

From the Secretary

Here, at last, is the second Newsletter of the Basque Children of '37 Association: UK. We are still going strong and attracting many visitors to our website (www.spanishrefugees_basquechildren.org).

First, congratulations go to Steve Bowles for winning the bronze medal in the documentary section of the prestigious New York Film Festival for the film, "La Generación del Guernica", he produced for the Latin America Discovery Channel. It's a wonderful achievement and members will have the opportunity of seeing the film later on in the year.

I am glad to report that following the annual general meeting in February, some more committee members were elected. We now have a Membership Secretary, Carmen Kilner, who together with John Kilner has created a workable database of the membership. She asks that all those who haven't yet renewed their membership (due on 23 May) to please do so! The Association receives no outside funding and we rely solely on your subscriptions and donations to continue the work we are doing. Publications Officer is Jim Jump, who has already designed for us a much more attractive leaflet and application form; he has also undertaken to produce the Newsletter. The committee now meets regularly every two months, and one of the decisions we have made is to bring out the Newsletter twice a year.

The various activities planned for the first half of the year, the AGM and members' lunch, the poetry reading and Valentine Cunningham's perceptive talk in Oxford, were well attended and most enjoyable. The next few months promise to be equally interesting: a blue plaque is

being unveiled at the colony in Caerleon in October and there will be an exhibition at Southampton Civic Centre and then the University in November and December.

We are continuing the practice of publishing short articles by members and we would urge you to contribute to future editions, whether an article or correspondence. We have established links with the Asociación Jubilados Evacuados de la Guerra Civil, and with the Center for Basque Studies at the University of Nevada, Reno.

Perhaps one of the most rewarding aspects of my involvement with the Association has been the unexpected new material which has been discovered: a collection of negatives in the basement of the Oxford Public Library of the children in the Aston colony taken by a professional photographer, Cyril Arapoff, himself a refugee; some 30 pencil drawings by Richard Murry of staff and *niños* in the Langham colony; two short films on the *niños* and colonies; a series of photographs taken at North Stoneham Camp by one of the British helpers when he was 16; "new" *niños vascos* who had lost contact with others in Great Britain; eight negatives of my mother with the *niños* at Langham that I had never seen.

Who would have thought two years ago that we would have discovered so much about the *niños*? One thing is certain – the *niños* are no longer "los olvidados"!

Let us hope the following years are just as fruitful!

iAgur!

Natalia Benjamin



Herminio Martinez in organising the event and anticipate more in the future.

Españoles españoles del éxodo y del llanto levanta la cabeza y no me miréis con ceno porque yo no soy el que canta la destrucción sino la esperanza

(Leon Felipe)

Film: 'La Pelota Vasca'

Acclaimed Spanish film-maker Julio Medem turns towards non-fiction to direct this incisive documentary (titled "The Basque Ball" in English) on Spain and the Basque region, looking at the complicated situation between the Basque nationalist movement and the Spanish government. Interviewing a range of artists, writers, politicians, priests, activists, journalists and academics, Medem delivers a torrent of contradictions and opinions, painting a vivid history of both the Basque region and its contested status.

Laurie Lee in Spain

by Alan Warren

Saturday 6 March 2004 saw a packed audience at the Imperial War Museum, London, attending the 3rd Len Crome Memorial Lecture, titled "Laurie Lee in the International Brigades: Writer or Fighter", hosted by the International Brigade Memorial Trust. Dr Richard Baxell gave a fascinating lecture on the writings of Laurie Lee, focussing particularly on "A Moment of War" (1991), concerning Lee's experiences in Spain and the International Brigades.

Published over 50 years after the Spanish Civil War, despite initial enthusiastic reviews, criticism from International Brigade veterans concerning his account was expressed. Soon after Laurie Lee's death in December 1997, articles in *The Spectator* and later in the letters column of *The Guardian* questioned his role in Spain, wondering whether Lee actually did join the International Brigades.

Dr Baxell ran through Lee's experiences as detailed in "A Moment of War". That he travelled over the Pyrenees at the end of 1937 is not disputed, but his experiences do not always tally with historical fact. His leaving Spain in February 1938 is a fact, but his recollections of fighting at Teruel are probably an invention. Nevertheless, Laurie Lee's name is recorded in a list of British volunteers compiled in September 1938 and his work with Bill Rust in Barcelona is acknowledged as fact.

So "A Moment of War" should perhaps be compared to the first and second books of Lee's trilogy ("Cider With Rosie", "As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning") as works of literature rather than true autobiography. Written so long after the event, memory can

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How to support the Association

Niños and their spouses/partners and widow/ers are honorary members. Annual subscriptions (which are renewable in May) for other family members and supporters of the Association's aims are:

- £10 for individuals ● £25 for institutions.

Contact Membership Secretary Carmen Kilner for membership application forms.

play havoc on what took place, and Lee's account is prone to such inaccuracies.

I must admit I had great respect for Richard Baxell in addressing Laurie Lee's role in Spain, as he provided an appealing and reasoned account of the facts and fantasies of a book whose author has not always found favour with survivors of the International Brigades.

Richard Baxell's new book "British Volunteers for Liberty" is published by Routledge at £60 hardback.

IB commemoration

by Alan Warren

Luckily the rain held off for the annual commemoration on 17 July 2004 at the International Brigade Memorial in Jubilee Gardens by the London Eye.

A large crowd attended, and Republican flags and the new replica British Battalion flag were on display as those present remembered the conflict in Spain and the International Brigaders, especially those who never returned. After a short introductory speech given by the International Brigade Memorial Trust Chairman, veteran Jack Jones, Secretary Marlene Sidaway introduced Ana Perez, chair of the Spanish *Asociación de Amigos de las Brigadas Internacionales*, who gave an impassioned speech on the role of the Brigades.

After a minute's silence for those who had died in Spain, those attending made their way to the nearby Travel Inn in the old GLC building, where a Spanish buffet was served; an informal social event with many reunions and animated conversations taking place went on into the late afternoon.

We thank the IBMT Secretary, Marlene Sidaway for her untiring work in organising this event, which seems to grow in popularity year after year.

Anniversary lunch

The annual anniversary lunch organised by Helvecia Hidalgo for all the *niños* took place on Sunday 23 May at the El Prado restaurant in Fulham. *Niños* and their families had come in some cases from afar to be at the reunion and there were several *niños* who had never been before. The Association had prepared some 12 display boards of photographs and newspaper cuttings from many colonies, which were the focus of much interest.

Helvecia pointed out in her speech that there were 67 people present and it was exactly 67 years since they had first left Spain. She welcomed Jim Jump, the son of a British International Brigader and a Spanish *auxiliar* who had been in the Lancing colony, and also Carmen Kilner, daughter of a *señorita* who was not well enough to attend.



International Brigade veterans at the IB Memorial in London's Jubilee Gardens. See "IB commemoration" report.

El Exilio de los Niños

The exhibition *El Exilio de los Niños*, organised by the Largo Caballero and Pablo Iglesias Foundations, opened for a month on 17 December 2003 in the Palacio Euskalduna in Bilbao.

Representing the Basque Children of '37 Association: UK at the inaugural ceremony was the Secretary, Natalia Benjamin, who had contributed an article on the Basque children in Great Britain to the catalogue of the exhibition. Also present from Great Britain were two sisters, *niñas vascas*, living near Southampton, Josefina Stubbs and Maria Carmen Smith (Antolín).

The exhibition reflected the lives of some of the 33,000 children who were evacuated from Spain during the Spanish Civil War through photos, texts, drawings and other artefacts. Of particular interest was the dance costume that Josefina had made when she was 11 years old and two marbles she had been given at Moor Hill House, Southampton.

The inauguration speeches reflected the desire to learn from the errors of the past. Alfonso Guerra, President of the Pablo Iglesias

Foundation, emphasised that the exhibition was determined to contribute to the healing of the scars of the past. Amongst those present were many of those children, today grandparents, whose life stories had been hitherto virtually "neglected by historians." He added that the children deserved our affection and our respect. In concluding, he said that it was necessary to remember the past in order to "render homage to those who gave up their lives and freedom for us".

The President of the Largo Caballero Foundation, Antón Saracibar, stated that the aim of the exhibition was to situate the exile of the children in its rightful place in history. Everyone knows about the exile, he said, but no one remembers the little ones who had to leave their homes and families, or those who suffered repression within Spain. The exhibition was seeking to inform today's generation about what their forefathers had gone through during the Civil War so that it should not happen again. Bilbao had been chosen for the inauguration of the exhibition because it was the main point of exit for the evacuees.

During 2004, the Exhibition moved from Bilbao to Barcelona, then to Salamanca and Seville; it is presently in Badajoz until 19 September. It will then move to Valencia, Gijón and Madrid.

Jim Jump, son of *auxiliar* Cayetana Lozano-Díaz (Lancing colony), visited the exhibition in Bilbao in January 2004. He writes:

"It was hard to keep a dry eye looking at the photographs which brought home the scale of the emotional pain which must have been suffered by the evacuees. The exhibition also covers the return of the children after the end of the war. Thankfully, many were happily reunited with their families, but many too were sent to Francoist orphanages and prison schools where they received harsh and often inhumane treatment because of the political affiliation of their parents. Some children never returned or, if so, only towards the end



The exhibition catalogue.