

## From the Secretary

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

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

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

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

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

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

Saludos y agur,

*Natalia Benjamin*

Natalia Benjamin

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

## Los Niños de Guernica Project, Eastleigh

by Crispian Cook

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- "Absolutely wonderful – the combination of the two was so good that I feel strongly that the play and dance should be shown in other areas of the country where *niños* were sent to live."
- "Well thought-out event, very emotional, of great historical interest."



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

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

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

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

## The experience of exile

by Alicia Pozo Gutiérrez

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Exposición de pintura

por María José Sanchez

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

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

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

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

## Spanish TV film

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

## 'The Guernica Children' wins TV award

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

## Book launch

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

## Cardiff conference

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

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

## Exhibition touring Wales

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

## Spanish citizenship

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

## Talks given...

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