



¡Nunca más!

Amical de Mauthausen y otros campos y de todas las víctimas del nazismo de España. Information and communication bulletin.

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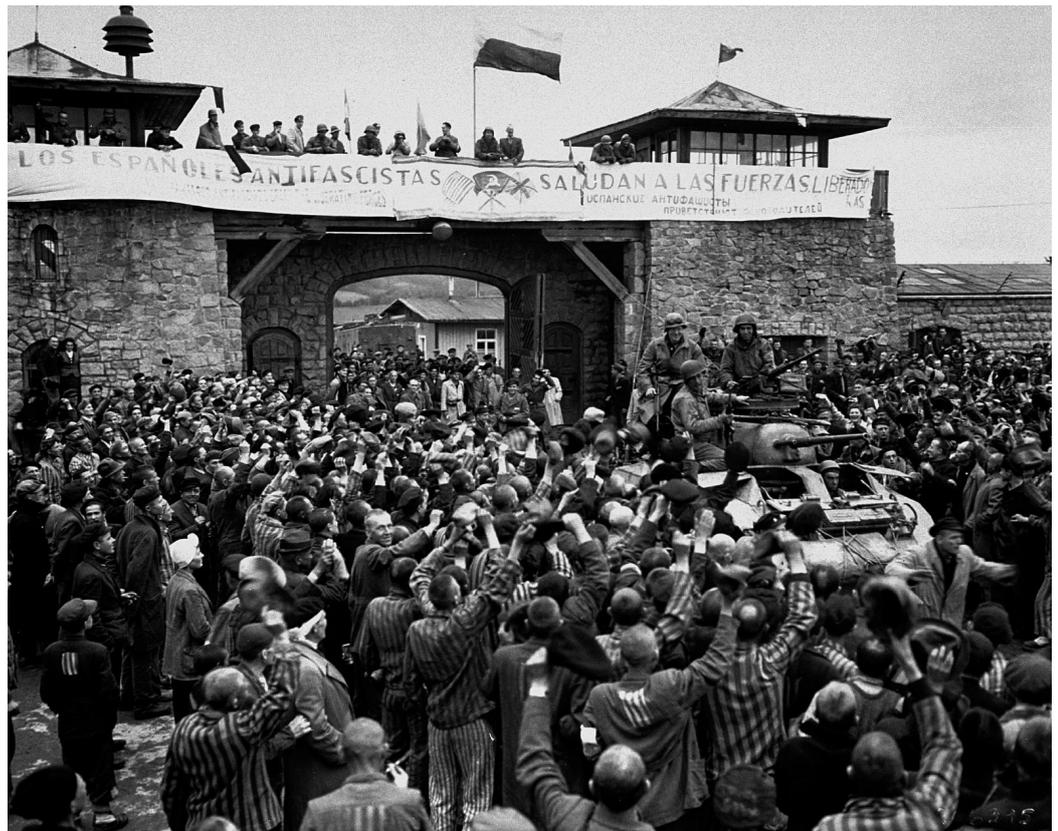
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75° Anniversary of Liberation

EDITORIAL

All this year we have been commemorating the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi camps, where almost 10,000 Spanish Republicans were held, who were punished with slave labor and death for their condition as anti-fascist fighters, along with hundreds of thousands of citizens, men and women, from all corners of Europe.

On January 27, organized by the Auschwitz Museum / Memorial, a tribute was paid to the victims of the Holocaust. About two hundred survivors and more than sixty Heads of State and Government from all over the world were invited to the events. The official Spanish delegation was formed by the Kings of Spain, the Minister of AA.EE. Mrs. Arancha González Laya, the Spanish Ambassador in Poland, Mr. Francisco Javier Sánchez Sanabria and the Director of the Cervantes Institute in Kraków, Mr. Fernando Vara del Rey. For the first time, a representation of the Amical de Mauthausen and other camps was officially present, invited as an association that groups the Spanish Republican deportees and accompanied at all times by the representatives of the Museum / Memorial of Auschwitz, to remember and honour the Spaniards who suffered there.

This act and the participation in those organized in all parts of Spain on the occasion of the International Day of the Holocaust and the Prevention of Crimes against Humanity held in the month of January, were the starting point to organize and be present at the massive events of tribute in the different camps with the aim of keeping alive the memory of the victims of Nazism, reaffirming the commitment to their memory, as well as the survival of the values they defended and for which they took unimaginable risks and paid a high price.

The worldwide pandemic of the Covid-19 has prevented the carrying out of these acts, prepared since a long time, in the expected conditions, and has forced to an adaptation according to the circumstances, due to the limitation of movements and the prohibition of mass

gatherings. Our association had participated in the organization of the scheduled ceremonies in Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald and in Mauthausen and Gusen, where we had to travel about 200 people, with relatives and students from various parts of the State. With amazement and pain we have had to suspend the trip when everything was prepared and reserved. One of the peculiarities of the commemoration of the current year 2020 was to pay tribute to Francesc Boix Campo, given that this is the 100^o anniversary of his birth, and to all the comrades who collaborated to save the images, testimony to the atrocities perpetrated in the camp. We are confident that throughout the year we will be able to find other formulas to give them recognition.

Another postponed project has been "The train of 1,000" in which young people from all over Europe, would depart from Brussels on May 5 to visit the camps of Auschwitz and Birkenau and participate in a ceremony at the Birkenau International Monument, symbol of the 1,100,000 Jews, Roma, Sintis and men and women of all conditions killed in that camp. 15

students from the Francisco de Goya Institute in Barcelona, adhered to the "Never Again" Network of the Amical de Mauthausen, were to participate to this event.

Also, during these weeks, remembrance days had been scheduled in numerous localities,

as May 5 had been officially instituted by the Government as a day dedicated to the memory of the deportation. Most of them have been postponed and will be carried them out at another time when the situation allows, and others have been carried out virtually.

With this special Bulletin, the Amical de Mauthausen and other camps wants to join the memory of those days lived with intensity by those who managed to reach the day of liberation alive. That is why we have selected several testimonies of survivors, men and women, who have transmitted to us the intense feelings lived during those days in which the joy of liberation was saddened by the accumulated suffering and by the constant presence of death until the last moment.



75 years after liberation

1. INTRODUCTION

Our deportees to the Nazi camps, were the "undesirable reds" mistreated in the concentration camps in France, where they were interned by the French authorities who turned the land of refuge into a place of humiliation and stigma, when the Republicans had fought against the nazi-facism with all weapons, which soon also seized the neighbouring country. Today we are well aware of the misery of those hundreds of thousands of men and women who sought protection and only received pressure to return to Franco's Spain and ignominious deals of all kinds. Despite having served the French army, many of the men who were interned in the camps were abandoned to their fate by the collaborationist government of Vichy, when they fell into the hands of the German army, a fact that facilitated the orders for internment in the camps of the Reich, emanating from the conversations between Ramón Serrano Suñer and Hitler. Later, groups of significant republicans pioneered the movement of Resistance to the occupation and contributed to the liberation of France. Both groups, in different years, ended up in the Reich camps. On May 6, 1945, all Nazi camps had been liberated, by Allied troops or the Red Army, and the Republi-

cans were unable to return to their homeland, as most survivors did. The Franco dictatorship continued to grant them their status as enemies that they will maintain throughout their existence. Thus, the first fighters of Nazi-fascism in Europe could not enjoy the freedom they dreamed of, due to the maintenance of the fascist regime in Spain, thanks to the acquiescence of the allies for geostrategic reasons, in the context of the Cold War. Most of the survivors had to rebuild their lives in other geographies or sink into silence and inner seclusion, in case of return to Spain.



Group of Spaniards released in Dachau

2. THE DISCOVERY OF THE CONCENTRATIONARY UNIVERSE AND THE LIBERATION OF VICTIMS (1)



Liberation of Auschwitz

faced with the complex reality of our days: "There are very few things stranger than the indifferent and conceited tranquillity with which we, myself and my fellow men, contemplate the beginning of the Nazi revolution in Germany as if we were in the theatre box, seeing a process whose objective, in the end and after all, was exactly to erase us from the face of the earth. Perhaps even stranger is the fact that, even years later and taking us as an example, all of Europe allowed itself the same attitude of a conceited, entertaining and passive spectator while the Nazis had long been lighting the fuse on all four sides. . " HAFNER, Sebastián, Historia de un alemán, Memorias (1914-1933), Barcelona, Destino, 2000, pág. 113). We often attribute to the term liberating optimistic connotations, which do not correspond to the reality of the end of the National Socialist concentration camps. The discovery and liberations - from the first, Madjanek, by the Red Army, to the last, the Komman-

At the historical moment of the liberation of the camps, an American army officer, upon entering Buchenwald, wondered about the responsibility of the inhabitants of Weimar, and, by extension, that of all Germans, a reflection that also invokes all of us,

(1) (Most of the information comes from the article "L'alliberament de les víctimes i el descobriment de l'univers concentracionari" by Rosa Toran, published in L'AVENÇ Núm. 302, MAIG 2005. Els camps nazis, 60 years old).

do Ebensee of Mauthausen, by the Allied troops - are part of the history of the Second World War and the various modalities in which they occurred are an exponent of the dynamic character of the Nazi concentration system and at the same time of the military and propaganda strategies of the allies. The liberations took place over a fairly significant interval of time, so that the actions and reactions within the Reich powers and in the allied armies and leaders were of a varied nature: dismantling, massacres and death marches, on the one hand, and on the part of the victors, attitudes that turned almost from secrecy to the deployment of

advertising media unknown until then, to show the horror of the concentration universe. As for the victims, only a minority could enjoy the liberation; the majority had either died or were still in a very distant state of life, both physically and emotionally. And the penalties did not end with the recovery of their condition of free people. They still lacked a long way to go until they could integrate again into the real world, where they continued suffering new humiliations or new exiles, as was the case with the Spanish Republicans and the Jews of Eastern Europe.

2.1 MARCHES OF DEATH

From the end of 1944 to the beginning of 1945, the deportees were forced to evacuate the eastern camps and to travel hundreds and thousands of kilometres, in which have been called the Death Marches, until they reached the concentration camps of the western Reich. The marches began when the Soviets entered Poland, at which time the SS were

closing the camps and making thousands of deportees advance by road or in improvised convoys. The SS continued to act with the same patterns of contempt for human life, since the removal of the weak and the abandonment of many of them in hermetically sealed wagons was the usual practice. Between 250,000 and 375,000 people died.

2.2 THE SEQUENCE OF LIBERATIONS

The liberations of the camps took place at different paths and in different ways. Due to the dynamism in the history of the camps, for some regions of the East it is not even possible to speak of liberation, but only of discovery, since they were empty of people and with the vestiges of the crimes erased. Between July 1944 and May 1945, the camps were discovered, by chance or at the insistence of former prisoners who had managed to reach the ranks of the armies. In Eastern Europe, the advance of the Red Army determined by the Nazis the abandonment and dismantling of the precincts and the destruction of death facilities, in the autumn of 1943, while the inmates who were still alive were evicted in the terrible "death marches". Thus, the Soviets, before reaching Auschwitz, had passed through Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka, then invisible cemeteries, unaware of what had happened a short time ago, as it was not made clear with the arrival of the Americans in Natzweiler-Struthof, in Alsace, on November 23, 1944.

The atrocities and the extent of the crimes were not confirmed until after the entrance to Madjanek and Auschwitz. On July 24, 1944 the Red Army arrived in Lublin-Majdanek and, despite the almost intact presence of the gas chambers and crematoriums, it was difficult to get the idea that this place, then empty, had been a place of extermination for 500,000 people.

In Auschwitz the deportees had heard the detonations to blow up the death facility before 60,000 of them were evacuated westward between January 18 and 19, 1945. The SS made the decision based on reports released by the allies, but above all because of the Soviet

advance and when, in the image so recreated, the young soldiers of the Soviet army entered through the Auschwitz gate, on January 27, they only found about 6,000 patients. In addition to the emotional impact and the difficulties in attending to the situation of the survivors, the use of the facilities was not really understood until their study and the word of the witnesses, but despite the evidence, it was hardly disclosed; it was only publicized in some articles and images in main big newspapers, in the immediate months. The war was not over, and military operations were a priority.

The camps and commandos of the West, located in Austria and Germany, were until the last moment of their existence, centres of exploitation until the death of the slave labor that had to help prevent defeat. For the supreme head of the concentration system, Himmler, there was still the possibility of negotiating his salvation and surrender to Western countries with internees as a bargaining chip. In no case did these attempts stop the extermination, governed by arbitrariness, secret orders and counter-orders. If anything prevented the consummation of the total elimination, through detonations, poisonings, executions ..., it would be the disagreements between the Nazi leadership and above all the fear of the SS themselves, of possible actions of the deportees and their capture in the place of the crimes.

In the second half of April 1945, with the arrival of the allied armies in the great camps of Germany, the brutality of the concentration system was shown in all its magnitude. The accidental discovery of the Ohrdruf

command of Buchenwald on April 4 and 5, with the barracks overflowing with dead, followed by Dora-Nordhausen, with 700 survivors and 3,000 corpses rotting in shallow mass graves, and Buchenwald, released on 11 April. Four days later, the British arrived at Bergen-Belsen –emblem of the horror of the last stage of the Nazi terror-, where 60,000 people were destined to disappear due to starvation and illness; In Dachau, on the afternoon of April 29, the Americans



Buchenwald

discovered 30,000 prisoners and the 40 wagons with 2,310 corpses. Flossenbürg, Sachsenhausen, Ravensbrück ... were providing enough evidence of horror

until they reached Mauthausen, on May 5, where the hell of the Russian camp and the commandos crowned the soldiers' itinerary through the Nazi precincts. In the West, since the autumn of 1944, the camps experienced their worst moments, due to the overcrowding with the arrival of the deportees from the East and, with the total collapse of the Nazi regime, as they lacked water, food, fuel and were infected with epidemics, and full of corpses, that the Nazis had not even had time to eliminate. Thus, the last liberated camps became centres of extermination and massacres, which ended their years of existence with hundreds of thousands of deaths. The sight and smells of thousands of human remains, of unrecoverable sick people, of people who crawled to the doors of the camps, with lost eyes, will accompany all their lives to the soldiers who entered the Nazi camps for the first time. They had crossed a boundary and despite the battlefield experience until the day before, they were not prepared to enter a Dantesque world, to face which no special equipment's had even been planned. During the immediate weeks, the overcrowded barracks, the difficulties in controlling the epidemics, the irrational behavior of hungry deportees, the threats of the uncaptured SS groups ... formed a reality too far from any epic vision of liberation. On the other hand, the phenomenon known as the pedagogy of horror began, which remained in the first informative plan until mid-June.

2.3 THE DISCLOSURE OF HORROR

Following the visit of Eisenhower, Bradley and Patton in Buchenwald on April 12, censorship ceased to operate, especially in France, where there had been fear of reprisal by prisoners of war remaining in Germany and fear of alarming families. A few days later, on April 20, Churchill sent a British Parliament commission to the camp; A visit that was repeated with members of the American Congress, to provide separate reports to the parliaments, and with representatives of the United Nations War Crimes Commission. And the USSR also released a detailed Auschwitz report. The last week of April and the first weeks of May, when Germany had already capitulated, would be the moments of maximum influx, especially in Buchenwald and Dachau, when the military photographic services and the reporters and editors of the main newspapers accompanied the troops and penetrated in the camps, repeating a

ritual that emphasized the role of the soldiers, the obligated visits and work of the surrounding populations and the image of the victims, who either rejected the treatment of curiosity or agreed to be photographed to help showing the indignity to which they had been reduced. The concentration system was definitely within the reach of public opinion.



Francesc Boix

The slogan to disclose given by Eisenhower was widely fulfilled, at the same time that a new form of photo-journalism began, with a pedagogical vocation in several directions: to breathe morale into the troops that had to continue fighting and to have material for denazification or re-education. But panels exposed in German and Austrian cities and film passes to German civilians and prisoners failed, despite widespread acceptance of the facts, to break the response of placing blame on Hitler and the Nazi Party and of alleging ignorance, especially on the part of the inhabitants of the neighbourhoods of the camps, who had quickly forgotten the prosperity paired

with the proximity in the camp, by practicing the black market with the SS or using the labour of the internees.

The legion of photographers and war correspondents made the reality of the camps known to the world and some of the first published images have become icons of the concentration universe, despite the lack of docu-

mentary precision, as in the case of Bergen-Belsen bulldozers depositing the bodies in the pits, a prophylactic measure of the allies, but often confused with the years of Nazi control of the camp, or in the staging of the entrance of the Americans to Mauthausen, carried out two days later that the first tanks passed through the gate of the fortress, and identified with the act of liberation.

2. 4. THE FUTURE OF SURVIVORS

As Victory Day was celebrated from Moscow to London and in the cities of the United States, after Germany's unconditional surrender on May 8, survivors could not do the same; many had to wait days, weeks or months for their return. Some 700,000 people had been released from the camps, part of the 11 million homeless, forcibly displaced by delusional Nazi resettlement plans, forced workers and prisoners of war, temporarily housed in military facilities, railway stations, schools and castles, but also in former concentration camps.

In a Europe immersed in chaos, with death and destruction everywhere, ex-deportees had to remain in the camps, under quarantine control, applied more strictly by the Americans than by the Soviets. When the press left the camps and only the medical and military personnel remained, the priority was to bury the dead and care for the sick, in the barracks transformed into hospitals or in prisons by the captured SS and Kapos. The soldiers did not understand certain reactions of the deportees, nor were they always correct in their treatment; Added to the language and communication difficulties was the tendency to equate them with prisoners of war, according to a conventional vision of war, and with the passing of days, problems arose when those who recovered health wanted to leave the camp and escape to quarantine, while the soldiers searched for a way to forget in amusement the horror that had paralyzed them when they entered the camps. During the period that preceded the repatriations, one of the objectives of the deportees began to become a reality, to survive to testify, from the documentation tasks carried out in collaboration with the official investigative commissions or on their own initiative. Eugen Kogon led the production of a 400-page report in four weeks in Buchenwald, used in Nuremberg and in other processes, and which will end up in the form of the book *Sociology of the concentration camps*; Turkish journalist Nevin E. Gun, deported from Dachau, worked as a photographer after liberation; Hans Marsalek began designing his classic Mauthausen; Viennese psychiatrist Victor Frankl reflected on past experience to publish a year later *Man in Search of Meaning*; David Rousset, interned in Buchenwald and Neuengamme, wrote *The Concentrational Universe* in August 1945; Germaine Tillion did not stop taking notes between 1942 and 1945, which she used when

she was appointed by the Amicale de Ravensbrück as an observer in the Hamburg process, and which took shape in the three versions of Ravensbrück (1947, 1972 and 1988); and the Spanish republicans of Mauthausen made the lists of the dead comrades and photographed the different episodes of the liberation and the state of the facilities.

The epic image of liberation was muffled by the complex and varied paths of return. Scattered in commandos, some in camps they did not know, the former deportees awaited repatriation, fast or slow, depending on the geography of the camps or where they came from. As for France - the country with the largest number of deportees and prisoners in Western Europe - Henri Frenay, Ministry of Prisoners, Deported and Refugees organized the repatriations, which were considered completed in July 1945, except for those in the Soviet zone, carried out from the Odesa regrouping centre based, on a reciprocity agreement. Upon arrival, by plane or by saturated railway trains, the reception continued, in centres located at the borders or in large cities, not without slowness and insufficiencies, which operated until October. In Paris, the ex-deportees were transported by truck or bus to the Lutétia, the former headquarters of the Nazi forces' espionage service, a luxury hotel enabled to fulfill the hospital and reception functions, with a delegation from the Spanish Republic Red Cross to serve Republican survivors.

No one knew for sure who had survived, and the crowds filled the stations, with screams and photographs, and then a new test began for the liberated, facing normality, without knowing too much its meaning, marked as they were by the previous radicality of life or death. They had to relate their journey, endure the same worn-out phrases, land in the world of misunderstandings, drag the feeling of guilt and the weight of the dead in the midst of all the miseries and not under the aura of heroism, in addition to pathologies that caused death in a short period of time or persecuted them forever and ever, with hypersensitivity, insomnia and a recurring return to the past. And also people for whom nobody was waiting for, such as the Spanish republicans, who had to cultivate their future in geographies far from their country.

The future of ex-deportees from Eastern Europe was not easy either. 800,000 Polish stayed in the occupied

areas of Germany and Austria and also some 150-200,000 in the Baltic and Ukrainian republics, either because they rejected Communism or because they were afraid of being accused of collaborationists; and the ex-deportees of the Soviet Union had to suffer the unworthy treatment of Stalin, being branded as cowards and traitors and agents of imperialism, with the

corresponding penalties of imprisonment or exile. The case of the Jews is particular: some returned to their countries of origin to look for vestiges or news from family and friends, but the loss of property and assets was irreversible and the permanence of anti-Semitism made them aware of the impossibility of redoing the life among his old community ■



3. TESTIMONIALS OF LIBERATION

The republican survivors - men and women - from the Nazi camps had to rebuild their lives, dragging aftermath of all kinds as a result of their deportation and were forced to share a long exile with the rest of the Republicans. Many of them lived in silence the drama they had lived and only in the encounters they shared their extreme experience. Fortunately, over the years, some of these people began to speak, to share their memories which were published and that today are a

precious legacy to know the personal and also collective circumstances of the deportation, that of the survivors and that of so many thousands of victims whose lives were taken from them.

Below, we present a small selection of testimonies of these deportees to different Nazi camps, in whose memories the moments when they regained their freedom and hope for a more just and solidary future were indelibly engraved.

AUSCHWITZ

Anette Florentín Cabelli

(Thessaloniki, Greece, 25/04/1925). Sephardi deported to Auschwitz in 1942, No. 4065. Her mother was killed in the gas chamber. Evacuated on one of the "Death Marches", she reached Ravensbrück and Malchow. After liberation, she settled in Nice, where she married and currently resides. She regained the Spanish nationality in 2017.

We walked in the snow. Without any bread. We crossed the border without sleep. If you could not walk, the SS were coming, throwing you to the ground and shooting you. More than 50% of the deported died ... After four days we arrived to Ravensbrück, a small camp where there was hardly any food. It is impossible to explain how the body suffers, with no food to eat and freezing to death. When the



soup arrived, it was warlike ... When we left, we walked and saw a town where the streets were full of mountains of weapons. They were from the Germans, who had left dressed as civilians. One morning [in Malchow], we woke up and discovered that the Nazi guards had disappeared. We were free.

(Different media after participating in an event at the Sefarad-Israel Center in Madrid on 01/21/2020).

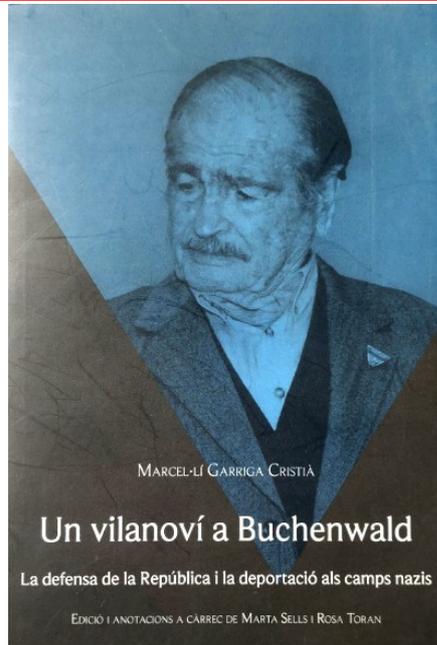
BUCHENWALD

Marcel·li Garriga Cristià

(Vilanova i la Geltrú, Barcelona, 19/06/1916-08/12/2009). Republican officer. Deported to Buchenwald, 01/19/1944, No. 40548. Released 4/11/1945. He returned from exile in 1947 and then settled definitively in Vilanova i la Geltrú. Actively linked to the Amical de Mauthausen and other camps.

Nevertheless, the situation was also one of unease and fear, because nobody knew how it would end and what the last days of that outcome would be like. We already knew what was happening in all the camps in Poland versus the Soviet army offensive, the Wehrmacht and the Gestapo had hardened their attitudes and, demonstrated desperate resistance, they did not hesitate to sacrifice everything that was bothering them and that could be a witness in the future ...

During the last days in the camp, we witnessed the arrival of trucks full of prisoners, evacuated from other camps in the eastern territories, and we realized that any form of evacuation would be fatal for



all of us. Many evacuees were just skeletons, without hope ... But the events unfolded in an unexpected way for all of us. We all expected the worst, given the circumstances, and we were ready to face a desperate fight, without avoiding any sacrifice or calculating any possible outcome. It was all or nothing. One morning we realized that all the watchtowers were empty and that all the Germans in SS uniforms had disappeared ...

The Americans were surprised and scared. Trucks were often passing through but we weren't allowed near them; maybe they were afraid we might be infected by some disease. Quite a few

civilian factory employees were detained by the Americans and locked up in the camp. A lot wanted to kill them -the desire to hang them was there - but finally no one took advantage''.

(GARRIGA CRISTIÀ, Marcel·lí, *Un vilanoví a Buchenwald*. Vilafranca del Penedès, Ed. Andana, SL, 2008, pp. 116- 118).

Fausto Jiménez Pérez

(Venta del Moro, Valencia, 26/09/1910 – Marsella, 1988). A Communist party member. He was arrested in September 1942 and after being tried and convicted for his clandestine activities, was deported to Buchenwald, 08/06/1944, n° 69588. Released. He continued to live in France until his death.

It was April 11th when the Germans were preparing to withdraw and destroy the camp. At two or three in the afternoon, the prepared groups attacked their targets. The Soviets, almost all of them Red Army soldiers taken prisoner on the Ukraine front, cut the barbed wire that surrounded the camp on the eastern side and opened a path through which the prisoners left. Others attacked the SS garrison lookouts with machine



guns. The Spanish group was ordered to neutralize the watch towers at the camp's entrance.

As each group in the operation paraded, all the prisoners clapped grouped together at the entrance of each block. After the liberation, the camp passed into the hands of the prisoners. About three hundred people from the garrison and some members of the SS were detained. The camp was secured to prevent incidents occurring until the final evacuation happened. Meetings were organized according to nationality to explain the situation and how we would be evacuated later.

(JIMÉNEZ, Fausto, *Un testimonio más*, Valencia, Universitat de Valencia, 2007, pp. 132-133).

Fermín Casorrán Clavería

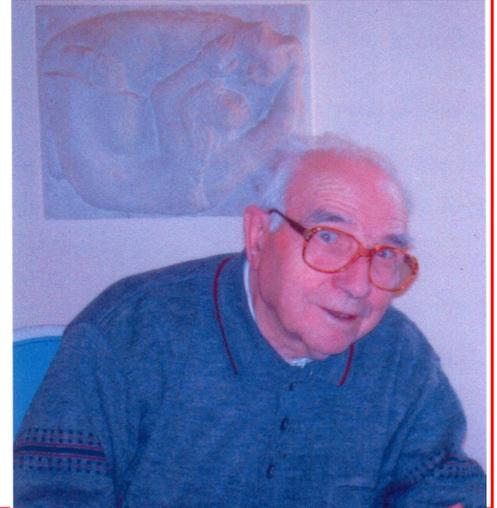
(Albalate del Arzobispo, Teruel, 17/10/1913 - France, 2009). Exiled. Deported to Mauthausen, 02/24/1942, No. 6386, Transferred to Dachau, No. 39029, and to Buchemwald, No. 38961. He was released from Wansleben. He settled definitively in France.

Night felt, I could no longer walk, I was among the last few, at around four in the morning we heard a plane that dropped two white flares on a nearby bridge to discover whether it was mined. This gave me joy and strength. I said to the Spaniard that was always with me: "Look! Those are the Americans who are going to cross the bridge now. Tomorrow they will free us!" , they hurried to free us because they found so many dead prisoners along the sides of the road That same day at around 1:00 p.m., we saw a reconnaissance plane and as soon he saw us, he flew down close to the ground and waved to us with a white handkerchief. A few minutes later some light tanks arrived, they surrounded us, and the SS chief and his sergeant ran away. Many American soldiers arrived with their trucks and the German soldiers kneeled to avoid being killed. Nevertheless,

the Russians killed a few German soldiers with their own rifles.

The Americans took us to a nearby town, they gave us large frying pans and saucepans, the Komando cooks, who were French, prepared food for everyone. (...) It was our liberation day and I could not stop saying "We are free now!" and cried with joy and said "Long live freedom!", an American soldier who spoke Spanish hugged me several times and said : "May you live for many years and always remember us."

(Mauthausen Amical Archive. Fermín Casorrán, Testimony).



BERGEN-BELSEN

Edmon Gimeno Font

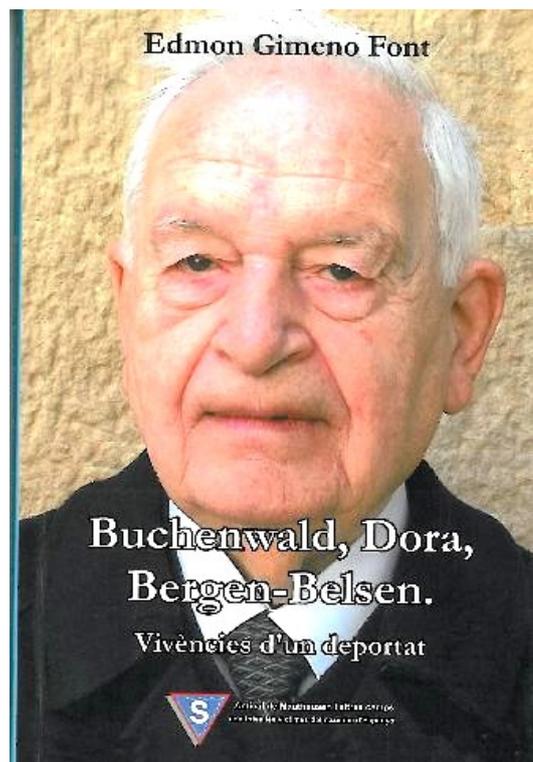
(Caseres, Tarragona, 10/07/1923 – 03/01/2014). Deported to Buchemwald, on 01/29/1944, No. 43631. Transferred to Dota and Bergen-Belsen where he was released on 04/15/1945. He returned from exile in 1951. The last years of his life he lived in Caseres. He was one of the Amical of Mauthausen and other camps founders.

At that precise moment, a few German aircraft, pursued by a large group of allied fighters, passed over the camp at low altitude. Several bursts of fire were heard. The traffic on the roads, near the camp had decreased a lot, the long queues of civilians, soldiers and war material had almost completely disappeared ... A time, an instant, a silence, precursor of a decisive event, which was the arrival of the liberating troops and, consequently, the end of a horrific nightmare

Bergen-Belsen, a few days after liberation. A group of Iberian deportees were remaining seated in a corner of the camp on a small mound of ground, near the road. We talked, we recalled, we dreamt. The return to our homeland would be announced very soon. Family and friends would soon be seen again, the sun and the sky, our countryside so varied and so original, the mountains and plains, the rivers, the diversity of folklore and traditional customs. An old man from Mauthausen talked enthusiastically about the great orchards in Valencia, that immense and fertile oasis. Orange trees, rich and varied fruit ...

Our dreams, longings and memories did not bring much to us. Many of us continued in exile for years and years. The cold war, between the two military giants at that time, annihilated all our hopes.

(GIMENO FONT, Edmon, *Buchenwald, Dora, Bergen-Belsen. Vivències d'un deportat*. Barcelona, Amical de Mauthausen and other camps, 2007, pp. 176-182).



SACHSENCHAUSEN

Francisco Largo Caballero

(Madrid, 15/10/1869 –Paris //1946). Socialist leader, President of the Council of Ministers of the Second Republic (1936-1937). Deported to Orianenburg-Sachsenhausen, 07/31/1944. He was released and repatriated to Paris where he died. Buried in the Pere Lacheise cemetery, his remains were repatriated to Spain in April 1978.

I woke up in pain, very early the next day. I wanted to see the camp after the evacuation. The first thing I noticed was that there were no guards; the sentries had disappeared. We are free! I screamed to myself. I entered the S.S offices .Everything was in disorder. Drawers, files, folders and papers scattered on the floor gave the impression of having been looted by a gang of bandits. (...) I discovered that the hospital staff, who I had innocently believed to be my protector, had left at one in the morning. There was no one left but the



French surgeon, the ophthalmologist, also French, and a Belgian patient. That was all the staff they had left to care for more than a thousand patients, some of them seriously ill. The hospital was practically abandoned (...)

At ten o'clock in the morning, the Red Cross flag was raised (...) At twenty past four in the afternoon a Russian officer entered and everyone who could walk went out to greet him. They hugged and kissed him; he was the announcer of freedom. He visited some of the hospital rooms and left! The next day,

Monday, April 23, the Russians returned; they opened the S.S. warehouses. There were hams, bacon, bread, wines, dried vegetables, and tobacco. The prisoners took everything as the Russians did not want anything. The Germans also left motorcycles and bicycles. The rout had been hasty and total.

On Tuesday the 24th, I left the camp and reached the Berlin road. No one stopped me from leaving, but because I was unable to walk and nobody could understand me, and I could not understand German, nor did I know where to go so, I decided to stay and wait for things to happen..

In the afternoon Polish officers arrived. They spoke to their fellow countrymen and when they found out that I was there, they made me leave the barrack and greeted me warmly. Two of them spoke French better than I did and we understood each other; (...) Two hours passed and other Polish officers arrived who went

straight to see me. We talked in French and they asked me when I planned to leave. I replied I did not know, and then one of the officers told me that he was going to speak to the General-in-Chief to find out if he was willing to release me. A little while later he returned to inform me that the General had ordered my release and that I should leave the camp immediately.

(LARGO CABALLERO, Francisco, *My memories*, Mexico, D.F, United Editions, 1976, pp. 182 -183).

Joan Mestres Rebull

(El Molar, Tarragona 29/09/1911 – Sant Boi de Llobregat, 28/04/1994). Republican officer. Deported to Sachsenhausen, 01/25/1943, he was assigned to Kommando Heinkel where he was released on 05/04/1945. He returned from exile in 1959, lived in Sant Boi de Llobregat. President of Amical de Mauthausen and other camps between 1979 and 1994.

Faced with the irresistible advance of the Soviet army and the fear of falling into their hands, on April 28 we were ordered to move again. We passed through towns and villages, their inhabitants were totally indifferent to us, they didn't even bother to remove those who died lying on the streets or those left by the roadside.

The night of May 4, 1945, we were aware of the proximity of the allied troops on both fronts, some French friends, a larger Polish group that included a Jew whom we had all protected, and three Spaniards, all agreed to escape.. To stay safe, we decided that our escape should be carried out one after the other and then we should regroup at a certain distance from the camp. So, we did it like that and it went well. We agreed to separate ourselves into small groups so as not to raise suspicions and confuse the dogs if the SS chased us. Our group was made up of three Frenchmen and three Spaniards, each group took a different direction.

After walking for a time, it was difficult to calculate, we saw a large haystack in the middle of a meadow. We realized that it was a perfect place to hide due to its size, so we burrowed into it. We built a small tun-

nel and once inside we blocked the entrance. The interior temperature was wonderful, and we had a great night's sleep.

When we awoke, we started to open some entrances to find out what was happening outside. From the brightness of the sun we deduced that it was quite late. We pondered on our predicament and what to do next: either stay one more day or take the risk and leave, come what may. Hunger and thirst were the reasons that made us leave.

What impressed us was the absolute silence. Very strange. No cannon shot blasts nor the judder of machine guns. A clear sky and with no planes. A silence enveloped us; everything was still. What was happening? Silence in war is impressive, it's disturbing because you feel that something momentous is about to happen. And it happened. It was May 8. The armistice had been signed! The German army had surrendered unconditionally. It was the end of the war!

(MESTRES REBULL, Joan, Amical de Mauthausen and other camps, s / f, Barcelona, Amical de Mauthausen, p. 21).



DACHAU

José M^a García-Miranda Esteban

(Toledo, 21-2-1897 – 02/1971). He was a professional soldier; due to the retreat he was forced into exile. He was detained in Le Vernet camp and was deported on the infamous "Ghost Train", he entered Dachau on 08/28/1944, nº 94367. Released, he returned to Spain in 1957, settling in Toledo.

Our discharge wasn't as fast as we thought it would be and I gave you a glimpse of that in my first letter following our release. Our lamentable physical condition, due to hunger, ill-treatment and the refined suffering we were subjected to were so immense that typhus, diarrhea and other scourges were rife and we had to undergo rigorous quarantine. Anyway, food is now abundant and healthy, the war against the lice that ate us alive, is relentless and I think that within a month we can be in France...

It has been a horrible year, it's difficult to explain the innumerable amounts of mistreatment, abuse and sufferings we have experienced, it's impossible to believe. So many thousands of Spaniards have perished, and likewise French, Polish, etc.!

It's a miracle some of us remained alive because even in the final days, the criminal Nazi organization had decided to exterminate us so that we could not speak or tell anything, and we were 25,000! ... We lived hours of great anxiety; Fortunately, the timely arrival of the Americans partially caused the sinister fascist plans to fail, and now we live as men.

(PAÑERO REINLIN, Rafael: *La suerte del otro*, Tarragona, Mandala Ediciones, 2005, p. 156).

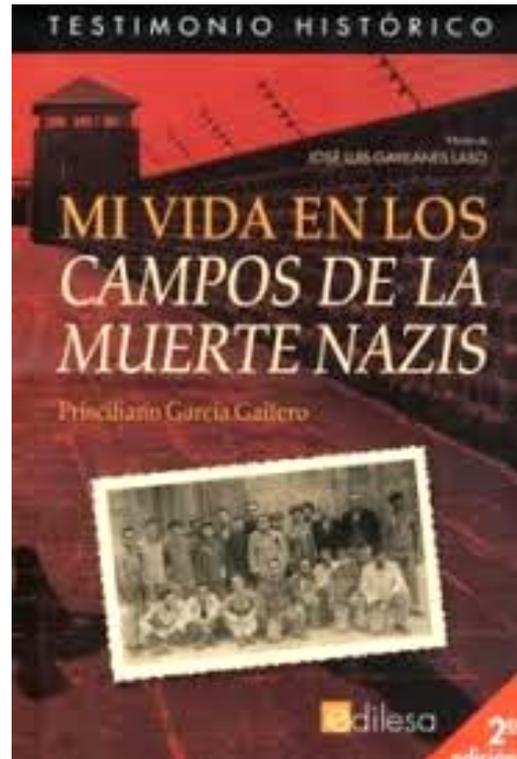


Prisciliano García Gaitero

(Fuentes de Carbajal, León, 29/06/1910 - Fontenay-sous-Bois 30/06/1949). Republican in exile, he was detained by the Germans in June 1940 and deported to Mauthausen, n° 3400, on 03/03/1941, Moved to Dachau on 11/9/1942, n° 38857. Survived with very poor health, died four years later.

When the camp was liberated by the allied troops, hygienic measures were quickly taken to stop disease. Throughout those days, there were dune like mounds of corpses piled up in grotesque postures next to the cremation ovens. The lack of fuel, the deterioration due to the uninterrupted use of the ovens, but, above all the huge number of deaths explained why the accumulation of candidates for daily incineration exceeded the scope of their possibilities. The sight was so repugnant, it was not easy to behold. The sight blurred our eyes immediately, even for those of us who were veterans and were already cured of all kinds of human bestialities and calamities. The liberating troops brought civilians from the town of Dachau, to load the bodies into carts and parade them around the town so that all the inhabitants could see the crimes that had been committed a few steps from their homes”.

(GARCÍA GAITERO, Prisciliano, *Mi vida en los campos de la muerte nazis*, León, EDILESA, 2005, p. 164).



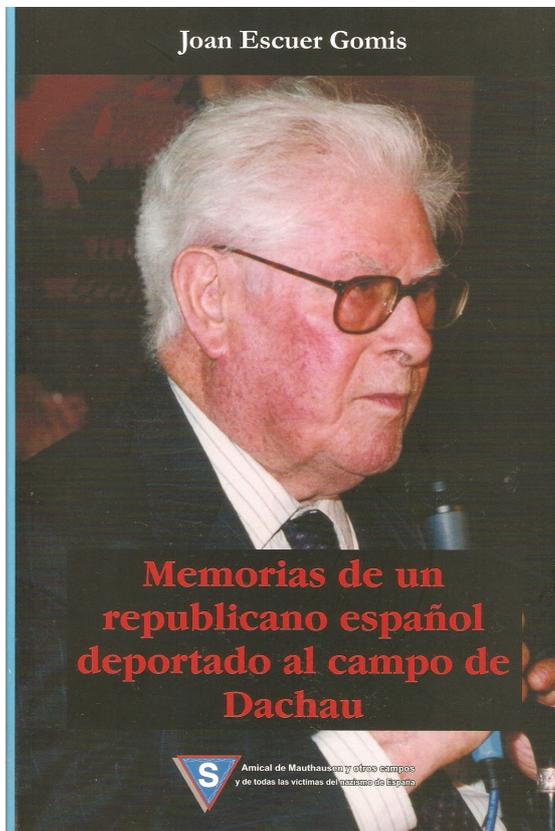
Joan Escuer Gomis

(Cornudella de Montsant, Tarragona, 16/11/1914 – Sentmenat, Barcelona, 15/12/2004). Exiled republican soldier, who was interned in several refugee camps. He was a communist party member who was detained in French Resistance and was deported to Dachau on 06/25/1944, n° 74181. After his return from exile, he settled with his companion Constanza Martínez, in Senmenat. He was part of the Amical de Mauthausen and other camps, whom president he was from 1992 to 2002. His memoirs were published by Amical in 2007.

...the retreat of the Nazi army troops was continuous. A couple of kilometres from the town a soldier on horseback reported to the corporal that it was impossible to reach Rosenheim, because the Americans were 4 kilometres away. So, our guards distributed their cigarettes among us, shook hands with us all and wishing us

luck, said goodbye. We were left alone without protection.

That May Day was a historic date for the entire world's working class, but for us, deported from the Dachau death camp, it also had another meaning: it was the beginning of our freedom. But, although it was true we no longer had sentries, we were still behind the enemies' front line, not an easy situation, because our physical safety still depended on luck. (...) The Deggendorf's bell tower clock marked 11am, on May 2, 1945 ... The white flag was flying on the bell tower's spire ... indicating the end of our ordeal, but it wasn't until we saw the first soldier from the friendly army appear that we dared to give free reign to our joy at having regained the long-awaited freedom and we would once again enjoy human dignity.



(ESCUER GOMIS, Joan, *Memoorias de un republicano español deportado al campo de Dachau*, Barcelona Amical de Mauthausen

y otros campos, 2007, pp. 205-209).

RAVENSBRÜCK

Constanza Martínez Prieto

(Madrid, 17/1/1917 – Sentmenat, Barcelona, 17/01/1997). Exiled and resistant. Deported to Ravensbrück, 06/26/1944, No. 43224. Transferred to Kommando Leipzig, where she was released. With Joan Escuer Gomis they settled in Sentmenat del Vallés. Amical Vice President of Mauthausen and other camps.

As the English approached Leipzig, the SS Nazis evacuated the camp. I perfectly remember that it was April 14, 1945. Paquita (Mercedes Núñez), who was in the infirmary, had made, I don't know how, some republican flags for the 8 Spanish women in the camp and, wearing them, we set off for Dresden. The odyssey on the road is not to be described and poor of who fell exhausted by fatigue! She was shot down as if she was a badly wounded dog. At one point we noticed that our guardians had disappeared. We continued some time in line, in case it was a manoeuvre to have a pretext (although they didn't need it) to machine-gun all of us, but when we



made sure that we had no surveillance, in small groups, we separated and that was the "every woman for herself". Our small group (three Spanish and one French) was picked up by some prisoners of war (a Czech, a Yugoslavian and an Italian) who worked in a farm, where they kept us hidden until the arrival of the Soviet troops. These concentrated us in a large camp and later took us to Torgau, and a few days later the American troops repatriated us to France, where we were welcomed at the Hotel Lutetia. There I found my husband, who had already been repatriated 15 days ago. Our joy at seeing us was immense, but soon the sadness won over us when we found out, as we met well-known comrades, about the death of many others who remained there, in the so-called Camps of Death, who did not have the happiness of seeing our victory that had cost so dearly.

(CATALÁ, Neus, *De la Resistencia a la deportación*, Barcelona, ADGENA, S.L, 1984, pp. 206-207).

Mercedes Núñez Targa

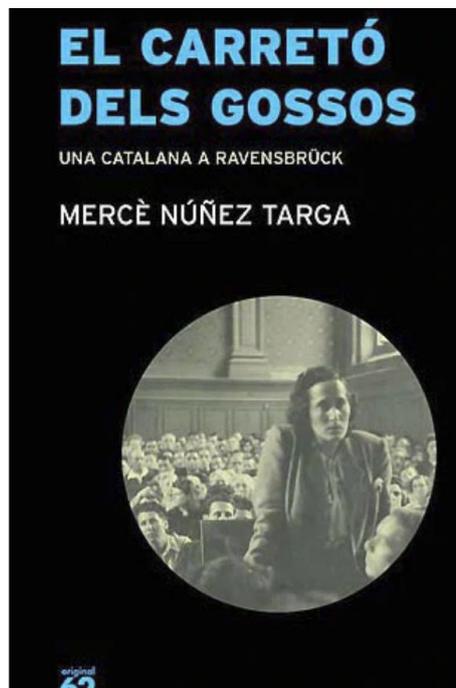
(Barcelona, 16/01/1911 - Vigo, Pontevedra, 04/08/1986). Exiled and resistant. Deported to Ravensbrück, 06/25/1944, nº 4068. Transferred to Kommando Leipzig, where she was released. After her exile she settled in Barcelona and Vigo. Member of the Board and delegate in Galicia of the Amical de Mauthausen and other camps.

We were still seeing the rows of prisoners in the distance when a Soviet entered the Revier like a madwoman:

-Tovàritxi! Tovàritxi!

The woman, screaming, stumbling, spoke and gestured, cried and laughed at the same time.

When we saw the extraordinary emotion and the victorious



screams of all the Soviets, we understood that something magnificent was coming.

-We're free! -Translated a woman with exaltation-. Free, comrades! All the SS have gone.

Even the dying prisoners rose from the beds. We laughed, wept, we hugged. I can't find words to describe that unforgettable moment. I only remember that my first reflection was to quickly put on the republican flag so lovingly made by my Spanish sisters.

It was the fourteenth day of April, one thousand nine hundred and forty-five.

(NUÑEZ TARGA, Mercedes, *El carretó dels gossos. Una catalana a Ravensbrück*, Barcelona, Ed. 62, 2005, p. 109).

NEUENGAMME

Alfredo Rotella Morán

(Sama de Langreo, Asturias, 09/12/1922 – Eauze, Francia, 05/03/2020). Arrested in December 1943. Deported to Buchenwald on 01/29/1944, No. 63667 and transferred to Neuengamme, No. 63667 on 10/26/1944, being assigned to Kommando Hohwacht from where he was released. He left in France until his recent disappearance.

We stayed at Hohwacht until April 1945 and were evacuated with our guards during the advance of the Allied troops. We arrived at the town of Rathmansdorf, I think, and slept in a barn. On May 3, 1945, one of our guards, who spoke French for having been a prisoner during the war of 1914-1918, told us: "If you want, I will take you to the other side of the Kiel Canal, and then I will go to home because for me the war is over "

We left, a group of twenty comrades (...) escorted by this guard who had been called at the end because they were missing SS. Upon arriving at the bridge over the Kiel Canal, we are stopped by the guards who controlled the bridge. Our guard told them that



he had orders to escort us to repair a road that had been bombed. We passed and arrived at Kiel. There, the guard abandons us.

We spent the night in a bunker and the next day we decided to try to get to the front of the allied troops. We took the road and, on our way,, had to leave an old Belgian companion who can no longer walk in a French prison camp that we meet on the road. We arrived at Neu-enmunster without encountering the Allied troops, but we see signs on the road that indicate their passage.

We go to the town hall to request accommodation. They call the local police and we end up in jail where we stay three days. We make noise and a guard comes to see us. We request to meet with the principal. After the verbiage, the allied soldiers come; We tell them that we are soldiers. We were immediately released and arrived at a barracks for former

German soldiers. They ask us for our names and addresses in France. Finally, we are free men.

(<https://asso-buchenwald-dora.com/temoignage-de-alfred-rotella/>).

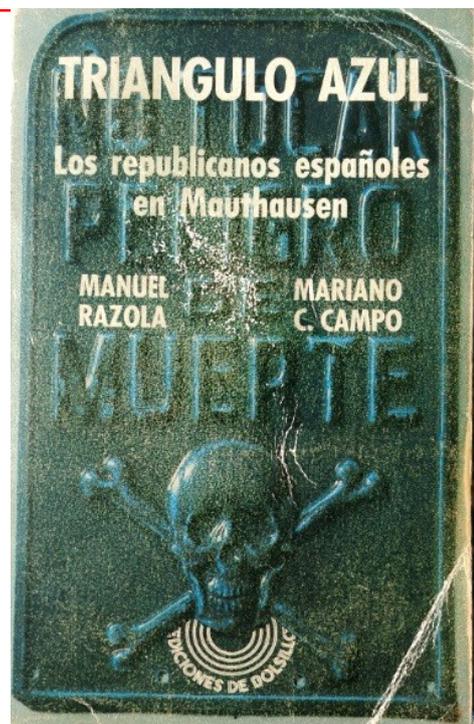
MAUTHAUSEN and EXTERNAL CAMPS

Mariano Constante Campo

(Capdesaso, Huesca, 08/14/1920 - Montpellier, France, 01/20/2010). Republican fighter and exiled, arrested on 06/21/1940 and deported to Mauthausen on 04/07/1941, with the registration number 4584. After the liberation, he settled in France and published different testimonial books. He was linked to the Amical de Mauthausen and other camps since its inception.

Manuel Razola Romo

(Sacedón, 12/30/1909 - France, 1993) Exiled with the retreat, he was arrested on 06/21/1940 and deported to Mauthausen on 04/26/1941, where he received the registration number 3793. He was part of the clandestine organization of the camp and was a member of the International Committee. After liberation, he settled definitively in Hendaye.



"From the last days of April, the SS started burning large amounts of documents. On May 3, the Vienna police companies participated in the surveillance of the outside of the camp; rumours spread that SS units were going to head out. On May 2, the gas chamber was dismantled and partially destroyed, as were the crematoriums and torture instruments.

Those who worked in the crematorium were shot so that they could not divulge anything in this regard ...

On May 5, 1945 ... at 1:00 p.m. 14 min. three or four armored vehicles with the American badge appeared unexpectedly. A surge of enthusiasm originated in the huge human mass confined in the camp. But these allied forces were nothing more than an advance party of the American vanguard and around 5:00 p.m. They returned to their base ... leaving the camp in full swing.

The AMI was immediately required to take possession by force of arms and to assume responsibility for order within the camp ...

In no time at all, the watchtowers and the pediment of the monumental gate were covered with posters in honour of the allied armies and with flags raised as if by magic. On the main mast, where a few days before the sinister black banner with a skull was still waving, the flag of the Spanish Republic now happily flies. Ah! I wish you could have seen, dear comrades who have lost their lives in this hell, this great spectacle that would have constituted your revenge and your eternal consolation ...! "

(RAZOLA, Manuel y CONSTANTE, Mariano: *Triángulo azul: los republicanos españoles en Mauthausen, 1940-1945*. Barcelona, Ed. Península, 1979, pp. 161-163).

Juan de Diego Arranz

(Barcelona, 18/05/1915 - 9/05/2003). Republican Army Lieutenant. Exiled and deported to Mauthausen on 08/06/1940, nº 3156. He was assigned to the camp offices, after his liberation he settled in Paris and later in Perpignan. He returned to Barcelona in 2001.

An ordinance brought Captain Bachmayer's motorcycle, he rode on it, his eyes scanned the detainees for a few seconds and then they went to stray into distant horizons, as if getting off ecstasy he pedalled to start the machine, his white-gloved hands manipulated the handlebars, the engine started, a thud followed by small explosions broke the silence of the camp. The sight of the deportees was fixed unanimously on the monster who had killed so many people.

Authoritatively he made a detainee leave the ranks; This old deportee introduced himself to him, stood at attention before the Lagerführer. Bachmayer stared at him and said:

- Chuan, I'm leaving...*
- My captain, I'm staying ...*
- What do you think of all this?*
- My captain for us the light ... for you. the night...*

Bachmayer took a breath, shook his head slightly, fixed his eyes on his hands, slowly took off the glove on his right and held it out to the prisoner said:

-Good luck to you...

He shifted the heavy machine with his feet, operated the controls, and impetuously it passed the threshold of the main gate of the Mauthausen concentration camp, leaving behind that place that was the realm of crime.

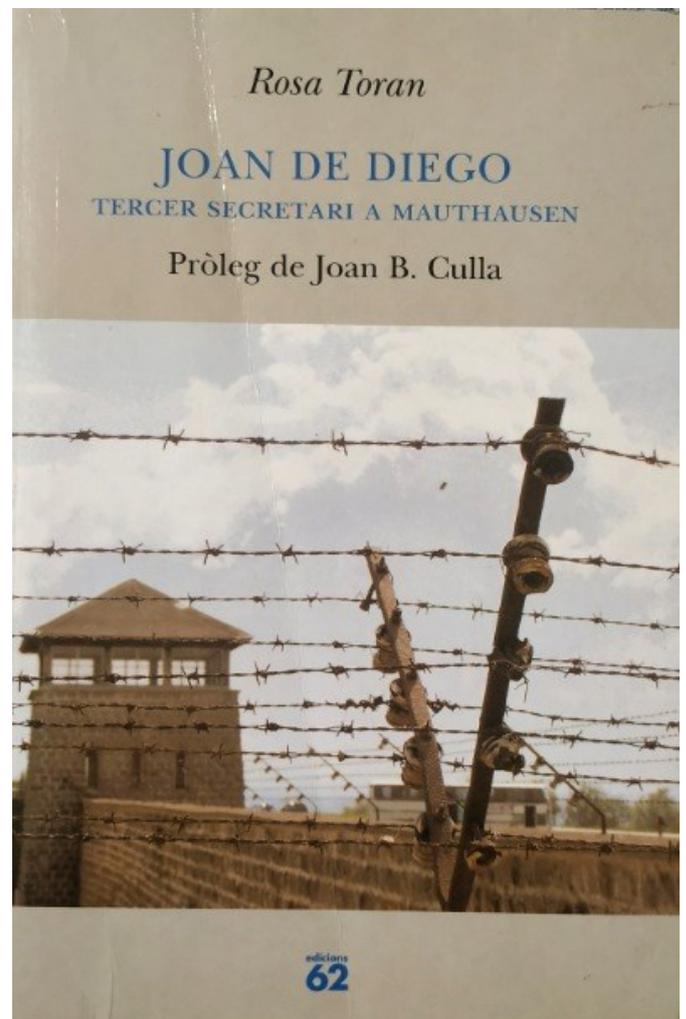
That same day, after this scene, he would kill his wife and two children, doing justice on himself.

This was the last "appel" in the Mauthausen concentration camp and the last words between the van-

quished and the winners still dressed in the striped suit.

What significance can be given to this scene? I still wonder today.

(TORAN, Rosa, Joan de Diego. *Tercer secretari a Mauthausen*, Barcelona, Ed. 62, 2007, p. 186).

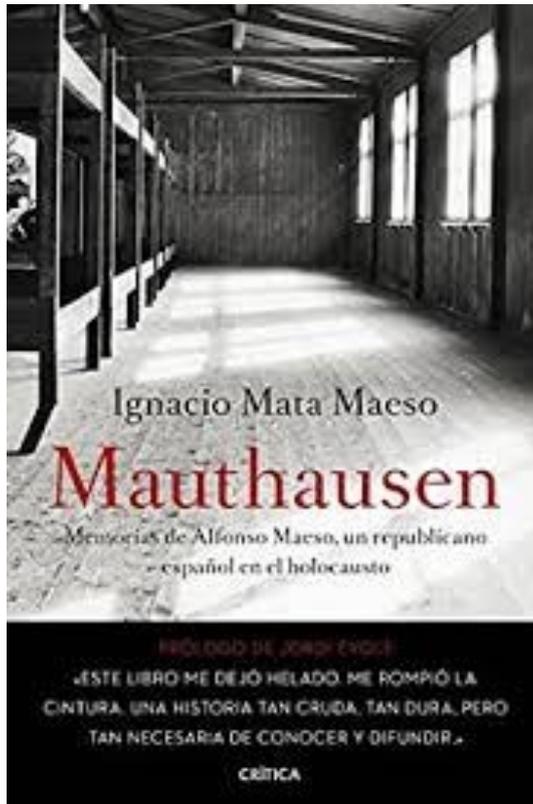


Alfonso Maeso Huertas

(Manzanares, Madrid, 20/11/1919 – Toulouse, 01/2007). Republican soldier., In exile he was interned in Le Vernet and Septfonds. Arrested by the Germans, he was deported to Mauthausen, nº 3447 on 01/25/1941. After liberation he lived in Toulouse.

The liberation took place around 9 or 10 in the morning of May 5, 1945. Two American tanks, coming from the 11th Armoured Division, entered majestically through the great arch that presided over Mauthausen.

Although they came from liberating other concentration camps, the fear that their faces expressed, in which we saw reflected, as in a mirror, the horror that we had experienced, showed that they had never witnessed anything remotely similar. In front of their eyes paraded a sordid procession of men decimated by years of suffering that crowded before them, some screaming, sobbing without consolation others. Some paralyzed by the emotion of the moment, others embraced, no one indifferent. When they arrived, the tension from the night before was still in my body. Sitting quietly in the infirmary



next to Fresas and Galopa, I suddenly began to hear a hubbub. I remember that I immediately shared a fleeting glance with my companions, who had also heard Boix tell us days before that the front was only a few kilometres away. Startled by the screaming, I looked out the small window that looked out onto the appellplatz and watched people running toward the front door. Something big was going on. When I went outside I saw the American tank, haughty, still, right in the centre of the great arch, surrounded by many others who, like me, knew that the hardest part was over.

I must say that I felt a deep and pleasant relief, but I did not burst out with joy or lose control. The joy was immense, but also the tiredness, the anger and the feeling that this had not yet ended, that it surely would never, and that those years would weigh on me forever, like the heavy stone blocks that for so many years I had to climb the Wiener Graven staircase.

(MATA MAESO, Ignacio, *Mauthausen. Memorias de un republicano español en el holocausto*. Based on the life of Alfonso

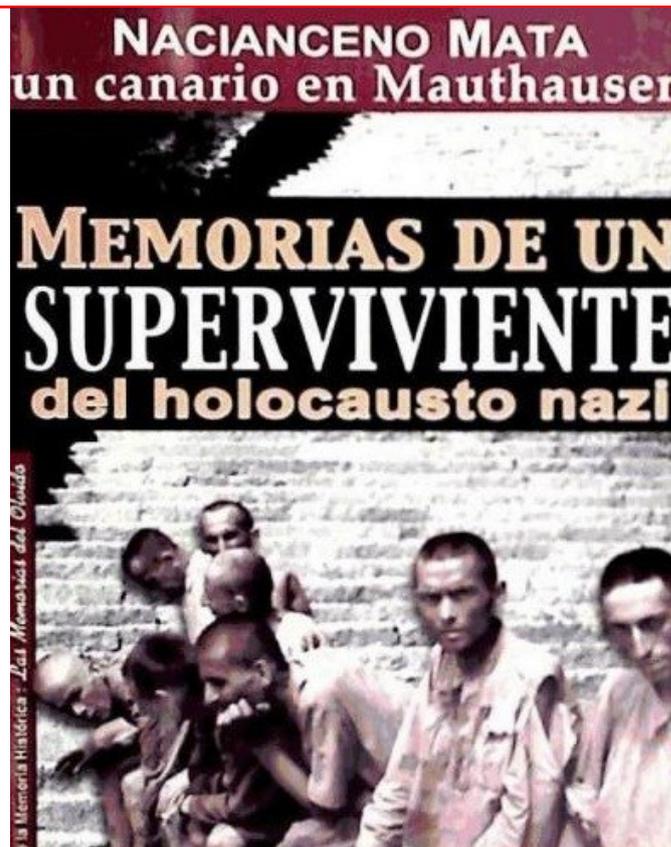
Maeso (pp. 105-106, 111).

Nacienceno Mata Rodríguez

(Garafía, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, 09/05/1911 – París, 2003). Deported to Mauthausen on 12/13/1940, nº 5007 with his brother Orencio, (1914) who died in Gusen on 07/27/1941. Upon liberation, Nacienceno resided in Paris.

From the month of April 1945 the symptoms of the end of our Calvary in Mauthausen began to be seen. One morning we were pleasantly surprised to see American reconnaissance planes evolving over the camp and at low altitudes. The SS had no anti-aircraft weapons installed, as Mauthausen was far from the fronts and there was supposed to be no risk of attack. That day, the planes passed in complete confidence without encountering any reaction from the SS. Inside the camp, morale rose day by day...

Some nights, working in the laundry room, there were among us "lookouts" sent by the clandestine international committee of the camp, who watched through the glass the evolution of the SS at the door



and the nearby sentry boxes. We were all aware of the danger we were in. These "lookouts" ... were better informed, since they were part of the international group in charge of observing and organizing a revolt in the event that the SS wanted to take us to the Gusen galleries, to the laundry and kitchen subways, to the closed garage yard etc. They were critical moments. There was an order not to spread the rumour and to be ready for any eventuality. Little by little it became known of the existence of knives, a kind of machetes and iron bars hidden and prepared. Later it was also revealed that we had some pistols. All this was part of the defensive material prepared in the clandestinity ...

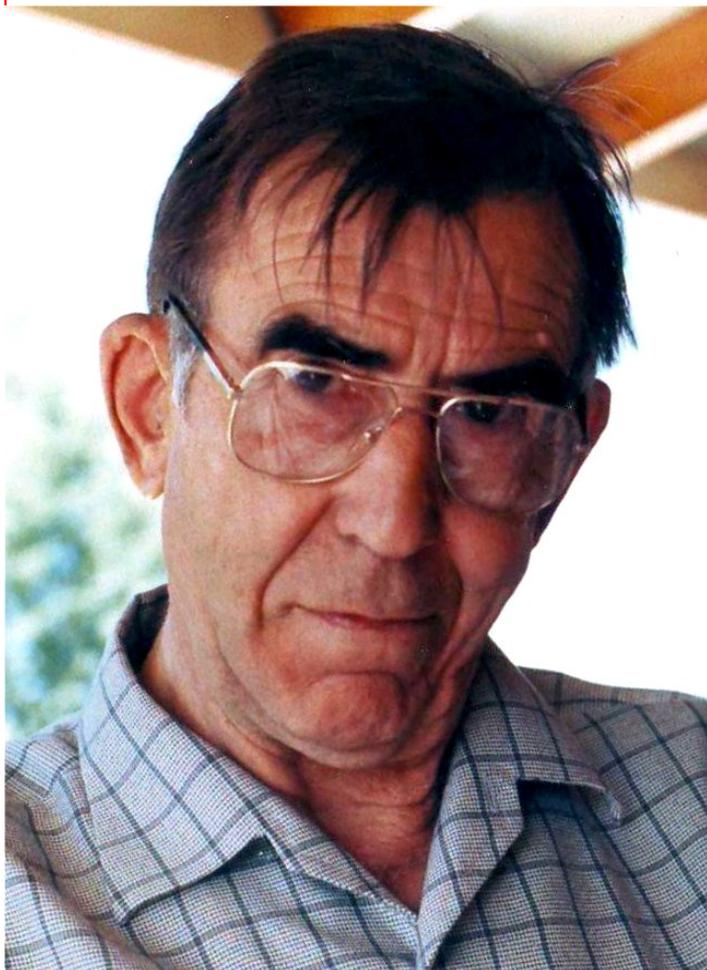
In the last days of the camp, it was known ... that SS

officers held secret meetings in the evenings in order to make a prompt determination regarding the possible collective extermination of detainees in the camp. Fortunately, the macabre liquidation project proposed by an officer with great influence among them, was rejected in a vote held at the last meeting. The next day, the Germans who brought the news ... announced to the international camp committee the result of the vote. The enormous existing tension diminished, and it was soon seen how the SS progressively 'retreated' from Mauthausen discreetly".

(MATA, Nacienceno, *Un canario en Mauthausen. Memorias de un superviviente del holocausto nazi* (pp. 202-204).

Manuel San Martín Santamaría

(Lleida, 02/05/1920 – Toulouse el 16/04/2006). Exiled republican, after his arrest in the spring of 1940, he was deported to Mauthausen on 04/07/1941, number 4949. After his liberation, he settled in the town of Fumel (France) and in recent years he lived in Toulouse.



In May 1945, the Allies approached the Mauthausen camp. Liberation is near. It will not be solely the work of American soldiers. We detainees had prepared it over the years. The men from the Spanish

military group had stolen three grenades, a pistol, and five litters of gasoline that were used to make Molotov cocktails. This "arsenal" may seem laughable, but you have to know that these robberies had been carried out methodically and meticulously with danger of life. The person in charge of stealing the gasoline used a small flattened bottle that he hid under his shirt. Ramón Suñer and Izquierdo worked in the SS garages and had access to gasoline there. At the time of his release, Ramón Suñer served as a link between the armed groups using an SS truck that had been sabotaged and that they failed to take away with them.

We all hoped to use these weapons to free ourselves with the remaining men. The flight of a large number of SS made us understand that the end was near. Some clashes with those that were still left caused five deaths among our comrades. The deportees stayed between May 5 and 7 with weapons in hand controlling the camp and its surroundings in order to prevent any last wrongdoing of the SS that remained nearby. These two days were extremely important because they show that, despite what we had suffered, we knew how to face the situation with responsibility and discipline. The German soldiers they encountered, eighty in all, including eight to ten officers, were imprisoned without exerting any brutality on them, which might seem understandable or at least explainable. Only one torturer was immediately executed without the torture he had inflicted being returned to him.

When the first soldiers arrived, order was restored in the camps, the prisoners had demonstrated that we knew how to take care of ourselves; however, we were misunderstood because the Americans authoritatively appointed a camp chief and ordered us to remain calm.

(Unpublished testimony).

José de Dios Amill

(Fraga, Huesca, 10/07/1910 – 03/12/2002). Republican soldier, went into exile leaving his wife and daughter in Barcelona. Detained in May 1940, he was deported to Mauthausen, n°5142 on 01/27/1941. Later destined to Brestein and Steyr, where he was released. He returned to Fraga in 1947. Linked to the Amical de Mauthausen and other camps since its inception.

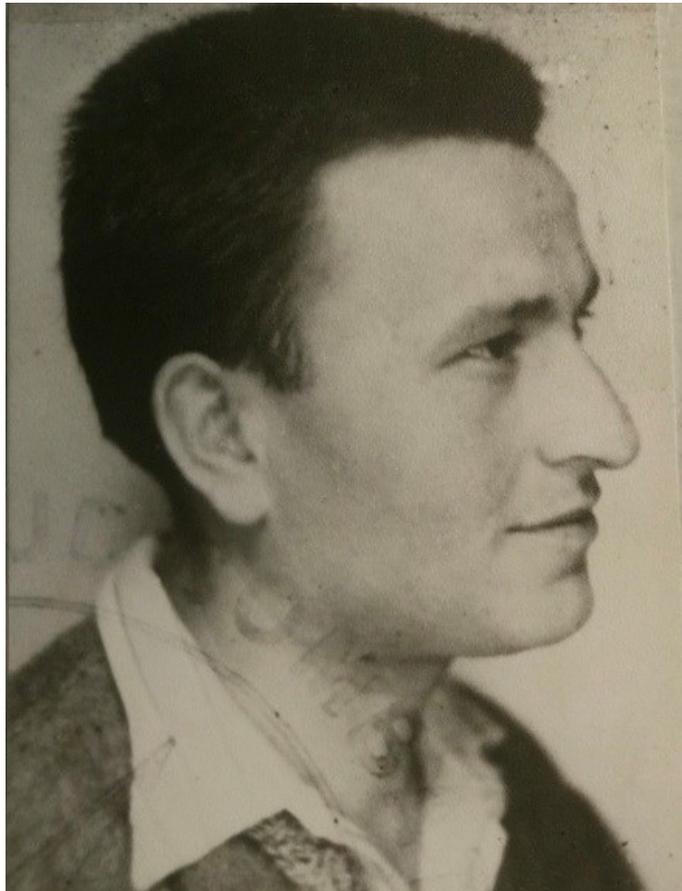
The street was completely deserted and only at the end of the bridge did we see the figures of two soldiers and a small vehicle that turned out to be a small tank. As in the movies, one American was white and the other was black and the two of them alone took the city. They ignored us despite our number and we, for the moment, were a little disappointed in the coldness that we were subjected to. Then we reacted and deduced that the clothing of the inmates' striped suit was already almost familiar to them due to the number of concentration camps they had to find in their advance.

All the German soldiers who were going into disarmament and coming in the opposite direction from ours,



when they arrived at the bridge, as a sign of surrender, they left their weapons at the feet of the white American and the black American took the rifles one by one and broke them on the iron railing of the bridge throwing them into the river. Despite the promptness that occurred, he could not cope with as many weapons as there were on the ground. At last I saw the defeated and humiliated German soldier! Only two soldiers took Steyr, an important city with a bridge of great strategic value. The German soldier, the god of war, whom I had only seen as the victor, finally saw that he was a human being like the Spanish, French or Russian soldier who, when defeated, took on the appearance of an inferior being. The German soldiers, who were watching how their weapons were thrown at the feet of the vanquished, were also inferior beings, not dying to kill before being defeated, but surrendering themselves submissive to the victors.

(DE DIOS AMILL, José, *La verdad sobre Mauthausen*, Barcelona, Ed. Sirius, 1995, pp. 268-269).



Miquel Serra i Grabulosa

(Roda de Ter, Girona, 29/03/1921 – Perpignan, France, 16/11/1989). Exiled Republican and deported to Mauthausen on 12/19/1941, n° 4715. Member of the clandestine resistance organization in Mauthausen. After the repatriation, he settled in Paris and then moved to Perpignan. Linked to the Amical de Mauthausen since its creation.

May 5th

*May 5th, awaited day
Today, you enjoy Liberty
But life is so strange ...
What can you do with this Liberty?
For whom is it? Is it for you?
Or it is for those who cheated you?
Everybody shouting, let's go home!
In different foreign languages ...
But for you, Catalans
and gent from the rest of Spain
Where are you going to?
You must create a new homeland
Where to stay
And you have a sad heart
and thoughts for those
You left behind!*

(Miquel Serra i Grabulosa, unpublished)

Jacint Carrió Vilaseca

(Manresa, Barcelona, 19/09/1916 – 31/10/2000). Exiled, intern in the Saint-Cyprien camp. Deported to Mauthausen on 12/13/1940, nº 4676. Moved to Gusen on 10/20/1941, nº 43423. He returned to Manresa in 1949, where he settled definitively.

On May 3, the camp commander began loading papers and compromising material into a car. They all disappeared behind the entrance portal. Gusen was left empty of SS. After his departure, the Viennese guard appeared. They did not know what had been happening until then inside the camp. They disconnected the electric fences. Some even distributed cigarettes among the prisoners ... As we loaded the bags, we saw a group of German soldiers arriving. They came scrapped, dirty, half naked. Some had lost the rifle.

- Where are the allies?

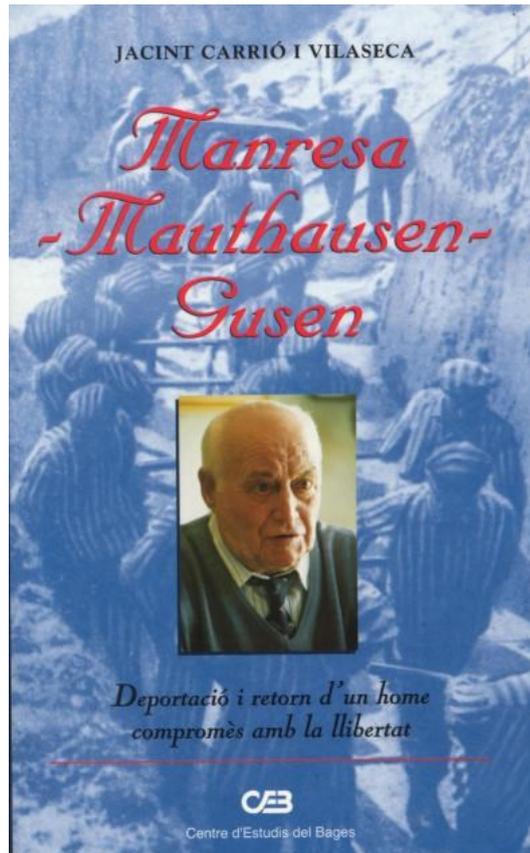
- They are in Saint Georgen.

They spoke in fear, defeated. They were the portrait of defeat.

A portrait I knew very well: I had seen it among the Republicans, during the withdrawal, and also among the French, when they fell into the hands of the Ger-

mans. We immediately returned to the camp to communicate the news to our comrades ...

We spent the whole morning in expectation. It was five minutes before 5 pm of May 5 (the fifth calendar month) of 1945, when the allies arrived in the camp of Gusen. I have always remembered this date; For me it was a magical moment, loaded with fives (...)
When Gusen was released, many did not trust the Americans. They didn't want to go out the doors, they knocked down the walls and cut the barbed wire at the back. A black man in a tank entered in Gusen. The first thing the Americans did was throw the machine gun from the control tower to the ground. That was a symbol. We felt a joy difficult to explain. All republicans gather in a corner. This was a party. We had gathered all the parties and unfurled our flag, the republican flag.



(CARRIÓ VILASECA, Jacint, *Manresa-Mauthausen-Gusen*, Centre d'Estudis del Bages, Manresa, 2001, (pp. 93-95) and ROIG, Montserrat, *Catalans als camps nazis*, Ed. 62, Barcelona, 2003, pp. 536-537).

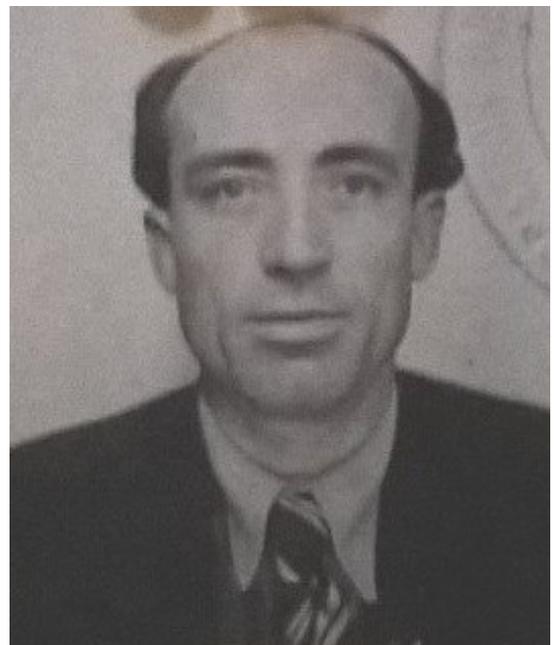
AURIGNY and JERSEY (Channel Islands)

Julio Comín Villuendas

(Obón, Teruel, 2/02/1909 – Rivesaltes, France, 22/01/1996). He belonged to the Carabineros Corps, fighting on various war fronts. Exiled and deported to Aurigny, in the Norderney camp. After the liberation, he defended the rights of the Channel Islands deportees.

May 9 at 6 PM freedom. The English liberated the camp and the prisoners went out to sing victory with the island's inhabitants. I was appointed head of the committee for the Spanish deportees; The English wanted to return us to our home countries, so I met with the Governor of Jersey and the French Consul with the aim of avoiding that. I told them that in the group of Spaniards there were sailors who knew how to read the stars and that, if we were repatriated, we would rise up on the high seas, cut off the captain's head and go wherever we wanted.

(CALVO GASCON, Juan M., *Dentro de poco os podré abrazar. Supervivientes aragoneses de los campos nazis*, Andorra, (Te), CELAN, 2019, p. 203).



Guzmán Bosque Comas

(Maella, Zaragoza, 22/06/1910 - Aguessac, France, 1988). Was a member of the PSUC and a political commissioner at the Aragon front. After the retreat he stayed in refugee camps in the south of France. In 1942 he was arrested by the German and deported to the Island of Aurigny. After being freed he settled in Paris.

clandestine radio of the Jersey farm workers. We had not yet been let free so Domench, Valls and I went to see the German policeman at Command Headquarters. We told him we wanted to celebrate the victory because we were ant-fascists. He nearly shot us, if he had been a member of the SS, we wouldn't be alive.

(ROIG, Montserrat Catalans In the Nazi camps, Barcelona, Ed. 62, 2003, p. 547).

We learned about the Allies victory thanks to the

2020 VIRTUAL CELEBRATIONS

This year, the year of the 75th anniversary, will remain in our memory as the occasion when we were unable to celebrate it live due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The International Committee of Mauthausen, of which we are a part, as well as the Austrian Committee of Mauthausen, organized the virtual celebrations of great symbolism.

Thanks to social media, the Mauthausen Oath was heard and the message of

"humanity without borders" was sent out forcefully around the world.

We now invite you to the live celebration of this 75th anniversary in May 2021, when we visit Mauthausen, Gusen, Ebensee, Hartheim again ... where so many of our compatriots have lost their lives or suffered the worst hell.

We will remain faithful to your memory.

Never again!

