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**The Basque Children in Britain: An Insight into the  
Financial Intervention of the British Government and  
British Political Parties**

Treball de Fi de Grau/BA dissertation

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June 2023

**Statement of Intellectual Honesty**

**Alèxia Ribó Pradas**

**The Basque Children in Britain: An Insight into the Financial Intervention of the British Government and British Political Parties**

I declare that this is a totally original piece of work; all secondary sources have been correctly cited. I also understand that plagiarism is an unacceptable practise which will lead to the automatic failing of this assignment.

12/06/2023

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## **Abstract**

Spanish Civil War was one of the major conflicts in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as its consequences were devastating at several levels. Correspondingly, these consequences went beyond death and political conflict as the civil population was the most affected by the war. Therefore, many families were separated, and there are many soldiers whose bodies are still not found today. Having this in mind, it is central to consider children's involvement in the war and how these children were the ones who were left behind in this central conflict. This is the case of the Bilbao children, who were sent alone to the British Isles in order to find a home there for some months. However, the process was different to what was expected by the population in both countries.

This specific case has been analysed by many scholars that approach the process from different perspectives. However, many of them account for a non-interventionist approach to the conflict from the British government as a result of the appeasement process adopted in Britain after World War I. This led to refugee programmes being conducted thanks to fundraising and donations as the financial contribution from the British government was not expected due to its neutral position regarding the Spanish Civil War. Thus, the non-intervention policy had a direct effect on the Basque refugees as the intervention and contribution from the government were key in order to welcome the Basque Children.

Through the analysis of the entire process, this project focuses on the political as well as the economic initiatives made by the government and the political parties concerning the Spanish refugee cause. Accordingly, through the analysis of the entire procedure as well as the politics in Britain after World War I, this dissertation provides an insight into the different political reasons and influences that conditioned the development of the Basque Children's refugee programme.

This project aims to argue that the non-interventionist position of the British government in the Basque Children's cause was directly related to a political policy and thus, that the political influences in Europe were key to the government's approach to the cause. Accordingly, this dissertation attempts to argue the different reasons why the government did not contribute economically to the cause as well as to focus on the strategy that was undertaken by the government to approach the Basque Children's cause. Thus, this dissertation examines the entire process, focusing on the economic income and the political intervention that enabled the process to develop, as well as accentuating the fundraising promoted by some political influences.

**Keywords:** Spanish Civil War, appeasement, refugee, exile, government

## **0.Introduction**

The Spanish Civil War left a country politically divided, with a huge economic crisis and with important demographic changes. Nonetheless, the people who, in order to escape the horror of war, left Spain and moved to other countries are often unremembered. Therefore, it is relevant to take into consideration the amount of people that left Spain seeking for a better future and a better life. Accordingly, the ones who suffered the consequences of the war most, the children and teenagers that were growing up during the 1930s, became, in most cases, refugees. This is the case of a particular group of children that left the Basque country in May 1937 and arrived at Southampton, a place that would welcome them for three months. Nonetheless, their stay in Britain was prolonged.

The arrival of the Basque children generated controversy all over Britain since their arrival had both supporters and opponents. Nonetheless, the evacuation, as well as the stay, became an important event not only for the British society but for the British government and political parties. As Peter Anderson highlights, “The evacuation marks one of the great chapters in twentieth century refugee history”(Anderson 297). Correspondingly, the arrival and the development of the refugee process has become an important part of British history, since it was an event in which many volunteers contributed to facilitate the children’s stay. Therefore, the Basque children’s programme changed and influenced British society’s opinions towards the Spanish Civil War and more specifically, towards the Basque refugees.

The British government’s involvement in international conflicts during the 1930s was directly conditioned by appeasement and neutrality. Therefore, the intervention in many of the international movements and conflicts going on during the

1930s was restricted to neutrality. Accordingly, the Spanish Civil War was one of the main conflicts in which British non-intervention became relevant. Subsequently, the Non-Intervention Agreement conditioned the potential involvement of the British government in the Spanish Civil War. Thus, the position of neutrality was one of the aspects that shaped the Basque Children's process.

It has been argued that the British government did not contribute economically to the arrival and stay of the Basque Children in Britain. Subsequently, the different political parties' involvement was conditioned by different political reasons and positions. Accordingly, this thesis aims to analyse the British government's economic involvement in the Basque Children's process. Subsequently, the British political parties' will also be examined in order to provide an insight into the politico-economic involvement in the Basque Children's cause. To that end, different sources from the 1930s that concern both the British government, and the British political parties will be examined and considered in order to determine the economic involvement of the government, as well as of the political parties.

The Basque Children's process has been analysed abording different perspectives and domains. However, the historic event has been considered from a social and psychological point of view. Concerning the politics that conditioned the refugee programme, many scholars such as Tom Buchanan, have examined the political atmosphere that shaped and conditioned the development of the refugee programme. Nonetheless, the economic perspective has been researched in general terms concerning British society.

In order to examine the economic involvement of both the British government and the British political parties, this thesis covers three distinct sections. Correspondingly, the first section provides a specific political context that focuses on



the British government during the 1930s, as well as on the Spanish Civil War. The second section examines both the British government's position concerning the refugee proposal and the economic involvement of the British government in the Basque Children's refugee programme. The third section focuses on the British political parties and on their economic contribution to the Basque Children's process.

## **1. Political context**

### **1.1 Britain after World War I**

World War I (1914-1918) was a major conflict fought between two major world blocks, the Triple Alliance, and the Triple Entente. The development of the war led the Triple Entente to victory. Consequently, the winning countries decided the conditions to be applied in order to punish mainly Germany, seen as the country which had caused the war. This major conflict left many countries divided and devastated. Correspondingly, Britain was one of the countries which was directly affected by the war, not only because they were one of the victors but also because the socio-economic effects on British society were devastating.

“The British had won the war, but it did not feel like a victory”(Grant et al. 331). This quote mentioned in *History of Britain & Ireland* encapsulates what World War I meant for Britain. Although there was a war victory, the consequences went beyond a world victory. Therefore, British society was directly affected by the consequences of the war as every citizen was directly influenced by what had happened in the world conflict. There was an awareness of the effort made by British society in order to win the war and this effort implied complications in different parts of the society, such as the economy or the industry.

After World War I, Britain saw a period of economic depression and of general unemployment. The fact that in the early 20s, Britain had financial problems that derived from the Great War, implied a rise in poverty as well as in unemployment. In her article about unemployment between the wars, Meredith M. Parker mentions the following: “During the brief recession at the end of the war, the unemployment rate climbed to 23.4% in May of 1921. From there, it never fully recovered, remaining over 10% in almost every month of the 1920s”(Paker 1). Correspondingly, this rate illustrates the detrimental situation that Britain was undergoing. Society was profoundly conditioned by the economic consequences of the war and therefore, the decrease in exports, production and working hours directly conditioned unemployment in the country.

The severe consequences that Britain was undergoing had a direct effect on politics and on social movements. Therefore, from 1916 until 1945, Britain had had a total of 10 different Prime Ministers. The different Prime Ministers belonged to different political parties, and they all tried to push the country towards a better situation, not only political but also socially and economically. Nonetheless, society was not comfortable with the situation since there was high unemployment, more poverty, and a huge decrease in industrial production. This led society to protest massively in order to promote changes in a society that was devastated. An example of social demands is the Jarrow March. This protest asked for changes, industrial impulse, and regeneration in the North. The protest was organised as a walking march which started in Jarrow and ended in London. Many workers from Northern industry participated in this protest in 1936. According to William Frame, “In the longer term the Jarrow March became symbolic of the effects of large-scale unemployment in the 1930s, and was central to the development of regional policy in post-war Britain”(Frame 207-208). This

protest was a central symbol of the status of British society and how unemployment and the different policies being applied in the country were having negative effects for most people.

World War I's consequences went beyond economic crisis and political instability, since people had to assimilate the general trauma that existed in society, caused by death and physical disabilities. B. Urianis in his book *Wars and Population* points out the statistics of World War I and Britain lost a total of 715000 men (Urianis 209). This statistic illustrates the gravity of the situation in the country. Accordingly, the country had to face difficulties at several levels and thus, Britain had to overcome a severe situation that left British society completely devastated.

### **1.1.2 Appeasement**

After the Great War, Britain was facing severe devastation at a socio-economic level. This instability had a direct effect on British politics since the British population questioned the policies applied by the government. At a European level, many countries saw the rise of fascism and extreme-right regimes and proposed different reactions to the problem. Therefore, countries such as Britain, the Soviet Union or France reacted differently towards the rise of fascist regimes in Europe. Britain thus, opted for appeasement and distance.

Appeasement is understood as “the act of giving the opposing side in an argument or war an advantage that they have demanded”(‘Appeasement’). Thus, it consists of a concession to the opposing side that can develop in different outcomes. Accordingly, each country that promotes an appeasement policy pretends to avoid any type of conflict. Britain adopted appeasement in the 1930s in order to prevent Germany from creating a bigger conflict and thus, Britain wanted, by applying this international policy, to create a positive reaction from Germany towards Britain.

Neville Chamberlain was Britain's Prime Minister when appeasement was introduced. Therefore, Chamberlain had a specific strategy concerning Germany and Britain's international policy during the 1930s. Peter Trubowitz and Peter Harris in their article about appeasement state the following: "Chamberlain viewed Hitler's ambitions and diplomacy with wariness and misgivings. He could not afford the political risk of ignoring the danger. At the same time, domestic politics created strong pressure to find an inexpensive way to reduce the nation's strategic exposure (Trubowitz and Harris 18). Thus, Chamberlain had different influences that conditioned his decision of leading the country through an appeasement policy. Politics in Britain were unstable due to industrial, labour, and social issues. This fact contributed to a path for peace in Europe as intervening or opposing the rising powers could imply another problem not only at a national level but also at an international one.

The decisions that Germany was taken did condition the development and the progress of British government's international policies. During the 1930s, Germany started to expand through the annexation of different territories such as Austria in 1938. Thus, this progressive expansion threatened the geopolitical stability in Europe and therefore, countries such as France, Britain or the Soviet Union saw Hitler's expansion a direct threat. In order to pacify the situation and to protect the empire, Neville Chamberlain and its government considered different possible solutions to tackle the German threat. One of the options was to succeed in an alliance with the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, a great part of British society was not comfortable with the idea of creating an alliance with the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, Germany kept expanding and trying to gain more parts of Europe. Adolf Hitler wanted to unify German-speaking territories and thus, he had the goal of conquering the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia in 1938. Britain saw this attempt to conquer the Sudetenland as a threat to European stability and

this led Neville Chamberlain to ask for a conference in Munich with Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini and Édouard Daladier<sup>1</sup>. This conference determined that Germany could access the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia. However, the Czech's representatives were not present in this agreement and were informed of the treaty afterwards.

The Munich Agreement in 1938 was seen by Neville Chamberlain as a key decision in order to maintain Europe's peace. When he came back from the conference, he stated the following: "The settlement of the Czechoslovakian problem which has now been achieved is in my view only the prelude to a larger settlement in which all Europe may find peace" (Chamberlain 00:02:14 - 00:02:34). This quote by the Prime Minister illustrates how Neville Chamberlain saw this agreement. He presents the outcome of the Munich agreement as a key element in order to maintain peace and stability. Peter Trubowitz and Peter Harris present the following notion: "For Chamberlain, appeasement meant continued diplomatic and economic ties with Germany and the reasonable redress of Germany's security concerns and territorial grievances"(Trubowitz and Harris 34). Accordingly, he believed that the agreement that established a cordial relationship between Germany and Britain. Consequently, he saw the international relationship as a long-term relationship. Therefore, it was thought that signing this pact would directly mean a reduction of territorial grievances as well as the threat of war. However, Germany's expansion did not stop, and the problem became worse with Germany's invasion of Poland.

The Munich Agreement of September 1938 brought about a global satisfaction within British society as they saw the agreement as a prevention to a war that was to come. Accordingly, many citizens received Chamberlain after his summit in Germany in a celebratory atmosphere. However, some politicians were critical of Chamberlain's

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<sup>1</sup> Édouard Daladier (1884-1970) was France's National Security Minister.

decision. An example of political criticism is Winston Churchill, Britain's Prime Minister during World War II. He presented a speech in the House of Commons on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October 1938 in which he stated the following: "I will, therefore, begin by saying the most unpopular and most unwelcome thing. I will begin by saying what everybody would like to ignore or forget but which must nevertheless be stated, namely, that we have sustained a total and unmitigated defeat" (...)(Churchill). This quote by Churchill illustrates the vision on the agreement as an absolute defeat against Germany and how this decision acclaimed by everyone would have certain consequences for society.

## **1.2 Spanish Civil War**

Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) is understood as the conflict that opposed two major blocks within Spain, the Republicans, and the Nationalists. This conflict, which started from the military rising of Franco and his supporters, left a democratic Spain divided in two. Society underwent a profound social division as the two opposing sides had radically different interests, goals, and ideologies. Accordingly, the uprising block wanted to preserve the traditional values, to intercept Madrid and to put an end to the Republican government. On the other side, the Republicans aimed to preserve the Spanish Republic. This strong division in society persisted not only during the war years but also afterwards. Spanish Civil War left a country divided, destroyed and with multiple difficulties for the civilian population.

The war emerged as a military insurrection planned by Franco and other sympathising military leaders. This insurrection, which had the objective of intervening in Madrid, developed into a complex war that divided the country into Nationalists and Republicans. Although the war took place in Spain and the context was attached to specific political differences, the war had a world repercussion that raised many reactions towards the conflict. Therefore, the war was conceived by many as an

international conflict of opposed ideologies. Stanley G. Payne mentions the following notion: “The war was given many names. Leftists, as well as many liberals, termed it varyingly “fascism versus democracy”, “the people versus the oligarchy”, (...). Rightists and conservatives at different times called it a struggle of “Christianity versus atheism”, “Western civilization against communism”, “Spain versus anti-Spain””(Payne 1). This quote highlights the diversity of interpretations that Spanish Civil War arouse not only in Spain but internationally. Therefore, the Spanish Civil War became the emblem for different fights such as democracy, Christianity, or communism.

The development of the Spanish Civil War was directly conditioned by arms supplies and by the number and organization of the military forces on each side. Subsequently, the development of the war towards one side or the other was related to international support as each side could not sustain itself autonomously. Both sides in the war tried to request aid and financial support from countries like Germany, Italy, France, or the Soviet Union. The Nationalists, despite their prior intention of not requesting aid internationally, ended up meeting Italian and German representatives in order to ask for economic and military aid. Stanley G. Payne states the following notion: “This German and Italian aid, even if very limited, provided crucial support for the Nationalist mobilization in Morocco and Franco’s drive on Madrid, without which it might not have been possible”(Payne 133). Accordingly, German, and Italian supplies were key for the Nationalists in order to progress in the war. The Republicans, for their part, sympathised with France as they were under Léon Blum’s government and whose policies were related to a Popular Front government. Therefore, the Spanish Republic requested French aid and military supplies. However, Britain’s influence on France as well as the news coming from the Spanish Popular Front made France decide not to intervene in the conflict nor send economic and military aid. Consequently, the

Republicans had to appeal to another influential country in Europe, the Soviet Union who actively contributed and helped the Spanish Republicans. Thus, both sides of the war depended on external contributors and influences and therefore, the war and its development were directly conditioned by international enrolment in war.

The Spanish Civil War, apart from being a prelude to World War II, also became a disaster in humanitarian terms. Bob Peck concludes the documentary on Britain and the Spanish Civil War by stating the fact that the war left 500,000 deaths, 20,000 Republicans made prisoners, a huge number of Republican soldiers committing suicide and it also meant the killing of 200,000 men by Franco soon after the war (Gregory 00:57:05 - 00:57:40). Accordingly, the war had devastating consequences that directly affected the civil population. Therefore, it meant not only the deaths of many citizens but also the persecution of many others<sup>2</sup>. Many Spanish citizens had to escape not only war but also a future regime that would persecute them. Consequently, many citizens found in countries like Mexico, France, or Britain their new home.

### **1.2.1 Britain's non-intervention policy**

The Spanish Civil War was a conflict that implied not only a threat at a humanitarian level, but also implied a threat to European peace. This element was key for many countries in order to determine their involvement in war. Many countries had considered intervention to prevent fascism from expanding as well as other countries wanting to intervene to prevent communism from spreading. However, most countries opted for a non-intervention policy and Britain was one of the promoters for non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War. Britain's non-intervention policy can be

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<sup>2</sup> Many Spanish Republicans were persecuted by Franco's regime because of their ideology or participation in war. Franco's regime imprisoned and killed many Republicans that had participated in war.



considered in three different blocks. Therefore, their neutrality focused politics, economy, and international interventionism.

The Spanish Civil War broke out in a delicate period for European countries, as many countries were recovering from World War I. This war that emerged as an internal conflict, soon arouse different reactions and interventions. Focusing on Britain, the British government had a clear position concerning this war. Therefore, through important political figures such as Anthony Eden<sup>3</sup>, the British government developed a specific strategy concerning the approach to the Spanish Civil War. From the first instances of the war, Britain insisted on their neutrality and non-intervention. Therefore, their objective was to avoid an international conflict that could develop into a world war. However, apart from the notion of stability and peace, Britain's non-intervention pursued personal interests in Spain. Richard Little points out this notion:

It was argued that if Spain became an enemy of Britain and permitted hostile forces to operate from Spain then it would make Britain's position very precarious because of the crucial role played by Gibraltar in maintaining the imperial links that depended on access to the Mediterranean (...) then Britain's communications with Americas would also be rendered vulnerable. Under these circumstances, the British considered that they had no alternative but to pursue a policy that would preserve the existing balance of power (Little 1124).

Therefore, Britain's main goal was presented as maintaining Europe's peace. However, their goal was directly associated with their wealth since their involvement with the Spanish cause would influence their proprieties. Subsequently, it would condition Gibraltar and commerce. Therefore, it would imply a possible disruption of their imperial power. Consequently, in view of the possible instability in power, the British government opted for non-intervention.

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<sup>3</sup> Anthony Eden (1897-1997) was a British politician that during Spanish Civil War was the Foreign Office secretary and during the 1950s he became Prime Minister.

The pursuit of non-intervention policies as well as the pursuit of complete neutrality was carried out by the creation of the Non-Intervention Committee<sup>4</sup>. This committee had the goal of avoiding an international conflict. Therefore, the committee had to prevent countries from getting involved in the war. British influence at time conditioned some countries' decisions concerning the Spanish Civil War. An example of British conditioning of other countries would be France. Accordingly, Spanish Popular Front requested some aid from France and specifically some military aid. France, whose government was under Léon Blum<sup>5</sup>'s Popular Front's government, initially planned to send Spanish Republic airplanes and other military supplies. However, the multiple pressures that his government received, made him change the decision of helping Spain. On a written testimony that accounts the different events between 1933 and 1945, Léon Blum declared that after a discussion with Yvon Delbos<sup>6</sup> and Édouard Daladier, they had concluded that they could help Spain by selling them aircraft and arm supplies. However, he also mentions in his declaration that during a conference soon after in London, Anthony Eden asked him to be prudent with his decision (Serre 216). Thus, the different international pressures as well as the involvement in the Non-Intervention Committee made France change the decision. The Non-Intervention Committee included countries such as Germany and Italy. Those countries actively participated in the war by sending soldiers, airplanes and supplies to Franco's troops. In order to put an end to Italian's intervention, Britain tried to reach an agreement with Italy to make them withdraw the troops from Spain.

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<sup>4</sup> Committee created on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 1936 whose venue was London. It reunited a total of 27 countries including Germany, the Soviet Union and Italy.

<sup>5</sup> Léon Blum (1872-1950) was France's Prime Minister during Spanish Civil War. His policies were attached to socialism. He was the Prime Minister in France during the organization of the Popular Front.

<sup>6</sup> Yvon Delbos (1885-1956) was France's Foreign Minister during Spanish Civil War.

Britain's intention of declaring themselves neutral in the Spanish War had an effect on the Republic's economy and resources. Dr Enrique Moradiellos mentions the fact that in order not to concede any indirect or direct help to the Republic, the British government positioned itself in a tacit neutrality. Consequently, the British government promoted a secret arms' embargo against the Republic and denied the aid requests (Moradiellos 00:10:12 – 00:11:00). Therefore, Republicans were negated help and arms supplies and thus, their resistance was conditioned by international decisions. An article on British intervention in the war mentions the following: "Unsurprisingly, the Republican Government complained that the British arms embargo had much larger consequences for them, because of the external military support being given to the Nationalists" (Little 193). Accordingly, this response to the Republicans' problem directly conditioned them, as the embargo did not affect the Nationalists as they were receiving aid from Germany and Italy. Nonetheless, the Spanish Republic depended on supplies coming from other countries, but the embargo conditioned other countries to send them arms supplies. The British position concerning Spain also had repercussions in banking. Correspondingly, as mentioned in *Beside Franco*, the Bank of England broke the clearing agreement<sup>7</sup> with the Bank of Spain and consequently, the trade between both countries was drastically reduced (Gregory 00:26:05 – 00:26:20). Therefore, the Spanish Republic depended on the Spanish Bank as they were denied economic aid internationally and thus, this British decision contributed to the existing difficulties that the Spanish Republic had to overcome. Dr Enrique Moradiellos mentions the fact that Britain interfered in a purchase that the Republicans aimed to make. The Republicans wanted to buy military supplies from the United States. However, the British government interfered and blocked this exchange (Moradiellos

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<sup>7</sup> Clearing agreement is understood as an agreement between nations that controls trade and imports and exports between the countries in order to establish a balance.

00:26:21 – 00:26:53). This interference was not impartial since other operations and purchases of arms supplies had been made by Nationalists and the British government did not get involved. Accordingly, many of the operations carried out by the British government were gradually isolating the Republicans. Therefore, the Republicans' progress in war was very limited as the international contribution was reduced to the Soviet Union, whose contribution was based on military supplies and other contributions.

British policies during the Spanish Civil War had a direct involvement in world politics as the creation of the Non-Intervention Committee contributed to preventing other countries from intervening in the war. However, British politicians aimed to be as neutral as possible. Although their intention was to pursue neutrality, they ended up committing what Douglass Little names in his book "Malevolent neutrality". On his book Douglass Little highlights this notion on British and American involvement in the war:

For three years, Franco's promises to restore order from chaos seemed to offer an easy solution to the nagging political and economic problems which had bedevilled British and American relations with Spanish since 1931. But ironically Franco's Spain presented Great Britain and the United States with nearly as many troubles as its predecessor. (Little 597)

Accordingly, Britain found Franco's victory as a more stabilizing solution for the Spanish problem. Therefore, Britain's involvement in the war, portrayed initially as neutral and non-interventionist, ended up siding indirectly with the Nationalists. Britain's movements concerning the economy, arms supplies, and international intervention became, on the one hand, favourable factors for the Nationalists and on the other hand, isolating factors for the Republicans. Thus, Britain's implication in the war had an effect on the development and the outcome of the Spanish Civil War.

## **2. British government's economic involvement**

### **2.1 Refugee proposal**

The refugee proposal was the outcome of the horror experienced in Guernica. The international news portrayed the horror experienced in the bombing of the village. This specific event aroused sympathy towards the Republicans in many countries since many cities and villages were gradually being destroyed. Therefore, the Basque country's government aimed to request help internationally in order to evacuate women and children as fast as possible. The Basque government aimed to reduce the number of victims and to evacuate the population to other parts of the country and to other countries too. Leah Manning<sup>8</sup> was responsible for the evacuation plan, which would take almost 4,000 children from Bilbao to Southampton. Leah Manning, in collaboration with José Antonio Aguirre,<sup>9</sup> drew up the evacuation plan.

Early in 1937, the Basque Country's government sent a letter to the international community in order to formally request the welcoming of a great number of women and children that were undergoing a devastating situation due to the bombing of many Basque cities. France, according to Nerea Azurmendi in her article on the Basque children, welcomed more than 15,000 children during the early months of 1937 (Arzurmendi). Nonetheless, the British government saw the proposal with reluctance as according to the Non-Intervention Agreement, welcoming refugees would imply getting involved in the conflict and this would be seen as direct involvement in the war.

Leah Manning was a Labour member of Parliament when the bombings in the Basque country took place. She travelled to Bilbao dismayed by the news of the bombings. During her stay in the Basque country, she met Basque politicians and

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<sup>8</sup> Leah Manning (1886-1977) was a British politician. She belonged to the Labour Party and was an MP in the 1930s. She was elected the President of the National Union of Teachers.

<sup>9</sup> José Antonio Aguirre (1904-1960) was the lehendakari of the Basque country.

British journalists who contributed to her objective of carrying out the evacuation plan. At the end of April 1937, some of the aspects on the evacuation plan were almost set. According to Gregorio Arrien, she met the representatives of the “Asistencia Social” on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April in order to establish the main conditions of the evacuation proposal (Arrien). Although the main aspects were set, the proposal faced strong opposition.

The refugee proposal was negatively seen by many organisations, committees and by some parts of the British government. It was thought to be associated both with an involvement in the war and with a deterioration of children’s conditions. According to Tom Buchanan, Lewis Golden<sup>10</sup> argued that the organisation Save the Children Fund was always against the removal of children from their country. Concerning the Basque Children’s evacuation, he considered that children would weaken physically, morally, and mentally if they were evacuated (Buchanan 110). This quote highlights the main arguments that were presented in order to oppose the decision of welcoming the children. However, the reluctance of welcoming the children changed progressively due to many influences. Thus, the Duchess of Atholl<sup>11</sup> became a key figure concerning the Spanish conflict and the children’s evacuation. As stressed by Gregorio Arrien in his book, the National Joint Committee presided over by the Duchess of Atholl contributed to the change of the British government’s perspective concerning the evacuation (Arrien 42). Therefore, the pressure made by the various committees and political parties contributed to the perspective’s drift.

The British government considered different options concerning the Basque Children’s evacuation. Nonetheless, in general terms, the proposal was seen with unwillingness. Although they did not want to welcome the Basque children, the British

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<sup>10</sup> Lewis Golden was the secretary of the Save the Children Fund.

<sup>11</sup> The Duchess of Atholl (1874-1960) was a Scottish aristocrat and a Conservative Party’s member. She became the first Scottish woman to be elected to Parliament. She was also the responsible of the National Joint Committee.

government eventually accepted welcoming them. However, the government marked specific conditions in order to guarantee the evacuation. According to Gregorio Arrien, the British government established that the National Joint Committee had to contribute 10 and a half shillings per child (Arrien). The Foreign Office planned the conditions which had to be accepted in order to allow the evacuation of the children. However, the conditions were considered strict by most members of the organisations in charge. Tom Buchanan highlights the following notion concerning the conditions applied by the government: “Sir John Simon, the home secretary, imposed a series of conditions, the most important of which was that children must be the financial responsibility solely of those who had brought them (...)”(Buchanan 110). Therefore, the acceptance and the proposal would be formally accepted in the event that the organisations responsible for the evacuation would sustain the refugee programme economically.

The conditions determined by the Home Office were seen by many organisations as “undesirable and impracticable” (Buchanan 111). The conditions were severe in order to prevent the evacuation. However, according to Arrien the final decision was conditioned by the work of Leah Manning and Mr Stevenson<sup>12</sup>(Arrien 44). On the 18<sup>th</sup> of May 1937 the British government accepted the refugee proposal. According to Nerea Arzurmendi, each government established a series of conditions. On the one hand, the Basque government wanted the siblings to be together as well as to guarantee them an education. On the other hand, the British government imposed medical check-ups, an age limit as well as a political sympathy limit<sup>13</sup> (Arzurmendi). Therefore, the agreement was accepted under specific conditions.

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<sup>12</sup> Ralph Stevenson (1895-1977) was the British Consul in 1937.

<sup>13</sup> In order to be as neutral as possible, they tried to guarantee asylum to Republicans’ children as well as to Nationalists’ ones in equal terms.

## **2.2 Economic involvement**

The Non-Intervention Agreement made by the European powers at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War conditioned the majority of the decisions made by the British Government concerning the Spanish Civil War. Therefore, the Basque Children's cause was directly affected by the positioning of the British government since they saw the children's arrival with reluctance.

This was because their main position concerning the evacuation was opposition. Accordingly, they unsuccessfully tried to dissuade the evacuation by trying to argue that the children would be better welcomed in other parts of Europe such as France. However, the children eventually arrived at Southampton.

The position stated by the British government concerning the economic involvement of the British government was very clear and strict. The following quote from the Executive Meeting that took place at the House of Commons on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May 1937 highlights the main economic aspects stated by Sir John Simon:

The acceptance by this committee<sup>14</sup> of complete responsibility financially and otherwise, for the arrangements for the children; the responsibility to include a camp at Southampton and the necessary medical arrangements; the subsequent dispersal of the children into institutions or homes; the acceptance by the committee of responsibility for repatriation as soon as conditions permitted, and the acceptance of the principle that financial responsibility rests with the Committee and that no charge upon Public Funds will be involved locally or nationally. ('Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting')

Therefore, as stated in the minutes of the meeting, the British government established several conditions in order to guarantee the children's arrival. The most important condition was the economic one. Correspondingly, the British government accepted welcoming the children in the event that the Basque Children's Committee accepted the financial responsibility. This decision, conditioned by the Non-Intervention Agreement and by neutrality, guaranteed the Non-Intervention in terms of funding. Therefore,

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<sup>14</sup> The committee to which the quote is referred is The Basque Children's Committee.



although the British government had accepted the proposal of welcoming the children, they could also maintain their position of neutrality. As mentioned in the quote, it was directly stated that no public fund could be involved in the Basque Children's process. Accordingly, the financial responsibility was left mainly to the Basque Children's Committee.

The British government by establishing the conditions to be accepted and respected delimited their participation in the refugee programme. Therefore, their contribution was restricted to the acceptance of the children as the different costs that the refugee programme had to be assumed by voluntary organisations, political parties and the Basque government. Accordingly, apart from the costs of the whole programme that included the camp organisation and food that the Basque Children's Committee had to assume, the British government asked for more specific economic conditions. As mentioned by Nerea Arzumendi in her article on the Basque Children's Committee, the British government explicitly asked the Basque Children's Committee to guarantee 10 shillings per child per week (Arzumendi). Therefore, the British government determined a strict plan for the organisations in order to carry out the refugee programme.

### **3. Political parties' economic involvement**

#### **3.1 Communist Party**

The British Communist Party had an important role during the Spanish Civil War and more specifically concerning aid and fundraising. Therefore, the contribution started early in the war. From the first instances of Franco's uprising, the Communist Party started collaborating with the Spanish Republic. According to Tom Buchanan in *Britain and the Spanish Civil War*: "Communist policy towards Spain was particularly important for its ramifications on the local level. Wherever the party was strong, it

contributed to broad-based organisations campaigning for political and humanitarian support for Republican Spain”(Buchanan 73). Therefore, their contribution was an organized plan seeking political and humanitarian aid. Their objective was to help the Republican Spain and from the early instances of the war, they started their contribution.

The evacuation of the Basque Children meant organisation at several levels in British society. Concerning the Communist Party, their contribution to and involvement in the evacuation was highly important. All around Britain, the Communist Party financially aided the Basque Children’s colonies. An example to their contribution is the colony known as ‘Sketty Park’ in Wales. As mentioned in *Fleeing Franco: How Wales gave shelter to refugee children from Basque Country during the Spanish Civil War*, the Communist Party economically participated in the organisation of the colony in Wales (Davies 93-94).

The contributions from Communist Party members were numerous. However, possibly the most remarkable member concerning the Basque Children’s cause was Isabel Brown<sup>15</sup>. She actively participated in the organisation of fundraising for the Basque Children. Correspondingly, one of the most important fundraising events was ‘Spain and Culture’. This event united several artists and writers such as Pablo Picasso, Virginia Woolf, Pau Casals, H.G. Wells among others. ‘Spain and Culture’ was an event that took place in the Royal Albert Hall in London on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June 1937. This meeting was an event created in order to collect money for the Basque Children. Although many people contributed to the organisation of the event, the Duchess of Atholl as well as Isabel Brown were the ones who organised the whole meeting.

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<sup>15</sup> Isabel Brown (1894-1984) was a Communist politician and activist. She was also one initial members of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

Accordingly, Virginia Woolf in a letter to Jane Case states the following: “really by means of a fat emotional woman in black velvet called Isabel Brown take collected £1,500 for the Basque children”(Woolf et al. 139). Therefore, the event was successful, according to Virginia Woolf, thanks to the insistence and participation of Isabel Brown as according to the Bulletin no. 8 of the Basque Children’s Committee, the event raised a total of £11,000 (National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief 5).

The Communist Party made a great effort by promoting events, activities and fundraising in order to help the organisation of the Basque Children’s stay in Britain. Nonetheless, although their contribution was highly important during the period, according to Hywel Davies, “Communists involvement in providing assistance for the children has been dismissed by some” (Davies 25). Accordingly, although their contribution was key at time, their participation has been discredited.

### **3.2 Independent Labour Party**

The Independent Labour Party<sup>16</sup> energetically participated in the Spanish Civil War. Their participation in the war, apart from an ideological aspect, was conditioned by their sisterhood with POUM<sup>17</sup> in Spain. As mentioned in “The Independent Labour Publications”, the participation of ILP can be considered in three distinct areas, humanitarian, political and military (Hall). Therefore, their participation covers different aspects on which they contributed.

The arrival of the Basque Children had also an impact on the Independent Labour Party, since they actively collaborated in the organisation and support of the Basque Children’s colonies. According to Tom Buchanan, the ILP raised around £2,300

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<sup>16</sup> The Independent Labour Party (ILP) was a socialist party that had its origins in the Labour. In 1932, the section officially left the Labour Party, and became a socialist and revolutionary party in Britain.

<sup>17</sup> POUM (Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista) was a Spanish political party that presented a left-wing ideology associated with anti-Stalinist ideology. This party had a key role in the Spanish Civil War specifically in Catalonia.

which would be destined to help Spain. The half of the money would be destined to medical supplies and aid (Buchanan 110). Correspondingly, they raised different funds in order to collaborate with the Spanish Republic. Concerning the Basque Children, according to Christopher Hall in “The Independent Labour Publications”: “(...) the money was used to send medical supplies to Spain and to finance the care of Basque refugee children – 4,000 of whom had been evacuated to the UK. The ILP housed 40 of them at The Grange in Street, Somerset” (Hall). Accordingly, the ILP took the responsibility of taking care of 40 children destined to the Grange in Street. Bulletin no.8 of the National Joint Committee establishes the organisation of the children and their distribution all around Britain. The text mentions that a group of children would be sent to houses where Local Committees would be the responsible for the care. In this specific group, the responsibility of the ILP in welcoming 40 Basque children in Street is mentioned. (National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief 1). Therefore, it established the economic responsibility for the care of 40 children by the Independent Labour Party.

### **3.3 Labour Party**

The Labour Party was a political party that contributed to the Spanish Civil War as well as to the Basque Children’s cause. However, as mentioned in *Britain and the Spanish Civil War*: “The Labour movement, more than any force in British politics was racked with disputes over the Spanish Civil War”(Buchanan 78). Accordingly, the initial position adopted by the political party was not clear due to internal differences. Nonetheless, although the position was initially unclear, as the war progressed, the political party channelled its position towards the Spanish Civil War into a position of neutrality. However, the Labour movement through activists individually or through committees participated in fundraising, and in organising an aid campaign for Spain. Thus, different Labour politicians were active members of the Basque Children’s

Committee. An example to Labour politicians' work concerning the children's evacuation is Leah Manning, who actively organised and encouraged many citizens to collaborate with the Basque Children's cause.

The arrival of 4,000 Basque children implied an organisation as well as funding in order to cover the necessities of the children and teachers coming to Britain. Nonetheless, the Labour Party was aware that they could not be financially responsible for the whole refugee programme. A meeting took place between the representatives of the Labour Movement and José Lizaso<sup>18</sup> in order to establish the lines of the evacuation. In the memorandum of the meeting, it is mentioned the following aspect: "Having regard to the language difficulty, religious and other considerations, it would, in my opinion, be beyond the resources of the Labour Movement to deal with this problem alone. The finance involved would be very great (...)"(Citrine 2). Therefore, through this declaration of Walter Citrine<sup>19</sup>, it is observable the initial awareness of the financial capacities of the Labour Party.

The Labour movement promoted different campaigns to raise funds for the Basque Children. Therefore, in order to promote an aid campaign, the Labour Party published several pamphlets to be distributed all around Britain. Accordingly, their goal was to increase the funds gained in order to provide the different organisations helping the children, the material and money needed. Accordingly, one of the pamphlets directly appeals to British society by stating: "Your shillings will save lives"(National Council of Labour). Therefore, the Labour movement tried to persuade society in order to gain funds. The same pamphlet mentions the following aspect concerning the Labour movement: "The Labour movement has a special responsibility and a splendid record in

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<sup>18</sup> José Ignacio Lizaso was the Basque delegate of the Basque government in Britain.

<sup>19</sup> Walter Citrine (1887 – 1983) was the General Secretary of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) and a member of the Labour Party.

organising relief for the Spanish people and care of the Basque children is an individual duty the movement's members have undertaken in the name of humanity”(National Council of Labour). Correspondingly, the Labour movement appealed to the duty of the party in order to help the children. Moreover, there is an explicit appeal to humanity. The Labour movement contributed thus to the organisation and collection of funding destined for the children.

The Labour movement actively contributed to the Basque Children’s cause by supporting groups of children. Therefore, as the historian Michael Alpert mentions, the Labour parties, the cooperative movements, and the multiple voluntary organisations involved housed and supported groups of Basque Children (Alpert 35). Nonetheless, in terms of the Labour Party’s as a block, the party’s contribution was really limited, as in general terms, the majority of campaigns, and events were produced thanks to Labour Party members who acted independently of their political party. As Jim Fyrth mentions: “(...) the Aid Spain movement could not have achieved what it did without the work of labour movement activists and organisations. But the credit for this belongs to those activists and organisations, who are usually acting independently of their national leaders, and were often critical of them” (Fyrth 157). Therefore, as mentioned by Fyrth, the success in humanitarian campaigns was thanks to the activists and politicians who acted despite the neutral line adopted by the Labour Party. It is important to remark that the whole humanitarian and fund process had its success in the individuals who crossed the neutral and non-interventionist lines marked by the political party.

### **3.3.1 Trades Union Congress (TUC)**

The Trades Union Congress was engaged in the Basque Children’s cause. Correspondingly, they were part of some of the voluntary committees created *ad hoc*. Nonetheless, the initial participation was influenced by the members of the committees.

Therefore, according to Jim Fyrth, the Trades Union Congress did not get enrolled in either the Spanish Medical Aid Committee or the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief mainly because of the presence of the Communists in the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief (Fyrth 157). Thus, initially the TUC did not participate in or contribute to the main organisations in charge of the Basque Children.

The involvement of the Trades Union Congress in the organisations that emerged in order to cover the different needs of both the children and the volunteers was very delimited. In a letter to William Elger<sup>20</sup>, Walter Citrine states the following:

It was decided therefore, as a general principle, not to participate in the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief. (...) The General Council of the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party are represented on that Committee which is known as "The National Committee for the Care of the Basque Children". (Citrine)

Their involvement was thus, restricted to what will be known as the Basque Children's Committee, as they did not want to get involved in The National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief.

The financial involvement of the TUC concerning the Basque Children is related both to fundraising and to Trades Union Congress donations. The Trades Union Congress launched several campaigns in order to appeal for funds. These campaigns were usually created in collaboration with the Labour Party, and they appealed to the 'comradeship feeling' in order to ask for economic aid. The following statement was present in a leaflet published in order to ask for help: "in these circumstances efforts are being made to ever great Basque children to France, Great Britain and other countries. (...) It is for this purpose that the General Council and the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party appeal for your help"(The Trades Union Congress and

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<sup>20</sup> William Elger (1891 – 1946) was the General Secretary of the Scottish Trade Union.

The Labour Party). Therefore, in collaboration with the Labour Party, the TUC appealed for contributions and economic aid to the members of both organisations.

At an organisational level, the Trades Union Congress donated different amounts of money to the Basque Children's Committee. Thus, they got financially involved in the care of the Basque Children. Jim Fyrth mentions that the TUC donated £5,000 to the Basque Children's Committee as soon as they joined the organisation (Fyrth 157). Apart from the initial donation and the raising of funds, the Trades Union Congress made other lower contributions. As mentioned in a booklet by the National Council of Labour, the Trades Union Congress donated £1,000 and contributed objects such as clothing or shoes (The National Council of Labour). Therefore, the TUC contributed economically to the Basque Children's Cause by donating both money and material needed for the children.

### **3.4 Conservative Party**

The Conservative Party was indirectly involved in the Basque Children's cause since the Spanish Civil War had caused an internal division concerning the position to be adopted. Therefore, the opinions on the Spanish Civil War were diverse and the arrival of the Basque Children reinforced the different positions on the war. According to Nick Crowson, the Conservative Party was divided into three blocks concerning the Spanish Civil War. The first block included members who supported pro-Franco groups and organisations such as the Committee of Friends of National Spain. The second block included members who supported non-intervention in order to prevent a conflict. The third block was the one which was aware of the threat that the different dictatorships represented (Crowson 79). Thus, the internal situation within the Conservative Party made it difficult to establish a strategy for the Basque Children's cause that concerned the whole organisation.



The Conservatives' involvement in the Basque Children's cause is related to the participation in the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief and mostly related to the activism of some conservatives' politicians. Correspondingly, Katherine Stewart, also known as the Duchess of Atholl, was a Conservative MP who actively participated in the organisation of the Basque Children's stay in Britain. Therefore, her work apart from an organisational one was key for the arrival of the children. Tracy McVeigh mentions the following: "The feeding, clothing and housing of the children was left to volunteers and one campaigner, the Duchess of Atholl, guaranteed a sum of money for each child"(McVeigh). Therefore, the economic contribution of the Duchess of Atholl guaranteed a sum for every child in the camp.

The economic aid provided by the Conservative Party was restricted to voluntary donations and independent contributions from political members of the party. This non-intervention was given by political discrepancies and also by the respect for the Non-Intervention Agreement. Tom Buchanan highlights the following notion on a section of the Conservative Party: "(...) the Basque Children's Repatriation committee under the chairman of Sir Arnold Wilson and supported by the Duke of Wellington. Its purpose was to put pressure on the British government for the refugees' prompt return to Spain and to make their continued residence in Britain as difficult as possible"(Buchanan 90). This quote illustrates how some of the sections in the Conservative Party saw the presence of the Basque refugees. This fact together with the 'pro-Franco' sentiment spread among some of the Conservative Party politicians encapsulate the vision of the political party on the children. Correspondingly, this justifies their non-interventionist approach to the Basque Children's cause.

### 3.5 Liberal Party

The Liberal Party's involvement in the Basque Children's cause as well as in the Spanish Civil War was both conditioned by the political ideology and the internal economic status. As mentioned by Tom Buchanan, "The Civil War found the Liberal Party, even more than Labour, still recovering from the effects of the 1931 crisis"(Buchanan 83). Therefore, the situation within the political party was complicated due to the economic crisis that had affected Britain in 1931.

The contribution of the political party was restricted to politicians' individual donations and the collaboration in the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief. Therefore, as a political block, the Liberals did not contribute financially to the Basque Children's cause. Nonetheless, some of its politicians such as Wilfred Roberts<sup>21</sup> made a huge effort in order to guarantee the children a good stay in Britain. Wilfred Roberts was an active participant of the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief. He was the secretary of the organisation and prepared the arrival of the children. Although the contributions from Wilfred Roberts and other politicians were key for the arrival of the children, the political party did not side with those political members. Tom Buchanan highlights the following notion: "Roberts' heavy involvement in Spain was resented by Liberal leaders (...)"(Buchanan 85). Therefore, the general position of the Liberal Party was separated from the direct involvement in the Basque Children's cause.

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<sup>21</sup> Wilfred Roberts (1900-1991) was an MP of the British Liberal Party.

#### 4. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to examine the economic involvement of both the British government and the British political parties. Therefore, it has been key to consider the political situation during the 1930s' Britain. Correspondingly, still recovering from World War I, the British government opted for neutrality concerning international conflicts in order to avoid a conflict at an international level. Therefore, the initial positioning conditioned the development and the involvement of the British government in the welcoming of the refugees. Moreover, the creation of both a Non-Intervention Committee and a Non-Intervention Agreement in collaboration with other world powers directly shaped the development of the Spanish Civil War as well as the evacuation of refugees.

The British government, due to the neutrality and non-intervention adopted, had a strong opinion towards the proposal of the evacuation of Basque children. Accordingly, their intervention in the evacuation was restricted to the enablement of the process. Therefore, there was no involvement concerning financial nor organizational aid. The funds, as well as the material needed, were not provided by the British government, but by voluntary organisations created *ad hoc* and by political parties and individual contributors. Thus, the British government did not get involved financially in the evacuation of the Basque Children in 1937.

The British political parties played different roles concerning the Basque refugee programme since every political party had an internal position towards the Spanish Civil War and more specifically, towards the Basque Children's evacuation. Regarding the British Communist Party, the party itself actively participated in the process. It contributed economically to the cause by accepting the responsibility of the 'Sketty Park' colony. Moreover, they actively organised fundraising events in order to cover the

children's needs. Concerning the Independent Labour Party, its participation was both financial and organisational. Therefore, it accepted financial responsibility for 40 children. Furthermore, they promoted fundraising campaigns to be destined to the Basque refugees. The Labour Party's position towards the Basque refugees and the Spanish Civil War was one of neutrality. Thus, although the position adopted by the political party was neutrality, the political party organised fundraising campaigns and appealed for donations. Moreover, some subsections of Labour Party did house children. Nonetheless, the Labour Party as a block did not contribute economically to the Basque Children's cause. Attached to the Labour Party, the Trade Union Congress was an organisation that actively contributed to the refugee programme. It made various sizeable donations; it participated in committees, and it organised several campaigns in order to raise funds. The Conservative Party as well as the Liberal Party did not get involved financially in the Basque Children's stay in Britain. Its participation was limited to individual members' participation in voluntary organisations. Therefore, the financial involvement in the case was restricted to some specific political parties who decided to actively participate in the cause.

Having considered the financial involvement of both the political parties and the British government, it is key to highlight the influence that political ideologies have on the welcoming of refugees. This specific involvement and influence can be extrapolated to 21<sup>st</sup> century's refugee crisis. Therefore, it is meaningful to approach the refugee crisis considering the fact that most decisions concerning the welcoming of refugees are directly conditioned by political influences and interests. Thus, compared to the Basque Children's refugee programme, the 21<sup>st</sup> century refugees are also welcomed by voluntary organisations and by political members or activists.

The Basque Children's evacuation and stay in Britain has been approached considering the financial involvement of both the British government and the British political parties. Nonetheless, the economic and organizational cooperation of both the British government and the Basque government has only been focused considering the intervention of Leah Manning. Therefore, this issue might be addressed in future research concerning the Basque refugees.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Chronological development**

The development of the whole evacuation process took place between 1937 and 1939. Correspondingly, once the proposal had been accepted by the two political blocks, the Basque government and the British government, the evacuation was ready to be carried out. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of May 1937, 3,843 children had embarked on the ship “SS Habana”. According to Nerea Arzurmendi in her article on the evacuation, the wooden liner had a capacity for 800 passengers (Arzurmendi). Consequently, the liner provided had quadrupled the capacity allowed. Therefore, the children as well as the teachers and priests on board struggled during the trip from Santurtzi to Southampton.

The “SS Habana” docked at Southampton on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May 1937. The children were affectionately welcomed by many citizens waiting for them in Southampton. After their arrival, the children were divided into groups which would be sent to Eastleigh where they would live for a reduced number of weeks. There, many volunteers contributed to the preparation and organisation of the camp. However, the initial prevision was to establish a camp for around 2,000 children but soon after, the number of children doubled. This implied the extension of the camp. According to Arrien, soon after their arrival, the children were divided into two major blocks. The division was made according to the parents’ political affiliation (Arrien 62). Therefore, there were two major blocks, the Nationalists’ section and the Republicans’ section.

After their stay in the camp in Eastleigh under difficult sanitary conditions, the children were progressively divided into groups who would be sent to different houses and schools around Britain and Wales. Many organisations contributed to the creation of the

‘colonies’<sup>22</sup>. The children were divided into 10 different colonies around the British Isles. Although the expected time to remain in the British Isles was three months, the majority remained longer than expected. Correspondingly, the repatriation process started around 1938. Gerald Hoare and Simon Martinez highlight the following notion: “By the end of 1938, 2,175 children had returned leaving 1,704 remaining under the care of BCC<sup>23</sup>”(Hoare and Martinez 6). Therefore, the repatriation process started early in 1938 and the children were quickly sent back with their relatives. Nonetheless, a great number of children remained in Britain.

### **Colonies organisation**

After some months living in the camp in Eastleigh, the children were divided into different schools and houses all over the British Isles. Therefore, their removal from the camp due to organisational as well as sanitary problems meant the division of the children. Many organisations and committees contributed to the distribution of the children around the British Isles. Accordingly, the children were divided into three main blocks: England, Scotland, and Wales. Therefore, the children were divided and distributed.

The children were divided into three different types of “colonies”. Therefore, the “colonies” belonged to three organisations: the Salvation Army<sup>24</sup>, the Catholic Church and Local Committees. According to Arrien, three days after their arrival, a total of 400 children left the camp in Eastleigh and they went to a “colony” in Clapton (Arrien 70). Therefore, soon after their arrival the children were distributed around the country where many volunteers and teachers took care of them. However, not in every colony

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<sup>22</sup> Colonies was the term chosen to refer to the different houses and school where the children would be staying.

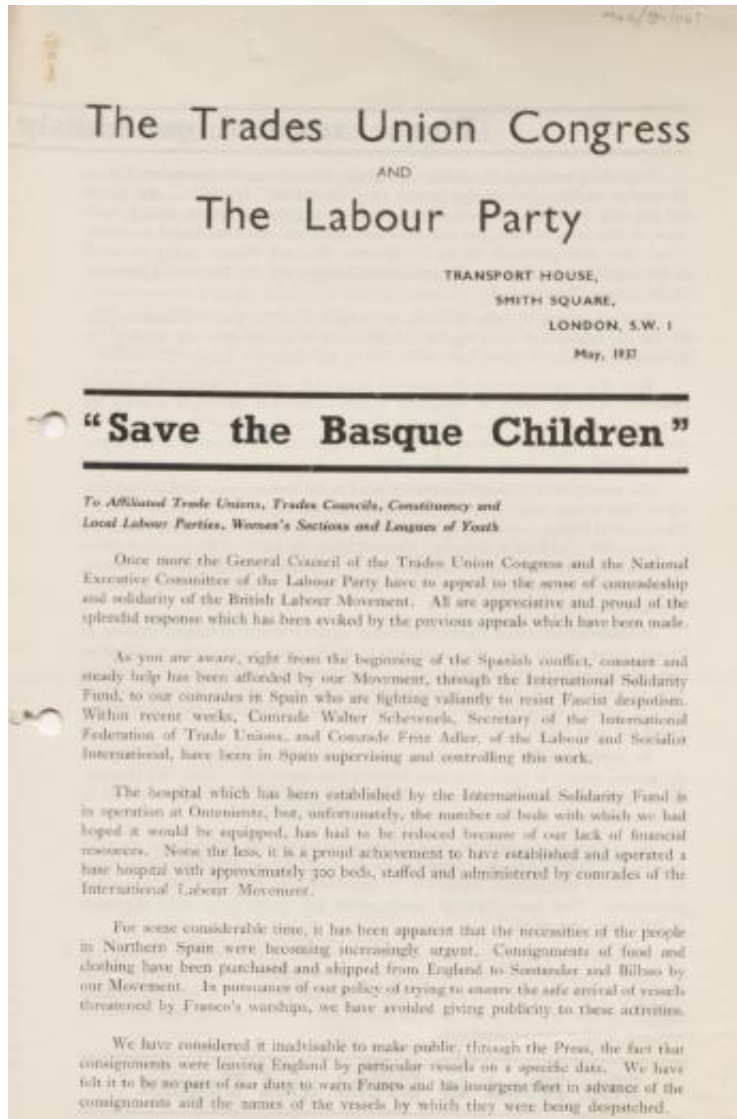
<sup>23</sup> Basque Children Committee.

<sup>24</sup> Protestant English Church

went as well as expected as there were organizational problems as well as behavioural problems.

## Appendix B

### Documents from the period



This document is an appeal for funds made by both the Labour movement and the Trades Union Congress.

Source: Warwick University

The Trades Union Congress, and The Labour Party. 'Save the Basque Children'.  
Warwick University, May 1937,  
<https://cdm21047.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/scw/id/2639>.

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL.

## MEMORANDUM OF INTERVIEW.

Date 5th May, 1937.-  
6th May, 1937.

SUBJECT.

Reference WMC/XMS/485.

Time \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

SPANISH SITUATION  
EVACUATION OF BASQUE CHILDREN

Present Señor Lizaso,  
Mr. Middleton and  
Sir Walter Citrine,  
Mr. H.V. Tewson.

At my request, Señor Lizaso called here to-day to discuss matters concerning the proposed evacuation of Basque children.

I said that it appeared that Mrs. Leah Manning had been telegraphing many people in this country, and that I had received a telegram which Mr. Attlee had received from her. Another telegram which had been sent to Miss Ellen Wilkinson appeared that day in the "Manchester Guardian".

Señor Lizaso said that he did not like the way in which Mrs. Manning had gone about her business. He had received a visit on Sunday morning from Mr. Wilfrid Roberts, M.P., who had shown him a telegram from Mrs. Manning demanding that the Basque Government in London should charter two ships for the purpose of evacuating children. He resented this, as he was not employed by Mrs. Manning but by the Basque Government, and any instructions to him should come from his Government. He had told Mr. Wilfrid Roberts that he expected to know from his own government what was required of him, rather than from other people in England.

This morning, 4th May, he had received a telegram from his Government in answer to others which he had sent, telling him to charter two vessels for the evacuation of 4,000 children to England. This was the only news he had received, but he had cabled for a copy of the plan of evacuation which his Government had instituted. He understood that a Mrs. Pye of the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief was in Bordeaux, and was looking after the interests of the Spanish children in that region. He also understood that a Mr. Sam had been appointed by the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief to organise the arrangements for the receipt and housing of the children in Great Britain. This latter gentleman had had some experience in dealing with Belgian refugees during the War. He stated that no distinction of creed or politics was being made, and that it was very important that the Catholic organisations in this country should be identified with the work of relief for these children.

I said that it appeared to us that we had two alternatives before us. The first was that we should organise this work directly under the auspices of the British Labour Movement. It was estimated that some 26-30 thousand pounds

This document is the Memorandum of Interview made by Walter Citrine which was in response to the telegram sent by Leah Manning who was in Bilbao.

Source: Warwick University

Citrine, Walter. 'Spanish Situation. Evacuation of Basque Children'. *Memorandum of Interview*, Warwick University, 1937, pp. 1-3,  
<https://cdm21047.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/scw/id/13866>.



ROYAL ALBERT HALL  
(Manager: CHARLES B. COCHRAN)  
Grand International Meeting on

# SPAIN AND CULTURE

THURSDAY, JUNE 24, at 8 p.m. Doors  
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**HEINRICH MANN**  
**PROFESSOR LANGEVIN**  
**PROFESSOR CONSTABLE**

In the chair:

**THE DUCHESS OF ATHOLL,**  
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Nicolson, M.P., Philip Noel-Baker, M.P., John Robertson Scott (Editor of the  
"Countryman"), Professor Charles Singer, Dame Sybil Thorndike, Professor  
J. B. Trend, H. G. Wells, Virginia Woolf.

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**IN AID OF THE BASQUE REFUGEE CHILDREN**  
UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE NATIONAL JOINT COMMITTEE FOR SPANISH RELIEF

Printed by the VICTORIA HOUSE PRO. CO. LTD. (T.U. all Depts.), 55 and 57 Drury Lane, London, W.C.2

This document was the leaflet which informed of the international meeting held in order to raise funds for the Basque Children. In the meeting many important intellectuals, artists and writers participated.

Source: Warwick University

*Grand International Meeting on Spain and Culture.* (1937). Warwick University.  
<https://cdm21047.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/scw/id/13668>



94,630

FOUR THOUSAND SPANISH CHILDREN HAVE BEEN BROUGHT TO SAFETY  
FROM WAR-STRICKEN BASQUE VILLAGES AND TOWNS

£2,000 A WEEK IS NEEDED TO MAINTAIN THE CHILDREN IN THE  
HOMES THAT HAVE BEEN FOUND FOR THEM

**S.O.S. S.O.S. S.O.S. S.O.S.**  
**FUNDS ARE URGENTLY NEEDED**

The Labour movement has a special responsibility and a splendid record in organising relief for the Spanish people, and care of the Basque children is an individual duty the movement's members have undertaken in the name of humanity.

*Send your contribution now. If you have already subscribed, do it again.*  
*Expenditure is continuous and funds are running low.*

Every penny you can spare will help to keep these helpless victims of War safe and well cared for—  
Every penny is needed—Every penny will be well spent—Every penny counts.

*Contributions should be sent to:—*  
SIR WALTER CITRINE, National Council of Labour, Transport House, Smith Square, London, S.W.1.

(7/37190) Printed by the Victoria House Printing Co., Ltd., and published by the National Council of Labour; order from the Labour Publication Dept., Transport House, Smith Square, London, S.W.1.

This document is an appeal for funds. The Labour movement highlights the responsibility in helping the Basque Children.

Source: Warwick University

National Council of Labour. *Your Shillings Will Save Lives!* National Council of Labour, 1937. <https://cdm21047.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/scw/id/3099>.





## CARE OF CHILDREN

**A**FTER the appalling massacre by Franco's foreign airmen at Guernica, efforts were made to evacuate as many as possible of the Basque children. A special appeal was issued by the National Council of Labour. 4,000 of the children were brought to England and cared for by the National Committee for the care of the Basque children.

In this work the Trade Union Movement nationally and in various localities has participated actively. Apart from grants totalling £6,600 from the International Solidarity Fund, gifts in kind have been sent. A notable instance was the gift of boots and shoes by the Boot and Shoe Operatives and the Rosendale Union of Boot, Shoe and Slipper Operatives.

More than half of the 4,000 children have now been repatriated.

Tens of thousands of children are among the

refugees in France. Their plight is truly terrible, and although the French authorities immediately undertook the organisation of relief, the obligation resting on the International is heavy, and there is a fear that existing funds will be rapidly exhausted.

All the children in the homes established by the International Solidarity Fund in Catalonia have been successfully evacuated. More than 400 have been sent to Belgium.

Three children's colonies were organised by the Spanish Committee of the International Solidarity Fund. One was for the orphans of railwaymen organised in the U.G.T. (the Spanish National Trade Union Centre), another for the orphans of organised commercial employees in Madrid, and a third for orphans of the miners of Asturias and Santander.

This document is a section of a booklet published by the National Council of Labour that highlights the organisation and repatriation of the Basque refugees.

Source: Warwick University

The National Council of Labour. *Labour Raises £500,000 for Spain*. Warwick University, 1939, <https://cdm21047.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/scw/id/2779>.

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## NATIONAL JOINT COMMITTEE FOR SPANISH RELIEF

Chairman: THE DUCHESS OF ATHOLL, M.P.

Vice-Chairmen: THE EARL OF LISTOWEL, MISS ELEANOR RATHBONE, M.P.

Hon. Secretaries: MR. D. R. GRENFELL, M.P., CAPT. J. R. J. MACNAMARA, M.P.,  
MR. WILFRID ROBERTS, M.P.

53 Marsham Street, S.W.1. Telephone: Victoria 2168.

Organising Secretary: MRS. MARY. M. MILLER.

Co-operating Societies: The Service Council of The Society of Friends, The Save the Children Fund, The Spanish Medical Aid Committee, The Scottish Ambulance Unit, The Spanish Women's Committee for Help to Spain, The Spanish Youth Foodship Committee, The Christian Foodship Committee, The Southern Spanish Relief Committee.

BULLETIN No. 8.

JULY, 1937.

Price 1d.

Now that we are established in our new office and the volume of our work appears to grow daily, we have decided to publish the bulletin monthly. Since we distributed over 10,000 of the last number we suggest that a charge of 1d. now be made for those copies which have been given away at meetings. If you would like to receive future numbers, please send 5d. as your subscription for the next six months.

We are glad to announce that the Christian Foodship Committee are going to co-operate with the National Joint Committee.

### THE BASQUE CHILDREN

The Camp at North Stonelands, near Southampton, has now been greatly reduced in number and we hope that the 570 children who remain will shortly all be placed in the Homes to which they have been allocated.

The health and spirits of the children is very satisfactory. We may congratulate ourselves on the fact that an epidemic of typhoid which might have resulted from the six cases which came from Bilbao has not in fact taken place. We owe a deep debt of gratitude to the camp medical staff who prevented the spread of infection in conditions which seemed favourable for it. The children were all inoculated twice, the anti-typhoid vaccine was promptly secured with the help of the Spanish Medical Aid Committee. We regret, however, to have to announce the death of one child, Dolores Ugarte, from galloping consumption. She had been treated in University College Hospital and no expense had been spared to save her life.

At a meeting of the Basque Children's Committee held on July 7th the following statement was unanimously agreed:

"The Committee has already made it clear that it is acting as the temporary guardian of the refugee children on behalf of their parents, and that the children will be reunited with them at as early a date as may prove possible.

In the meantime, the general position is being carefully watched. In view, however, of the unsettled

conditions still existing in Spain and generally, the Committee feel that the time has not yet arrived when detailed plans for the children's repatriation can be contemplated. The Committee would remind those interested in this country that the children were offered a haven here from war conditions. Until their parents are in a position to take them back under conditions of safety, the Committee feels it their duty to continue to offer them refuge. They appeal to the generosity of the British public to help them with this responsibility."

Two requests from parents of children in Spain have been received by the Committee. One child, Caridad Oreraga, has been repatriated to Vigo to her father at his expense. The other request is being investigated. A few requests have been received from relatives of children in France which are also being considered.

### HOMES FOR THE CHILDREN

The following is a complete list of Homes where the children have been sent and their numbers:

Roman Catholic Homes and Institutions have taken about 1,200, at Freshwater, Isle of Wight (114), Southall (100), Southampton (34), Honiton, Devon (16), Honor Oak, London (60), Bury, Lancs. (21), Manchester (55), Liverpool (170), Preston (50), Lancaster (10), Wigton (35), Darlington, Newcastle, Hemmersmith.

Four hundred children are under the care of the Salvation Army, 350 at Clepton and Brixton, and 50 in Hadeigh Farm Colony, Suffolk.

Centres where local Committees are making themselves responsible for groups are: Leicester (50), Birkenshead (60), Walsfield (65), Barnet (10), Swinmen (30), Walsall (50), Tunbridge Wells (40), Worthing (50), Woolwich—Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society Home (18), Ipswich (50), Colchester—Peace Pledge Union Home (50), Brompton, Cumberland (100), Blackboys Sussex (20), Hurstmonceux (12), Street—Independent Labour Party Home (40), Cambridge (30), Witney (40), Birmingham—Society of Friends Home (40), Manchester (40), Derby (50), Newbury (100), Barnes (40).

This document is the conference proceeding of the Bulletin no.8 of the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief.

Source: Warwick University

National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief. 'Bulletin No.8'. *National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief*, July 1937, pp. 1-5.

<https://cdm21047.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/scw/id/13290>