. Europe. Spain 1918-1940, File 188.

⁷ Constructed in the Naval of Sestao for the *Compañía Transatlántica* (Transatlantic Company) in the 20s, this ship's dimensions were 146.30 metres length, 18.59 wide and 6.3 metres deep. From its launch to the war it had gone on various transatlantic voyages to Cuba, Mexico and New York, under the name of *Alfonso XIII*, which was changed to the *SS Habana* at the beginning of the Second Republic.

⁸ Polixene Trabudua, *Crónicas de amama*, (The Amama Chronicles), Fundación Sabino Arana-Emakunde, Bilbao, 1997, p. 139.

⁹ Basque Nationalism Archive, S. 338 K. 7, Basque Emigration. Basque Citizens in France. A report from Paris on the 18th March 1939.

¹⁰ At the beginning of the 90s a group of historians put that figure at 23,231 Basques evacuated from Santander and 29,855 from Asturias. M. C. Ferro, P. González Marcos and J. L. Méndez Rueda, "Basques in France due to the Spanish Civil War", in VV. AA., *Españoles en Francia*, (The Basques in France), international Colloquium, Salamanca, 2-4 May 1991, pp. 472-485.

¹¹ Juan Carlos Jiménez de Aberasturi goes even further and reduces the figure to 79,538 exiled Basques in 1937: *De la derrota a la esperanza: políticas vascas durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial (1937-1947)* (From Defeat to Hope: Basque politics during the Second World War (1937-1947)), IVAP, Bilbao, 1999, p. 15.

¹² These minors were taken in by different European countries: Some 22,800 went to France. 3.861 to Great Britain, 3,278 to Belgium, 1,600 went to Russia whilst a small group of 250 found refuge in Switzerland and another 100 in Denmark.

¹³ *Presidency Report*, from the work of J.C. Jiménez de Aberasturi, op. cit. p. 16.

¹⁴ General Archive of The Spanish Civil War, P. S. Santander, "C", 21/12, Passage of the Steam-ship "Cabo Corona" carrying refugees from Bilbao to La Palisse (sic).

¹⁵ Loire Atlantique Departmental Archives, 1 M, Letter from the authorities of the *Loire-Inférieure* to the Ministry of the Interior, 21-VII-1937.

¹⁶ Vaucluse Departmental Archives, 4 M 211, Digital Records, 1936-1937.

¹⁷ Basque Nationalism Archive. Sabino Arana Foundation. Villa Endara Fund, folder 3. Affiliates consultation, 1939.

¹⁸ According to a report from the Basque Government, a contingent of some 30,000 Basques headed towards Catalonia, whilst another 60,000 headed towards the Basque Country via the Irún border. I. Anasagasti and Koldo San Sebastián, *Los años oscuros. El Gobierno vasco. El exilio (1937-1941)* (The Dark Years. The Basque Government. The exile (1937-1941), Txertoa, San Sebastián, 1985, p. 37. The figures may be on the low side, but they are interesting because they clearly indicate the desire of a large proportion of Basque refugees to return home and put an end to the seemingly never ending exile, at least among those families who did not consider their lives to be in peril by returning to the Basque Country.

¹⁹ Jean-Claude Larronde, *La Roseraie. Ko Ospitalea. L'Hopital de "La Roseraie". El Hospital de "La Roseraie"*, (The "Roseraie Hospital") 1937-1940, Bidasoa, 2002.

²⁰ Jesús J. Alonso Carballés, 1937. *Los niños vascos evacuados a Francia y Bélgica. Historia y memoria de un éxodo infantil, 1936-1940*, (The Basque children evacuated to France and Belgium. History and memory of an exodus of children, 1936-1940, The Association of Children Evacuated in 37, Bilbao, 1998, pp. 173-258.

²¹ Vaucluse Departmental Archives, 4 M 213. Our own italics.

²² Lide de Olaeta, Olaeta's second: *cien años para la cultura vasca*, (One hundred years for Basque Culture), self-published, Bilbao, 1996.

²³ For those interested in this organization and its work, please consult Jean-Claude Larronde, *Exil et solidarité. La Ligue Internationale des Amis des Basques*, (Exile and Solidarity. The International League of Friends of the Basques), Bidasoa, Villefranche, 1997.

²⁴ We will not dwell on the analysis of this exile which came mainly from France. We refer the interested reader to the classic work of Koldo San Sebastián, *El exilio vasco en América 1936-1946. La acción del Gobierno*, (The Basque Exile in America 1936-1946. Government action), Txertoa, San Sebastián, 1988, and to the website www.euskosare.org, where you can find numerous references to studies of the Basque diaspora.

²⁵ Among the works dealing with this exodus, an important work is that of Gregorio Arrien, *Niños vascos evacuados a Gran Bretaña (1937-1940)* –(Basque Children Evacuated to Great Britain (137-1940)), and Adrian Bell, *Only for three months. The Basque Children in Exile*, Mousehold Press. Norwich, 1996 (reprinted in 2007).

²⁶ Daniel Kowalsky, *La Unión Soviética y la Guerra civil española: una revision crítica*, (The Soviet Union and the Spanish Civil War: a critical review), Crítica, Barcelona, 2003, p. 123.

²⁷ Manuel Tagüeña, *Testimonio de dos guerras*. (A Testimony of Two Wars). Planeta, Barcelona, reprinted in 2005, p. 167. For reference to the Basque children please consult the work of Dorothy Legarreta, *The Guernica Generation: Basque refugee children of the Spanish Civil War*, University of Nevada Press, Reno, 1984. There is a Basque translation: *Gernika belaunaldia: espainiar anai-arteko gudako, Euskal, ume, errefuxiatuak*, Kriselu, San Sebastián, 1987. You can also consult the works of E. Zafra, R.Crego and C. Heredia, *Los niños Españoles evacuados a la URSS (1937)*. (The Spanish children evacuated to the USSR (1937), Ediciones de la Torre, Madrid, 1989, and A. Alted Vigil, E. Nicolás Marin and R. González Martell, *Los niños de España en la Unión Soviética. De la evacuación al retorno, 1937-1999*, (The children of Spain in the Soviet Union. From the evacuation to the return. 1937-1999), Largo Caballero Foundation, Madrid, 1999.

²⁸ Jesús J. Alonso Carballés, *op. Cit.*, pp. 259-306.

²⁹ Nationalism Archive. Sabino Arana Foundation, S.K. 338, C. 7. Report by Doctor Samperio regarding his inspection visit in Belgium on the 18th of November 1937.

³⁰ The Belgium communist family Eeckman deserve a special mention for their exceptional solidarity in view of having added eight more children that had arrived in Belgium in 1937 to their own six biological children. One of the fortunate children in this case was Esther Arocena Torrecilla, a child from Bilbao, who recounts her exceptional experience with that family in the book written by Emilia Labajos and Fernando Vitoria, *Los niños. Histoire d'enfants de la Guerre Civile espagnole exilés en Belgique*, (The Children. History of the Children of the Spanish Civil War Exiles in Belgium), Ed. Vie Ouvrière, Brussels, 1994, pp. 63-65

³¹ Report by Doctor Samperio regarding his inspection visit to Belgium on the 18th of November 1937, *cit*.

³² Gregorio Arrien and Iñaki Goiogana, *El primer exilio de los vascos. Cataluña 1936-1939*, (The First exile of the Basques. Catalonia 1936-1939) Sabino Arana- Ramon Trias Fargas Foundation, Barcelona, 2002, p. 123.

³³ General Archive of the Spanish Civil War, P.S. Barcelona, 913.

³⁴ As well as the now classic work in this field: Claude Laharie, *Le camp de Gurs: 1939-1945, un aspect méconnu de l'histoire du Bearn*, (The Gurs Camp: 1939-1945, an unrecognized aspect of the history of the Bearn, J&D, Biarritz, 1993, recently the historian Josu Txueka has published *Gurs, El campo vasco*, (Gurs, the Basque camp), Txalaparta, Tafalla, 2007.

³⁵ The number of Basques with responsibilities and in charge of families who at the end of December 1939 still received subsidies from the Basque executive was 6,554. G. Arrien and I. Goionaga, *p. cit.*, p. 473.

³⁶ José Ramón Zabala Agirre (dir.), *Non zeuden emakumeak? La mujer vasca en el exilio de 1936*, (Basque Women in Exile 1936), Saturraran, San Sebastián, 2007.