

TABLE 1

“AFTER ALMERÍA, THE DIASPORA...”

Eusebio explains that in the first studies on the flight from Malaga, Encarnación Barranquero and Lucía Prieto show us how the exodus to the city of Almería took place.

The events during the journey between the provinces of Málaga and Granada were magnificently studied by Maribel Brenes and Andrés Fernández.

Eusebio says that it was still left for us to discover what occurs when 150,000 people, according to a Dutch reporter, arrive in Almeria, when the city had a population of 50,000 inhabitants at that time.

The Civil Governor, Gabriel Morón, stops sending vehicles to rescue those who walked among enemy fire. Why? It was necessary to send the 2,500 litres of gasoline he had in his possession to Lorca to supply the 13th International Brigade who were travelling to the front.

The majority of the doctors in the city had left to save themselves and only returned when the Civil Governor threatened to have them put in prison.

Gabriel Morón Díaz faces four major problems in the face of the arrival of such a large human contingent:

AN ACCOMODATION PROBLEM: Almeria only took in 10,000 personas, sending the rest when possible to towns in the province. And over land to Murcia and over sea to Alicante. However, the population of Almeria make a concerted effort to take in refugees, mainly children. Even the most powerful families at the time and now took in refugees. When the war ended they justified this saying they had done it out of fear, that if they had not there could have been reprisals from the mayor.

A SANITARY PROBLEM: There were no vaccinations, but those locations conditioned for the refugees were whitewashed, there being only a single typhus outbreak at the Alquife mineral loading dock on Playa de las Almadrabillas.

A SECURITY PROBLEM: The first arrivals in Almeria, who came in motor vehicles, carried arms, which was a cause for concern for the local authorities, who took the decision to confiscate them at the entrance to the city. Older people were sent to the barracks.

A FOOD PROBLEM: What at first seemed difficult or impossible to resolve, thanks to the Spanish Government a solution was found with the sending of two million to attend to the needs of the refugees.

On studying the condition of the arrivals we lacked things:

-There were no injured due to shrapnel or firearms -being at war- in Almeria Hospital.

-There were very few children taken in in Almeria, few nurseries for the children of militiamen and women and war widows.

-There are no pregnant women, and no children born in the months following the arrival.

Investigating and following the trail through Levante, the author says, we get to Murcia and here we find answers to our questions.

Murcia had FIVE splendidly equipped hospitals with the most efficient medical staff, including the International Brigades Hospital. AND ELEVEN hospitals spread around its province.

The most seriously ill arriving from Almeria were taken to these, pregnant women, the number who gave birth in Murcia's hospitals stands at 263.

Lost children, minors, of which there is a record are: 1 aged 2, 3 aged 3, 3 aged 4, 5 aged 5, 8 aged 6, 3 aged 7, 4 aged 8, 3 aged 9, 7 aged 10, 9 aged 11, 4 aged 12, 6 aged 13, 14 aged 14, 3 aged 15, 2 aged 16

and 5 aged 17. The action of the authorities in Murcia was exemplary for the recent arrivals, perhaps the reason why the city's mayor Fernando Piñuera Romero was sentenced to death and executed when the war ended and the doctor Mateo Carreras Roura prosecuted and given a 30 year prison sentence.

But those in La Desbandá or *Huída* do not stop in either Almeria or Murcia, they march on through Levante to Catalonia and France.

My interest, says speaker Juan Francisco Colomina, is in “the *Malageños* of la Desbandá or *Huida*, their exodus and exile bring him to the research and study of the “Andalusian republican exile”. It is estimated that there are between 45 and 50 thousand Andalusians at the beginning of 1939. When we got to some 20 thousand exiles in the database, it drew our attention that of them 8,000 were from Malaga and of those, half were civilians. **“The exiled, the stateless, is in all parts an undesirable guest who must apologise, by virtue of humility and servitude, his existence” (A Sangre y Fuego, Manuel Chávez Nogales 1937).** This is the feeling of many exiles in the first years of exile, as they had to live through concentration camps and a 2nd world war.

The natural exit of the “malageños y malageñas” who arrived in Almeria to become exiles isn't France, but Algeria or Morocco, French colonies at the time, which is why it is so striking to find so many of them in France. The first explanation is that they were refugees who left Malaga in 1937 and over the months began to settle in Catalonia and from there between the end of 1938 and the beginning of 1939 the second desbandá towards France occurs. When Barcelona falls (26 January 1939) close to half a million people leave with just the clothes on their back. A great human column, which over the last few kilometres prevents the circulation of vehicles, which had to be abandoned before the border. A great human mix: men, girls, women, the elderly, workers, intellectuals, politicians... A tragic flight bombed up to the French border by Francoist planes.

It was a disorderly avalanche. France was afraid and proposes a “refugee pocket” around the Pyrenees to the Republican government and to general Franco. The republicans categorically opposed this, as they were clear about what would happen afterwards, being joined in their opposition by the French leftist parties, the Red Cross and Canadian Quakers.? The French government was obliged to permit a staggered entry, firstly only the injured, then women and children and between 7 and 8 February militiamen and women and over 16s.

The French press was united in its animosity towards the refugees: “Undesirables, problematic, reds, communists, priest and nun killers”, all those arriving in France appear in this period as being a danger to the French state.

Those taken in who were soldiers and over 16 years of age go directly to the concentration camps Argelés-sur-Mer, Septfonds, Gurs...). This meant separation from families, lack of healthcare, food and psychological assistance, no covering or shelter and watched over by the Senegalese Guard. There was exhaustive control over the refugees. When children of La Desbandá who left Malaga at the age of 13 or 14 arrive in France years later they will end up in the labour camps. They are the 152 Malagueños who die in concentration camps. Where are these dead?

Pilar Dominguez addresses the subject of exile, especially in Mexico where she spent 2 years, from **oral history**. A history that focuses on memory as an object of analysis. She studies the women who have always been a hidden voice and subject for history.

She begins her interviews in the 1980s and recovers them, enabling her to review them and rediscover voices of women including María Fernández (maiden name) and María Gallegos (married name) born 1910. Thanks to these interviews Pilar has been able to once again find the desbandá, and says: “I'd never heard

of it. An interesting interview by her and her husband, it sometimes happens that the husbands intervene in a paternalistic way. He had been in the *desbandá*, she hadn't, they were both *malageños*. Although María didn't take part in the *desbandá* she did suffer the consequences for which she spent three months in prison ***"I was put in prison like a criminal, without having done anything"***. Her husband fled Malaga and she **suffered gender repression** (she talked for longer about this during our interview).

Over half a million people cross the border, 43% women and children and 57% men, as a result of the defeat of the republic and due to the 1939 **"Law on Political Responsibilities"**, which made said responsibility retroactive up to 1934. These percentages indicate to use the numerical importance of the refugee women and the fact that it involved family emigration, which included various generations. The biggest exile of women in contemporary Spanish history.

There are a number of journeys in France suffering the concentration camps that María's husband is also going to suffer until able to leave for Mexico, journeys organised by the **SERE** (Service for the Evacuation of Spanish Republicans). Along with the SERE there is the **JARE** (The Board of Aid for Spanish Republicans).

Paco was a sales employee, and a member of the Izquierda Republicana party and the UGT union. In 1931, he had been part of the Committee that proclaimed the Republic in Malaga, and according to his account "ran away" from Malaga in February 1937, fought in the infantry and the Battle of the Ebro, later going to Catalonia and on 13 February 1939 went to France and from there to Mexico in **the steamship *Ipanema***, one of three next to ***El Sinaia*** and ***the Mexique***, which in 1939 left France for Veracruz. In 1940 the German invasion of France interrupted these journeys to Mexico.

Many women faced lots of difficulties in being able to travel, there were quite strict criteria for women travelling alone. Some pretended to be the wives of others. It is estimated that over **24,000 Spanish refugees** were established in Mexico between 1939 and 1947. A third were women

María considered herself as a victim of war, with no control over events. Like her sisters, she was obliged to work from a young age in her father's small business, machine stitching the soles of baby shoes, while receiving a scarce and discriminatory education in a school run by nuns. She followed the steps of the traditionally model of femininity and when she was 11 she became Paco's girlfriend. Everything related to her personal circumstances forms a fundamental part of her life. She vaguely remembers the political events of the republican period, she doesn't even remember having voted during the Republic. María remembered 50 years later: "I didn't do anything in the war". She arrived in Mexico 7 years after her husband in 1946 when the journeys by ship started again from Spain to Cuba and then from Havana to Mexico.

It is now time for the testimony of an 84 year old survivor, who confirms to us the misery of the exiled, experienced first hand, and already set out above.

María Amparo speaks to us of our most recent social history: of an epopee written by anonymous men and women whose names do not appear in the official History, although they are its real essence... women and men from Spain who have lived through History in its most tragic dimension...

Of some pages, still to be explored, that speak of exile and concentration camps, of resistance, prisons, torture and death...

Of a dignified people, fighting for their freedom: simple people, "everyday" people", neither elites nor heroes, children of this *pueblo llano* that Antonio Machado celebrated through the words of Juan de

Mairena who said, when speaking of the Homeland: "In the event of danger, the masters evoke it and sell it, the people buy it with their blood or don't even name it... "It is about this people, a people abandoned, condemned to exile, betrayed by others. I have had the immense fortune to grow by the light of their example, sharing with them the miseries of exile, the concentration camps in France and the tragedy of another war... All of the struggles, hope and despair of these such hard years of exile.

I'll speak, then, from my own memories, as a direct witness of events and episodes lived through by their side, from the painful memory of the defeated who never, NEVER! Never gave up. I was born here, in this beaten down "piel de toro" country of ours, one day in April, in the middle of this so called "civil" war, when for the first time in history the fascist air force bombed the civilian population, sowing death and destruction... I'm a daughter of antifascist fighters: My father, an Army Lieutenant, member of the UNE (Spanish Normalisation Association), Lieutenant in the Forces Françaises de l'Interieur in the maquis and one of the almost 5,000 "don Quijotes" to participate in the assault on the Pyrenees through the Arán valley in October 1944. My mother, member of Socialist Youth of Spain and representative of International Red Aid.

The Francoist victory left the republicans no option other than EXILE OR DEATH. The fall of Barcelona on 26 January 1939 would create the greatest "Desbandá" ever known. My parents carrying me in their arms joined it hoping for asylum in France, the birthplace of human rights. But they weren't times of humanity, and the "asylum" those of us who passed through the Pyrenees hoped for, was ... concentration camps in the south of France and improvised "shelter" where the incredible human tide of "undesirable" refugees were locked up and monitored, that's how we were labelled in the immigration laws of the time... For others it would be the terrible camps of north Africa. Djelfa, Boghri, Hadjerat m'guil...

France closes its borders on the 10th. Our fate was sealed. To the dismay and desperation of the 500,000 refugees who despite everything, -the war, the bombings up to the border itself, the bodies, the grief and drama they dragged along with them and the pitiful march along difficult paths of exile - entered French territory. **The concentration camps** were going to be the **Cemetery of Last Hopes**: Latour-de-Carol, Saint Laurent de Cerdan, Mont-Louis (en los Pirineos, por cama el suelo helado y la nieve), Argeles-sur-Mer, Saint-Cyprien, Le Barcares (with cold sand, rain, and north wind...). In the Argeles-sur-Mer camp, such a sad memory, we thousands of Spanish children started to discover the world in its most inhumane form, undergoing along with the adults all the hardships of the French concentration camps and the burden of all of the humiliation and suffering imposed on our parents ... My family, like thousands of others, endured the cruel anguish: our dispersion throughout the whole territory, in the thousand and one "shelters" reserved for refugees. Concentration camps, shelters, the old Aubusson prison in the centre of France, where I had my second birthday. Despite my young age I think that the whole experience is forever burned into my subconscious. My own memories start from when I was 4 and I had to live up close the racism and xenophobia, memories that have left deep imprints, of things I've experienced and suffered in the flesh: the little girl of a crushing exile, growing up far from your native home as a refugee, in a country you don't understand and a language you don't even speak, a country that abuses your parents... is an experience that makes you grow strong and your conscience mature quickly.

If I'm here today it's in memory of all of them, of the political refugees of my infancy who I owe so much to!!