



Overloaded ark

The British coal ship *Stanbrook* arrives in Oran, French-administered Algeria, carrying 2,638 Republican refugees at the end of the Spanish Civil War

For six days, 45,000 men were kept virtually without food or water in Alicante, exposed to the wind and rain

Over the next few days, thousands of refugees from all over Republican territory gathered in Valencia and Alicante. Some vessels approached the ports but, fearful of interception by the Francoist navy, their captains turned back. In Alicante, the refugees waited in vain for three and a half days without food or water. Many committed suicide. Children died of exhaustion and malnutrition.

At the end of that time, two ships carrying Francoist troops arrived, and those soldiers violently separated families; any who protested were beaten or shot. Women and children were taken to Alicante, where they were kept for a month in a cinema with little food and no hygiene facilities. The men were herded into the bullring in Alicante or in a large open field outside the town known as the Campo de Los Almendros. For six days, 45,000 men were kept virtually without food or water, sleeping in mud in the open, exposed to the wind and the rain. They were given miniscule rations on just two occasions.

In contrast, Casado and his cronies went to Gandía, about 60km south of Valencia, where Franco had arranged special treatment for them. The port was in the hands of Falangists, who provided refreshments while the junta awaited embarkation on a British warship.

Shattered hopes

Franco's forces could now advance unopposed, and they took Madrid on 28 March. City after city fell bloodlessly. By 31 March, all of Spain was in Nationalist hands. The bravado of anarchists who had boasted of scorched earth and suicide squads came to nothing.

In privileged exile in London, working for the BBC, Casado never showed any regret or remorse for the actions that had precipitated the collapse of the Republic in the worst imaginable circumstances. In 1961, he returned to Spain, where he was handsomely paid for memoirs published in newspapers and in book form. No mention was made of his dealings with the fifth column and Franco's intelligence services. Negrín, though, was principally concerned with the welfare of the exiles. He arranged for funds to help more than ten thousand Republican refugees travel to and settle in Mexico. When the exiles reached the port of Veracruz in Mexico, the side of the ship carried a huge banner that read 'Negrín was right'.

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VICENTE RUIZ (IHU) - ACRACIA PUBLICATIONS WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF GRUPO CULTURAL DE ESTUDIOS SOCIALES DE MELBOURNE



In search of the missing

A BBC Radio 4 series, *Spain's Lost Generations*, looks at the ongoing legacy of Spain's civil war and dictatorship. Matt Elton spoke to its presenter, Lucas Laursen (left)



Which groups of people does this series deal with, and what happened to them?

Our series deals with people killed or otherwise disappeared during the Spanish Civil War and the subsequent dictatorship. More than 100,000 men and women are still missing. One episode focuses on people executed by Franco's regime, and on the families who are only in the past decade or so recovering those remains from mass graves. The other is about people affected by the state-initiated theft of babies, which started during the war and continued through the early years of democracy. In some cases these people are now beginning to recover their identities and their families.

How did you find out about their stories?

Thanks to a growing civil society movement that began in the early 2000s, more Spaniards are learning where their lost loved ones are buried – or, in the case of some stolen babies, where they are now living. More than 8,000 bodies have been recovered from mass graves since the first exhumation in 2000, and we followed several families we met via those organisations through different stages of their journeys of recovery.

We recorded at a ceremony in Guadalajara, during which the organisation returned the remains of 22 people to living relatives. Unfortunately, I know of far fewer reunions of families with stolen babies, but we tried to follow some of those threads, too, and I suspect we'll hear about more those in the future.

Are there any cases you found particularly striking or moving?

The most moving moments for me came when I met people who had lost family members. Some had been children during the war, while others had lost babies at the same Madrid hospital where my daughter was born. Meeting these people in person helped me experience how the



Fate uncovered

The remains of 22 people, killed by Nationalists after the Spanish Civil War and found in a mass grave in Guadalajara, are returned to their families in 2018

human toll of the Spanish Civil War and the subsequent dictatorship and the healing it needs are still unfinished.

What do these stories tell us about the wider legacy of the civil war?

I hope listeners will hear just how unfinished that business is. We spoke with government bureaucrats and policymakers, activists and legal experts, each with their own prescription for healing. The generation of people doing the recovering isn't composed of those who survived the war or lived under the dictatorship, but the generation afterwards. That taught me something about how slow people are to overcome fear, and how slow democracies are to take root. Perhaps, after hearing these voices, listeners will have their own ideas about what it takes to mend a rift like Spain's – and how important it is to avoid them in the first place.

“More than 8,000 bodies have been recovered from mass graves, and we followed several families through the journey of recovery”

DISCOVER MORE

Listen to the new two-part documentary **Spain's Lost Generations**, now available on catch-up at bbc.co.uk/radio4