

TABLE 3:
WOMEN IN LA DESBANDÁ

Moderator: Dolores Sierra Alcalde

Speakers:

- **María Isabel Brenes Sánchez:** Archaeologist and researcher
- **Annie González Galy:** Relative of La Desbandá survivors.
- **Linda Palfreeman:** Doctor of Linguistics, University of Leeds (England) and Professor of Humanities at the University of Elche (Alicante)

On 29 October 2022 and within the framework of the 1st International Congress on La Desbandá held in Mollina (Málaga), the table begins at 9:00 a.m. following the presentation thereof.

Presentation:

Chapter II, concerning comprehensive public policies on Democratic Memory, opens with a special mention of the active role of women in Spain as protagonists of a long struggle for democracy and the values of liberty, equality and solidarity. It textually states:

“In these struggles and suffering Spanish women played a singular role, being active subjects in the intellectual, professional, political and union life of our country”.

During the war and the dictatorship, women suffered humiliation, harassment, rape, persecution, violence and punishment for their public or political activity, for the mere fact of being women or for having been mothers, partners or daughters of victims of persecutions, reprisals and killings. Furthermore, and at different moments in history, they suffered reprisals for having attempted to exercise their right to free personal development and having transgressed the limits of traditional femininity. Therefore, their contribution to the Democratic Memory must be collected in the promotion and transmission of knowledge”

But it was not just Spanish women who played an important role in this period of history. At all times, attention may be drawn to the international political-solidary effort

To speak about this, it is our privilege to count on the presence of contemporary women to corroborate it for us.

María Isabel Brenes,

“FEMALE REPRESSION UPON RETURNING FROM LA DESBANDÁ”

In view of the book *1937. Éxodo Málaga Almería. Nuevas fuentes de investigación* (“*1937. Málaga Almería Exodus. New sources of investigation*”), it is accredited that the population that left Málaga seeking refuge in Almería on 7 February stood at 300,000, given that the figure provided by Norman Bethune was estimated as of 10 February, when la desbandá had already begun various days prior to this.

This is the case taking into account that the population that left Málaga originated from other provinces of western Andalusia together with those originating from Málaga, a column of people which saw the incorporation of entire families from the province of Granada.

The majority of the population that journeyed on foot to Almeria were the elderly and women with children.

The intense bombings by sea and air, together with the terrible weather and food situation, undermined the moral of these people. Having abandoned hope of reaching safe territory, some individuals and entire families opted for collective suicide.

However, many others chose to return to their homes, given they were not accused of any crime, except thinking differently to the military rebellion.

The return of this population was not forgiven by the rebel forces, and they were arrested when they arrived at their place of origin, now occupied by the new authority.

Linda Palfreeman,

With the title “The humanitarian work of British women in the Spanish Civil War: ‘La Desbandá’ ” speaks to us about the participation of British women in humanitarian initiatives launched during the civil war and, more specifically, in the south of Spain, after the fall of Málaga to the rebels – which gave rise to what today is commonly known as ‘La Desbandá’.

The Francoist military coup provoked a civil war in Spain, in July 1936. The British government, like those of France and the United States, followed a policy of ‘non-intervention’. Despite this, thousands of normal citizens actively supported the Spanish government and backed voluntary participation. Out of these volunteers rose the army that we came to know as **the International Brigades**. Over 2,500 British men joined its ranks. But the response from the women was equally noteworthy.

Annie González Galy. Daughter of Republicans exiled in France, with her talk **“PASIONARIAS TO THE END”** tells how her family had to flee Spain during the war to escape prison, torture and death.

She tells the story of her family speaking of the important roles of her mother and sister Margarita.

First event: the *flight from Málaga* on 8 February 1937 to Almería; La Desbanda

Second event: They left Spain in February 1939: *La Retirada* (“The Retreat”)

Third event: They discovered *exile*, precariousness, concentration camps in France.