UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES

THE BASQUE REFUGEE CHILDREN
OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR IN THE UK:
MEMORY AND MEMORIALISATION

by Susana Sabín-Fernández

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

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A vast body of knowledge has been produced in the field of war remembrance, particularly concerning the Spanish Civil War. However, the representation and interpretation of that conflictual past have been increasingly contested within the wider context of 'recuperation of historical memory' which is taking place both in Spain and elsewhere. An academic gap has been identified with regard to the part played by the Basque Children (*Niños Vascos*) who were evacuated to the UK in 1937 as a result of the war. This thesis investigates the impact that forced migration has had on these children's identity construction, particularly those who settled permanently in the host country.

The thesis is a comparative examination of the process of memory construction and memorialisation, across transnational spaces and time. It analyses the nature and development of commemorative practices both in the UK and in the Basque Country, addressing some of the most fundamental issues related to agency and categorisations. My analysis of the social actors goes beyond Jelin's 'memory entrepreneurs' to include those memory profiteers who benefit from a return to the past in order to fulfil their own personal agendas. I introduce the new term '*conmemoraccionistas*' to refer to them.

The central question dealt with here is how identities are constructed and reconstructed in the social and political arenas in which remembrance takes place. By using ethnography and a multimodal approach, this study provides an in-depth analysis of the discourses of the main agents engaged in memory production, and their agendas. It also identifies reasons for disengagement. Finally, it examines the interrelated narratives of those social actors and how they build on interaction with each other in a complex and continually changing social reality, where I argue, identities can no longer be approached from an essentialist polarising and dichotomising perspective. On the contrary, new approaches are needed which see identitarian development as a dynamic and accumulative process in which different actors have an input and identities are displayed according to particular contexts, settings, and audiences.

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All the photographs presented in the thesis are my own. Figures 3.1, 3.2 and 5.3 are photographs taken of archival material which belongs to the Basque Children of '37 Association UK. Figure 4.3 is a photograph of a programme of events. Figure 5.1 is a photograph of a poster.

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Susana Sabín-Fernández, declare that the thesis entitled '**The Basque refugee children of the Spanish Civil War in the UK: memory and memorialisation'** and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;

- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;

- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;

- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;

- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;

- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;

- parts of this work have been published as:

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Signed: …………………………………………………………………..

Date: ………………………………………………………………………

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This doctoral thesis would not have been possible without the participation of a large number of *Niños Vascos* with whom I have had the pleasure to spend delightful times, who have opened their hearts to me, and who have really made me feel that I have a 'family' and a 'home' away from home.

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Ama y aita, a vosotros os lo debo todo. Eskarrik asko bihotz bihotzez.

GLOSSARY

Acciones   1. Actions. 2. Stocks and shares.

Accionista   Holder of stocks and shares.

BCC   Basque Children's Committee.

Celebracción (pl. *celebracciones*)   ('Celebraction'). See '*conmemoracción*'.

Conmemoracción (pl. *conmemoracciones*)   ('Commemoraction'). Made-up term which encapsulates the active and dynamic character of the commemorative practice being the site where memory, therefore identity, is being constructed by a number of social agents. This term is also associated to a 'tendencia mercantilista' ('commercial tendency') and to a world of investment and 'stocks and shares' or *acciones* (in Spanish), where different social actors invest their social 'capital'.

Conmemoraccionistas   ('Commemoractionists'). The memory agents who take part at the commemorative practices and invest some type of capital, particularly those who expect to make a profit out of it.

Colonia   Colony. In this study this term refers to the homes where the Basque refugee children were sent after their initial stay at the Eastleigh refugee camp site.

Evacuado   Evacuee.

Exiliado   An exiled person.

Exilio   Exile.

Familia   Family.

Fecha redonda   Rounded date. Used here to express special anniversaries and commemoration dates such as the 10th, 20th, and so on.

Guerra   War.

Jubilado   Retired person.

Ley de la Memoria Histórica   Law of Historical Memory. Also known as '*Ley de Extensión de derechos a los afectados por la Guerra Civil y la dictadura*'.

Los olvidados   The forgotten (plural).

NJCSR   National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief.

Nationals   In most literature on the Spanish Civil War written in English the term that has been used for this is *Nationalists*, but this is ambiguous in the Spanish context. Instead of this term I will use *Nationals* throughout my thesis because I find it closer to the Spanish term *Nacionales*, which is the word used to identify Franco's followers as opposed to the *Nationalists* or *Nacionalistas* from the

Basque Country or Catalonia (who did not support Franco but the Republican Government).

Niños de la guerra   Children of the war.

Niños Vascos   Basque Children. Whilst if strict grammar rules are applied this common name does not need to be capitalised as such, I will do it to emphasise its function, which is to identify the particular group under study. However, I will maintain the lower case when I use the term *niños vascos* to refer to a label or to children who were evacuated from the Basque Country to any destination (not only to the UK). I will keep the use of italics when the term is applied to any single member of the group, but in that case without capitalisation (i.e. *niño vasco*, *niña vasca*). When I quote someone else's writing I will keep the original as it is with regard to the use of both capital letters and italics.

Pacto del olvido   Pact of forgetting.

Refugiado   Refugee.

SRA   Social Research Association.

UNHCR   United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

INTRODUCTION

Figure 0.1

0.1 CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

The thesis presented here was originally motivated by personal reasons owing to my family connection with the group under examination, the Basque refugee children of the Spanish Civil War in the UK. The primary intention was to uncover the 'truth' about the historical episode that these children shared. However, I soon became aware of the multiplicity of perspectives and continuous changes involved in memory work. Thus, when my ideas were put into a working plan, the focus moved from a search for 'completed facts' towards an examination of an 'unfinished and constantly changing process' of memory construction and memorialisation, in which agency and categorisations are the centre of attention. The image which opens the study summarises a number of key concepts which will be analysed in depth and relate to issues involved in remembrance of past conflict and forced migration.

There has been much research on the Spanish Civil War and the prior Republican period that according to historians led to escalating hostility from some sectors of the population and culminated in a military uprising in July 1936.[1] Despite the so-called 'neutral' stance that Britain adopted with regard to this war and its government's initial refusal to receive refugees, when the Basque town of Gernika (see Appendix A for explanation on choice of nomenclature) was attacked on 26 April 1937 by the German Condor Legion, the fact that an air force deliberately bombed a non-military target (and machine-gunned those civilians who were trying to run away[2]) affected public opinion so much that the possibility of accepting refugee children was reassessed. As a result of enormous pressure from the public, the British Government agreed to accept a limited evacuation of Basque children to Britain under the condition that no public funding would be used for this cause (Legarreta 1984, Bell 1996).[3] Eventually, on 21 May 1937 more than 3,800 children were evacuated on the transatlantic liner *Habana* from the port of Santurtzi, near Bilbao, to Southampton (Arrien 1991, Bell 1996).

The discrepancy between British state interests and civil society's humanitarian and political agenda generated a variety of paradoxes and complex situations which had fundamental consequences with regard to the identitarian development of the children, known as the 'Basque Children' or '*Niños Vascos*', particularly those who settled permanently in the UK.[4] An important consequence was that this episode was neither incorporated into mainstream history[5] nor dealt with at an official level, which amongst the *Niños Vascos* led to a feeling of being *los olvidados*[6]. The hope that after Franco's death this situation would change did not materialise. Naharro-Calderón notices the 'heavy silence which was imposed in Spain during the so-called transition to democracy, whose dates one could fit to the last 25 years of the last century'[7] (Naharro-Calderón 2004:9).

The 50th anniversary of the Civil War in 1986 coincided with Spain joining the European Community, which was seen as a historical landmark that initiated a process of deep political, economic and social changes. Such an effervescent moment in Spanish history was perceived as a favourable context in which to start dealing with

that 'forgotten' past within a commemorative framework. Some changes came about with regard to the hitherto unique official discourse on the war memory, with those 'defeated', 'forgotten' and 'marginalised' (Alonso Carballés 1998:179) by the previous political regime attempting now to participate in new discourses and so provide alternative narratives.[8]

In this scenario however, the aspect of the child evacuations to other countries was still missing. Thus, in order to fill that gap, in May 1987 a major reunion of *niños evacuados*[9] was organised in Bilbao to commemorate the 50th anniversary of their departure. This meant their entrance as a collective into the public arena, which was considered a milestone in the history of the collective memory of the Basque child exile (Alonso Carballés 1998).[10] The *Asociación de Niños Evacuados el 37*[11] founded in Bilbao was officially presented at that event, and they continued to gather annually thereafter. Similar associations were set up in some of the countries where evacuee children settled permanently, amongst them, in 2002, the Basque Children of '37 Association UK.[12]

During this time there was a growing public debate framed by a discourse of 'recuperation of historical memory' which is evidenced by the vast body of literature produced dealing with the Civil War and its memory; exhibitions; academic events; art productions; public homages; and some government initiatives (Naharro-Calderón 2004).[13] This phenomenon reached its peak in Spain in 2006, which was declared the 'Year of the Historical Memory'. Also, the 'Law of Historical Memory' was first approved in that year and it became effective in 2007, when it was passed by the *Congreso de Diputados*[14] on 31 October.

In a moment when issues about past conflict emerge with such a vigour in the public and institutional spheres both in Spain and elsewhere, there seems to be a need to reminisce and find a meaning for the traumatic past. Despite the extensive quantity of work produced in the field of war remembrance, specifically concerning the Spanish Civil War, there is still an academic gap with regard to the part played by the refugee children. This needs to be addressed both in terms of their input within the wider context of memory and memorialisation, and also regarding how their narratives have

been shaped by other agents. This thesis seeks to fill the gap identified within the field of memory production.

With few exceptions, the absence of the Basque refugee children from any significant work that has been carried out focusing on refugees in the UK is remarkable. Kushner and Knox (1999) dedicate a chapter to the Basque children in their history of the twentieth century refugee movements to Britain.

Previous scholarly work devoted to the *Niños Vascos* focuses on historical reconstructions of the past based on archival research (Legarreta 1984, Arrien 1991) and oral testimonies (Bell 1996), providing insights into individual perspectives. Thus, there is an angle missing which relates to how individuals interact and constantly reconstruct their individual and collective identities within the framework of wider discourses that derive from (and are reinforced at) memorial practices. In other words, in the light of previous work on the topic, it seems that the hidden past has been unburied, therefore the debate now needs to be pushed towards the analysis of 'how' this past has been (and still is) interpreted and constructed. To investigate this phenomenon I examine the subjects of the research both individually and as a collective from a comparative transnational perspective. This includes processes of memorialisation in the hostland which received them (the UK) but also in the homeland they left behind.

A key aim is to provide evidence of the interwoven-ness between the social actors, their actions and agendas, and the impact that they have on each other within the commemorative arena by means of consent or (often) contest. In this view, remembrance is understood as a process which looks at the present as much as it looks at the past. This is epitomised by the picture that opens this work (Figure 0.1, p 1), which shows a blue plaque designed by a *niño vasco* to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the evacuation in Southampton. The text in the picture reads:

> To commemorate the arrival aboard the 'Habana' of 4,000 refugee children
> from the Basque region of Spain in May 1937 following the destruction of
> Guernica during the Spanish Civil War and to thank the people of
> Southampton and Britain who volunteered to care for them.

This memory vehicle reveals a set of particularly significant indicators. These will be analysed in the next chapters in order to examine the fundamental function of commemorative practices which is to support and shape the process of both individual and collective identity building. Firstly, the text connects to a current dominant celebratory discourse of 'commemoration' and 'gratitude'; it categorises the evacuees as 'refugee children'; it mentions 'Guernica', which is a significant point of controversy between conflicting narratives of the victors and the defeated; and also, by stating to whom the gratitude is directed ('the people […] who volunteered'), it obviously makes the point that the British Government did not help the *Niños Vascos*. Secondly, the symbology of the plaque also foregrounds some key elements for analysis.[15] These are 'home' (symbolised by the Tree of Gernika and its 'roots'[16]); 'rupture' with home (broken year of 1937); and finally, 'evacuation' and 'movement' or migration, that is 'routes' (the ship). This brief description shows my approach to the topic in terms of the main concepts which have guided my discussion. It also illustrates the multimodal angle of the ethnographic methodology used for the collection of data and their analysis, which acknowledges the essential role of non-verbal media, in addition to speech, to express and transmit memories.

0.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This investigation has been designed and conducted with two main theoretical questions in mind. In order to manage the analysis, a number of sub-questions were also taken into account. The reason why I do not 'number' the questions is that they are inter-related and considered of equal importance. Whilst during the course of the research the focus has intermittently shifted towards one or the other, all the steps taken have been consistently guided by both questions:

- Who and what are the Basque refugee children of the Spanish Civil War in the UK?

  - ➢ How do they self-identify in what circumstances?

  - ➢ How are they identified by others?

- Are they passive subjects whose narratives are influenced and shaped by other social agents or do they have an active role in the process?

- How do they understand belonging?

- What is the meaning of the commemorative practices that they perform?

  - Who wants to celebrate what?

  - Who is not there? Why?

  - What is the significance of the places and dates chosen?

  - What is the agenda of the different social actors behind these practices?

  - How are these practices shaping the construction of the social identities of the *Niños Vascos'*?

0.3 CHAPTER STRUCTURE

In order to answer these questions the thesis is structured in six chapters. Chapter 1 defines the field of research providing a critical review of key authors and the literature in the area of memory and memorialisation, particularly as regards the topic of displacement. This provides the theoretical framework for a discussion on individual and collective memory, after which I problematise the relationships of memory with time and with history. I also highlight some issues connected to remembering and forgetting, before I move on to explore the importance which elemental concepts such as dates and sites of remembrance have within the phenomenon of memorialisation. The chapter finishes with a debate on the use of the terms refugee and diaspora which concentrates on the notion of 'home' and perceptions of 'us' and 'the others'. The analysis of these essential constituents in the process of building a sense of belonging, and thus an identity, will allow a further contextualisation of the findings of the fieldwork done.

Chapter 2 introduces the qualitative methodological and analytical approach followed for this investigation, which includes participant observation of community life and commemorative practices, and also a number of ethnographic interviews and conversations. It analyses the advantages of an oral and multimodal approach in depth, focusing particularly on ethnography, and substantiates the suitability of this chosen method for collection and analysis of the data. After that I discuss some methodological challenges encountered, paying particular attention to the effect which my position both as a researcher and also as part of the collective under examination has had upon my investigation. In that section attention is drawn to the methodological implications of working in and across languages and the dilemmas involved in the translation work, particularly when the researcher is also the translator who, as such, obviously participates in the construction of the informants' accounts. In this study all translations from Spanish and Basque have been done by myself, unless indicated otherwise, and have been kept as close to the original as possible in order to keep interference to a minimum.

Chapter 3 contextualises my case study from a socio-political perspective. It approaches the topic of the Civil War with a brief examination of its historiography followed by a discussion of some major issues that the Republican Government had to face when it came into power. The focus here is on some particular circumstances that concurred in the Basque Country. Then, I explore the early foreign intervention and policies of appeasement that marked the beginning of the internationalisation of the Spanish conflict and crystallised in a non-intervention agreement. My argument is geared to the significance of the UK's ambivalent attitude towards the war, calling attention to the debate of whether the help provided by the volunteers was purely for humanitarian reasons. This first part of the context chapter sets up the background for my subsequent analysis of the concept of 'Gernika', which encapsulates the ultimate reasons for the evacuation of the children to the UK following the air attack. The chapter finishes with the evacuation and arrival in the UK, which can be considered the major event which determined the later development of the children's lives.

In Chapter 4, I start the data analysis by looking at the construction of narratives at the private annual reunion meal of the *Niños Vascos* and then I move on to examine some remembrance practices which have been held at a public level. The analysis of the data shows the processes of agreement and contestation between the social actors (memory agents) inherent in processes of maintenance and transmission of a social capital which take place at those events. In this chapter I propose a new terminology and grammar which designates the various social actors and actions identified within the commemorative arenas where they operate. In sum, I draw attention to who those memory agents are, to the agendas behind their actions, and also to the efforts these actors make in order to both participate in the discourse of war memory and to set the agenda for it.

Chapter 5 delves further into the processes by which the *Niños Vascos* have constructed their social identities. The first section shows how they have been labelled and re-labelled, and the main categories which have been historically used within dominant discourses in Spain and also in the UK in order to identify them. In the last section of this chapter I attempt to demonstrate the negative effect which prevailing dichotomising discourses of identity have on the *Niños Vascos* perceived sense of identity and belonging. This is followed by an analysis of more dynamic paradigms which transpire from some narratives and suggest a new accumulative approach to identity and to making sense of the past.

Chapter 6 brings this thesis to an end by putting together and emphasising the most significant aspects of the debate with regard to the research questions which have guided it. I present some thoughts on what this study has to offer and what challenges it has posed during its course. Finally, I extend an invitation to the academic community and the wider society to reflect on the issues discussed here with the purpose to create new views and to further arguments in order to advance knowledge.

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Chapter

1

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: MEMORY, MEMORIALISATION AND DISPLACEMENT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will establish a framework of concepts and ideas that I will use throughout my research. I will do this by analysing and evaluating some key texts and discussing writers such as Halbwachs, Jelin and Connerton and their contribution to the debate on memory and memorialisation. I will also discuss the work which authors such as Kushner and Cohen have carried out within the field of refugees and diaspora. This will enable me to derive some answers to my key theoretical questions of 'Who and what are the Basque refugee children of the Spanish Civil War in the UK?' and 'What is the meaning of the commemorative practices that they perform'?

Using a multidisciplinary approach, I will problematise the concepts of memory and memorialisation and will discuss the impact that they have in the process of identity development. First, I will analyse the idea of collective memory and its implicit relationship with time and with history. In addition to this, I will explore remembering and forgetting, and other memory issues discussed by scholars. Focusing on theories regarding commemorative practices, I will examine how these influence and shape individual and group narratives and memory construction. I will finish the chapter

with a section on refugees and diaspora, the purpose of which is to analyse and evaluate scholarly work in this field within a multidisciplinary framework including historical, sociological, political, cultural and psychological perspectives.

1.2 MEMORY

In this preamble I will present my working definition of the term memory, and will defend my choice to use the terms *collective memory* and *social memory* as interchangeable throughout this study. My enquiry will be significantly influenced by the work on memory by the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, a pioneer in the study of collective memory, who maintains that memory carries on our sense of identity (Halbwachs 1992) and Elizabeth Jelin, who contends that the current culture of memory in our Western society

> is in part a response or reaction to rapid change and to a life without anchors or roots. In such a cultural climate, memory has a highly significant role as a symbolic mechanism that helps strengthen the sense of belonging to groups and communities.[17]

> (Jelin 2003b:1-2)

I will start my discussion by introducing and reviewing the ubiquitous concept of memory, which in Gillis' words 'seems to be losing precise meaning in proportion to its growing rhetorical power' (Gillis 1994:3). Memory has become such a recurrent and central feature of study and of public discourse, that authors observe the saturation of references to it in both the public and academic spheres (Olick & Robbins 1998:107). Winter refers to this wide-ranging phenomenon as the 'memory boom', which can be considered 'the historical signature of our own generation' (Winter 2006:51). Such interest is a world-wide phenomenon which has a particular strength in Spain, which in 2007 passed the controversial *Ley de la Memoria Histórica* or *Ley de Extensión de derechos a los afectados por la Guerra Civil y la dictadura* ('Law of Historical Memory').[18] Klein argues that 'Memory serves so many different scholarly interests, and is applied to so many phenomena, that an inclusive history of its origins would indeed approach the universal' (Klein 2000:144).

There are diverse academic disciplines including, amongst others, history, social sciences, psychology, cultural studies, and philosophy, which have shown much interest in the study of memory. From Ancient Greece to the present, scholars have endeavoured to find an answer to the ultimate questions of what memory is and how it works, considering it as a 'physical phenomenon', a 'psychology', a 'physic' or 'cultural space', a special 'social geography' or even a 'political agenda' (Craig 2002).

Ricoeur reminds us of Agustin's idea of memory as a store where everything that has been experienced is kept as images (Ricoeur 1999:114). Related to this is the first of the four entries that the Oxford English Dictionary Online shows for the term memory, which is described as 'the faculty by which the mind stores and remembers information'. The dictionary also identifies memory as 'a person or thing remembered'. The third definition introduces the notion of 'time' defining memory as 'the length of time over which people's memory extends'. The idea of time is crucial in the analysis of memory and it needs to be taken into consideration in any debate, thus I will return to this central point later in this chapter (see 1.2.2). Finally, the dictionary transfers these ideas to the technological sphere by adding 'a computer's equipment or capacity for storing data or program instructions for retrieval'[19].

For working purposes I am going to use the definition of memory given by Craig, which is more comprehensive than the ones shown above. It also calls attention to the distinction between human memory and that of computers, since it includes the ideas of 'recalling' and 'adjustment'. For her

> The human capacity to remember words and things, information and actions, and then to recall these for contemplation or for adjustment, is understood universally to be our memory.

(Craig 2002:278)

Till observes that the now institutionally acknowledged interdisciplinary scholarly field of memory studies started 'as topic of study in the 1970s and 1980s that focused on the emergence of the so-called memory industry' (Till 2008:101). In order to explain the very rapid expansion of the subject of memory in all areas, a number of reasons

have been given which Winter groups into the political, technological, and philosophical. Additionally, he also pays close attention to the element of who the 'audiences' or consumers of memory are (Winter 2006:37).

Authors have highlighted the 'lack of precision in definition', the 'lack of common methodology' and also the 'lack of theoretical development' of the term 'social memory' (Sutton 2008:157, also Cattell & Climo 2002, Winter 2006). Thus, Olick maintains that the critical comment which he and Robbins made in 1998 describing social memory studies as 'a non-paradigmatic, transdisciplinary, centerless enterprise' (Olick & Robbins 1998:106), is still valid a decade later (Olick 2008:23).

The wide interest in the subject of collective or social memory, the diversity of areas covered by it, the interdisciplinary character of the approach to its study, and also the lack of a well established systematic and institutionalised study of it over a long period of time, that is, its comparative 'newness', help us to understand the variety of names attached to this versatile phenomenon. Cattell and Climo list the terms 'cultural memory, historical memory, local memory, official memory, popular memory, public memory, shared memory, custom, heritage, myth, roots, tradition' which are used in this field and sometimes approximate or equate to the term 'collective memory' (Cattell & Climo 2002:4).

In order to distinguish between a shared memory or memories of groups and collectives, and the more personal and subjective memory of individuals, however blurred the boundaries between both types of memory might be, I will refer to the former as *collective* or *social* memory. Authors such as Fentress and Wickham (1992) make a case against the interchangeability of these terms favouring the use of 'social memory'. Furthermore, Winter criticises the frequent use of the term 'collective memory' without interrogation, and even questions the suitability to continue the current indiscriminate use of it which he considers 'cavalier' due to its ambiguity and lack of actual meaning (Winter 2006:4). However, when authors use the terms discussed here they do not always unambiguously differentiate them despite their claims.

In this matter Sturken's observation helps us to move forward on the debate. For her 'the field will not be well served by a preoccupation with terminology', therefore she suggests that instead of hindering the debate with discussions on the use or abuse, and differences of terminology, attentiveness to clearly determine that terminology should be sought, for instance by each analyst defining their own terms (Sturken 2008:77).

Subsequently, in order to clarify my position, I will align myself with Crumley, who writes that

> Social memory is the means by which information is transmitted among individuals and groups and from one generation to another. Not necessarily aware that they are doing so, individuals pass on their behaviors and attitudes to others in various contexts but especially through emotional and practical ties and in relationships among generations.

(Crumley 2002:39)

Social or collective memory is by no means understood here as the shared property of the citizenry of a state and is not taken to be a total, unique and comprehensive memory. In a complex world characterised by fragmentation, multiplicity, and rapid change, different collectives, within the same state, socially frame their memories about the past and express them in public in very different ways (Winter 2006). For this reason I defend the use of either *collective* or *social* for the plurality of memories of the past specific to different social groups, which are usually built through processes of discussion, negotiation, contestation and conflict. These memories construct interpretive frameworks which help the members of those collectivities understand who they are and where they belong.

1.2.1 Individual and collective memory

Whilst they recognise the social character of remembrance, Fentress and Wickham remind us that:

behind the display of knowledge and the representation of experience, behind

the facts, emotions, and images with which memory seems to be filled, there is

only we ourselves. It is we who are remembering, and it is to us that the

knowledge, emotions, and images ultimately refer.

(Fentress & Wickam 1992:201)

Ricoeur observes the logical inconsistency and difficulty to reconcile the intrinsic

contradiction between treating memory as 'an eminently individual, private and

internal experience' and at the same time characterising it as 'a social, collective and

public phenomenon'[20] (Ricoeur 1999:13-14). In this respect, Craig rightly observes that

if memory were something merely private and personal, it would 'pass irrevocably

with our death', leaving no trace behind (Craig 2002:280). She concludes that this is the

reason why many scholars tend to focus on the study of 'social' memory, since this is

the type of memory that 'exceeds and transcends the life of any given individual'. She

describes social memory as 'that which we share with communities of experience and

history' (Craig 2002:280). In addition to this, Radley suggests that the reason for this

preferred attention to social memory lies in the 'recent interest in language and in

cultural aspects of thinking' (Radley 1997:46).

However, as noted earlier, the study of social memory is not a new venture.

Thus, we need to return to the first decades of the twentieth century to track the initial

attempts to theorise it which laid the foundations for recent investigation.

In the 1920s the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs started his seminal study

on collective memory and elaborated the case that the memory of individuals is built

upon the ways in which 'society'[21] constructs the past.[22] Halbwachs claims that

psychological research is based on the memory of individuals considered on their own,

yet, he stresses, 'it is in society that people normally acquire their memories'

(Halbwachs 1992:38). He contends that it is the individuals who remember and arrange

memories, that is, who 'are capable of knowing and calling them to mind', however,

these recollections 'belong to everybody' (Halbwachs 1992:171). In this line, Jelin points

out that words and the community of discourse are collective, therefore even though

the experience is personal, it becomes collective the moment it is shared (Jelin

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2003b:24). Relating this notion to the case studied here, Alonso Carballés emphasises the importance of the collective when he notices that the memories which the *Niños Vascos* had kept 'latent' only became active when they contacted the group (Alonso Carballés 1998:185).

Much of the research work is based on this notion of collective memory developed by Halbwachs, which puts the emphasis on membership of social groups as the central requirement necessary for individuals to remember (and likewise, to forget). However, some authors identify Halbwachs' disengagement of collective memory from the actual thought process of any particular individual (Fentress & Wickham 1992, Misztal 2003, Olick & Robbins 1998) highlighting the inherent risk of this to 'render the individual a sort of automaton, passively obeying the interiorized collective will' (Fentress & Wickham 1992:ix). In this respect Cattell and Climo remark that while Halbwachs rejected the individual psychology approach to memory, it was not in favour of a 'supraordinate group mind, but in favour of shared or collective thought arising from interactions among individuals as members of groups' (Cattell & Climo 2002:4).

Despite their occasional criticisms of Halbwachs' theories and some discrepancies with regard to terminology, a large number of authors agree on the social nature of memory, thus current debate focuses on big societal concerns such as issues of (competing) social agency, contestation, and power; the politics of memory and who owns it; its role in identity building and belonging; types of memory; and remembrance and forgetting. There is also academic discussion on the interchange, and whether there are actual differences, between individual and collective or social memory, and to what extent (or if) we can differentiate history and memory.

At the end of the seventeenth century, the philosopher John Locke had argued that memory is radically singular and personal, a defining characteristic of one's identity since it is impossible to transfer one's recollections to someone else's memory (Ricoeur 1999:15-16). However, following Halbwachs, it can be argued that one does not remember alone, and often our assumed recollections have been borrowed from others. To support his theory, Halbwachs remarks that dreams constitute the instance

where we are not in contact with other people and 'the mind is most removed from society'; significantly, there is no 'real' and 'complete' memory in our dreams, thus we cannot relive our past whilst we dream (Halbwachs 1992:40-42).

Ricoeur also introduces the idea of 'imagination', noticing that although both memory and imagination 'give presence to the absent'[23] (Ricoeur 1999:25), there are two instances where we can see the difference between them. One is related to the time dimension involved in memory, which does not appear in relation to imagination, and the other is the memory's 'attempt'[24] to be faithful and exact, while imagination is situated in the realm of fiction.

The relation that exists between memory and the construction of personal and collective identity becomes a vital issue in the case of minorities and the less powerful, as for those groups 'collective memory and myth are often still more salient: constantly resorted to both in reinforcing a sense of self and also as a source of strategies for survival' (Samuel & Thompson 1990:19). Moreover, collective memory becomes crucial as it engineers group cohesion, and following Misztal's argument, it is claimed here that it is also an 'essential factor in creating solidarity' (Misztal 2003:136).

Owing to the social nature of memory, individuals do not always need to experience the past themselves in order to remember it (Schuman & Scott 1989), as it is passed down from generation to generation. In those instances, Jelin adds the notion of *the others*, stating that memory is a 'representation of the past constructed as cultural knowledge shared by successive generations and by different "others"' (Jelin 2003b:21).

In his conceptualisation of collective memory, Halbwachs distinguishes between historical and autobiographical memory. The former entails written records, whereas the latter is entrenched in other people and tends to 'fade with time unless it is periodically reinforced through contact with persons with whom one shared the experiences in the past' (Halbwachs 1992:23-24). This raises questions of particular significance to my enquiry, as recently there has been a considerable proliferation of written documents and celebratory practices in connection with the subjects of my research:

- Are the *Niños Vascos* trying to convert their autobiographical memories into historical memories so that they are remembered in the future, or perhaps more accurately, so that they are not forgotten?

- Is the reason for this that they feel they are approaching the end of their lives, as they are in their late seventies or eighties, and they need to give closure to an unfinished emotional business before they die?

Radley notes that remembering 'take[s] up much time among the ageing in society, among those who feel that most of their lives (or the significant parts of it) have already been lived' (Radley 1997:50). Besides this, memory is 'obstinate, it does not resign itself to remain in the past, insisting on its presence' (Jelin 2003b:xiv). This persistent feature of memory is highlighted by Agosin, when she expresses her feelings as an exile writer:

Memory becomes [...] [a] most precious ally, as well as [...] [a] most disturbing obsession.

(Agosin 1995:13)

1.2.2 Time and collective memory

Ricoeur posits that 'every memory takes place with time […] *without* things themselves *but* with time'[25] (Ricoeur 1999:28), echoing Aristotle's reflection that we do not only experience the past nature of absent things, but time itself. He ascertains the direct relation between memory and time, particularly with anteriority, claiming that memory is the present of the past and it guarantees the temporal continuity of the person (Ricoeur 1999:16).

Bergson had already reflected upon the idea of time, considering inner time as an intuitive and subjective perception, namely 'duration', while Durkheim advocated the divergent idea of time as a 'social construction' (Coser 1992:7-8). It is the latter, which Halbwachs supported, that I intend to follow in my analysis.

In Craig's inspiring words '[t]ime, in the form of chronology, knits the fabric of shared experiences into a common memory or history' (Craig 2002:285). Nonetheless, we need to be aware of the notion of personal time, which has its own characteristics. As maintained by Samuel and Thompson, personal time during the stages of childhood can be distorted when adult or older people remember. Time can subjectively be stretched, shrunk or mixed in random order according to the importance given to those periods (Samuel & Thompson 1990:7).

Torpey acknowledges that Freud had already explored the importance of the past in relation to present issues; adding that when people remember, the main concern for them is to conform to the prevailing memories of the current society, rather than to their past experiences as individuals (Torpey 2003).[26] On this, Radley emphasises the influence of the relationships to their community when people remember, 'beyond the idea of a single cognitive faculty which people have in common' (Radley 1997:49). This important point will be considered when I analyse the data in Chapters 4 and 5, where I will seek to answer the following questions:

> Do the participants recall the stories of their lives adapting them to contemporary trends?

> Do their perceptions of the past change according to the different socio-cultural and political contexts in which they have spent their lives from the moment they were evacuated to the UK?

Some theorists of memory work, including Halbwachs, address the relationship between memory and time from a presentist approach. This argues that 'our experience of the present very largely depends upon our knowledge of the past' (Connerton 1989:2), a past that is socially constructed and shaped by the concerns, beliefs and requirements of the present (Halbwachs 1992). Our past therefore has an impact on our present as much as the present has an impact on our recollections of the past. However, there are more conservative thinkers who interpret this constructionist approach as a means to give the present primacy over the past. Authors such as Maistre and Burke advocate a continuity theory opposite to the constructionist line and, as Schwartz puts it:

In this reactionary light the collective memory is distorted in a different direction: It is the past that shapes our understanding of the present rather than the other way around.[27]

(Schwartz 1991:222)

Schwartz's cumulative approach challenges both theories, asserting that the error of the constructivist approach is that they 'underestimate the present's *carrying* power' (Schwartz 1991:234), to conclude that

we find the past to be neither totally precarious nor immutable, but a stable image upon which new elements are intermittently superimposed. The past, then is a familiar rather than a foreign country; its people different, but not strangers to the present.

(Schwartz 1991:234)

Samuel and Thompson concur with other authors in their presentist approach, adding that recollections 'need to make sense of the past', for which a process of selection, ordering and simplification of these recollections is required (Samuel & Thompson 1990:8). This is an important point which I will revisit when I analyse the role of forgetting later in this chapter.

Schuman and Scott distinguish two meanings of the term collective memory. The first one dwells on the concept of memory as a store of knowledge, 'when large parts of the population appear to remember a common object' (Schuman & Scott 1989:378). More interestingly, they offer a second meaning which introduces a new temporal factor into the equation. This is the relevance of the collectively created and held memory for 'future' actions (Schuman & Scott 1989). Continuing this debate on the importance of the past in relation to memory work and the implication of the future, Jelin (2003b) maintains that experiences not only take into account future expectations, but they also happen in a 'dynamic' manner. She observes that 'the present contains and constructs past experience and future expectations' (Jelin 2003b:4), which suggests that with regard to human experiences time is not something linear, chronological or rational (Jelin 2003b) but a mixture of subjective complexities.

Other authors also mention this non-linearity of time. For instance, Connerton considers that people have a *cyclical* perception of time, therefore, he says, life 'is not a curriculum vitae but a series of cycles' (Connerton 1989:20) such as days, weeks, seasons, years or generations. Schwartz uses the *spatial* conception of time, as opposed to linear, stressing that

> It is spatial because it suggests that instead of conceiving time as an unbreakable chain of events, we can use our imagination to lift a past instant out of its place on the continuum of time and drop it into another place.

> (Cottle cited in Schwartz 1982:395)

Thus, the time linearity is dispensable, and as Halbwachs puts it

> What makes recent memories hang together is not that they are contiguous in time: it is rather that they are part of a totality of thoughts common to a group, the group of people with whom we have a relation at this moment, or with whom we have had a relation on the preceding day or days.

> (Halbwachs 1992:52)

He then examines some of these groups such as the family, religious collectives, social classes and also the locations of their various different collective memories. This can be considered and analysed in relation to other groups and, as Jelin points out, at any given event 'there will always be other stories, other memories, and alternative interpretations' than the dominant story (Jelin 2003b:xviii). This is not surprising if we agree with Ricoeur (2006) and Jelin in that the past simply leaves 'traces' which will acquire a meaning only when they are interpreted and reconstructed at later stages. Connerton defines these traces as 'the marks, perceptible to the senses, which some phenomenon, in itself inaccessible, has left behind' (Connerton 1989:13).

Consequently, owing to the subjective nature of memory, it is impossible to find one single memory, in words of Naharro-Calderón a 'super-memory which encompasses all memories'[28]; neither can be found a 'universal memory, just, equalitarian, which pleases both the collective and also the different groups and/or individuals'[29] (Naharro-Calderón 2005:102), that is supported by the entire society.

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In our reconstruction of the past, when we give an account of an event we tend to distort it and, as Halbwachs comments, we summarise the idea of a type of life instead of adhering strictly to what happened at the time. In our recollections we can move important events 'along the line of time' (Halbwachs 1992:61) so that they borrow what has preceded them and also what will follow, because 'as often as we return to these events and figures and reflect upon them, they attract to themselves more reality instead of becoming simplified' (Halbwachs 1992:61). I argue that this subjective aspect is not an issue but a highly revealing characteristic of the construction of memories, which will be discussed in Chapter 2. It will also be referred to in Chapter 5 as an important analytical point to explore the increase in detail of the informants' stories as they repeat them and reflect on them. My informants belong to a small community scattered across the UK which has relatively recently started to become public as a group. Based on Halbwachs's theory I will explore whether they are more concerned with surviving as a group and being heard than with remembering and being faithful to the truth (Halbwachs 1992).

1.2.3 Memory and history

The *truth* is a critical element of discussion in the study of memory and one that confronts it with history. Despite the traditional preoccupation of history for hard facts and how they happened, there are theorists such as the historian Pierre Nora (1989, 1998), the philosopher Ricoeur (1999, 2006) or the sociologist Jelin (2003b) who go beyond that constrained perspective and are incorporating in their work an analysis of the significance of the perceptions and subjectivities of the actors who make or made history. In other words, there is a focus on the *construction of truths*. Within the general discipline of history, from the literature reviewed, an attempt to legitimise oral history is noticeable, bringing subjectivities and explanations into the debate.

For some time there has been an ongoing discussion on the relationship between memory and history, with a variety of thinkers exploring the dialectical relation between them. The question I posit is whether memory enriches or impoverishes history.

I will start my examination by considering some implicit differences in the nature of both memory and history. As Nora (1989, 1998) states, memory is 'social', 'spontaneous', 'life', it consists of skills transmitted by unspoken traditions from generation to generation and it is in 'permanent evolution' unaware of its constant changes and transformations. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction of the past, linked to a conscious critical discourse (Nora 1989). Owing to this apparent antagonism, history might critically consider that memory is not rigorous enough with reality and therefore reject it. In this confrontation between history and memory, it may be argued that history corresponds to knowledge and truth, while memory is linked to will and loyalty,

> relegated to the sphere of uncritical belief, myth, and the 'invention' of the past, often with an idealized or romanticized version of that past.

> (Jelin 2003b:47)

Memory emerges mixed with myths and it has no guarantee of being truthful, but, is not this subjectivity a fundamental part of identity construction? Are a society's myths and stories not an important part of memory as they contribute to forging that society's identity? In this respect, Hall maintains that the past 'is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth' (Hall 1998:226).

It is important to note that memory sometimes provokes confrontation and pain, especially when there are unresolved issues, for instance from a dictatorial past. On this Leydesdorff et al. underline 'the immense difficulty of coming to terms with the legacy of violent civil conflict within a society' (Leydesdorff et al. 1999:22). For this reason some challenge an approach to the past which relies on memory. It can be argued that in dictatorships, history is monolithic, thus when these regimes fall other voices require to be allowed on the scene. History then needs to include other memories, which become a statement of identity. As Jelin challenges '[s]ocial reality is complex, contradictory, and full of tensions and conflicts. Memory is no exception' (Jelin 2003b:24).

I will follow Ricoeur's considerations with regard to the tensions between memory and history and his analysis of the 'documentary', 'explanatory' and 'interpretative' levels (Ricoeur 1999:41). He describes these three levels as focusing on the investigation of the source, the scientific nature of history, and the writing of the historiography respectively. I am particularly interested in the documentary level, since I have carried out archival research in order to access a number of primary and secondary sources for my research.

One essential feature of history is its requirement for analysis and criticism for its intellectual and secular construction (Nora 1989). Therefore when historians write official narratives, they need to critically and scientifically assess the credibility of the documentation they choose to search in order to reconstruct events. There are a number of problems connected to this, such as the arbitrariness of the selection of what to include in archives and other sources of data, as well as the selection of historical events. These selections have previously been carried out by people and institutions (Ricoeur 1999) which undoubtedly have their own agenda. This will certainly affect the path the historian follows when they reconstruct the past. It could be argued that selectivity is about making choices, not necessarily linked to denial, but I contend that behind any choice there is a reason which includes personal or institutional interests. Thus, despite history's aspiration to be scientifically demonstrable, as Napoleon Bonaparte put it 'History is the version of past events that people have decided to agree upon'.

Ricoeur also observes that these days even memory is archived, which links to Craig's observation of the archive 'as a form of social memory' (Craig 2002:278). Ricoeur notices that, as a result, the recollection loses its character and becomes a document. In response to this I will use Nora's distinction between *true* memory, and *transformed* memory. The former is the type of memory described earlier, whereas the latter corresponds to that indirect type of memory 'transformed by the passage through history' which is 'experienced as a duty' and has lost spontaneity. The archive-memory corresponds to this type of memory (Nora 1989) which is not social any longer. As Nora observes '[t]he passage from memory to history has required every

social group to redefine its identity through the revitalization of its own history' (Nora 1989:15).

It is said that the past is fixed and the future uncertain. Nevertheless, the meaning of what happened is never fixed and its interpretation through memory can change (Ricoeur 1999) 'anchored in intentions and expectations toward the future' (Jelin 2003b:26). In this respect Ricoeur's argument is that history should also take into account the aspirations which people had in the past as this is also part of their memory (Ricoeur 1999).

As a conclusion to this analysis of the *truth* and its implications in the dichotomy between memory and history, Jelin calls on LaCapra to bring some answers to the issue. Beyond radical objectivism (with its rejection for subjectivity, its transformations, and the social actors' point of view) and radical subjectivism (with its unreserved focus on those actors), there is a third position which LaCapra explains as

> a conception of history as tensely involving both an objective (not objectivist) reconstruction of the past and a dialogic exchange with it and other inquirers into it wherein knowledge involves not only the processing of information but also affect, empathy and questions of value.

> (LaCapra 2001 in Jelin 2003b:50)

In that light, I argue that while history contributes to scholarly discussion with its experience as an academic discipline and confers validity, memory expands the space of history by recovering marginal voices. This makes possible the coexistence of conflicting versions of past events, thus increasing democracy. Furthermore, I contend that it also inspires and 'insofar as it [memory] is affective and magical' (Nora 1989:8), it brings warmth and humanity to history. Thus, we can talk of a 'polyphonic history'[30] where history and memory complement each other.

1.2.4 Remembering and forgetting

So far I have looked for responses to the question of what memory is and how it works at a collective level, but there still remains a crucial part of the memory construction

process to be analysed, which is how it works in relation to what individuals and societies remember and what they forget. As Jelin notices:

> Dealing with memories entails paying attention to remembrance and forgetting, to narratives and acts, to silences and gestures. Knowledge and information are at play, but so too are emotions, lapses, voids, and fractures.

(Jelin 2003b:8)

Both individuals and society are selective regarding the experiences they remember, but what do they choose to remember? Furthermore, if forgetting is an active, not a passive process, what do they choose to forget? Is there any individual choice at all or is it something that comes 'from above'? I am particularly interested in the strategies which individuals and groups utilise in order to reconstruct the past, and, in the case of the *Niños Vascos*, to ascertain who the agents involved in the remembering and forgetting processes are and what their input is.

In their study on memory, Samuel and Thompson maintain that '[w]hat is forgotten *may be* as important as what is remembered' (Samuel & Thompson 1990:7, my emphasis). More assertively, other theorists claim that in order for remembrance to exist forgetting also *needs to exist*, as 'both are opposites on a balance wheel, which keeps the machine of remembrance in fine tune' (Craig 2002:282).

One could attempt to explain the issue of how that machine works from a neurobiological point of view, but that is not the concern of this investigation. Moreover, it is unlikely that neurobiology alone could ultimately explain all the intricacies of memory. Halbwachs, in a rather simplistic manner, maintains that adults are so busy with their day-to-day concerns that they are not interested in past experiences which are not related to them. On the other hand old people, who are more free of commitments, escape the present, therefore they are in a better position to remember the past as it occurred (Halbwachs 1992). More elaborately, Jelin notes the importance of continuity and permanence throughout time and space with regard to identity, arguing that remembering one's own past is what sustains the sense of self.

She affirms that the milestones and experiences which are retained in the remembering process are chosen because they connect the subject with the others (Jelin 2003b).

Regarding those experiences that get lost in the course of time and their disappearance, or possibly more exactly, *erasure* from memory, Ricoeur (1999) comments that, except for Nietzsche, philosophers have generally neglected to select this topic as the object of their study. Forgetting has had a negative connotation attached to it, being considered implicitly the enemy of memory, a threat to identity.

Jelin, from a psychoanalytical perspective, focuses much of her work on the role of the unconscious on the 'blocks, lapses, voids, and repetitions that the conscious ego cannot control' (Jelin 2003b:10). She associates this with the idea of the frameworks for memory, which according to Halbwachs are the coordinates that people use to structure their recollections. He states that

> We can remember only on condition of retrieving the position of past events
> that interest us from the frameworks of collective memory. A recollection is the
> richer when it reappears at the junction of a greater number of these
> frameworks, which in effect intersect each other and overlap in part. Forgetting
> is explained by the disappearance of these frameworks or of part of them.
>
> (Halbwachs 1992:172)

We can also explain forgetting by the fact that these frameworks are not static and they change over the time.[31] Thus, part of the past is forgotten, but what is left is reconstructed (Halbwachs 1992), the reason why Jelin defends that memory is not mere recollection but a reconstruction (Jelin 2003b). Halbwachs also includes the changes or disappearance of the groups which originated the memories in the first place, amongst the reasons why people forget or modify their perceptions of the past.

In today's society, forgetting generates a pervasive and entrenched fear, which Achugar describes as the 'ghost of a collective Alzheimer'[32] (Achugar 2003:192). Ricoeur writes that 'forgetting is experienced as an attack on the reliability of memory. An attack, a weakness, a lacuna' (Ricoeur 2006:413). However, he makes the distinction between this forgetting that means destruction and the type of forgetting which can be

considered *positive* and even necessary. For instance, it is unthinkable to expect people to remember all the experiences they have had in their entire life. Halbwachs also observes a positive type of forgetting, maintaining that society protects its integrity by erasing memories which separate individuals or groups (Halbwachs 1992:182). However, is it actually 'positive' that a society sacrifices the memories of part of that society for the perceived benefit of the entire population?

Sometimes there is an active *evasive* forgetting connected to the convenient lack of interest in uncovering what we would not like to know or would hurt us (Ricoeur 1999:58) and sometimes forgetting is useful in that it expediently allows us not to remember those experiences which would make us feel guilty. There is also a *selective* forgetting which permits us to filter unnecessary details when we tell or narrate a story (Ricoeur 1999, Halbwachs 1992), and Nietzsche's *liberating* forgetting which helps a nation with an excess of memories to get rid of its burdens and move forward (Ricoeur 1999). There is a healthy and therapeutic *compassionate* forgetting which conveys forgiveness and the solution to some issues of a 'sick' memory (Ricoeur 1999). However, it is important to point out that sometimes the forgetting only occurs at a superficial layer, as it might reappear at a later stage in time (Jelin 2002a); in such cases, memory is only hidden and waiting for something to trigger its reawakening and refreshing. For instance, after decades of silence, the memories of the Spanish Civil War have been resuscitated with such an enormous vigour which warns us that, despite the general silence or *pacto del olvido* ('pact of forgetting')[33], the past had not been completely forgotten.

1.2.5 Memory matters

I have so far explored some positive aspects of remembering and forgetting, but there are certainly problems as well, related to a lack or excess of either of them. These might be revealed by silences, absences and gaps in a narrative or, on the contrary, by pathological repetitions.

Taking up again the point made earlier regarding the need for people to make sense of the past when they remember, the question is now whether this is always achieved. Is it always possible to give a meaning to the traces left by the past? Are people always willing to talk about their past?

There are times when people do not forget those traces, but for different reasons they do not deal with them and keep them buried. In her analysis of situations in which people choose silence as an alternative to talking about their past, Jelin (2003b) indicates that people might be frightened to talk about it, for instance in cases of a past of political repression or when they disagree with the existing interpretive frameworks. People might silence their past in order to avoid pain to someone else, or perhaps they lack an audience willing to listen. Sometimes, people might also be worried that they are misunderstood, or their words will be consciously or unconsciously misused or manipulated; or perhaps they cannot find the words to express themselves.

In addition to these, I believe that there are also instances in which people might prefer not to talk because they are embarrassed about their past, do not want anyone to pity them or, in the case of controversial memories, they fear that they will be considered traitors by their own kind if they do not follow the dominant lines.

In more extreme cases the reason why individuals or groups are blocked from dealing with their past is that they have suffered traumatic events or forgetting might have been imposed by a dictatorial regime. After a recent past of repression and violence, especially in the occurrence of a war, society tends to be divided. While some are content to forget, there are others who do not resign themselves to that line of organised forgetting and to keep that 'public secret' or 'social amnesia' (Jelin 1998b:24). At the same time as the state and the winners might celebrate their victory, others will inevitably feel humiliated and/or angry. Usually the national narrative will be that of the winners, and 'a state apparatus is used in a systematic way to deprive its citizens of their memory' in order to enslave them (Connerton 1989:14).

In these cases of forced forgetting, those people with different and *silenced* stories, especially if there is trauma involved, might experience a 'fixation or a constant return' (Jelin 2003b:5) to the distressing past. Their recollection of the past might be continually

repeated instead of reflected upon, hence there is a lack of the memory labour that is needed in order to give a meaning to the past (Halbwachs 1992).

Jelin observes that the continuous repetition or saturation of memories is not the result of having too many memories, but the result of a lack of a mourning process and the personal and private sphere not transcending to the public level. She concludes that the contradictory memories of past dictatorial regimes need to be expressed in democratic institutions and in open public spheres, not necessarily via consensus but in a public arena which accepts plurality and controversy about different memories (Jelin 2003b). While in psychology individual cases of trauma are treated as such, Ricoeur claims that abuses of memory are caused by problems of identity, and proposes a solution which entails a policy for a management of the past which looks towards the future (Ricoeur 1999). This consideration of the future is a key aspect which, I believe, answers Torpey's question '[i]sn't there a danger that struggling to redress history will become a substitute for working for a better future?' (Torpey 2003).

However, Ricoeur rightly points out that there is the risk of intervention turning towards manipulation (Ricoeur 1999). As Connerton remarks, '[i]t is surely the case that control of a society's memory largely conditions the hierarchy of power' (Connerton 1989:1).[34] In this respect, I will take again the reference to computers made at the beginning of this chapter. I gave some definitions of the term memory, noticing the dichotomy between human memory and that of computers, which are nevertheless linked nowadays. Information technology plays a very important role these days as it stores information, therefore it could be said that in some way it organises the collective memory. Connerton defends that this is not just 'a technical matter but one directly bearing on legitimation, the question of the control and ownership of information being a crucial political issue' (Connerton 1989:1).

As a dimension of political power, social memory is a question of control, ethics, ideology, and partisan interests. Thus, in its selection and reconstruction of the past, remembering serves present political interests, and memories legitimise and delegitimise social institutions and collective actions. They ultimately legitimise the present social order (Connerton 1989). Taking this line, Confino remarks that a very

important contribution that memory studies have made is the analysis of how 'the construction of the past, through a process of invention and appropriation, affected the relationship of power within society' (Confino 1997:1393). However, he is suspicious about this new approach to the study of memory as he considers that there is a danger 'to reduce memory, which is fundamentally a concept of culture, to the political' (Confino 1997:1393). What I find most interesting in his argument is that he considers the political approach to be important, since it connects cultural history to power, but he warns us that it would be wrong to reduce 'power to politics and the political to top-down, public, and official manifestations' (Confino 1997:1394).

In an effort to reach reconciliation between antagonistic sides and their versions of recent history, there have been attempts by governments and social groups to reconstruct the past by taking into account, indeed stressing, past peaceful and positive periods. Recognising wrongdoings has often been part of this effort. However, is it possible to replace a *selective* memory with another *selective* memory when a conflict has not been resolved?

While the hegemonic discourse might be using forgetting as a political instrument for manipulation, there are also collective memory and victimisation discourses which might be maintained in order to keep the unity and cohesion of a group. Torpey takes this to an extreme when he mentions 'the professionally injured' who 'make a profession of their past injury' (Torpey 2003).

Schwartz et al. note that 'no society would go to the trouble to reconstruct its past had not some significant problem disrupted its normal pattern of living' (Schwartz et al. 1986:150). In this context, there are a variety of social actors, Jelin's 'moral entrepreneurs', who engage in a dialogue and

> strive to affirm the legitimacy of 'their' truth. They engage in struggles for power, searching often to legitimate their current positions through claiming privileged links to the past.

(Jelin 2003b:26-27)

It is often said that this struggle for ownership of memory is 'memory against oblivion' or 'against silence' but, as Jelin rightly observes, ultimately this claim conceals the real struggle, which is fundamentally connected to a conflict between different memories, that is, 'memory against memory' (Jelin 2003b:xviii). When the struggles for memory between the public and private or sub-collective narratives emerge, issues which were unquestionable commence to be questioned. I argue that those tensions which appear within the battlefield of opposed memories are a positive feature, since they provoke debate over issues that still needed to be discussed. They also give the opportunity to reach 'consensus' in a new reconstruction of the past, even if this consensus simply means listening to different voices, accepting multiple or divided memories, not necessarily agreeing on a final and definitive closure of the debate. Rather than consensus, we mean here that there might be an agreement over the disagreement.

In the conflict between different agents of memory, groups and individuals have their own agenda. Using the religious collective memory as an example, Halbwachs notices that the religious society increasingly attracted more groups who 'preserve[d] their own interests and their own memory' (Halbwachs 1992:98). One of the consequences of the tensions created by the growing numbers of agents is analysed by Jelin, who comments that these agents in some occasions have an unexpected impact on the reconstruction process. For instance, she mentions the times 'in which there is "saturation of memory" in the public sphere, triggering a sense of rejection or a freezing of memory, opposite to what is hoped' (Jelin 2003b:36). This compulsive remembering is an issue that emerges from my research. However, given the lack of attention that the refugee children of the Civil War received until relatively recently, I question if what now appears like an excess of memory and commemoration may be the delayed result of a long period of state amnesia both in Spain and in the UK. This leads to the question of 'how much is too much memory?'.

1.3 MEMORIALISATION

Thus far it has been argued that memories are subjective processes, objects of disputes and struggles. I will now defend that so are the experiences, and symbolic and material

markers in which they are anchored. The previous section explored remembering and forgetting and also some issues connected to them, which are frequently related to tensions amongst the individuals and collectivities that remember. In this section I will focus on theories regarding remembrance practices, as these are the milieux in which these conflicts manifest themselves more explicitly.

Commemorations, anniversaries, dates, and sites of remembrance are usually contentious affairs, as they generate the realms where people's feelings reactivate and they look for new meanings of the past. They constitute the occasions when memories are produced and activated. Thus, these remembrance practices become the arena for struggles over memory where different actors contest for legitimacy. They are the markers of memory in time and space where social actors and memory carriers battle to decide 'who has what rights to determine what should be remembered and how' (Jelin 1998b:24-25).

I have followed very closely both the organisation of a number of commemorative events in relation to the arrival of the *Niños Vascos* in the UK and also the subsequent representations of the history of the *Niños Vascos* which have been made public. The discourses of the organisers, media, and other agents involved in these ceremonies, and the portrait they give of them to the public, are undoubtedly charged with the meanings they are trying to establish (Jelin 2002b). It can be argued that these types of events are also the perfect ground for those who use the story to gain a private profit out of it, whom I call *memory profiteers* (this idea will be developed in Chapters 4 and 5). Their appearance on the scene incorporates an extra source of tension as it creates conflict between them and other memory agents, owing to the different and often conflicting agendas which they introduce. Consequently, not only can we say that these practices reflect controversies, but also that they mould them.

The study of remembrance practices is rather recent within the field of memory work, as it has only been a few decades since it has become a significant subject area within history. Ashplant et al. attribute two main reasons to the rising profile of this subject. First, the surfacing of the Shoah into the public domain; and second, that

> social groups suffering injustice, injury or trauma that originates in war have become increasingly prepared to demand public recognition of their experience, testimony and current status as 'victims' or 'survivors'.

> (Ashplant et al. 2000:3)

These authors also consider the point made earlier in this chapter regarding the ageing of those who lived the experiences of a war during the first decades of the twentieth century, which adds the urgency for collection of their memories and for reflection on them.

Nora (1998) remarks that we are living in the era of commemoration. He and authors such as Connerton (1989) and Jelin (2002a, 2002b) have focused on the interpretation of commemorations and important events to analyse the role of symbolic spatial and temporal dimensions in the construction of collective identities. Concentrating their work at the macro level structures, these theorists have analysed the phenomenon of remembrance practices approaching them from a state-centred perspective, Nora for instance uses the French society for his study, or in the case of Jelin, from a social-agency angle.

In his analysis of the French era of commemoration Nora points out that this era only encompasses meaning at present and will finish once the French people acquire another way of collective life (Nora 1998). Jelin, using the case of the Southern Cone of South America in her work, notes that there is a fascination surrounding 'fechas redondas' ('rounded dates') which has marked large transnational commemorations (Jelin 2002b). This point will be elaborated in the analysis of the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the Basque refugee children in the UK, the most celebrated in the history of the *Niños Vascos* since their journey began in 1937.

Following a long period of imposed silence in Spain during the 'so-called transition to democracy' (Naharro-Calderón 2004:9), from the late 1990s there has been a considerable increase of memory work. As a result of this surge, 2006 was declared the 'Year of the Historical Memory' and the 'Law of Historical Memory' was first approved in that year. This coincided with the 70th anniversary of the start of the Civil

War. The reactivation of the memory of the *Niños Vascos* fits very well in this context since, as Schwartz et al. write, 'historical events are worth remembering only when the contemporary society is motivated to define them as such' (Schwartz et al. 1986:149). Following Nora's argument, are we observing the climax of a memorialist era which will finish when the current society finds new interpretations of the past and consolidates a new identity as its history is reconstructed? To what extent are the *memory profiteers* contributing to this memorialist fever, fuelling it and utilising it for their own benefit and perhaps changing the collective memory of the *Niños Vascos* in a way that suits themselves?

Durkheim and Halbwachs already mentioned rituals and ceremonial acts in the work on memory which they carried out in the 1920s. While Durkheim defends that ritual and ceremonial acts appear in history during the transition between periods of effervescence and calm in order to fill the gaps (Coser 1992:25), Halbwachs places more emphasis on their central role in relation to social identity development. He claims that the beliefs and sentiments common to an average member of a society, namely collective memory, are learned through commemorations and artefacts.

In this view, Connerton maintains that human habits and rituals are also part of the social memory, '[f]or images of the past and recollected knowledge of the past […] are conveyed and sustained by (more or less ritual) performances' (Connerton 1989:3-4). An important point he makes, is that commemorative ceremonies might memorialise the idea of a past that has existed, but they do not necessarily evoke a specific account of that past. They are there primarily to remind the community of its identity. This is particularly relevant in the case of smaller groups and minorities, as they have 'less capacity to influence prevailing narratives or project their own narratives into wider arenas' (Ashplant et al. 2000:21). Their memories need frequent active expression in order to survive the weight of the public or national narratives of the majority (Samuel & Thompson 1990).

1.3.1 Dates and rituals

In anniversary events temporality is a key feature as 'the time contracts: the past and the present elaborate the libretto for future remembrance'[35] (Jelin 2002b:245). The selection of dates and anniversaries is a deliberate one which sometimes might cause discrepancy, as there are different memory agents with different agendas involved in the selection.

What has been said, regarding memory and the past being constructed and reconstructed over time, could equally be applied to commemoration dates. This is evidenced by the fact that sometimes society transforms the previous meaning of a date. To illustrate this point, Connerton analyses the case of the National Socialist regime in Germany, which related some festivals to previous Christian ones, the same as these had related to previous pagan celebrations (Connerton 1989).

In relation to the requirement of certain 'frequency' of the remembrance practices, Jelin mentions the calendars. She observes that the repetitiveness and, at the same time, changing nature of the 'annual rhythms' from one year to another, offer appropriate occasions for remembrance (Jelin 2002b). Rites are not simply expressive, formal or limited in their effect to the ritual occasion, but they are repetitive, which implies a sense of continuity with the past. Connerton remarks the 'explicitly backward-looking and calendrical character' of some rites (Connerton 1989:45) and he then develops his argument exploring the hidden symbolic content of rituals.

It is important not to simply look for the contents and meanings of these repetitive rituals, but to go further, analysing the actual 'form' of the rituals, since this is an equally significant element which expresses and builds identity (Connerton 1989). To put it in other words, practices are not only embedded in a 'symbolic' realm, but also in a 'performative' one. Connerton maintains that 'the performativeness of ritual is partly a matter of utterance' and he also discusses the performativeness of postures, gestures and movements (Connerton 1989:58). Some illustrative examples will be discussed in 4.2.3.1 and in 4.3.1.4.

1.3.2 Sites of memory

Pierre Nora, who can be considered as the pioneer *par excellence* of the study of the sites of memory (Aguilar Fernández 2008:42), calls them 'lieux of mémoire' and identifies them as the sites where memory is embodied and 'a sense of historical continuity persists' (Nora 1989:7). He notices that memory establishes itself in the concrete, spaces, gestures, images, and objects and, while history is connected to events, memory is connected to sites. Places and monuments are central elements in memorialisation processes, as they are the memory machines which give physical materiality to memory (Jelin & Kaufman 1998a:4, Achugar 2003) and the spaces where history is reproduced and celebrated. However, their public visibility is a source of 'opportunities for contesting as well as celebrating received memories' (Ashplant et al. 2000:4).

Similarly to the dates of commemoration, commemorative plaques, memorials, and monuments are charged with a meaning, and they are also the places where new senses of the past are elaborated. They are more graphic than people's narratives, and in some respects it seems easier to understand these physical marks of memory because we can see them (or their remains) in front of us. However, they hide an enormous complexity within them. They are multi-dimensional entities which represent the stories of the individuals or groups which they commemorate. These marks also need to be recognised and legitimised by institutions, public entities, and memory entrepreneurs, who often struggle and compete for the ownership of them (Jelin 2002a). Frequently there are also struggles associated with the maintenance or removal of these memory marks from the public places, as is currently the case in Spain.

There can be few examples which so powerfully highlight the centrality of this topic, as the present controversy with regard to how the Law of Historical Memory deals with the remaining memory sites of the dictatorial past in Spain. One of the most contentious elements of this law relates to the withdrawal or maintenance of the symbols and monuments which celebrate the Francoist victory after the Civil War. Not only has this topic generated a burning public debate with individuals and social and

political groups criticising the law in the public sphere, but it has also started to generate academic production. For instance, a recent book written by Abad Liceras (2009) discusses the legal problems and grey areas of the law. In this public arena where struggles take place and meanings are constructed and contested, 'conflict emerges as a central dynamic and one that is not only destructive but also productive of identity, community, and the public sphere' (Bernal 2005:662).

The question now is, who are the protagonists of that 'forgotten' and conflictual past?

1.4 DISPLACEMENT

In order to investigate the questions of who the *Niños Vascos* are and also who they are considered to be by others, my empirical work will focus on the analysis of the main labels which have been applied to them throughout their life histories. At a theoretical level, my approach to their experience of forced migration will be framed by the work carried out in the areas of refugee and diaspora.

For a number of years these concepts have been subjects of lively debate in the public and academic domains, and authors such as Kushner (2006), Said (2000), Malkki (1995), Clifford (1994) and Papadopoulos (2002) have explored these terms.[36] Scholars have discussed their meanings, sometimes criticising the misuse of the words in the literature and by the media. Discussions focus the attention on whether we should strictly adhere to their original meanings or whether new uses should be accepted which expand and extend their meanings to new situations encountered within the field of human migrations in a rapidly changing world. As Said puts it 'our age [...] is indeed the age of the refugee, the displaced person, mass immigration' (Said 2000:174).

1.4.1 Refugee

In order to discuss some academic contributions to the debate on refugees, my first concern is to explore what a refugee is.[37]

Despite a long history of refugees in Europe, they only became a prominent feature of international political relevance in the twentieth century (Kushner 2006:41). After several decades of increasing hostility towards the refugees, in 1940 the British Government decided to re-label refugees as *enemy aliens* and 'a policy of mass internment and deportation was implemented' (Kushner 2006:6). The arrival of this remarkably negative expression to refer to them points to a shift from what might have previously been perceived as 'large herds of innocent and bewildered people requiring international assistance' (Said 2000:181) to unwelcome, hostile and disturbing strangers.[38] This new status meant an increase in the attention paid by the world to the European refugee camps and, more importantly, the justification for control measures.

Approaching the end of the Second World War it was important to have the refugees well under control, because they were seen as a military rather than an international humanitarian problem, in spite of the involvement of some individuals and voluntary agencies in refugee aid. It was with the institution of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1951 that there was a shift from the military sphere towards a more international and humanitarian domain (Malkki 1995). The definition given by the 1951 United Nations Convention states that

> the term 'refugee', shall apply to any person who: […] As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.[39]

Prior to this, 'refugees had no rights or international protection' (Kushner 2006:41), therefore reaching this definition was a step forward. However, as Patricia Tuitt rightly indicates, reducing all refugee experiences into the legal definition of the 1951 United Nations Convention 'has stifled the search for an appropriate solution for the rapidly increasing number of refugees' (Tuitt 1996:2).

Some authors define the 'refugee experience' as an identifiable condition linked to a certain category of people who share common characteristics, and therefore, a common identity (Malkki 1995:511). Moreover, they differentiate some stages during the process, beginning when these refugees feel threatened in their home country, and lasting until they eventually *adjust* and *lose* their original culture in the host country.[40] Malkki argues that considering refugees as something more than a mere 'mixed category of people sharing a certain legal status', has an impact on how refugee crises are handled, and, at a political level, maintains the established order of things regarding state sovereignty (Malkki 1995:511). I take the view outlined by Barutciski (1998) that categories such as this can be meaningless or even negative, and that there is not a formal and homogeneous refugee identity but an 'essential heterogeneous plurality' (Naharro-Calderón 2005:110).

Barutciski indicates that the definition of refugee was fundamentally constructed for legal purposes and '[t]he whole Convention is based on the notion of having fled one's country' (Barutciski 1998:12). Thus, we cannot consider refugees as a group with distinct characteristics common to all of them except for the one related to the *loss of home*. In connection with this, some authors claim how little the concept of home has been studied (Malkki 1995, Papadopoulos 2002)

> there is no substantial examination of the idea of home and its implications for refugees […] Instead, what is more readily available is the plethora of theories on trauma and their application. Whenever one thinks of refugees, from a psychological perspective, the first association is to trauma rather than to home. Home, after all is not a psychological concept, as such. Yet, loss of home is the only condition that all refugees share, not trauma. Refugees are defined not as a group of people exhibiting any specific psychological condition but merely as people who have lost their homes.[41]
>
> (Papadopoulos 2002)

It can be argued that the idea of *Heimat* has been a fundamental concept in the German context for a long time. However, as Blickle (2002) points out, it has been neglected in English studies of German culture mainly because the word *Heimat* has no equivalence

in English. He calls attention to the omnipresence and multiple meanings of it, such as 'home', 'homeland', 'fatherland', 'nation', 'nation-state', 'hometown', 'paradise' and 'birthplace' amongst others (Blickle 2002:4). For the purposes of this study I will restrict the debate to scholarly notions of the concept of *home*, which will be a central element of discussion in Chapter 5.

1.4.1.1 Framing home

The idea of home is conspicuously comprehensive and 'a problematic concept' (McLeod 2000:216). We can find a number of definitions which are sometimes connected to a concrete physical space in the sense of the *house*, defined as 'the literal object, the material place in which one lives' (Naficy 1999:5). Very often the definition includes a 'personal space of identification' (Fog Olwig 1998:225), feelings of where one belongs and also a relationship with a psychological sphere or time. In this respect, Naficy notices the shift from seeing home as something material, to understanding it as 'the symbolic imaginings and national longings that produce and reproduce [it]' (Naficy 1999:5). Furthermore, in the current context of a world characterised by the continuous movement of its population,

> for a world of travellers, of labour migrants, exiles and commuters, home comes to be found in a routine set of practices, a repetition of habitual interactions, in styles of dress and address, in memories and myths, in stories carried around in one's head.

> (Rapport & Dawson 1998:7)

Researchers have explored the idea of the home country noticing the mythical sense attached to it amongst migrant populations (McLeod 2000, Cohen 1997). This is highlighted by Brah when she describes home as 'a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination' (Brah 1996:192). I contend that this myth is born from a necessity to cope with the difficulties to settle in the new place encountered.[42] Also, Bernal notices that in the spaces of diaspora, 'location' is an ambiguous concept which in order to 'be made socially meaningful […] must be actively constructed' (Bernal

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2005:661). Agosin's thought '[i]t seems that I am always prepared to leave somewhere, taking with me the only possible *homeland*: language, memory, the invention of it' (Agosin 1995:15) is an excellent illustration of this idea. In this view home

> is a place of no-return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin'.

> (Brah 1996:192)

However, home can be interpreted as something undefined which is either no place or any place, 'temporary and […] moveable; it can be built, rebuilt, and carried in memory and by acts of imagination' (Naficy 1999:6), thus, it is possible to return to that mythical place and time by means of imagination (McLeod 2000).

The previous observations prompt new theoretical questions concerning the changing nature of the concept of an imaginatively constructed home in space and time, and also if one can have several homes at the same time. I will expand on this when I discuss the meaning of the term 'home' amongst the *Niños Vascos* (see 5.3).

Having established that the loss of home is the unique universal characteristic that all refugees have in common, one can expect not to find an anthropological self-delimiting field of investigation (Malkki 1995) but a complex diversity of experiences which, according to Kushner, 'have added to the fundamental heterogeneity of the United Kingdom' (Kushner 2006:228). It is within this diversity where local, national and global identities are continually reconstructed and renewed, the same as the labels associated with refugees (Kushner 2006:3), with migrant communities being included in the process, as Dora Schwarzstein (2001) indicates. She identifies migrant communities as active actors who, by developing strategies and making decisions, have their input in the political, economic and social processes in society.

1.4.1.2 *Us* and *the others*

The debate on the concept of home leads to the issues of belonging and otherness. Kushner (2006) identifies the refugee as a critical symbol of placelessness, temporariness and statelessness, stating that they are everywhere and nowhere

challenging the ideas of stability (also Malkki 1995:504), continuity and place. However, he observes that they can be excluded from the host society as they create anxiety, but they can also be included when 'the "local" is inscribed with universal meaning and associations' (Kushner 2006:1). Malkki clarifies that not all stateless persons are refugees, and, what is more important here, not all refugees are 'technically stateless' (Malkki 1995:501-502).

As McLeod puts it, when migrants go to new places 'they can be deemed not to belong there and disqualified from thinking of the new land as their home. Instead, their home is seen to exist elsewhere, back across the border' (McLeod 2000:212). More importantly, he adds that it is difficult to retain this conventional dualistic and static narrative of belonging in a world where people think of their relation to places in a new manner, with many

> living 'in-between' different nations, feeling neither here nor there, unable to indulge in sentiments of belonging to either place.

> (McLeod 2000:214)

Furthermore, he points out that this in-betweenness can be 'painful, perilous and marginalising', but it can also be seen as something positive and as 'a place of immense creativity and possibility' where migrants are empowered as 'agents of change' who create new identities 'open to change and reinscription' (McLeod 2000:219).

A variety of authors emphasise the concepts of *us* and *others* in their work on refugee (Kushner 2006), on memory (Jelin 2003b), on national identity (Petersoo 2007) and on nationalism (Billig 1995). They stress the importance, furthermore, the necessity, of *the other* in constructing and maintaining identities (Billig 1995:78). In this same line of thought, Weedon's argument is that

> Identity is relational. It is defined in a relation of difference to what it is not […] All identities have their 'others' from which they mark their difference.

> (Weedon 2004:19)

Developing this argument further, Therborn maintains that:

> Identity is post-classical Latin and means sameness. As such it is operative only dialectically, i.e. in connection with its opposite, otherness. Because of this dialectic we may say that there is a primacy of otherness over sameness in the making of identity.

> (Therborn 1995:229)

On this, when Kushner reveals an observation by a Jewish refugee saying that '[i]f we had not remembered that we were refugees there were always others to remind us' (Kushner 2006:161), it is significant that this person chooses 'others' instead of 'people' or any other more inclusive term.

As the '*basis of otherness* can vary considerably in different situations' (Petersoo 2007:119) it is fair to say that there are a number of possibilities of *others* if we think of different contexts. Petersoo notices that, against the dominant idea of negativeness associated with *the other*, there have also been some positive examples in history and she then formulates four types of *others*: 'the internal positive Other, internal negative Other, external positive Other and external negative Other' (Petersoo 2007:120). What is most remarkable here is that she contemplates the prospect of communities moving categories over the time. With regard to the *Niños Vascos*, I am interested in whether they make the distinction of *us* and *the others* and what they consider themselves to be both in Spain and the UK. Or furthermore, do they position themselves somewhere outside the *us* and *the other*? In this respect, Said goes one step further in the debate on the issue of *us* and *the others* in relation to displaced people:

> And just beyond the frontier between 'us' and the 'outsiders' is the perilous territory of not-belonging: this is to where in a primitive time peoples were banished, and where in the modern era immense aggregates of humanity loiter as refugees and displaced persons.

> (Said 2000:177)

1.4.2 Diaspora

In general terms, *diaspora* suggests an idea of community and it also involves 'having collective homes away from home' (Clifford 1994:308). Kearney's argument is that '[r]efugees and displaced persons are often the first generations of diasporan communities' (Kearney 1995:559). This leads to the issue of the changing nature of human groups over time, which I analyse in later chapters in relation to the development of the subjects of my study as a group. It also raises the question of whether the *Niños Vascos* could be considered part of the Basque diaspora.

Just as the meaning of the term *refugee* has been revised in the literature, so has been the notion of *diaspora*, which according to Tötölian

> now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest-worker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community.

> (Tötölian 1991:4-5)

A number of authors have explored the new uses of this term and, as Cohen (1997) states, the word diaspora of Greek origin has been used throughout history to express different ideas. Originally, it was used in Ancient Greece meaning migration and colonisation; later it became associated with collective separation from home involving trauma; and in more recent years, it has been used in relation to groups who are neither colonisers nor victims of separation from their homeland (Cohen 1997:ix). He then adds some features to the previous list of characteristics of a diaspora devised by Safran, noticing that as the term has evolved, a new definition is needed.

Cohen summarises the features of diasporas as:

> 1 dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically; 2 alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions; 3 a collective memory and myth about the homeland; 4 an idealization of the supposed ancestral home; 5 a return movement; 6 a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time; 7 a troubled relationship with host societies; 8 a sense of solidarity with co-ethnic members

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in other countries of settlement; and 9 the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in tolerant host countries.

(Cohen 1997:180)

However, as Hall (1998) maintains, diaspora experiences are not essentialist, pure and fixed, but highly dynamic and heterogeneous. In this view 'diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference' (Hall 1998:235). Thus, when authors have tried to theorise and conceptualise the term diaspora, they have failed to produce a set of criteria that could consistently be applied to any given diasporic group. For instance, Safran mentions the 'ideal' type in regard to the Jewish diaspora, but then Clifford rightly argues that 'large segments of Jewish historical experience do not meet the test of Safran's […] criteria' (Clifford 1994).[43] Also, Cohen claims that collective identities such as 'world religions', 'borderland cultures' or 'stranded minorities' are not diasporas but 'cognate phenomena' as they do not fulfil his criteria; yet, more significantly, he admits that '[c]onstructing a taxonomy of diasporas is a highly inexact science, partly because the taxa concerned are overlapping or change over time' (Cohen 1997:179-191). It is argued here that Clifford has already found an answer to this when he adds the peculiarity of a 'shared, ongoing history of displacement, suffering, adaptation or resistance' and clarifies that

> Whatever the working list of diasporic features, no society can be expected to qualify on all counts, throughout its history.

(Clifford 1994:306)

Cohen, echoing Marienstras, indicates the relationship, moreover, the need of time to pass in order to be able to categorise a migrant community as a diaspora (Cohen 1997:185-186). Additionally a 'strong attachment to the past, or a block to assimilation in the present and future, must exist in order to permit a diasporic consciousness to emerge or be retained' (Cohen 1997:186).

Can we then talk theoretically of a Basque diaspora or should it be considered as one of the three cognate phenomena considered by Cohen as 'stranded minorities' (Cohen 1997)?

A good starting point for the discussion is the statement maintained by Clifford that '[i]n the late 20th century, all or most communities have diasporic dimensions (moments, tactics, practices, articulations)' (Clifford 1994:310). Kearney establishes a difference between diasporas and other patterns of migration in that

> diasporas include a full cross-section of community members who are dispersed to many diverse regions of the world, and who yet retain a myth of their uniqueness and an interest in their homeland.

(Kearney 1995:559)

This substantiates the case for a Basque diaspora since those conditions have all been characteristic of the Basque migration movements throughout history.

Authors such as Totoricagüena (2005) and Oiarzabal (2004) have theorised and constructed a case for a Basque diaspora.[44] Based not on a nation-state perspective but within a transnational framework, Totoricagüena compares the experiences of groups of Basques currently disseminated around the world, maintaining that in those collectives there are many who still consider themselves Basque, and there are also examples of returning to the Basque identity after generations (Totoricagüena 2005:102). Based on Cohen's definition she sustains that there is a Basque diaspora, even though this diaspora does not clearly fulfil all the criteria. This claim is based on a Basque identity of diasporan collectivities which is firmly connected to arguments of belonging to a group, individual development, and a perceived positive social status associated with a 'positive work-ethic reputation'[45] (Totoricagüena 2005:112).

Oiarzabal agrees that there is a contemporary transnational and diasporic behaviour amongst the Basques and he observes that this is not a recent phenomenon, but one that has also occurred in the past.[46] He postulates that the Basques constitute an 'ethno-diaspora' or 'national diaspora' defined as:

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scattered deterritorialized ethnic people that form a distinctive collective identity to their host societies' dominant culture, where they have instituted specific 'ethno-diaspora' social identities, institutions and networks across spaces and over time.

<div align="right">(Oiarzabal 2004:6)</div>

With regard to the *Niños Vascos*, as it will be developed in Chapter 5, at an individual level some of them do not regard themselves as Basques. However, some others do, which raises questions of whether these can be considered as part of the Basque diaspora. It is significant that on a search on the internet for the term *Basque diaspora* it is the Basque Children of '37 Association UK itself that appears in the first place on the list of Basque diasporan communities in the UK.[47]

Since diasporas are increasingly becoming central links between homelands and hostlands, is it that the Basque institutions include the *Niños Vascos* because they can benefit from their socio-economic network in the UK and other countries? Is it that as a result they support this collective and consequently the *Niños Vascos* themselves benefit from it? Furthermore, is it that the *Niños Vascos* come in and out of that diaspora as and when it suits their needs? Totoricagüena observes the support provided to the Basque diaspora by the Basque Government owing to its interest in using the Basque 'centers for promotion and development and for disseminating the contemporary reality of the Basque Country'. More importantly, she highlights the role played by the 'Basque communities [as] stimulator for positive social, cultural, economic, and political relations' (Totoricagüena 2005:24).

After introducing the theoretical framework of this thesis, I next focus on the methodological and analytical approach which I intend to follow for the empirical work. Chapter 2 will present the tools and strategies used to collect and analyse data, critically evaluating both the advantages of the chosen method and also some challenges encountered during the course of the research.

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2

METHODOLOGY AND DATA: ANALYSING REMEMBRANCE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will examine the complementary qualitative research methods and analytical tools which will be employed to examine the case study explored for my empirical work. This approaches the subjects of my enquiry from two different levels, as a collective and also as individuals.

I will start with a section which includes an explanation, from a theoretical perspective, of the rationale behind the use of primarily an ethnographic approach. This will lead to a justification of the use of participant observation and ethnographic interviews and conversations as the most appropriate strategies for my case study. In the next section I will examine the use of other sources which also inform my enquiry and predominantly provide testimonies of *Niños Vascos*. I will next give details of my approach to data analysis, including a description of how and why I am going to use a multimodal analysis, to finish the chapter with a discussion on some methodological challenges encountered as a result of the choice of an oral approach. The last section on self-reflexivity highlights some issues I had to confront and some difficult choices I had to make at various levels from the beginning of this thesis. In some instances these challenges were specific to my chosen ethnographic methodological approach. In others they were found throughout all the methods employed and also throughout all

the chapters of my thesis. Among other issues, I will discuss my role as an *insider* given my family connection to the collective under examination. I will also reflect on the ethical concerns associated with my approach owing to my double, sometimes conflicting, identity as a member of that collective and as a researcher. Selecting the nomenclature to be used when I wrote and also when I talked to my informants was a particularly difficult exercise, as the choice of terms might be controversial. This matter was a continuous source of tensions for me due to my awareness of the effect which my choices would have on how I established rapport with my informants, and ultimately on the results of my research.

2.2 FIELDWORK

While the use of secondary sources and archival information will complement my approach to this study, the main methodological strategy which will inform my work is going to be ethnography. Nevertheless I will also cite the work by scholars who are principally known as oral historians, for instance Alessandro Portelli and Paul Thompson. The reason behind this is that authors often struggle to clearly define the thin line between ethnography and oral history, as there are many instances where both methodologies intersect owing to their shared interactive oral character. For the purposes of my research I will refer to oral historians when they theorise about concepts, strategies and techniques which are relevant to both methods. I will explore their thoughts when they are applicable to oral methodologies in general, particularly interviews, be they ethnographic or oral history, as opposed to other non oral qualitative or quantitative methodologies.

2.2.1 Scope of an oral approach

Authors recognise the complementarity of written and oral sources (Grele 1991, Howarth 1999). On this, Portelli points out that:

written and oral sources are not mutually exclusive. They have common as well
as autonomous characteristics, and specific functions which only either one can
fill (or which one set of sources fills better than the other)'.

(Portelli 1992:46)

The nature of my investigation clearly determined my choice of an oral methodology,
which is fundamentally different from the perspective adopted by historians in the
past in that it is closer to the *subjects* of study. The actors of history are not *objects* seen
from the distance, but individuals who express their own feelings and interpretations
of their own stories. In the words of Thompson this fact makes oral evidence 'truer'
(Thompson 1988:99).

Less radically, I defend this method as *different* from, and *richer* than, the non-
oral. However, I position myself within the trend which from the mid-1990s has
contested the *truth* of the narrative, claiming that it is naive to consider life stories as
'reality' or 'facts' (Leydesdorff 2005:viii).

Early studies on memory point out the lack of factual rigour within people's
accounts when they communicate their experiences. Halbwachs notices that
individuals tend to summarise different moments of their lives as if they had happened
in one single occurrence, mixing elements from different stories. In his words, accounts
of events are

pregnant with all that has preceded them just as they are already pregnant with
all that will follow. As often as we return to these events and figures and reflect
upon them, they attract to themselves more reality instead of becoming
simplified. This is because they are at the point of intersection of an increasing
number of reflections.

(Halbwachs 1992:61)

This statement hints at the value and uniqueness of oral sources, which provide the
researcher with new material and insights, highlighting topics that often have not been
explored. More significantly, they give ideas of what is (or was) important for the
people involved in the events, and what their hopes for the future are (or were),

regardless of whether these hopes materialise or not. It can be argued that expectations of future play an invaluable part in establishing identity, a dimension which would be missed were oral sources not used.

2.2.2 *Scope of ethnography*

In this study I turn my attention to both the narratives of the *Niños Vascos* and also to the events which frame them. I endeavour to carry out a comprehensive examination of the renewed identities and new relationships which emerge as a result of, and are fuelled by, the rituals performed by the *Niños Vascos* and other relevant agents of memory (such as their children and members of institutions and the Establishment). Hammersley and Atkinson note that 'human actions are based upon, or infused by, social meanings: that is, by intentions, motives, beliefs, rules, and values' (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:7). These are continually under revision, particularly when individuals interact.

The selection of a particular methodological approach will need to take into consideration that, as Goodwin contends, 'the production and interpretation of human social action is built through the simultaneous deployment of a range of quite different kinds of semiotic resources' (Goodwin 2000:1492). This phenomenon of construction and reconstruction of identities, which occurs in the context of social networks and the public sphere and also implies human interactions, is related to emotions, feelings and perceptions. Therefore it is not of a measurable and observable nature, but one that needs to be directly experienced in its 'natural' settings (Powers 2005:12). Hence I used participant observation of a variety of commemorative practices to examine the behaviour of the informants in public, and ethnographic interviews/conversations in order to explore the informants' private sphere. Corbin and Strauss point out that

> The world is very complex. There are no simple explanations for things. Rather, events are the result of multiple factors coming together and interacting in complex and often unanticipated ways. Therefore any methodology that

attempts to understand experience and explain situations will have to be complex.

<div align="right">(Corbin & Strauss 2008:8)</div>

Willis and Trondman consider ethnography the conjunction of methods utilised to comprehend and represent the 'irreducibility of human experience' with its sometimes paradoxical and unintended results (Willis & Trondman 2002:394). Furthermore, in order to analyse these experiences and situations in depth, they need to be considered in relation to the wider universe which frames them (Corbin & Strauss 2008:8, Willis & Trondman 2002) as in the process of identity construction 'people constantly make and remake themselves, connecting their personal histories to a larger social history' (Schneider 2003:188). Similarly, the impact of this twofold relation between the micro and macrostructures is noticeable in the fact that wider social and political discourses are reinforced by, but also derive from, commemorative practices. I argue that they both feed into each other, since I have noticed this in the events which I observed for this enquiry.

For the purposes of triangulation of evidence, a choice of a multiple methodological approach is required which:

1. gives a voice to the actors who live the process of identity construction;

2. enables them to express the experiences, memories and values which mould that process; and

3. observes and explains behaviours.

My work will use ethnographic tools to analyse the concrete and particular with regard to the individuals, and the general with regard to their practices, exploring who the *Niños Vascos* are by looking at how their sense of identity has been, and still is, being constructed and reconstructed over time. In this sense my study is different from others which have been carried out in the past, as those authors who have previously written about the Basque refugee children evacuated to the UK (see Legarreta 1984, Arrien 1991, Eizaguirre 1999, Benjamin 2007) have usually merely compiled testimonies or have reconstructed the events from a historical perspective, trying to

uncover the historical *truth*. Their work lacks a critical and multidisciplinary analysis, as they have used primary and archival sources to tell life stories and to give information and facts, namely '*hard* realities' if we use Samuel and Thompson's terminology (Samuel & Thompson 1990:1), rather than considering each case as an experience of narrative construction.

The ethnographic approach is particularly effective for my research, as in the case of the study of minorities and marginal groups it empowers these groups, and enables the investigation to show an additional dimension not covered by the historical discourse (Samuel & Thompson 1990:2). Manuel Vázquez Montalbán detects the lack of this extra dimension in the work of authors who have analysed the memory of the opposition to Francoism. He observes that this memory 'is full of data and aromas; historians can reach the data, but not the aromas'[48].

In this respect, Portelli points out that 'oral sources give us information about […] social groups whose written history is either missing or distorted' (Portelli 1992:47) whilst Willis and Trondman also maintain a radical critical approach in research and writing. They highlight the crucial role which the ethnographic method plays to some extent with regard to the study of social interactions, as these 'embody, mediate and enact the operations and results of unequal power' (Willis & Trondman 2002:398). I took this line of enquiry into consideration when I exercised the ethnographic method as a participant observer and also as an interviewer, paying particular attention to issues of power, and reactions to it, which emerged from the data collection as will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

In order to explore behaviours, in those chapters I will follow Jelin's approach, which focuses on 'social and political actors, their stances in public situations, their confrontations and struggles, and alliances and identifications with others' (Jelin 2003b:xviii). To achieve this I consider ethnography the most suitable method of data collection in the sense that it allows the researcher to observe *who* those actors are, *what* agendas they have and *how* they interact with each other. In the context of this study, the actors identified at the commemorative practices which I observed were, in

addition to the *Niños Vascos* themselves, their children or grandchildren, or other agents of memory such as artists, activists, researchers and political and social groups.

Also, the ethnographic interviews/conversations approach allowed me to uncover why individuals participated in these practices or decided not to do so. I consider it highly significant, and necessary, to explore the process of engagement or disengagement of certain individuals or groups that took place at the events which I attended. In some instances their determination was particularly persistent, and was the cause of a number of issues which need to be analysed in order to understand how persons negotiate their involvement in these processes of memory and identity engineering.

Finally, another advantage of the ethnographic method for my research was that it permitted me to examine how the actors under study interact with each other. It allowed me not only to observe social action while it took place but also the spaces, objects, symbols and artefacts which mediated it. These often-symbolically-loaded semiotic vehicles will be explored in my analysis in the sense of how the *materiality* of social life affects discourse and the interaction between individuals and collectives.

2.2.3 Data collection

I considered it crucial to allocate as long a period of time as possible to my fieldwork. This was undertaken from the beginning of the study in the autumn of 2006 and continued until the spring of 2010, which amounts to nearly four years. Firstly, this allowed me to consolidate trust and rapport with the informants. Secondly, it made it possible to collect data of particularly good quality. For example, it gave me the opportunity to gather varied data of both routine and exceptional occasions. Amongst these was the 70th anniversary of the evacuation to the UK. Also, more recently, a memorial for a *niño vasco* whose ashes were buried, a year after his death, close to Karl Marx's grave at the Highgate Cemetery in London. Finally, it facilitated following a grounded theory approach, in which theory is:

derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research

process. In this method, data collection, analysis, and eventual theory stand in

close relationship to one another […] Grounded theories, because they are

drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and

provide a meaningful guide to action.

(Strauss and Corbin 1998:12)

The aim was to investigate the subjects of both memory and memorialisation in depth, thus, I gathered data by using two different research tools. Firstly, I took part as a participant observer at a number of commemorative practices held both in the UK and also in the Basque Country. Secondly, I carried out a number of ethnographic interviews/conversations with relevant informants. Once the data were gathered I structured their subsequent analysis in two separate chapters of this thesis. The rationale to collect my data going from the general/collective to the particular/individuals was mainly due to practical reasons.

When I initially planned my data collection I decided to do oral history, hence I started to trial the method by carrying out interviews of two *Niños Vascos* who had returned from the UK to Spain in their childhood, and with whom I have a personal relationship. However, the three main commemorative events which I contrast in my study were celebrated in 2007 and 2008. Thus, owing to the timing of the events, it was imperative that I attended those celebrations before I individually interviewed the informants of the study. Despite the fact that this order of gathering the data was not my original intention I then realised that it helped me to acquire a much richer perspective of the context of the practices which I was investigating. This strategy conforms to Powers' theory regarding the distinction between the methods traditionally followed by historians and the ethnographic approach:

Historians direct interviews through sets of specific questions, leading

participants toward topics they consider relevant to their inquiry.

> Ethnographers first take part in local activities, engage in as much daily life as they are permitted to, and observe; context plays a far greater role.

<div align="right">(Powers 2005:19)</div>

Following this order during the data collection identified some unexpected analytic topics which needed to be explored in depth. For instance, before I began my investigation I considered the *Niños Vascos* a homogeneous group and did not question their categorising as such. Then, I started to see them as individuals (not a group), whose only common characteristic was the fact that they had all been evacuated to the UK in 1937. Finally, starting the fieldwork as a participant observer helped me see that it is reasonable to say that the *Niños Vascos* are a group of a heterogeneous nature, where one can distinguish individuals of different backgrounds, but can also recognise some important common characteristics which hold them together as a group (see 5.2).

Another positive and unexpected consequence of the change of order of the data collection was that it reinforced ethnography as my main methodology, enhancing the wider social aspect of my investigation as

> For oral historians, the interview is the foreground, and the social information the background. For ethnographers, it is the reverse: the interview is background material for an account of broader scope.

<div align="right">(Powers 2005:20)</div>

Also, the first observations during the first phase of my data collection facilitated the design of the semi-structured interviews/conversations that I carried out during the next stage instead of the originally planned oral history interviews.

2.2.4 Participant observation

The years of 2007 and 2008 were remarkably serendipitous with reference to the number of events which were organised in connection with the *Niños Vascos* both in the UK and in Spain. Two main factors contributed to the sudden proliferation of commemorative practices. Firstly, 2007 marked the 70th anniversary of the evacuation

and the arrival of those children in the UK. Secondly, this momentous and *rounded* anniversary, probably the last major one which will happen while some of the *Niños Vascos* are still alive, took place within the framework of a broader current contemporary debate on memory and the recuperation of historical memory, both in Spain and elsewhere (see 0.1 and 1.2.1).

This general context was particularly favourable for my research. The implication was that the abundance of unique activities which were organised as a result gave me the opportunity to be able to carry out ethnographic observation of community life attending a number of exceptional events in which the *Niños Vascos* were involved throughout 2007 and 2008. These included some reunions, exhibitions and official meetings. During that time I was also present as a participant observer at various meetings of the Basque Children of '37 Association UK and at a number of memorial events. Among these there were the unveiling of commemorative blue plaques and the 70th anniversary of the *Niños Vascos*' arrival celebrations at Southampton in May 2007 and Eastleigh in October 2007.

My role in the previous events was clearly as a researcher who was gathering data as a participant observer, but I also participated in all of them as an individual who belongs to the community of the *Niños Vascos* and their families. However, my role changed to some extent when I attended a series of homage events which were organised in Bilbao to pay tribute to the Basque Children of the Spanish Civil War and took place from the 7th to the 15th of June 2008. On this occasion my role was partly different, since I was observing the events, but I did not take part in their organisation or decision making process. Also, this week of commemorative acts was not exclusively addressed to the Basque Children of the UK (see Idi Ezkerra 2009 DVD), thus, my role as a participant was diffused and considerably less active than at previous events, allowing me to collect and analyse my data from a different perspective.

Attending these events gave me a further insight into the sphere of the *Niños Vascos* which I documented in my field notes, my own digital photographic material, video-clips and audio recordings, and also several hours of digital video tapes

recorded by myself. Additionally, I compiled a vast amount of audio-visual material related to these events which are in the public domain. This includes press coverage of the events by both Spanish and British newspapers and television, and also a number of articles and photographs which were published on the Internet.

2.2.5 Ethnographic interviews/conversations

Authors highlight the value of the interview as an instrument 'for developing new frameworks and theories' (Anderson & Jack 1991:18). Furthermore, it is considered an 'extremely important source of data' (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:131), as it allows the fieldworker to acquire information which would probably not be obtained by using other methods. For instance, my informants usually received me in their homes, where I had the opportunity to become part of, and observe, their day-to-day lives, and observe the places where they live. Thus, the ethnographic interviews/conversations were the lenses through which I looked more closely into the lives of the subjects of my research and their private sphere, providing an alternative method which substantiated the evidence collected from other sources. The interviewees also introduced me to their families and to other informants, and in addition to answering my questions they often lent me or gave me as a present some of their books, which were related to the topic of the *Niños Vascos* and which were impossible to find by other means.[49]

Initially, I carried out a number of in-depth semi-structured and open-ended interviews which did not consist of a series of standard questions repeated to all the informants. On the contrary, they were similar to a natural conversation, giving the informants the opportunity to cover the subjects which were important to them. As Howarth remarks, '[i]nterviewing is… an artificial extension of "the informal conversation" but the target should be just that: as far as possible an informal conversation' (Howarth 1999:161).

An immediate consequence of this conversational character of the interview is that the resulting narrative is the product of an interaction between both the

interviewer and the interviewee (Grele 1994:2), thus the ethnographic site can be seen as an encounter where the speakers construct 'both their own and each other's identity' (Schneider 2003:190). This relates to the understanding of ethnography as a collaborative process in which by '"creating something together", agency becomes shared between the researcher and informant' (Pink 2007:57), who to some degree both have in mind the potential audience of the results of that research.

Obviously, when informants converse with the ethnographer they do not merely give unprompted and autonomous accounts. They respond to an initial requirement articulated by the researcher, who in turn will be stimulated and influenced by the themes raised by the informant and so on. This leads to Portelli's statement that

> Communications always work both ways. The interviewees are always, though perhaps unobtrusively, studying the interviewers who 'study' them.

(Portelli 1992:54)

What we see here is first, a twofold process which takes place as a result of the interactive nature of language; and secondly, that

> All interactions and interviews, whatever the politics of the situation, are jointly constructed –a term often used is *co-constructed-* and ethnographers participate in, influence, and are influenced by the very situation they have set out to observe.

(Powers 2005:20)

A number of authors have explored the issue of power differentials between the researcher and the participants and how this can affect the quality of the data from different perspectives (Wiles et al. 2004). Grele brings our attention to the complex question of shared power involved at any interview, noticing that '[i]n most interviews [the historians] are hegemonic' (Grele 1994:5). In this respect I consider that the word 'interview' on its own might imply a position of power of the ethnographer over the interviewee; consequently, I have favoured the use of the term 'interview/conversation' in this thesis.

The ethnographic interviews/conversations which I carried out covered the set of topics which form the structure of Chapters 4 and 5, and were usually conducted at the informants' homes with the exception of three of them which took place at the informants' work places. They were digitally recorded in audio and sometimes video format, including filming of relevant objects such as posters, pictures or artefacts found in the spaces where the conversations took place. The approach to the analysis (see Chapters 4 and 5) will be of a comparative nature, with the intention that more complete and richer conclusions can be achieved by contrasting a diversity of individual accounts.

Each time I started by giving my interlocutor a brief outline of the research in which I am engaged and went on to explain the reason why I wanted to interview him or her. I tried to avoid giving too much information or ideas of the topics which I had in mind, in order not to influence or guide their thoughts. The format of the interviews contained a number of analytical topics which needed to be covered with each informant. Nonetheless, I was aware that at an interview or at a conversation each side brings their own agenda, and that the answers which the informants give are not always in reply to (or even connected to) the researcher's questions. Thus, I kept an open attitude with regard to the topics which we discussed and let the conversation take its own course.

During the interviews/conversations which I carried out there were instances when the answers were unsolicited or unexpected, but this was understood and used as a tool to enhance the investigation. I interpreted those question-unrelated answers as an indication that the informant was not being led by and reacting to my researcher's *script* and *agenda* but being spontaneous in his or her thoughts. This was an excellent source of information with regard to the selection of themes to be considered and given priority for the analysis.

Ultimately, my primary intention was to conduct a comprehensive study of the informants' perceptions and the significance they attach to practices which commemorate their experience as refugees, by encouraging them to elaborate meaning out of their own personal experiences at these practices. This is a remarkable

characteristic which ethnographic interviews have in common with oral history, which tells us 'less about *events* than about their *meaning*' (Portelli 1992:50). I am interested in how my informants interpret their degree of involvement in those collective rituals and in what they consider to be the effects of this commemorative phenomenon both upon themselves and the wider society. For this reason, despite the fact that during the period in which I collected my data those initial ethnographic interviews increasingly became fluid and natural ethnographic conversations, I also kept my own agenda in mind. Thus, in those instances when the basic themes which I had in my agenda were not touched upon, I returned to them later. Usually these topics were discussed before that particular conversation finished, or in some cases we returned to them in a further conversation.

In order to contrast different perspectives and agendas, I also interviewed participants who are not *Niños Vascos*. For example, I was interested in exploring other perspectives with relation to the criteria followed to define and identify the group and its membership. How a membership is defined has an obvious impact on who is entitled and in a position to decide the places and dates of the memorial ceremonies, that is, on issues related to ownership of memory. In this respect, I conducted two interviews in the Basque Country. I first interviewed Gregorio Arrien, who from the late 70s has been carrying out research in the area of the Basque refugee children of the Spanish Civil War and the Basque exile in general. Then I interviewed Mauro Calvo, the main organiser of the commemorative acts which were held in Bilbao in June 2008. These two interviews were particularly valuable, as they gave me the opportunity to explore the experiences and struggles for memory of the *Niños Vascos* both from a diachronic and also from a synchronic perspective.

I also interviewed Natalia Benjamin and Crispian Cook, to have an insight into these commemorations from the British perspective. They were two key organisers of the two commemorative events which were held in Southampton and Eastleigh respectively in the year 2007. Finally I interviewed Steve Bowles, who is a British film-maker known for his interest in the story of the *Niños Vascos*. He has produced a number of documentary films (2003, 2005, 2007 DVDs) on this topic and interviewing

him allowed me to examine representations of the *Niños Vascos* which have been guided by an artistic and non-academic agenda.

All these informants were an excellent source of information and not only did they fully and willingly participate in my study, but they also provided me with invaluable extra and unexpected data such as audio-visual material, books, archival documentation, questionnaires and film transcripts.[50] Nonetheless, the central core of these ethnographic interviews was testimonies and conversations with a selection of *Niños Vascos*. Originally, the criteria followed to select these informants was primarily to include those who merely participate in commemorative practices, those who participate at an organisational level and are involved with institutions, and those who do not wish to participate. Each of those categories integrated men and women who live in the UK in an area which covers from Hampshire to London, as for practical reasons I needed to confine my investigation to an area geographically close to me providing this did not jeopardise the varied nature of the group of informants. This selection was considered the most inclusive in order to respect the plurality of voices within the collective under examination. It was anticipated that it would incorporate divergent and conflicting points of view with regard to the struggles for memories, thus enriching the investigation. Also, for reasons of pluralism and representation, another feature which was carefully sought amongst the selected participants was variety with regard to their educational and socio-economic backgrounds, in order to ensure that not only the 'confident' and the 'articulate' were approached.

However, there were changes throughout the enquiry, which is in line with Hammersley and Atkinson's thought that

> Who is interviewed, when, and how will usually be decided as the research progresses, according to the ethnographer's assessment of the current state of his or her knowledge, and according to judgments as to how it might best be developed further.

> (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:138)

For instance, although I collected the data mainly in the UK amongst participants who settled in Britain permanently, eventually I decided that including some accounts of *Niños Vascos* who returned to the Basque Country would help my research by giving me the opportunity to contrast their narratives. In addition to this, those who left the UK were often part of an event which I observed as a participant, and they had their input, thus they are an important part of the subject of this investigation.

2.3 OTHER SOURCES

Thus far it has been explained that my analysis of what it means to be a Basque refugee child of the Spanish Civil War in the UK has primarily developed out of ethnographic work. It also draws on a number of secondary sources which provided me both with information and also significant frames of reference.

There are a number of autobiographical books (see for example Barajuán 2005, Santamaría 2008, Sabín Etcheverry 2009) which contain testimonies of *niños vascos* evacuated in 1937, mainly to the UK, that I regard as an invaluable source of information for my research, since they indicate the interests and perspectives of the evacuees.[51] In addition to some books of personal memoirs which in principle can be considered as historical documents relatively free from editing, two further books have been published which are compilations of *Niños Vascos*' testimonies, Eizaguirre's *Corazón de cartón* (1999) and Benjamin's *Recuerdos* (2007).[52] Also the seminal book by Adrian Bell's *Only for three months* (1996) has been an invaluable source of both testimonies and inspiration.

Initially I intended to use these books to verify and to cross check my findings with written sources and also to check for consistency. However, I then realised that the testimonies which appear in them had many significant similarities with the ones I had collected, to the point that sometimes sentences said by the same person were almost literally repeated in both. Thus, I cross-referenced a number of excerpts from my own data, and on certain occasions I quoted those found in the books instead of mine. Offering this variety of sources enriches and validates my evidence. More importantly, most of the quotations in those books were given in English, thus the use

of them avoided some epistemological issues of working with translated data had I used mine instead.[53]

My conversations with the *Niños Vascos* have been carried out in Spanish except for a few informants who do not speak Spanish (this point is further developed in Chapter 5). On the contrary, English is the language which was used to interview the informants of the two books written in English. I considered that using the *Niños Vascos*' own words in English would be more appropriate and closer to their voices than if I translated my own data, which raises the question of the character of translated material as a biased construct which reflects the *authority* of the translator (see 2.5.5.2).

The Basque Children of '37 Association UK has also been a significant source of information and its role is explained in Appendix B.

2.4 DATA ANALYSIS

My interpretative analysis derives from a thematic content analysis which combines linguistic and multimodal semiotic approaches. I will not go into a micro-detailed multimodal analysis, owing to the large amount of data collected and the time constraints and word limit restrictions of this study. Thus, this method will be used in a broad sense, combined with narrative analysis of speech and of written sources.

During the initial stages of the research I organised the data as collected chronologically, making a note of the date of happening, since I considered this the most simple and direct way to do it. This also assured me that all the information gathered was included. Nevertheless, when the analysis started, I viewed all the material which I had collected and extracted the samples which I considered most significant, always guided by my research questions and emerging themes and concepts, organising them thematically in manageable excerpts for my analysis. Thus, there was a shift from a chronological order, in which time was the central factor, to a conceptual organisation of data, which focused on the most salient themes. I followed Hammersley and Atkinson's approach with regard to re-conceptualisation, which:

involves the categorization of the data – often breaking the texts up into discrete chunks or segments and identifying them in accordance with an indexing or 'coding' system

<div align="right">(Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:193)</div>

Despite the fact that ethnography takes place in a natural setting, one must consider that this environment is influenced and assembled by human practice, including the presence of the ethnographer. The semiotic devices selected for a particular setting contribute to the production of meanings, and both the objects and the media where they are positioned are 'crucial for the specific kinds of action that actors perform' (Goodwin 2000:1505). Also, the coming of the digital age has allowed the fieldworker to record data in a variety of forms which allow him or her to better capture this important extra dimension. Thus, in Chapters 4 and 5, in addition to analysing social action and testimonies, I will also display a number of illustrations in order to support my argument. Figure 2.1 (p 67) provides an example of the powerful enhancement provided to this enquiry by media other than speech. The meaning of the *ikurriña* (Basque flag) and *txapela* (traditional Basque beret), which this *niño vasco* wears as an expression of his identity, can only be fully captured and analysed by use of image.

Figure 2.1

Pink indicates the increasing use of 'photography, video and hypermedia' for ethnographic work (Pink 2007:1). A major reason to follow a multimodal approach which includes the collection and analysis of different formats of digital materials is that, as Hindmarsh and Heath point out, '[v]ideo provides unprecedented access to the fine details of social action and interaction' (Hindmarsh & Heath 2007:156) which reciprocally build on each other. Moreover, 'it provides opportunities to discover and analyse phenomena that hitherto were unavailable to analysis' (Hindmarsh & Heath 2007:156), amongst which the 'emergent production of role' needs to be highlighted (Hindmarsh & Heath 2007:168). The significant advantage of this analytical method is that by including images, gestures, three-dimensional forms and facial expressions in addition to speech it 'approaches representation and communication as something more than language' (Jewitt 2008:1). In Blommaert's words,

> What is traditionally understood by language is but one manifestation of it; all kinds of semiotic 'flagging' performed by means of objects, attributes, or activities can and should also be included for they usually constitute the 'action' part of language-in-action.

> (Blommaert 2005:3)

By analysing forms of social action other than speech, it is my intention to accomplish a greater and richer understanding of the complexities which this enquiry aims to uncover, particularly with regard to the 'multi-party interactive phenomenon' (Goodwin 2000:1501) of negotiation and fluctuations of power. I also expect to contribute to the development of the multimodal approach, which in Jewitt's words 'is an area that is at a relatively early stage of development' (Jewitt 2008:6) and 'an important, and often under-exploited, aspect of ethnographic fieldwork' (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:189).

In this study I treat the audio-visual material and video-recordings made by myself as primary data. I consider the documentaries and film footage made by others and which I have used for my research as secondary data, since there is no full guarantee that the recordings have not been edited for the purposes of maintaining a particular narrative. On this, when I interviewed the director of some film

documentaries which inform my research, he commented on the issues of editing his work in order to fulfil both an artistic agenda and also the requirements of the producers.

Hammersley and Atkinson remind us of the use of the ethnographic film in social anthropology pointing at the lack of neutrality of this type of film (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:188). It is not my intention to classify my own recordings as completely neutral, since I am aware that any type of data gathering is always subjective. Nonetheless, I contend that an essential distinction needs to be made, as my own recordings have not been edited, and furthermore, the motive behind the use of this tool is exclusively for the purposes of academic research.

Another central advantage of a multimodal methodology as a new approach to analysing the social, is its particularly effective way to uncover and record common human contradictions which the observation method reveals, as 'it is not unusual for persons to say they are doing one thing but in reality they are doing something else' (Corbin & Strauss 2008:29).

As a final point of this discussion, it needs to be noticed that while a multimodal collection of data has a number of significant advantages, there are two main challenges which the researcher needs to face while using this approach. Firstly, participants might feel inhibited and to a certain degree intimidated by the recording equipment, thus they often offer more relaxed, open and interesting accounts after the equipment has been switched off (Corbin & Strauss 2008:28). This is particularly the case when equipment which records the image in addition to the sound is used. Secondly, as Duranti observes, while the use of new cutting-edge technologies has introduced considerable opportunities to investigate new phenomena increasing 'analytical sophistication', at the same time it has also multiplied 'the number of technical, political, and moral problems that a fieldworker must confront' (Duranti 1997:84), in addition to a rapidly increasing number of complex legal issues.

2.5 METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES OF AN ORAL APPROACH

Abrams reminds us of the shift of focus which the debate on oral history has recently experienced, noticing that previous discussions about

> faithful transcription, representativeness and authenticity have been mostly superseded by deliberations about intersubjectivity, memory, composure, narrative construction and other theoretical perspectives.

> (Abrams 2009:12)

Ethnography is also undergoing this change of focal point and current writing consistently includes the ethnographer's point of view and how this affects the research.

I try to reflect this in my approach to this study, by giving a major emphasis to the *process* of memory and narrative construction. I focus on *how* people construct the identity they portray of themselves and the factors which influence this construction of the self, rather than on the accuracy of *what* that self is. For this reason, at the end of this chapter I will dedicate a section to inter-subjective relations and their methodological impact. Nevertheless, I am going to briefly discuss first some issues which are related to representativeness and the faithfulness of oral data, since they are aspects which I had to critically consider when I made my choices of how to collect and how to present my data to the potential readers of my thesis.

2.5.1 Access to information and representativeness

In principle, an oral methodological approach which focuses on the subjects who have experienced, and who to a great extent are the *guardians* of, a particular moment of history could be considered as original, inclusive, democratising and genuinely instigated by the purpose of merely uncovering a story, without hidden agendas. However, it is practically impossible to identify and to reach every person directly related to that experience. Thus, there is an element of judgment and discrimination from the beginning of a study when the researcher decides *who* is going to inform this.

A challenge which is sometimes faced by oral methodologies is the issue of gaining access to the informants who are considered necessary for the research and also to the settings. On occasion, this can prove a difficult task and it 'determines who will and will not be interviewed' (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:136) or which social action will be observed. With regard to the settings of my study, it needs to be pointed out that I accessed them without any difficulties except for one occasion when I did not attend a key event, which was organised unexpectedly, because a gatekeeper prevented me from doing so by failing to pass on information. In this respect, it has been written about the important role, sometimes indispensable in ethnographic work, which the gatekeepers play in order to gain access to informants and events. There is a risk that they 'attempt to exercise some degree of surveillance and control, either by blocking off certain lines of inquiry, or by shepherding the fieldworker in one direction or another' (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:66).

The individuals whom I approached for my study were highly cooperative in most cases. The fact that many of them knew me as the daughter of a *niña vasca* and the niece of three others before I started my investigation certainly facilitated my access to the settings, informants and events which I chose for my empirical work. However, this was not always the case and there were instances when due to mainly practical reasons I had to resort to indirect approaches.

One of the factors which influenced some changes of my approach, particularly with regard to *who* was interviewed for my research, was the inconsistency or discontinuity of access to some of the *Niños Vascos* due to terminal illnesses or death. For this reason the selection of informants is not as comprehensive as it was planned at the beginning of the investigation, a fact which potentially makes it harder to assess the representativeness of my findings and ultimately their validity. In order to surmount this difficulty, I used a variety of methodological approaches for my research. After collecting data from commemorative practices as a participant-observer, I recorded my own ethnographic interviews and conversations with a number of informants. Then I cross-referenced my findings with testimonies of the same persons when they appeared in books, films and other media. Finally, I also accessed the testimonies of

other *Niños Vascos* whom I did not directly contact myself by resorting to a variety of alternative sources (see 2.3 and Appendix B).

2.5.2 Professional interviewee-ness

The current interview culture pervades all areas of our lives. Wiles et al. notice that

> the familiarity of celebrity interviews, 'confessional' television and various forms of public opinion interviews have resulted in the interview becoming a central feature of everyday life, so much so that contemporary society can be understood as 'the interview society'.

(Wiles et al. 2006:295)

In this context, a particular methodological issue encountered during the course of this research has been the lack of spontaneity, the *professional interviewee-ness* I would argue, of some of the participants in relation to their oral accounts.

While ethnographers and oral historians defend the use of an oral approach as an instrument to give a voice to the voiceless and the underprivileged, the current identification of the *Niños Vascos* as such might be contended. They are scarcely mentioned in the literature between the time of the evacuation in 1937 to the end of the 1990s, therefore it cannot be ignored that for a long period of time they have not had a voice. However, coinciding with the recent phenomenon of the Recuperation of the Historical Memory in Spain and the memorialist movement elsewhere, the *Niños Vascos* started to receive enormous attention from the media (see Figure 2.2, p 73, as an example), writers and the academic community. While some of the *Niños Vascos* are still unaware of the historical value of their experiences some others are now conscious of their membership of a 'historical group' (Alonso Carballés 1998:188) which attracts interest from the media and scholars. The story of the *Niños Vascos* has been written, filmed and published to the point that there are currently a number of projects both in Spain and in the UK in which they are the central element.

As Thompson points out

> The more people are accustomed to presenting a professional public image, the less likely their personal recollections are to be candid...[s]o are those who, through reading, have fixed upon a view of the past which they propagate professionally.

(Thompson 1988:128)

In the last few years some of the informants of this investigation have regularly been interviewed by the media and are accustomed to telling their story. This makes them, I would argue, *semi-professional* interviewees.

Figure 2.2

Many of them have now the confidence to talk in public or in front of a camera, feeling comfortable with it and enjoying their star role. Furthermore, they have a *mental*, sometimes *physical*, script of their story. They use this script as an aid in order to present the story which they suspect they are expected to provide to their audience. As an observer, I witnessed several situations where a *niño vasco* was repeating the same words that I had already heard him, or others, pronounce in a film or elsewhere. Nonetheless, I do not think this invalidates the evidence provided its meaning is

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analysed, thus I will treat repetitions and the use of scripts as an analytical theme. Also, when I talked to these *semi-professional* interviewees I asked them to expand those particularly recurring details of their accounts as much as possible, in order to obtain new and possibly more spontaneous exchanges.

2.5.3 Subjectivity

The accounts of individuals presented in this study are inevitably coloured by revealing subjectivities and personal interpretations. With regard to this point, authors agree that subjectivity is one of the positive and unique particularities of oral methodologies rather than a limitation, constituting a source of data in itself (Anderson & Jack 1991:23-24). Portelli remarks that

> Oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did […] The organization of the narrative reveals a great deal of the speakers' relationship to their story.

<div align="right">(Portelli 1992:50)</div>

This point raises the methodological issues of reliability and legitimacy of the data collected by oral means. Portelli asserts that 'there are no "false" oral sources […] "wrong" statements are still psychologically "true", and this truth may be equally as important as factually reliable accounts' (Portelli 1992:51). Furthermore, there are authors who carry out oral history or ethnographic work who claim that oral sources are not less accurate than the written documents, since they give the researcher the possibility to ask for clarifications (Thompson 1988:104, Howarth 1999:ix) and '[v]ery often, written documents are only the uncontrolled transmission of unidentified oral sources' (Portelli 1992:51). In this respect I argue that written documents and their selection for archival purposes are frequently more connected to ideologies or partisan interests than to factual data, as it is argued in Chapter 1. Moreover, in the context of my investigation the written sources relevant to my case study are often unreliable or unavailable (see Chapter 3).

On many occasions the informants of this investigation provided accounts of the same event presenting the facts substantially differently from one person to another. However, they frequently claimed that they know or remember the 'true story' and that they are the only ones saying 'the truth'. On the other hand an informant was reluctant to converse about her memories of her stay in the UK because her experience significantly differed from others, and she felt that she would be considered 'a liar'. Since subjectivity is a crucial part of the process of identity construction, it can be contended that it is precisely the fact that individuals add their own subjectivity to their accounts which makes these accounts richer and more valuable, and thus counteracts the existence of a dominant single discourse.

2.5.4 Transcriptions

It has been pointed out that '[w]ithout a written version, only the most determined researchers will take the time to listen to hours of interviews that may have only passing relevance to their investigations' (Robertson 1994:48). For instance, it is considered that the transcript permits the interviewer and interviewee to 'enhance the value of the interview by correcting and clarifying matters raised on the tape' (Robertson 1994:51). Thus, some authors suggest that once the interviews have been transcribed the transcriptions are the data the researcher uses for the investigation (Aronson 1994). Yet, as Samuel notices,

> The spoken word can very easily be mutilated when it is taken down in writing and transferred to the printed page. Some distortion is bound to arise, whatever the intention of the writer […] People do not usually speak in paragraphs, and what they have to say does not usually follow an ordered sequence of comma, semi-colon, and full stop.

> (Samuel 1998:389)

It is argued that these days there are systems in place which are highly accurate and which allow the researcher to transcribe interviews in great detail, including pauses, tone and other non-verbal semiotic elements. Nevertheless I see conversations as

highly sophisticated entities with multiple dimensions which cannot be fully expressed in the bi-dimensional paragraphical character of any writing. I contend that despite the level of accuracy which the transcription may reach, it is an impossible task to completely represent in writing the complexity of tones, volumes, timing and rhythm of communication. Thus, crucial elements of the interview/conversation are lost in the process of transcribing. Moreover, these cues might sometimes imply that what people are saying is not exactly what they mean, as is the case of irony or humour (Powers 2005:13). In this respect Portelli notices how the transcriber's subjectivity has an impact on the transcription:

> The same statement may have quite contradictory meanings, according to the speaker's intonation, which cannot be represented objectively in the transcript, but only approximately described in the transcriber's own words. In order to make the transcript readable, it is usually necessary to insert punctuation marks, which are always the more-or-less arbitrary addition of the transcriber.
>
> (Portelli 1992:47)

My strategy was to record the interviews/conversations and to listen to them until the most relevant analytical themes emerged. I then wrote a summary of what was said at each interview and transcribed the excerpts which I considered more relevant as evidence, taking details of the timings when they appeared in the recording. For my analysis I used the recordings together with their summaries and transcripts. Thus, the *real document* which I used was the recording, supported by the written transcription. I also listened to the complete interviews a few more times while I was analysing the data in order to keep the narratives in context and to check if any other segments of the interview became more relevant at different stages.

The transcribed excerpts of testimonies which I obtained from other sources, such as documentary evidence or film transcripts, were kept *exactly* as they appeared in the original unless it was an obvious case of misspelling such as the name of a place written with lower case.

In order to be faithful to the originals, I kept changes to a minimum thus there are frequent cases of syntactical, grammatical, orthographical and typographical errors. There are also recurrent instances where there is an unexpected lack of consistency with regard to the use of verb tenses and agreements in number or gender. I have not rectified these, since they highlight some analytical topics to be further developed, and they also reflect common characteristics of oral texts such as 'repetition, redundancy, imprecise lexis' and an additive sentence structure which lacks the use of connectors (Hatim & Mason 1997:141).

2.5.5 Self-reflexivity

There is ongoing scholastic debate about the interaction between the ethnographer and the subjects of their investigation which focuses on the agentive dimension of the researcher and on how their relationship with the informants affects the outcomes of the research.[54] Attention also needs to be drawn to the impact that the researcher has on the collection and further interpretation of the data when the ethnographic approach is the methodology chosen for an investigation. It can be argued that the researcher and also the interview as a social relationship have an effect both on the people and on the course of the events being examined. In order to deal with this, for instance it is recommended that only basic information is given at the beginning of the study in order to minimise that effect. A thorough description of the aims of the research 'will influence the behaviour of the people' (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:72), and also this is not advisable because the research questions might change as the study progresses.

Another important issue to review is that, as Hall suggests

> the 'I' who writes here must also be thought of as, itself, 'enunciated'. We all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always 'in context', positioned.

> (Hall 1998:222)

The addition of the first-person introduces a subjective point of view, which leads us to the issue of bias involved in any research. This is explored by Barwell, who maintains that researchers interpret their data of interactions according to their previous experience (Barwell 2003). He warns us that the analysis is not only about the data but it also reflects who carries it out, posing the methodological question

> How, though, is the researcher's presence to be taken further, as a presence which positions participants, for example, and as an observer with a perspective which is implicated in producing the interaction and interpretations which are reported?

(Barwell 2003)

Since the bias is inevitable, the researcher has the options of minimising, managing or monitoring it. Thus, I next convey my reflections on what I consider the main instances where my personal position has had an impact on this study.

2.5.5.1 Ethnographer's position in the research

An important factor which influenced to a great extent my selection of the ethnographic approach as the most suitable has been the circumstance that I am unavoidably engaged with the group of the subjects of my research given my family background. In fact, this is the reason why I embarked upon this investigation. I was born in the Basque Country, where I spent all my life until I migrated to the UK at the end of 1996. Prior to this, my family had a significant history of forced migration, as both my parents had been evacuated as children during the Spanish Civil War.[55] My mother and her three siblings were among the *Niños Vascos* evacuated to the UK on the *Habana* in 1937. Also, my mother's parents went in exile to France and lived in a refugee camp for some time during the Civil War. At the start of the Second World War my mother and her three siblings were sent from the UK to France to meet their parents, and from there they all returned to Spain, where Franco was in power. Not only did my family experience the consequences of the Civil War but they also lived throughout the following 36 years of dictatorship. Franco died when I was 15 years

old. Consequently, in addition to my academic agenda I also bring my own personal agenda and a previous body of knowledge related to the subject of this thesis.

This prior knowledge involves presumptions and preconceptions from all parties involved, including my informants and myself, with regard to shared values, beliefs and norms of the group. Thus, there is a risk of not only trying 'to *prove* pre-existing ideas that are brought into the interview' (Anderson & Jack 1991:12, my emphasis) but also that these permeate the entire research process. As the researcher, I subjectively set the agenda for gathering my data and decided to which areas I paid attention within the chosen settings. Moreover, as a member of that particular 'community of memory' (Faber 2004) I have had an important input in those settings.

However, despite the fact that being the daughter of a *niña vasca* can potentially be a source of conflict of interests and loyalties between my double identity as a researcher and as part of the group under study, my insiderness can also be seen as an advantage which furthers the analysis. It entails familiarity and friendship with the informants, it facilitates access to sources of information, and it assures some degree of collaborative behaviour. It has created a context for my interactions with the *Niños Vascos* which has been of a personal character (and linguistically in Spanish most of the time).[56] In our ethnographic exchanges my informants and I have shared our life experiences, our thoughts and opinions, and I have become an informer of my own research. This is reflected in some excerpts analysed in Chapter 5 where some *Niños Vascos* mention my own case as a point of reference to contrast their experiences and feelings with mine. As Pahl puts it, when such a degree of intimacy is reached 'friendship and fieldwork are similar endeavours' (Pahl 2006:2).

Duranti highlights the apparent contradiction between the *distant* objectivity sought by the ethnographer and the wish to attain an insider's *close* perspective at the same time, suggesting that 'given that there are different degrees of distance from or closeness to a given ethnographic reality, descriptive adequacy for most ethnographers lies somewhere in the middle' (Duranti 1997:86). My positioning in this study has not been that fixed place in the middle. On the contrary, it has experienced continuous shifts that could be described as changes of the degree of *insiderness* and of *outsiderness*,

according to which one of the multiple aspects which shape my identity was relevant and thus revealed in a specific situation. Depending on the context I would tend to feel and emphasise my position as a researcher, as the daughter and niece of *Niños Vascos*, as a Basque, as a Spanish citizen, as a person who lives and belongs in an English village and so on. Thus, the perspective of my own personal stance and ideological commitments unavoidably colours my interpretation of my informants' own interpretations regarding the topics explored in this study.

On this, Jelin claims

> Discussion of contemporary memories can rarely be done from outside the scenario where struggles are taking place. The researcher cannot avoid being involved, incorporating his or her subjectivity, experience, beliefs, and emotions, and incorporating as well his or her political and civic commitments.

> (Jelin 2003b: xvi)

Thus, it would be naive to claim objectivity. In the past this has been signalled as one of the major weaknesses of ethnography. In this regard Blommaert and Huang notice the historical lack of prestige of ethnography as a method, as 'it was under-theorized, relied too heavily on subjectivity, and consequently produced data that did not stand the tests of a more rigid interpretation of objectivity in science' (Blommaert & Huang 2009:1).

Nonetheless, it has also been recognised that '[r]esearch can never be entirely objective, and social research is no exception' (SRA 2003:18). In addition to personal sources of bias there are a number of factors, for instance the source of funding, which might impose certain requirements on the researcher. The key point is then 'to *pursue* objectivity and to be open about known barriers to its achievement' (SRA 2003:18, my emphasis). In this sense my claim is that the purpose of my research is to examine and treat my case study as objectively as possible when I present my insights, observations, findings and interpretations with regard to the data I collected.

My approach is not normative and it is not my intention to give a series of guidelines or to correct any issues found throughout my investigation, but to

essentially raise those issues in order to stimulate debate. I also want to contribute to knowledge production and theory development in a structured and disciplined way which is supported by evidence, and which develops out of earlier scholarly work done in this field of research.

However, at this point it is necessary to recognise the evident and, as a minimum, sensitising impact of social research at different levels (Willis & Trondman 2002). As Hammersley and Atkinson argue, the social researcher is part of the social world being investigated, thus ethnography

> cannot but be concerned simultaneously with factual and value matters, and its role inevitably involves political intervention (whether researchers are aware of this or not) […] researchers have to take responsibility for their value commitments and for the effects of their work […] ethnographic research should be concerned not simply with understanding the world but with applying its findings to bring about change.
>
> (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:15)

2.5.5.2 Translations

Another significant aspect which needs to be considered is the fact that I am a doctoral student at a British university, thus my thesis has been written in English. This poses the additional methodological challenge of translating both the samples of data chosen for my analysis and the quotations of authors when they were originally written in Spanish, in order to comply with the protocol of the British system.[57]

In this respect, a first dilemma which the researcher has to confront is whether to do the translations themselves or to entrust them to someone else. Bringing into the research process another person as a translator involves new interpretations and sources of bias, in other words, they are not just the transmitters but 'are part of the process of meaning construction' (Temple & Young 2004, Temple 2006).

This claim is supported by the fact that the same piece of text generates different interpretations by different translators. For instance, I cross-checked my translation of the following excerpt which was originally written in Spanish

> Nuestra salida fue en un día hermoso y claro, diría que de los mejores de aquella primavera, pero tristísimo al momento en que todas las familias debían separarse de sus hijos.

(Benjamin 2007:296)

I literally translated it as

> Our departure was on a beautiful and clear day, I would say one of the best of that spring, but very sad at the moment when all the families had to separate from their children.

However, the following version is provided in the book

> Our parting took place on a beautiful and clear morning, one of the best that spring. Nevertheless, it was very sad because all the families had to bid farewell to their children.

(Benjamin 2007:98)

While I translate 'at the moment' literally and also keep the original punctuation of the sentence, the other translator has introduced the connective 'because' and changed the punctuation, adding a full stop. These changes elaborate a presumed meaning which is not however explicit in the original Spanish text.

Thus, in order to manage this complexity and to avoid the presence of a new agent potentially unfamiliar with the subject I decided to do the translations myself. This implies the advantage of knowing the context in which the communication and social action being studied took place, which to a certain extent legitimises my authority as the ethnographer translator who works across languages, and who can attempt to reach levels of meaning beyond the level of the sentence. Nonetheless, some important issues emerge as a result, despite a common tendency to simplistically consider the bilingual researcher as someone who can unproblematically act as a

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bridge 'between communities just because they are bilingual' (Temple 2006, see also Samuelsson-Brown 1998).

Hatim and Mason write that '[t]he world of the translator is inhabited by an extraordinary number of dichotomies, reflecting divisions which either exist or are supposed to exist between mutually exclusive opposites' (Hatim & Mason 1997:1). With regard to the dichotomy of choosing between a free and a literal translation, in order to minimise changes and manipulation I chose to translate quotes as literally close to the original as possible, which favoured content over refined form. By doing this there is the danger which Katan reports as distinctive to the Western community, that 'sees the translator and interpreter as a walking dictionary, and not as a cultural mediator' (Katan 1999:15). Thus, I resorted to my previous intercultural knowledge to make decisions or to add explanatory comments in those instances when information was missing or unclear in the source language, for instance when the informants assumed that as an insider I *knew* what they implied without the need for further explanations. The relationship between *who* I am and *how* I interpret or *why* I choose a particular meaning amongst the variety of possible ones attached to the words both in the source language, that is Spanish, and in the target language, English, has inevitably introduced a considerable element of bias in the process. In a similar way, Barwell draws attention to the contingent character of '[t]he interpretation of both the content and practice of interaction […] on the experience of the interpreter' with regard to ethnographic analysis (Barwell 2003).

In order to address the issues which I have exposed so far, I firstly made the decision to give priority to the translations and present them within the body of the thesis only when I was quoting other authors. In these cases I added the original citations in Spanish as endnotes. In contrast, in order to maintain the full richness of my data, I worked with the original Spanish quotes when that was the language which the informants had used, adding the translations into English as an endnote to facilitate readability and access for a non-Spanish speaking audience. The main reason behind my choice is that, as some authors affirm, there is no single 'correct' or 'neutral' translation of a text (Pahl 2006:2, Hatim & Mason 1997:145, Temple & Young 2004:165),

since not 'everyone who is bilingual experiences the social world in the same way' (Temple 2006). It can also be argued that very often translations can hardly penetrate the meaning of certain words when these allude to concepts not shared by the source and target languages.

Secondly, I meticulously measured the implications behind particular translation choices and considered different perspectives on them. For this reason I sometimes returned to the informants to clarify concepts or asked other bilingual people their opinions before I chose a specific word or expression which was either a focal point of my analysis, or exceptionally difficult to translate without sacrificing linguistic or cultural meaning. Occasionally I judged it necessary to add an explanation as an endnote to clarify a concept or to clarify issues related to the register.

Finally, in order to maintain the original voices of the text producers, and thus avoid assimilating or *domesticating* their production in favour of the culture of the target language (Hatim & Mason 1997:146) or furthermore, my own one, I opted for a type of translation which relays the source language as closely as possible.[58] As a result of this approach some occasional clumsiness and lack of flow within the texts was noticeable, thus I contacted an established practitioner to proofread my translations and to ensure that they were intelligible in spite of the *foreign* vestiges.

2.5.5.3 Ethical concerns

The issues discussed earlier ultimately relate to the ethical dimension of any research. In the case of work which implies human participants as it is for ethnography, authors emphasise the need to consider the ethical implications (Pink 2007:49, Wiles et al. 2004), stressing that it is vital to commit to 'the most rigid ethical and moral standards' (Howarth 1999:vi) with regard to the design, undertaking, analysis and dissemination of any research. Duranti alerts us of the complexities of the ethical boundaries of human-centred fieldwork, particularly since the recent introduction of new and sophisticated techniques and methods which allow us to reach insights and record people's privacy at an unprecedented level (Duranti 1997). As the former chairperson

of the Social Research Association (SRA), Ceridwen Roberts rightly observes, this 'methodological innovation is a sine qua non for the study of a changing society and its ever-changing constituent individuals and institutions', but at the same time it presents a new whole array of ethical dilemmas (SRA 2003:4). Changes in the law and concerns about legal actions have driven academic institutions, and institutions in general, to acknowledge their appreciation of this matter to the extent that policies and guidelines about ethical issues are a constant feature of any official website. Also courses on research methods and general method texts and the literature tend to include sections on research ethics, yet guidelines tend to be 'intentionally vague' (Wiles et al. 2006:284).

As a postgraduate student I need to abide by my personal code of practice, which is framed by my own institution's policies and guidelines on research ethics. I am accountable to the subjects of my research thus, aspects such as the representations of them which I make public, how I go on about recordings and how I treat issues of a sensitive nature are of crucial importance.

INFORMED CONSENT

The request for consent with regard to what is recorded and disseminated has been a standard procedure for a considerable period of time, yet this is still a grey area within ethnographic research, as it is remarkably difficult to define what exactly constitutes informed consent (Wiles et al. 2007).

The SRA ethical guidelines recommend that '[i]nquiries involving human subjects should be based as far as practicable on the freely given informed consent of subjects' suggesting that they be 'as fully informed as possible' (SRA 2003:27). In the case of scientific research this might be simpler to achieve, however, as it has been discussed earlier, in ethnographic research it raises the issue of probable interference and unwanted change of the natural settings which are the very objects of the research.

While clearly informed permission to collect data needs to be granted by the participants, particularly when it involves oral and visual recordings which identify them, this might have a negative effect, especially when the researcher is personally

involved with the group of informants. Before I collected my data I explained to them that I was requested to produce signed informed consent forms. For a number of mainly cultural and age related reasons they found this procedure suspicious and uncomfortable, as they did not understand why someone close to them needed to ask for permission to record our encounters. This posed me the dilemma of whether to act as a person who is part of the group, which meant ignoring clearance forms, or to conform to officious technicalities, a fact which might have raised a barrier between us. Eventually, all the informants gave their consent, although in some instances I considered it more appropriate to ask for a mere oral agreement. In those cases the agreement was included in the audio recording.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

This is a remarkably complex subject, as total confidentiality can never be granted, particularly within a small social network of participants. The SRA observes the increasing tendency to accept research as ethically sound on the basis of 'the willingness of social researchers to accord respect to their subjects and to treat them with consideration' rather than of technical considerations (SRA 2003:29). Thus, a situational relativist approach is currently suggested by most social researchers as 'appropriate for resolving the ethical issues that emerge' (Wiles et al. 2006:283). In this respect, in those instances when ethical dilemmas due to conflicts of ethical principles have arisen during the course of this study I have applied my practical judgement. For instance, despite the general lack of concern of my informants with regard to disclosure of their identities, and at risk of dispossessing them of the ownership of the data which they produced, I have anonymised their identities. I have tried to use terms such as *niño vasco*, *niña vasca*, *informant* or similar terms as much as it was possible and in some cases, I have given them pseudonyms.

Several reasons can be put forward to make a case for rigorous confidentiality and anonymity. First, sometimes there is a thin line between what constitutes data which as a researcher I have been granted permission to use and the private information which I have accessed as an insider.

Second, informants might say something in a particular context, such as a private meal or at home, which they would not express in another, for instance in public (Pink 2007:56). Thus, while participants of the research might fail to perceive the advantage to keep their accounts confidential, it is the obligation of the researcher to protect them from moral wrong or potential damage which could arise as a consequence of an open disclosure of persons' names when associated to sensitive issues (SRA 2003:25).

Third, confidentiality needs to be reassured to guarantee free responses and to produce the most accurate accounts.

Finally, the purpose of this enquiry is to examine identities not in terms of describing *who* those individuals are, but in terms of analysing *how* they have become *what* they are. I am concerned about *how* the transmission of the *Niños Vascos*' experiences of forced migration contributes to the constant and dynamic process of their memory and identity construction. Therefore it can be argued that removing their names achieves the shift of focus at which I aim.

REPRESENTATIONS

With regard to representations, Duranti points out that this is not a question of trying to please the participants, but rather a matter of being scrupulous about what we say and write and of thinking about the potential consequences which our actions have upon others (Duranti 1997:121). In addition to the issues related to the translations which have been discussed earlier, the main dilemma that I have come across is how to name the Basque refugee children throughout this thesis. Bourdieu reminds us, in the context of art, that the notions artists and critics use to define themselves 'are indeed weapons and stakes in the battle' (Bourdieu 1987:206). His observation may be extended outside that field in relation to other forms of categorisation. It can be argued that a researcher is entitled to use his or her own terms. However, I consider that

a) following Bourdieu's argument, categorisation is a deliberate choice which is full of meanings and implications, and

b) in a discipline which is concerned about, and indeed which claims to give a voice to, the voiceless, the vulnerable and the underprivileged, it is vital that this is reflected in the research practice.

As Schneider highlights

ascription of social identity can be understood as a form of social control, and application of the category to someone without consulting with them can produce a sense of social injustice.

(Schneider 2003:195)

Thus, after initial choices of terms which I changed several times during the course of my research, and which can be interpreted as struggles to identify and give a name to an intrinsically heterogeneous group, I finally decided to call them the '*Niños Vascos*'[59], mainly guided by their unanimous wish to be called like that and also for historical reasons (this point is further developed in 5.2.3).

Having introduced my methodological and analytical approaches to this thesis and justified their appropriateness, I next move on to trace the socio-political factors which provided the historical context in which the evacuation of the *Niños Vascos* took place.

3

THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR, INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT AND THE BASQUE REFUGEE CHILDREN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will analyse the political, sociological and economic factors which provided the context to the evacuation and subsequent life in Britain of the subjects of my research. I will start with a section on the Spanish Civil War which highlights particular circumstances within the Basque Country during the period of 1936 to 1937. This will be followed by an analysis of the complex and confusing situations which the Civil War generated at an international level, with a number of countries becoming involved and clashing with one another. Next I will examine the ultimate reasons why the Basque refugee children were evacuated, as well as the evacuation procedure itself. In this section there will be an emphasis on the paradoxes which surrounded the entire venture, as these were key factors that shaped the later development of the children's lives. Finally, I will look at what is revealed by individuals' testimonies with regard to their experiences of arrival, dispersal to the *colonias*, and adult life in the host country.

3.2 THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

3.2.1 Historiography of the war

The Spanish Second Republic (1931–1939) and the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) have been the objects of much research and continue to be favourite topics amongst historians.[60] Despite some initial accounts which saw the war as an internal issue, particularly the agrarian question, in the 1950s historians focused their work on the 'evil machinations of communism' (Preston 1993:3).

In the 1960s, coinciding with a modernisation within Spanish society, independent researchers and also foreign authors sympathetic to the Republican cause started to offer an account of the war from a different perspective (Preston 1993:4).[61] Also during this decade, while historians in Spain were still following the official line trying to justify the continuation of the dictatorship, the exiled republican writers were more concerned with attempting to find reasons for their defeat.

In the 1970s, at the end of Franco's era, some universities started to fund research which had previously been considered somehow untouchable. There was a revival of Spanish scholarship which revisited the task of writing about the war. However, from then until the mid 1980s much of the local research was carried out in thesis form, very often only in Spanish. Historians encountered many difficulties regarding archival consultation during that period of time; during the war and the subsequent 36 years of dictatorship many of the primary sources had been destroyed, and many of the remaining archives were not accessible to most people (Preston 1993:2).

The files seized by Franco after the fall of the Republican administration were only made available to scholars from the late 1980s (Schwartz 2002:161).[62] That monopoly of the archives meant that in Spain there was a unique and pro-Francoist interpretation of the Civil War until those years. This had a high impact on the discourse used to refer to both the war and also those who took part in it or were affected by it. It also contributed to the maintenance of stigmatising labels such as *rojos masones* (red masons) or *traidores* (traitors).[63]

In addition to this, during the political transition that occurred when Franco died, the newly born political class was not interested in discussing the war (Juliá 1987:1). Historians agree that there was an unwritten 'pact of silence'[64] regarding the recent past which Spain had experienced (Naharro-Calderón 2005, Egido León 2006, Tébar Hurtado 2006). Naharro- Calderón highlights that:

> in post Franco Spain there was a consensus on a Solomon-like pact to erase the reference to the partisan memories of the opposing groups in the Civil War and the exiles from the political and cultural 'common' frame.[65]

> (Naharro- Calderón 2005:102)

This meant that the political parties, the media, and the writers[66] would not talk about the war, a fact which permeated Spanish society in general. The victims therefore kept silent, and those guilty of war crimes remained unpunished. Furthermore, the lack of public and institutional recognition and acknowledgement of those who left the country as a result of the war continued.[67] This crucial factor helps us understand that for many years there were considerable sectors of the population who could not articulate their memories and make meaning of them.

Particularly during the last decade there has been a change within the Spanish society, which has increasingly questioned the silenced past. In this respect, Richards mentions the important role played by the grandchildren of the victims when they started 'to ask questions about the brutality suffered by innocent civilians during and after the war' (Richards 2005:118). As a result, a number of analysts have engaged in a critical debate which revisits the topic of the war and its consequences. Tébar Hurtado highlights the part played by civil associations whose aim is to recuperate the 'historical memory' for a number of reasons which

> are connected to the will to correct what has been interpreted as errors made during the period of the political transition; [errors] stemming from the so called 'pact of silence' forged by the Spanish political elites during the transition.[68]

> (Tébar Hurtado 2006:779)

Alfonso Guerra, a prominent Spanish politician of the transition, argues that this pact was the result of the still present psychological pressure of the war and the attempt to avoid it ever happening again. However, Guerra reflects 'that vision of the future meant forgetting the exiles, the defenders of democracy'[69] (Martín & Carvajal 2006:13).[70]

This deliberate silence can be considered an important factor when analysing the reasons for the delay of a significant debate regarding the historiography of the Republic as well as the Civil War. It has been stated that '[i]n a purely military sense the Spanish Civil War may have ended on 1 April 1939, but for its victor, Francisco Franco, it would never truly end' (Blinkhorn 1992:52). As Schwartz puts it:

> The conflict itself ended on April 1, 1939. Yet the war about the war –argument upon argument, frequently brutal and hurtful– over what happened and why has yet to end.

> (Schwartz 2002:151)

In connection with this, there is the following reflection provided by one of the numerous radio listeners who replied to a call from *Radio Euskadi* asking for *Niños de la Guerra* and their memories in the spring of 2006

> Tengo la impresión de que la guerra nunca terminó del todo para mí. He tenido que vivir toda mi vida con los recuerdos, con las consecuencias. La Guerra no fueron solamente esos tres años: fueron 40 años más después y fueron también todas las secuelas que han quedado.[71]

> (Berazategi & Domínguez 2006:226)

3.2.2 Republic and war

Once the Republic was installed, it had to face a series of difficulties set against it, despite the fact that some of these were of an alien nature. For instance, at the time the Republic came into being an economic crisis was taking place throughout the world,

and Europe was experiencing both the rising of fascism and a significant fear of communism (Preston 1994, Buchanan 1997).

A considerable part of the Spanish people did not support the newly elected regime and a key issue that divided the population, the most important one according to historians (Preston 1993, Ben-Ami 1993), was the agrarian reform that the Republic had in its agenda. Also, the de-confessionalisation of the state and the implementation of an anti-clerical legislation caused much opposition amongst the Catholics.[72]

Despite the fact that historians agree that the ultimate reasons for the falling of the Republic were mainly internal and due to class conflicts, writing on this war has usually been treated as 'struggles within and amongst the parties of left and right' (Preston 1993:10). It can be argued that the reason to present it as a war against the 'evils of the communist-dominated Loyalist government' (Crosby 1971:84) resides in the interest of the western countries of having Franco as an ally after the end of the Second World War (see Figure 3.1 for discourse of the 'good' ('*el bien*') against the 'bad' ('*el mal*') propagated by Franco in the media).[73]

Figure 3.1

The Civil War has also been often presented as a religious 'redemptive crusade' (Crosby 1971:87, Blinkhorn 1992:1), especially in the early literature. This crusade question needs to be closely analysed, since Franco, Mola, and other generals did not

make any reference to the Church or religion in the original declarations of war when they revolted against the Republic in July 1936 (Jackson 1999:366).[74] It is ironic that this controversial label of the war as a crusade has been so fiercely defended by some, when the troops led by one of the main rebel generals, Franco, were composed of African Muslims.[75] Also, the *Falange*, one of the factions which supported the National front fighting against the Republic, was a *secular* minded fascist party.[76] Finally, it is noticeable that the rebels did not hesitate to kill priests and nuns or to bomb churches during their intense offensive against the Basque Country.[77]

3.2.3 Particular circumstances in the Basque Country

Some distinctive features of the war in the Basque Country as compared with the rest of the Republic were the respect for the Catholic Church and the absence of a social revolution (Berazategi & Domínguez 2006:123). In the Basque Country the Catholics and the clergy took a different stance from the rest of the state. The Basque priests did not follow the instructions from the Church but declared themselves anti-Francoists (Jackson 1999:330). In fact, when the subjects of my research were evacuated to the UK, there were a number of priests amongst the accompanying adults (Arrien 1991:48, Bell 1996:8).

The religious issue had a major influence in Nafarroa.[78] The Carlists, who were ultra-radical Catholics, and the *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* (Basque Nationalist Party), who were 'largely defined by their Catholicism' (Graham 2002:243), were allies and presented common candidates to the election of 1931 (Fusi 1993:193). In spite of this, once the Republicans won the election and they wrote the Constitution, the Carlists realised that they were not going to obtain the power they expected over religious affairs. The Basque Nationalists, more interested in obtaining a Statute of Autonomy from the Republic than anything else (Graham 2002:243), declared themselves loyal to the newly elected government, being subsequently considered as traitors by the Carlists.

As a result, the Carlists' collaboration with the Basque Nationalists began to break down and during the war the Basque Nationalists were treated more harshly than other supporters of the Republic, such as the socialists or anarchists (Jackson 1999).[79] After the Nationals conquered Nafarroa militarily, there was a political 'cleansing'. Some of the anti-Carlists escaped to other provinces of the Basque Country while others 'sought refuge with their conquerors' or 'stood exposed to summary execution at the hands of the Requeté or lynching at those of right-wing mobs' (Blinkhorn 1984:60).[80]

A Bizkaian particularity was that at the end of the nineteenth century the management and capital of heavy industry were local; however, there was a strong foreign investment, particularly British (Jackson 1999:228). This connection with Britain was highly relevant when the Basque Government had to decide which countries should be approached to ask them to host the evacuees. England was highly regarded as suitable, as it is stated in the Basque anarchist magazine *Euzkadi Roja* of May 7, 1937, p4, which Legarreta quotes:

> the Basques 'have always had an unlimited admiration for and faith in England, and feel they can place their children in English hands with complete confidence that they will be cared for and returned to them under happier circumstances safe and well'.

<div align="right">(Legarreta 1984:103-104)</div>

A unique feature of the Basque Country is that it was 'perhaps the only Spanish region loyal to the Republic where the military uprising of 18 July 1936 was not followed by a working-class revolution' (Fusi 1993:182).[81] Fusi points out that socialism was the main force in the Basque labour movement. Thus, despite the industrial importance of the Basque Country in Spain, there were no strikes, nationalisation of banks, collectivisation of factories or attacks to the Church. The Basque Government was catholic and moderate, and behaved independently from the other northern provinces. When the Nationals were conquering the area and the Basques had to retreat, the Basques refused to sabotage their industry and infrastructure. After the great offensive

against Bizkaia at the end of March 1937, the Basque army retired leaving the area almost intact, and the Basque Government went into exile.

These peculiarities seen above and the events which happened during the war in the Basque Country had considerable repercussions in the international arena, which will be analysed in the next section of this chapter.

3.3 INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Blinkhorn points out that

> It cannot be stressed too highly that in origin the civil war was the product of Spanish conditions and not merely part of a wider struggle that happened to be played out on Spanish soil.

> (Blinkhorn 1986:12)

However, this war soon developed an international dimension with two key factors which need to be taken into account with regard to foreign involvement. First, there was early intervention of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy which helped the Spanish insurgents, and of the Communist Soviet Union which supported the Republic in a less devoted manner (Jackson 1999:11). Second, there was an international reaction in response to these countries' participation, which crystallised in a Non-Intervention Agreement. Ironically, Germany, Italy, and the USSR were amongst the states which signed this agreement.

The impact of the war on the 'intervening' and 'non-intervening' powers was of great magnitude and had important consequences such as 'forging the Rome-Berlin Axis. It led to splits in the French and British cabinets and it has been claimed that it eventually led to Anthony Eden's resignation as Foreign Secretary' (Forrest 2000:70, see also Viñas 1987:118 and Jackson 1999:384). It also had important repercussions in the United States and created great discomfort amongst a considerable sector of the population (Crosby 1971). The Basque refugee children were only another brick in this wall of uncertainty and chaos which preceded the Second World War.

3.3.1 Early foreign intervention and policies of appeasement

By 19 July 1936, immediately after the outbreak of the war, the two Spanish opposing sides were asking for help from those European countries from which they expected a positive response (Blinkhorn 1992:35).[82]

Within this unstable international diplomatic scenario Hitler and Mussolini saw the war as an opportunity to fulfil their own imperialist agenda, anticipating colonial and strategic advantages for their countries in the case of a rebel victory. Mussolini provided generous and consistent help at all levels, and sent large numbers of ground troops. Hitler, conversely, collaborated with military supplies and war experts. As Smyth indicates, Hitler feared the consequences of a left-wing Republican regime, and his strategy of spreading the ghost of communism was successful in order to maintain his standing within the diplomatic community (Smyth 1993:247). This strategy kept the Conservative British Government away from the Spanish conflict, and it also meant that the Republican Government did not receive much-needed financial and military assistance, except for some limited Soviet and Mexican support.

By the mid 1930s Hitler's anti-communist government had become a threat to Stalin's regime, thus, all the Soviet Union wanted was to seek 'peace, alliances and assurances' (Ranzato 1999:18) with the main European powers.[83] The outbreak of the Civil War was at the very least a considerable inconvenience for the plans of the Soviet Government, which was 'uninterested in Republican victory and unwilling to provide sufficient resources to make it possible' (Blinkhorn 1992:56). Eventually they provided help, but this could not be considered of real value.

Despite the direct involvement of the Nazi, Fascist, and Communist states in the conflict, Maxwell-Mahon notes that

> The support given to one side or the other by European powers had nothing to do with ideological convictions. Germany, Italy and Russia saw the Spanish Civil War as an ideal testing ground for their military equipment and armed forces.

(Maxwell-Mahon 1988)

There were some other agents whose input was also decisive to the outcome of the war, though in a more indirect and unreliable manner. During the period that is being analysed here, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy were a growing threat to the international community, which saw 'the rise of fascist regimes challenging both the peace of Europe and the future of democracy' (Buchanan 1997:2).[84] To a great extent France and Britain were not preoccupied with this, as their main concern at the time was the triumph of bolshevism in the Soviet Union and the implications this could have beyond its frontiers (Jackson 1987:101).

The British official position towards the Civil War represents an example of the paradoxes and complex situations that this war generated at an international level. In the mid thirties, the British Government did not act when the Germans and the Italians started to become a threat due to their aggressive foreign politics and conquests. Fyrth argues that

> Those who saw this as a slide towards a fascist Europe and a world war were alarmed by the British government's reaction, which looked to them at the best like criminal cowardice, or at the worst like treacherous connivance. Certainly, there was sufficient Establishment support for the fascist dictators to give credence to the latter interpretation.

(Fyrth 1986:28)

The British knew they did not have the resources, both human and economic, that they would need in case of another general European conflagration. Thus they, followed by France, wanted to avoid conflict and decided to pursue a policy of appeasement which would guarantee 'peace at any price' (Ranzato 1999:10, Moradiellos 1999).[85]

By the time the Civil War started, the British had been trading with Spain for a long time. These financial connections continued during the war, and the insurgents carried out some trade with members of the Anglo-Saxon business community, who were predominantly pro-Franco's side (Blinkhorn 1992:48, Legarreta 1984:99). Faced with the prospect of a Spanish Republican government which might follow Russia's steps and which might threaten Britain's investments, commerce and strategic interests

in Spain, the British agenda was self-protection, and also the preservation of the capitalist order in general.

Britain preferred Franco's victory, providing it did not mean a fascist hegemony in the Mediterranean (Moradiellos 1999).[86] The alleged 'neutrality' was in fact favouring the side that would protect the British interests, despite the fact that this would occur under a dictatorial government of the right. The British Government was prepared to indirectly sacrifice a democracy in order to safeguard its own interests.

In the United States the anti-communist sectors of the population, led by the Roman Catholics who were the most organised and determined regarding the issue, and also the isolationists and the pacifists were against intervention. As a result, a 'legislation forbidding American manufacturers to sell arms to either side in the Spanish war' was passed in January 1937 (Crosby 1971:90).[87] Despite his personal sympathy towards the Republic, Roosevelt was determined to firmly support neutrality for fear of another European war (Jackson 1999:427). He was also highly influenced by the pro-insurgent fervour of many American Catholics, the press, and a significant number of politicians (Blinkhorn 1992:48). However, the population were highly polarised regarding their stance concerning this war.[88] Thus, there was an enormous controversy regarding an embargo that in many Americans' opinion only meant restrictions on arms shipments for the loyalists, given that the rebels were obtaining aid from Germany and Italy.

3.3.2 Non-intervention Agreement

With the international community undergoing such critical times as a result of the general depression, and with countries experiencing profound internal ideological divisions with regard to the Spanish War, the Germans and the Italians saw no diplomatic risk attached to helping the rebels. Hitler's version of this war as a campaign against the communist evil and for the preservation of Christianity was indisputably effective in preventing reactions from other countries. In addition to this, there was the collective feeling that the struggle would be a quick coup d'etat which

would rapidly finish, yet surprisingly, it prolonged beyond any expectation (Buchanan 1997). Thus the Germans and the Italians soon started to be seen as a menace as their support to the insurgents increased (Moradiellos 1999).

Confronted by this, the French Government reconsidered its posture. Blum's government was still constrained by the French public opinion and the British, thus it tried to bring to an end the Axis powers' help to Franco by proposing a Non-Intervention Pact. This treaty was signed by 27 countries at the end of August 1936 (Blinkhorn 1992:35, Moradiellos 1999). It prohibited the selling and transport of war material destined to any of the fighting parties, including those contracts which had already been signed (Moradiellos 1999, Bell 1996:3, Padelford 1937:580), as well as the entrance of foreign fighters into Spain.[89]

The proposal was welcomed by many governments, as in some measure it relaxed the international tension that was on the increase, and it also served several diplomatic purposes. In France, the UK and the United States, it helped to attenuate the strong internal opposition of some sectors towards the governments' policies of neutrality and appeasement. It also helped to confine the struggle to Spanish territory, to prevent these governments' coalition with the communist Soviet Union, and ultimately, to avoid confrontation with Italy and Germany (Moradiellos 1999). However, as early as October 1937, Padelford highlighted a number of failures of the accord (1937:578) and authors agree that this in-principle 'impartial' pact worked in fact in Franco's favour (Viñas 1987:116, Arrien 1991:32).[90] It is referred to as the 'farsa del *comité*' ('farce of the committee') (Jackson 1999:8), the 'sorry farce on non-intervention' (Blinkhorn 1992:55), 'threadbare masquerade' (Bell 1996:3) and 'damaging to the Republican cause' (Fyrth 1986:37).[91]

Arrien quotes a headline of the *La Tarde* newspaper of 26 April 1937 which read '[t]he biggest cannon which Franco possesses is that of non-intervention'[92] (Arrien 1991:32). This pact was extremely detrimental to the Spanish Republic, and from the beginning it was obvious that it was not going to serve its theoretical purpose. It allowed democracies to deprive the Republic of financial and military support, while

Italy and Germany, who were also signatories but failed to keep their pledge, continued to aid the insurgents (Blinkhorn 1992:48).

In her memoirs, Dolores Barajuán, one of the children evacuated to the UK on the *Habana*, sarcastically comments:

> El día 28 de Agosto Del 1937, las tropas italianas entran, Triunfalmente, en Santander. Llegando al colmo del cinismo, la prensa italiana hace, orgullosamente, grandes elogios a sus soldados que tan 'heroicamente' conquistaron más una ciudad española. ¿Y el tratado de 'No intervención'? ¿Serán estos los 'Nacionales' que tan pomposamente proclaman estar luchando en una gloriosa guerra civil a fin de expulsar el comunismo de España? ¿Será que Italia es alguna colonia española?[93]

(Barajuán 2005:90)

Furthermore, when Hitler was challenged because of his uninterrupted assistance to the rebels, he replied that he would not allow Spain to become another bolshevist country. Once again he managed to escape retributions.[94]

Consequently the Republic only received some support from the Soviet Government, who, encouraged by the violations of the agreement by the fascist powers, changed its attitude regarding non-intervention owing to political and strategic reasons. The Soviet support bifurcated into two parallel tactics. First, the Soviet Government provided war advisers and material (Blinkhorn 1992:48) and second, it encouraged the creation of the International Brigades (Moradiellos 1999). These brigades constituted a significant international movement. In spite of the official postures of the governments, which have been analysed above, at a grass-roots level the situation was very different.

3.3.3 International brigades and volunteer movement

Bob Doyle, an Irish member of the International Brigades, writes in his memoirs that:

> From the beginning of 1936 I was hearing more about Spain. It was everyday
> news. The propaganda of the Catholic Church and the official press was 100 per
> cent in support of Franco's military revolt. It was a tremendous campaign,
> preaching at Mass and the missions about the need to support Franco, a gallant
> Christian gentleman, defending the Catholic Church in Spain.
>
> (Doyle 2006:42)

However, Coni notes that the British pro-loyalists also had access to press coverage, and he comments on the many doctors and nurses who were amongst their volunteers (Coni 2002:147).[95] By August and September 1936 there were already hundreds of volunteers fighting on the Republican side (Jackson 1987:106). Thousands of volunteers, probably between 30,000 and 40,000 according to Buchanan (1997:123), from more than 50 countries (Moradiellos 1999, Pons Prades 2005:460) left home to go to Spain, ignoring their own 'neutral' governments' dictates.

Except for a small number of Irish volunteers who fought on Franco's side,[96] the majority of them fought for the Republicans, driven by revolutionary ideals or simply defending democracy against fascism.[97] In a newspaper article, the historian Eric Hobsbawm[98] wrote that '[t]he extraordinary wave of volunteers who went to fight for the republic is, I think, unique in the 20th century'[99]. Buchanan notes that

> The campaigns in solidarity with the Spanish Republic were not only defensive,
> but were inspired by the passionately held belief that a new and better society
> was being created in Spain.
>
> (Buchanan 1997:4)

Many of the volunteers also understood this war as a crusade, yet for them evil was not the loyalist side but fascism (Blinkhorn 1992:1).[100] Not all were communists or had strong ideological convictions, after all there was a great international economic crisis and some of them might have simply been looking for an escape or an 'adventure' (Buchanan 1997:127).[101]

A member of the International Brigades, Bill Alexander, remarks:

> the British volunteers role was only a part, a focus, of the very large 'Aid Spain' movement which involved hundreds of thousands of people in wide forms of activity supporting Republican Spain.

(Alexander 1992:6)

However, Buchanan notes that this 'Aid Spain Movement' is an idea which has only been constructed over time. He argues that this is a modern 'myth' which did not exist at the time, claiming there were many other forms of helping the Republic apart from this politically charged notion created by the Communist Daily Worker (Buchanan 1997:96-97).

The British, and generally the English-speaking countries' middle and working classes, were mainly supporters of the loyalist parties (Coni 2002:147). They were influenced by the fact that the Republic was the government which the Spanish people had democratically elected; and also that the revolt against it was particularly horrific, costing both sides an extraordinary number of injured and dead people, predominantly non-combatants. It has been claimed that the Nationals' aim from the beginning of the war was to exterminate the enemy (Jackson 1999:389). On this Crosby writes

> Many non-Catholic newspapers in both Europe and America were openly critical of Franco's treatment of the people he conquered, citing repeated examples of political execution, infringement of freedom, and persecution of non-Catholics.

(Crosby 1971:87-88)

The papers specifically denounced the particularly brutal treatment to which the Basques were subjected (Crosby 1971:88).[102] The issue of undernourishment was also decisive in shifting the public's sympathies towards the Republicans. This was emphasised by the fact that the starvation and related illnesses they suffered were aggravated as a result of the international embargo and the Italian and German attacks of ships that carried supplies.[103]

So far I have analysed the political and economic factors that influenced governments to decide their positioning with regard to the Civil War. I contend that these could also be applied at a civil society level, and that the reasons which have often been regarded as humanitarian could also be interpreted as political. Alexander writes that despite the strictly humanitarian incentive of some of the volunteers 'nearly all came to accept the aims of the Republic, became critical of the Tory policy and strongly condemned Franco' (Alexander 1992:12). Regarding this Buchanan observes that

> it would be wrong to see these campaigns as purely humanitarian in their objectives. Almost all were an attempt to intervene directly in the course of the Civil War, to favour one side or another […] relief work became an extension of politics.

(Buchanan 1997:93)

As a result, these 'apparently' humanitarian motivations and swings of the public opinion created some paradoxical circumstances. For instance, despite the Conservative Government's sanctioned 'neutrality', there were English officials who regardless of their conservative political affiliation were prepared to use navy ships to transport refugees from the loyal side to avoid them being executed (Jackson 1999:332). The evacuation of Basque children to the UK, which was substantially surrounded by a turbulent mixture of humanitarian, compassionate and political reactions, provides an excellent example of the inconsistencies examined above.

3.4 THE BASQUE REFUGEE CHILDREN

3.4.1 Gernika

Dorothy Legarreta highlights that the embargo imposed by Franco by means of a naval blockade of Bilbao in April 1937 inflamed public opinion in the UK, as '[t]here was absolutely no precedent for stopping food ships to either side in a civil war' (Legarreta 1984:24). Additionally, this blockade was an issue of great magnitude regarding international law and produced a number of political confrontations within the British

cabinet. Ultimately however, the episode that shook the world with regard to the international public's opinion of the war, and also made governments reconsider and to some extent relax their non-interventionist attitudes, was the bombardment of the Basque town of Gernika.

It is contended here that the concept of Gernika does not merely correspond to a single event. It epitomises a series of extraordinary conditions which served as a catalyst to activate a more committed international response to what was happening in Spain, a total war. It also highlights the 'radically anti-Basque disposition'[104] (Pons Prades 2005:155) of the enemies of the Republic. Eventually, these circumstances motivated the evacuation of the group under study, who are known as *The Gernika Generation* in addition to *The Basque Refugee Children* or the *Niños Vascos*.

By the end of March 1937, the situation at the northern front was alarming. When the rebels realised that conquering Madrid was more difficult than they had anticipated, they decided to concentrate their forces on the great offensive against Bizkaia, which seemed an easier target (Rankin 2003:108, Legarreta 1984:28, Alexander 1992:12). It has been said that when Gernika was attacked in the afternoon of the 26 April 1937, it was the first time that an air force had deliberately bombed a white non-military target.[105] Steer described the bombardment of Gernika as

> undoubtedly the most elaborate attack upon the civilian population staged in Europe since the Great War, and more concentrated than any of their experiences in that holocaust.

(Steer 2009:258)

Some authors point out that this war tactic of targeting a civilian population from the air had already been put into practice by the insurgents in 1936, during the attack against the Basque village of Otxandio, and also against Irun and San Sebastian in earlier 1937.[106] Sarrionaindia (2007) nevertheless notes that Durango and Gernika were the places more brutally attacked indicating economic, military and political reasons. This highly devastating type of warfare was new within the European context (Berazategi & Domínguez 2006:55, Kurlansky 2000:197, van Hensbergen 2005:3) and as

a result 'Gernika has gone down in history as the first experiment in total war'[107] becoming a passionate subject of research amongst modern historians.[108]

There were strategic reasons which motivated the assault of Gernika, such as the prospect of isolating Bilbao with the intention to conquer the Basque Country once its eastern zone had been occupied. Yet it can be argued that when the German *Luftwaffe Condor Legion* and the Italian Fascist *Aviazione Legionaria* attacked this town with the purpose of terrorising the civil population (Steer 2009:250-251), they were also targeting the symbolic heart of the Basques. Franco had expressed that, in order to find a solution to the separatist aspirations of the Basques, a 'complete annihilation of the Basque nationalists' was required (Kurlansky 2000:195). What could be more effective than destroying the ancient capital of the Basques, the representation of Basque freedom where the Basque parliament had traditionally celebrated its assemblies under the symbolic Oak Tree? Also, it was vital for the insurgents to subjugate Bizkaia as rapidly as possible, since their role as 'Defenders of the Faith' appeared rather incredible while the deeply catholic Basque Country was on the Republic's side (Legarreta 1984:28), challenging the legitimacy of the 'Crusade' in the eyes of the world (Tabernilla & Lezamiz 2007:35). I argue that this issue has been the reason why so many Republican sympathisers have referred to Gernika as the 'sacred' town of the Basques (Bell 1996:2). On this, Dolores Barajuán writes the following reflexion in her memoirs:

> una fila interminable de refugiados […] no consiguen comprender por qué arrasaron Guernica, marco sagrado de sus tradiciones y espíritu religioso […] esto fue el acuse de recibo, la venganza sádica y sangrienta del muy 'católico' general Francisco Franco porque los vascos permanecieron fieles al gobierno de la República. A ellos no podrá llamarlos nunca de comunistas.[109]

(Barajuán 2005:55)

The information released after the event was highly controversial. The news of the bombardment by Franco's allies was rapidly spread to the world by the Basque Government and various eye-witnesses, including foreign journalists (Atholl 1938). Conversely, the response of the Nationals was to play down the number of casualties,

and above all to deny their involvement, blaming the Republicans for the assault (Steer 2009:247).

George Steer, the war correspondent for *The Times* during the conflict, had visited the front east of Bilbao in the morning of that day witnessing German planes firing on the area, and he returned to Bilbao afterwards. In his detailed account of the Gernika raid, he stated that when he returned to Gernika after the assault, he found German ammunition on the ground (Steer 2009:245). He also highlighted that the rebels never showed evidence to support their version, yet since then onwards the 'official' account has never admitted the rebels' participation. As stated on the website of The Gernika Peace Museum Foundation:

> Franco's army never acknowledged responsibility – on the contrary, evidence
> was twisted, and his press service accused the Basque republicans (referred to
> as reds and separatists) of having set fire to the town during their retreat
> towards Bilbao. To this day the Spanish army has failed to acknowledge that it
> took part in the bombing of Gernika.[110]

In 1965, Jackson wrote that this 'myth' that Gernika was burned by the 'reds' was still maintained by some Spaniards (Jackson 1999:333). Currently, there is sufficient evidence to support Steer's version, thus there is agreement among historians to accept it (Buchanan 2007:24). Amongst others, there are archival accounts of German soldiers who took part in the assaults of Durango and Gernika (Rankin 2003:121) and testimonies of German officers at the process of Nuremberg (Jackson 1999:334, Pons Prades 2005:155). Also, the order of the bombing is kept at the 'Archivio Stato Maggiore Aeronautica Militare. Ufficio Storico' in Rome (Irazabal Agirre 2001:152).

It is remarkable that, after some debates and moves towards reconciliation which took place for a decade in Germany,

> in a dramatic gesture on 27 April 1997, Roman Herzog, president of the Federal
> Republic of Germany, stood in the Plaza del Mercado in the centre of Guernica,
> where the first bombs had fallen sixty years before, and for the first time

publicly acknowledged his country's responsibility for the bombing of the town in 1937.

<div align="right">(Patterson 2007:174)</div>

Yet in an article of the BBC webpage of 26 April 2007, it still said:

> Hitler now saw Spain as a testing-ground for Germany's newest weapons and tactics, and in April 1937 Guernica was heavily bombed, supposedly[111] by German planes.

Despite contradictory versions regarding the numbers of casualties and who had attacked Gernika, the international community was deeply shocked by the event and a feeling of sympathy for a defenceless Republic grew everywhere. Steer's and other journalists' reports, and also the declarations of some independent eye-witnesses,[112] presented the world proof that the Germans and the Italians had participated in the attacks on Durango and Gernika.[113]

This obvious violation of the Non-Intervention agreement attracted international condemnation and persuaded both the neutral and the undecided of who the enemy of democracy was. By now, even some Church of England leaders were formally protesting about the outrageous events (Maxwell-Mahon 1988). The immediate effect these unexpected attacks had on the population was an intense urge to abandon the destroyed areas to seek refuge in safer places. Thus, the carnage marked the beginning of a mass exodus. A large number of the population were displaced from their homes retreating towards Bilbao and the idea of organising a massive evacuation of children to other countries started to develop. According to Graham:

> the onset of the rebel offensive against Vizcaya [...] saw a significant build-up of refugees in Bilbao, whose population had by this point more than quadrupled as a result – from 120,000 to 500,000. Under this pressure the Basque government initiated refugee evacuation in early May 1937.

<div align="right">(Graham 2002:253)</div>

3.4.2 Evacuations

From the commencement of the war, as the insurgents were taking control of new areas, there were *ad hoc* migrations of the civil population both internally within the Spanish territory and also to other countries such as France, Portugal or Latin-America (Alted Vigil et al. 1999:30). A week after the Autonomy Act for the Basque Country was accepted by the Republican Government on 1 October 1936, the Basque Government was formed, and it started to systematically organise these movements of people. One of the new autonomous government's *consejerías* was *Asistencia Social*, a cabinet which 'was charged with developing a complete system of social services for the citizens of Euzkadi, particularly for those who were refugees' (Legarreta 1984:18). According to Legarreta, for the Basque Government this was the main priority after defence (Legarreta 1984:19).

The general initial outcry of 'save the children' heard on the streets (Devillard et al. 2001:11, Martín & Carvajal 2006:39) increasingly became an imperative as parents' concerns for their children's safety intensified seeing the rebel advances in battle. This was the determining factor which drove the organisation and accomplishment of the evacuations, especially after the vicious offensive on the northern front, and a blockade that had led to shortages of food and other essential provisions. Many who were children when they left Spain during the war, point at the bombings and the lack of food as the reasons for their evacuation when they are interviewed these days.[114] A *niño vasco* whose testimony appears in the book *Recuerdos* writes:

> [her] family was poor. There were five children and the parents were keen to
> send them to England, not only to escape the bombings, but also to eat
> properly.

(Benjamin 2007:14)

In addition to this, there were another two key factors which helped families to decide whether to send their children away. Firstly, the political leaders were still hoping that the foreign democracies would help them fight for the Republic (Pons Prades 2005:155-156). Thus, the families believed the separation would be brief, as they envisaged that

the war would finish soon (Barajuán 2005:63, Pons Prades 2005:36). Authors and many *Niños Vascos* themselves, in their written memoirs and also at interviews, often quote the phrase 'it was only for three months' (Bell 1996:8, Benjamin 2007:19, 69, 94, 122), which has transcended to a variety of documentary films and other forms of art.[115] It is argued in this thesis that this concept merely incarnates the presumed temporary nature of the exile, and it cannot be understood 'literally', as it is highly unlikely that all the parents had exactly the same period of time in mind when they sent their children away.[116] The second reason which affected parents' decisions was the government's policy of evacuation. Political parties or trade unions to which some of the parents were affiliated also encouraged and reassured them that their decision was right. Another *niño vasco* writes:

> Against this very dangerous background of the war, my parents, along with all the others, had no other choice and, sad as it was, they decided to put us down for one of the expeditions to a foreign country, which was the advice of the Basque government to all parents.

(Benjamin 2007:33)

Arrien states that one of the government's main concerns, in response to the Francoist propaganda which said that the parents were being morally compelled into disposing of their children, was that the evacuations were '*generales* and *libres*' ('general' and 'free'). Each evacuation was advertised in the local press, where the parents could read both the inscription and medical requirements and freely decide whether to register their children (Arrien 1991:40).[117] In our conversations, some informants have consistently refuted the Francoist slogans (see Figure 3.1, p 93) which stated that the children were being taken away from their parents by the 'reds', claiming that there were long queues of parents waiting to enrol their children. In fact, sometimes the parents could not send their children abroad despite their efforts, because there were no vacancies left for their chosen expedition. In those cases they often accepted an alternative country.

Between March and October 1937 the Basque Government coordinated a number of voyages to transport mostly children abroad. The department involved in the

organisation and later assistance was *Asistencia Social* with the help of the *Consejería de Cultura,* which was in charge of selecting the accompanying teaching personnel and priests (Arrien 1983:130-131).

Until the fall of Bilbao the expeditions departed from the Basque ports of Santurtzi and Bilbao to France, the UK, Belgium and the USSR. Other countries such as Czechoslovakia, Switzerland, Holland and Denmark also accepted refugee children, though in smaller numbers, and part of a Mexican contingent also left from the Basque Country (Alted Vigil et al. 1999:33, Steer 2009:260, Arasa 1995:29). Sweden, Norway, and Holland maintained colonies for the children in France (Martín & Carvajal 2006:39, Alted Vigil et al. 1999:44, Alted Vigil et al. 2003:20).

Steer, in a rather melodramatic manner, comments that this marked a new period of warfare with large masses of civilians being displaced:

> The period of the great migrations of people begins once more, with a flight of women and children of a kind forgotten since the invasions of the Tartars.

> (Steer 2009: 260)

It is remarkably difficult to obtain an accurate figure of the number of children evacuated in the period between 1937 and 1938, thus authors are usually only able to give mere estimations. Gregorio Arrien, an expert on the evacuations of Basque children, quotes a total of 31,104 children sent abroad, according to the archives of the Department of *Asistencia Social* of the Basque Government on March 1938 (Arrien 1983:238).

There was also a failed attempt to evacuate 500 children to the USA during the spring of 1937. This proposal was conceived by 'a group of American intellectuals and liberals called the Board of Guardians for Basque Refugee Children' (Crosby 1971:96, also Totoricagüena 2005).[118] Crosby explains that the American Catholics, many of whom were devoted to a particularly active pro-Franco campaign, were concerned that if these children were hosted in the USA, they would be used as a means of propaganda against the Nationals. Thus, they began a battle to keep the children in the Basque Country, adducing this was safe since Franco had taken control of the area.

Eventually, in spite of the significant support which the evacuation scheme received from key people such as Eleanor Roosevelt, it never came to fruition due to the effect of the enormous pressure that the Catholics put on the politicians to force them to reject it (Crosby 1971).

There were other instances where the children also became a political issue and a source of controversy, for instance when the 'catholic' Basque Government sent children to the 'communist' USSR (Alted Vigil et al. 1999:32). Thus, despite their lack of direct involvement in the war, the children became a central element in the political arena. They were the future generation who would consolidate the winners' victory in a post-war society and more importantly, as Pons Prades remarks

> defenceless before the cruelty of the confrontation, they would become one of the best resources of a propaganda which promoted as much the legitimisation of the principles for which they were fighting, in one zone or other, as to obtain the necessary international support to win the war.[119]

(Pons Prades 2005:29)

For the evacuations, the Basque Government had the support of both the Republican Government and the Generalitat[120] and also of a number of local, national and international institutions and committees. The foreign assistance included both governmental and non-governmental institutions, such as the Red Cross and also an endless number of *ad hoc* committees which were created with the purpose to help the evacuations and refugees in general.[121] These committees were circumscribed within the ambit of political organisations, trade unions and religious and humanitarian aid groups.[122]

In the UK, after some initial responses regarding for instance medical help and *brigadistas,* as discussed above, at the end of 1936 the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief (NJCSR) was created. This committee, comprising 15 organisations which were involved in relief work, was officially launched on 6 January 1937 at a meeting which was held at the House of Commons (Bill & Newens 1991:42-43, Kushner & Knox 1999:106). The choice of the venue for the meeting is rather ironic,

given the government's declared separation from Spanish affairs. It is also ironic that the chair of the NJCSR was Katharine Marjory Stewart-Murray, the Duchess of Atholl, who was a Conservative MP; furthermore, owing to the activities which ensued from her firm commitment to the Basques, which 'led her to cooperate with other political factions, including Communists […] she became known as the "Red Duchess", losing favour with her party' (Kushner & Knox 1999:111). The NJCSR was presented by its founders as non-political; however, its loyalty to the pro-Republican cause was evident from the beginning, both regarding its relief work and also the campaigning in Britain (Buchanan 1997:97-98).

Buchanan (1997) points out that relief work in Britain highlighted many political issues, thus the importance of giving a non-political image to a country which had declared itself officially neutral and non-interventionist. Also, this non-political approach would encourage a wider segment of the population to join the forces of the NJCSR.

In February 1937 there was an initial discussion amongst members of the NJCSR who contemplated the potential evacuation of Basque children to the UK; however this proposal did not go further. In March the Basque Government raised the issue again when they officially approached the committee asking for medical supplies and food. Two weeks later there was a further attempt by Mr. Stevenson, the British consul in Bilbao, to convince the Foreign Office to accept Basque children into the UK, for which he had no reply. Finally, after the destruction of Gernika and consequent uproar within public opinion, on 30 April 1937 the government succumbed to the pressure and agreed to a limited evacuation of Basque children (Legarreta 1984:101).[123] Kushner and Knox draw attention to the fact that 'The acceptance of children also diluted the political nature of the gesture' (Kushner & Knox 1999:106).

In order to safeguard its image of neutrality, the government stipulated as an indispensable condition that 'the selection of children should reflect no political favouritism of any kind' (Bell 1996:33). This turn around in the state of affairs was an unexpected achievement, since the evacuation had encountered the opposition from

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the Foreign Office and also from 'all the agencies with a recognised expertise in the subject' (Buchanan 1997:110).

Despite severe restrictions such as the firm refusal to use any public monies for the operation or to have any responsibility for the 'children's maintenance, welfare and eventual repatriation'[124] (Bell 1996:7), this episode marked the beginning of a more tolerant governmental attitude. For instance, the Royal Navy would subsequently escort ships of any nationality which transported refugees, usually to France, and also the British merchant vessels facilitated the provisioning of Bilbao (Arrien 1983, Legarreta 1984).

While Steer in his capacity as a journalist was a key person in the process of raising the British and world consciousness, Leah Manning did similar work as a labour politician and a 'frenetic' campaigner in favour of the evacuation of Basque children to Britain (Buchanan 1997:110).[125] She was a member of the NJCSR and went several times to Spain during the war. On one occasion, she stayed in Bilbao for a few weeks liaising with the Basque Government, as requested by the Basque delegation in London (Bill & Newens 1991:44). Manning, who was in Bilbao at the time of the bombing of Gernika, states that the Basque Government's initial idea was to evacuate 4,000 children between the ages of five and sixteen (Manning 1970:125). When the British Government finally gave permission to evacuate 2,000 children between the ages of five and twelve (Legarreta 1984:105, Arrien 1991),[126] the Basque Children's Committee (BCC) was created, on the 15 May 1937, under the umbrella of the NJCSR. This committee would be responsible for the care and housing of the children once they arrived in England, which according to the government's estimations was going to cost ten shillings per child per week (Legarreta 1984:102, Arrien 1991:44). Though the Committee quite unrealistically according to Bell, had estimated the cost of one shilling per child per week (Bell 1996:27).

Buchanan points out that both the Catholic Church and the Labour movement, regardless of their refusal to be members of the NJCSR, were part of this committee along with the Society of Friends, Save the Children, the Salvation Army, and Spanish Medical Aid (Buchanan 1997:111). Other members were the Catholic Church, the

liberal and conservative parties, and the Trades Union Congress (Arrien 1991:44). Evidently, despite the controversy surrounding the evacuation and the numerous obstacles raised by the stern conditions imposed by the government, these children also gave an opportunity to the pro-Republican campaigners to attract 'wealthier sections of society not otherwise involved in Spanish causes' (Buchanan 1997:96).

In the Basque Country the plans proceeded and two paediatric doctors, namely Richard Ellis and Audrey Russell, and two nurses travelled from Britain to Bilbao to carry out tests before children were accepted for the evacuation (Cloud 1937:31, Manning 1970:131). They noticed that the children 'were remarkably free from malnutrition or disease other than body lice' (Coni 2002:149) despite the fact that the economic blockade of Republican controlled areas had caused malnutrition in the civilian population. Dr. Ellis writes:

> The principal way in which the deficiency of the diet was becoming manifest was in the very high incidence of dental caries (presumably due in part at least to this cause) and in certain skin changes. It was encouraging to feel that the group as a whole was still essentially a healthy one.

(Cloud 1937:22)

Although the British Government initially only gave permission for the evacuation of 2,000 children, eventually 'the BCC sponsored double that number, necessitating an immense effort marked by constant improvisation' (Legarreta 1984:102). The significant lack of resources due to the worldwide depression and the government's attitude resulted in volunteers being usually forced to work in a hasty and reactive manner to the events. Thus, improvisation was going to be one of the recurring features of the odyssey of these children, who in the night of the 20 May 1937 embarked on the *Habana* in the port of Santurtzi to set off the following morning headed for the UK (Bell 1996:8).[127]

3.4.3 *Arrival and life in the UK*

3.4.3.1 Arrival, refugee camp and dispersal to the *colonias*

All authors and informants consulted agree that more than 3,800 children arrived in Southampton after an apocalyptical journey due to the severe weather conditions at sea and the physical conditions on the liner. According to some, the *Habana* was carrying more than 4,000 people on board when her capacity was for 800 people (Manning 1970:131, Benjamin 2003:99); however Legarreta points out that the ship had 1,500 berths (Legarreta 1984: 107).

One of the evacuees recounts 'So our journey to England began, a journey we will never forget. Since then I have never crossed the Bay of Biscay again' (Benjamin 2007:15). During a conversation with this informant, she explained that the reason why she has never repeated the crossing is because she was traumatised by the 'shocking, absolutely shocking, hell' experience which she had at sea as an evacuee (see Chapter 5 for further testimonies and more detail of the voyage).

There is discrepancy amongst historians regarding the number of children who arrived in the harbour at Southampton,[128] which is not surprising due to the fate of the archives of the war period explained above. Authors agree that the *Habana* left Santurtzi on Friday 21 May 1937,[129] however, while some of them maintain that she arrived in Southampton in the evening of the following day (Arrien 1991:54, Bell 1996:8, Martin & Carvajal 2006:51), some others indicate the morning of the 23 May instead (Legarreta 1984:107). My informants have specified that they arrived on the 23 May. This apparent lack of consensus simply reflects the fact that while some use the word 'Southampton' to refer strictly to the city (where the *Niños Vascos* arrived on the 23rd), some others use it in the broader sense of 'Southampton Water' (arrival on the 22nd). According to Boling, '[o]n the evening of the second day, the *Habana* dropped anchor off Fawley, near Southampton harbour' (Boling 2009:248). This is also reported by the Basque Children of '37 Association UK, which states on its website:

the '*Habana*' […] dropped anchor at Fawley, at the entrance to Southampton
Water, on Saturday evening. The following morning, Sunday 23rd, they docked
at Southampton.

(http://www.basquechildren.org)

Bell (1996) maintains that this was the largest single influx of refugees into the country that there had ever been.[130] The children continued to symbolise the remarkable paradoxes and confusing situations created by the Spanish Civil War. For instance, the fact that the UK was now needed to care for such large number of Spanish 'exiled' children was sufficient recognition of Franco's injustices, notwithstanding the non-interventionist official stance of the political authorities.

The next paradox was that once in the UK, owing to the conditions imposed by the government, the children were not in the hands of the Establishment. On the contrary, it was a network of volunteers, with theoretically no political agenda, who were totally responsible for them. This apolitical factor was once again only true at a theoretical level, since politics permeated all spheres where the children were involved.

Initially all the children were taken to a refugee camp at North Stoneham, Eastleigh, where, based on a political segregation, the physical space was divided in two main areas (see Figure 3.2, p 118, for aerial photograph of the camp).[131] The children of a Basque nationalist background were placed in the largest one, and the other accommodated those of other political tendencies. Additionally, a third small area was set aside for the older ones. Legarreta (1984) writes that there were also a few pro-Franco children amongst the evacuees who were initially placed with the Basque nationalists. However, after being attacked on one occasion 'by children of Leftist parents […] this small contingent was segregated, and slept in different tents each night so there could be no further reprisals' (Legarreta 1984:111, also Kushner & Knox 1999:118).
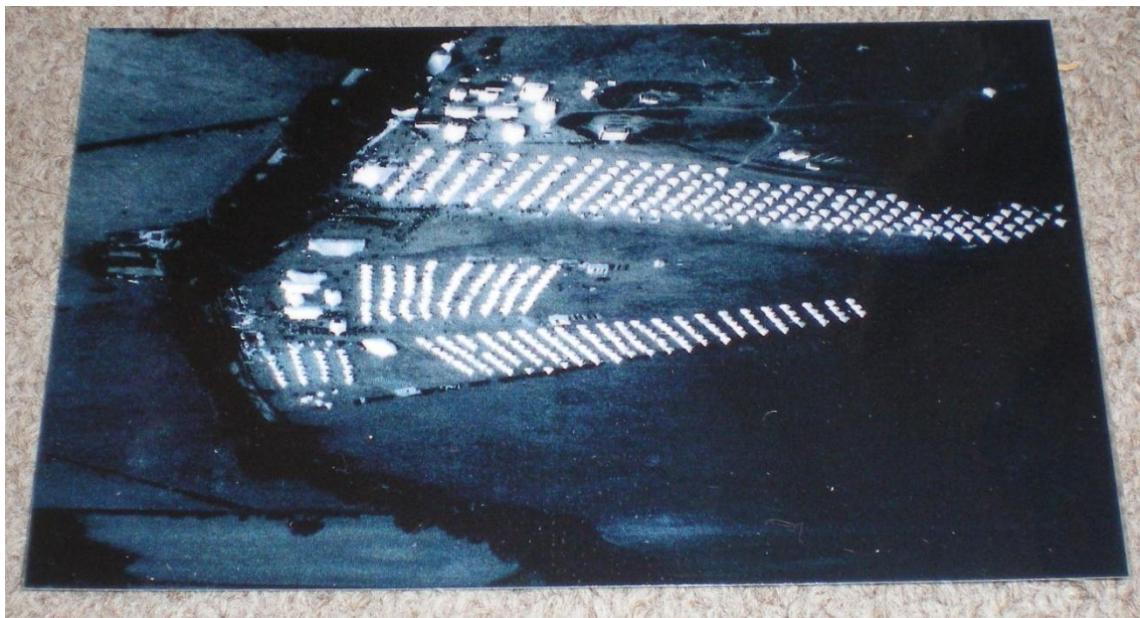
Figure 3.2

A *niña vasca* remembers:

> Yo tenía doce años, y la vida en aquel campamento se me hacía extraña, una
> gran diferencia con la vida normal en casa. Niños y niñas estábamos separados,
> y también estaban separados los de padres nacionalistas de los no nacionalistas,
> con un espacio libre entre unos y otros. Apartados de todos, con una alambrada
> de por medio, había unos veinte chicos mayores.[132]

> (Eizaguirre 1999:130)

The paradox is that in many cases the alleged political affiliations of the children
simply depended on practical choices which the parents made unaware of the
consequences. For example, a *niño vasco* whose registration card identified him as an
anarchist explains

> Anarchists! What Anarchists? […] What happened was that when my father
> went to register us, he said that he was a Republican Socialist. They said that
> there weren't any more places for Republican Socialists, but there were still
> some places for Anarchists. So he said, 'Alright then. Put me down as an
> Anarchist. What the hell difference does it make?'

> (Bell 1996:34)

In spite of this, there are accounts which show that some of the children, despite their young age, had already developed some political conscience. Benjamin claims that the adults in the host country were surprised by the political passion which the older children showed (Benjamin 2003:100, also Kushner & Knox 1999:116). There are many examples of this amongst the informants' accounts, for instance when they report the fist salute they used to do. Cloud contends that with this they were looking for reassurance, as once these children were separated from the source of their suffering, they considered that they had something in common with the host country 'the enemy is a common enemy' (Cloud 1937:50). Therefore she concludes that political neutrality was not an option.

The main early challenges faced by the organisers of the camp have generally been identified as the language barrier, diet and cultural differences, and health and hygiene. To some extent as time went on discipline and behaviour also became causes for concern.

Owing to the reasons explained earlier regarding the lack of resources, and also the fact that the evacuation had been organised in less than two weeks, it is not surprising that a number of testimonies raise the critical issue of the lack of an authority figure amongst the children. This was accentuated by the fact that the children lost contact with their families for a varying but usually long period of time, as it is recounted by an evacuee:

> Although I have been happy in the UK, I have often wondered what our lives would have been like if we hadn't left our families at such an early age. We missed them, and couldn't help but worry about them. For the first year or so after our arrival we had no news of them.

(Benjamin 2007:130)

During their stay at the refugee camp and subsequently when they were dispersed to homes throughout the country, the children were frequently expected to independently manage their lives and the whole range of new situations to which they

were exposed. A former evacuee remembers some of the harsh conditions they had to face in one of the *colonias*

> There was no heating, little, if any, adult supervision, and very little food. There was a lot of bullying and we were left to our own devices to survive.[133]

In this respect Cloud comments on their need for a caring authority figure in order to reassure them from the beginning of their life in the UK:

> camp-life has charms for holiday-makers, but privacy was never one of its charms – with strange children […] Picture them, uprooted, still reeling under the shock of the recent alarms and the great excursion, turning to each other and, more particularly, to any person whose bearing promises love, attention, authority.
>
> (Cloud 1937:51)

This necessary element in the life of a child was often supplied by the older sibling, who might have taken responsibility not only for their younger brothers and sisters, but also for other young children in the group. An evacuee explains her assumed role as a custodian as early as they arrived at the camp:

> Yo tuve a mi cargo una de las tiendas-vivienda, con mi hermana y otras seis niñas. Había que mantener un surco profundo alrededor de la tienda por si llovía, y las cuerdas tensas por si hacía viento. Me sentía un poco la madre de todas ellas; incluso les daba clases de aritmética, gramática e historia.[134]
>
> (Eizaguirre 1999:35-36)

Comments such as 'Mi hermano tenía tres años más que yo y para mí no solo fue hermano sino también padre y madre'[135] (Benjamin 2007:242) reveal that this situation comforted the younger children. Thus, an element of recognition and deep gratitude towards the protective role of the older siblings who provided a much needed sense of security is often stressed:

> I thought [that being the little sister] was an advantage really. Because she used to look after me, although I was a little monkey at times. I think really she did

save my life, because as I said earlier, I wouldn't eat and I did become very ill and I think I would have died.[136]

After a relatively short stay at the camp the Basque children were dispersed to a number of *colonias* in different counties, mainly in England and Wales. According to the Basque Children of '37 Association UK by mid-September 1937 they had all been relocated to residential homes throughout Britain (http://www.basquechildren.org).[137] A former refugee child remembers his departure from the camp and subsequent relocations:

> En Southampton estuvimos varios meses, hasta que nos repartieron en grupos y nos enviaron a sitios diferentes. Yo fui a Cambridge, pero cuando ya estaba empezando a hacer nuevas amistades volvieron a trasladarnos, esta vez a Ipswich, muy cerca de Londres.[138]

(Eizaguirre 1999:103)

This reminds us of the constant mobility and changes between *colonias*, which divided groups of friends which had naturally developed at the camp. Moreover, testimonies reveal many cases of siblings being separated, mainly in the case of brothers and sisters. However, authors stress that as a rule sending them to private accommodation was avoided and in the first instance it was always sought that they resided together in the *colonias* (Arrien 1991, Bell 1996, Kushner & Knox 1999).

It is a remarkably difficult task to give exact figures of how many *colonias* were run at any given time, as they started up at different times according to needs and available resources. Also, their lifespan varied significantly, and while the population of some of them was relatively stable some others experienced a continuous movement of children. There are for instance testimonies of *Niños Vascos* who lived in eight different places. Arrien (1991) provides a list of 98 homes which were prepared to house the children after dispersal throughout the country. The Basque Children of '37 Association UK also gives a list of 98 known colonies and a further list of 8 for which 'only anecdotal evidence has been found' (http://www.basquechildren.org).

Fundamental differences amongst these colonies have been reported with regard to how they were managed and how they catered for the children. On the one hand there are accounts which describe the life at the *colonia* as a thoroughly enjoyable experience:

> Life in the colony was incredibly creative, exciting. There was always something going on. There was dancing, singing, poetry, painting, lots of reading, making wall newspapers, and a lot of theatre work.[139]

On the other, some informants provide testimony of highly negative experiences. For instance, in contrast to the previous account the same *niño vasco* describes his life at a different *colonia* where the children were cold and hungry. Nevertheless, the children had found a new home in the *colonias* (see Bell 1996).

Following the eventual closure of the *colonias*, children who were used to living in the safety of the group and also to being supported by the public, were left to make a living by their own means. One of the younger ones recounts:

> Los peores tiempos de mi vida fueron los años después de salir a trabajar a los catorce y que se cerró la última colonia. Uno estaba solo. Viví en posadas por todo Londres. Trabajé en un sinfín de trabajos. No tenía estudios ni preparación ninguna. No ganaba lo suficiente para poder sobrevivir. Me encontré muy solo. A mi parecer, esta es la edad en que los jóvenes, sobre todo los que viven internados sin padres, son lo más vulnerables y precisamente cuando necesitan más apoyo.[140]

This testimony highlights the commencement of a new period marked by a lack of support which was aggravated during the subsequent years.

3.4.3.2 End of communal life: repatriations and adult life

As soon as the Basque Country was occupied by the insurgents, a strong campaign was initiated to repatriate the Basque children from the host countries which had given them refuge. This was vehemently demanded by the nationals and supported in the UK by some sectors of the population, particularly the Catholics, in spite of the

resistance of the children's families and the Basque Government. An informer reflects on the impact which this had, as 'We had to be in our best behaviour always. We had not to antagonise public opinion […] There was a campaign in the press to repatriate us'[141].

The older children, who were over sixteen by then, were given the option to decide whether to stay in Britain or not. Regarding those under sixteen, in order to make sure that they only returned if it was safe for them to do so, the BCC refused to carry out indiscriminate repatriations and imposed the condition that the children would only return if this was requested by their parents. Subsequently some parents applied for their children to be repatriated, but some others asked for them to stay in Britain. It has been documented that although some repatriations were voluntarily requested, there were frequent cases of parents being forced into it and sometimes their alleged letters were forged (Arrien 1991, Bell 1996). Many *Niños Vascos* reveal the types of pressure to which their parents were subjected, including insults for having their children abroad, verbal attacks, and threats. One of them confesses:

> Father was in prison and mother had the rest of our five brothers and sisters. There was no work and conditions were dreadful. Mother was visited by a priest and an official who threatened her with imprisonment and with her children being taken away if she didn't sign to have us repatriated […] The signatures had been forged.[142]

In addition to forged letters there are also examples of censorship and of correspondence still being manipulated by the Spanish authorities for a long time after the Civil War had finished. A *niña vasca* remembers that 'the censors used to cut out pieces of the letters [the family] wrote between 1944 and 1945'. A reported strategy to deal with this was the use of secret codes by the children and their families in their written communications.

Some of the returnees recount the unexpected and distressing experience of leaving the host country; this is summarised by a *niño vasco* who highlights the predominant lack of enthusiasm with regard to their repatriation of a group of other *Niños Vascos* whom he saw set off:

Because I was working in London in December 1939, I went to see them off at Victoria; they came from all over. Those who were going were not looking forward to it at all. Well, very few.

<div align="right">(Bell 1996:112-113)</div>

Despite some significant resistance most children were gradually repatriated. This meant that in 1939, by the time the Spanish Civil War finished and the Second World War started, most of the children had left and there were only approximately 400 remaining in the UK, whose lives would still be marked by constant mobility during the next period of war. Their initial status as refugees was downgraded to a legal status as 'aliens' or 'enemy aliens', thus the cohesion of the collective started to break in the public eyes. A *niño vasco* writes in his memoirs:

Habíamos llegado a Inglaterra como *Basque Children* o *Basque refugees*; iniciada la Segunda Guerra Mundial, cuando alcanzábamos los dieciséis años nos convertimos en *enemy aliens*, y después de la guerra fuimos *stateless persons* (<<personas sin país>>) residentes en el Reino Unido – ciudadanos de las Naciones Unidas con pasaportes y salvoconductos expedidos por esta organización (obviamente inservibles en la España franquista) que sólo nos permitían desplazarnos y volver al país de residencia –. La posición nos parecía insoportable.[143]

<div align="right">(Santamaría 2008:183)</div>

Intense geographical and social mobility signified that they grew up as resistant 'survivors' who lived and worked where they could, thus lacking full control of their lives. This is encapsulated in the following extract

As we realised that there was no likelihood of Franco being ousted by the Allies, we found ourselves in a sort of limbo. Some of the exiles went to France, others to Latin America. We, the younger ones, stayed on and had to re-structure our lives, and wait and wait. The last of the colonias closed and we simply had to fend for ourselves doing whatever job we could; living in lodgings or rooms. These were the most lonely, barren years of my life… To

reach this point had been fraught with difficulties, as everything in life seemed to have been. In England, I was an 'alien'. I had been very unsettled and constantly on the move: different jobs and different places to live.[144]

During that period of personal isolation some of the *Niños Vascos* lost contact with the others for many years. However, there were some initiatives that ultimately contributed to bring a significant number of them back together and helped them combat a feeling of nostalgia. An informer who lived in Birmingham remembers that 'an English lady opened her house for the Basque Children who were in the Midlands so that we could have tea reunions once a month'[145]. This developed into a club of Basque Children who contacted the *Hogar Español* in London, where there was also a cluster of them 'organised'.

The *Hogar Español* had been set up in London in 1941 as a place of reunion where Spanish exiles gathered regularly. The son of a *niña vasca* comments

> My parents met through the Spanish connection [...] One of the roles of the *Hogar Español* was to connect with the Basque children and bring them to London so that they didn't lose their Spanishness.[146]

This constantly appears in accounts of *Niños Vascos*, who regarded the *Hogar Español* as 'a real home from home where we spent all our free time' (Benjamin 2007:125). In 1942 some republican money was used to subsidise a lunch in London with some of the attendees coming from the Midlands. In return, their next gathering event took place in Birmingham, where some *Niños Vascos* from London went for a weekend. To a certain extent this marked the establishment and consolidation of a group whose members had passed childhood by then and saw it as something which gave cohesion to their lives. In this sense an informant declares 'We were very cohesive in London'[147].

By 1945 the group had diminished to approximately '250 individuals who settled permanently, sometimes marrying local people and remaining in Britain for the rest of their lives' (http://www.basquechildren.org). At that point there is also a shift in the narratives, which marks the beginning of a period in which the *Niños Vascos* were

aware of their agentive power within the host society by means of work, citizenship, and starting their own families.

Resilience was crucial in the transition towards taking charge of their lives and circumstances over time. In this regard testimonies generally show a pragmatic approach to making decisions:

> I decided that I would not go back. I can remember writing to my mother and telling her that I'm not coming back, that I didn't want to go back, that I wanted to take a chance here. I was sixteen and after everything that had happened to me – you know, you don't trust people. You lose all the trust that you… you wonder if you might be going back to something worse and at least then I'd started a career here, and I was very English.

(Bell 1996:20)

This transition was rather sudden for the older children, who were impelled to look for work very quickly. An informant recalls the differences between young and older children with regard to the period of time which they had to get used to the new life:

> Los más jóvenes hasta cierto punto hemos sido los más privilegiados. Nosotros tuvimos más tiempo para adaptarnos a las condiciones. Los mayores fueron quizás los que peores lo pasaron porque en cuanto cumplían catorce era cuestión de salir a trabajar.[148]

Informants' accounts point at the fact that during the war and post-war periods there were many jobs in Britain, thus the Basque children entered work life following a variety of paths.[149] However, there is general acknowledgement that owing to a disrupted education, lack of skills, and often lack of the necessary level of English, they could only aspire to low paid jobs. Many overcame these initial disadvantages through extremely hard work and they managed to develop a successful career.

Additionally, some *Niños Vascos* had access to education through the *Juan Luis Vives Scholarship Trust*, which was created in London in 1942 with some remaining republican money and 'most money was used for the Basque Children, as their education was broken'[150]. As a result a few of them started a career in arts including

painting, sculpture, poetry, dance or acting, for which some acquired considerable recognition, sometimes at a national level or beyond.

Another step in the settling down process was to sort out their 'nationality problems'. After many years of unrest, some *Niños Vascos* managed to obtain a Spanish passport following a long bureaucratic battle with the Spanish authorities:

> The years following the end of World War two had been very unsettling. Many of us young exiles had been living in a sort of limbo. We were neither British nor Spanish. We could not reconcile ourselves to accepting the Franco regime and returning to what we still considered 'home' […] I had been refused British citizenship but now had a Spanish passport instead of the 'stateless' UN travel document with which I had travelled up to then.

(Benjamin 2007:110)

This was not always the case and some became British citizens in order to end their arduous struggles with the Spanish bureaucracy, despite the fact that obtaining British nationality was not easy for them either unless they married a British citizen (see 5.3.2.2 for further details regarding citizenship).

Unsurprisingly, a significant number of *niños vascos* particularly those who stayed connected through the London hub, married either other *niños vascos* or Spanish migrants, including republican exiles. In line with the British custom, officially the women changed their surnames and took their husband's, which meant acquiring a British surname or a different Spanish one. However, Spanish women do not change their surname as a result of marriage. As a consequence, many *niñas vascas* are known by both their married name and also their maiden name, which they may feel is their 'authentic' one. This generates comments such as 'First of all I must tell you that my name is not HH. I am HGA, but since I got married in England I took the name of my husband'[151].

Thus far a number of factors have been presented which contributed to the process of settling in the hostland. The *Niños Vascos* reached their adult life, predominantly entering the work life and also getting married. Starting a new family

provided a sense of stability which helped to cope with the difficulty or impossibility to go back to the after-war Spain. A *niña vasca* who went from Britain to France, where she spent a few months before she returned to Britain, recounts

> I was in France for five or six months I think and came back here and came back from France into this house where I have been 60 years. So I made my life here, I had two more children, two more boys, so I channel my views and my life in here you know.[152]

Spain was increasingly becoming a place of no return, where not only was the political situation unfavourable, but also where family links had been broken:

> Well, Spain became distant because of my political beliefs, I couldn't imagine going back to Spain under dictatorship at all and my father, nor my mother either, so they stayed in France. My father died in France, my mother died here [UK] in this house, so there was family in Spain but they were in very peculiar circumstances as well you know. Totally different than what they used to be and they went, they went through a lot during the Second World War, so I didn't see any future in going back to Spain at all, none. No I couldn't.[153]

In spite of this, testimonies evidence an enduring desire to return to the homeland, even though once the former refugees were established in Britain this only happened in the form of short trips, normally after many years. Some only visited their place of departure after more than 20 years of not seeing their family, who by then had become strangers. Additionally the beginning of the Cold War marked a new period in which 'We had to accept the inevitable, that there was no perspective that we were going to return to Spain'[154].

The dream of return has been a constant in the lives of these former refugees, which they express in phrases such as 'I always lived with the idea of returning to Spain'[155], and which was transmitted to their children. One of them, the son of a *niña vasca* and a republican exile, summarises this concept with a powerful:

> Father always dreaming of return. Sometimes the Basque Children wouldn't buy a home because it felt as capitulating. This was a struggle.

Finally, during the following decades the emphasis on the idea of return gradually lost strength to give place to 'I think we are a modern British family'[156], in the sense of 'ordinary' people with lives occupied by a number of daily routines including family commitments, work commitments, and later on retirement. Those lives also included maintaining contact with other *Niños Vascos* (see 0.1 for the entrance of the *Niños Vascos* as a collective into the public arena) and sporadic visits to the place which saw them depart in 1937.

This chapter has provided an outline of the socio-political and historical context in which the evacuation of the *Niños Vascos* can be placed, and a summary of what is emphasised (and not) during the subsequent period by those who were involved.

In the next chapter I start to analyse the data by examining a number of commemorative practices which have been held at a private level or in the public sphere. The analysis will focus on agency and will problematise the, often overlapping, agendas behind these practices.

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Chapter

4

THE MEANING OF THE COMMEMORATIVE PRACTICES: '*CONMEMORACCIONES*'

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the nature and direction of a number of commemorative practices which have taken place in the UK in recent years, and the impact that these ceremonies have had in the process of memory construction of the group under examination. By contrasting the narratives, discourses, spaces and behaviours observed, it will be possible to recognise the relationships which the *Niños Vascos* maintain and develop amongst themselves, and also with other actors and institutions, within the current socio-political context. The chapter discusses three specific events with the aim of shedding light on the differences between commemorative practices organised by the *Niños Vascos* themselves and carried out at a private level, and those organised by a variety of memory agents which have been enacted in the public sphere. In this chapter I propose a new terminology and grammar within the area of the study of remembrance which designates the various actors and actions identified within the arenas where they operate, paying particular attention to who those memory agents are and the agendas behind their actions.

In Chapter 5, I will problematise the labels *los niños de la guerra*[157], *los niños vascos*[158] and *los olvidados*[159], which are the main categories normally used by the actors distinguished in Chapter 4, and will follow it with a discussion on the development of

a mythology particular to the group under study. Finally, I will look into the concept of 'home' which has consistently emerged throughout the data collection.

COMMEMORATIVE PRACTICES

My analysis is framed within socio-spatial coordinates, where I do not simply consider space as part of a conceptual framework, but as an entity in its own right. Space is treated as the dynamic dimension where individuals and groups perform their identities and find an audience, who themselves also become agents. All these agents interact in a particular space in order to negotiate and make sense of the past and also to set up the basis for the future. This spatial dimension contains bodies, objects, marks, and symbols which are the physical reminders that give materiality to social life and mediate the discourses of the actors. In this sense, space cannot be considered neutral. On the contrary, it is regarded as an active agent of change in the process of meaning and knowledge production. Furthermore, inspired by Blommaert and Huang (2009) it is claimed here that the character of the social space of remembrance is frequently normative.

In order to properly uncover the full complexity of what goes on with regard to the *Niños Vascos*, I next analyse and contrast a number of different spaces which are socially and culturally distinguished as unique entities. To put it in other words, each one of them is considered as a 'nexus of practice', that is

> A point at which historical trajectories of people, places, discourses, ideas, and objects come together to enable some action which in itself alters those historical trajectories in some way as those trajectories emanate from this moment of social action.

> (Scollon & Scollon 2004:viii)

4.2 PRIVATE MEMORY

Documentary and oral evidence reveal that the *Niños Vascos* have had a social annual gathering for a number of years, which brings together members of the group and also

other individuals invited by them such as relatives or friends.[160] Once a year they gather at a restaurant in London, where they have a traditional Spanish meal followed by a few hours of social networking. A considerable number of the participants live in the London area, but for this encounter some *Niños Vascos* come from more distant locations, which include Spain and France on special occasions. At this annual reunion there is a significant lack of presence of the press and institutions. Also, this is the only type of event organised *by* the *Niños Vascos* themselves[161], *for* the *Niños Vascos*, who consider it the occasion which they have to socialise with each other and to maintain their link with the group at a private level.

4.2.1 Place

The venue of this event tends to change every year, and the restaurant is usually chosen depending on factors such as the number of attendants or what place is available, but it is a Spanish restaurant which offers a Spanish food menu. This physical space might be a constraining factor in some cases, as depending on its facilities some *Niños Vascos* will decide whether to attend or not. For instance, those who have mobility difficulties might choose not to go when the selected restaurant is not suitable for them. On the other hand, giving preference to a Spanish restaurant rather than to another perhaps more appropriate for their age related requirements and circumstances but non-Spanish, enables them to create a microenvironment where they feel they are entitled to 'perform Spanish'. Furthermore, that semiotic space is giving cues by means of its staff, memorabilia and other objects on display, which are encouraging, reinforcing and shaping at the same time a demonstration of the Spanishness of the attendants. This is ultimately linked to ownership of the social arena where cultural and social reproduction takes place.

For instance, there is more physical contact, the greetings to other dinner companions include two kisses and the personal space boundaries are smaller than in other contexts. They have the opportunity to talk to the staff in Spanish and to make 'Spanish jokes' about the 'Spanish food'. They also use certain familiarities, such as being noisy or addressing the staff using *tuteo*[162] instead of the more formal *usted*,

which they would not attempt to do in a different environment where they might find it more convenient to 'perform English'. As Scollon and Scollon remind us, the social interaction

> works best […] when it is supported by very specific requirements for the structure of the spaces in which it occurs as well as the material mediational means that are available for the participants to use in conducting their activities.

(Scollon & Scollon 2004:3)

In the reunion of 2008, the *niña vasca* who had been a key element in organising and maintaining this annual encounter throughout the years, announced that she was going to hand over the organisation of it to three children of *Niños Vascos*. At the reunion of May 2009, which was the first one organised by those children, the choice of restaurant was primarily decided following practical reasons such as its size, price and central location. It was still at a 'Spanish owned hotel', as stated on the letter which the organisers sent to the prospective attendants, but the restaurant was not run by a Spanish speaking Spanish family as it has been in previous occasions. On the contrary, it was a big restaurant in a hotel which is part of a Spanish chain well established world-wide. The menu on offer was Spanish as it had been negotiated between the restaurant manager and the organisers. However, the language used for this menu was English and there were no physical signs of Spanishness at the venue. Furthermore, not all the waiting staff were Spanish as they had been in previous years. Interestingly, the menu of the annual meal of 2010, held at the same venue, was in Spanish.

It remains to be seen how the change of 'framework' due to the shift of the organisation of the event from the *Niños Vascos* to their children, might influence the group strategies and modify individual remembrances and interpretations in the long term (Halbwachs 1992:134).

4.2.2 Date

The date of the reunion is always fitted around the anniversary of the evacuation, usually on the Sunday nearest to the 21ˢᵗ May. This choice denotes the importance of this date above any others relevant to the group, such as the bombing of Gernika or the anniversary of the Second Republic or even the arrival at Southampton. The *Niños Vascos* have chosen a date which is unique and specific to their history, thus their identity as a distinctive group is reinforced. In other words, this date is not merely a temporal milestone, but it embodies a historical landmark. It is noticeable that in May 2007 there was another event organised by the Basque Children of '37 Association UK taking place around that date to celebrate the 70ᵗʰ anniversary of the evacuation as well. This one attracted a much bigger audience and most of the *Niños Vascos* attended it, but they decided to also have their private gathering as usual and still celebrated the annual meal, which was attended by approximately '60 guests'[163]. This shows how important it is for them to keep the private gathering alive. There is uncertainty with regard to the continuity of this exact date as central in the future, as expressed by one of the new organisers at the beginning of the speech he delivered at the reunion of 24ᵗʰ May 2009. He started his address to the guests by clarifying that

> una de las cosas que queríamos hacer este año era cambiar la fecha porque este weekend siempre es el bank holiday weekend y había, pues, por lo menos, seis o diez personas que hubiesen venido, pero como era un weekend, long weekend, no han podido venir. Así que si lo hacemos nosotros o lo hace alguien más el año que viene, que quizás sería mejor cambiarlo a una semana más temprano o una semana más tarde y así no choca con el weekend este.[164]

After this he switched the linguistic codes and started to speak to the audience in English.

Whilst these significant changes which are taking place with regard to crucial elements such as place, date, and language provide an invaluable source of data to explore the ongoing process of the group identity remaking, the shift to the children of the *Niños Vascos* is not going to be analysed in depth here, as this is not the purpose of this study. However, the importance of this transition is calling for future research on

the transmission of memory to individuals of next and future generations, and how these individuals act upon the struggles which are occurring at present in the arena of the commemorative practices.

4.2.3 Social orders

The temporal continuity (through periodical recurrence) of the private reunion historicises it, permitting us to observe the process that has taken and is taking place over the years with regard to the particular social orders developed during the interaction between the subjects. Maintaining this ritual permits them to retain ownership of their story and memories, which empowers them to shape and transmit their cultural and social capital in their own way, thus building up a collective memory. It is noteworthy that in 2008, during the handing over speech, a *niño vasco* thanked the organisers of the meal with the following words 'quiero dar un aplauso a ti y también a ella por el trabajo que estáis haciendo por unirnos a nosotros los *Niños Vascos*'[165] . To which she responded 'mucha gente me ha dicho esto, porque creía que era importante seguir nuestra historia'[166]. The *Niños Vascos* are aware of the importance of continuing this tradition, which to them means holding together as a group and ensuring their existence is not forgotten by future generations.

A good example which illustrates how their shared cultural capital is transmitted, is found in the discourse of an informant when he showed the others a picture of a plaque which he had designed for the 70th anniversary commemoration at Southampton, saying that

> tenemos aquí la fotografía de la placa que se colocó en el ayuntamiento de Southampton que realmente expresa nuestra llegada a este país y creo que por ejemplo si tenéis algún álbum de los nietos, la historia vuestra y así, esto realmente explica nuestra llegada.[167]

Not only is he moulding *how* to commemorate that arrival by means of a memory object which he has produced himself, but also he is stating that this is the best way to do so, since it 'really' explains the story. Furthermore, he is giving ideas on how they

can include that 'real' story amongst their family memorabilia, and thus transmit it to their descendants. By following his advice the experience of war and exile of the group of *Niños Vascos* becomes part of a family history, transcending the space and time of the reunion, hence supporting a social order. Nonetheless, there are individuals who dissent and alienate themselves from the social orders accepted by the group (I will expand on this in 4.3).

I analyse next the complex process of attainment of the social orders by looking at the repetitions of a number of routines and discourses which frame the subjects' thinking so that they do not or, moreover, cannot get out of it unless they dare risk being excluded from the group. Individuals become enskilled and accustomed to these repetitions to the extent that they internalise and naturalise them, forgetting that they are a learned practice. They reiterate those ritualised practices often unaware that by doing so they contribute to the preservation of the values and norms of the group.

There is an excellent example of how a ritual has become so embedded in the social fabric of the group that individuals assume that they will repeat it at each event without any questioning. At the annual meal of May 2009, a *niña vasca* delivered a speech which she closed with a few words remembering the *Niños Vascos* who had recently died. After that, her last words were 'y a disfrutar de lo que queda del resto del día. Ahora podéis cantar'[168]. At her signal the 'performance' continued and the *Niños Vascos* started to sing the accustomed Basque and Spanish traditional songs.

The following section analyses social orders covering the areas of what the *Niños Vascos* say, what they do and how these contribute to mould their thinking and to construct a collective memory of the group, which they call *familia*[169].

4.2.3.1 What they say – negotiating group boundaries

A key social order observed in the interaction is the negotiation of the boundaries which mark the belonging to the group through the use of words such as 'we' and 'family', and also the choice of a particular language. In the narratives of the *Niños Vascos* there is a recurring emphasis on the use of the term 'family', which could be

interpreted as a metaphor and a substitute for the family which they lost during the early years of their life. In a conversation which took place on 24th June 2008 the historian Gregorio Arrien indicated that when the evacuation of the children was negotiated in 1937, the Basque Government considered important that the *Niños Vascos* were kept together in a group 'para mantener la identidad'[170]. Thus, one of the conditions was that the children were not dispersed (Arasa 1995). In spite of this requirement, the children were separated and sent to homes known as *colonias* as it has been explained earlier (see Chapter 3).

However, from the early days of their stay in the UK they were aware of their common background, and there are numerous examples which show their attachment to the group and consciousness of belonging. A *niña vasca* who was taken to a *colonia* in Wales recalled at the 70th anniversary celebrated in May 2007 at Southampton:

> We had a lovely time there, we were very happy in Caerleon because we were one big family […] There were 67 of us, and one Spanish lady who looked after us all – we called her our mother.[171]

The following excerpts have been taken from the book *Recuerdos*, which is a compilation of testimonies of *Niños Vascos* written directly by themselves[172]

> … was introduced to all the other young Basques who lived there. Because they were from the same part of northern Spain, they all got on well together and Mari Carmen was very happy to be part of this communal life. They talked and sang in Spanish and one or two could actually speak Basque, but they all knew the Basque songs and dances.

> (Benjamin 2007:13)

> La vida en aquella colonia fue de lo mejor. Los 21 niños parecíamos todos hermanos, los mayores nos daban mucho cariño a las cuatro más pequeñas.[173]

> (Benjamin 2007:242)

> Somos parte de una gran familia – los niños vascos del '37.[174]

> (Benjamin 2007:287)

These reflections highlight the sense of being part of a 'family' which emerges from the accounts, as very often the *Niños Vascos* refer to themselves as 'somos una familia'[175]. This idea is often reinforced by other agents at a public level, as illustrated by the following excerpt which was part of a speech given at the humanistic funeral of a *niño vasco* in April 2009:

> Some of you here today shared that unique experience as child refugees from the Spanish Civil War [...] That experience bound you together as a close family [...] He spoke of his life there [at the home] as 'one big happy family'.

In this respect Ashplant et al. remind us that

> In a transitional space between the formal organizations of civil society and the informal networks of family and kin, there exist what Jay Winter has termed 'fictive kinships', referring to particular groups [...] small-scale agents who form what he calls 'families of remembrance' [...] and their felt sense of familial identity extended beyond kin.

(Ashplant et al. 2000:29)

This notion represents an integral part of the participants' perception of being part of a unit. However, they use the term *familia* rather flexibly and it is not clear what the boundaries of that family are. For instance, when an informant recently said at the annual reunion 'tengo que deciros que además de Koke, han fallecido cinco más de nuestra familia, cada vez más reducida'[176], it was obvious that she strictly meant the group of *Niños Vascos*, but there have been times when they have made the difference between the *Niños Vascos* who stayed in the UK permanently and the ones who returned to Spain. In those instances they flag the difference with the use of the pronouns 'we' and 'they'. Nonetheless, when a *niño vasco* comes from abroad for the annual reunion, they will be included in the 'we'.

Another *niña vasca* admitted that she had not attended the annual meal in May 2006 because it was too expensive and 'los niños vascos no quieren hablar con otros niños vascos. Tienen sus pequeños grupos y no se mezclan'[177]. This comment reveals a fracture with regard to the sense of 'family' and homogeneity of the group. Moreover,

she is not conforming and she is excluding herself from the group's social order by building a strong barrier between her and the others through the use of the third person plural instead of 'we'. In spite of this, the informant returns to be part of the group later in that conversation, when she says that she recently went to someone's funeral[178] and left 'una rosa blanca con una tarjeta que firmé de parte de todos los niños vascos diciendo gracias por todo lo que hizo'[179]. This goes beyond regaining her identity as a member of the group, as in this instance she is not a mere individual *niña vasca* but the 'representative' of the entire group.

Sometimes the use of the pronoun 'we' exceeds the boundaries of this group, and reinforces the group's or an individual's belonging to a larger imagined community (Anderson 1983). Some of the *Niños Vascos* look forward to attending this gathering with great anticipation, as this is the special occasion when they can do 'lo que nosotros hacemos'[180]. The words of this *niño vasco* refer particularly to the act of singing after the meals and his 'nosotros'[181] refers to a larger group, the Basques in general, as singing after a celebratory meal is considered to be one of the idiosyncrasies of being a Basque. This is also sensed when the *Niños Vascos* reiterate with pride, or more exactly, repetitively perform, phrases such as 'aquí la comida no es como la nuestra'[182], which is a commonly heard stereotype among Spaniards when they live abroad, particularly in the UK. By saying 'nosotros' and 'la nuestra'[183], firstly the *Niños Vascos* are identifying a community, and secondly they are establishing that they belong in it.

There is also a negotiation of the 'we' with regard to the children of the *Niños Vascos*. When at some point I said 'vale'[184] during a conversation with an informant, she then repeated this word later in the conversation adding 'como decís vosotros'[185]. I asked for clarification and she mentioned that this term 'vale' is constantly used in the Basque Country, 'los de allí decís "vale" todo el tiempo'[186]. The significance of this is that firstly, she was constructing a dichotomy between 'los de allí', meaning the Basque Country, and 'los de aquí', the UK, based on some geographical particularities of our common language. Secondly, she was excluding me from her 'we' this time, despite the fact that I am the daughter of a *niña vasca* and that I have been living in the UK and not in the Basque Country for many years. On the other hand, this informant was very

pleased when she was told by someone from the Basque Country that she still has a Basque accent, as this proves that to a certain extent her identity signs from the past have not totally been erased. In a telephone conversation with a son of a *niña vasca* I noticed that he was including me all the time as part of his 'we'. As I had been excluded from that 'we' earlier by a *niña vasca*, I asked him for clarification. He responded that I was 'undoubtedly' part of that 'we', since 'todos somos lo mismo'[187].

These fluctuations of what is meant by 'we' and 'family', point towards a more strict and restricted view of these concepts by the *Niños Vascos*, which helps them resist influence from the outside by means of a strongly established group (Halbwachs 1992:184). However, as soon as other agents such as their children or those *Niños Vascos* who did not settle in the UK appear on the scene, the group's membership criteria is challenged and its boundaries blur. The *Niños Vascos* deal with it depending on the circumstances of the moment, negotiating constellations of identities which are mediated by a number of factors, such as place, audience and language.

The language primarily used amongst the *Niños Vascos* in these reunions is Spanish, which is perceived as a sign of pride and status within the group. Thus, it is a recurrent feature to hear a *niño vasco* to proudly construct an image of themselves as a proficient speaker of Spanish. When a *niño vasco* addresses the others they do it in Spanish, despite the fact that sometimes they hesitate and have difficulties to find the right word. Those who lost their Spanish tend to be apologetic about it, giving reasons such as being isolated from the rest of the children during the early years of their stay in the UK, or having married an English person. Sometimes a degree of competitiveness to prove whose Spanish is 'better' is perceived, since their command of Spanish puts individuals in a position of power. These tensions reach their peak when it involves their descendants, as some *Niños Vascos* seem to take it as a question of social honour that Spanish is and has always been spoken within their family circle. A good example to illustrate this point is the following sentence said by a *niño vasco* at the meal of May 2006,

> hablamos todos español en casa, otros no. Estoy orgulloso de que en mi casa se habla español perfectamente. Mis hijos hablan, no como los hijos de otros.[188]

Those others show a feeling of guilt for the loss of the language in their family, and justify it with expressions such as 'mi hijo no quiso aprender español. Ya sabes cómo son los ingleses'[189] or 'mi marido podía entender pero hablar no, le daba vergüenza'[190]. Repeating their apologies becomes part of the process of getting rid of guilt. After that, they often add 'no habla español pero está aprendiendo'[191] in an attempt to include these non-Spanish speakers close to them in the negotiated community which regards this language as a symbol of identity and belonging to the group.

4.2.3.2 What they do – building social relations

The annual reunion is perceived by the *Niños Vascos* as the space to establish and consolidate their social network around activities such as having a meal, singing, dancing and meeting old friends. This is reflected in the words of an informant who is geographically separated from the others but normally attends this event. She declares that 'si no fuera por esta ocasión perderíamos el contacto'[192]. However, in a telephone conversation of 14th of January of 2007 this *niña vasca* also stated that

> en esas celebraciones hay tanta gente y tanto ruido que no tenemos nada de tiempo para charlar. Por eso ella y su marido me van a visitar y así charlamos.[193]

This comment supports the claim that the group experience transcends that particular reunion space and time to continue at a more intimate level.

At these nexus of practice some struggles occur as a consequence of the difficulties which the *Niños Vascos* sometimes experience when they articulate their memories. For instance, during the reunion of 2006, an anxious informant timidly confessed that she did not dare describe her childhood experiences because they contradicted some other *Niños Vascos'* memories. She repeated a number of times 'mira lo que dicen, que Margate fue una colonia muy mala. Si cuento que a mí allí me fue muy bien van a pensar que soy una mentirosa'[194]. This leads to an important point which an informant raised when he declared that 'mi memoria siempre ha sido mala y cada vez es peor. Ahora a mi edad es malísima y si hablo de todo esto ¿quién dice si es memoria o imaginación?'[195]. On the other hand some informants have reacted to this

type of conflict by insisting that 'mi historia es la verdadera'[196] and they have argued that the others do not remember.

At that meal in 2006 there was also a moment of tension when an informant reproached another one because she had been interviewed by a media representative and she had not mentioned Spain. As a result, this *niña vasca* felt confused and did not know what to reply. After a few hours she was still disturbed by that comment, and she tried to make sense of it explaining that it might have been because she had not said anything against Franco at the interview. She defended her posture of ignoring Spain in her declarations with an interesting 'qué iba a decir! España a mí no me ha dado nada, ni dinero ni trabajo ni nada'[197]. Nevertheless this is an isolated incident of entering political grounds, as it has been observed that a particularity of these private reunions is that the *Niños Vascos* tend to avoid discussions on politics and religion favouring a joyful atmosphere of diversion.

An excellent example of the importance the *Niños Vascos* attach to this gathering is found in the fact that they have only handed over the organisation of it when they found some of their children willing to take over and continue the tradition. At the end of the meal of May 2008, the *niña vasca* who had been the main organiser throughout the years gave a little speech announcing that

> Os he estado diciendo medio en broma que seguramente esta será la última reunión que tengamos [big noise of disapproval by the group] y ahora os puedo decir de verdad que esta es la última reunión que yo organice. Sería una pena muy grande que nuestros encuentros anuales se terminasen y sería maravilloso que siguieran con nuestros hijos, organizado por ellos y los padres acudiendo como pudieran. Así podemos seguir.[198]

One of the three children of the *Niños Vascos* who were taking up the baton and were committing themselves to organise it in the future, responded

> [los tres] queremos decir que obviamente queremos que esto continúe, no solamente el año que viene, pero años del futuro también. Es importante que esto continúe con vosotros pero también con los hijos y los nietos.[199]

This moment of mutual agreement between two generations captured at the rite of transmission was confirming the perpetuation of the gathering, at the same time as it was strengthening the social network, thus ensuring the continuity of the group. It is interesting to note that at this nexus, the group was firstly validating its wish to carry on the gathering in the future, and secondly negotiating the membership criteria. This becomes evident in their boo-ing at the departing organiser's initial confession that this might have been their 'last' encounter, and also by a lively unanimous murmur of approval amongst the audience when a *niño vasco* extended the scope of future membership by adding '¡y los biznietos!'[200] to the ones that had already been mentioned.

The agents of memory identified so far in this chapter have been primarily the *Niños Vascos* and their descendants. It has been argued that through social interaction and 'dramaturgical performance' (Schneider 2003:187) individual identities are constructed which are then presented in particular social circumstances. The members of the group see themselves as a 'family' which possesses a communal body of knowledge which is jointly preserved and transmitted by themselves and their kin.

It has also been claimed that it is by carrying out some performative practices that preservation and transmission of their social capital take place, and are legitimised, at a private level. Ashplant et al. draw attention to the close relation and constant engagement between private memories and dominant historical discourses, maintaining that the historical discourse sets the frame for the private memory construction. They also observe that

> the power of dominant memories depends not simply on their public visibility, but also on their capacity to connect with and articulate particular popular conceptions, whilst actively silencing or marginalizing others.
>
> (Ashplant et al. 2000:13)

Thus, once that private universe has been explored as the starting point of my inquiry, I now continue with an analysis of how it is projected into the public sphere.

4.3 PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS

The term 'public representations' is used here in the sense which Ashplant et al. refer to it, as

> those representations of the past that 'achieve centrality' within the public
> domain, where their institutional propagation by the national and local state,
> the culture industries or the public media ensure their scope to make public
> meanings for vast audiences.

(Ashplant et al. 2000:13)

In contrast to those previously examined, the remembrance practices explored in this section were organised by a variety of agents of memory instead of the *Niños Vascos* themselves or their descendants, and had a rather formalised structure by comparison. Before discussing the distinctive nature and objectives of each of the two events which I analyse, I will draw attention to some features which they have in common and their implications.

Firstly, they were both performed in open view and the general public had access to them, in some instances following the purchase of a ticket or by formal invitation. As a result of taking a broader audience into account, there was a shift of focus from a community of *Niños Vascos* and their close ones to a community of interest. This includes those who directly participated in the events which were the subject of commemoration and also other agents of memory who had some interest in remembering and disseminating the experience. Some others were simply looking for information on a topic which caught their attention for different reasons.

Secondly, in order to secure the large and varied audience which these remembrance practices targeted, they were strongly publicised. Widening the participation had the potential to dilute the *Niños Vascos'* own specific agenda of transmitting their experiences of forced migration within a larger and more heterogeneous agenda. For this reason the organisers had to make choices, thus there was the potential for complications and struggles.

Thirdly, there was a considerable presence of the media and representatives of official bodies. This presented these agents with the potential ability to mould the commemorative process by incorporating and promoting their own agendas.

Finally, whilst in spite of their internal differences and individual subjectivities the idea of maintaining a private annual reunion has proved to be unanimously embraced by the *Niños Vascos* approached for this study, this has not always been the case with regard to the public events. Some individuals have revealed a profound disengagement with public commemoration, manifesting their disapproval of a number of issues. In this respect, Ashplant et al. claim that 'the enhanced public visibility of these anniversary occasions has created opportunities for contesting as well as celebrating received memories' (Ashplant et al. 2000:4). This point is highlighted by negative accounts given by three informants when I asked them during our conversations why they do not attend any public events which commemorate them in their role as *Niños Vascos* and their experiences:

> [las conmemoraciones] No me gustan. Pasaron cosas horribles, padres luchando contra hijos. Las guerras son malas, pero ésta fue la peor de todas. Fue horrible, ¿Cómo se puede separar a los niños por partidos políticos? ¿Qué sabe un niño de todo eso? En una guerra pierden todos. No solo perdimos nosotros, sino todos los que la vivieron y a muchos no se les está teniendo en cuenta en todas estas celebraciones. Los dos bandos hicieron cosas terribles, los dos. Yo creo que uno peor que el otro, pero mientras no se reconozca eso las cosas no mejorarán, es lo mismo que pasa ahora.[201]

> Yo no voy nunca a esas ceremonias organizadas porque quieren mantener a flote con los hijos, los sobrinos, como si fuese una cosa espectacular.[202]

> [with regard to the evacuation] no tuvimos ni voz ni voto. Esto es una cosa muy seria, hubo mucha gente con mucho trauma, y la están tomando como teatro. Están dando una versión de la historia que no es verdad. No hablan de la segregación por partidos en Eastleigh.[203]

A first impression points towards disengagement of these 'dissidents' from the public arena. However, a closer look into their narratives discloses firstly, disagreement with the 'official line'. For the purpose of this study this is understood as the 'official memory' which Ashplant et al. refer to as 'those dominant or hegemonic narratives which underpin and help to organize the remembrance and commemoration of war at the level of the nation-state' (Ashplant et al. 2000:22). By no means do I intend to present that official line as something unique, unitary and homogenous, but as a variety of narratives which are more important or influential, and have access to the broader public as a result of having high level connections.

Secondly, there is a criticism of *how* this process of memorialisation is dealt with more than of the process *per se*. The first informant disagrees with the 'exclusion' of many other victims of the Civil War within the current public discourse. The second and third informants criticise the 'theatricalisation', that is, the trivialisation of something which to them is important and they believe should be taken more seriously. Authors such as Naharro-Calderón (2005) and Faber (2004) touch upon this subject of the 'trivialisation of memories'[204] and exploitation of a renewed interest in the past by 'mass-media and cultural'[205] discourses (Naharro-Calderón 2005:101) arguing that

> Memories can be malleable […] Infra-memories which touch the kitch and the spectacular, the 'exiliobusiness' ('exile-business') within an unstoppable commercial and globalising tendency.[206]

(Naharro-Calderón 2006:12)

He points out that it is particularly the 'divulgers'[207] who use those memories to reconstruct the darkest periods of the past, namely 'journalists, directors and audiovisual media producers'[208] (Naharro-Calderón 2006:5). In the literature there is a plethora of titles and book contents which show this tendency to a sensationalist and 'victimisationalist' approach to the topic of the Civil War, particularly when they construct a memory of the children who experienced the war.[209] Devillard indicates that:

If one pays attention […] to the media coverage at this time, one notices the emergence of the 'victimised' image of the *children of the war*, a recurring image […] emphasis on a *broken childhood*, on the suffering owing to wars, [this] will start to become prominent as a discursive topic which, in different contexts and for different reasons, even some agents will come to adopt.[210]

(Devillard et al. 2001:59)

The third 'dissident' quoted above also showed his passionate views on the issues under discussion when he declared during a telephone conversation that he was not attending a public event to which he had been invited because

lo organiza la Asociación y yo estoy muy quemado con ellos, no quiero participar en nada que tenga que ver con ellos. Ellos están a lo suyo. ¿A quién representa la Asociación? No les interesa la gente normal, son todos del mundo académico. Vete al 'Club de Jubilados'. Cuando fue allí el ministro no entrevistó a niños vascos, sino a los de la asociación, y me cerró la puerta cuando quise hablar. Los de la Asociación organizaron alguna charla con fotos; hemos dado fotos, ellos las utilizan y piden dinero, tienen otros motivos, se están forrando. Las placas no hacen nada a los niños de la guerra. Es un teatro.[211]

In his account, this *niño vasco* raises a number of issues with regard to the struggles taking place in the social spaces which are the subject of this discussion. Thus, the 'conmemoraciones' ('commemorations') could be seen as 'conmemoracciones' ('commemoractions'). This term summarises their active and dynamic character as the sites where memory, therefore identity, is being constructed by a number of agents, that is, being the 'conmemoracción' a core point of a particular type of action ('acción'). This new term is also connected to that 'tendencia mercantilista'[212] brought up above and to a world of investment and 'stocks and shares' or *acciones* (in Spanish), where different actors invest their 'capital' as it is discussed next.

It is not my intention to draw a clear line to separate the variety of agents between the supporters and makers of the official line and the grassroots. On the contrary, the aim of this study is to prove that their narratives are interconnected and

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they all support and have an impact on each other. In this respect, they could all be seen as dynamic 'transceivers' of the social and cultural capital that is at stake. This makes it difficult to decide whether discourses are generated from the top down or the other way round. However, what those connections are and how different agents put forward their own perspectives may be explored.

Owing to the limitations of this study it would be impossible to include all the agents identified, thus, the following two sub-sections of this chapter present the most prominent agents or 'conmemoractores' ('commemoractors') and the roles which they played in the commemorative events or 'conmemoracciones' analysed here.[213] The two events were distinct from each other principally due to their different foci and approaches.

4.3.1 Southampton

Jelin (2002b) observes the inclination towards the 'fechas redondas'[214] with regard to major commemorations. From this perspective, it can be argued that the 70th anniversary of the evacuation of the *Niños Vascos* signified the most memorable occasion amongst any others of a national or transnational character which had been celebrated so far in relation to them. On this line, Eidson points out the importance which institutions and members of groups place on

> Observing special anniversaries –for example, the 25th, 50th, or 100th – [which] has come to represent both an obligation and an opportunity to reflect on the constitution of their respective institutions and to present them, or idealized images of them, to the broader public.

(Eidson 2005: 559)

Thus, in May 2007 the Basque Children of '37 Association UK organised an elaborate commemorative event which marked this 70th anniversary. Owing to the importance of the moment, they chose Southampton as the site for remembrance, on the basis of its significance in the history of the *Niños Vascos*. In a first letter which the Association sent to the prospective guests it was stated:

> To commemorate the arrival of the Basque Children in England on 22 May 1937[215], the Association is planning an event in Southampton on 26 May 2007.

This was followed by a second letter which explained

> We are also working to get good media coverage and hope that the Spanish and British TV will be there […]. There will also be a stall selling the […] book, the CD […], the new edition of the DVD […] and the second edition of […] book […]. There will also be a special commemorative programme, so come prepared to spend! [...] We are all looking forward to this event tremendously. It is going to be a wonderful occasion – an opportunity to meet old friends, make new ones, to educate and inform, and enjoy spending a day together.

To a certain extent, this second invitation showed a more enthusiastic approach to the event than the previous one, which could lead us to think that it would be more engaging. However, it introduced the notions of 'media coverage' and 'selling', setting an agenda which could potentially act as a deterrent. Thus, this could be interpreted as the moment when some *Niños Vascos* became disengaged for the reasons discussed above.

In a third letter the organisers renegotiate the purpose of this event introducing a new factor

> We are seeking consent to place a plaque *commemorating our arrival and thanking the people of Southampton*[216], to be unveiled during the proceedings.

On the one hand, the shift of an impersonal 'the Basque Children' of the first letter to the use of the adjective 'our' on the third brings the event to a familiar ground, implying that this event is being organised by the *Niños Vascos* themselves. On the other, expanding the agenda entails having a broader audience in mind, as the invitation now involves 'the people of Southampton'. The media coverage, which now also includes the Basque press, still appears as an important point of the agenda and the letter highlights:

The events commemorated are part of the history of our people and need to be known. Realistically, this will be the last and most important event commemorating this event. An occasion to educate and inform.[217]

The programme of the day included a number of acts, such as visiting an exhibition of photographs and other memory vehicles while socialising; a series of speeches by representatives of public bodies and some *Niños Vascos*; the unveiling and presentation of a plaque by the Spanish Ambassador; lunch; and the showing of the film *The Guernica Children* followed by closing words.

With regard to the agents, in other words the 'who', the focus of this event was the *Niños Vascos*, as stated in the information pack distributed to the guests on the day:

We decided it was most important that all the *Niños Vascos* attending should be in the Itchen lecture theatre as, above all, it is their day.

However, the organisers also name other participating agents, who at some point will have the floor to introduce their own particular agendas:

We hope that this will prove to be an enjoyable, informative and memorable occasion for all involved – the *Niños Vascos*, our special guests, our association members, their friends and families.

Regarding the agenda, that is the 'what', the event was heavily advertised as an occasion to remember and to 'celebrate', where people were invited to enjoy themselves. It was therefore marked by a predominantly *festive* tone. This joyful context sets and facilitates an easier approach to remembrance, since, in principle, there is no arena for political and controversial agendas. Nevertheless, it can be argued that when the organisers selected the speakers, firstly they were giving these individuals the right to decide what to remember and how to do it; and secondly, they were legitimising their discourses, trusting they were the owners and carriers of a particular symbolic and social capital. In Eidson's words, this symbolic capital includes 'the contents of historical representation, the meanings attached to them, and the way in which these meanings reflect on those who promote them' (Eidson 2005: 567).

4.3.1.1 The *Niños Vascos*

The theme of 'gratitude' has become increasingly dominant within the narratives of the *Niños Vascos* and other relevant agents in recent years, and it was common theme among the speeches at the 70th anniversary. The guest speakers constantly repeated the expression of 'gratitude' to the people of Southampton who had welcomed and helped the 'Basque children' in 1937 and to the British public in general.[218]

One of the guest speakers, a *niño vasco* who returned to Spain, declared:

> We still had to put up with the dictator until God called him to his side, and the truth is that our Creator took some time to do so… All those times are now behind and we are here again today to express our affection to this country that gave us so much at the time and which we will always carry in our hearts, as the thankful people that we are.[219]

Another speaker, this time one of the *Niños Vascos* who settled in the UK, stated:

> But, we are here today, to express our thanks and gratitude to all those wonderful British people who helped in so many different ways; to thank them for their generosity, their solidarity and their humanity […] thanks to individuals […] who waged such a battle with the Foreign Office, that wanted to pack us all back to Spain whether we had parents to go back to or not; so as to appease Franco: to appease a brutal dictator […] Spanish exiles who helped […] To all these wonderful people, to all these exceptional people and to many, many others, those of us who are here today, who arrived in Southampton in May 1937 as refugees, want to say: thank you.

It is interesting to see that while both speakers emit a message of gratitude, the frameworks in which their narratives are embedded differ. Eidson brings up the 'antimemory' issue when he quotes Young and also Torpey, noting that 'citizens may achieve reorientation and derive satisfaction by constructing new identities in contradistinction to discredited ones' (Eidson 2005:569). This is highlighted by the first informant, whose message of gratitude is embedded in a celebratory and positive discourse which remarkably leaves the negative aspects of the past 'behind'.

Comparatively, in his study of the contemporary representations of refugees, Kushner warns us of the risk which a celebratory interpretation of the past might imply stating that

> Such a celebratory reading of the past also undermines the success of the Kinder, not by denying their undoubted achievements, but by underplaying the forces of indifference, antipathy and conditional acceptance that for so long they faced and the ongoing impact of the forced separation from their parents. It ignores what was denied to the Kinder - the rights of a child.

(Kushner 2006:171)

In contrast, the second speaker shows a critical approach to the past when, before he gives thanks, he initially declares:

> it is a paradox, that whereas the people of Southampton and the British People, received us with such warmth, the British Government did not want us. Indeed, the policy of appeasement and of so called non intervention pursued by that government, would contribute to the defeat of Republican Spain and the oppression of 36 years of a dictatorship.

4.3.1.2 The politicians

When Jelin discusses the struggles amongst memory agents, she highlights the probable multiplicity of the state narratives during a period of 'political opening' (Jelin 2003b:29). With regard to this diversity of narratives, Eidson notes that

> official history often comes in multiple varieties, corresponding to the plurality of offices in complexly organized territorial states or to differences among the forces vying for political power.

(Eidson 2005:557)

To illustrate this point, I analyse next what was underneath the discourses of the two politicians who represented the Spanish Government and the Basque Government respectively.

Whilst the Basque representative opened her performance with a few words in Basque, the Spanish Ambassador did not acknowledge this language, and he opened his act with a reference to the 'two' languages, Spanish and English, which 'the majority of those here today speak'. The significance of this is that by acknowledging, or silencing, those languages, both speakers construct the linguistic profile, thus the identities of the audience, and furthermore, of the *Niños Vascos*.

After that introduction the Spanish Ambassador sets a context for this event. In an attempt to gain the approval of a potentially politically biased audience, he clarifies that he has attended 'many' other commemorative ceremonies 'for example in Jersey where the Germans employed Spanish forced labour during the Second World War and at the monument of the International Brigades, amongst others'. Has he attended pro-Franco commemorative ceremonies as well?

His initial statement could lead us to think that he is going to deliver a political discourse, however he then changes his register and moves on to a universe of 'emotions' with expressions such as

> I feel extremely honoured to be here, being able to participate in this event, which awakens so many emotions.

> […] in which the terrible ordeal of the 'Basque Children' is remembered, where we can realise the atrocities of what happened […] during a horrifying civil war.

> There is nothing more difficult for a parent than to give up their children […] heart-wrenching act that took a lot of courage and bravery from those mothers and fathers.

Linguistically this is highlighted by the predominant use of the personal pronoun 'I' throughout his discourse. He certainly moves away from that 'could have been political' discourse when he sets a parallel between the parents' suffering and an episode from the Bible. I argue that the adherence to the 'specific official line' of this anniversary, namely discourses of gratitude and celebration, was easier and more comfortable than following the 'doing justice' line which some might have hoped for.

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Nevertheless, the two politicians under discussion still found a platform for permeating their own different agendas with regard to contentious national issues beyond the specific agenda of this anniversary.

The Ambassador notes that 'the memory of all this brings me to make three comments', of which one refers to the use of a 'memento' of memory, namely 'the flag of the Second Republic', for which he has 'a great respect'. With regard to this highly controversial matter, his lack of acknowledgement for 'the Basque' continues, as he does not mention the Basque flag (see Figure 4.1 for arrangement of flags) at any time.[220] He is more concerned with ending a highly divisive dichotomy between Franco's flag and the Republican, pronouncing that the current Spanish flag is neither. He tries to secure the favour of the audience by giving his personal view:

> The Spanish flag that is here in this room, is a symbol of the democratic Spain of today. It is not the flag of Franco. Neither is it the flag of the Second Republic but I am convinced that deep down, in the same way as our flag of today must look with reluctance upon the flag of the dictatorship, it looks with friendship upon the flag of the Second Republic, as the latter also represented a democracy.

Figure 4.1

In his discourse he is obviously giving new meanings to a memory object. In response to this some of the participants showed their disagreement as this comment disregarded that firstly, it was Franco who removed the Republican flag imposing his own one; and secondly that, more importantly, that is exactly the same flag with the same colours red, yellow and red to which the Ambassador refers as 'it is not the flag of Franco'.[221] While it is not the purpose of this study to discuss this particular issue in depth, it is nevertheless an excellent example of memory engineering and the struggles which take place at the arena of commemoration. It also underlines a fascinating topic which might be considered for future research.

Finally, the Ambassador stresses the national-state official line of democracy and national unity declaring:

> Fortunately nowadays we have once again a democratic Spain. Constitutionally Spain is a Parliamentary Monarchy and our State is divided into 17 Autonomous Communities, one of which is Euskadi.

This is the first time he acknowledges 'the Basque'. However, it is not in relation to the subject of the day, but to reinforce the Spanish national-state discourse of unity.

While the discourse of the Ambassador was somewhat directed to the hearts of the audience, the representative of the Basque Government regularly made remarks to remind the audience that she was there in her role as the voice of her government. Thus, she moved away from the use of 'I' to an institutional 'we', which meant 'Eusko Jaurlaritzaren izenean'.[222]

The focus of her speech was on 'commemoration and gratitude, those are the key words here today', where she equated commemoration to the notion of 'acknowledgement'. These concepts were framed by a comprehensive quantity of historical information with regard to facts, figures, and agency at the time of the evacuation, which stressed the leadership of the Basque Government.

In contrast to the previous discourse, which drew attention to the 'unity' of Spain and the subordinate position of the Basque Autonomous Community (placing it at the same level as the other 16 Autonomous Communities which form the Spanish State),

the Basque spokesperson brings 'the Basque' to the forefront. By doing so a different 'official line' from the one analysed previously is being set. This incorporates the official history of 'political diversity of that [Basque] Government who joined forces to defend freedom and democracy'.

The speaker reinforces that Basque identity construct when she calls attention to a broadcast from a Basque radio in 1937 where the programme presenter described his vision of his imagined community's future:

> The unhappy days will pass and from the ruins of Gernika will arise another city as smiling and as endearing as she was. And with her Euskadi shall live again. She will respond to the impulse of progress and the needs of time; she will sing her past history and renew her life whilst nothing will be remembered of those peoples and countries who established their laws upon the rule of violence and oppression. Gernika shall live again, Euskadi be forever free and world democracy prevail.

The Basque Government representative then declares that this vision is becoming real, but disagrees with the forgetting the past, as this must be remembered 'because keeping those times in our memories is the best way to prevent them from happening again ever in the future'.

Her message of gratitude also embraces the *Niños Vascos* and other agents of memory within the associations of Basque Children, legitimising the refugee children as 'marcas de nuestra historia'[223]. Finally, she considers this commemorative event in Southampton as a 'tribute to all of you who were forced to leave the Basque Country 70 years ago'. However, while she acknowledges the 'debt' towards the British public and a number of politicians who helped, this concept does not embrace the *Niños Vascos*. Therefore it can be argued that beyond the 'tribute' to the *Niños Vascos* embedded in a celebratory and festive line, the government discourse does not fully recognise the hardship of the forced migration and rupture with 'home' which was imposed on them. Thus, it is also keeping away from the commitment to compensate the *Niños Vascos* within an institutional framework and repair a past injustice not only at a symbolic but also at a material level.

To summarise, looking at the narratives of the two politicians analysed, it is evident that they both follow the particular official line of the event of gratitude and celebration, which facilitates them to engage in an ultimately positive interpretation of the past. However, the wider discourses in which these narratives are immersed differ in terms of both 'what' is transmitted as the national or state ideological matrix, and also 'how' this is transmitted.

4.3.1.3 The media

At the commemoration of Southampton there was a strong media presence as had been predicted by the organisers. Compared with previous years this was the anniversary which caught most attention. Local journalists and television broadcasters covered the event, and some representatives of the Spanish and Basque media travelled to the UK. They interviewed some *Niños Vascos* very briefly and took photographs of them and of the event in general. Ashplant et al. discuss the proliferation of

> anniversary commemorations to mark the beginning and ending of wars, and their key episodes. This is one component of a wider anniversary boom, fuelled and amplified by the public communications media, which seize upon forthcoming commemorative dates to stimulate cultural production of all kinds. Not only are commemorative ceremonies and other events reported in – and increasingly, staged for – the news media […] In this way, war commemoration is transformed into a media event.

(Ashplant et al. 2000:4)

After a considerable 'investment' of resources with regard to their time and travelling costs, the 'profits' or final 'production' which different web pages, newspapers and television broadcasters offered to the public during the following days was generally marked by its emotional register. This was highlighted by headings such as 'Emotional reunion for the civil war innocents'[224] or 'Tears flow in emotional reunion'[225]. There was also a noticeable avoidance of political connotations. For instance, while the newsletter of a political group mentioned 'nearly 4,000 refugee children arrived in Britain in May

1937 and were cared for entirely by volunteers and public donations'[226], the local newspapers evaded the use of words such as 'refugee'. In this respect, the press release issued by the Spanish Embassy in the UK is marked by a strong de-politicisation of the subject. They merely stated:

> On Saturday 26th May several events took place in Southampton commemorating the 70th anniversary of the arrival to this British harbour of the steamship 'Havana', carrying 3,826 kids on board, known as 'The Basque children', who fled from the effects of the Spanish Civil War.[227]

This note leads the reader to think that the importance of the moment was to commemorate that ship, and it presents the fact that there were thousands of refugee children in it in a rather anecdotal style. Indeed, the word 'refugee' does not appear in the text at all. Furthermore, the use of the term 'kids' lifts the weight of a more politically committed word, and its register hardly seems appropriate for the occasion.

There is an example of an article in a Spanish newspaper which attempted to connect its interpretation of the act to the current official discourse,[228] and used subheadings such as 'Un entendimiento cordial sobre la memoria histórica'[229] and 'recordar, exhumar'[230]. Although this article generally avoided sensationalism and emotionalism, it still used headings such as 'Vida de un héroe'[231] in order to secure public interest. It also presented some stories which were not characterised by their accuracy.

A common feature of the representations which different newspapers or television programmes offered to the public after the event was their lack of accuracy and rigour with regard to what the interviewees and participants had said; who the organisers and other actors were; what the purpose of the day was; where it had taken place. For instance, several of them declared that the event had been held at the 'University of Southampton' when the real venue was 'The Solent University'.

The press release of the Spanish Embassy declared that

> The commemorative events, ensued throughout the day, were attended by the Spanish Ambassador to London, Mr. Carlos Miranda, and a delegation of representatives from the Basque Government.

Firstly, this exaggerates the Basque representation, as there was only one person representing the Basque Government, and secondly, it does not mention any other government representatives and guest speakers who were there.

More interestingly, a newspaper announces that 'La ceremonia de ayer fue un pacto amistoso entre hijos de refugiados y gobiernos'[232]. This interpretation shifts the ownership of the event towards other actors instead of the *Niños Vascos*, at the same time as it constructs a reconciliation discourse, which is different from the original intention or specific agenda of the event. It also declares that the Mayor of Southampton 'reconoció ayer que no había oído la historia de los niños hasta que se vio envuelto en la organización del aniversario'[233]. This reinforces his agency, though it is not accurate, as he was not part of the 'organisation' but a guest speaker.

There is a further example of a paragraph which transcribes a family story told by a former Basque child evacuated to France and which is full of inaccuracies.[234] The relevance of this is that when a journalist was challenged and reminded of the general lack of rigour of the press, his response was:

> De todos modos, creer que lo que publican los periódicos es siempre de primera y veraz información es como creer que todo lo que dicen los políticos es cierto y la religión es buena para la salud y en cambio, ahí estamos, intentando tirar adelante compartiendo piso con periodistas, curas, policías, políticos y demás animalejos de este mundo.[235]

His resigned view of the role of the media and politicians accepts their lack of rigour and furthermore, he advocates for a pragmatic approach which believes in adaptation and negotiation amongst agents.

4.3.1.4 Social order

The previous point could be interpreted as a means to achieve reconciliation. However, agents of memory 'vary in their access to political and cultural power, and hence in the resources they command to develop and broadcast their narratives' (Ashplant et al. 2000:17). In addition to the dissidents discussed above, there are also some other agents who do not take part in the negotiation which takes place at commemorative practices simply because they do not have access to them, therefore their voices might be lost in the process. Furthermore, the authority and power are not equally distributed amongst those agents who take part.

In order to explore this idea, I will next look beyond the language medium, following Goodwin's argument that to interpret human action we need to look at the variety of semiotic resources which concurrently operate while action takes place (Goodwin 2000). Connerton enlightens us on this respect when he sustains that

> The importance of postures for communal memory is evident. Power and rank are commonly expressed through certain postures relative to others; from the way in which people group themselves and from the disposition of their bodies relative to the bodies of others, we can deduce the degree of authority which each is thought to enjoy or to which they lay claim […] in all cultures, much of the choreography of authority is expressed through the body.

(Connerton 1989:73-74)

An example which illustrates this point is the table arrangement of the speakers at the event under discussion, in other words, the ownership of the place, which translates into a common understanding of who the authority is (see Figure 4.1, p 155, for seating arrangement).

The central position of the table was occupied by the Spanish Ambassador in the UK, who was flanked by the spokesperson of the Basque Government to his right and the Mayor of Southampton to his left. After these the Mayor of Eastleigh and a historian were sitting one on each side, followed by a *niña vasca* who settled in the UK permanently and a *niño vasco* who returned to the Basque Country at each end. Outside

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the table, a *niño vasco* who settled in the UK was sitting on a chair. This arrangement can be seen as something within the etiquette of the situation and probably nobody will question it; on the contrary, a different arrangement, for instance if the Ambassador were sitting on the chair outside the table, would be seen as a transgression. Social memory is in essence performative (Connerton 1989), thus the centrality or marginality of the speakers on the table and the space each person owns are physical marks which have a social effect.

Blommaert and Huang's view on this is that the movements and positions of the body transmit cultural information. They study the 'enskilled' forms of social conducts and their central role in the production of meaning, claiming that the expectation to find certain signs in certain places and knowing how to act appropriately is a manifestation of how we have been enskilled in distinguishing the specific nature of those places and our expected behaviour (Blommaert & Huang 2009:9). In this view, we can say that in the previous example the 'conventional' interaction order of that semiotic space has been preserved, thus the social order is kept intact.

Moreover, the paraphernalia which some of the speakers wear, such as the medallions which the British Mayors wore as required for official performances, are interpreted by the audience as a manifestation of power and hierarchy, which pervades at an unconscious level and legitimises the *status quo* and the distribution of authority (see Figure 4.2, p 163, for official medallions).

Figure 4.2

The examination of this particular action allows us to understand how power and hierarchy are underpinned at the commemorative arena by a combination of use of language and speeches, and the powerful semiotic signals embedded in the material world and the movements and positioning of the bodies.

It also draws attention to a process of institutionalisation of memory which could be at risk of relegating the main agents or direct memory carriers, namely the *Niños Vascos*, to a second rank (Sabín-Fernández 2010:26).

Due to the inequality of access to the forum where 'memory action' takes place and is shaped, there is a danger of homogenising discourses and diluting the variety of memories of the *Niños Vascos* within dominant discourses. Also, there is a risk of trivialising memories which then become a media event as noted above. Ultimately, this shift enables society and particularly the state, not to assume responsibilities for the past, that is, it deviates from a political discourse based on justice, apology or compensation for past injustice.

4.3.2 Eastleigh

In 2007 the Department of Arts of the Eastleigh Borough Council decided to celebrate the significant and 'round' 70th anniversary, as that area is where the first camp was set up for the *Niños Vascos* in 1937 before they were dispersed to a number of *colonias* in different counties. The initial idea of the organisers at Eastleigh was called 'The Basque Project', which would be 'a large scale multi art form commemoration of the evacuation of nearly 4,000 children from the Bilbao region because of the bombing and the Nationalist blockade of the north coast of Spain'[236].

Twenty years earlier the Borough Council had celebrated the 50th anniversary in May, and then the 60th also in May. For the 70th they started a project with schools in spring to raise awareness, and the central event – four days of a variety of acts – was held in October at The Point Arts Centre. In the words of the organiser this was 'purely timing when we could get it together to do it, I don't think there was any particular reason. I would have liked to do it when the Southampton event was going on'[237].

Ironically, they chose Friday 12th October as the key day of the week of events, which is a highly controversial date in the Hispanic World. This is the 'Día de la Hispanidad'[238], not exactly celebrated by everyone for reasons connected to the idea of a bygone empire which, at the same time as celebrated with pride by some, is considered a reason for embarrassment by others. Previously, during Franco's dictatorship this day was called the 'Día de la Raza'[239] and was also, and still is, the 'Día de la Guardia Civil'[240]. It is obviously a contentious date, but, were they aware of this at Eastleigh when they chose it? When the organiser was asked he declared 'I don't know who came up with that, that wasn't me. I wouldn't have known that'. However, the heading of that day appears as 'On the National Day of Spain' in the programme (Figure 4.3, p 165).
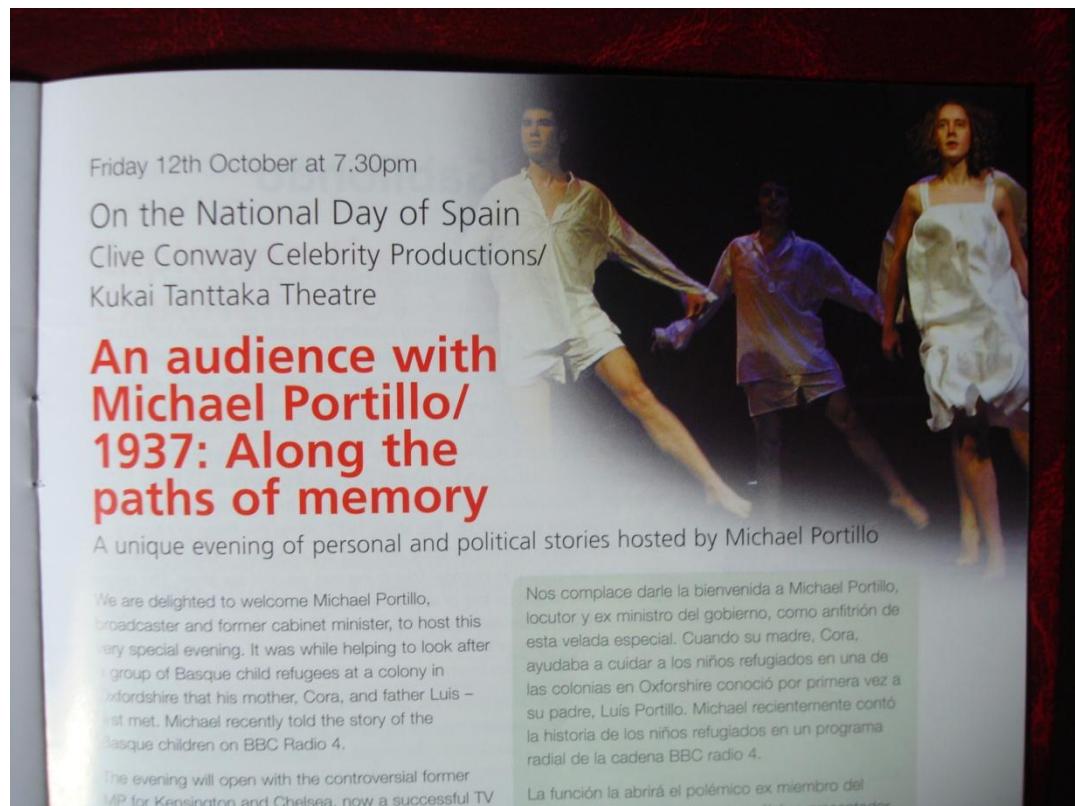
Figure 4.3

Despite the fact that this event at Eastleigh was organised by a department of the Borough Council and funded by this council[241], it had a low profile with regard to institutional presence in comparison with the event analysed in the previous section. This is also confirmed by the main organiser when he identified himself more as an 'artistic director than anything else'.

Ashplant et al. remind us that the artistic productions as opposite to the institutional channels 'may operate to draw together shared or common memories into a wider narrative within civil society' (Ashplant et al. 2000:29). In this respect, the organiser stressed the fact that he did not have 'much involvement with the *Niños Vascos*' as he was aware of how often they had told their stories, therefore the central element of the week of remembrance events was that

> Although the memories belong to them [the *Niños Vascos*], it's so important for us
> to record and disseminate these memories … it's important to historically,
> contextually, to remember these things for future generations. It's so easy to say
> the war and the Jews and things like that, but actually, there are so many other

stories, there is an awful lot of people who were in the same boat and still are. That's one of the reasons we did the schools' work, the education stuff with the play, before the events, to remind the children that those stories are still going on, nothing much has changed in the world.

Furthermore, Ashplant et al. observe:

> as the generation which fought the war approaches the end of its life, and their grandchildren enter adulthood, agencies of civil society together with the state have developed new initiatives, […] these continue to transmit memory of the war, and the national narrative it underpins, but through the rather different channels of education and entertainment.

(Ashplant et al. 2000:28)

On this line, Naharro-Calderón equates memory to a claim of identity which so far has been presented as oral memory and also written or visual memory. However, he defends that 'these days the channels of transmission are mainly audiovisual' (Llanes, 2006).[242] In order to explore this theme the next two sections analyse firstly, the rationale behind the commemoration at Eastleigh and secondly, the agency and agendas involved in the transmission of memories by means of artistic channels.

4.3.2.1 Rationale

The programme of events at Eastleigh included four days of remembrance performances with the projection of the film *The Guernica Children* on the first night; a double bill of a theatre play and a dance performance on the second night; an audience with a former MP followed by a mixture of a theatre and dance performance on the third night; and finally, on the last day, a symposium which explored the experience of exile. During the events there was also an exhibition of photographs and other memory objects. All the performances were based on the experience of the *Niños Vascos*, thus those different representations of the past could be best viewed as 'varieties' of the same symbolic capital (Eidson 2005:556).

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The week's finale had been preceded by an 'extensive education project and tour [of the theatre play] to local schools', as stated in the programme. The focus was the local community and the rationale behind the project was on the one hand, to engage the local community through art, and on the other, to inform and educate so that the story is not repeated.

4.3.2.1.1 'To engage local community through arts'

The artistic director highlighted that what he most liked about the project was

> the new work with ideas, also working with people who had not heard the story before and get excited by it, and the playwright... That kind of emotive event sparks the strongest emotion in art, that's where the strongest stimulus comes from.

He acknowledged that arts, and particularly his work, are about public engagement, since 'The Point exists for people to come here to see shows'. He also observed that with previous projects he learnt that people are 'very interested in local stories and heritage and history'. This underlines the idea that a project like this provides the opportunity to establish and strengthen a strong connection between the community and the arts, since firstly, 'it gets people involved with their stories, their community, what's gone on' and secondly,

> inadvertently to them, being involved with arts without them knowing… that was our primary aim. By coming to see Kukai they were coming to see a dance show. They would never normally see a dance show, but because of the local interest in the project [they did]. My interest is in interesting stories, the kind of stories we should be remembering.

In addition to those two central purposes of the organisers' agenda, an interaction takes place between members of the community and others who shared past experiences with them as a result of the encounter. For instance, the organiser remarked that at the exhibition:

I met *Niños Vascos*, naturalised English people who live in Eastleigh, and then they said 'I was one of those *Niños Vascos*' and they'd never had any contact before with it. It was interesting to get that story but also to speak to local people who said 'oh, yes, I helped on that site, oh I remember that!' That was most interesting for me, to spark that memory from local people.

From this a double function of the commemorative practice emerges. First, it serves as a forum characterised by both its informative and disseminative function. Second, it welcomes actors to play an active role by bringing their own individual memories at the same time as it stimulates their remembering.

A further connection mentioned by the organiser was the relevance of the event within the broader social context, which he identifies as

the time of refugee, with immigration and things like that, specially in 2007, it was never more current, it was always on the agenda but it was more about education to local people, not only arts education, but also education about what is the definition of the refugee, what is the definition of an immigrant, so the whole project was about raising awareness, not only the story but also raising awareness of arts and raising awareness of current issues with people from other countries.

At this point, looking at the two public representations under analysis, one can attempt to place the event held in Southampton within a festive context of celebration. This is connected to a predominant discourse of 'gratitude' to the hostland, which in a first instance could have been assumed would also be the case at Eastleigh. However, now the discourse incorporates the important notion of 'raising awareness of current issues'. This takes us to the next fundamental point of the agenda, namely the educational intention of the project.

4.3.2.1.2 'To inform and educate so that we don't forget'

It has been pointed out by some informants of this thesis that the history books currently used have yet to give a new interpretation of the Civil War away from the

official narratives presented thus far, and also that episodes such as the experience of the *Niños Vascos* need to be included in school programmes and curricula. A central performance of what was originally titled 'The Basque Project' was conceived as a means to fill this gap, as it was stated in the first draft of the project outline

> In response to requests from local schools, The Point Young People's Theatre wishes to launch a touring show for Key Stage 2. This specially commissioned play will use the events of 1937 as a stimulus and inspiration to study relevant contemporary refugee issues. The performance provides a vehicle in which we move from the past events to a contemporary understanding of human rights and differences.[243]

This educational purpose of the project eventually transcended the remembrance space of The Point leading to new initiatives, such as the formation of a group of memory agents who looked into the continuity of it. This was the seed of new developments such as an educational pack for use in schools, an oral history archive and a travelling exhibition amongst others. It also generated a number of academic papers and the artistic dimension had continuity through some collaborative work and events. Finally, the media were also present and a television documentary was produced. Thus the organiser considered that 'it was very successful the project, it had lasting effects'. This is illustrated in a message which he distributed a few days after the events took place:

> I just wanted to thank everyone who was involved in the project last week. I think it all went amazingly and saw some great performances, discussions and exhibition. It worked on so many levels and drew in many people associated with the story as well as those with no knowledge at all, a real engagement of community in the truest sense.[244]

The consensus of opinion amongst organisers, participants and other people involved was highly positive. Nevertheless, attention needs to be drawn to the fact that there is a risk that mere agents of memory become *conmemoraccionistas* ('commemoractionists') as a result of the investment of social, symbolic and other types of capital which occurs in the commemorative arena.[245] They could ultimately be seen as memory entrepreneurs or memory brokers who carry out their roles at an 'artistic enterprise'[246]

and gain a profit out of recycling and continuing a story which in the process might lose its meaning. This term 'memory entrepreneurs' has also been discussed by Brubaker, who in a different light points out at the risk which constructivist theories pose of 'sliding into a voluntaristic overemphasis on the malleability and manipulability of the past in the hands of contemporary cultural and political entrepreneurs' (Brubaker 2004:162).

4.3.2.2 *Acciones* and agendas

In the last part of this chapter I analyse the concept of agency by looking at the *acciones* and the agendas behind the week of performances which 'fabricated' memory at The Point. The terms *acciones* and *conmemoraccionismo* refer to the actions which take place at the commemorative practices in the sense of activity, *actuación* or performance, and also activation and gestation of identities (Sabín-Fernández 2010:17). They are also connected to that entrepreneurship and business world brought up above.

4.3.2.2.1 Film

The first act of the week was the projection of the film *The Guernica Children*, which was advertised by the producers thus: 'There is another chance to see the highly acclaimed documentary film *The Guernica Children*[247] on the big screen'[248]. The official programme highlights a number of awards won by the director for this film, and also by a documentary which he had produced on the same topic earlier in the year. A first reading would suggest that the *investment* of resources is resulting in the profits expected, particularly when we look at the figures of attendance at this event. All the tickets were sold and this was the only performance of the week where the attendance was 100%.

However, an interview with the director of the film revealed a multilayered agenda which needs to be explored at a deeper level. He explained his personal links to the topic of the Spanish Civil War and the reasons why he became interested in the story of the *Niños Vascos* when he learned about it. Ultimately, the reason to make the

film was that this was 'a great story that had not been told and should be told' towards which his 'political leanings were sympathetic' and he was 'keen to make a good film' in his search for personal recognition in a 'highly competitive field of work'. By this point two types of investment can be recognised, namely *capital* investment and also *prestige* investment.

In 2007 this director also made the documentary 'El bombardeo de Guernica'[249], which was broadcast in Spain in April for the 70th anniversary of the bombing, and he describes as 'the first attempt to give a definitive account of *exactly* [my emphasis] what happened in Gernika on the day of the bombing'. However, when the subject of historical rigour was discussed during our interview he admitted that primarily, he had an 'artistic agenda' since 'film making is about pictures ultimately', thus it is allowed to make 'generalisations' and it is characterised by its 'superficiality' at the same time as being 'emotional and powerful'.

This admitted lack of depth of both the film and also the documentary deprives this representation of the past of its political angle since, according to the director, 'politics are too complicated for a documentary'. It also transmits a particular rendering of the story of the *Niños Vascos*, as it is the origin of an abstraction which represents their memory and creates a pattern for future representations. This rendering was also supported by the introduction of the screening by the film maker and a question and answer session carried out at the end. Finally, it points out some struggles within the subjects involved in the production of that representation, which are noticeable in the fact that the background to the story which the director originally mounted was considerably longer than the final one presented. This reduction of factual information was imposed by the 'commissioning editor' with the purpose of making the film more appealing to a broad audience unfamiliar with the topic. Also for popularity reasons, it was required that the film had a 'happy ending', which meant an 'ethical compromise' with which the director felt uncomfortable. As he declared, he addressed some criticisms due to this 'happy ending' in a later longer version of the film which was produced with a more knowledgeable audience in mind.

Following Brubaker's idea of the overemphasis on the manipulability of the past by some constructivist theorists discussed above, we can see this point as an example of power regained by initially disempowered agents. Not only do some of them have the opportunity to become 'stars' in a film, but also some of the *Niños Vascos* become agents of change with an input on the cinematic representation of their story.

4.3.2.2.2 Theatre/dance

The first show of the next day had been specially commissioned for the event and consisted of 'a piece of theatre based on the accounts of the Los Niños' as stated in the report written by the artistic director after the events. However, the historical rigour of this representation was challenged by a *niño vasco* when he was consulted privately after the show. He declared that he did not like the representation very much, because

> algunas de las cosas que salen no son verdad. Cuando vinimos éramos niños y no pensábamos en esas cosas de sexualidad que han salido en la obra. Es solo en el teatro, en realidad no había nada de eso, éramos muy niños, todo era nuevo, todo era nuevo.[250]

This example illustrates the introduction of new identity markers which are more connected to the parameters which frame current social issues than to the past to which the performance related.

The second part of that night was also a show which had been created especially for the event by a local dance company in conjunction with a Basque dancer and choreographer. The following day this Basque choreographer's company staged a dance work which they had been performing for five years, and that was based on the experience of the *Niños Vascos*. The choreographer declared:

> The fact of recognising and remembering the history of thousands of Basque children that had to be evacuated in 1937 touched my heart. In addition to paying tribute to these people, I was motivated to be part of a project where history and Basque dance are put together, especially in a country like the United Kingdom. Apart from these emotional motivations I cannot hide my

personal pleasure in having the privilege of working with a contemporary dance company in the UK.

In this statement there is firstly, an element of recognition and tribute to the *Niños Vascos* which is carried out by means of the art, and secondly, an attempt to historicise this art production. Thirdly, the investment of prestige is also part of the agenda. Yet looking at the whole variety of performances, the most remarkable aspect with regard to the transmission of memory is that they are different representations of the past which coexist in a particular commemorative period of time within a unique space of experience and of memory. A spectator remarked upon the complementarity amongst the representations by writing the following comment on the evaluation questionnaire provided by the organisers: 'it has been good to see the links between the different presentations - film, talk, music, dance and exhibition'.

Furthermore, not only do they portray a mixture of old and new interpretations of that past, but also, most interestingly, they generate an intersection of meanings which are of a bi-national character, since both Basque and British perspectives are present. Moreover, new representations are created where both perspectives merge, giving a new extra dimension to the transnational character of the event.

Although this node can initially be seen as an enriching characteristic, it is interesting to note that it is also a source of struggles. This is revealed by the organiser at an interview when he declared:

> The only thing I felt uncomfortable with was my lack of knowledge, my lack of cultural understanding of a very different people… frustrated to not know about the Basque psyche – I knew more than most people but not enough. For example I always felt frustrated that I didn't speak Spanish, let alone Basque. I had an interpreter. I was always very conscious that the *Niños Vascos* had repeated their story, that they were old, I didn't want to push anything and I didn't want to upset anybody. That's something that was also contentious, not everybody was from the Basque Country. It was harder because culturally I had a limited knowledge; the whole thing was quite tricky.

4.3.2.2.3 Audience with the broadcaster

With regard to these struggles which occur at the commemorative arena, the most controversial topic which emerged amongst the informants' accounts was 'who' was chosen to present the last night of performances. This had already been anticipated when it was announced in the programme that the host was a '*controversial* [my emphasis] former MP for Kensington and Chelsea'[251]. This person is connected to the topic of the *Niños Vascos* for personal reasons, as his father was an exile of the Civil War and his mother was an English volunteer who helped the evacuees at one of the *colonias*. Also, he is a well known public figure as a broadcaster and as a former cabinet minister of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government. His presence provoked some opposition and distress to the extent that a *niña vasca* who lives in the area refused categorically to attend the shows of that specific night if he was the host owing to his political leanings (Sabín-Fernández 2010:29). The following excerpt taken from an interview with the organiser illustrates his struggle to justify why he went ahead and hired the celebrity:

> also with Mr M.P. … the reason I did that… some people were very… I can understand why, but there were a couple of people who were… but also I was quite uncomfortable with the whole process because I'm just an English arts guy doing a project, I don't know everything. We have had some struggles in England, but not struggles for our survival and our nationality like the Basque people have had, the Spanish people have had. The thing with Mr M.P. was obviously his link with his mother and father, but also the fact that I had to keep thinking for audiences and for relevance. He's a big man, gets interest straight away. If it's slightly contentious it gets more interest but in recent years he's become less right wing and he's also done work with the BBC about stories and he's actually one of the major exponents in the UK of keeping the story going despite his past comments. It was quite contentious and I did feel a lot of the time not knowing, not being an expert you're always going to upset someone.

Initially he hesitates enormously trying to compose the first few sentences, then he justifies his 'action' owing to lack of knowledge and then he moves on to validate that person's presence owing to the link between him and the *Niños Vascos*. Finally, he openly reveals his own agenda, which is primarily to attract a large audience, but he softens the callousness of his statement by bringing the disputed subject's stance closer to what is perceived as politically correct for that type of event.

Once again the investment produced the expected success, and 94% of the tickets were sold.[252] Yet the amount of time dedicated to the topic of the event within this former politician's talk was minimal. As a result, some significant issues were raised in the feedback questionnaires which some of the attendants completed at the end of the night:

> Fantastic - both the speaker and the dancers. Perhaps [Mr M.P.] could have talked more about Guernica, he talked about British politics and his career. Interesting - but I came to hear more about Spain and especially Guernica.

> I didn't really appreciate the opening jokes. Interesting, articulate speaker, but I thought there would be more focus on the Civil War and his contact with Spain - it seemed this was almost a convenient coincidence.

> [Mr M.P.] is a good and articulate speaker. Although it didn't need some of the jokes or party political element.

> Far exceeded my expectations! [Mr M.P.] is a very polished raconteur, but I wouldn't normally come out and pay to listen to him.

These observations problematise the use of the event by the speaker as a vehicle to talk about himself, his politics, and his career. Through this *acción* the son of an exile and a volunteer acquires the identity of a showman who invests on prestige and has the opportunity to reach an unusual audience to the detriment of an attempt to make meaning of the past.

To conclude, the common characteristic which the remembrance performances analysed in this chapter share is that they all focus on a past historical event. The interest in these commemorative practices is socially shared by the subjects who

participated in that historical event, their descendants, and a variety of agents of memory. Thus far, the distinction between the private and public nature of a number of practices, and also different approaches to the public representations of the past, has been discussed.

By comparison with the other acts performed at The Point, the main particularity of the symposium held on the last day was the visibility of the *Niños Vascos*, who had a more active role as a group than in the public representations analysed so far. This event was also singular in terms of its non-artistic character, despite the fact that it was part of a week of an *artistic enterprise*, where to a certain degree the artistic representations had an element of fiction and artistic license in their approaches to the transmission of memory. Some findings of my analysis of this event are embedded in the critical analysis of the narratives provided in the next chapter, where my attention turns from commemorative practices to the *Niños Vascos* themselves.

5

THE MEANING OF BEING

THE BASQUE REFUGEE CHILDREN

OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

IN THE UK

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The final chapter of this thesis examines who and what the Basque refugee children of the Spanish Civil War in the UK are by looking at some specific concepts which have been crucial with regard to the construction and maintenance of their sense of identity as a group over time.

I start my discussion by debating both the existence of a single collective of *Niños Vascos* and also the nomenclature which is used to recognise and to differentiate the subjects of this group. Firstly, I analyse how they are identified by others and how they identify themselves. I am particularly interested in establishing whether the constructs *niños de la guerra*[253] and *niños vascos*[254] contribute to the maintenance of their collective memory by means of holding them together as a distinct group, or whether they contribute to the loss of this memory by means of homogenisation. Despite the fact that these are the main categories which are normally attributed to the informants of this study, they have been contested by a number of social actors. I also examine whether

these labels have been reached by consensus or whether they have been imposed from above in order to fulfil particular purposes and agendas. In this case, have the *Niños Vascos* found any strategies which might help them counteract their passive role in the processes of being categorised and remembered? In other words, are they active actors? Do they have a voice? A discussion on the label *los olvidados*[255], which I frame within a 'victimhood' discourse, finishes the first section of the chapter.

This initial analysis is followed by a debate on the dynamic nature of the *Niños Vascos*' sense of belonging within a transnational context which includes fluctuations between 'the Basque', 'the Spanish' and 'the British'. I argue that the *Niños Vascos* navigate between these identity markers, embracing one or another guided by an assessment of their needs in relation to specific moments and circumstances. The focus of this last section of the chapter is on the concepts of 'imagined' and 'constructed' home and the process of transformation of identities within those parameters. These are explored from a double perspective which takes into consideration the roles which the country of origin and the receiving country have played in moulding the *Niños Vascos*' perceptions of belonging, as much as their role as agents of change in the process.

5.2 THE BASQUE REFUGEE CHILDREN

Authors such as Malkki (1995), Barutciski (1998) and Kushner (2006) discuss the complexity and variety of experiences which the term *refugee* encompasses. Echoing this view, in Chapter 1 of this thesis I argued that the loss of home is the unique common characteristic shared by all refugees, therefore we cannot consider them to be a homogeneous group. Although the *Niños Vascos* correspond to this theoretically disparate group, it has been observed that despite their diverse ideological and socio-economic backgrounds, they often appear as a homogeneous group, which they call 'family', as discussed in Chapter 4.

In this respect, at the inaugural lecture of the Basque Children of '37 Association UK the historian speaker stressed the lack of a single narrative of the *Niños Vascos*' experience. However, with regard to the nature of the group as such, he stated:

> We talk about the Basque Children and it's very hard to generalise about this group of children, but they tend to be lumped together. One always sees them photographed in groups; they are always together, on the move together, in football teams, in concert parties. You never see them on their own. One has the sense that they move everywhere very socially in a group.[256]

Based on ethnographic observations, I have traced this gregariousness and detected a strong inclination to group together. For instance, they tend to gather as the group of *Niños Vascos* when they are present at events which include other participants. An informant explains their close relationship:

> We're all part of a family. If you go to the Spanish pensioners centre, you will find the Basque Children section sitting there and in fact the others admire the way we have remained together and we have always helped each other as one large family. This has been a very important aspect in our lives.[257]

From 2005 until 2010 I have attended a number of meals and other celebratory practices which were not strictly particular to the *Niños Vascos*, both in the UK and in Spain. I found remarkable that there are a number of rituals which they permanently perform at these events, such as insisting in sharing their tables with other *Niños Vascos*; convening the *Niños Vascos* present at the event to have pictures of 'nosotros los niños vascos solos'[258]; and choosing other *Niños Vascos* as dance partners. Taking part at these practices and exhibiting publicly their bond develops a collective identity which strengthens both the coherence of the group and its continuity.

This group was brought into existence as a consequence of war and then it remained as one, despite the fact that some individuals moved to distant locations including other countries. Although there is no apparent evidence of any challenge to the acceptance of the group as such, there are discrepancies with regard to the naming of it, a fact which to a certain extent challenges that existence by itself, given the

important role that a name plays as an identity marker. Following Schneider's view, it is argued here that social identities are not static entities but 'are constructed through the use of categories, both those people seek to put themselves into and those others impose upon them' (Schneider 2003:187).

5.2.1 Categorisation

In their study of the Spanish refugee children who were evacuated to the former USSR during the Spanish Civil War, Devillard et al. point out that they

> stand out because of their awareness that national and international events have constructed their history; and also that at individual and collective level, these events have been objectivised as the places, fortunes, misfortunes, separations, decisions, elections, restructurings, etc. that have shaped their lives.[259]

(Devillard et al. 2001:189-190)

This highlights a number of factors which have similarly coincided and have had an impact on the formation and permanence of the group of the *Niños Vascos*. However, whilst recognising the identifiable nature of the collective which they study, Devillard et al. problematise the use of the phrase *niños de la guerra* which is often 'used by the different media, it appears on the name of some associations connected to the collective'[260] (Devillard et al. 2001:37). They discuss the implicitly socio-politically charged condition of this expression, maintaining that its use creates difficulties such as those related to the extent to which it can be applied to identify a variety of collectives. Thus, it can be interpreted as a historical and conceptual construct which belongs to a particular discourse (Devillard et al. 2001).

This nomenclature controversy is a constant with regard to the children who were evacuated during the Civil War regardless of where they were sent, and which poses a considerable methodological challenge to those authors who have an interest in the topic in their attempts to use 'neutral' terminology. For instance Naharro-Calderón opened the course 'De los Niños de la Guerra a los Nietos de la Memoria' (Llanes,

2006) by questioning the audience whether '¿deberían ser los *niños de la guerra* o deberían ser *niños del exilio*?'[261]

The range of terms generally used by the social actors who have been presented in this study, and also by the media and by those who write on this topic, spans a number of combinations of the words *niños, vascos, evacuados, guerra, exilio, generación*[262], *Gernika* and *refugees* mainly. It includes expressions such as *the Basque refugee children, niños vascos, niños de la guerra, niños del exilio, la generación del exilio, the Guernica generation, los niños de Gernika* and *los niños*[263], amongst some others such as *nenes* or *babies* which have been exceptionally observed. Whilst tracing and analysing the multiple variants which have been historically constructed and documented could be a highly stimulating exercise, what is most relevant for the purpose of my enquiry is to analyse why individuals or public bodies choose to use one or another. Also, I examine the level of identification of the *Niños Vascos* with these terms with the aim of uncovering what discourses are supported.

The 'artistic agenda' has been pointed out by informants who took part at the week of events at The Point in Eastleigh, which is analysed in Chapter 4. One of them, a film-maker, explained his selection of words:

> It depends who I'm speaking to. I refer to them as the 'Basque refugee children' or the 'Spanish refugee children', it depends on the audience, it depends if you are writing a script. If you have just used the word 'Basque' in the previous paragraph you might not want to say Basque refugee children so you might put 'Spanish'. Again, it's an artistic thing as much as a political. Well, there might be some political agenda, but it's less important than the script and the sounds.[264]

His quote reveals that he indistinctly uses different terms, whose choice is dictated by two main elements. Firstly he mentions the audience, and secondly literary reasons. He also introduces the political factor, yet this is immediately downplayed in comparison with the other two.

Another informant expressed his choice of a specific expression as a 'selling point'. The organiser of this week of remembrance wrote '*Los niños de Guernica*' and included a picture of the Basque flag on the programme thinking of

> a new audience for the art and the story. By mentioning Gernika people think 'I know that word' and 'I've also seen this flag somewhere'. The reason is that it would pop up when it was in a rack, in the library. People with an interest in Basque culture that's the first thing they'd see and they would pick it up. A way of trying to give a symbol to as many people as possible so as it meant something to them. Also people would say 'why in Eastleigh this "*Los Niños*"…?' and the 'Guernica' was related to the painting.[265]

The 'Basque' theme included in his agenda generates some controversy which will be explored later in this chapter (see 5.2.3).

5.2.2 Niños de la guerra

The phrase *los niños de la guerra* has been widely used at public events and it also appears in the literature.[266] However, this term is not accepted unanimously as we can see in the next excerpt extracted from an ethnographic conversation maintained with the historian Gregorio Arrien in 2008. He interprets the expression in terms of temporality and rejects it, owing to its lack of accuracy:

> Yo no les llamo *niños*, no les llamo *niños de la guerra*, no, porque yo también soy *niño de la guerra* porque nací en la guerra. Es *generación del exilio*, para mí son exiliados, que eso es diferente. Hay dos tipos de evacuaciones, las evacuaciones a nivel interno, y aquí en eso ha sufrido casi todo el mundo, esos para mí son exiliados también, pero a nivel interno, porque esos también sufrieron el tener que abandonar su hogar sin saber en manos de quién iba a quedar. Yo propendo a llamar *generación del exilio*, no *niños de la guerra*, porque *niño de la guerra* es el que ha nacido en la guerra; según eso yo también soy *niño de la guerra*. *Niños vascos de la guerra* somos todos los que hemos nacido en la guerra y hemos sufrido las consecuencias.[267]

A further semantic issue is highlighted by an informant who at an informal conversation during an annual reunion of the *Niños Vascos* (London 2006) showed great concern about the use of the expression *niños de la guerra* to identify them. He stressed:

> Nosotros somos los *olvidados*, somos *niños vascos evacuados*. No somos los *niños de la guerra*, pues eso podrían ser considerados incluso los niños Nazis.[268]

This *niño vasco* also interprets the phrase in temporal terms and stays within the coordinates of war time. Additionally, he raises the issue of the excessive semantic field which it could potentially cover if applied meticulously, to the extent that 'victims' and 'perpetrators' could be part of the same collective. Notwithstanding these issues, this term was chosen to be used publicly at the week of events advertised as *Homenaje a los niños y niñas de la guerra vascos*[269] which was held in Bilbao in June 2008 (Figure 5.1).

 Figure 5.1

In this occasion it was interpreted in a comprehensive sense, which included Basque children from several countries that hosted child evacuees who departed from the Basque Country as a result of the war. However, during an ethnographic conversation, the organiser of the acts gave details of a *niña* who had been approached and initially interviewed as a prospective attendee, but eventually she was not invited:

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A esa le entrevistamos pero al final no vino porque ella no era *niña de la guerra*. Esta fue con su familia más tarde. Yo creo que fue como refugiada más tarde, no sé si con la familia. En principio le grabamos porque creímos que era *niña de la guerra* y luego al ver la grabación vimos que no era *niña de la guerra*. En eso también –igual que en lo de vascos o no vascos–, quisimos ser super-estrictos, porque si abres el abanico a otro tipo de refugiados, claro, entonces ya los homenajeables se convierten en miles. Había que ser super-estricto, ya lo siento, pero *niño de la guerra* es *niño de la guerra*, que es el término que se ha acuñado para los que salieron en tales circunstancias.[270]

In contradistinction to the previous accounts this one defines the expression *niños de la guerra* based on the circumstances of the departure. These circumstances are not explicitly explained, but they appear to be related to the time of departure and also to the fact that this person probably left the country accompanied by her family. Yet it could be argued that the ultimate reason not to include her as a member of the collective of the *niños de la guerra* was the fact that the number of guests had to be restricted, owing to a quota imposed by the funding available. Ironically, I have traced this person and she presents herself and is considered by others as a *niña de la guerra*, as she was a child during the Civil War and she was evacuated to the former USSR as a result of the war.

In addition to the controversy generated by the attribute *de la guerra* due to its lack of specificity to a clearly defined group, this contended expression of *niños de la guerra* is the origin of further tensions, as the word *niños* is also a source of dispute. In Bilbao there are two associations of evacuees of '37, which, as indicated by an informant, evolved from an initial group which was called *Asociación de niños evacuados el 37*[271] (see 0.1). During a telephone conversation this informant explained that this Association had the opportunity to apply for public funding if the word *jubilados* were part of their official name. After some discussions and owing to the lack of agreement, some of the members decided to found a new association whose official name would not contain the word *niños* but its substitute *jubilados*. Thus, currently there are the *Asociación de niños evacuados del 37*[272] and also the *Asociación de jubilados evacuados de la*

guerra civil[273], both in Bilbao. Whilst I have found no other declarations of informants which confirm these reasons for the division, it is surprising that in a relatively small place like Bilbao there are two associations whose memberships have such similar characteristics and are mainly formed by *niños evacuados* who returned from the UK.[274] The fact that they construct a representation of themselves as *niños* or *jubilados* reveals where they place the emphasis of *who* and *what* they are.

Not all of them, though, profess such a strong opinion about the term *niños* and this is how they usually refer to themselves (adding *vascos*, *evacuados*, *de la guerra*, or *exiliados* after it). In many instances they display a humoristic approach to it when speaking in public, making jokes at the fact that they are still being called *niños* despite their age. Interestingly, the phrase '*Toda una vida siendo niños*'[275] (Figure 5.2) was the title of the exhibition which opened the week of homage acts in Bilbao. This statement is particularly remarkable as a metaphor of the key issue of this discussion. While some individuals of this collective are inclined to move on in their lives and become retired *jubilados*, the public discourse maintains a united representation of them as the *niños* who were once deprived of their childhood as a result of a war.
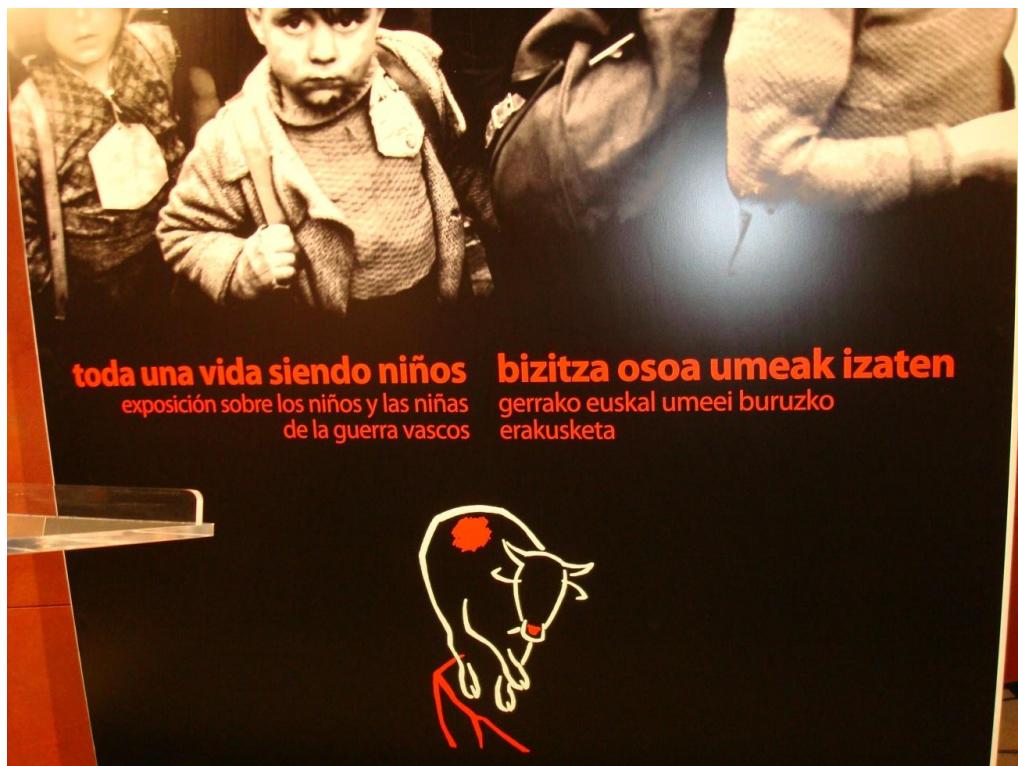
Figure 5.2

In response to this, the *Niños Vascos* follow the official or dominant line which in turn gives them a sense of being as a group and it is the ground where they feel safe, their 'comfort zone'. This identity is reinforced by repetition, thus they tend to repeat anecdotes of their childhood, particularly the episode which marked the start of their experience of forced migration, that is, the evacuation from Santurtzi. Also, by staying within the boundaries of childhood they achieve four purposes:

- First, at this stage they still had a strong sense of belonging and they felt that they had a home to return to, which gives meaning to their past.

- Second, by presenting themselves as a part of a larger entity they are not individuals on their own, which means that there is a network that provides them with support.

- Third, they present to their audience the type of stories which they assume this audience wants to hear by means of engaging in descriptive accounts. These are less distressing than deep reflections.

- Finally, by doing so, they avoid the difficulty of presenting themselves as individuals who had to make difficult choices in their life. Thus, they avoid having to justify those choices.

The organiser of the homage in Bilbao provides an account which is an excellent example to illustrate these points. After he listened to 60 interviews of Basque children which were carried out for his project in a number of countries including the UK, he observed:

> Mi impresión fue que son unos profesionales de contar la aventura del barco. Esa te la cuentan con todo lujo de detalles literarios y adornos, pero en cuanto quieres ir un poco más allá… que la idea era esa, que las entrevistas se basaran en un 20% en la aventura del barco pero que el otro 80% que fuera ya lo de después, es decir, 'cómo ha sido tu vida cuando ya dejas de ser un *niño de la guerra*, cuando ya te das cuenta de que no vas a volver y tienes que buscarte las alubias donde estés'. Desde ese momento… tanto su vida personal, profesional, su retorno, cuando volvieron, su reencuentro, cómo fue, hasta qué punto ha

mantenido el vínculo, si se sienten más de aquí, más de allí, si hubieran mandado ellos a sus hijos estando en la situación de sus padres… de eso no les sacas. En cuanto intentas que entren un poquito más en profundidad te vuelven a contar la aventura del barco. Es ahí donde se sienten a salvo, entrar en una reflexión de vida, de eso ya no.[276]

These observations provide a remarkable insight into a methodological issue involved in the study of memory. It summarises a general disposition which favours a descriptive account of a particular time in their lives, which in some cases was traumatic, instead of an analysis of the issues and the events which configured their life trajectories seen from a more holistic perspective.

The interviewer gives the interviewees the opportunity to move away from that account when he shows an interest in a variety of issues central to their lives; he actively urges them to do further identity work. Nevertheless, the interviewees are unwilling to enter those grounds. It appears that they do not want to 'stop being a *niño de la guerra*', as the representations which they have constructed of themselves as individuals and also as a part of a collective are based on that key element, the evacuation, which is when their collective experience started.

Whilst this attitude has been observed amongst informants of this study, there is also evidence of reflective approaches and attempts to make sense of the past, for instance in the memoirs written by some *Niños Vascos*. At this point it is important to mention that during the writing of this thesis I have observed that the *Niños Vascos* have constructed and reconstructed their stories developing deeper narratives; these increasingly include more elements of their ordinary lives, and how they rebuilt these beyond their experiences of the initial years as 'refugee children'. However, during our recorded conversations the *Niños Vascos* have usually been reluctant to deviate from the story of their childhood which they have narrated to other interviewers. They usually ignored my request to focus their reflections on the current commemorative upsurge and invariably put the accent in describing their boat trip to the UK and their lives in the *colonias*.

5.2.3 Niños vascos

From the information which I gathered at ethnographic observations and conversations, it emerges that the informants of this study describe themselves as the *Basque Children* or *Niños Vascos*. That is also the name by which they are identified by others in the UK as it appears in the literature, films and media broadcasts. It is also the term generally used by associations and institutions, who at a public level often add to it comments such as 'niños vascos (basque children), as they still call themselves despite now being all in their 70s and 80s'[277].

Whilst the expression *niños de la guerra* connotes a large semantic field whose boundaries are perceived as particularly imprecise as it has been discussed earlier, the term *niños vascos* is used specifically for the children who were evacuated from the Basque Country. It distinguishes them from the children who were evacuated from any other location within the Spanish territory during the Civil War. It is, therefore, used in its geographical sense in relation to the point of departure, regardless of the origin and family background of the children who are known by it.

It is noteworthy that the adjective *vascos* used in the destination country in order to identify the *niños*, places centrality in the point of departure, that is, the Basque Country. At this location of departure though, the attribute *vascos* is not perceived as necessary, thus they are sometimes identified as the *niños evacuados*, in a general sense which also includes *niños* evacuated to any other countries, or the *niños ingleses*[278], more specifically. This shows a semantic shift which transfers the centrality of the concept from the point of departure to the point of arrival or *vice versa* depending on where the speaker is.[279]

A distinction could be made between the different meanings which the informants attach to the word 'Basque'. With a few exceptions, besides the geographical interpretation the general tendency of the *Niños Vascos* who I approached for this study was that they consider it from a cultural perspective. However, one informant ascribed a political meaning to it, understanding 'the Basque' as a politicised concept, and thus questioning the suitability of calling himself *niño vasco* in that sense.

For a long time, particularly during the last few decades, the politicisation of the concept 'the Basque' has generated enormous controversy. It has become such a complex topic that it is not possible to discuss it in depth in the context of this research. Nevertheless, to a certain extent this wider debate needs to be taken into account in order to examine the label *niños vascos.*

I structure my analysis following a chronological trajectory of its appearance and further use, with the aim of establishing when and by whom it is used and the reasons behind it. It can be argued that there is also an agenda behind the discourse which erases this term and substitutes it by others more vague, such as *niños de la guerra* or simply *niños*.

From the early days after the evacuation, there are examples of the use of the expressions 'Basque children' and 'Basque refugees' in the press by journalists and readers who wrote in relation to the arrival of the children and their stay at the 'Basque Camp' of Eastleigh. Furthermore, there is documentary evidence of this use which predates the evacuation. For instance, the *Hampshire Chronicle* published a letter to the editor on 20 May 1937 where two readers from Winchester wrote 'In connection with the camp now being established for about 4000 Basque children at North Stoneham'.

Other early examples include letters to the editor and articles of 6 and 9 June, 2 and 13 July, 11 August, and 6 and 29 October, all of them of 1937, in *The Times*. Six months later, on 26 March 1938, the Salvation Army's weekly *The War Cry* published an article entitled '"Basque-ing" in the sunshine', with pictures of the children who are described as the 'Basque Refugee Children'.

With a few exceptions where they are presented as 'Spanish refugee Boys from the Spanish Childrens' [*sic*] Home, Almondbury'[280] or 'Quartet of Spanish Children at Wherstead Park centre, Ipswich'[281], all the documentary and photographic evidence gathered for this study (and which is related to the acts organised throughout the UK to raise funds for the children), presented them as the 'Basque Children'. In fact, the entrance of the camp in Stoneham, Eastleigh, was signalled with a big placard which announced 'Basque Children's Camp' (see Figure 5.3, p 190, and HCC n.d. video).

Arrival in Britain: North Stoneham camp Eastleigh
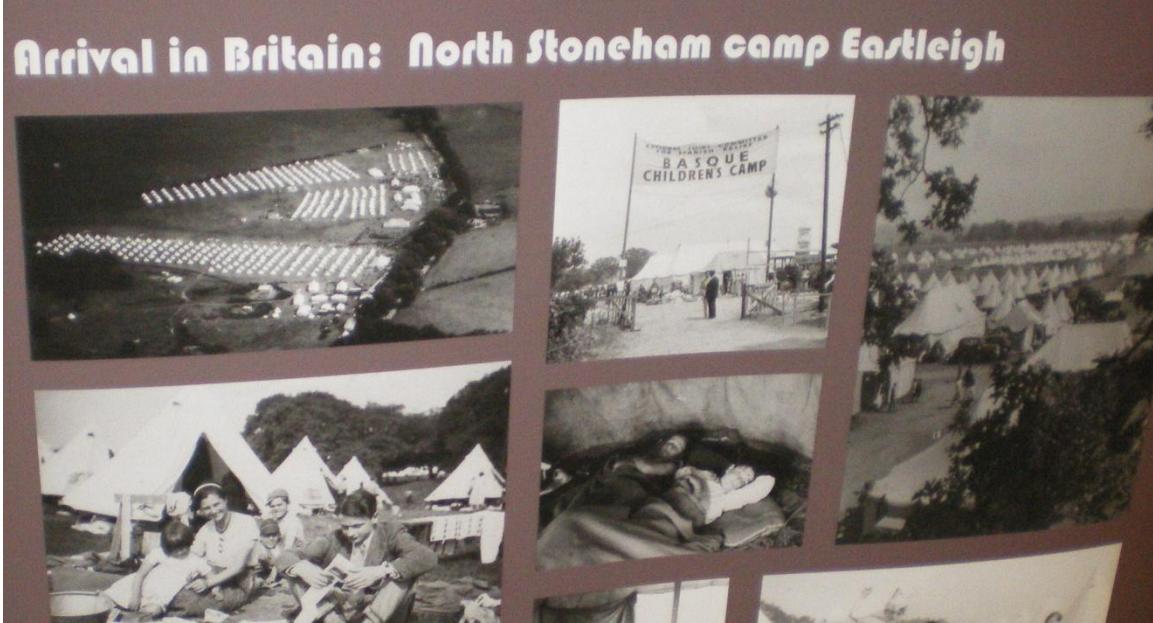
Figure 5.3

There are various written testimonies of *Niños Vascos* who confirm the use of this label:

> Íbamos bastante al cine en el pueblo. Entrábamos sin pagar, sólo hacía falta decir al portero: *Basque Children*, y él contestaba: *Walk in*.[282]

> (Eizaguirre 1999:154)

> Durante un tiempo mi vida transcurría entre el instituto, la nueva casa y mis visitas al cine. Josechu y sus amigos se movían en un pequeño grupo, aislados del resto de los *niños vascos*, que era como nos llamaban, y aún hoy nos siguen llamando así.[283]

> (Santamaría 2008:173)

The term 'Basque children' also appears in the first two books published in the UK in relation to the topic as early as 1937 and 1938. Yvonne Cloud's book published with the title *The Basque Children in England* gave an account of the life of the children at the camp, explaining that 'The Proceeds from the Sale of this Book are being devoted to the Basque Children's Committee' (Cloud 1937:4). In 1938, the war correspondent George Steer wrote '[t]he feeling of ordinary English people for the Basque children was reflected in their gifts' in his book *The Tree of Gernika* (Steer 2009:263).[284]

As emerges from these examples, the *Basque Children* were known by this expression even before their arrival in the UK in May of 1937. To a certain extent it is perplexing that in a foreign country the adjective 'Basque' was used instead of 'Spanish', which one would assume was the more widespread and recognisable by the British population. In order to determine the reasons for this unexpected choice, the evacuation cannot be considered as an act in isolation and it needs to be placed in the context of that period of time. Four main factors can be indicated as the most salient causes of this unpredicted detailed knowledge:

- Firstly, as discussed in Chapter 3 there were well established links between Britain and the Basque Country due to strong commercial links between the two countries (Jackson 1999), thus the British, particularly the people from Southampton, were relatively familiar with the Basque.[285]

- Secondly, the Civil War was closely followed by a considerable sector of the British public, who was aware of the hard situation of the Basque provinces. Furthermore, when volunteers such as Leah Manning became involved in the organisation of the evacuation, they started negotiations with the Basque Government. Thus, the campaign aimed at an evacuation of 'Basque' children, from the 'Basque' Country pressured by a 'Basque' government desperate to send its children to a safe shelter.

- Thirdly, the news of the bombing of Gernika also reached those who had not previously been interested in the war mainly through the reports of George Steer, who was also a Basque sympathiser.

- Finally, when the British Government gave permission for the evacuation, the Basque Children's Committee (BCC) was set up and took responsibility for the children in the UK. It is not surprising that this organisation used the word 'Basque' to refer to the children in all their official procedures, and at the events which they organised throughout the country in order to raise funds.

In relation to these events, Bell points out that the Basque Delegation in London had requested from the BCC that:

rather than dispersing the children individually into English families […] they be kept together, precisely so that they might retain their cultural identity. One practice which, in many colonies, certainly helped to reinforce that sense of collective identity was the formation of groups to perform traditional Basque songs and dances in 'homemade' costumes in the halls, and theatres throughout their locality.

(Bell 1996:77-78)

The paradox is that although in the UK the children were categorised as Basque in relation to mainly geographical parameters, a large number of them did not belong to that category according to some predominant ethnic nationalistic parameters of that time. In this respect, Arrien explains:

El PNV lo asumió [el término 'vascos'] y en aquella época vascos eran prácticamente los del PNV.[286] Los otros eran gente inmigrante. Muchos de los que fueron a Inglaterra eran hijos de emigrantes; castellano-parlantes. Yvonne [Cloud] comete ese disparate; en su libro dice que 'en realidad los vascos que han venido aquí son pocos, y los que hablan euskera son menos'. Ahí se equivoca, porque todos los que eran nacionalistas creo que hablaban algo de euskera. Saber sabían, otra cosa es que hablaran en público. Para mí todo el que vive aquí es vasco. Yo en ese sentido soy muy amplio; para mí todos los que han ido de aquí aunque hayan venido de donde sea. Porque no todos los que evacuaron a Inglaterra eran oriundos de Bizkaia y Gipuzkoa; sino que habían venido de otros sitios. Pero yo como salieron de aquí les llamo vascos. Cloud confunde 'vascos' con los que hablan euskera. Eso es un equívoco, porque aquí somos bilingües y siempre hemos sido. Parece que era costumbre entonces, ser vasco era ser *euskaldun*.[287]

On the one hand this account illustrates the informant's agreement with the geographical interpretation of the 'Basque' discussed above. On the other, it highlights the confusion created by the political party in power which, owing to its xenophobic attitude towards the immigrants, constructed a Basque identity based exclusively on

ethnicity and language; thus excluding those whose background was not originally Basque and who did not speak the Basque language.

All the *Niños Vascos* were in the Basque Country at the time of departure; however, information gathered from conversations with participants reveals that some of them had not been born in the Basque Country, or that they had been born there to parents who had migrated from other areas within the Spanish state.

Three consequences of this can be highlighted which had a major impact in the perceived sense of belonging of the subjects of this study. First, many of them internalised the prevailing nationalistic construct of 'the Basque' and grew up either feeling excluded or excluding others who did not conform to that category. This is a theme which emerges in conversations amongst informants encapsulated in comments such as 'ese es maketo '[288] or 'yo soy maketo. Solo tengo el último apellido vasco'[289].

Second, some of them experienced xenophobic incidents when they were still living in the homeland, which developed a feeling of exclusion and of resentment towards 'the Basque', as this concept was equated to exclusion. The memories of an informant epitomise the alienation experienced by his family:

> They felt resentment that an outsider should encroach upon their domain. Not only that, we were 'maketos'-- immigrants. My parents were simple people and very poor. They had come to Vizcaya from […] They had come hoping to find work and to escape the misery and poverty of subsistence farming in the sierras. This dreadful behaviour towards them, I found contemptible. It was based on ignorance, envy, narrow minded Basque nationalism, and a lack of humanity.[290]

Finally, ironically once they arrived in the receiving country they all came to be known as 'Basques', which gave some of them an identity that they might have been denied earlier at home. Furthermore, this also meant that some were somewhat deprived of their identity, since they might have not considered themselves as Basques before, for instance those who had not been born in the Basque Country. During a conversation which we had at an annual meal an informant claimed:

Yo no tengo identidad. Yo no soy vasco. Yo nací y viví en […] durante los primeros años de mi vida, y después cuando vine a Inglaterra me llamaron *alien*, me robaron mi identidad.[291]

Another informant confesses that he is 'proud to be a maketo' and during our conversations has always rejected his alleged 'Basque' identity, despite the fact that he is part of the collective under study, and also he is on a mission to disseminate the experience of exile of this collective by means of giving lectures, talks, interviews to the media, and participating in a number of events related to the *Niños Vascos*. Paradoxically, in his public appearances he always identifies himself as a *niño vasco* with statements such as:

He estado indagando e investigando sobre esa organización a ver lo que hizo por nosotros, los niños vascos, y lo que hace hoy día.[292]

Nosotros, los niños vascos.[293]

Sometimes the use of the term 'niños' on its own has been observed, but whilst an informant declared that it 'tends to be used affectionately or in passing conversation', the *Niños Vascos* (and their children)[294] approached directly with regard to this matter unanimously expressed their disapproval with comments such as:

I do not like the term 'Niños'. We have always been known as 'The Basque Children or los niños vascos'.[295]

Mum says the children always refer to themselves as 'niños vascos'.[296]

Mi madre es 'Niña Vasca' y todos que vinieron en el *Habana* eran y siempre serán 'Niños Vascos'.[297]

I was surprised that they were referred to as "Los Niños" throughout. They have always been known as "Los Niños Vascos" because they all came from the same region, not because they were the children of Basque descendants.[298]

I think they should be 'niños vascos' as we have always known them.[299]

To lose the 'Vascos' part would be a travesty.[300]

The issues outlined above have an impact in discursive production, and also reveal some occasional contradictions between the private and public personas. Whilst at a private level some *Niños Vascos* maintain that they are not Basque, publicly they accept being categorised as such by others and thus construct a pertinent discourse. I regard this as an excellent example of the conflicts and contradictions between operating parameters characterising collective memory. Interestingly, it has emerged from conversations that informants do not see this issue as problematic. This standpoint is identified by Davies and Harre, who maintain:

> Who one is, is always an open-ended question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions made available within one's own and others' discursive practices and within these practices, the stories through which we make sense of our own and others' lives.

> (Davies & Harre 1990)

In spite of the perceived resignation of some *Niños Vascos* in accepting what could appear to be an imposed identity, they are also social actors whose discourses have implications in the social spaces where they operate. They are agents of change who have the power to both change discourses and also to introduce new ones.[301] We can see a good example of this in a message which was distributed to advertise one of the events held at The Point, Eastleigh, in October 2007:

> Please find attached an electronic flyer detailing a series of cultural events that are taking place at The Point Arts Unit in Eastleigh between 10th and 13th October 2007. These events are part of the 70th Anniversary Commemoration of the arrival in the UK of nearly 4,000 Basque and Spanish evacuee children from the Spanish Civil War.[302]

This excerpt stands out for its new approach to the identitarian presentations of the *Niños Vascos*. Thus far we had seen a dichotomy between the 'Basque children' and the 'Spanish children' which with few exceptions gravitated towards the former. However, the person who wrote the email above found a third way by stating 'Basque and Spanish'.

The dichotomisation 'Basque and Spanish' might be interpreted as a simple answer to the contested accuracy of the phrase. However, it raises two critical issues. Firstly, it threatens the cohesion of the group by means of fragmentation, thus contributing to its invisibility. Secondly, it introduces a new discourse which theoretically does not impose any identity, however it brings an issue to the fore and consequently, once change has happened, other social agents might feel pressured to act upon it. What are they going to say, the *Basque Children*? The *Spanish children*? The *Basque and Spanish children*?

I followed this up and thus far have not found evidence of change of nomenclature within the collective of the *Niños Vascos*. Yet there are examples of projects, academic material and oral evidence which show that within some academic circles they are now occasionally simply labelled '*niños*'. I interpret this simplification as a way out to avoid having to make a difficult choice on a controversial subject. As a consequence, the most unique aspect of this collective dissolves and gets lost within a wider discourse of *niños de la guerra* or similar, thus losing meaning as discussed above.

Also, there is a shift of framework, which takes the discourse away from the field of Basque migration and diaspora, and also Basque identity, discussed by scholars such as Totoricagüena (2005) and Oiarzabal (2004), to the wider discourse of the Spanish exile, thus sanctioning the state official line of unitarism discussed in Chapter 4.

An example of this shift is that despite the fact that this thesis has the title 'The Basque refugee children of the Spanish Civil War in the UK: memory and memorialisation' it has been presented as a 'PhD based on the experiences of Spanish refugees who were evacuated to the UK during the Spanish Civil War' on my University's website despite my efforts to have that vague characterisation changed. It is interesting to note that the same source which used the term 'Basque children'[303] in an advert placed in March 2007 has in 2010 re-labelled those *Basque Children* as 'Spanish refugees'.

By merging this collective and putting the emphasis on the wider and highly heterogeneous phenomenon of the 'Spanish refugees' there is a risk that the narratives

of the *Niños Vascos* as a unique group are lost and they become invisible. The theme of their public invisibility, which has generated a perception of being '*los olvidados*', has been recurrently highlighted by many of my informants in their narratives and I discuss it next.

5.2.4 Los olvidados

Ashplant et al. observe the increase of a 'transnational discourse of trauma, victimhood and human rights' since the mid-1970s and especially since 1989 (Ashplant et al. 2000:25).

The label *los olvidados* is contemplated here as part of a 'victimhood' discourse that apparently contradicts the agentive character of the *Niños Vascos* discussed above. Nevertheless, their perceived vulnerability, particularly during childhood, is also a central aspect of their narratives. Victimisation is reinforced with the use of a number of powerful and dramatic key elements in the accounts of personal experiences, to the extent that we are observing the process of construction of this group's mythology. This translates into a shared language which strengthens the identity of the group as such.

Ashplant et al. expose the function of myths (amongst other 'pre-memories' or 'templates' of the remembrance of a war) as 'the frames through which later conflicts are understood' as they shape personal memory operating at the individuals' psychic level (Ashplant et al. 2000:34). Once these individuals have a 'common' language they are in a position to tell their audience *who* they are. According to Alonso Carballés

> The final result is an incomplete collective memory, with lacunas; at times with a certain amount of myths, but [a memory] which has been accepted, internalised and assimilated as their own by the members of the group.[304]

> (Alonso Carballés 1998:190)

Three main axes can be considered in order to group the supporting elements of the 'victims' discourse, namely experiences prior to the journey, the journey in-between countries itself, and the aftermath, including the *Niños Vascos*' perception of themselves

being ultimately forgotten by the public without recognition or compensation for their suffering.

PRIOR TO THE JOURNEY

Firstly, it is noticeable the emphasis which the informants put in the refusal of admittance by the British Government and the problems related to the organisation of their evacuation. They also accentuate their experiences of separation and shredding of roots, and the loss of family and home, in statements such as:

> Carmen, Ángel and I enjoyed an idyllic childhood […] We travelled to Portugalete on 20 May 1937. We were all crying and it was awful to be torn away from our parents. I didn't want to let go of Mamá's hand.

> (Benjamin 2007:15)

> To look back over events that turned a child into an adult is not easy. They began as a nightmare, saying goodbye to parents and family and the long journey that awaited us.

> (Benjamin 2007:19)

> Nuestra salida fue en un día hermoso y claro, diría que de los mejores de aquella primavera, pero tristísimo al momento en que todas las familias debían separarse de sus hijos. Viajamos por tren desde Bilbao a Santurce. En la estación del tren y en el puerto, el ambiente era de gritos y lloros desgarradores, ¡qué despedida más horrible! ¿Volveríamos a ver a nuestras queridas familias?[305]

> (Benjamin 2007:296)

In these accounts, the use of terms such as 'crying', 'nightmare' and 'tristísimo'[306] which identify and emphasise the intensity of the negative emotions is noteworthy. Furthermore, in the first example a theatrical impression is created by the literary contrast between the idealised beginning of the sentence with 'idyllic childhood' and the later 'torn away'.

This effect is also achieved in the third example by the use of the opposite terms 'de los mejores'[307] and 'gritos y lloros desgarradores'[308], and 'despedida horrible'[309]. The relevance of this is that not only have the *Niños Vascos* constructed a representation of themselves as the casualties of a war, thus, the 'victims', but also they have constructed a myth of their 'idyllic' childhood prior to the evacuation which magnifies their loss.

It is remarkable that whilst one informant describes the day of departure as 'claro'[310] and one of the best of that spring, another informant recalls it 'si la despedida era triste, el día también lo era porque recuerdo que llovía'[311] (Benjamin 2007:288). An informant touches upon this subject confessing his 'romantisation' of his childhood, which is not shared by his wife, owing to the fact that she was too young at the time of the evacuation:

> I mean, Feli – she was only six; she doesn't know anything about Spain. When I start to romanticise about my childhood in Spain, she can't do any of that because she was only a baby.

> (Bell 1996:196)

Connected to the notions of pain and rupture, and the creation of a mythology particular to the group, the idea has been constantly recorded that the *Niños Vascos* were leaving 'only for three months' which they repeat in their accounts. As discussed in Chapter 1, this can be interpreted as a construct which has been developed as a strategy to cope with the distress of the separation. It also helped the children to make meaning of such a traumatic event as the decision of their parents to send them away, which was construed by some as being abandoned (Benjamin 2007:13).[312]

THE JOURNEY

The second axis can be exemplified by numerous explicit quotations of their suffering, both physical and psychological, during their 'nightmarish' and 'horrendous' sea crossing on a 'labyrinthic' ship full of seasick children who were scared, among other reasons, because 'Nos perseguía un barco franquista y todavía oigo el boom boom de sus cañones disparándonos al abandonar aguas españolas'[313] (Benjamin 2007:266).

This is documented in books, memoires, films and accounts which are characterised by the amount of graphic detail in which the informants base the relation of their travelling experience.

An evacuee writes in her memoirs:

> Serían aproximadamente las cuatro de la mañana cuando el navío parece crear vida. Pulsa extrañamente. Ruidos sordos hacen temblar los frágiles tabiques. Las anclas son izadas y la pequeña ciudad flotante, con su inaudita carga de sufrimiento y esperanza se pone en movimiento. Los pequeños viajantes, como movidos por un único impulso, despiertan. Nos dirigimos todos hacía [*sic*] las cubiertas para un último adiós a nuestra querida patria donde quedan los mejores recuerdos de nuestra infancia y nuestros seres más queridos.[314]

> (Barajuán 2005:67)

This account is a good example of the issues highlighted above with regard to a narrative which relies on the use of a variety of dramatic terms and literary resources in order to poeticise and dramatise the experience.

THE AFTERMATH: LIFE AS A REFUGEE/EXILE/ALIEN

The final axis in which this victimhood discourse is based is the negative experiences which marked the lives of the *Niños Vascos* after their arrival in the UK. This includes a perceived sense of public invisibility which crystallised into the adoption of the term *Los Olvidados* to refer to themselves.

Negative feelings are reported with regard to the division to which they were subjected at the camp immediately after their arrival (see Chapter 3 for division on the basis of political affiliation/segregation). This meant that the children were denied the possibility to share the private space of the tents where they slept with other children whom they might have chosen. Also, these children were accustomed both to spend all the time and also to participate in all activities with their siblings and friends regardless of their gender. Nonetheless the girls and boys were segregated in separate tents.

Despite the feelings provoked by the segregation that occurred at the camp site, the children were not deterred from mixing together:

> El campamento estaba dividido, a un lado estaban los nacionalistas, con su tienda-capilla, al otro los no nacionalistas. Nunca pude entender el porqué de esta separación, ni supe de quién fue la idea. Que yo sepa, en ninguna otra parte de Gran Bretaña estuvimos separados en los *Basque Children Centres*, e incluso había un *Comité Central Vasco* en Londres. Pero la gente cruzaba aquella división de vergüenza. Y aparte de políticas mezquinas, estaban los periódicos sensacionalistas ingleses. Algunos fotógrafos se acercaban a la alambrada exterior y repartían unos peniques entre los niños curiosos. Les animaban a jugar apostando el dinero y entonces les sacaban fotos. He visto esas fotos, en primera plana. De asco.[315]

(Eizaguirre 1999:53)

Some children soon faced yet another family fracture when they were separated from their siblings to be sent to different *colonias*. Testimonies provide examples of strategies developed by the children, which sometimes helped them to avoid experiencing, once again, rupture and loss:

> Algo después empezaron a trasladarnos a colonias. Yo me apunté con mi hermano a una. Pero resultó que a mí me llevaban y a él no, por ser pequeño. El día en que yo debía partir me escapé y me escondí en un bosque cercano al campamento, junto a un pueblo llamado Eastleigh. Allí estuve hasta que creí que el autobús ya habría salido hacia la estación de ferrocarril.[316]

(Eizaguirre 1999:108)

In order to be allowed to stay with their siblings some children resorted to lying about their age:

> Empezaron a repartirnos en grupos para enviarnos a otros lugares. Para no separarme de mi hermana, yo dije que tenía once años, dos más de los que en realidad tenía, y que cuidaría de ella.[317]

(Eizaguirre 1999:121)

These accounts bring to light an agentive dimension of the *Niños Vascos*, who from an early stage showed their resilience and their capability to develop strategies which challenged their role as mere passive victims of a world of adults where decisions were made for them without consultation.

However, issues of social dislocation, confusion, and anxiety are regularly raised in accounts, which stress the fact that informants were deprived of a 'normal' childhood in terms of both their rupture with home and also the constant chaos of displacement in the new country. These feelings are summarised in the following comments:

> Now and again when I feel a bit melancholy I realise how higgledy-piggledy our lives have been […] Most of us were too young to be separated from our families at such an early age, because it marks you for the rest of your life.

> (Benjamin 2007:130)

> By the time I was 19 I'd had 8 years of wars.[318]

In addition to anecdotes which express some initial awareness of being in a different country, there are also some deeper identitarian issues raised. A *niña vasca* cheerfully recounts some first impressions:

> Seeing the strange hats the ladies were wearing and the double-decker buses made us laugh and realise how different life was in this land! We were taken to the camp at Eastleigh, and when we saw the fields full of tents, we said: 'Indians!' We had never seen a tent in our lives, let alone thought of sleeping in one.

> (Benjamin 2007:15)

However, her sister states:

> When we arrived [at the next destination after the camp] we were taken up great iron staircases, through long corridors. It was also big and dark, it seemed like a prison […] Eventually, some of us were sent to another of the Salvation Army's orphanages in Brixton. It was a little better, but the food was not. I just

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couldn't eat. My sister Carmen would eat her food and then mine so that we could get two helpings of fruit that she would give me to eat. It was the only thing I liked and it reminded me of home.

(Benjamin 2007:16)

Whilst I am not going to analyse the issue of adaptation to the new diet in depth, it calls for researchers' attention, since this topic provides an excellent angle from which to explore identity.[319] It is raised in detail by numerous subjects, for whom having to eat the unfamiliar food which they found bizarre, and in many cases repulsive, epitomises the feeling of being obliged to change something essential to their sense of self. The profound impact of this at a psychological level is expressed in the account of the husband of a *niña vasca*:

Generally, the treatment by the teachers and the nuns was pretty bad at this convent. The children were punished, being made to stand in the corner of the dormitory at night with their hands above their heads if they didn't finish their meal. The terrible food was served up with the pudding slopped on to the remains of the main course. All this led to Mari Carmen sleepwalking, until one night she was found trying to lift a heavy sash window to escape.

(Benjamin 2007:11)

A *niña vasca* touches upon the subject of the unfamiliar food and also introduces a further issue in connexion to the responsibility placed upon the older siblings who cared for the younger:

Nos llevaron a un lugar lleno de tiendas de campaña, incluso había una grande, cuadrada, que hacía de iglesia. Mi primera impresión fue mala, no me gustaba aquel sitio. Además, la comida me parecía tan rara que pensé que me moriría si comía aquello. Por una cosa o por otra, agarré una colitis y me pasaba los días yendo y viniendo de las zanjas que hacían de letrinas. Menos mal que tenía conmigo a mi hermano mayor.[320]

(Eizaguirre 1999:117-118)

The parents were concerned anticipating insufficient adult supervision for their children, thus the need to develop strategies to minimise the risks. First, parents stressed how important it was to stay together all the time, and second, they insisted that the older ones looked after the others:

> I remember mother saying to my sister Carmen and saying to her 'now you look after your little sister' and I remember papa saying to my brother, 'now you're the eldest and you've got the responsibility of your two sisters and you've got to look after them as well, you've got to stick together'.[321]

An evacuee recalls that as she exceeded the prescribed age limit for children to be evacuated, her parents resorted to lying about her age in order to secure a place on the boat for her, so that she could take care of her younger siblings:

> Yo había cumplido 16. Hicieron trampa mis padres porque querían que viniera porque mis hermanos eran más pequeños que yo y para que les cuidara.[322]

This links to the topic of the necessity of the mother figure which is brought up in some narratives:

> Verdaderamente lo pasamos fatal al recordar los tiempos vividos en Inglaterra, si bien sobre todo nos faltaba la presencia de una madre, tan importante a esa edad.[323]

(Benjamin 2007:221)

Many of the older children took upon themselves the responsibility of filling that role. However, this role meant extra pressure for the older ones, who obviously were also in need of assistance. Some informants acknowledge the fact that the older siblings were more aware of what was going on owing to their age, and that being still children themselves they were the ones in most need of comfort:

> Certainly later on though the general idea was that he [my brother] would um being four years older, would be looking after me, in actual fact he felt the separation from his [our] family so much that perhaps he needed more help than I did.[324]

A *niño vasco* reflects on his role as the 'parental' figure, which was imposed on him despite his inability to fulfil it properly owing to the fact that being a child himself he also needed someone to be responsible for him:

> Conmigo iban dos primos míos algo menores que yo. Antes de embarcar, sus padres y el mío me encargaron con mucha insistencia que cuidara bien de ellos. Visto después de los años el encargo tenía gracia, porque los tres éramos unos niños y era a todos a quien debía de cuidarnos alguien. No obstante, creo que hice todo lo que buenamente pude y que fui para ellos como un hermano mayor. Me daba cuenta de la responsabilidad que había contraído.[325]

> (Eizaguirre 1999:31-32)

Bell presents an example of one of the older children who was in charge of her siblings and which illustrates well the amount of distress that playing such a role engendered. He observes the feeling of anxiety which this girl experienced having to lie to her little brother in order to comfort him for the absence of their mother, and also her feeling of guilt for her past complaints about 'the burden of responsibility put upon her' (Bell 1996:57).[326]

A constant in the narratives is the lack of stability and the sense of uprootedness experienced during the years when the children were in the hands of institutions or foster parents. This unsettling haze is illustrated with statements such as:

> I have no idea how long I was there. Then I went to Liverpool because one of my older sisters was living in Liverpool with a family there and I went to friends of theirs […] and they took me in, you know, as their own. Then, when the bombing got bad in Liverpool during the war, they sent me back to Cambridge. I went back to Cambridge and I think I had three stops there. Isn't it awful – like a rolling stone, aren't I?

> (Bell 1996:147-148)

There are also many accounts which emphasise the feelings of sadness and loneliness experienced after being removed from the places which had become 'home' in the host country:

When I arrived there, I was sad and lonely, missing Cambria House, which had been home for a long time. I also missed my friends, but then I made new friends at the school and became very interested in the work I had to do.

<div align="right">(Benjamin 2007:7)</div>

In addition to this, there was also an element of uncertainty with regard to whether they would be repatriated or not. Many accounts and also documentary evidence stress on the one hand the desire of the British Government, and particularly from the Catholic authorities (Fyrth 1986:231), to repatriate the children as quickly as possible. On the other, the messages from many parents were that their children should stay in the safety of the UK. Thus, the children were placed in the middle of competing demands, and usually in a powerless position without the ability to decide their own future in one country or the other.

There are numerous testimonies which illustrate the sadness of those who were repatriated and had to say goodbye to the host country and the families with whom they lived:

Llegó la despedida, y aquello fue tristísimo, entre lloros y promesas de que algún día volveríamos.[327]

<div align="right">(Eizaguirre 1999:29)</div>

En Enero de 1940 mi padre nos reclamó desde Francia. Me dolió en el alma tener que despedirme de Mrs. Swinden, que había sido para mí una auténtica madre.[328]

<div align="right">(Eizaguirre 1999:24)</div>

Entonces nos reclamó mi padre a mi hermano y a mí. Me compraron ropa nueva para la vuelta a casa. Pero yo no quería volver. Lloré mucho.[329]

<div align="right">(Eizaguirre 1999:133)</div>

These accounts mirror the first departure from home to such a great extent that they lead us to think that the children had found a 'new and happy home' in the hostland, which deviates from the 'victims discourse' analysed in this section. Furthermore, there

are numerous testimonies of *Niños Vascos* who were repatriated, who describe their experience in the UK as 'para mí han sido los días más felices de mi vida'[330]. Thus the question now is whether those who were not repatriated experienced this new home as such.

The initial highly welcoming reception by the British public has become part of the group mythology in the sense that the *Niños Vascos* persistently emphasise how well the public treated them at their arrival. This developed a collective sense of gratitude which has been discussed in Chapter 4 and is observed in a variety of accounts:

> Prefiero acabar recordando con gratitud a aquella Inglaterra y a su gente, que supieron acogernos en un momento tan difícil, que supieron tratarnos como lo que éramos, como a seres humanos, en su tierra de la mantequilla.[331]

(Eizaguirre 1999:25)

> También me acordaré siempre del espléndido pueblo inglés, que nos recibió y nos trató de maravilla, hasta conseguir hacernos olvidar a menudo nuestra triste situación.[332]

(Eizaguirre 1999:34)

However, there is a fundamental shift of the public response with regard to the *Niños Vascos* which impacts greatly on their perception of the host country and their feeling of belonging. The two main contributing factors are the closure of the *colonias* and the change of their refugee status (see Chapter 3 for context).

A number of accounts show the contradictions involved in the changes of their legal status. They also reveal the negative implications of the change of status. Whilst the *Niños Vascos* were labelled as refugees it was acknowledged that they could not return to their country of origin and therefore deserved the public's sympathy and support; but once they were re-categorised as 'aliens' and particularly as 'enemy' aliens, they started to be seen in a more negative light. Kushner calls attention to the negative consequences which involves the relabelling 'refugee' to 'undesirable alien' or 'enemy alien'. He points out that '[n]ew labels are being used, not only to recognize the

complexity of forced migration, but more as instruments of control, restrictionism and disengagement' (Kushner 2006:7). There are numerous accounts which show how disruptive this was with regard to the rhythm of their everyday lives,[333] particularly because they were having to face the challenges of growing up and transition to adulthood at the same time as they were losing the public's backing.

During a conversation which I had with an informant at an annual reunion (London, May 2006), he pointed at some of the issues with which they had to cope:

> Somos los olvidados, no nos dieron pasaporte, éramos enemigos *aliens*. Cuando nos casamos en el Reino Unido Franco no reconoció nuestras bodas, pues no eran católicas ni religiosas, y consideraron a nuestros hijos bastardos.[334]

This point is also raised by an informant who recounts the questions he was asked at the Spanish Consulate in London when he went there to request Spanish nationality in order to have a passport:

> She asked if I was married and I said I was. 'At church?' 'Yes.' 'At the catholic church?' 'No, at the protestant one'. In that case my marriage was not legally recognised and I would have to have a single person's passport. […] 'have you children?' I said yes, I had a son, but of course, he was 'un bastardo'.[335]

His testimony exposes the humiliating treatment to which the *Niños Vascos* were subjected by the state apparatus. This apparatus not only downgraded their status in Britain, but also failed to recognise their civilian rights in Spain.

These statements are poignant examples which combine a number of factors discussed above. They imply that the much-needed sense of reassurance mentioned earlier did not fully materialise for a long period of time. It also in part explains the number of stories which draw on the invisibility of the *Niños Vascos* within the Spanish and the British contexts.

To discuss this point in more detail, finally I examine a topic which was mentioned by informants on a regular basis, that is, their perception of the group feeling excluded from history. Furthermore, calling themselves *Los Olvidados* is an expression of their perceived invisibility in public life which is a source of distress to

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the extent that one of the primary aims of the Basque Children of '37 Association UK is 'To place the experience of the exile within its rightful historical context, so the *niños* should not be *los olvidados*'[336].

Authors highlight the little attention that has been paid to the children in the context of the Spanish exile:

> There is no doubt that the child exile is the great unknown and the great absentee in the history of the Spanish exile, where they have featured very lightly […] the child exile, a *passive subject* of this history, only added tragic brushstrokes lacking any ideological and representative charge; from this follows that they had and have had a place of a second order in the studies of the Spanish exile.[337]

(Alonso Carballés 1997:167)

Whilst not completely in disagreement with this statement, I contest the 'passive' character of the children's role, particularly with regard to my specific case study. As discussed in Chapter 3, these children were the ultimate incarnation of a number of political issues and paradoxes which occurred during the Civil War at an international level. There is factual evidence that in many respects their role has been a historically 'neglected' and 'obscure'[338] subject. They have not been included in history books or school curricula, and their presence in the British landscape has been nearly non-existent for many years.

Lala Isla writes in her book of life stories *Aventuras en la Nostalgia* (which includes testimonies of a variety of Spanish migrants and a *niño vasco* amongst them):

> En 2004 se publicó *Bloody Foreigners* (jodidos extranjeros) aludiendo el título a uno de los insultos que se decían en este país a los extranjeros. En él se mencionan las diferentes emigraciones que han contribuido a hacer de este país lo que es, empezando por la prehistoria, y asombra al leerlo cuanto de lo que

hoy se considera como la esencia del Reino Unido es aportación foránea. Lo que

es más ¡En ningún momento de sus casi quinientas páginas hay una sola

mención a los españoles y españolas![339]

(Isla 2008:16)

In this respect, a *niño vasco* summarises the views of many others with a simple, yet

highly powerful, 'England forgot about us' (Bell 1996:188). This lack of attention to the

Niños Vascos has been pointed out by specialists in the topic such as Arrien (1991), Bell

(1996), Fyrth (1986) and Benjamin[340], and it has also been claimed at commemorative

practices, in newsletters, and by other means of communication which have given a

voice to the members of the collective. An informant who for the last few years has

been involved in a variety of acts to disseminate this particular experience of exile,

declared his firm aim to uncover this 'still unknown' episode of the history of Spain

during a conversation which we had in March 2007. He stated:

Ésta es la última ocasión de dar a conocer lo que pasó, de que se sepa la

tragedia de España. Todavía hay gente que no quiere que se sepa lo que pasó.

En 40 años de historia de España todavía falta un capítulo.[341]

However, during the last few years there has been a considerable increase in

commemorative practices in relation to the Civil War and its consequences, within the

wider context of war commemoration. In this climate the *Niños Vascos* have

increasingly made their mark and have found a space in which they can tell their

stories to an audience. They feel that they belong in this social space and at the same

time that this space belongs to them.

The host of a night of performances during the week of commemorative events

which was held at The Point in Eastleigh (October 2007), remarked that despite the fact

that in the past it had been 'an obscure subject… now this incident of the Basque

Children arriving in England has become quite well known, quite celebrated'. This

development is evoked by an informant in a letter which he posted to the organisers of

the 70th anniversary of the arrival at Southampton:

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Supermagnificent blue plaque unveiled by the Spanish Ambassador His Excellency Carlos Miranda an indelible homage for posterity in memory of 4,000 war weary refugee Basque children 'The Guernica Generation' never to be forgotten that they were historical monuments of adversity in bombardment hunger and besiegement from air sea and land.[342]

The relevance of this is that not only did this *niño vasco* send the letter to the organisers, but he also distributed it among other *Niños Vascos* and one of these forwarded it to me with a note which said 'Te mando la copia de la carta que […] ha escrito, que bien lo ha puesto, me la mandó […]'[343]. Firstly, the way this letter was disseminated highlights the existence of a social network which permits individuals to maintain their links with the group, and also to share information which might then be spread to a greater audience. Thus the 'invisible' becomes 'visible'.

Secondly, these individuals agree on their new identity as 'historical monuments' which establishes their historical value and indicates a major shift from the 'alien' and 'forgotten' position. Furthermore, they are engaging in a new approach which moves away from the 'victims' discourse.

The *Niños Vascos* have appeared in documentary films; have been interviewed by the press and the media in general; have published their memoires; and have been invited to give talks both at institutional and at private events. The amount of resource and media coverage invested in them reveals a new phase in the trajectory of the *Niños Vascos* in which due to the protagonist role they play it is at the very least complex, if not controversial, to continue to use the label *los olvidados* (Sabín-Fernández 2010).

5.3 SENSE OF BELONGING

Thus far my analysis of the *Niños Vascos*' identity construction process has focused upon their identity as members of the distinctive group to which they belong. After exploring *who* they are as a group and the group's quest to become visible in public, my next question is to find out who they are as individuals and what their perceived social place is as such. In the preceding section I have presented some insights into the

Niños Vascos' understanding of a changing home during their childhood and adolescence. However, this central aspect needs to be further examined from an angle which focuses on the fluidity of these individuals' sense of belonging in relation to both the homeland and also the hostland. In order to uncover the complexity of the idea of 'home', I next examine this concept by looking at how it has been constructed over time, and what different meanings of it are presented in the *Niños Vascos*' narratives.

5.3.1 Imagined home: 'Home is where one starts from': Stable and Safe? Place to return to?

The use of the term '*Niños Vascos*' reminds them of what they were at the precise moment of their evacuation. Furthermore, it freezes time at the point when their experience of forced migration started. To a certain extent, this compensates for the disorienting fracture with home by giving them some sense of fixed and essential identity prior to that moment; yet conceptualising this home from which they were being separated as something static and stable in their existences is rather problematic. Naficy powerfully maintains that

> today more than ever, the empirical and metaphorical house, home, and homeland are in crisis. Millions of people do not or cannot live in their own homeland, many others are homeless within their native lands, and many of those who own houses are so afraid of what lies beyond that they have turned their dwellings into fortresses.

(Naficy 1999:6)

The theoretical instance in which home can be conceived as most immobile and unchanging is when it is defined within the parameters of a physical space. However, when the architectural historian Joseph Rykwert poses the question of whether a home needs to be 'anything built at all, any fabric', he maintains that this is a requirement for a 'house', but not for a 'home' (Rykwert 1991:51). Subsequently, he connects the notion of home to the 'situation – with its implication of well-being, stability, ownership'

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(1991:54). Still within the realm of physicality and place, we can interpret his broad definition of '[h]ome is where one starts from' (1991:51) to refer to the homeland.

As Rapport and Dawson point out, home has been traditionally defined as

> the stable physical centre of one's universe – a safe and still place to leave and return to (whether house, village, region or nation), and a principal focus of one's concern and control.
>
> (Rapport & Dawson 1998:6)

However, these authors postulate that:

> A broader understanding is possible and necessary, one concerned less with the routinization of space and time than with their fluidity and with individuals' continuous movement through them.
>
> (Rapport & Dawson 1998:7)

This is particularly relevant to the present discussion for two main reasons. For a number of years the place from which the refugee children departed could be considered neither stable nor safe. It was a war zone, which means that large parts of the population found themselves obliged to migrate from one place to another looking for safety; sometimes more than once. Some informants report internal relocations within the Basque Country before they were finally taken to Bilbao to be evacuated, hence home as a place of refuge and safety had become unfamiliar and unsafe.

Second, as Malkki indicates,

> if 'home' is where one feels most safe and at ease, instead of some essentialized point on the map, then it is far from clear that returning where one fled from is the same thing as 'going home'.
>
> (Malkki 1995:509)

During the post-war years the *Niños Vascos* were in principle able to return, however, the home which they had left during their childhood did not exist anymore. The following testimony illustrates the main reason which marked the disappearance of that home, namely that some of the parents were no longer there:

Many of us have no real home in Spain to go to, as our parents were driven
away and they, too, are living in foreign lands.[344]

Also, the new political context placed them at a disadvantaged, if not dangerous,
position in society. As time went on and the danger diminished, they went back for
short periods of time to see their families and introduce their spouses and children to
their family. However, some informants express their disengagement in comments
such as 'I feel like a stranger there now'[345]; home had become a foreign place for them.
When informants are asked about their thoughts with regard to return, their accounts
frequently convey feelings of detachment:

we had settled down to the English way of life […] For so many of the children,
return to Spain was almost impossible. For some of us, repatriation was
possible, but not until after the Second World War. Life as we knew it had
changed.

(Benjamin 2007:19)

The emphasis placed on feelings in the previous testimonies shows a shift from a
traditional view of home framed within restrictive bi-dimensional time and spatial
coordinates. This traditional dualistic and static definition of the concept of home is
insufficient in the complex and rapidly changing world of today characterised by the
transnational movement of people. Thus, I consider more appropriate to engage in a
multidimensional analysis of home which also takes into account 'feelings' of
belonging, and traces the dynamics, intricacy, and contradictions of these in addition to
the tensions originated by its changing nature.

5.3.2 Constructed home

5.3.2.1 Parameters: Space? Time? Feelings?

Urkizu raises the questions 'What is exile? A place? A time? A feeling of sadness? A
type of melancholy?'[346] (Urkizu 1995 no page). These reflect the multiple nature of the
exile, namely space, time, and also the feelings of sadness and melancholy or nostalgia
also mentioned by Said (2000) and Schwarzstein (2001). As refugees the *Niños Vascos*

experienced a feeling of loss which was intensified by the perceived abandonment documented in some accounts:

> After all the years of thinking herself abandoned, the post-war years were a happy time for her.

(Benjamin 2007:13)

> Being separated from my parents at such tender age and feeling abandoned affected me greatly.

(Benjamin 2007:126)

The feeling of loss was reinforced and amplified by repetition. A fact which had a considerable impact in the lives of the *Niños Vascos* was that nothing permanent could and would be established for years, as very often when they were starting to develop a bond of mutual affection they were abruptly separated from it and taken somewhere else. This is stressed by a number of informants, who mention the emotional problems and loneliness originated by the impossibility to forge any affective relationships owing to the fact that they were constantly transferred from one place to another:

> after some months there where I felt terribly lonely because I lost all my friends and this is the thing that um starts to come through into my life, a sense of loneliness and separation and um once on the beach at Tynemouth wondering how I could escape and join my other friends.[347]

> I felt of course all my friendships I had made was simply shattered and I remember feeling extremely um lonely and extremely sad and trying to see there was a way in which I could rejoin my many friends that I had made in Swansea.[348]

In addition to the issue of loss voiced in these accounts which is intrinsic to the exile experience, a key characteristic observed specific to child exile is the confusion and lack of understanding of the reasons why they were moved from one place to another. The following account highlights the distressing and disorienting effect which the lack of explanations had upon a *niño vasco*:

Yes, it was obviously the um being without family but also the constant separation from other children that one established some sort of relationship and friendship with and suddenly being separated for no reason that I could understand. Nothing was explained, one was simply um put on a plane and um arrived at another destination. There was a total lack of explanation as to what was going on, so it was one of total bewilderment because um even from a Brampton, um, again I think it was four of us, yes that's right, four of us we travelled all the way down to Margate, […] in Margate, that is when I was finally separated from my brother and once again there was just no explanation.[349]

Testimonies point towards a sense of not-belonging which is aggravated by the sense of vulnerability and insecurity caused by old age. A *niña vasca* explains the impact which her lack of health and her old age have had on her feelings of longing for the home country:

Por no estar bien, y la edad también, no sales, no puedes hacer esto, no puedes hacer lo otro y después estás pensando en lo que te pasó cuando eras pequeña, lo de venir a Inglaterra, te quedas sola y estás pensando, pensando, y yo me pongo muy triste. España te llama. Yo creo que los niños vascos, cuando lees el libro de las memorias yo creo que ellos también piensan, España sí que les llama. Yo creo que cuando tú vas a otro país después, como tú por ejemplo, si te quedas aquí con Mark y te pones vieja, España te llamará. Ahora no, yo no, bueno, yo sí que pensaba mucho. Si te pones tú vieja y te quedas aquí yo creo que muchas veces estarás pensando 'España me llama'. Porque yo creo que donde una persona nace ese país te llama.[350]

It can be argued that this does not imply lack of belonging in Britain, but a feeling of 'longing' for Spain which is exacerbated by her old age. However, there are accounts which explicitly emphasise the feeling of lack of belonging and its strong connection to old age, which firstly, makes the *Niños Vascos* more aware of it and its negative impact on their lives, and secondly, reinforces it:

first of all there is a certain degree of lack of security throughout my life um, a sense of um uneasiness it has um as I get older I realised the effect that it has had upon me more and more, though I get the impression of being a person of decision I know deep inside me that this isn't so and um I do feel that um in, whilst in many ways I have been able to adapt myself apparently to British Society, emotionally I feel I am not… I have read extensively about Spanish literature and history, I feel really that I don't belong. I am very fortunate in that apparently I am able to deal with two different cultures fairly deeply through my education but I do not belong to either and this is as I get older, I feel this more and more strongly and still the sense of insecurity and loneliness really.[351]

Authors such as Clifford (1994) and Said (2000) have discussed the frequently individualistic focus of exile, raising the issue of loneliness which is illustrated in the aforementioned testimonies.[352] Feelings of isolation and detachment at a national level pervade the narratives, but are also observed in connection to personal issues. For instance, some subjects mention that they did not feel the temporary homes to which they were taken during their childhood and teenage years to be their real home:

You never had the liberty of asking people round to your home. I never felt I had the freedom to say, 'Come with me.' You always had to wait to be asked.

(Bell 1996:149)

However, a common characteristic amongst the narratives of the *Niños Vascos* is the contradictions and changes of opinion with regard to whether they consider the host country as home. Despite the disengagement shown at times, there are many instances when they consider Britain as home, particularly when the narratives are framed within the discourse of gratitude:

As a child you didn't really realise the responsibility they [all the people who helped us] were taking on, but looking back on my life as an older person, it's a pity most of them are not here to really give them a big thank you, because they deserve it, for the kindness, for being so helpful giving us a home in England.[353]

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5.3.2.2 Dichotomy: Spanish? English?

The feeling of not-belonging is sometimes reinforced by how the displaced person's presence is confronted by 'the others', who explicitly mark the refugee as an outsider or a 'dumb foreigner'[354]. This is highlighted by an informant in a brief but eloquent comment '[a]quí en Inglaterra dicen que soy español y allí que soy inglés'[355] which he made during a conversation that we had on 11 October 2007 in Eastleigh. Remarkably, when we said goodbye to each other his farewell was 'agur, que es la única palabra [in Basque] que sé, así que tengo que usarla'[356]. This shows that in spite of the alienation experienced in both his country of origin and also the country which received him, he has a strong will to keep an identity link with his native home, expressed in this case by means of a linguistic mark.

Many statements of *Niños Vascos* provide excellent insights into how difficult they find it to identify themselves with regard to where they belong when their narratives are framed within a dualistic approach to the concept of home.

> I don't know what I am – neither one thing, nor the other – and I think
> practically everyone will tell you that too.
>
> (Bell 1996:197)

> We feel a foreigner in both countries.
>
> (Bell 1996:197)

> Otro problema es el de nuestra identidad. En Inglaterra somos extranjeros, a
> pesar de todo el tiempo que llevamos viviendo aquí, pero cuando volvemos a
> nuestra tierra nos convertimos en 'ingleses'.[357]
>
> (Santamaría 2008:186)

> To tell you the truth, we're misfits in both places.
>
> (Bell 1996:197)

> It was not an easy time for any of us. We lost and at the same time gained a
> great deal. I lost my identity. I am neither Spanish nor English.
>
> (Benjamin 2007:136)

It is claimed here that this polarisation and the need to chose whether they belong to one country *or* the other comes from the fundamental dichotomy which characterises how the human brain works, which structures the questions and answers to big issues with a *yes* or a *no*, *us* or *the others* or *one thing* or the *other*. There is also a societal demand which remains attached to a traditional conception of home and forces these individuals to choose in those terms. This becomes evident when interviewers ask the *Niños Vascos* questions such as 'do you feel Welsh or Spanish, what is your identity?' or 'at this stage, did you think "now England is my home"?'[358] In this regard Cardelús and Pascual indicate the psychological or affective component stating 'each person *is* from a place, has *their* village, *their* city, *their* region and *their* country'[359] (Cardelús & Pascual 1979:244). This dichotomising approach to identity issues permeates to individuals and requests them to choose between two primary aspects which are presented as opposites and exclusive. This type of discourse, in which the *Niños Vascos*' narratives are embedded, has a highly negative impact. It jeopardises the individual's sense of self as a whole entity and leads to a feeling of mutilation documented in statements such as:

Te falta algo, te sientes mitad de aquí mitad de allí.[360]

It also generates problems which ultimately lead to a conflict of loyalties more in connection to the state interests than to real individual concerns. A consequence of this is that, by having to pronounce their allegiance to one state *or* the other, these individuals are forced to make a choice that implicitly proclaims their foreignness in one of them. Thus, they are deprived of the possibility to have more than one home. On this, the following account presents a good example of how far a *niño vasco* is prepared to go in order to prove that he is not a mere 'foreigner', and how he negotiated his commitment to 'defend King and Country':

Then they made me take the Oath of Allegiance, which I refused […] And then a bloke from the Air Ministry came with a document, and he says to read this. And I read it. 'You agree to that?' I says, 'Yes, I agree to that.' 'Well, sign here.' And I signed there. I was signing that I was willing to serve in the British forces and obey all orders and commands and all the other things, during the duration

> of the War. Only! Only for the duration. Also, if there was going to be a war
> against Spain, I refuse!

<div align="right">(Bell 1996:139-140)</div>

At first reading, his statement could be interpreted to express that Spain is where he ultimately belongs, that is the subject of his leaning and loyalties. However, looking more carefully it becomes evident that he is not choosing where he belongs, but where he does *not* ultimately and unconditionally belong. All he reveals is that in the case of a war between both countries he would not be on the British side to fight Spain, but he does not say he would be on the Spanish side, fighting Britain, either.

The conflict which the state's dichotomising requirement entails is revealed in the hesitancy shown by a *niña vasca* to give a straight answer when she is questioned about her allegiances:

> I was very very very busy, so Spain was in the background, it was over there
> my country, I come from there, but… sometimes I have been asked that here
> and there, where is your loyalties lie, if you are against the war or with it…
> where your loyalties lie. I would have to say, it will depend on the
> circumstances, I find myself then that I would say I am here, or I am not here, I
> couldn't really until maybe that point might come one day I don't know, I
> doubt it, I am very settled here now after all these years.[361]

She does not wish to take part, and thus legitimise, a dualistic discourse that commands she chooses 'one' country *or* 'the other', as she finds this distressing and unnecessary, which reflects my observation that a requirement for strict affiliation is more the state's concern than that of individuals. What is most relevant in her reflection is that by declaring that she has different selves which she discloses according to circumstances, she moves away from a conceptualisation of an individual's identity as something fixed and static into a dynamic and organic construction of it. Schneider raises this point and observes that 'identity is something that must be accomplished over and over again, in every social interaction, constantly negotiated and maintained through communicative practice' (Schneider 2003:188).

This leads to the subject of citizenship, which at some point in their lives became a question that the *Niños Vascos* inevitably had to confront (see Chapter 3). Kearney indicates that refugees and displaced persons 'are becoming an increasing percentage of the world population, with identities that make concepts such as citizenship and resettlement problematic' (Kearney 1995:559). This is reflected in the number of paradoxes discussed earlier with regard to the changing status of the *Niños Vascos*, which spanned from being refugees to stateless persons.

While informants generally disclose a lack of inclination towards a specific nationality, they report the need for a passport for a number of practical reasons. It emerges from testimonies that sometimes this was an official requirement if they married a British subject. Some informants explain that they applied for British nationality in order to avoid the risk of being taken to jail when they visited Spain during Franco's dictatorship. Nonetheless there were also those for whom having Spanish citizenship was important and they campaigned to obtain it during the 1960s. Finally, there are some who in order to prove how irrelevant this subject is to them, when they are asked about their nationality and passport make comments such as:

> I am a citizen of the world.[362]

> Mine is European. I am a European citizen.[363]

> I have two passports, one Spanish and one English, but I don't care, I don't know if they are both valid.[364]

In October 2007 I accompanied an informant to check in at a hotel. When the receptionist asked him whether he was a British citizen his answer was 'No, I'm Spanish and a European citizen, if I were British I'd be a servant of the Queen!' Then he started to laugh loudly explaining that his birthday was on the 21st April, the same day as the Queen's and that she had sent him a birthday card for his 81st anniversary.[365] The relevance of this is that the important issue for him was that he did not want to be a 'servant', while the question of nationality was immaterial.

Another consequence of understanding identity in dualistic and exclusive terms is the difficulty of dealing with existentialist questions, for instance those related to

death. Some informants declare that they have made their life in England, which 'after so many years' they consider their home. Yet they confess that their dream would be to return to their place of origin or that if they die in the UK their body is taken back. Nevertheless, most informants manifest such a strong attachment to the family which they have raised in Britain that they have decided not to leave the country, as that is where their children and grandchildren have been born and live. Furthermore, sometimes the dichotomy is between their biological family and the *Niños Vascos* family. Those who have moved away from the latter to be nearer their children, who want to look after them in their old age, show signs of sadness due to yet another separation in their lives. An informant expresses her concern about a *niña vasca* who accepted having to move near her child:

> Y claro, si la hija tiene que ir a trabajar, si se queda sola, está triste, está dando falta a los niños vascos amigos.[366]

The constant struggles which these individuals have to face when they are put in a position which demands that they have to decide which home is 'more' home call for a new approach to this concept which needs to take into account mobility, memories, and desires, and also the fact that many people have more than one home. For instance in the following account, the adversative conjunction 'but' shows a tension which originates from the fact that the informant interprets her double identity of having two homes as conflictive:

> We have now been in England for 70 years and we would like to say a great thank you to everyone for the care and devotion they showed us at a very sad time in our young lives. But in my heart the little town of Berango will be with me always.

> (Benjamin 2007:19)

The comprehensive approach proposed here entails a shift of identity speak from antithetical 'but's to constructive 'also's, that is, 'double' or 'multiple-belongings' which better correspond to the 'new forms of social belonging [which] arise out of the dual processes of technological advances in communications and the geographic

mobility of populations' discussed by Bernal (2005:661). This subject is examined in more depth in the last section of this chapter (5.4.4).

5.3.2.3 Other approaches

5.3.2.3.1 <u>Art – creating a world of their own</u>

In order to cope with the issues discussed so far, some individuals opt for a third option, and create a new space where they can express themselves freely and construct their personal paradigm of home by means of artistry. Said (2000) calls attention to the tendency amongst exiles to construct worlds of their own, thus novelists, intellectuals and language teachers are frequent among them. It has emerged from my research that a significant number of *Niños Vascos* chose creative professions such as painters and dancers, and also teachers, or have spent a significant part of their lives painting and writing. A *niño vasco* describes the experience of exile as 'It's inspiring'.[367] I argue that at the same time as they constructed a home by means of fantasy, the writing and painting themselves also became home for them, providing continuity to an imaginary 'stable' past.

On this line, Rushdie emphasises the dual nature of the identity of refugees and exiles as something plural and partial at the same time, considering that the ambiguous ground they inhabit 'is not an infertile territory for a writer to occupy' (Rushdie 1992:15). Agosin, an exile writer herself, maintains that her homeland is 'language, memory, the invention of it' while she reflects on her occupation claiming that '[t]he writer in exile tries to recreate what has been drastically lost' (Agosin 1995:13-15). This phenomenon is observed in the constant references to the themes of exile and home in the works of art created by one of the *Niños Vascos*.[368] Furthermore, this *niño vasco* provides an excellent example of the powerful medium which art can be with relation to identity construction, as he made up two artistic names for himself depending on the domain in which these were used. His name 'Jose María Martínez Castillo' becomes 'Coqué (or Coquë) Martínez' in his paintings and 'Kokë Markiniz' when he

writes, while he is known as Koke by his relatives and friends (see Figure 5.4 with the different aliases used by himself in one of his self-portraits).

CASTILLO MARTÍNEZ, JOSÉ MARÍA
[pen.] Kokë Markíniz (Coquë Martínez); [b.] 21 April 1926; Cabredo Navarra, Spain; [p.] Tirso Martínez,
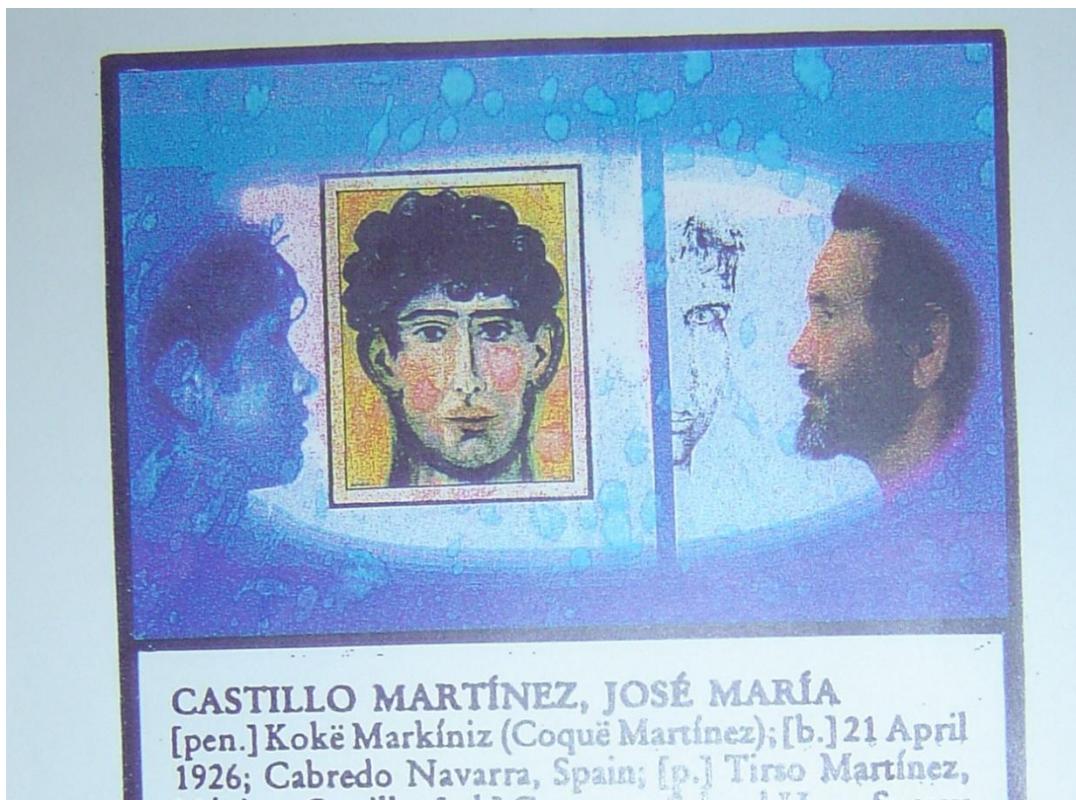
Figure 5.4

Koke was a multi-talented professional artist known as a painter, as a poet and as a sculptor (see Morales 2007 DVD for examples of Koke's art). In April 2009, during his humanistic funeral, the minister of the ceremony mentioned some significant features of his life, including that 'the trauma of his early life and the Civil War marked him for the rest of his life – and was ever present in his paintings and writings'[369].

In January 2008, Koke with two other amateur artists, one of whom was also a *niño vasco*, exhibited some of their work at an exhibition of paintings in London. While the art displayed by Koke included a variety of representations of his life as an exile with some dark symbols and illustrations in it, the other *niño vasco*'s paintings were mainly calm and had light placid colours. When I asked about the topics of these serene pictures, the artist declared that they were the places of his childhood, explaining them in detail.

The significance of this case is that, despite their different interpretations, both informants touch upon the same subject and construct the lost home in their own artistic language, to the extent that this lost home was the theme of more than half of the paintings exhibited by one of the artists. Furthermore, while one of them paints a disturbing, complex and somewhat chaotic picture of exile, the other portraits an idyllic and peaceful image of home which can be used as an example of the mythical sense attached to the idea of the home country amongst migrant populations discussed by Cohen (1997).

A legendary image of mother home is highlighted by some references which frequently appear in accounts of the *Niños Vascos* for example with regard to human relations, people's sense of hospitality, the landscape, food and other everyday life topics and stereotypes. However, this is usually associated to the past, particularly to an idyllic recreation of their childhood.

5.3.2.3.2 <u>Making one's home</u>

It has also been observed that some informants, whilst still staying within the conventional dualistic approach to the notion of home, attempt a more open approach by allocating different areas of their psyche to each one of the perceived options. Bell distinguishes between 'emotional and practical attachments' in those who declare:

> The practical part of me is very British […] But from the sentimental side – going to Spain and talking to anybody in the street, which you don't do here, takes me back.

> (Bell 1996:199)

> Home is here [in Britain] […] But sentiment? [...] Oh, Spanish. Oh, the sentiment is very Spanish.

> (Bell 1996:199)

These statements reveal a compromise which firstly, allows the *Niños Vascos* to remain loyal to both countries, and secondly, allows them to have two homes. However, their

narratives remain within the traditional discourse of polarisation and they still feel they have to choose one *or* the other. It is contended here that this dichotomy needs to be deconstructed and new questions need to be made in order to address the confusion generated when individuals are forced into choosing between only two possible options.

A line of questioning such as: '[s]o, after more than half a century of living in England, how may these people be defined? Are they Spanish *or*[370] are they English?' (Bell 1996:197) voices the way in which society is approaching and thinking of the *Niños Vascos*' identity in terms of one *or* the other. This presents an identity 'problem' which produces a type of answer in those terms. What this thesis argues is that these leading questions should be substituted with open questions to offer the possibility to see one's own identity as accumulative and inclusive instead of exclusive; thus allowing the informants come to terms with some of the issues raised throughout this investigation.

In this respect McLeod maintains that it is difficult to retain this conventional dualistic and static narrative of belonging in a world where people think of their relation to places in a new manner, many 'living "in-between" different nations, feeling neither here nor there' (McLeod 2000:214). Whilst in principle we agree with his statement, the argument here is that this 'in-between' does not need to exclude the 'here' and the 'there' but to integrate them both as equally essential parts to procure a more balanced and realistic notion of belonging. An excellent example is provided by the pragmatic approach of an evacuee who reflects on the effect which being a refugee had in her life:

> Well, we had a few things to put up with, being Spanish [...] There was at one time, they had oranges from Spain and they put a bomb or something in them and everybody where we lived said nasty things to us about it. I said 'well I can't help it, I'm a refugee, I came away from there, I didn't put the bombs in the oranges' […] you try to live a good life, you know, but you knew you were the foreigner, no matter where I went, I was a foreigner. When I went back

home, I was a foreigner too! They didn't think I was Spanish! […] but I made

my home in England and I felt safe.[371]

On the one hand, this account illustrates the issue of being alienated in both countries. On the other, and more importantly, it shows the capacity of the *niña vasca* to resist; firstly, by being assertive and confronting the hostile situation, and secondly, by taking control of her life and 'making' her home.

The choice of the term 'making' by this informant shows an agentive power which I have tried to show elsewhere. It also challenges discourses which place the *Niños Vascos* in uprooted and meaningless 'in-between' countries.

5.4 TRANSFORMATION AND ACCUMULATION OF IDENTITIES VERSUS ACCULTURATION AND ASSIMILATION

In spite of the issue of alienation discussed above, there are also numerous indications of the *Niños Vascos* becoming part of and being accepted as one of theirs by the host society in which they were gradually making their home. For instance, a *niño vasco* remembers an occasion when he went to the police station to obtain a permit to ride a bicycle, which was a legal requirement for any person with alien status:

I went to the police and said, 'I've got a bicycle.' And he said, 'Oh yes, and who are you?' I said, 'A Spaniard.' 'Ah yes,' he said. 'You're not..? Are you one of the Basque boys?' I said, 'Yes', and he said, 'Oh you're not a foreigner. Go away'.

(Bell 1996:139)

Clifford points out that the connection of displaced people with a 'prior home […] must be strong enough to resist erasure through the normalizing processes of forgetting, assimilating and distancing' (Clifford 1994:310). I argue that concepts such as 'assimilation' and 'adaptation', which are part of the academic discourse on exile, imply a loss of identity which needs to be prevented in any debate.

Malkki questions the essentialist approach to identity which equates the loss of homeland with a loss of cultural identity, disapproving of 'the uncritical use of the concepts of "adaptation" and "acculturation" to analyze processes of transformation in identity, culture, and cultural tradition' (Malkki 1995:509).

In any case, there are numerous examples which reveal how resourceful and flexible the *Niños Vascos* were in terms of coping with the unfamiliar conditions of their ordinary lives. For example, a *niña vasca* who had been deeply traumatised by the food and the unfamiliar settings at an early stage of her arrival confesses:

> I felt much better there than at Brixton and, as time went on, I started taking an interest in things and eating the now not so strange food. Life was coming back to us.

(Benjamin 2007:16)

I next analyse the process of identitarian transformation by looking at the parameters of family and language as the historically fundamental markers of identity. This is followed by a discussion on how some *Niños Vascos* have dealt with their perceived sense of multiple belonging in order to answer the question of *who* they are, which finishes the chapter.

5.4.1 Family transformation

After initial reactions discussed above with regard to the loss of family and the feeling of abandonment, testimonies show an extraordinarily resilient attitude which translates into many cases of *Niños Vascos* becoming part of a new family. For some this was achieved by adoption, for others by foster parenting. Furthermore, some children who remained in *colonias* also called 'mum' and 'dad' the sympathetic adults who sometimes took them out on weekend trips. This form of address is also extended to other 'relatives':

> Sybil wrote back and said that her parents […] would give us a home and take us as their own girls […] The Fawcetts were good and kind people and we

learned to love them very much […] We called them Mother and Dad and grew up with Sybil as our big sister.

On Saturday mornings we would go to the cinema in Annisland with our new 'cousins' […] Grandad Nichol, who lived with them, often joined us in our games.

What is important to note here is that this extension strengthens the new family unit and validates its character as such. It also constructs a new home which some informants compare with their old one:

we were very lucky with the English people that we made our home with them, they were so good to us, especially mum and dad who we had more time, more years with them than at Brighton, that really, they were just as good as my own parents, really.[372]

While sometimes the terms which refer to the new family are introduced by attributes such as my 'Scottish' father or my 'English' parents, and the biological family is referred to as the 'real' family, this is not always the case. Frequently there is no linguistic distinction between both families:

In a way, maybe I had better chance of making better of my life with being in England with my mum and dad in North Staffordshire. What it would have been made in Spain, I don't know, but you always had that longing to go back and see your parents. But you have less years, thirteen years, of life with your own parents that you missed and therefore you can't turn the clock back and had to go forward and we just made the best of our lives and really we were very lucky.[373]

This testimony confirms the becoming part of a new family in the UK and, despite the mention of the 'longing' for the old family, it is remarkable that in the first sentences the interviewee does not differentiate both families with markers such as 'foster' mum and dad or any others that could imply hierarchy or more attachment towards one or

the other. In fact, the lack of marking and explanation of the terms results in an initial difficulty to understand who the biological and non-biological parents are, and to whom she refers each time. This is not interpreted as a sign of destruction of identity by loss, but of a process taking place whose result is a continuous reconstruction of the *Niños Vascos'* sense of belonging; it ultimately helped them to rebuild trust, and 'to get back their sense of living ordinary lives again, with a family, a community, and a regenerated sense of home' (Kohli & Mather 2003:210, see also Kohli 2006).

5.4.2 Language transformation

The emphasis which the *Niños Vascos* place on the use of Spanish as their common language and the apologetic posture of those who lost it or have not passed it on to their offspring has been discussed earlier (see 4.2.3.1). Despite the fact that they can often maintain a more fluid level of communication when they speak in English, in our ethnographic conversations they have always chosen to express themselves in Spanish.[374] An informant reflects on her difficulties in speaking Spanish:

> No, [my son] no habla español, bueno, ya tampoco. Hay muchas palabras que, mira, no hablamos con ninguno. Mi hermana y yo no hablamos en español, ella habla todo el tiempo inglés. Ésta es la primera vez que yo estoy hablando el español desde la última vez en Southampton, y suelo hablar un poco con tu mamá. Cuando estás que no hablas te cuesta más.[375]

Nevertheless they use that as their common language. This is noteworthy since their Spanish often has an English accent, and also, it poses them a challenge due to some gaps in their vocabulary and their frequent transpositions from English grammatical structures or phrases. Temple and Young remind us of the function of language 'in constructing as well as describing our social world' (Temple & Young 2004:164). Thus for the *Niños Vascos* the choice of language is not based on functional communicative reasons, but as a representation of their own identity and the collective belonging to a motherland. Yet in that imagined community there are two official languages, namely Spanish and Basque.

Amongst the participants of this study I have met an informant who maintained her Basque and uses it regularly when she visits the Basque Country. When I discovered this I started to speak to her in Basque, however we went back to carry out our conversations in Spanish. The main reason was that we had already been speaking in Spanish for some time, and changing the established code seemed somewhat unnatural, particularly because we usually meet in social spaces where the other people do not speak or understand Basque. Thus, the priority has been to adopt the common language which marks the linguistic identity of the group, which is Spanish.[376]

It has been documented that at the time of departure Basque was the first language of some of the children and the second language of some others. However, this has been more frequently lost than Spanish:

> But it's a Basque song, but now I only I know this boga boga, that's all I know the words of, I've forgotten the rest of them. I used to speak Basque […] It was Basque and we knew quite a bit of Basque […] but we lost it.[377]

Spanish was the common language of the majority of evacuees. Spanish was also the language which some of the aid providers in the UK could speak. Thus, in order to maintain a sense of unity that was the language strongly promoted in the *colonias*. A consequence of this was that for some time the children did not learn English:

> We had everything we wanted, although we had a hard time because of the language barrier, since up until then we had only lived with Spanish children in the colony.
>
> (Benjamin 2007:167)

Nonetheless, there many examples which reflect my earlier observation of the children's resilience and a transformation process taking place:

> I didn't want to learn because I found the pronunciation very difficult and, in any case, since we were told that we would be going back to Spain in a few months, what use would it be for me to learn the language? In the end I decided

to take an interest in English […] I became very keen on learning the language […] I ended up top in English.

(Benjamin 2007:138)

To me the language seemed toneless and monosyllabic. The people spoke too quietly and without any expression on their faces. Looking back and my memories of it, I would say that the English language to me, then, was insipid, colourless and lacked animation. Of course, I couldn't explain it in those terms. One has to understand that the Latin races speak as much with their hands, face and the tone of voice as they do with their tongues. Three short years later, I could have told a very different story. I grew to love the richness of the English language, even with its crazy grammar, and to really appreciate the diversity of dialects.

(Benjamin 2007:133)

The previous accounts show the growing fondness for the new language, which I interpret not only as 'language' acquisition but as a symptom of a new 'home' acquisition, due to the intimate correlation between the two of them. These children soon realised that by means of using English they could fully become part of the new home, that is become part of the 'us' without anyone marking them as the 'others'. The husband of a *niña vasca* recounts her explanation of how she used this strategy with her friend:

Espe always insisted that they continue in English if anyone was near them and so the lilt of the valleys began to enter their voices and they knew that their 'foreignness' could only be detected with difficulty.

(Benjamin 2007:12)

Several informants highlight experiences of first language attrition as they were increasingly becoming proficient in English, to the extent that this became their first language:

We quickly learned English with a Scottish accent. This had a big impact on me, but even more on my brother Tony, who would have been six or seven at the

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time. Even to this day Tony speaks English with a very broad Scottish accent […] As we were learning English, we were losing our Spanish, so much so that by the time I left Gatehouse for London in 1946, I had completely forgotten it, as had my brother Tony.

(Benjamin 2007:128-129)

In the space of one year I was proficient in English, but had forgotten all my Spanish […] I had no contact with my parents except by correspondence, for me in English, for them in Spanish, which made communication difficult.

(Benjamin 2007:153-154)

Nevertheless, resistance to the loss of language is reported through the development of strategies which often helped the *Niños Vascos* recuperate the lost or nearly lost language. The main strategies declared are exhaustive reading of Spanish literature, studying for a Spanish degree, and in some cases moving to live in London, where a social network of *Niños Vascos* steadily developed.

5.4.3 Contribution towards the host society and impact on 'the others'

An informant recounts his experience of returning to Spain for the first time after the evacuation:

I realised that really we could certainly not in the foreseeable future dream of settling in Spain. We had a child, we had left him in England and we assumed that our future lay in England where we were able to integrate ourselves quite readily. We were both teachers and we both had a purpose in community and in society and consequently we felt we could participate actively and constructively in the society of this country which I think we did very well.[378]

This testimony brings attention to the issue of the term 'integration', which needs to be meticulously scrutinised. In a social context, the word 'integrate' generally suggests marginal members of society or outsiders who lose their previous identity in favour of a new one which better complies with the terms of that society. This society implicitly

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'appears' to be homogeneous, whole and complete. It is defended here, however, Malkki's observation on this subject when she critiques the essentialist view of society 'that constructs displacement as an anomaly in the life of an otherwise '"whole," stable, sedentary society' (Malkki 1995:508). This was certainly not the case in a country which had just finished a war. Moreover, due to increasing mobility, migration movements, and also transnational movement of people, societies cannot be considered as stable and fixed entities anymore. The world is constantly changing and it has become the arena in which identities are continually reconstructed and renewed.

In the previous testimony the term 'integrate' needs to be interpreted in relation to its etymology; and not in its usual sense, since the following sentence would contradict that interpretation when the informant declares his positive role as an agent of change in the host society. This is an important point discussed by Schwarzstein, who claims the role of migrant communities as active actors who, by developing strategies and making decisions, have their input into the political, economic and social processes in society (Schwarzstein 2001). Thus, this informant's 'we were able to integrate ourselves' is interpreted here in terms of 'we were able to become part of', which is also more in accordance with the original meaning of the word 'integrate'.

The testimony also reveals the interviewee's perception of becoming part of the English social landscape by means of his job. This job is the tool which allows him to 'construct' a society, and to have an impact on others. This is an excellent example which indicates a key turning point in the process of identity building of the *Niños Vascos*, who start to see themselves as individuals who contribute to the development of a society in which they consequently belong. This highlights the need to move from dominant discourses of 'acculturation', 'integration' or 'assimilation' towards alternative discourses of 'transformation' and 'contribution'.

There are early examples of individuals wishing to take an active part and to contribute towards the receiving society. Amongst those, the following is particularly interesting because of the positive attitude which it shows with regard to the notion of belonging:

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I felt it was my duty to contribute something in return by volunteering to fight for this country against Fascism, by joining the Royal Navy. I happen to have had a choice and have had the privilege to love two countries, the one in which I was born, which is always in my heart, and my adopted one. I keep strong links with my home town and visit whenever possible.

(Benjamin 2007:151)

Here the *niño vasco* goes beyond the potentially unsettling division between the allocation of his practical side to an English identity and his heart to a Spanish one which has been discussed above. On the contrary, he takes a positive accumulative approach which stresses his power to chose, and furthermore, the privilege which this entails. This leads us to the subject of the individual's positioning discussed by Oiarzabal and Oiarzabal in relation to the 'multitude of identities and belonging which we are adopting at the same time, and which we unfold in a different way according to the circumstances'[379] (Oiarzabal & Oiarzabal 2005:31) which closes this chapter.

5.4.4 From identitarian dichotomy and trichotomy to a cumulative multiplicity of identities

The testimonies of the informants of this thesis disclose a variety of responses to the issues generated by a dichotomist approach to identity. Thus far I have explored the use of imagination and also a compartmentalisation of personalities in relation to practical and emotional aspects. I now analyse an holistic approach observed in some narratives, which has allowed the *Niños Vascos* to accumulate their perceived identities without having to renounce to any of them.

Accounts often reveal a relative contentment with a triple identity as British, Spanish and Basque:

Although I'm British on paper, in my heart I'm still Spanish, still Basque. I go to Spain every year and it still feels like home there. It's true what people say, one

is always pulled back to one's roots. But after so many years here, it would take a lot longer to get used to living there again.

(Benjamin 2007:109)

Some individuals avoid choosing or uncovering their attachment to any of those identities and opt for an inclusive 'world citizenship':

In 1949 I married a young Spanish exile and we left for Venezuela. That was 57 years ago, and now I see myself as a citizen of the world.

(Benjamin 2007:79)

Finally, the most illustrative reports which support the argument defended in this study are those of individuals who have developed an understanding of their identitarian construction process as non exclusive but cumulative. This is illustrated in the following account:

Now, after so many years, I realise that my roots are planted in three places. The Basque Country of my birth; England that took care of me during the Spanish Civil War and, of course, Mexico, the wonderful place that welcomed me with open arms and that has given me so much.

(Benjamin 2007:100)

What is most relevant is that there many excellent examples of testimonies which show how informants are aware of their multiple identities, which they display according to circumstances. For instance, during an interview for a documentary film when a *niño vasco* was cornered into explaining his identity in terms of choosing one *or* another he answered:

I feel Welsh now, you know when I went to London and I speak to somebody they tell me must be the accent I suppose, oh well they said you are Welsh, yes I am Welsh yes, I want to tell them yes because otherwise I would have to give a lot of explanation and I mean … if in England and playing football I want Welsh to win that sort of thing, so in a way it's because I am half Welsh, half Spanish or half Basque, I don't know.[380]

In those circumstances this person chooses a Welsh identity which marks him as non-English. However, he is then asked what he feels when he goes to Spain and in this case he positions himself within the parameters which prevail in that context by answering:

> Well, I don't think about that, when I went to Spain … I don't know, I feel Basque then, when I went to San Sebastian, you know you feel like one of them I suppose, never entered my mind really.[381]

It is important to note that the interviewer is introducing an issue to which the interviewee has not given any thoughts in the past. Thus, it has not been an actual issue for him until this point. Furthermore, the interviewer still questions what the informant's understanding of his Basque identity is, to which the interlocutor responds:

> Well, like I am one of them, nothing political, I am a Spanish resident and Basque, you know what I mean when you are amongst them, my family and all that well you feel one of them, well they are Basque, and you feel like one of them it is obvious, you feel like a Basque.[382]

This subject reveals an apparently natural and spontaneous fluctuation between identities, and his selection of *what* and *who* he is will normally be determined by accommodation to the surrounding environment.

Some observations point out a more conscious decision by individuals who are aware of their power to operate among different identities, and who make use of these in order to fulfil the requirements of particular situations. It has emerged from my ethnographic observations that depending on whether the interaction takes place in an English, Spanish, or Basque setting, the *Niños Vascos*' display of identities vary. For instance they are louder in a non-English context (see 4.2.1) while they show an impeccable ability to perform 'English' when this is required. Also, whilst an informant declares that he is not 'Basque', at the same time he confesses his strong emotional attachment to Basque music and other representations of the Basque culture. Furthermore, on the one hand he shows his lack of allegiance to the Basque

Government due to his non-Basque identity, but on the other he flags his belonging to a Basque community in order to obtain support from that government.

These are not simple contradictions originated by tensions of competing identities within individual psyches. On the contrary, I believe that they show the rich diversity of resources and strategies which the *Niños Vascos* have developed in order to be actively involved in the variety of realities which form part of their lives. There are also examples which demonstrate their impact and agency on those realities. For instance, at the week of homage and commemoration celebrated in Bilbao in 2008 Andoni Egaña, a well known *bertsolari*[383], sang a *bertso* dedicated to the *Niños Vascos* who lost their Basque language as a result of being evacuated and resettling in foreign countries. Despite the fact that by definition this type of song is sung in Basque, he sang his *bertso* in Spanish.

While it remains to be seen what the long term impact of this 'trangression' will be, the fact that the event's host publicly stressed that this was the first time in the history of *bertsolaritza* that this happened makes it a memorable episode. The setting was an exceptional forum which included representatives of the full socio-political spectrum of Basque society and also the media. Thus, not only was the *Niños Vascos'* membership of that society validated, but also their presence was legitimised as a welcome addition to it.

The awareness of their agentive role is highlighted in the following example. During a conversation which I recently had with a British scholar, I was reprimanded by a *niño vasco* who overheard us and indicated the inappropriateness of my body language. He commented 'you move your hands too much when you speak in English'. His remark shows firstly, the understanding and acceptance of a social code which defines 'Englishness' differently from 'Spanishness' (or 'Basqueness'). Secondly, it also identifies this person as an active social actor who possesses the different codes, and thus can use them when he considers it appropriate or necessary. Thirdly, the fact that he reprimanded me and marked my lack of knowledge or disrespect with regard to the English code in front of the other person, validated his positioning and Englishness in that particular situation.

To conclude, this section presents a *niña vasca* who has brilliantly come to terms with the issues of conflict of identities which I have discussed throughout this chapter. She ultimately epitomises an alternative discourse based on the acceptance of the multiple identities which emerge as a result of a process of transformation. Her husband explains that despite some outbreaks of a feeling of a sense of loss:

> After all the years of thinking herself abandoned, the post-war years were a happy time for her. Mari Carmen is proud of being born a Spanish Basque and having been brought up and loved by the Welsh family who took her in. She also feels proud of being a British citizen, and was even sworn in as a British subject late in 1949, in London.

> (Benjamin 2007:13-14)

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Chapter

6

CONCLUSIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis has been to examine how memorialisation processes generate, perpetuate, transform, and renovate both individual and collective narratives. I contend that as a result of commemorative practices renewed identities and new relationships emerge fuelled by the rituals that are performed by the individuals in the context of their social networks and also in the public sphere. To investigate this phenomenon I chose the case study of the Basque refugee children (*Niños Vascos*) evacuated to the UK during the Spanish Civil War after the bombing of the Basque town of Gernika. In spite of their different ideologies and socio-economical backgrounds, the *Niños Vascos* collectively participate in rituals which give them the opportunity to develop a collective identity which in turn strengthens the existence of the group and assures its continuity.

As a starting point, Chapter 1 examined existing studies in the fields of memory, commemorations, and refugee work in order to establish a theoretical framework for my investigation. In this chapter I discussed authors such as Halbwachs (1992), Jelin (2002, 2003), Connerton (1989), Kushner (2006), and Cohen (1997) and their contribution to the scholarly debate. First, I focused on the notion of collective memory, problematising some issues related to it, and then I proceeded to explore the literature on processes of memorialisation and their impact on memory production. In

order to conceptualise the development of the *Niños Vascos*' sense of self and to restrict the area of my research within the broad field of human migrations, I revised the term refugee and the concept of diaspora. I came to realise that due to the increasing complexity of the field, it is difficult to adhere to conventional historical meanings of these concepts within a constantly changing and ever more transnational world. The first key point which emerges from this enquiry, is that new uses and approaches need to be sought which better correspond to new situations encountered within the field of human migrations.

After establishing the theoretical basis for my research I moved on to a methodological chapter, where I discussed the scope and limitations of the ethnographic approach chosen for this study, and also reflected on the effect which my double identity as a researcher who is also part of the collective under examination has had upon my investigation. A number of issues were raised which generate new theoretical questions that may be followed up in future enquiries, mainly with regard to representations of the research subjects and to the ethical concerns involved in an oral approach.

Chapter 3 contextualised my case study from a socio-political perspective. I discussed some of the background to and events of the Civil War, the subsequent international involvement, and the evacuation of the *Niños Vascos*, in order to frame the issues that led up to and surrounded the evacuation to the UK. This highlighted a series of paradoxes which affected the subjects of this study and which set some basis for discussion in the subsequent two chapters.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I examined the ongoing process of (re)construction of the *Niños Vascos'* sense of identity by looking at both agency and politics of remembrance - largely from a synchronic perspective-, and also the narratives constructed throughout history. To carry this out I analysed the information gathered focusing on two basic questions: Chapter 4 dealt with the constructive role in the formation of values of the private and public commemorative practices, which I argue create, manage, and transmit a social order which facilitates that this group of people functions as such; and Chapter 5 dealt with how the group and its members have historically been defined

both by themselves and by others, ultimately, how the *Niños Vascos* interpret their positioning in relation to that social order, and how they make sense of the impact which their experience of forced migration has had upon their lives.

6.2 THE 'BUSINESS' OF MEMORY

In order to address my first research question I emphasised the importance of agency in memory production, in line with Jelin (2003b), who stresses the struggles which take place in the commemorative arena. The analysis of evidence presented in Chapter 4 revealed the complexities of interaction among the various social actors involved. One prominent characteristic observed was that although the *Niños Vascos* are the ones who experienced the historical episode directly –and therefore in principle they are the memory bearers–, in the context of current commemorative practices remembrance is ultimately shaped and constrained by an amalgam of the interwoven ideological, cultural, political and, increasingly, personal agendas of a variety of actors (including the *Niños Vascos* themselves). These actors collectively configure the memory landscape by offering deliberately constructed representations of the past through conflictual processes of contestation and debate. Furthermore, they also set the agenda for the remembrance narratives of other members of society.

6.2.1 Who, how, where, when

Drawing particularly on scholarship by Jelin (2003b), Ashplant et al. (2000), and Torpey (2003), in order to define the actors identified I have used the terms *agents of memory* and *memory entrepreneurs*. These terms refer to those individuals who, by participating in the commemorative processes, seek to define the field and to establish the criteria for key factors such as categorisation and public representations of history, membership, and ownership of memory. They are principally academics, representatives of state institutions, politicians, and the media, whose agendas concerning how to deal with both memories and their deletion are embedded within larger state and corporate agendas.

Although my analysis of agency has fundamentally been based on Jelin's theoretical model, an important point of departure was reached through observation of data. Her examination of the struggles for memory is based on remembrance in the context of countries with a history of past dictatorship and repression, primarily in Latin America. Thus, she puts the accent on the political factor and political and humanitarian motivations which stimulate memory entrepreneurs. I found this to be the case at the commemorative events observed in the Basque Country, which were part of a wider lively socio-political debate. However, while I chose Jelin's approach as the most pertinent to my study given the similarities between her context and the Spanish recent past, the main focus of my enquiry relates to the British context, which has traditionally been identified as an example of democracy and egalitarianism. Therefore, if we want to uncover the subtle mechanisms of memory work and a crucial aspect such as participation in the process, we need to look from a wider and more multilayered perspective than the merely political, as the evidence collected for this study suggests. Moreover, the debate on *equality* of access within the public sphere cannot be reduced and thought of in terms of

> openness of access, as if information and communication were neutral goods that exist already and simply increasing their availability is a satisfactory goal in itself.

(Bernal 2005:672)

On the contrary, it needs to be measured in terms of engagement of all relevant actors with debates, their capacity to challenge or subvert the presented topics and agendas of those debates, and the capacity to provoke social change as a result.

In relation to this, I found that the majority of *Niños Vascos* actively engage in practices celebrated at a private level, which have been organised by themselves until very recently and are now organised by their children. Data collected at their annual reunion showed that the *Niños Vascos* consider these events as the opportunity which they have to socialise with each other and to maintain their connection with the group. At these reunions they perform an identity which they attach to their homeland rather than to their hostland. This identity is reinforced by a number of repetitive rituals and

also by semiotic devices which are part of the social space of reunion. A remarkable feature is the determined intention of the *Niños Vascos* and their families to ensure the continuity of these private reunions in the future, and to continue to keep them separate from any institutional and official type of remembrance. At work here is the importance attached to the safeguard and transmission of a social capital, modelled in their own terms, and also the firm attempt to keep ownership of it.

By contrast, the commemorative practices held in the public sphere are attended by a varying number of *Niños Vascos* who do not participate in the organisation and decision making process. A significant difference noticed is that while in the Basque Country the practices observed included enthusiastic debates in which the *Niños Vascos* widely participated, in the UK those who attended were in most instances a mere part of the audience who *received* knowledge. This hierarchical division between the knowledge-authorities and the comparatively passive consumers, questions the legitimacy of the so-called negotiation of knowledge production and its transmission operating at public sites of memory.

An in-depth study of agency cannot limit itself to scrutinise who makes memory by means of being present where this is produced, but it also needs to look at the absentee and the motives behind absenteeism. The following reasons for disengagement have been identified:

1. disagreement with the perceived dominant official line which is outlined by those who have access to the broader public as a result of having the power, social status, privileges and connections to do so;

2. unwillingness to legitimise the exclusivity of public memorialisation processes in terms of both being organised by an elite and also ignoring certain segments of the population who experienced the same harsh past, thus excluding parts of the narrative;

3. strong critical opposition to the phenomenon of *theatricalisation* in the sense of trivialisation of memories; and

4. intense refusal to collaborate with memory agents whose agenda consists of the pursuit of personal fame and fortune.

As it was explained in Chapter 4, I intend neither to judge who writes the official line and who does not, nor to classify the social actors according to those Manichean parameters. On the contrary, an important concern of this investigation is to provide evidence of the interwoven-ness of the dynamics implicit in agency, and the impact which all actors and agendas have on each other. This *per se* challenges the very existence of a 'unique' official line.

After having introduced *who* produces memory, it becomes essential to identify *how* knowledge and narratives are constructed, and also the methods utilised to unfold and underpin those narratives. Documentation introduced in Chapter 4 highlighted how memorialisation sites are the context which provokes and shapes discourses and narratives. I expressed how a social capital is transmitted by means of language and, following Connerton (1989) and Radley (1997), also by the performativity and materiality of the social life. This includes the objects and places where history is remembered; choice of meaningful dates and spaces for memorialisation; political elements such as flags and speeches; artistic representations; and also performance of rituals; all of them being reinforced by repetition at those sites of memory. While it is a relatively easy task to locate the physical space where people gather for remembrance at a given date, to answer the question of where a memorial event begins and ends is a complex endeavour. Does it begin at the time of its very inception or when it gathers an audience? Since its effect transcends the time and space of the gathering, when does the memorial practice end? I approached my analysis from an holistic perspective which also considered what was said and relevant mnemonic devices observed before and after the events took place, but which were an important part of the process, for instance correspondence and advertising posters.

6.2.2 *What, why*

To conclude the discussion on agency, I attempted to identify the agenda of the different actors behind the practices observed. I found that at a private level a common discourse is reinforced by means of repetition and is internalised by the *Niños Vascos*. This endorses belonging to a group that is self-perceived and categorised as a *family*, where members share both a past experience of forced migration –embodied in the date chosen for the encounter, that is the anniversary of the evacuation–, and also Spanish as the language of interaction.

At a public level, however, multiple discourses take place, including a variety of official lines ascribed to particular memorial events and audiences. A common celebratory agenda is supported by institutions and the media which puts the accent on a festive tone and sets a joyful context for remembrance. The motto persistently predicated at this type of events is a message of 'celebration' and 'gratitude' to a society that received the *Niños Vascos* when they arrived in 1937. The fact that these terms are explicitly described as the key words of the remembrance depoliticises its character, thus the political dimension of the historical episode and its consequences is neutralised and ignored. This departure from the political element of the remembrance is underpinned by the representations which are offered, which either fulfil an artistic agenda or avoid the use of the term 'refugee' or generally move the remembrance to an emotional realm with which a broad audience can easily sympathise. Consequently opportunities for a meaningful and elaborate debate are missed.

In addition to the openly announced agendas of the practices, a close look at the data suggests that there are a number of underlying discourses. Some *Niños Vascos* interpret these public events as an official symbolic acknowledgement of wrongdoing and of recognition of their silenced past suffering. Ultimately they look for justice and continuity of the group against forgetting. In this sense, there is a therapeutic element of closure to an emotional unfinished business, particularly now that they are approaching the end of their lives.

Unsurprisingly, I also identified a national discourse promoted by state representatives which frames and reinforces what matters at the memorial event

within the parameters of their national agendas. In this respect the narratives of representatives of the Spanish and the Basque governments respectively concentrate on presenting the hegemonic state as an established democracy characterised by its unity, and on bringing the Basque agenda to the forefront.

To conclude, a significant finding was that in order to ascertain social agency, despite the socio-political and institutional background which frames public remembrance acts, the individual subjectivities and interests of those who are involved also play a vital role, thus this needs to be introduced in any debate. In this respect and owing to the intricacy and the high level of action detected in the commemorative arena, I have proposed a new terminology which is connected to an entrepreneurial character detected in the social engineering of remembrance.

In the days of enormous pressure to produce and to market knowledge at any cost, as everyone is currently perceived first and foremost as a buyer or a seller, I have coined the terms *conmemoracciones* ('*commemoractions*'), *celebracciones* ('*celebractions*') and *conmemoraccionistas* ('*commemoractionists*'). They combine the idea of commemorations and celebrations as the milieux where different agents have their input in the process of identity construction; these agents (memory brokers) are active and dynamic *accionistas* ('investors') who by investing a considerable amount of time and effort *act* upon memory. Besides this, the Spanish terms also imply the connection of these agents' *acciones* to entrepreneurship and the business world. I refer to the *acciones* – used here with its double meaning in Spanish of 'actions' but also 'stocks and shares'– which take place at the commemorative practices in the sense of activity, *actuación* or 'performance' and also activation and gestation of identities (Sabín-Fernández 2010). Bringing the debate to this contemporary context I first discussed the concepts of 'exiliobusiness' ('exile-business') and the trivialisation of memories (Naharro-Calderón 2005). Developing these concepts further, I noticed the existence of opportunistic *memory profiteers*, who by highlighting the need for this type of return to the past are concealing their agenda, which is to gain celebrity and to make a profit out of it. This success is achieved at the expense of compromising values such as ethical integrity, accuracy, and in-depth analyses of public interest. Ultimately these memory brokers

uncritically redefine the social and symbolic capital at stake and contribute to manufacture consent (Herman & Chomsky 2002) in a growing memory market.

6.3 IDENTITY MATTERS

Having analysed the relationship between commemorative practices and the process of social memory building, I looked at the narratives emerging at the public spaces shared by various memory agents. Several categories used in relation to the *Niños Vascos* were identified which I then examined in Chapter 5 in order to find answers to my research question 'Who and what are the Basque Refugee Children of the Spanish Civil War in the UK?' The main focus here was on the questions of how they self-identify, how they are identified by others, and whether the *Niños Vascos* are passive subjects whose narratives are influenced and shaped by other agents or whether they have an active role in the process.

It transpired that the *Niños Vascos* function as a distinct group which strives to find its place in history. There are some features, such as the Spanish language, which the members share to different degrees. However, the unique particularity that bonds them and is perceived as the one that explicitly marks the boundary between the 'us the *Niños Vascos*' and 'the others' is that on 21 May 1937 they all embarked on a boat in Santurtzi which took them to Southampton, where they found refuge. With regard to representations of this group I limited my analysis to the commonly heard expressions *niños de la guerra* ('children of the war'), *niños vascos* and *los olvidados* ('the forgotten').

Within a public discourse of war remembrance, in Spain the *Niños Vascos* have often been included within the larger category of *niños de la guerra*, which is nevertheless presented as a problematic construct by authors such as Devillard et al. (2001) and Naharro-Calderón (Llanes, 2006). This label has been contested by those who finding it too vague –and inclusive of many others who did not experience forced migration–, favour the expression *niños del exilio* ('children of exile'). With regard to this nomenclature the data collected indicate that there is no agreement amongst the *Niños Vascos*. There is however strong evidence of accord with regard to their choice of the expression *Niños Vascos* to self-identify, as for historical reasons that is how they

have largely been identified from the British perspective and also in the Spanish literature (Arrien 1991, Eizaguirre 1999, Alonso Carballés 1998). Above all the *Niños Vascos* find this term meaningful as it embodies an identity to which they relate, and furthermore, which they perceive as solely representative of their particular group, since no *others* would be able to become a *niño vasco* or *niña vasca* in the UK unless they had experienced the same journey on the *Habana*. Nevertheless, despite unique features analysed in this enquiry which clearly differentiate this case study from others, they do not disengage this experience of forced migration from others. This is by no means interpreted as an isolated phenomenon; on the contrary, its transnational character makes it a fascinating case to compare with others of a similar nature both within the context of the Spanish Civil War and also current contexts of war and conflict.

A victimhood discourse emerges from the data which is epitomised by the term *los olvidados* and reinforced by a dramatic tone within the narratives of, firstly, the loss of family and home; secondly, the distressing journey on the boat; and finally, a sense of not-belonging throughout a new life in the UK as a refugee and as an enemy alien. When this study commenced, the term *los olvidados* was persistently used by both the *Niños Vascos* themselves and also by some memory agents close to them. For instance, it was a topic recurrently foregrounded on the newsletter of the Basque Children of '37 Association UK. Interestingly, during the four years of the course of this study the narratives have developed in the sense that a shift has been noticed from that victimhood discourse towards the discourse of celebration argued earlier.

A fluctuation between a passive and an agentive character of the *Niños Vascos* was observed within the narratives, thus an argument for a counter-victimhood discourse at work was put forward in the light of some examples of agentive power detected amongst the data analysed. These include an explicit self-identification of the *Niños Vascos* as 'historical monuments', which shows an awareness of their importance in history, thus of the possibility to change dominant discourses, and also contestation of some labels and insistence on self-identifying as the *Niños Vascos*. By discussing and spreading topics of concern within their social network, narratives are disseminated and then transmitted to a larger audience. To a lesser extent a small number of

members of the group have also had the chance to propagate their narratives, and so to fulfil their agendas, by having the opportunity to express themselves by featuring in the media and other outlets of information. However, in these cases an element of their narratives having been 'severely edited' has been raised occasionally.

In order to further explore resistance, or the lack of it, in the narratives against dominant discourses with regard to forms of identification, I next delved into issues of belonging in relation to both the homeland and the hostland. Based on the theoretical models of Malkki (1995) and Rapport and Dawson (1998) I contested a traditional understanding of the concept of *home* as something essentially stable, unchanging and safe, in favour of a dynamic continuous construction of it. A redefinition of this concept is needed which does not restrict itself to geographical space and time parameters. On this point I underlined the importance attached to feelings of belonging and the resort to the arts and imagination as ways to create alternative representations of home.

Subsequently the discussion of the data focused on the negative impact of a dichotomising approach to identity which has its origins in state interests, since a definitive self-declaration by its citizenry in this respect contributes to ensure loyalties, to safeguard national identity, and also to help naturalise the state's otherwise arbitrary borders. Under this type of essentialist binary discourse the individual is required to choose between absolute allegiances to the homeland and the hostland, thus jeopardising their sense of self as a whole entity and leading to a feeling of mutilation. By contrast, to finish my discussion I proposed an approach to identity which sees it as incessantly under construction (Schneider 2003, Oiarzabal & Oiarzabal 2005). The individual therefore is not seen as having a fixed and unique identity but a sum of *identities* which relate to the different forms that these constructions take under different circumstances. In this respect Hall points out that 'identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past' (Hall 1998:225). This helps us understand the process that has taken place throughout the history of the *Niños Vascos*, which is not by any means seen as a phenomenon of acculturation, fragmentation, and assimilation, but interpreted

instead as an enriching transformation and accumulation of identities which are displayed according to particular contexts, settings, and audiences. A fundamental consequence of this is that while adopting an essentialist approach to identity in which the discourse of a fixed and unchanging notion of the *us* implies a fixed notion of *otherness*, a dynamic and fluid conception of it blurs the boundaries between the *us* and *the others*, thus it subverts the nation-state agenda.

6.4 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

Fyrth points out that

> The story of the Basque children has been ignored by most historians of the period. Yet it was an epic of the British people's history. It affected almost every part of the country, and changed many people's lives. It left lasting links between this country and the Basque lands.

> (Fyrth 1986:242)

A decade after this was written, Bell (1996) and Alonso Carballés (1997) make a similar point with regard to how the story has been neglected by historians, and even now there is still a lack of scholarly work on the narratives of the *Niños Vascos* themselves in terms of how these fit into wider discourses.

The aim of this study has been to fill that gap, particularly in relation to what the pioneer researcher on the topic, Gregorio Arrien, identified in 2008 as the need for a 'memoria de la memoria' ('memory of the memory') of the *Niños Vascos* (Personal communication, 24 June 2008). The fact that this study is a first step in that direction means that there were many questions to be asked and many angles from which these questions could be approached. As a result, on reflection, a major limitation of this enquiry has been the attempt to examine central issues from many perspectives in order to produce a rich comparative body of new knowledge. While this generated a large volume of fruitful data, at the same time the analysis was constrained by the time constraints and word restrictions of a doctorate. Thus, certain important identitarian aspects such as linguistic features related to code switching between languages and

intergenerational transmission of Spanish or Basque languages could not be given meticulous attention.

The project was designed having in mind that the phenomenon of forced migration from one country to another could not be analysed within national parameters of reference but as a historical process whose study necessarily had to be of a comparative and transnational nature. As noted earlier, this entails working in and across languages, which on its own raises new epistemological issues, such as those involved in translation, which needed to be discussed in depth as they had not been considered in any earlier scholarly work on this topic. It is my hope that bringing this subject up, in addition to presenting the data consistently in its original form, raises awareness of the relevance of language choice and language representations in research and it also stimulates further investigation on those lines.

The fact that I am a member of the community of memory has also given an extra new dimension to the analysis in terms of further inside knowledge of feelings, values, practices, hopes, needs, and I dare say passions, which are an important part to be considered in order to understand processes of identity construction in deep detail. Existing scholarly work had not approached this subject through the lenses of an *insider* who, in addition, as a Basque who lives in the UK is also strongly connected to both countries. Hence, I hope that my reflections as such provide new perspectives and help further understand the processes at stake. As an insider I have had access to private spaces, which has given me the opportunity to strengthen the depth of my enquiry by comparing individual with collective narratives, and also collective practices held within the private sphere with those held in public.

Additionally, a key element which makes this study desirable and necessary is the previous lack of research on commemorative practices within this particular context. Furthermore, the timing has been exceedingly favourable, as during its course there have been a number of exceptional remembrance acts both in the Basque Country and in the UK, such as the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the *Niños Vascos* in Britain, which they felt was probably the last *big* one while a significant number of them were still alive. The question now is 'what will happen in two years time when there might

be no *Niños Vascos* fit enough to attend the commemorative events of the 75th anniversary?'. Furthermore, will there be a cohort of memory profiteers still interested in the topic or will the memory industry be focusing on something else by then?

Finally, there is an important aspect related to this enquiry which needs to be noted as it distinguishes it from earlier work on the topic from a methodological point of view. While previous work has been based on archival research and testimonies (Arrien 1991, Bell 1996, Eizaguirre 1999, Benjamin 2007), I have attempted to introduce new methods in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the variety of modes of expression and systems of meaning which underpin memory construction. By using ethnography and a multimodal approach new angles have been revealed which I believe make a strong case to consider these powerful tools for future research. The challenge is now to find the balance between obtaining a thorough and intimate insight of the subjects of our research –made possible by an ethnographic and multimodal approach and the high level of sophistication of new technologies–, and exposing it to our audience, while scrupulously applying the highest ethical standards throughout the entire process.

I have dealt with those ethical issues and also with others that have been uncovered in this study – for instance the subjectivity implicit in any research project, particularly when this is based on an oral methodology–, to the best of my ability, openly expressing my own positioning within the process. Nevertheless, a key aim of this enquiry is to offer my views on the topics discussed here with the intention that they stimulate further discussion both at a theoretical level and also with regard to the methodology employed. In other words, this is only one more voice in a dialogue to which it is hoped many voices, and not necessarily with the same accent, will contribute in the future.

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NOTES

Introduction

[1] See for example Preston (1993, 1994), Graham (2002), Jackson (1965, 1999).

[2] See Steer's (2009) detailed account.

[3] There were some other conditions (see 3.4.2).

[4] According to the Basque Children of '37Association UK 'By mid-September [1937], all [children] had been relocated to residential homes throughout Britain. After the fall of Bilbao and Franco's capture of the rest of northern Spain in the summer of 1937, the process of repatriation began. By the start of World War II in 1939, most of the children had left for Spain, although for some of the children this was a terrible ordeal. Some didn't speak Spanish, others had forgotten their parents. They couldn't get used to the restrictions in Spain. The 400 or so who remained in Britain either chose to stay (if they were over 16, they were given the choice), or had to stay because their parents were either dead or imprisoned. By 1945, there were still over 250 in Britain and many of these settled permanently, sometimes marrying local people and remaining in Britain for the rest of their lives' (http://www.basquechildren.org accessed 20.09.2009).

[5] Here the expression 'mainstream history' refers to the type of history to which the general public has access through the education system (provided by text books within school programmes and curricula), the popular literature, or the media. Even if there had been some academic literature on this topic during those decades, the *Niños Vascos* would have been unlikely to have seen it.

[6] Translation: 'the forgotten'.

[7] Original quote: 'espeso silencio que se impuso en España durante la llamada transición a la democracia, cuyas fechas podrían ajustarse a los veinticinco años finales del último siglo'.

[8] For the purposes of this enquiry the term 'discourse' will be used following Blommaert's definition of it as 'all forms of meaningful semiotic human activity seen in connection with social, cultural, and historical patterns and developments of use' (Blommaert 2005:3). I interpret this definition in a rather broad sense and link it to Kress and van Leeuwen's idea that 'discourses are socially constructed knowledges of (some aspect of) reality' (Kress & van Leeuwen 2001:4). Thus discourse here also includes both non-verbal elements and related interpretations transmitted by means of, amongst others, manifestations of art such as films, documentaries, music, and monuments.

[9] Translation: 'evacuee children'.

[10] The common feature amongst the attendants to this reunion was a shared experience of forced migration from the Basque Country as a result of the war, but the destination countries differed. However, according to oral sources, most of them had been evacuated to the UK. There were also representatives of the Basque Government and from the Consulates of the countries which had received evacuee children (Alonso Carballés 1998).

[11] Translation: 'Association of Children Evacuees of '37'.

[12] The role of this association is explained in Appendix B.

[13] In addition to the authors mentioned earlier, see for example Richards (2005), Moradiellos (1999), Juliá (1987), Tébar Hurtado (2006), Berazategi and Domínguez (2006), and also Camino (2001) as an example of documentary film production. This turning to the past which has increasingly taken place during the last few decades was greatly stimulated and framed by the 50th anniversary of the Second World War (Craig 2002:279), which opened new debates. It was underpinned by the greater use of oral history, which saw the urgency to interrogate the generations who experienced the war before they disappeared. Also, the younger generations who did not experience the war have recently started to raise questions about it.

[14] Chamber of Deputies.

[15] I use the term 'symbology' here to express the 'collective' of symbolic elements observed in the figure (and not the 'use' of those symbols or 'symbolism').

[16] The Tree of Gernika is a key element of Basque symbology. This oak tree, which is located in Gernika by the *Casa de Juntas*, symbolises the historical freedom that Bizkaia and the Basques had with regard to their traditional laws or *Fueros*. Estomba and Arrinda state that 'Under the tree of Gernika gathered […] representatives. And there they made the laws of Bizkaia. These laws and traditions formed the *Fuero* or legislation of Bizkaia' (original quote: 'Gernikako haritzpean biltzen ziren […] ordezkariak. Eta han egiten zituzten Bizkaiko legeak. Lege eta ohitura-multzo hauek osotzen dute Bizkaiko Fuero edo Legedia') (Estomba & Arrinda 1980:78). The writer José Luis Arriaga comments on the importance of this historical tree, claiming that 'it gave Bizkaians such cohesion that it converted them into an essence of Basqueness (Basques were called Bizkaians)' (Original quote: 'dio tal cohesión a los vizcaínos que les convirtió como en una esencia del vasquismo (vizcaínos se les llamó a los vascos)') (Equipo de redacción Pal 1981:7).

Chapter 1

[17] For this thesis I will use the translated English version (2003b) of the original book that Jelin wrote in Spanish (2002a). However, I will include the original Spanish version of her quotes if I consider that this might provide an extra angle, for instance in this case: 'es en parte una respuesta o reacción al cambio rápido y a una vida sin anclajes o raíces. La memoria tiene entonces un papel altamente significativo, como mecanismo *cultural* para fortalecer el sentido de pertenencia a grupos o comunidades' (Jelin 2002a:9-10, my emphasis).

[18] This law has been severely criticised by a considerable number of citizens, political groups, and associations, as they consider that it equates 'victims' to 'perpetrators' and does not sufficiently deal with a number of crucial issues, such as the removal or maintenance of certain Francoist symbols and public monuments.

[19] http://www.oxforddictionaries.com [accessed 05.06.07].

[20] My own translation from a book published originally in Spanish, which is based on a seminar that Paul Ricoeur delivered at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid in November 1996 (see list of Bibliography).

[21] Although Halbwachs generally employs the term *groups*, a 'more cautious usage' according to Coser (1992:22), I have chosen Durkheim's word *society*, as this is the more common term among thinkers in current debate.

[22] The art and cultural historian Aby Warburg also wrote about the concept of social memory in the 1920s, but he did not develop a systematic theory as Halbwachs did (Confino 1997:1390).

[23] Original quote: 'hacer presente algo ausente'.

[24] Notice his choice of the term 'attempt' which draws attention to the issue of 'faithfulness' discussed in Chapter 2.

[25] Original quote: 'Toda memoria se da con el tiempo […] *sin* las cosas mismas, pero *con* el tiempo'.

[26] This idea is also expressed by Mead in '[w]henever you get to the point of introducing what situations existed in the past, you are stating your present, the present of the community, in terms of the past' (Mead 1938 in Schwartz et al. 1986:159).

[27] For further reading on continuity theory see Nisbet, R. (1978) 'Conservatism', *A History of Sociological Analysis*, edited by Tom Bottomore and Robert Nisbet, New York: Basic Books or Lively, J. (ed.) (1971), *The Works of Joseph de Maistre*, New York: Schocken.

[28] Original quote: 'supermemoria englobadora de todas las memorias'.

[29] Original quote: 'supermemoria universal, justa, ecuánime, que contente a la colectividad y a los diferentes grupos y/o individuos'.

[30] An extraordinary metaphor used by Juan Gutiérrez at the seminar 'Reflexiones sobre las memorias y el futuro' ('Reflections about memories and the future') within the course 'De los niños de la guerra a los nietos de la memoria' ('From the Children of the War to the Grandchildren of the Memory'), Curso de Extensión Universitaria de la Universidad de Alcalá de Henares. Llanes, Spain, 23-25 August 2006.

[31] How memories and experiences of other wars have an impact on war discourse and how a war is seen is a good example of the transformation of frameworks.

[32] Original quote: 'El fantasma de un Alzheimer colectivo'.

[33] This concept is developed in Chapter 3 (see 3.2.1).

[34] George Orwell touches upon this point when he states: 'Who controls the past, controls the future; who controls the present, controls the past'.

[35] Original quote: 'la temporalidad se comprime: pasado y presente elaboran el libreto para la rememoración futura'.

[36] The lack of presence of the *Niños Vascos* in the literature on refugees in the UK, with the exception of Kushner and Knox (1999), has been previously mentioned (see p 4).

[37] To cover the entire history of the refugee movement is beyond the scope and the objective of my study, thus I will focus my work on the 'modern' refugee notion (Malkki 1995, Kushner 2006) which is the category coined after Second World War.

[38] A number of intellectuals and writers have relatively recently begun to refer to themselves as an 'exile' using the term metaphorically to describe their (usually voluntary) condition as a displaced person. For further reading on this major issue of debate see Teeuwen (2004).

[39] http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3b66c2aa10.pdf [accessed 01.10.07].

[40] This point will be contested and elaborated in Chapter 5 (see 5.4).

[41] For an excellent analysis on refugees and trauma see Papadopoulos (2006) in the Bibliography.

[42] Moreover, I argue that the same rationale applies to the identities of the rest of the population, and that is the reason why people, not only the 'migrants', create and believe in myths, as a tool to cope with the difficulties of life in general, and also to establish their belonging to a group.

[43] It is significant that the first result shown in the Compact Oxford English Dictionary for the reference *diaspora* is related to the Jewish diaspora: • *noun 1 (the diaspora) the dispersion of the Jews*

beyond Israel, chiefly in the 8th to 6th centuries bc. and only in second place is the more general definition of **2** *the dispersion of any people from their traditional homeland.*

[44] See also Douglass, W. et al. (1999) *The Basque Diaspora. La Diáspora Vasca,* Basque Studies Program no. 7, University of Nevada, Reno; Douglass, W. (2003) *La Vasconia global. Ensayos sobre las diásporas vascas,* Urazandi Bilduma 2, Eusko Jaurlaritza, Vitoria-Gasteiz; Totoricagüena, G. (2003) *Diáspora vasca comparada. Etnicidad, cultura y política en las colectividades vascas,* Urazandi Bilduma 1, Eusko Jaurlaritza, Vitoria-Gasteiz.

[45] In this respect Schwarzstein notices the 'attributes of laboriousness and high morality of the Basque people [which] made them desirable for the American Republics, even during the period when these [Republics] closed their doors [to immigration] as a result of the crisis of 1929' (original quote: 'atributos de laboriosidad y alta moral del pueblo vasco [que] los convirtieron en población deseable para las repúblicas americanas, aun en la etapa de puertas cerradas iniciada a partir de la crisis de 1929') (Schwarzstein 2001:68).

[46] There is also current discussion on the issue of whether the Nafarroan diaspora exists on its own or whether it should be considered as part of the Basque diaspora. It has been suggested that 'the Nafarroan diaspora in the world does not exist separated from its natural environment, the rest of the Basques' (original quote: 'La diáspora navarra en el mundo no existe separada de su entorno natural, el resto de vascos') (Jose Mari Esparza. Available at: http://www.euskalkultura.com [accessed 27.11. 2004]).

[47] Available at http://euskaldiaspora.com/euskaleurope.html [accessed 14.05.07].

Chapter 2

[48] Original quote: 'está llena de datos y de aromas; los historiadores pueden llegar a los datos, pero no a los aromas' (Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, *El País* 26.10.1988).

[49] This was particularly useful, as the literature specific to that subject is very scarce and usually the print runs of these editions were very small, and many of those books are out of print these days.

[50] I carried out a further interview which for a number of reasons has not been used in this enquiry. The significance of this is that it opened a whole range of new theoretical questions with regard to the practical and ethical issues encountered. These will not be discussed here as they are not the primary focus of this study (for further reading on the subject see Wiles et al. 2004).

[51] On this, David Marshall, a writer and an English member of the International Brigades, states that his writing reflects 'my life and the things that were occupying my mind at the time, they tell of my inner self, and my reactions to my personal world and to the greater world and events through which I have lived' (Marshall 2005:no page).

[52] The book *Recuerdos*, which was published with the purpose of the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the Basque refugee children at Southampton in May 1937, compiles the written testimonies of a number of them.

[53] The implications of using translations and also of being both the researcher and the translator will be discussed later in this chapter.

[54] See for example Thompson (1988), Hall (1998), Barwell (2003), Blommaert & Huang (2009), Abrams (2009), Pahl (2006).

[55] My father and some of his family were evacuated to France for a short period of time, after which they returned home.

[56] For more information on the researcher creating the context in ethnographic research see Duranti (1997).

[57] This raises new theoretical questions related to the issue of a perceptible contradiction between the current climate of multiculturalism and multilingualism on the one hand, and yet on the other a protocol which gives preference to the English language, and suggests that the original data is added as an appendix or an endnote when this is in other languages than English, at the risk of damaging the analysis possibilities.

[58] This also includes maintaining grammatical inaccuracies such as errors in correlation of verb tenses, agreements and so on.

[59] See Glossary for choice of spelling.

Chapter 3

[60] See, Jackson (1965, 1999), Preston (1993, 1994), Graham (2002) and Buchanan (2007) to name but a few.

[61] See for instance Thomas, H. (1965) *The Spanish Civil War*, London: Penguin and Southworth, H.R. (1963) *El mito de la cruzada de Franco: crítica bibliográfica*, Paris: Ruedo Ibérico.

[62] These files were stored in the National Historical Archives in Salamanca and Madrid.

[63] To understand the international stance regarding these labels see analysis by Blinkhorn (1992).

[64] Naharro-Calderón (2004) considers that this transition, and silence about the past went on for the last quarter of the 20th century. Even in 2002 Torres stated that the silence was still prevalent

'because of the lazy thinking resulting from a political Transition built on a monumental Pact of Amnesia' (Original quote: 'por el pensamiento vago resultante de una Transición política edificada sobre un monumental Pacto de Amnesia') (Torres 2002:13).

[65] Original quote: 'en la España del postfranquismo se produjo un pacto salomónico consensuado para borrar del marco político y cultural ''común,'' la referencia a las memorias partisanas de los grupos enfrentados en la Guerra Civil y los exilios'.

[66] It is interesting to note that *El otro árbol de Guernica* ('The other tree of Gernika') (Castresana 1969), a book whose argument was based on the experiences of the writer as an evacuee child of the Civil War, won the *Premio Nacional de Literatura 'Miguel de Cervantes'* ('National Prize of Literature "Miguel de Cervantes"') in 1967 in Spain, during Franco's dictatorship. However, it needs to be pointed out that despite his republican family background, Luis de Castresana, the author, worked as a correspondent for the Francoist press.

[67] Amongst some other initiatives, Richards identifies 'the 1999 proposition of the Basque Parliament in favour of official recognition of the forced nature of the expatriation of war children in the besieged Republican zone during the civil war'. He writes that for the war victims who gave their testimonies then, after having been silent for many years this was the first time that 'they were able to actively […] participate in the recovery of a central part of their identities' (Richards 2005:118).

[68] Original quote: 'están conectados con la voluntad de corregir lo que se interpretan como errores de la transición política originadas con el llamado "pacto de silencio" fraguado por las élites políticas españolas durante la transición'.

[69] Original quote: 'aquella visión de futuro supuso olvidar a los exiliados, a los defensores de la democracia'.

[70] Guerra continues to write 'We, the Spanish people, are paying for such an unfair democratic lacuna with a rewriting of history, in such a way that if no one had been dedicated to announcing the truth of what happened during the Civil War years, and the never-ending years of the dictatorship, history would be re-written –now during the democracy- by those who already wrote –yesterday during the dictatorship- a crude falsification of history' ('Tan injusta laguna democrática la estamos pagando los españoles con una reescritura de la historia, de tal manera que si no hubiera personas que dedicaran sus esfuerzos a proclamar la verdad de lo que sucedió en los años de la guerra civil, y los eternos años de la dictadura, la historia volverían a escribirla –ahora en la democracia- los que ya escribieron –ayer en la dictadura- una burda falsificación de la historia') (Martín & Carvajal 2006:13).

[71] Translation: 'I have the impression that for me the war never ended completely. I have had to live all my life with the memories, with the consequences. The War was not only those three years: there were 40 years more afterwards and there were also all the remaining after-effects'.

[72] In fact, between 1931 and 1935 some of the more radical Catholics were organising armed bands which trained in Nafarroa with the help of Mussolini, who provided them with arms and money (Lannon 1993:40).

[73] Preston sarcastically comments that it was convenient to forget his fight against democracy and to present him as 'a clairvoyant pioneer in the war against communism' (Preston 1993:3) instead.

[74] I merely pose this question to encourage further research, since its analysis is not the aim of my investigation.

[75] For more details see Buchanan (2007:10-13).

[76] When Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera founded the *Falange* on 29 October 1933, in his discourse of foundation he merely spoke on 'economic' terms and described it as a movement which was an alternative to the evils of 'the liberal State' which had brought 'economic slavery' (Ellwood in Blinkhorn 1986:206).

[77] See Jackson (1999:330, 336), Legarreta (1984:28), Irazabal Agirre (2001:150), Graham (2002:243), Berazategi & Domínguez (2006:181). Berazategi and Domínguez also point out that Gipuzkoa was the area where the repression against the clergy was more visible particularly against the nationalist priests (Berazategi & Domínguez 2006:182) claiming that this repression affected approximately 3,000 priests and clergy directly or indirectly. However, they indicate that this figure is an estimate as the pertinent documentation is kept by the Catholic Church which does not allow academics and outsiders to access their records (2006:187). Rankin writes of a group of English witnesses to an attack on Durango 'on 2 April when fighters dived to machine-gun people fleeing for shelter, and they made a signed statement about it: "The churches especially had been completely destroyed, as well as a convent, in which … a large number of nuns were killed." The deaths of fourteen nuns and two priests should have embarrassed the Nationalists with their "Catholic Crusade for Civilization", but they flatly lied' (Rankin 2003:109).

[78] Blinkhorn indicates that '[t]he Navarrese Carlist élite was working not only to oppose and obstruct secularizing and socially reforming policies but actually to destroy the very regime which made the pursuit of such policies possible' (Blinkhorn 1984:79).

[79] According to Blinkhorn (1984) the Carlists fought a war which had two targets, namely Basque separatism and also Marxism.

[80] The issue of whether Nafarroa is part of the Basque Country or not is an extremely controversial one and I am not going to problematise it in this thesis. The author cited here, Blinkhorn, distinguishes Nafarroa from the Basque Country and writes literally '[s]ome of Carlism's enemies fled into the temporary safety of the Basque country' (1984:60). In this thesis I treat Nafarroa as part of the Basque Country mainly because that is how my Nafarroan informants utilised it in all our conversations (see Appendix A). Regarding the matter of Nafarroa being Basque or not, Blinckhorn points out that 'Basque consciousness, and an accompanying tendency to regard Nafarroa as a Basque province, nevertheless survived in all those northern and western districts which remained culturally Basque whether or not the language lived on. Throughout most of the ribera, however, and in more southerly and easterly parts of the centre, Basque consciousness was largely absent' (Blinckhorn 1984:65). Also it is significant that the initial project for an autonomy statute draft, the *Estatuto de Estella*, submitted to the Republican government in 1931 included Araba, Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa and Nafarroa. For a straightforward explanation of political, administrative and national boundaries of the Basque Country see Totoricagüena (2005:55-56).

[81] In his essay Fusi also writes 'Euzkadi' for Basque Country. He says that this is the Basque name for 'the fatherland of the Basques' (1993:182). I argue that the Basque name for the *Basque Country* is *Euskal Herria*, which means literally Basque Country or *Pueblo Vasco*. The term *Euzkadi* is a neologism introduced by Sabino Arana, the founder of the Basque Nationalist Party, which means Basque Country, but not literally, and has traditionally been used when the speaker speaks in Spanish, not in Basque. *Euskadi* is the variant of the term which, along with Euskal Herria, is wide spread these days and used by the Basque population, government, and the media. The choice of *Euzkadi* for *Euskadi* might be controversial, as it usually reveals a nationalist political stance of the speaker or the writer. Thus, I will use the term *Basque Country* whenever possible and also *Euskadi* or *Euskal Herria* (see Appendix A).

[82] Moradiellos (1999) observes that 'The simultaneous demand for foreign help by both contending sides meant an explicit recognition of the international dimension of the Spanish conflict and also an attempt to immerse it in the grave tensions that fractured the Europe of the 30s' ('La simultánea petición de ayuda exterior formulada por ambos bandos suponía un reconocimiento explícito de la dimensión internacional presente en el conflicto español y un intento deliberado de sumergirlo en las graves tensiones que fracturaban la Europa de los años treinta').

[83] Agreements such as the 'Soviet-French Treaty of Mutual Assistance, of 2 May 1935' were signed as a result (Smyth 1993:249).

[84] Leah Manning, a labour MP who was profoundly involved with the Basque children's evacuation to the UK, expressed her concerns regarding international politics, writing '[in the 1930s] a cloud […] was looming in the sky. During the next seven fateful years it was to grow, evil and horrific […] We did nothing to prevent it, we systematically destroyed our only defence against it – the League of Nations' (Manning 1970:107).

[85] When the Spanish Government asked the European democracies for support, Blum's Popular Front coalition, which had recently won the elections in France, responded positively in the first instance. However, both the French public and politicians were enormously divided with regard to this matter. Also, the British Government, whom the French considered their most valued ally, had adopted an attitude of strict neutrality from the beginning (Moradiellos 1999). As a result of the enormous internal pressure, and possibly also British disapproval, the French Government cancelled the promised aid to the Republicans (Smyth 1993:252-253, Jackson 1999:229, Blinkhorn 1992:35).

[86] In this respect Buchanan comments that 'Mussolini's intention of turning the Mediterranean into an 'Italian lake' created a situation of considerable danger for the British Empire, with its communications resting on Gibraltar and Suez' (Buchanan 1997:3).

[87] Viñas comments on the quickness of reaction of the American Establishment 'In an extraordinarily short period of time, without any legal support, the bureaucracy of the Department of State […] was capable of suggesting and developing a policy of "moral embargo" towards the Republic without fundamental disagreements between the senior civil servants in the decision making process' (original quote: 'En un plazo de tiempo extraordinariamente corto, sin apoyo legal alguno, la burocracia del Departamento de Estado […] fue capaz de sugerir y desarrollar una política de "embargo moral" hacia la República sin que consten desacuerdos fundamentales entre los funcionarios con peso en el proceso de decisiones') (Viñas 1987:113).

[88] The war had raised a challenging dilemma, especially amongst Catholics. Pope Pius XI and the Vatican were labelling the Republicans as perfidious anti-Catholics and 'To side with the Republicans evidently meant to join the ranks of the Infidel, while supporting Franco meant to compromise one's stand in favor of democracy and freedom' (Crosby 1971:82).

[89] The interpretation of the pact's restrictions by signatory countries often extended to include an embargo on other supplies, such as food when Franco declared a blockade of the Basque

coast in 1937. There was also accord between the governments to keep 'other governments participating in the mutual understanding (*cette entente*) informed of the measures taken to carry out the prohibitions' (Padelford 1937:580).

[90] Padelford writes that 'If the devices have not succeeded altogether in stopping the entrance of supplies and men into Spain; if they have glossed over or provided a screen behind which violations of pledged undertakings have occurred; if they have become popular laughing-stock, and have allowed unfortunate Spain to become a military laboratoy for the testing of weapons and strategy' (Padelford 1937:578).

[91] An important issue which needs to be pointed out here is that, despite the use by the governments of the term *agreement*, it could hardly be considered as such, since they did not all sign up to the same conditions, and some countries did not restrict themselves as much as others did. As Padelford puts it, this was 'merely a concert of policy, and its fulfilment depended entirely upon the initiative of each state' (Padelford 1937:580).

[92] Original quote: 'El mayor cañón que tiene Franco es el de no-intervención'.

[93] Translation: 'On 28 August 1937, the Italian troops triumphantly enter Santander. Reaching new heights of cynicism, the Italian press proudly praises their soldiers who so "heroically" conquered a Spanish city. And the "Non-Intervention" treaty? Will these be the "Nationals" who so pompously proclaim to be fighting in a glorious civil war in order to expel communism from Spain? Could it be that Italy is some Spanish colony?'.

[94] According to Smyth, Hitler determined the extent of his engagement in the Spanish struggle and employed only as much force as would attain his defined goal without radically alienating the major democracies or provoking them into counteraction (Smyth 1993:260).

[95] For details of the medical services during the period under examination see Chapter 'Medical Advances' (Fyrth 1986:140-157).

[96] Buchanan mentions the volunteer force raised by Eoin O'Duffy in the Irish Free State (Buchanan 1997:122). On this subject Mike Cronin states that in 1936 'O'Duffy formed a Blueshirt Brigade to go to Spain' (Cronin 1997:57) composed of 700 men (Cronin 1997:25).

[97] While the 'French contingent was composed largely of factory workers - the British contingent was less politically homogeneous, less proletarian; their motives were mixed: idealism, unemployment, and sheer boredom with a depressed and depressing Britain. "I happened to be in Ostend at the time", wrote one volunteer, "and was bored to desperation". Most of them nevertheless felt, however dimly, that they were fighting against Fascism.' (Maxwell-Mahon 1988).

[98] Hobsbawm was born in 1917, thus he has personal memories of that time, as he was a 19 year old student when the Spanish Civil War commenced.

[99] *The Guardian*, London (17.02.2007).

[100] Blinkhorn offers an analysis on Francoist 'fascism' (Blinkhorn 1992:56-58), a term which has been contested by authors who do not consider Franco to be a fascist. Also the more orthodox fascist section of the rebels, namely the Falange party, was a minority within the National alliance. However, Franco and the rebels were allied to the fascist governments and showed disregard for the democratic Republican government, therefore in agreement with Blinkhorn I argue that it does not seem incorrect to label them as fascists. Alternatively, Cronin uses the term 'para-fascism' in his analysis of the connections of the Irish Blueshirts with Fascism, which he also applies to Franco's regime among some others (Cronin 1997:63).

[101] Notwithstanding, they still co-operated with the communist parties around the world, which, encouraged by Stalin and the Comintern, took the lead in organising the brigades movement, the 'Comintern Army' in Buchanan's words (1997:123). Buchanan notes that at the time 'Communism was recognised as a supra-national organisation' (Buchanan 1991:225).

[102] Crosby also mentions the reaction to these reports by the American Catholic newspaper The Boston Pilot (Crosby 1971:88).

[103] In addition to this, Coni reminds us that 'the Nationalist zone encompassed the major food-producing regions of the country so that government-held regions were more vulnerable to undernourishment' (Coni 2002:149). In this respect, Graham establishes a difference between the mainly 'mixed' type of immigrant that Bizkaia attracted to work in its industry and the 'urban' type who went to Barcelona. In the Basque Country these workers maintained their links to the countryside, thus 'a proportionally greater part of its urban population retained ties to the countryside, and thus easier access to alternative sources of food' (Graham 2002:252-253).

[104] Pons Prades notes that once Franco conquered the Basque Country he would stigmatise the Basque provinces of Araba, Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia with the label of 'provincias malditas' ('damned provinces') (Pons Prades 2005:155).

[105] George Steer wrote that the Italians targeted a civilian population from the air when they attacked the Abyssinians and that the same war tactic was used for the first time against a 'white' population during the Spanish Civil War. However, when subsequent authors have quoted Steer's words to refer to the bombing of Gernika they have often failed to clarify that this refers to 'white' or 'European' population.

[106] Tabernilla and Lezamiz indicate that Mola's offensive against Bizkaia was 'the largest concentration of artillery and aviation that the Spanish Civil War had known' (original quote: 'la mayor concentración de Artillería y Aviación que había conocido la Guerra Civil Española') (Tabernilla & Lezamiz 2007:193). Berazategi and Domínguez claim that on 22 July 1936 this little Basque village had the 'dubious' honour to be the first place bombarded by airplanes therefore 'Otxandio suffered the first indiscriminate attack against the civilian population of the War of the 36, and of the entire history of Europe' (original quote: 'Otxandio sufrió el primer ataque indiscriminado contra población civil de la Guerra del 36, y de toda la historia de Europa') (Berazategi & Domínguez 2006:55). For details of the bombardment of Durango on 31 March 1937 see Sarrionaindia (2007) and also Irazabal Agirre (2001) in the Bibliography.

[107] Documentation Centre web page of The Gernika Peace Museum Foundation (http://www.gernikagogoratuz.org/en/a_documentacion.php).

[108] However, in the introduction of their book *El Exilio de los Niños* (2003) Alted Vigil et al. argue that the First World War was the first example of total war. Eslaba Galán writes that when at the Nuremberg trials the prosecution asked the German Air Marshal, Hermann Goering, about the attack on Gernika, he answered that this was 'a kind of testing ground for the Luftwaffe' (Original quote: 'fue una especie de banco de prueba para la Luftwaffe') (Eslaba Galán 2006:235).

[109] Translation: 'an endless row of refugees [...] they can't manage to understand why they devastated Gernika, sacred setting for their traditions and religious spirit [...] this was the riposte, the sadistic and bloody revenge of the very "catholic" general Francisco Franco because the Basques remained loyal to the government of the Republic. He will never be able to call them communists'.

[110] http://www.gernikagogoratuz.org/en/a_documentacion.php

[111] Note the use of the term 'supposedly'.

[112] Legarreta mentions an English delegation including the archbishop of Canterbury and John McMurray of the Popular Front who witnessed one of the German attacks on Durango at the end of March 1937 (Legarreta 1984:29).

[113] Sergio J. Valera points out that Steer lost his job with *The Times* as his version holding the Germans responsible for the massacre of Gernika clashed with the appeasement line of the newspaper (http://www.abc.es, 04.03.2005).

[114] Regarding the evacuations to the USSR, Jesús Hernández, who was the minister of *Instrucción Pública* at the time, emphasises an extra dimension when he declares how fortunate he

considered the children who had the opportunity to be educated in the 'country of the socialism' in addition to avoiding the dangers of the Civil War (Alted Vigil et al. 1999:35).

[115] Bowles' documentary film *The Guernica Children* (2005) amongst others.

[116] The metaphorical sense of this expression is analysed in (5.2.4).

[117] Another reason which motivated the more politically committed parents to send their children abroad was to avoid the retribution, imprisonment and forced conscription into totalitarian para-military organisations they feared would happen if the rebels conquered the Basque Country (Arrien 1983:154). Martín and Carvajal maintain that after the war, there were 'black lists' as a result of the 'Ley de Responsabilidades Políticas', which penalised those who had been part of the Republican forces or who had simply been sympathisers (Martín & Carvajal 2006:150).

[118] This war attracted the support of many intellectuals around the world. Many who had not taken sides at the beginning of the conflict became deeply involved with the pro-Republican cause after the merciless offensive in the north, and also after the killing of the poet García Lorca by the Nationals.

[119] Original quote: 'indefensos frente a la crueldad del enfrentamiento, se convertirían en uno de los mejores recursos de una propaganda que perseguía tanto la legitimación de los principios por los que se luchaba, en una y otra zona, como el obtener el necesario apoyo internacional para ganar la guerra'.

[120] The Generalitat ('Catalan Autonomous Government') helped with evacuations within the Spanish territory.

[121] Alted Vigil et al. emphasise the committed help from the French, Mexican and Soviet governments (Alted Vigil et al. 1999:34). Within the Spanish territory the Red Cross helped both sides and in France the international Red Cross did not get involved in support for the Spanish refugees. For further information see Alted Vigil et al. (1999:34) and Legarreta (1984:34-35).

[122] Authors generally comment the outstanding support given by the Quakers. An 'International Committee for the Aid to the Spanish Refugee Children' was set by the Quakers from a variety of countries including the UK (Pons Prades 2005:35).

[123] Approval was granted on 29 April according to Bell (1996:33).

[124] Legarreta specifies three conditions imposed by the government 'that no cost to the Treasury be entailed for their maintenance; that private funds be gathered for their education and care; and that only non-combatants of *all political parties* be allowed to come' (Legarreta 1984:101-102, my emphasis).

[125] There were other individuals who did similar and equally essential work, for instance the Dean of Canterbury, Mr. Johnson (Arrien 1983:160).

[126] According to Legarreta the reason was that only 2,000 children met that age requirement.

[127] For details of embarkation and the journey see Cloud (1937:24) and Arrien (1991:51-52).

[128] The Duchess of Atholl in a contemporaneous account maintains that 'A final raid carried out during their embarkation killed eleven, and prevented over one hundred others from joining the ship. The full 4,000, therefore, never reached England' (1938:199). For figures see Legarreta (1984:106-107), Arrien (1991:48, 51-54), Bell (1996:8), Martin & Carvajal (2006:51), Benjamin 2003:99 and Pons Prades 2005:340-341. In Appendices 1 and 2:169-202 of his book *Niños Vascos Evacuados a Gran Bretaña*, Arrien (1991) gives lists of the children and also accompanying teachers and assistants, noting that his source is the book *Gernika Belaunaldia* by Dorothy Legarreta. However, when I interviewed Arrien in June 2008, he admitted that he is aware that there are some mistakes in these lists, which he is hoping to amend in a future edition of his book (in preparation).

[129] With the exception of Teresa Pàmies, who indicates the 20 May (Pàmies 1977:110). However, her source is Yvonne Cloud's *The Basque Children in England*, and this author indicates the 21 May as the departure date. Tom Buchanan also specifies this date (20 May) in the foreword he writes in *Recuerdos* (Benjamin 2007).

[130] This expression has been constantly repeated at events which I have attended by various social actors, including *Niños Vascos*, thus it can be argued that it has become part of the cliché phrases of the narratives on this topic.

[131] For a detailed account of the arrival and initial life in the camp and also their effect at a local level see Cloud (1937) and Kushner and Knox (1999).

[132] Translation: 'I was twelve, and the life in that camp was strange to me, a big difference to my normal life at home. We boys and girls were separated, and those of nationalist parents were separated from the non-nationalists too, with spaces between them. Separated from everyone else, with a wire in the middle, there were about 20 older boys'.

[133] Eastleigh, 13.10.2007.

[134] Translation: 'I was responsible for one of the tents, with my sister and another six girls. A deep groove had to be kept around the tent in case it rained, and the guy ropes had to be taut in case it was windy. I felt a bit like their mother; I even gave them arithmetic, grammar and history lessons'.

[135] Translation: 'My brother was three years older than me and for me he was not only my brother but father and mother too'.

[136] Excerpt from the transcript of the documentary film *The Guernica Children* (Bowles 2005).

[137] See Legarreta (1984), Arrien (1991) and Bell (1996) for extensive information on the number and location of the *colonias*.

[138] Translation: 'In Southampton we spent a few months, until we were divided into groups and they sent us to different places. I went to Cambridge, but when I was starting to make new friendships they moved us again, this time to Ipswich, very near London'.

[139] Eastleigh, 13.10.2007.

[140] Translation: 'The worst times of my life were the two years after leaving for work when I was fourteen and the last *colonia* was closed. One was on one's own. I lived in inns all over London. I'd worked in an endless number of jobs. I didn't have any qualifications or any training. I didn't earn enough to be able to survive. I found myself very lonely. To me, that's the age at which the young, especially those who live in boarding schools without their parents, are the most vulnerable and precisely when they need the most support' (conversation with a *niño vasco*, 05.06.2009).

[141] Eastleigh, 13.10.2007.

[142] Eastleigh, 13.10.2007.

[143] Translation: 'We had arrived in England as *Basque children* or *Basque refugees*; after the start of the Second World War, when we reached the age of sixteen we became *enemy aliens*, and after the war we were *stateless persons* resident in the UK – citizens of the United Nations with passports and safe conducts issued by this organisation (obviously not valid in the Francoist Spain) which only allowed us to leave and return to the country of residency. We thought that position was unbearable'.

[144] Excerpt from the transcript of the documentary film *The Guernica Children* (Bowles 2005).

[145] Eastleigh, 13.10.2007.

[146] Eastleigh, 13.10.2007.

[147] Excerpt from the transcript of the documentary film *The Guernica Children* (Bowles 2005).

[148] Translation: 'We the younger ones, to a certain extent have been the most privileged. We had more time to adapt to the conditions. The older ones were perhaps the ones who had the worst time because as soon as they were fourteen they had go out to work' (Public debate, Bilbao, 13.06.2008).

[149] See Bell 1996 for detailed accounts of jobs and career developments.

[150] Eastleigh, 13.10.2007.

[151] Eastleigh, 13.10.2007.

[152] Excerpt from the transcript of the documentary film *The Guernica Children* (Bowles 2005).

[153] Excerpt from the transcript of the documentary film *The Guernica Children* (Bowles 2005).

[154] Public debate, Bilbao 13.06.2008.

[155] Public debate, Bilbao 13.06.2008.

[156] Eastleigh, 13.10.2007.

Chapter 4

[157] Translation: 'Children of the war'.

[158] Translation: 'Basque children'.

[159] Translation: 'the forgotten'.

[160] Some testimonies indicate that amongst the *Niños Vascos* who remained in contact living in London, the annual celebratory meal has a long history. At a larger scale, Alonso Carballés (1998) indicates the reunion of 1987 in Bilbao as the first major event which gathered evacuee children, who continued to hold subsequent annual reunions (see 0.1).

[161] The reunion celebrated on 25 May 2008 was the last one still organised solely by the *Niños Vascos* themselves. At that reunion the organisation of the annual meal was handed over to the children of some *Niños Vascos*. This event will be discussed later in this section (see 4.2.3.2).

[162] In Spanish there are two forms of address for the second grammatical person 'you', the *tuteo* or use of *tú (vosotros* in plural) and the form *usted* (*ustedes* in plural). There are no universal rules of usage within the Hispanic world. In the Basque Country the *tuteo* is particularly wide spread and it implies familiarity, whereas the form *usted* is used in formal contexts.

[163] As stated in the newsletter No. 11 of the Basque Children of '37 Association UK, May 2009.

[164] Translation: 'One of the things that we wanted to do this year was to change the date because this *weekend* is always the *bank holiday weekend* and there were, well, at least, six or ten people who would have come, but as it was a *weekend*, *long weekend*, they haven't been able to come. So if we or anyone else organises it next year perhaps it would be better to change it to a week earlier or to a week later so that it doesn't clash with this *weekend*' [Italics in English in the original quote].

[165] Translation: 'I want to applaud you and also her for the work you are doing to unite us, the children'.

[166] Translation: 'Many people have told me this, because they thought it was important to continue our story'.

[167] Translation: 'Here we have the photograph of the plaque which was installed at the Southampton Civic Centre which really expresses our arrival in this country and I think that if for instance you have some (photo) album of your grandchildren, your history and so on, this really explains our arrival'.

[168] Translation: 'And enjoy what's left of the rest of the day. Now you can sing'.

[169] Translation: 'family'.

[170] Translation: 'In order to maintain their identity'.

[171] *Daily Echo*, 28.05.2007.

[172] In some cases the testimonies have been transcribed by someone else.

[173] Translation: 'Life in that *colonia* was wonderful. We 21 children seemed like brothers and sisters, the older ones gave us the four smallest girls much love'.

[174] Translation: 'We are part of a large family – the Basque children of '37'.

[175] Translation: 'We are a family'.

[176] Translation: 'I have to tell you that in addition to Koke, another five of our family, which is getting smaller every time, have died'.

[177] Translation: 'The Basque children don't want to talk to other Basque children. They have their little groups and they don't mix with each other'.

[178] The deceased was one of the volunteers who helped the *Niños Vascos* when they arrived in 1937.

[179] Translation: 'A white rose with a card which I signed on behalf of all the Basque children saying thanks for everything he did'.

[180] Translation: 'What we do'.

[181] Translation: 'We'.

[182] Translation: 'Here the food isn't like ours'.

[183] Translation: 'Ours'.

[184] Translation: 'Alright'.

[185] Translation: 'As you [plural] say'.

[186] Translation: 'You people from there [Basque Country] say "alright" all the time'.

[187] Translation: 'We are all the same'.

[188] Translation: 'We all speak Spanish at home, others don't. I'm proud that in my home Spanish is spoken perfectly. My children speak, not like other people's children'.

[189] Translation: 'My son didn't want to learn Spanish. You know what the English are like'.

[190] Translation: 'My husband could understand [Spanish] but he couldn't speak [it], he was embarrassed'.

[191] Translation: 'He doesn't speak Spanish but he's learning'.

[192] Translation: 'If it weren't for this occasion we would lose contact'.

[193] Translation: 'In those celebrations there are so many people and so much noise that we don't have any time to chat. That's why she and her husband are going to visit me and so we can chat'.

[194] Translation: 'Look at what they're saying, that Margate was a very bad *colonia*. If I say that everything was good for me there they are going to think that I'm a liar'.

[195] Translation: 'My memory has always been bad and it's getting worse each time. Now at my age it's very bad and if I talk about all this, who can say whether it's memory or imagination?'

[196] Translation: 'My story is the true one [is the real version]'.

[197] Translation: 'What was I going to say! Spain hasn't given me anything, neither money nor work nor anything'.

[198] Translation: 'I've been saying half joking that this would probably be the last reunion we would have, and now I can honestly tell you that this is the last reunion which I organise. It would be a real shame if our yearly encounters finished and it would be wonderful if they continued with our children, organised by them with the parents attending if they could. [This means] we could carry on'.

[199] Translation: '[The three of us] want to say that obviously we want this to continue, not only next year, but also in future years. It is important that this continues with you [Basque children] but also with your children and grandchildren'.

[200] Translation: 'And [our] great grandchildren!'.

[201] Translation: 'I don't like [commemorations]. Awful things happened, parents fighting with their children. Wars are bad, but this one was the worst of all. It was horrible, how can children be separated by political parties? What does a child know about all this? In a war all [parties] lose. It wasn't just us who lost, but everyone who lived it and there are those who aren't being taken into account in all these celebrations. Both sides did awful things, both. I believe that one [side was] worse than the other, but whilst this isn't acknowledged things won't get better. It's what happens now' (conversation with a *niño vasco*, 11.10.2007).

[202] Translation: 'I never go to those organised ceremonies because they want to keep it going with [using] the children, the nephews, as if it were something spectacular' (conversation with a *niño vasco*, 03.10.2009).

[203] Translation: 'We had no choice. This is a very serious matter, there were many very traumatised people, and it is being portrayed as a theatre show. They're giving a version of history which isn't true [real]. They don't talk about the segregation by [political] parties at Eastleigh' (telephone conversation with a *niño vasco,* 19.09.2007).

[204] Original quote: 'trivialización de las memorias'.

[205] Original quote: 'mediático-culturales'.

[206] Original quote: 'las memorias pueden ser maleables […] Inframemorias que tocan lo kitch y lo espectacular, el "exiliobusiness" dentro de una tendencia mercantilista y globalizadora infrenable'.

[207] Original quote: 'divulgadores'.

[208] Original quote: 'periodistas, realizadores y productores audiovisuales'.

[209] Examples of this approach are observed in tabloid headings of book chapters such as *Gángsteres en la retaguardia* ('gangsters in the rearguard'), *Testículos retorcidos* ('Twisted testicles'), *Orín sobre los muertos* ('Urine over the dead'), *Devorados por las fieras* ('Devoured by beasts'), *Martirizado ante su madre* ('Tortured before his mother'), *Mentes depravadas* ('Depraved minds'), *Aviador descuartizado* ('Butchered aviator'), *Violada ante su hermano* ('Raped before her brother'), *Senos amputados* ('Amputated breasts'), *Fusilado por no blasfemar* ('Executed for not blaspheming').

[210] Original quote: 'Si se atiende […] a las noticias periodísticas de este periodo, se observa la aparición de una imagen 'victimista' de los *niños de la guerra*, imagen recurrente […] énfasis en *infancia rota*, padecimiento de las guerras, se irá imponiendo como un tópico discursivo que, en diferentes contextos y por diferentes motivos, llegarán a adoptar, incluso, algunos agentes'.

[211] Translation: 'It's being organised by the Association and I'm really disillusioned with them, I don't want to participate in anything that has to do with them. They have their own agenda. Who is the Association representing? They're not bothered about normal people, they are all from the academic world. Go to the 'Club de Jubilados' [Retired people club]. When the minister went there he didn't interview the Basque children, but the people of the Association, and he closed the door to block me when I tried to talk. The Association organised some talk with photos; we have given [them] pictures, they use them and ask for money, they have

another agenda, they are getting loaded. The plaques do not do anything for the children of the war. It's theatre' (telephone conversation with a *niño vasco*, 19.09.2007).

[212] Translation: 'commercial tendency'.

[213] The agents considered in the first event analysed (70th anniversary of the arrival of the *Niños Vascos*, Southampton 2007), are the *Niños Vascos*, the politicians, and the media. The analysis of these categories is of a comparative nature. There was also a historian amongst the guest speakers, however I have included the analysis of his narrative as an appendix (see Appendix C) as he was the only person who gave a speech within the category of 'historians'.

[214] Translation: 'Rounded dates'.

[215] Discrepancies with regard to this arrival date were discussed in Chapter 3.

[216] In bold in the original document.

[217] In bold in the original document.

[218] This is comparable to the current debate on refugees from Nazism, which similarly refers to the notions of 'loyalty', 'contribution' and 'gratitude' (see Kushner 2006).

[219] All the speeches of this anniversary quoted here were obtained from the Basque Children of '37 Association UK website http://www.basquechildren.org/?q=node/49 in September 2009. The Association also produced a DVD with the highlights of this event: The Basque Children of '37 Association UK. *The Basque Children 1937 – 2007 Bilbao – Southampton – Commemoration*.

[220] The three flags displayed to the left of the speakers were the Union flag on the left, the Spanish flag in the middle and the *Ikurriña* ('Basque flag') on the right. The Republican flag was not flown in the main auditorium. It was displayed among other objects in the exhibition which took place in a different room.

[221] In this sense various remarks were made during conversations after the speeches.

[222] Translation: 'in the name of the Basque Government'.

[223] Translation: 'Imprints of our history'.

[224] *Daily Echo*, 26.05.2007.

[225] *Daily Echo*, 28.05.2007.

[226] *International Brigade Memorial Trust Newsletter*, Issue 17, June 2007.

[227] Seen on the Spanish Embassy official web page http://www.reinounido.informacion.la-moncloa.es , 03.06.2007.

[228] *El Correo*, 27.05.2007.

[229] Translation: 'A cordial understanding of the historical memory'.

[230] Translation: 'Remember, exhume'.

[231] Translation: 'The life of a hero'.

[232] Translation: 'Yesterday's ceremony was a friendly pact between the children of the refugees and governments' (*El Correo*, 27.05.2007).

[233] Translation: 'Yesterday he recognised that he hadn't heard of the children's history until he became involved with the organisation of the anniversary' (*El Correo*, 27.05.2007).

[234] I can confirm the inaccuracies because the interviewee was my father and I was present at the moment when he was interviewed by the press.

[235] Translation: 'In any case, to believe that what the papers publish is always first hand and true information is like believing that everything politicians say is true and that religion is good for your health and on the other hand there we are, trying to get on; sharing flats with journalists, priests, the police, politicians and other nasty creatures of this world' (Personal correspondence via email, 30.05.2007).

[236] 'A programme of live performance, film and exhibition remembering the Basque children refugees of 1937'. As explained on email of 14.08.2007.

[237] Interviewed on 26.06.2009. Unless stated differently all his quotes refer to this interview.

[238] Translation: 'Day of Hispanicity'.

[239] Translation: 'Day of the Race'.

[240] Translation: 'Day of the Civil Guard'.

[241] It was co-funded by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund.

[242] Naharro-Calderón. Curso de Extensión Universitaria de la Universidad de Alcalá de Henares, *De los niños de la guerra a los nietos de la memoria* ('From the children of the war to the grandchildren of the memory'). Llanes, Spain, 23-25 August 2006.

[243] Draft outline proposed to potential co-organising partners in November 2006.

[244] Email of 15.10.2007.

[245] For an analysis of these types of capital see Bourdieu (1986).

[246] This is the term used by the Mayor of Eastleigh for the introduction which appears in the official programme.

[247] In capital letters in the original.

[248] Email of 10.09.2007.

[249] Translation: 'The Bombing of Gernika'.

[250] Translation: 'Some of the things that come out are not true. When we came we were children and we didn't think about those things about sexuality which have appeared in the

performance. It's only in the theatre; in reality there was nothing of that, we were very little, everything was new, everything was new'.

251 I refer to him as Mr M.P. in this study.

252 Among the key findings of the report written after the week of the events, with regard to attendance it was pointed out that there was 'a further spread than average and people travelled from London, Kent, Essex, Bath, Swindon, Salisbury and Tunbridge Wells'.

Chapter 5

253 Translation: 'children of the war'.

254 Translation: 'Basque children'.

255 Translation: 'the forgotten'.

256 London, 03.10.2009.

257 Eastleigh, 13.10.2007.

258 Translation: 'Just us, the niños vascos on our own'.

259 Original quote: 'destacan por la conciencia que tienen de que los sucesos nacionales e internacionales han construido su historia y de que a nivel personal y colectivo, se han objetivado en los lugares, suertes, desgracias, separaciones, decisiones, elecciones, re-estructuraciones, etc. que han modelado su vida'.

260 Original quote: 'utilizada por los distintos medios de comunicación, aparece en el nombre de alguna asociación relacionada con el colectivo'.

261 Translation: 'Should they be the children of the war or the children of the exile?'.

262 Translation: 'Children, Basque [people], evacuees, war, exile, generation'.

263 Translation: The Basque refugee children, 'Basque children', 'children of the war', 'children of the exile', 'the generation of the exile', the Guernica generation, 'the children of Gernika' and 'the children'.

264 Conversation of 18.06.2009.

265 Conversation of 26.06.2009.

266 Some book titles which illustrate the use of this term are, for example: *Los niños de la guerra de España en la Unión Soviética. De la evacuación al retorno (1937-1999)* (Alted Vigil et al. 1999); *Los Niños de la Guerra ya somos Viejos* (Jiménez Blanco 1994); *Los Niños de la Guerra* (Pàmies 1977).

267 Translation: 'I don't call them *children*, I don't call them *children of the war*, I don't, because I'm also a *child of the war* because I was born during the war. It's [called] *generation of the exile*, for me they are exiles, which is different. There are two types of evacuation, the evacuations at internal

level, and here almost everyone has suffered because of that, to me those are also exiles, but at an internal level, because they also suffered having to abandon their homes without knowing in whose hands they would end up. I tend to call it the *generation of the exile*, not the *children of the war*, because a *child of the war* is someone who was born during the war; that makes me also a *child of the war*. *Basque children of the war* include all of us who were born during the war and suffered the consequences' (conversation of 24.06.2008).

[268] Translation: 'We are *the forgotten*, we are *Basque evacuee children*, we're not the *children of the war*, because even the Nazi children could be considered to be that'.

[269] Translation: 'Homage to the Basque boys and girls of the war'.

[270] Translation: 'We interviewed her but in the end she didn't come because she wasn't a *child of the war*. She went with her family later on. I think she went as a refugee later on, I don't know if [she went] with her family. In principle we recorded her because we thought she was a *child of the war* and then when we saw the recording we saw that she wasn't a *child of the war*. In that as well, -as with [whether they were] Basque or not-, we wanted to be very strict, because if you open the door to other types of refugees, well, then the people to pay homage to become thousands. We had to be very strict, I'm sorry, but a *child of the war* is a *child of the war*, which is the term which has been coined for those who left under such circumstances' (conversation of 03.07.2008).

[271] Translation: 'Association of evacuee children of '37'.

[272] Translation: 'Association of evacuee children of '37'.

[273] Translation: 'Association of retired evacuees of the Civil War'.

[274] In Bilbao there is a third association of *niños evacuados*, this one composed of those who returned from the former USSR.

[275] Translation: 'An entire life being children'.

[276] Translation: 'My impression was that they're all professionals at telling the boat story. They tell that [story] with all sorts of literary detail and embellishment, but as soon as you want to go a little deeper, which was the idea, that the interviews should be based 20% on the boat adventure but the other 80% on what happened next, that is, 'what's your life like when you stop being a *child of the war*, when you finally realise that you're not going to return and you have to make your living wherever you are'. From that moment on… [I was interested] as much in their personal and professional life, their return, when they returned, their reunion, what it was like, to what extent they have maintained the link, if they feel more from here, more from there, if they would have sent their children away if they were in the same situation as their

parents were… you can't get them away from that, as soon as you try to get them to go deeper they tell you the adventure of the boat again. That's where they feel safe, they don't want to be reflective about their life' (conversation of 03.07.2008).

[277] *IBMT newsletter*, autumn 2009.

[278] Translation: 'English children'.

[279] Interestingly, in the prologue of a book of memoirs written by a *niño vasco*, the expression '*niños vascos* rusos' (Santamaría 2008: 10) is used to refer to those who were evacuated to the USSR.

[280] This is a poster advertising an event which was held on Wednesday 7 December and Saturday 10 December. The year is not displayed on the advert, however I assume it was 1938, as that is the only date when the 7 December was a Wednesday between the date when the children arrived until 1949.

[281] This poster does not explain what the event is or when it was held. However, it belongs to the archives of the Basque Children of '37 Association UK and it is assumed that it advertises an event similar to the others provided here.

[282] Translation: 'We used to go to the cinema often. We didn't pay to get in, it was only needed to say to the doorman: *Basque children* [originally in English], and he used to say: *Walk in* [originally in English]'.

[283] Translation: 'For a while my life was spent between the college, the new home and my visits to the cinema. Josechu and his friends hung around in a little group, isolated from the rest of the *Basque children*, which is how we were called, and still are'.

[284] The book used for this study is a reprint of the original book written by Steer in English which was published in 1938. I have also accessed a Spanish translation published in 1963.

[285] Southampton was the main port of arrival and departure of cargo.

[286] *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* ('Basque Nationalist Party'), the party who held the majority of votes in the Basque Government when the war started.

[287] Translation: 'The PNV assumed [the term 'Basque'] and in that time the Basques were practically [only] the members of the PNV. The others were immigrants. Many of those who went to England were children of emigrants; Spanish speakers. Yvonne [Cloud] makes that mistake; in her book she says that 'in reality the Basques who have come here are few, and those who speak Basque, even less'. She's wrong to say that, because I believe that all the nationalists spoke some Basque. Although they knew Basque, another thing was whether they spoke it in public. As far as I'm concerned, everyone who lives here is Basque. I'm very open in

that respect; [even] those who have gone from here no matter where they've come from. Because not everyone who was evacuated to England was originally from Bizkaia or Gipuzkoa; some had come from other places. But as they left from here I call them Basque. Cloud confuses [the term] 'Basque' with those who speak it. That's a mistake, because here we are bilingual and always have been. It seems that it was the custom then, that being Basque meant you were a *euskaldun*' (conversation of 24.06.2008). *Euskaldun* is the Basque word which has traditionally defined a Basque person. It is an abstraction of *euskera duena*, which literally means '(s)he who has the Basque language'.

[288] Translation: 'That one is *maketo*' [This is a term of abuse introduced by Sabino Arana, the founder of the PNV, to identify immigrants who migrated to the Basque Country from other Spanish regions].

[289] Translation: 'I am *maketo*. Only my last surname is Basque' [This comment relates to the fact that Spanish citizens have two surnames; the first one is their father's first surname and the second one is their mother's first surname. Thus, when the informants make this comment it means that although their mother's surname is Basque their father's is not].

[290] Written testimony by an informant.

[291] Translation: 'I don't have an identity. I'm not Basque. I was born and lived in […] during the first years of my life, and then when I came to England they called me *alien* [original in English], they stole my identity' [For anonymity reasons the place of birth, which is outside the Basque Country, has been deleted. This comment was made at the annual reunion of 21 May 2006. I also heard this person make a similar comment at the annual meal of 25 May 2008 when we sat at the same table].

[292] Translation: 'I've been making inquiries and investigating that organisation to see what it did for us, the Basque children, and what it does today'.

[293] Translation: 'We, the Basque children'.

[294] The examples given here are only a sample of the many responses I received when I asked my informants about the use of the terms '*niños vascos*' and '*niños*'. All the examples shown were received in writing. I have not included oral data collected in person or from telephone conversations.

[295] Email of 02.08.2010.

[296] Email of 22.07.2010.

[297] Translation: 'My mother is a *niña vasca* and all who came on the *Habana* were and always will be *Niños Vascos*' (email of 24.07.2010).

[298] Email of 30.07.2010.

[299] Email of 29.07.2010.

[300] Email of 01.08.2010.

[301] Other examples of the agentive power of the Basque children will be discussed later; for instance with regard to their proactive responses towards imposed separations from their siblings or with regard to their repatriation.

[302] Email of 21.09.2007.

[303] The complete text of the advert was 'VOLUNTEERS Do you study Spanish? ¡¡NECESITAMOS TU AYUDA!! ['we need your help'] We are recruiting volunteers to help with the Commemoration of the arrival of the Basque Children in Southampton who were escaping the horrors of Guernica'.

[304] Original quote: 'El resultado final es una memoria colectiva incompleta, con lagunas, en ocasiones con cierta carga de mitos, pero que ha sido aceptada, interiorizada y asimilada como propia por los miembros del grupo'.

[305] Translation: 'Our departure was on a beautiful and clear day; I'd say one of the best that spring; but very sad at the moment when all the families had to be separated from their children. We travelled by train from Bilbao to Santurtzi. At the train station and the dock, the atmosphere was of screaming and harrowing cries, what a horrible goodbye! Would we ever see our beloved families again?'

[306] Translation: 'Very sad'.

[307] Translation: 'of the best'.

[308] Translation: 'screaming and harrowing cries'.

[309] Translation: 'horrible goodbye'.

[310] Translation: 'Clear'.

[311] Translation: 'if the goodbye was sad, then so was the day because I remember it rained'.

[312] During a conversation with Gregorio Arrien he pointed out at the inconsistency of this idea of 'only for three months' owing to the fact that there was an initial agreement of six months with the BCC (conversation of 24.06.2008).

[313] Translation: 'A Francoist boat chased us and I can still hear the boom boom of its cannons shooting at us while we left Spanish waters'.

[314] Translation: 'It would be approximately four in the morning when the ship seems to give birth. It pulses strangely. Deafening thuds make the fragile partitions tremble. The anchors are lifted and the little floating city, with its unprecedented cargo of suffering and hope starts to

move. The small travellers, as if moved by a single impulse, wake up. We all head towards the decks to say a last goodbye to our beloved home where the best memories of our childhood and our most loved ones remain'.

[315] Translation: 'The camp was divided; to one side there were the nationalists, with their chapel-tent; to the other the non-nationalists. I could never understand the reason for this separation, nor whose idea it was. As far as I know, we weren't separated in any other part of the UK in the *Basque Children Centres*, there was even a *Basque Central Committee* in London. But people crossed that division of shame. And apart from petty politics, there were the sensationalist English newspapers. Some photographers used to get close to the perimeter wire and used to distribute pennies to the curious children. They encouraged them to play and bet money and then they took pictures of them. I've seen those pictures, on the front page. Disgusting' [The italics are English words originally].

[316] Translation: 'A little later they started to move us to *colonias*. I put my name and my brother's down for one. But it turned out that they were going to take me but not him, because he was little. On the day I was supposed to leave I escaped and hid in a forest close to the camp, near a town called Eastleigh. I was there until I thought the bus had left for the train station'.

[317] Translation: 'They started to divide us into groups to send us to other places. So as not to be separated from my sister, I said I was 11 years old, two more than I really was, and that I would look after her'.

[318] Eastleigh, 13.10.2007.

[319] See Sutton (2008) for an inspiring exploration on the topic of food and collective memory.

[320] Translation: 'They took us to a place full of tents; there was even a big square one which was used as a church. My first impression was bad, I didn't like that place. Furthermore, I found the food so weird that I thought I'd die if I ate it. For different reasons, I ended up with colitis and spent the days coming and going from the trenches that were turned into latrines. Thank goodness I had my older brother with me'.

[321] Excerpt from the transcript of the documentary film *The Guernica Children* (Bowles 2005).

[322] Translation: 'I'd reached the age of 16. My parents cheated because they wanted me to come so that I could look after my younger siblings who were younger than me.' (*Los Niños de Guernica tienen memoria*, film documentary).

[323] Translation: 'We have a really bad time remembering our lives in England, particularly since we lacked a mother's presence, so important at that age'.

[324] Excerpt from the transcript of the documentary film *The Guernica Children* (Bowles 2005).

[325] Translation: 'Going with me were two of my cousins a little younger than myself. Before embarking, their parents and mine insisted very much I look after them well. Looking back, this was funny because the three of us were children who all needed looking after. Nevertheless, I believe I did everything I could in the best way I could and that I was like an older brother to them. I was aware of the responsibility that I'd taken on'.

[326] This point is elaborated in the following excerpt: 'Can I tell you something? Well, I became a mother, and I had these jobs to do, these worryings with my brother and sister, so much so that I used to write to my mother a lot and tell her, that "I expect", you know, "how good for you", you know, "you got rid of", [laugh] I was really unkind. Luckily she didn't receive them. I said "oh, they're driving me crazy; you must have nice peace there without them". And I used to post them because we had a box there for posting letters; and we found out that they didn't go to Spain and we didn't get any back from them at all, but you know, we used to send these letters' (excerpt from the transcript of the documentary film *The Guernica Children*, Bowles 2005).

[327] Translation: 'It was time to say goodbye and it was really sad, among the tears and promises that some day we would return'.

[328] Translation: 'In January 1940 my father reclaimed us from France. It broke my heart to have to say goodbye to Mrs Swinden, who had been a real mother to me'.

[329] Translation: 'Then my father reclaimed my brother and me. They bought me new clothes for the return home. But I didn't want to return. I cried a lot'.

[330] Translation: 'For me they have been the happiest days of my life' (Menéndez 2008).

[331] Translation: 'I prefer to finish remembering with gratitude for that England and its people, who thought to give us refuge in such a difficult time, who thought to treat us as what we were, as human beings, in their land of butter'. Notice the metaphor of food being used as an identity marker which epitomises the receiving foreign country.

[332] Translation: 'I will also remember forever the splendid English people, who received us and treated us wonderfully, to the point that they often made us forget our sad situation'.

[333] See Bell (1996) and Benjamin (2007).

[334] Translation: 'We are the forgotten, they didn't give us a passport, we were enemy 'aliens'… when we got married in the UK Franco didn't recognise our marriages, as they weren't catholic or religious, and they considered our children as bastards'.

[335] Public talk, Southampton 12.03.2007.

[336] Taken from the list of ten Aims of the Basque Children of '37 Association UK which appears in the advertising pamphlet.

[337] Original quote: 'No cabe duda que el niño exiliado es el gran desconocido y el gran ausente de la historia del exilio español, donde ha tenido un escasísimo peso […] el exilio infantil, *sujeto pasivo* de esta historia, sólo aportaba pinceladas trágicas carentes de carga ideológica y representativa, de ahí que ocupara y haya ocupado un lugar de muy segundo orden en los estudios sobre el exilio español'.

[338] Terms used by several interviewees during the week of remembrance held at The Point, Eastleigh October 2007.

[339] Translation: 'In 2004 *Bloody Foreigners* was published with the title making reference to one of the abusive terms which were said to the foreigners in this country. In it is mentioned the different migrations which have contributed to making this country what it is, starting with prehistory; and it is surprising to read how much of what today is considered as the essence of the UK is of foreign contribution. Moreover, in its almost 500 pages there isn't a single mention of the Spanish men and women at any time!'

[340] Conversation of 22.09.2009.

[341] Translation: 'This is the last [opportunity] occasion to make known what happened, to make people aware of the tragedy of Spain. There are still people who don't want what happened to be known. In 40 years of the history of Spain there is still a chapter missing'.

[342] Letter, 28.05.2007.

[343] Translation: 'I'm sending you the copy of the letter which […] has written, how well he's put it; […] sent it to me' [The two names which appear in the letter have been deleted for anonymity reasons].

[344] Carshalton children's own internal newsletter, in the Croydon Advertiser in 1945 – personal archival material.

[345] Personal archival material.

[346] Original quote: 'Zer da exilioa? Leku bat? Garai bat? Pena-sentimendu bat? Malenkonia mota bat?'.

[347] Excerpt from the transcript of the documentary film *The Guernica Children* (Bowles 2005).

[348] Excerpt from the transcript of the documentary film *The Guernica Children* (Bowles 2005).

[349] Excerpt from the transcript of the documentary film *The Guernica Children* (Bowles 2005).

[350] Translation: 'Because you're not well, and also your age, you don't go out, you can't do this, you can't do that and then you think about what happened to you when you were little, coming to England, ending up on your own and you're thinking, thinking, and I get very sad. Spain calls you. I believe that the Basque children, when you read the book of memories I believe that

they also think, Spain really calls them. I think that when you go to another country, afterwards, like you for instance, if you stay here with Mark and grow old, Spain will call you. Not now, I don't, well, I did think a lot. If you grow old and stay here I think that you'll often think "Spain calls me". Because I believe that the country you were born in calls you' (conversation with a *niña vasca*, 11.05.2009).

[351] Excerpt from the transcript of the documentary film *The Guernica Children* (Bowles 2005).

[352] Said observes a distinction between the terms 'refugee' and 'exile' despite the fact that they are frequently used as interchangeable. He contends that whereas 'exile' contains connotations of loneliness and spirituality, 'refugee' has become a political term which suggests large groups of blameless and needy displaced people requiring international assistance (Said 2000). For the purposes of this study I will consider these concepts to be the same, since my informants use them both indiscriminately to refer to themselves.

[353] Excerpt from the transcript of the documentary film *The Guernica Children* (Bowles 2005).

[354] Excerpt from the transcript of the documentary film *The Guernica Children* (Bowles 2005).

[355] Translation: 'Here in England they say I am Spanish and there that I am English'.

[356] Translation: 'Agur (good bye), that is the only word [in Basque] which I know, so I have to use it'.

[357] Translation: 'Another problem is our identity. In England we are foreigners, despite all the time we've been living here, but when we return to our land we become "English"'.

[358] Excerpt from the transcript of the documentary film *The Guernica Children* (Bowles 2005).

[359] Original quote: 'cada persona *es* de un lugar, tiene *su* pueblo, *su* ciudad, *su* región y *su* país'.

[360] 'Translation: 'You lack something, you feel half from here half from there' (conversation with a *niña vasca*, 11.06.2005).

[361] Excerpt from the transcript of the documentary film *The Guernica Children* (Bowles 2005).

[362] Field notes.

[363] Eastleigh 13.10.2007.

[364] Field notes, London 05.06.2009.

[365] Field notes, Eastleigh 12.10.2007.

[366] Translation: 'And of course, if her daughter has to go to work, if she stays on her own, she gets sad and she misses the Basque children friends' (conversation with a *niña vasca*, 11.05.2009).

[367] Eastleigh 13.10.2007.

[368] Sadly, he died while this study was being carried out.

[369] This is illustrated in titles such as 'War lust war dust' (1944), 'Paradise allegory' (1946), 'Iberian transfiguration' (1946-47), 'Iberia para mí' ('Iberia for me') (1948), 'Family in exile' (1953), 'Arcadia in Navarra Spain' (1957), 'Our darkest hour' (1965) and 'Desert idyll' (1964) among others, particularly in his earlier paintings.

[370] My emphasis.

[371] Excerpt from the transcript of the documentary film *The Guernica Children* (Bowles 2005).

[372] Excerpt from the transcript of the documentary film *The Guernica Children* (Bowles 2005).

[373] Excerpt from the transcript of the documentary film *The Guernica Children* (Bowles 2005).

[374] This has been highly influenced by the fact that I am the daughter of a *niña vasca*, thus, by the time I started my research, my relationships with the participants of this study had already been established in Spanish.

[375] Translation: 'No, [my son] doesn't speak Spanish, well, I don't either. There are many words that, look, we don't speak to anyone. My sister and I don't speak Spanish, she speaks English all the time. This is the first time that I've spoken in Spanish since the last time in Southampton, and I usually speak a little with your mum. When you don't speak you find it more difficult' (conversation with a *niña vasca*, 11.05.2009).

[376] Also, this informant and I speak different dialects of Basque and, despite the fact that this does not pose a problem amongst Basque speakers, it could be argued that in this unfavourable context it has contributed to the prevailing of Spanish as our language for communication.

[377] Excerpt from the transcript of the documentary film *The Guernica Children* (Bowles 2005).

[378] Excerpt from the transcript of the documentary film *The Guernica Children* (Bowles 2005).

[379] Original quote: 'multitud de identidades y de pertenencias que vamos adoptando a un mismo tiempo, y que desplegamos de forma distinta según cuales sean las circunstancias'.

[380] Excerpt from the transcript of the documentary film *The Guernica Children* (Bowles 2005).

[381] Excerpt from the transcript of the documentary film *The Guernica Children* (Bowles 2005).

[382] Excerpt from the transcript of the documentary film *The Guernica Children* (Bowles 2005).

[383] Mouillot states that 'The word bertsolaritza finds its etymological roots in the Basque term "*bertsolari*," itself composed of the word *bertso* […], meaning "verse," and the suffix –*lari*, which signifies "maker." A *bertsolari* is thus a "maker of verses" […] The practice of bertsolaritza is based on the ability of the performers to improvise, in Basque, a sung verse on a pre-determined theme while respecting a set of strict rules determining rhythm and rhyme' (Mouillot 2009). According to Garzia, Egaña is 'the only *bertsolari* to have won four national

championships (1993, 1997, 2001, and 2005)' (Garzia 2007). For an analysis of the history of *bertsolaritza* see Garzia (2007) in the Bibliography.

A

NOMENCLATURE

Totoricagüena highlights the complexity involved in the choices of Basque words and place-names within the intricate reality of the Basque Country (2005:26). Euskal Herria (the 'Basque Country'), understood as a nation without a state, comprises seven provinces, of which four are within the Spanish state (Araba, Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa, and Nafarroa), and three within the French state (Lapurdi, Baxe Nafarroa, and Zuberoa). However, in addition to the divisions of the French Basque provinces in different departments within the French state, in political and administrative terms Euskal Herria in Spain is divided into two autonomic regions, that is, Euskadi or Basque Autonomous Community, and Nafarroa. The *Niños Vascos* departed from Bizkaia, which is part of the politically and economically autonomous region of Euskadi.

Not only are there Basque names for Basque and also non-Basque places, but also Spanish and French names for Basque places. Furthermore, some of those Basque places also have a specific English equivalent spelling (sometimes more than one).

Owing to the significant lack of consistency observed in the literature, both in Spanish and in English, I follow Totoricagüena's approach, which means favouring the use of the

> standardised Batua Basque language and the official toponyms decreed by the Resolution of December 17, 2001, which lists the official place-names and spellings selected by the municipal councils (Boletín Oficial del País Vasco, no. 1, January 2, 2002).

(Totoricagüena 2005:26)

I use the spellings 'Bizkaia' and 'Gipuzkoa' because they were the unique official spellings approved by the respective legislative branches. I also favour the spellings 'Araba' and 'Nafarroa' ('Navarre'), although in both these cases two different official spellings were approved.

With regard to the term 'Basque Country' I use it as inclusive of all the Basque provinces, not in political terms but in the broader sense of 'Euskal Herria' mentioned earlier. This includes Nafarroa as part of it, which is also how the Nafarroan informants of this investigation utilised it in our conversations.

The official name of Gernika is 'Gernika-Lumo' (which comprises de *Villa* of Gernika and the *Anteiglesia* of Lumo); however, I use the term 'Gernika' throughout this thesis because that is the name generally used by the inhabitants, and also by the rest of the population, to refer to the area concerning this study.

For the reasons explained so far, I spell 'Santurtzi' ('Santurce'), since this has been the official name of the city since 1983.

Thus far I have explained the choices of names and spellings which are consistently used throughout this study. Nevertheless, some other alternative spellings are also shown. This is only in the case of direct quotes when they have been accessed in a written form, as in these cases the original writer's choice of spelling has been maintained intact.

B

THE BASQUE CHILDREN OF '37 ASSOCIATION UK

This association was born in 2002 with the purpose of reuniting the Basque children of the Spanish Civil War who were exiled in the UK in 1937. It currently defines its main aim as 'to remember and preserve the story of these children, the *niños vascos*, in its proper historical context' (http://www.basquechildren.org accessed 06.07.2010) as stated in its newsletter. There are nearly 200 members from around the world, of which

> Some are *niños vascos* and people who were involved with them in 1937, others are their family, children and grandchildren. A final, rapidly growing group of members comprises; academics, teachers, researchers, students, writers and others with a special interest in the subject.
>
> (http://www.basquechildren.org accessed 06.08.2010)

It maintains relations with both the Basque Government and also with the Spanish Embassy in London. The information disseminated by the Association increases the awareness of, and interest in, their story, both in the UK and also in Spain, and to a certain extent it also contributes to maintaining active the *Niños Vascos*' social network. Both are achieved through use of their newsletter and their website (http://www.basquechildren.org).

The newsletter is of particular significance for a researcher, as it is the main source of information on matters regarding the *Niños Vascos* which are not recorded by other means. In principle, it also gives a voice to those *Niños Vascos*, their families and other agents of memory who choose to use it as the space in which to express themselves. Having been published regularly since 2003, it was produced eight times

between August 2003 and October 2007 and it is now published twice a year. Through the newsletter the Association reports on lectures, talks, round table discussions, exhibitions and other activities related to the *Niños Vascos* and it also provides listings of forthcoming events. Some other sections which appear frequently in the newsletter are book reviews and articles written by members, as well as details of the funding which the Association receives to continue its work. For my research I have found particularly useful the information reported concerning new initiatives such as unveiling of blue plaques and other commemorative events.

The website of the Association is an invaluable source of data, containing documents related to the history of the *Niños Vascos* and their lives in the *colonias* during the years which followed their arrival in the UK. This website includes a bibliography of the literature relating to the topic of the *Niños Vascos* which served as a starting point for my research. It also includes listings of activities and events, electronic copies of most of the newsletters which have been produced so far and links to other relevant websites. Furthermore, it contains an extensive collection of photographs and documentation of the main commemorative event which the Association has organised since it came into being, namely the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the *Niños Vascos* in Southampton in the year 2007. I found this section of the website particularly informative, as it also includes some press coverage of the acts, and the transcripts of the discourses which were delivered on that occasion by politicians and other speakers. The discourses and representations of that historical event are analysed in this thesis in order to explore the agendas of the different participants involved in these commemorative practices.

The Association also served as a start point to establish contact with some of the *Niños Vascos* and other relevant informants of my research. It has been a continuous source of data with regard to annual general meetings and the information distributed at them, such as yearly reports, minutes of meetings and records of membership. Additionally, it has given me the opportunity to obtain a deeper insight into how the *Niños Vascos* conduct themselves at an associational level, which I argue is at the point of intersection between the official and the private spheres. However, it should be

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noted that there is only one *niño vasco* amongst the members of the Association's committee, and the *Niños Vascos* are not all members of this association.

The archival material held by the Association consists of a compilation of documents and objects which have been donated by individuals, collectives or institutions. These include film footage, articles which have been published in newspapers and magazines, photographs, posters, drawings, programmes and other memorabilia. In addition to these, there are also records of correspondence and the minutes of meetings held by the Basque Children Committee and other relevant committees. One issue in relation to the Association's collection of archival material is that it is geographically scattered. It is also selected, organised and looked after by volunteers. At the moment, the largest and most important part of the collection is kept in a private home. However, the committee of the Association has agreed that the archives will be transferred to the Special Collections Division of the Hartley Library at the University of Southampton in the future. This means that in the future the archives of the *Niños Vascos* will be professionally curated and safely stored. As it is stated in the Association's website, 'Southampton was at the start of the story of the niños in this country so it is fitting that it should also be the place that we find most suitable for preserving our records' (http://www.basquechildren.org accessed 12.01.2009).

C

THE HISTORIAN

The influential role of historians within the modern context of war commemoration and remembrance has been analysed by authors who observe their increasingly agentive role as experts of the topic (Ashplant et al. 2000:47-48, Torpey 2003). Ashplant et al. observe that historians are used as 'anchors for media events commemorating anniversaries' (Ashplant et al.2000: 47-48), thus it is not surprising that another guest speaker at the event under discussion was a historian. His speech followed the line of a critical approach to the past, at the same time as transmitting a message of gratitude:

> whatever the motivation, the Basque children survived by the generosity of tens of thousands of ordinary British people who came from all walks of life […] It was on the basis of that kind of spontaneous generosity that the Basque children were destined to survive the next few months or years. And it is that which we wish to remember here today.

It can be argued that despite some initial critical comments with regard to the negative attitude of the British Government towards the evacuation and its subsequent lack of involvement, this historian positions himself within the celebratory frame, thus emphasising and legitimising the general joyful discourse of the event. He reinforces that agenda and also sets *what* to remember.

SOURCES

Primary sources

ORAL TESTIMONIES (ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEWS/CONVERSATIONS CARRIED OUT BY THE AUTHOR). More than one interview/conversation was carried out with some of the informants.

Date	Location	Informant
21.05.2006	London	A.S.
21.05.2006	London	M.R.
27.08.2006	Bizkaia	E.A.
01.09.2006	Bizkaia	K.F.
28.10.2006	Southampton	S.B.
10.11.2006	East England	C.M.
13.11.2006	Hampshire	C.A.
20.11.2006	Southampton	S.S.
14.01.2007	Hampshire	C.A.
17.02.2007	London	M.A.
17.02.2007	London	M.R.
11.03.2007	Hampshire	C.A.
12.03.2007	Southampton	S.S.
28.04.2007	Oxford	H.G.
26.05.2007	Southampton	X.M.
21.06.2007	Southampton	C.A.
21.06.2007	Southampton	C.S.
17.09.2007	London	K.M.
18.09.2007	London	H.G.
19.09.2007	London	A.S.
20.09.2007	London	M.A.
20.09.2007	Hampshire	K.W.
11.10.2007	Eastleigh	S.E.
11.10.2007	Eastleigh	J.E.
12.10.2007	Eastleigh	K.M.

08.10.2007	London	H.G.
09.12.2007	London	T.P.
09.12.2007	London	F.C.
25.05.2008	London	M.R.
10.06.2008	Bilbao	A.A.
12.06.2008	Bilbao	K.W.
13.06.2008	Bilbao	M.A.
14.06.2008	Bilbao	K.M.
15.06.2008	Bilbao	T.A.
24.06.2008	Bizkaia	G.A.
25.06.2008	Bilbao	B.A.
03.07.2008	Donostia	M.C.
09.05.2009	London	J.L.
12.05.2009	Hampshire	C.A.
24.05.2009	London	J.L.
01.06.2009	London	M.R.
05.06.2009	London	S.S.
18.06.2009	Southampton	S.B.
26.06.2009	Eastleigh	C.C.
22.09.2009	Oxford	N.B.
03.10.2009	London	C.F.
06.02.2010	London	A.A.
24.04.2010	London	F.S.
16.05.2010	London	F.J.
02.08.2010	London	S.S.

COMMEMORATIVE EVENTS (AUTHOR AS A PARTICIPANT-OBSERVER)

Date	Location	Event
21.05.2006	London	Annual reunion meal of the *Niños Vascos*.
28.10.2006	Southampton	Unveiling of a commemorative plaque.
10.11.2006	Hull	Unveiling of a commemorative plaque.

26.05.2007	Southampton	70th anniversary of the *Niños Vascos*' arrival.
10-13.10.2007	Eastleigh	Three days of remembrance artistic performances, followed by a symposium which explored the experience of exile.
09.12.2007	London	Annual reunion meal of the *Jubilados*.
25.05.2008	London	Annual reunion meal of the *Niños Vascos*.
07-15.06.2008	Bizkaia	A series of daily homage events to pay tribute to the Basque Children of the Spanish Civil War.
24.05.2009	London	Annual reunion meal of the *Niños Vascos*.
24.04.2010	London	A *niño vasco*'s memorial service.
16.05.2010	London	Annual reunion meal of the *Niños Vascos*.

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