



**SITGETANS  
ALS CAMPS  
NAZIS**

**DE SITGES A L'HORROR DELS  
CAMPS DE CONCENTRACIÓ**

**ENGLISH**



Between August 1940 and May 1945, at least eleven Sitgetans lived through the horrors of the Nazi concentration and extermination camps. Only two would survive.

Still today, not many people are aware of this reality.

The suffering and horror that our own neighbours and almost nine thousand other Spaniards deported in the German concentration camps underwent, first-hand, and the silence that ensued, is still reason for collective shame despite the recent years' attempts at reparation. The exploitation of human labor in the camps, the disdain for individuals when they ceased to be productive and, in general, the total disregard for human life with the use of methods for mass extermination translate in some of the worst episodes of cruelty in the history of humankind.

This exhibition, *Sitgetans in the Nazi Camps*, is the result of the collaboration between the Grup d'Estudis Sitgetans, the Sitges' Department of Culture and the non-profit organization Amical de Mauthausen (Friends of Mauthausen). This project aims, firstly, to raise awareness about a reality that is known to very few in Sitges; and secondly, to preserve and dignify the memory of so many deportees. Moreover, it hopes to be the starting point to further research and understanding of this sad episode in our history.

It must be pointed out that the project takes a wide approach to the notion of *Sitgetan*. Not only those deportees officially born in the town have been included, but also those who had, in later life, made of Sitges their home, a home from which they were uprooted. In any case, it must not be forgotten that the list of names may not be final, others could be added as light is shed on these tragic events.

In the seventy-fifth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps, Sitges joins in the effort of so many towns and associations to raise awareness of the suffering and horror our neighbours went through and pay tribute to the victims of Nazism.





A black and white photograph showing a large crowd of people, many with their hands raised, in front of a building with a tower. The scene appears to be a public gathering or protest. The text '1939' is overlaid in large white letters, and 'THE YEAR OF THE CATASTROPHES' is overlaid in large red letters below it.

1939

THE YEAR OF  
THE CATASTROPHES



# THE END OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

On Sunday, January 22, 1939, at midday, the Francoist troops entered Sitges. They took over the town with no opposition. In Sitges the war was over.

Two days earlier, the Francoist air force had bombed the town for the last time, the bombs had landed in several streets (Aigua, Barcelona and Major), killing four civilians and destroying a number of houses.

Many Sitgetans who had held public office during the Republic had already abandoned the town in face of the unstoppable advance of General Franco's troops. Others, because of their military background, or simply trying to escape what they thought was to come, fled towards the French frontier. They began an uncertain exile, from which many would never return.

On reaching the frontier, after a distressing and disenchanting journey, the French denied them access across their border. Eventually they would relent, compelled by the situation. Civilians were allowed to cross over on January 28 and soldiers from the Republican faction, unarmed, did so on February 5.

They were treated not as war refugees, but as prisoners. They could only hope and wait for the situation to change so that they could return to their homes. Very few were able to move freely in French territory, most were locked up in makeshift camps, in terrible conditions, where basic material needs were completely disregarded.

And thus the dilemma: return to a country where they were being claimed with views to retaliation; or stay in an unwelcoming and foreign country.

Some refugees were lucky enough to be claimed by relatives living abroad, or to receive aid from organizations like the SERE (Spanish Refugee Evacuation Service) or JARE (Aid Board for Spanish Republicans). Many others, however, were left defenseless.

The French government, trying to escape such a delicate situation and pressed by the extreme right, was in haste to make all those refugees, crammed in ignominious camps, disappear. The displaced were offered to return to Spain or to join the Foreign Legion or the Companies of Foreign Workers, entrusted with the construction of defensive fortifications.

In Spain, the situation was also complicated. The repression conducted by the new regime against non-sympathizers, and the condemnation of those who had abandoned the country, resulted in a climate of revenge, which materialized in *La Causa General* (General prosecution), the Councils of War, the Law of Political Responsibilities, the Court of Repression of Freemasonry and Communism, and other mechanisms of the "New State" headed by Franco.

In Sitges, as elsewhere, the new authorities exerted absolute control over everything: they purged municipal civil servants, controlled every aspect of the public sector and tried to do the same in the private one. The complicity of the regime's sympathizers made any attempt to escape the dominant orthodoxy futile.

It was the beginning of a long silence.



# THE INTERWAR YEARS AND THE RISE OF ADOLF HITLER

The political situation following World War I triggered the rise of ideologies that channeled the anger and resentment brewing in Europe. The clash between extremists facilitated the appearance of new actors: political agitators.

Adolf Hitler in Germany and Benito Mussolini in Italy managed to redirect these agitators and took over the control of their radical and extremist political parties.

Hitler and Mussolini initiated an unrelenting persecution of anyone who strayed from their political ideals: Communists, Jews, Romani people, Socialists. This persecution of the enemy was an active policy concealed by the implementation of short-term policies that blinded people.

A clear example of this is the siege and fall of the Weimar Republic under the implacable attack of the National Socialist Party led by Adolf Hitler, who, in the space of a few years, will go from being a second-rate politician to becoming the *Führer*.

Hitler was appointed head of government in 1933, from then on he would set off to increase his power and eliminate all political opposition. In a short space of time he attained an incredible political power. This process finally culminated in the transformation of a constitutional state into a clearly totalitarian one, which would lead to the rise of the Third Reich.

Once Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany, he had the entire country in his hands. He initiated an expansionist policy. The Saar region and Rhineland were the first to be annexed. The lack of any decisive action from the League of Nations encouraged Germany to go on to invade Austria and the Czech Republic.

The pact of non-aggression between Germany and Russia (Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact) enabled the two countries to partition Poland, and Russia proceeded with the annexation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The pact gave Hitler carte blanche in the actions that would lead to the war. On September 1, 1939, the Wehrmacht (armed forces of Nazi Germany from 1935 to 1945) invaded Poland. The war had begun.

In this context, the Spanish Republicans who had enrolled into the Companies of Foreign Workers after leaving the internment camps in the South of France were made to build fortifications and to reinforce the Maginot Line defenses —a line of fortifications constructed on the French side of its borders with Belgium, Luxembourg Germany, Switzerland and Italy. Other republicans, the war already underway, decided to serve in the Foreign Legion and fight fascism. Such was the case of the Sitgetan Rossend Ferret i Bertran (aka *Pauleta*), who, after fighting in North Africa against the German, marched into Paris with the 9th Company, *La Nueve*, the company that liberated the French capital. Many other Spanish Republicans, allowed in the French territory as free men, continued to fight and joined the Resistance.



# CONCENTRATION AND EXTERMINATION CAMPS

The Nazi totalitarian regime found in concentration camps the means to imprison and eliminate not only any kind of dissidence, but any kind of difference as well.

The first camps were created shortly after Hitler's naming as Reich Chancellor, under the pretext of the need to re-educate those who had strayed into Marxism. Soon, however, the implementation of the Nazi policy to eliminate any enemy of the state allowed the Third Reich to imprison anyone suspicious of hindering the regime's efforts. Initially ideated to house communists, the target soon widened to include members of any group considered ill-equipped to reside in the new Germany. The Reich had found the solution to eliminate all those elements deemed as deviant.

From 1934 onwards, the use of concentration camps became systematic and the creation of new camps increased, from 1939 to 1942 they would spread all over occupied Europe. When the war started, concentration camps multiplied. The millions of detainees were targeted for very different reasons: Jews, communists, homosexuals, Romani people, Jehovah's witnesses, the physically and mentally disabled..., as well as war prisoners from all across Europe and members of the Resistance. In short: all those who threatened the purity of the German race and who could hinder the growth of the nation.

Those prisoners captured during military operations or raids among civilians were initially sent to provisional camps known as Stalags. As war prisoners, in the Stalags they could enjoy some privileges. Their future, however, was already decided. Eventually, most of them would be sent to German concentration camps under the control of the SS.

On arriving at the camps, the prisoners were stripped of their personality. Instead of a name they had a number. They were overworked to exhaustion and underfed, they lacked basic sanitary conditions and health care; many did not survive.

The SS exploited the labor of prisoners for economic gain. Some prisoners worked outside the camps in the Kommandos. With time, the workload and Kommandos increased and new satellite camps, under the command of a main camp, spread throughout the territory.

By mid 1942, with the war already underway, some of these camps had adapted their objectives. War had brought about new needs, and prisoners, previously exploited to death, were now vital components of the war industry. The prisoners would often put their lives at risk trying to sabotage the production of war material.

Other changes were taking place; on January 20, 1942, the senior government officials of Nazi Germany had come together in the Wannsee Conference (near Berlin) to ultimate the plans for "The Final Solution". Although by mid 1941 the German troops had already begun to exterminate Jews behind the front lines by massive killings, it would be after Wannsee that gas chambers began to be used. Approximately six million Jews were murdered, either in the gas chamber or executed by a firing squad, a mass extermination that would come to be known as the Holocaust (*Shoah* in Hebrew).



# THE PACTS BETWEEN FRANCO'S SPAIN AND NAZI GER- MANY

From the very onset of the Spanish conflict, the Third Reich decided to support the fascist side by providing economic aid and granting supplies. Franco's African Army would not have been able to reach mainland Spain, in August 1936, if it had not been for the German help. The Nazi support was also responsible, in part, for the progress the rebel troops made through Spanish territory.

The Spanish insurgents and the Nazi reached a pact in which Spain became the testing ground for Germany's army technical innovations. A clear example is the bombing of Guernica by the German Condor Legion.

After the Nazi occupation of France in 1940, many of the Spanish Republicans, who had joined the Companies of Foreign Workers on French soil or had freely settled in the country, would be arrested and interned as war prisoners in camps, known as Frontstalags or Stalags, under German control.

However, since September 25, 1940, the Spanish no longer held the status of war prisoners. That same day, the Gestapo informed the Third Reich that the Spanish had become *Rotspanienkämpfer*, and, as such, were not entitled to the rights and privileges the 1929 Geneva Convention had granted war prisoners. Moreover, the Republican captives were no longer Spanish: they were stateless. They were in the hands of the Gestapo and the SS, and could be deported to any of the Nazi concentration camps. This policy was backed up by the approval of Serrano Suñer, Spanish Foreign Minister during the dictatorship, and the inaction from the Vichy government.

The Spanish authorities showed a complete lack of interest in the fates of those arrested by the German police. This was evinced by deplorable events such as the transport that left from Angoulême (Dpt. Charente, France) with 927 Spanish Republicans that would finally be deported: the Spanish government chose to ignore the petitions made by the German authorities.

Close to 9000 Spanish prisoners will be sent, given their stateless status, to concentration camps: Buchenwald, Dachau, Sachsenhausen, Ravensbrück, Flossenbürg..., but most of them would end up in Mauthausen, where close to 7000 Republican prisoners went through the Nazi horror, and where so many perished.

In the camps, they were the *Rotspanier*, the 'Red Spaniards', and were marked with a blue triangle (to refer to their stateless status) and the letter *S* for *spanier*.



# SITGETANS

## ALS CAMPS

## NAZIS





# DEPORTATION TO THE CAMPS

The testimonies of concentration camp survivors that speak of the harsh reality in the Nazi deportation camps are countless. Many authors, foreign, Spanish, Catalan... bear witness to the terrible experience of concentration camps. The Sitgetan José Egea compiled in his book stories that speak of the horror, the cruelty, and the constant presence of death. These testimonies speak of the most brutal episodes in the history of humankind.

At the end of the Spanish civil war, most of the Spanish refugees who had fled to France were detained in makeshift internment camps in the South of the country. There, they experienced misery and the abuse of the French authorities. Their day-to-day mainly consisted of looking for material to build or improve their "shacks"; writing to their relatives, and collecting food they were given from the outside of the camp. However, some would also build close friendships that would last through their lives. Many Sitgetans experienced the hardships of these camps. Jordi Robert i Ferret (aka *Tirano*) expressed in his poetry the suffering of those times.

France was not the only country where such suffering took place, the collaborationist French government set up internment camps outside their territory. In the North of Africa, the best known is Djelfa (Algeria). Agustín Roa Ventura was interned in Djelfa; and after being freed by the ally troops, he enlisted into the Royal Pioneer Corps, and fought in the British army till the end of the war.

Among the almost 9000 Spanish prisoners deported to the Nazi concentration and extermination camps, at least 11 had either been born in Sitges or made of it their home. Most of them –nine– were deported to Mauthausen, the camp with the most Spanish prisoners (more than 7000). Only one of the nine would survive that horror.

Two other Sitgetans were deported to Buchenwald, and with the war near its end would be transported to other camps. One of them survived.

The documental sources consulted express, if we know how to read between lines, what words cannot convey: physical and psychological pain, fear. We can sense, more than read, the suffering caused by the murder of fellow inmates, the extreme hunger, and the desperation: sleepless nights, beatings, slave-labor, long marches, hours standing in the snow waiting for the SS' orders, overcrowded barracks with prisoners sleeping head-to-toe, sick men and women too afraid to go to the infirmary lest they were given a lethal gasoline injection; people used in surreal experiments; the elderly and the sick, incapable of working, declared as "unfit" and taken to Gusen camp or Hartheim castle, to the gas chambers, to be exterminated and cremated...

On the other hand, they learned the meaning of solidarity and concern for others worse off; they strove to hide one another's weaknesses from the cruel gaze of their captors; they learned to share their food with those in need.

They gave away their lives, or part of them, as a sacrifice for the freedom of all people, for our freedom.

## THE COMPANIES OF FOREIGN WORKERS

Spanish Republicans who ended in the Nazi concentration camps came from one of two very different situations. Most of them had been arrested while part of one of the Companies of Foreign Workers, and were first imprisoned in the internment camps known as Stalags. A smaller group arrived at the camps after being detained as members of the Resistance; they, too, would be first taken to the Stalags.

The voluntary enlisting in the Companies of Foreign Workers was, for the majority of Republicans put in the French refugee camps, their only way out. Under the command of the French military, they were grouped in regiments of 250 men and put to work in the construction of defensive fortifications, in face of the looming German threat. With the start of the war, they became military targets for the Reich.

If arrested by the Wehrmacht, initially, as prisoners of war, they had certain privileges after capture. Most men, however, would end up being sent to Mauthausen, in Austria. The first Sitgetan to become an inmate in Mauthausen was José López Martínez, he was part of the first transport of Spanish Republicans to arrive at the camp in August 1940.

José Egea García, José Egea Pujante, Tomás Iglesias and Enric Miralles travelled on the same transport to Mauthausen, where they arrived on January 27, 1941.

## THE RESISTANCE

A smaller group of Spanish deportees ended up in concentration camps after their arrest in France as members of the Resistance. They were part of the guerrilla bands, the Maquis, composed by a group of coordinated volunteers who specialized in sabotage and violent action. Initially a loose group of individuals, they became increasingly organized and confronted the collaborationist and German troops.

The Gestapo conducted raids among the civilian population to capture members of the Resistance. Arrested with the war already underway, they were interned in different Stalags, and spent a shorter period of time in concentration camps.

Jaume Daví and Joan Abella were deported to camps as members of the Resistance. They arrived at Buchenwald in the same transport, on January 19, 1944.



# SEBASTIÀ ARNAN DOMINGO

Sitges 10/5/1895 - Gusen 30/6/1941

Born in Sitges to a family of sailors –as a young man he was part of the crew of the boat *Bot Salvavides*–, Sebastià, however, ended up making a career in the shoe industry. He would be head of the union for shoemakers, the *Sindicat Únic de Constructors de Calçat*. People knew him by the nickname of *dimoni vermell* (red devil). Sebastià was the eldest of eight siblings. As a worker and unionist, he was always interested in social and political matters.

He was an active member of the Workers and Peasants' Bloc (BOC, *Bloc Obrer i Camperol*) and was imprisoned after the events of 6 October 1934. Sebastià became an activist and local leader of the POUM (Workers' Party of Marxist Unification, in catalan *Partit Obrer d'Unificació Marxista*) after its formation in 1935.

In the early months of the war, he took part in actions against local conservative groups. During the war he was the publishing director of *Front*, òrgan del POUM a Sitges and, as a member of the CNT-FAI, he became head of the cooperative of shoemakers in 1938.

He married Rosario Pérez Martí and had two children, Teresa and Sebastià. They lived at number 25, Carreta Street. His daughter, Teresa, also a member of the POUM, was tried and imprisoned after the war.

At the end of the Civil War he went into exile in France, he worked in the fields in the south and later on joined one of the Companies of Foreign Workers, possibly number 9 or number 117.

The Nazi authorities arrested Sebastià in 1940, maybe in Dunkerque on June 4th or in Bray-Dunes on June 6th. He was taken to Stalag VIII-C Sagan (Poland) and later to XII-D in Trier (Germany), where he became inmate number 55629.

He was transferred from this prison camp on January 22, 1941, together with 744 other prisoners from the Republican side, and arrived at Mauthausen on January 25, 1941, becoming deportee number 4159. Soon after, on February 17, his state of health probably severely deteriorated, he was again moved, this time to Gusen, where he was assigned number 10579 and barrack 18.

Sebastià died June 30, 1941; he was the first Sitgetan to lose his life in those camps. He was also the oldest one.

KL MAUTHAUSEN 4159

KL GUSEN 10579



# MANUEL GARCIA CRESPO

**Sitges 1/4/1914 - Gusen 29/1/1942**

Born in Sitges, little is known about Manuel Garcia Crespo.

In Sitges he worked as a chauffer. In German documents, under profession we find listed mechanic and motorist.

When he was arrested he was part of one of the Companies of Foreign Workers. He was imprisoned in Stalag Wehkreis XVIII-C, in Salzburg, inmate number 317.

On September 9, 1941, he was transferred to Mauthausen with forty other prisoners.

He arrived to Mauthausen on September 11, 1941, and was assigned number 4923. In October 1942 he was moved to Gusen, where he lived in barrack 32 and was intern 13918. Manuel Garcia died in Gusen on November 29, 1942.

**KL MAUTHAUSEN 4923**

**KL GUSEN 13918**



# JOSÉ ANTONIO EGEA PUJANTE

Aljúcar (Múrcia) 27/1/1921 -  
Villamayor de Gállego (Saragossa) 18/10/2010

José Antonio Egea Pujante was born in Aljúcar, his parents' native village. He had been conceived in Sitges, where his father, José Egea García, and mother, Josefa Pujante, were living. Josefa, however, wished to give birth to her first-born by her mother's side, so José was born in Murcia. They would soon be back in Sitges.

José Antonio attended the town's public school, whose headmaster was Prudencio Santolaria. He then went on to work at the shoe factory Termes (which stood in today's park Can Bota).

On July 18, 1936 José was 16 years old and a member of Young CNT. Like so many other members of the anarcho-syndicalist confederation, he decided to enlist and fight fascism, but his father objected and he could not go on with his plans.

It was in 1938, when he was nearing his 18th birthday, that he was drafted by the Republican Army as part of the 'baby-bottle conscription' (*La lleva del biberó*), known as such because draftees who were as young as sixteen years old were sent to war. He was first sent to Arenys de Mar for his training and was later posted in Prat de Llobregat with military division 103.

When Franco's troops seized Barcelona, Egea recalls how he and other soldiers fled towards the Montseny, but they never reached their destination, they were arrested in Olot. José, however, managed to escape. In February he was crossing the French border at Le Boulou.

On 9th February he became an intern in the camp at Argèles. There he would find other Sitgetans, including his father. In Argèles the refugees would be treated ruthlessly by the Senegalese guards and would suffer the poor conditions of the makeshift camp.

Despite the French government's efforts to entice refugees to return to Spain, the Egeas (father and son), Carles Fransoy and Tomás Iglesias decided to enroll into the 6th Company of Foreign Workers, based in La Condamine (Haute Provence) and in charge of building roads bordering the gorges of the Parpaillon massif (Hautes-Alps). They started work on 24 April, 1939; a total of 250 spaniards made up the Company. With the arrival of winter, they decamped, afraid of becoming snowbound and settled in the town of Le Châtelar. In spring, they were posted in Noveant (Alsace-et-Lorraine), where, for two months, they helped the 40th Engineer Regiment in the construction of bridges.

From a letter that Tomás Iglesias sent his wife, dated February 27, 1940, in Gorze, we know that José was still with them: "Egea's son cannot leave, there are no expeditions..." The letter does not mention Egea's father, so the original might have broken up. With the retreat of the Belgian army, the men decided to move to Épinal, and later to Belfort.

On June 22, 1940, Egea was captured and imprisoned at Fronstalag 140 Belfort. Later, on January 22, 1941, he was transported to Stalag XI-B, near Fallingbostal (Lower Saxony), becoming internee number 87538. There, he would be reunited with his father.

On 25th January, father and son joined the transport that was to take them to Mauthausen. A total of 1479 Republican soldiers travelled together in the three-day-long journey. They arrived at the camp on the same day José was turning 20 (January 27, 1941). He was installed, as his father, in barrack 15; however, his father would soon be transferred to barrack 13.

In his book, Egea writes about the different jobs he had to carry out since his arrival at Mauthausen until 1943: first, he explains, he was forced to lay stones on the road; later, for two days, he was sent to the quarry, the infamous quarry of the 186 steps. His third task was the loading of trucks and, finally, he did roadwork.

In 1943, the SS chose a group of men to be sent to Kommando Steyr as building workers. They had to build test benches for aircraft engines. Egea recalls the help of Josep Borràs, a civilian, and friend, who interpreted for him. He also made the unfortunate acquaintance of two kapos, known among the prisoners as *Putxa* and *Popeye*. In April 1945 the Mauthausen prisoners were made to walk to Gusen to work on the quarry.

In the camp he also suffered corporal punishment, he was flogged 25 times after being caught stealing carrots. At one point, José weighed only 30 kg.

On May 5 Mauthausen was liberated. The survivors were transported on a train to Villa Don Quijote, in Toulouse. Egea explains how one day, while walking to the pool, he ran into the daughter of a prominent Sitgetan: Francisco González Gutierrez, (aka *Paco el Caliqueño*<sup>1</sup>). Francisco González had been a noted leader of the CNT and FAI, and president of the Committee of Antifascist Militias in Sitges. He had gone into exile in 1939. Egea moved in to live with the Sitgetan family. From Toulouse he was sent to Paris, where he would finally be granted a French passport.

In 1947 he settled back in Toulouse hired by "Entreprise du sud" as a building worker (job he would do for the rest of his life). Eventually, thanks to his mother's insistence, the mayor of Sitges, Felip Font, issued a safe conduct for Egea and, in the spring of 1948, he was able to return back home. José Antonio married Encarnació Martínez on January 27, 1949, on his birthday. The couple had two children: José and Elisabet Egea Martínez.

Josep Egea Pujante lived in Sitges until 2003, when he moved to Villamayor de Gállego (Zaragoza), he died there, aged 89, on October 18, 2010.

Egea was cofounder of the organization Amical de Mauthausen i altres camps, he participated in numerous debates and conferences to make the horror of the Nazi camps known. He was a man committed to the oath he made with fellow ex-deportees: "Never again."

KL MAUTHAUSEN 4159

KL GUSEN 10579



# JOSÉ LÓPEZ MARTÍNEZ

Sitges 1/2/1913 - Gusen 11/9/1941

José López was born in Sitges in 1913, the son of Victoriano López Herraiz and Avelina Martínez. He lived with his parents in the area of Sant Sebastià beach. His death certificate, however, states his address as number 117, Marina street in Barcelona.

He was a trained engineer. In the document *Nomenserzeichnis der Sapien-emigranten, Mauthausen*, dated 6-9 August, 1940, he was listed as a student; and in his *Tod fallsaufnahme* (death certificate), as an engineer.

In his death certificate it states that José was single (*ob ledig*).

How he fled Spain is unknown, so is which exact Company of Foreign Workers he joined, it might have been number 15, 101 or 103. Looking through documents where he is mentioned, it appears as if some members of these three companies were captured between May 20-25 in Amiens, and the remaining men sometime in early June in the region of Nord-Pas de Calais.

The prisoners were taken to Stalags: XII-A Hohenfels-Oberplaz (northeastern Nuremberg) and VII-A Moosburg (Upper Bavaria). López became prisoner number 40496.

On 5 August of the same year, he was part of the transport of 398 republican prisoners to Mauthausen. The following day they had reached their destination, the first group of Spanish Republicans to be interned in the camp. He became number 3164, his identity now completely lost.

From the account given by fellow deportee Antoni Sánchez, native from Vilanova i la Geltrú, we know that López Martínez befriended other prisoners from Sitges' neighboring town.

On January 24, 1941, López was transferred to Gusen, where he died 11 September, deportee number 9382.

KL MAUTHAUSEN 3164

KL GUSEN 9382



# JAIIME SÁNCHEZ GONZÁLEZ

**Sitges 22/12/1907 - Mauthausen 8/5/1942**

Born in Sitges, little is known about Jaime Sánchez González. He was a blacksmith, and seems to never have married. During the war he joined the Assault Guard force, and this was possibly the reason behind his decision to go into exile.

Although there is no clear evidence of his being part of a Company of Foreign Workers, everything seems to point in that direction. He was arrested and imprisoned in Stalag VII-A in Moosburg, near Munich, number 14851.

On August 31, 1941, he arrived to Mauthausen, where he was assigned number 5013.

In October 1941 he was treated in the camp's infirmary.

He died in Mauthausen, May 8, 1942.

**KL MAUTHAUSEN 5013**



# JAUME DAVÍ LUNA

**Barcelona 11/5/1919 - Lloc i data desconeguts**

Jaume was the son of Jaume Daví Mañosa and his first wife, Flora Luna Pelliser, he had been born in Barcelona but the family moved to Sitges when he was a child.

Jaume was one of the young Sitgetans drafted as part of the 1940 'baby-bottle conscription' (*La lleva del biberó*). The draftees were recruited at the end of April 1938 and Jaume joined the Republican troops on May 18, 1938.

Shortly after his arrival at the front, his unit, threatened by the advance of the Francoist troops, scattered, and he ended up crossing the border into France. There, Jaume would be put into one of the internment camps in the south of the country. However, his uncle, Josep Daví, a resident in France, claimed him, and Jaume was able to leave the camp. He moved in with his uncle.

With the start of the war with Germany, the French army mobilized the uncle, and Jaume joined the Resistance, probably through the Maquis. During this period he obtained the French nationality, thus becoming Jacques Daví.

We find Jaume's name linked to the escape network Sabot and to the Sainte-Jeanne network, made up mostly by Catalans, which operated near the small village of Vallmanya (Conflent), where they would hide Belgian evaders and assist them in crossing the border into Spain.

On November 11, 1943, Jaume was arrested during an operation against the network. He was taken to Paris in early 1944, and later interned at the Stalag in Compiègne. On January 17, 1944, he was sent to Buchenwald camp, in a transport with 250 Spanish Republicans, among them Sitgetan Joan Abella. Daví and Abella were probably acquainted with each other: they both came from Sitges and had similar ages; moreover, Daví's father had boarded in the Abella's house in Sitges.

He arrived at Buchenwald on January 19, 1944, and became prisoner number 41111 and assigned to barrack 52. On March 13, 1944, he was transferred to Dora-Mittelbau, a subcamp of Buchenwald, where, in the underground Mittelwerk factory, aircraft engines were manufactured, as well as the V-2 and V-1 rockets.

According to existing sources, on his arrival at Buchenwald, Daví was carrying a suitcase containing clothes (pants, socks...), books and a watch with a leather strap.

The reason for his imprisonment was also recorded: *polit* (politics), and his job: *arbeiter* (builder).

On December 29, 1944, he was taken to the camp's infirmary to get a knee injury treated. A report includes a description of the injury and the treatment prescribed.

Dora-Mittelbau was liberated by the U.S. troops on April 11, 1945. Just a few days earlier, the Nazi had ordered the evacuation of the camp and most prisoners left the camp on a death march to the north. Jaume Daví was probably amongst them. When American forces arrived at Dora-Mittelbau only a few prisoners were still in the camp: the sick and the living corpses.

The number of prisoners that died during the death marches leads us to believe that Jaume Daví died in those last days before the liberation.

In his memories, his father, Jaume Daví Mañosa, considers the possibility that his son might have been sent to Ravensbrück camp, and there liberated by the Soviet troops.<sup>1</sup> In any case, Jaume Daví vanished, probably during a death march, and was never heard of again.

A file at the *Service Historique de la Défense* (GR16P 160180) carries his name.

<sup>1</sup> *La destrucció de l'Art Sacre Sitgetà. Memòries de Jaume Daví i Mañosa*. Blai Fontanals. Fragments d'Història. Ajuntament de Sitges. 2018

**KL BUCHENWALD 41111**

**KL MITTELBAU-DORA 41111**



# MANUEL CALVENTÓS SÁNCHEZ

**Garraf (Sitges) 25/12/1909 - Gusen 29/12/1942**

Manuel Calventós was born in Garraf, a village under the administrative jurisdiction of Sitges. In Garraf he was an operator in one of the quarries.

He had married Maria Elvira Lafarga in 1935, at the courthouse in Sant Adrià del Besós, where the bride's family probably lived. The father, Francisco, was member of the Ateneu Federal in Sant Adrià del Besós.

The reasons behind his exile are unknown, so are the details of his life that lead up to the moment of his imprisonment in Stalag XVII-B (Krems-Gneixendorf, Lower Austria) as inmate number 29694. On December 19, 1941, he was transferred to Mauthausen. The transport, which departed from Vienna, carried 341 prisoners from the Republican faction. In Mauthausen Manuel was assigned number 5001. We know that in August 1942 he was admitted in the infirmary due to an illness. This could be the reason he was sent to the hell of Gusen, where he died on 29th December as prisoner number 4174.

Rafael Mateos writes that, *from late 1939 to early 1941, many young men that had been mobilized or made prisoners returned home. They all returned except for a quarry operator who, quite possibly because of his political views, was sent to a Nazi concentration camp and never heard of again.*<sup>1</sup> In almost all certainty, this "non-returned" quarry operator was Manuel Calventós.

<sup>1</sup> *Història de Garraf.* Rafael Mateos Ayza. Fragments d'història. Ajuntament de Sitges. 2003 pg. 146

**KL MAUTHAUSEN 5001**

**KL GUSEN 4174**



# JOSÉ EGEA GARCÍA

Aljúcer (Múrcia) 4/2/1897 -  
Castell de Hartheim (Àustria) 27/9/1941

José Egea García and his girlfriend Josefa Pujante Sánchez moved to Sitges around 1920, they were both from Aljúcer. They married in Sitges. José was no stranger to the town, for he and his father had worked in the nearby Garraf quarry.

The couple had seven children. The eldest, José Egea Pujante, was also sent to Mauthausen.

At first they lived in a little hut in the part of town called Poble Sec, later they moved to "cases d'en Silvestre" (on the road to Barcelona). In the early days of the war they moved to Sant Francesc street, back then called Francesc Ferrer i Guàrdia, to one of the houses confiscated by the Republican authorities.

José Egea worked at the factory of can Fradera, in Vallcarca; however, during the Republic he quit the factory to work in the Sitges' Town Hall. He was a member of CNT and at the onset of the conflict was one of the union representatives for the can Fradera factory. A month after the constitution of the municipal council (October 28, 1936), José Egea was named CNT council member (November 23, 1936), in place of Jacint Sastre Descarrega. He was part of the Taxation and Finance Commission.

With the fall of Sitges, in January 1939, the family moved to Badalona. Fearing for their safety, however, most of the family members returned to Sitges and went back to living in "les cases d'en Silvestre". The father and the eldest son did not return to the town, the latter was fighting at the front.

José Egea García crossed the border through La Jonquera. On February 9, 1939, together with other Sitgetans (José Torres, Carles Fransoy and Tomàs Iglesias), he reached Northern Catalunya. They were admitted into the refugee camp of Argèles, where José would be reunited with his son.

On April 24, 1939, father and son left Argèles and became part of the 6th Company of Foreign Workers, based in La Condamine (Alpes-de-Haute-Provence), in charge of the reconditioning of roads and the building of fortifications, ammunition dumps, tunnels and casemates. With the arrival of winter, they left La Condamine for the small village of Noveant, in the region of Alsace-Lorraine, to work on the Maginot line.

On June 22, 1940, the Wehrmacht captured José in Belfort (Burgundy) and he was interned at the prisoner-of-war camp in the front (140 Belfort). He would later be transferred to Stalag XI-B in Fallingbostel (Lower Saxony), as detainee number 87538. In Fallingbostel father and son were again reunited.

On January 25, 1941, José Egea García and 1472 other republican prisoners, amongst them his son, left the prison camp. Their transport arrived at Mauthausen on January 27. The writer Joaquim Amat-Piniella was one of these prisoners; he survived and went on to fund the NGO *Amical de Mauthausen i altres camps* and authored the book *KL Reich*.

At Mauthausen José Egea García was marked by a new number, 6315. Father and son were assigned to the same barrack, number 15. However, after the initial quarantine period, Egea García asked to be transferred to a different barrack; as the son explains, neither of them could stand to watch the other being beaten up and do nothing. José was assigned to number 13, the worst barrack in the camp.

On April 8, 1941, José Egea Garcia was transferred to Gusen and given number 11863. From Gusen he would be sent to Hartheim Castle, where the killing program Action T4 took place, that is, where the sick were euthanized.

José Egea Garcia was gassed to death on September 27, 1941.

His son, still in Mauthausen, would not get news of his father's fate until Christmas 1942.

**KL MAUTHAUSEN 6315**

**KL GUSEN 11863**



# TOMÁS IGLESIAS IGLESIAS

Casas del Monte (Cáceres) 9/6/1903 - Gusen 8/1/1942

Tomás Iglesias was born in Casas del Monte (Cáceres) and moved to Sitges in 1936. He first lived at number 56, Francesc Ferrer i Guàrdia street (today's Sant Francesc street), and would later move to Sant Gaudenci street. He was a laborer at the concrete factory in Vallcarca, Ciments Fradera. A member of the CNT, with the outbreak of the war he joined the FAI (Iberian Anarchists Federation).

In the early war days, he enlisted in the expedition commanded by captain Albert Bayo to reclaim the Balearic Islands for the Republic. The expedition ended in failure and Iglesias returned to Sitges. Soon after, he joined the militia in the Ortiz column (CNT-FAI) and was based in Caspe.

On February 18, 1937, he joined Ana Carrión in a common-law marriage. The Defense Committee in Sitges sanctioned the union. The couple had a daughter whom they named Llibertat (Freedom). After the civil war, Llibertat went by her birth name only in close circles: the dictatorship and the Church did not recognize *Llibertat* as a proper name. Her mother, Ana, was made to choose a different name for her daughter, who officially became Encarnación.

Soon before the end of the war, Tomás Iglesias returned to Sitges and tried to flee the country with his family, but the obstacles were too great and mother, mother-in-law and daughter had to stay in Sitges while he left for French territory.

He crossed into France in February 1939, together with some fellow Sitgetan men, and was confined at the camp in Argèles. His trajectory seems to have been quite similar to the Egea's. He joined the 11th Company of Foreign Workers, based in La Condamine. From there, he sent his first letter to Anita, dated July 3, 1939. He stayed in La Condamine until winter. In a letter dated 17th November, he writes that they had been snowbound for nineteen days. Between November and February of the following year he was transferred to Gorze (Moselle department), where he wrote to Anita again. The letter, dated February 27, 1940, is quite revealing. Anita seems to have asked about Egea in her previous letter, and Iglesias replies that he is still with him since there are "no expeditions to Spain". We can conclude, therefore, that out of the group of Sitgetans that left Argèles, at least Egea Pujante and Iglesias Iglesias remained together.

The last news his family get from him are sent from Gorze, on April 22, 1940.

He was probably captured at some point between April and May, and imprisoned in Frontstalag 140 Belfort (Borgogne). From there, he was transferred to Stalag XI-B in Fallingbomel (Lower Saxony) and assigned number 86877.

On January 25, 1941, he travelled on the transport to Mauthausen, together with 1472 other Republican prisoners, among them the Egeas, father and son, and the also Sitgetan Enric Miralles.

In Mauthausen, where they arrived on January 27, Iglesias was given prisoner number 5991.

On June 30 of the same year he was sent to Gusen, where he died January 8, 1942.

During his time in the Company of Foreign Workers, Iglesias kept with him some chocolate bars he had managed to gather, he was saving them for his daughter Llibertat.

KL MAUTHAUSEN 5991



# ENRIQUE MIRALLES RODÉS

**Barcelona 8/10/1898 - Gusen 28/1/1942**

Born in Barcelona, Enrique Miralles was a shoemaker and member of the Sitgetan CNT. During the civil war he enrolled voluntarily in the militia and served on the Aragon front.

He returned to Sitges and held different municipal posts as a representative for CNT. In 1937 he was chairman of the Local Committee and secretary at the municipal court.

He lived at number 27, Passeig Vilanova, with his sister, Regina Miralles Rodés, and his parents.

After the war, he left for France and, with the onset of World War II, joined the Company of Foreign Workers number 4.

He was captured in June 1940; probably in Belfort, and interned in Frontstalag 140 Belfort, from there he would be transferred to Stalag XI-B in Fallingbostel, and assigned prisoner number 87805.

On January 25, 1941 he was transferred to Mauthausen, together with 1472 other Republican prisoners, among them the Egeas, father and son, and Tomás Iglesias. The transport reached Mauthausen on January 27, 1941; Miralles became detainee number 6643.

The last camp he set foot on was Gusen, where he was sent on April 21, 1941, and where he died January 28, 1942, he was number 12457.

Both Enric Miralles and, the also Sitgetan, Manuel Garcia Crespo died in Gusen, within hours of each other.

**KL MAUTHAUSEN 6643**

**KL GUSEN 12457**



# JOAN ABELLA BEL

**Barcelona 8/7/1909 - Ramonville (França) 25/6/1976**

Joan was born in Barcelona, but his family lived in Sitges. Joan's father, Ambrós Abella, was the manager of the local electric company.

He studied in Sant Josep School. With a keen interest in technical matters, he started to work as a maintenance worker in the town's shoe factory, Calçats Benazet. He also worked as a driver transporting fish from the North of Spain.

A follower of the town's leftist party, his role during the war is unclear; we know he goes to the front and Antoni García Martínez names him political coordinator during the conflict.<sup>1</sup>

Near the end of the war he crossed the border into France and was interned in one of the refugee camps in the south of the country; his brother in law, Albert Bartés, living in Cuba, was able to intervene and Joan was allowed out of the refugee camp.

He started a new life in Toulouse, where he met his future wife Georgette-Alice Berthoul. In 1941 he obtained the French nationality, his name changing to Jean Abella. In Toulouse he was in touch with other Sitgetans that had gone into exile, like Joan Santaló i Camps (the last Republican mayor of Sitges) and his family, and Emili Martín Munté.

Jaume Montserrat Ibáñez (Joan Santaló's son-in-law) recalls how Santaló's house was a meeting point, where help and support to the Resistance was never denied. Abella was a regular at the meetings.

Jean and Georgette were active members of the Resistance during the Nazi Occupation of France. The small shop they run in Toulouse was a center of information for the French movement.

On July 2, 1943, Jean was arrested in the framework of Operation Meerschaum (sea foam), which targeted members of the Resistance. After being taken to Paris, he was interned at the Compiègne camp, in the north of France.

On 17 January, 1944, he joined 252 Spanish prisoners on the transport to Buchenwald; another Sitgetan, Jaume Daví, amongst them as well. They arrived at the camp two days later, Jean would become prisoner number 40749.

In Buchenwald life was hard, Jean suffered repeated beatings that resulted in kidney damage. He managed to survive because he was put to work at the camp's kitchen, where he "spat" in the Kapos' Sandwiches whenever he had the chance.

From his privileged position in the kitchen, Jean helped other prisoners. For years after the war, Jean's family would receive visits from former deportees, passing through Sitges, who told them about his kindness and thanked them for it.

Jean was also part of Kommando Gustloff Werke II. The Kommando worked at the Gustloff Werke armament factory, which stood right next to Buchenwald.

In April 1945, with the war almost over, he was transferred to Flossenbürg in Leitmeritz (Czech Republic), a subcamp specialized in the fabrication of engines and where his mechanical skills were probably needed.

He seems to have escaped from the camp, or maybe he never reached it—the family recalls a leap from a moving train—; in any case, Abella was freed in Vetrusici (near Prague), sixty kilometers away from the camp, on April 29, 1945.

Joan Abella received multiple decorations in recognition for his resistance work and as a survivor of the Nazi camps. Although whom he helped, and exactly how, remains in the most part a mystery, his role in the internment camp was no doubt significant.

And even after the war, his generosity of spirit never faltered: he kept offering help to those who needed it. Such is the case of fellow Sitgetan Rossend Ferret (aka *Pauleta*), whom he employed and put up in his house in Toulouse.

Around 1954, Lluís Curtiada recalls, a group of Sitgetans travelled to Villeneuve-de-la-Raho, a small village in Rousillon, where they met Joan Abella and Joan Santaló. He had a relationship by correspondence with the Sitges town mayor, Felip Font, who informed him of the situation in his hometown.

After Franco's death, Joan visited Sitges frequently; he used to spend the holidays in his house in Marquès de Montroig street. Joan felt a great love for Sitges and its people.

The French nation honored Jean Abella as a war hero; his burial, with military honors and the attendance of high-ranking authorities, was held in Ramonville, near Toulouse. In the archives of the *Service Historique de la Défense*, two files contain his information: as a member of the French armed forces (AC21P 695297), and as a deportee (GR16P 1459).

Despite all the honors, the horror Jean lived through during his internment in the concentration camps made him lose his faith in humanity. Very reserved in these matters, Joan chose not to have children. He claimed he kept his faith in God, but not in humanity.

**KL BUCHENWALD 40749**  
**KL FLOSSENBÜRG 40749**



# SITGETAN WORKERS IN THE THIRD REICH

In August 1941, Madrid and Berlin reached an agreement according to which a large number of Spanish workers were to be dispatched voluntarily to Germany in return for the help Hitler had rendered to Franco during the conflict.

These workers joined the workforce of Spaniards that were already working for the German regime; some of them refugees in French territory who had been forced into labor in France or Germany; others, arrested in occupied France, who had agreed to work for the Nazi in order to escape the concentration camps.

The contribution of Spanish workers supplied to the Reich's workforce, either voluntarily or not, is one of the least known aspects of the relationship between Franco's Spain and Nazi Germany.

It is estimated that the numbers of Spaniards that were forced to work on the construction of defensive fortifications or dispatched to German factories to cover for the shortage of local labor reached five-figure digits.

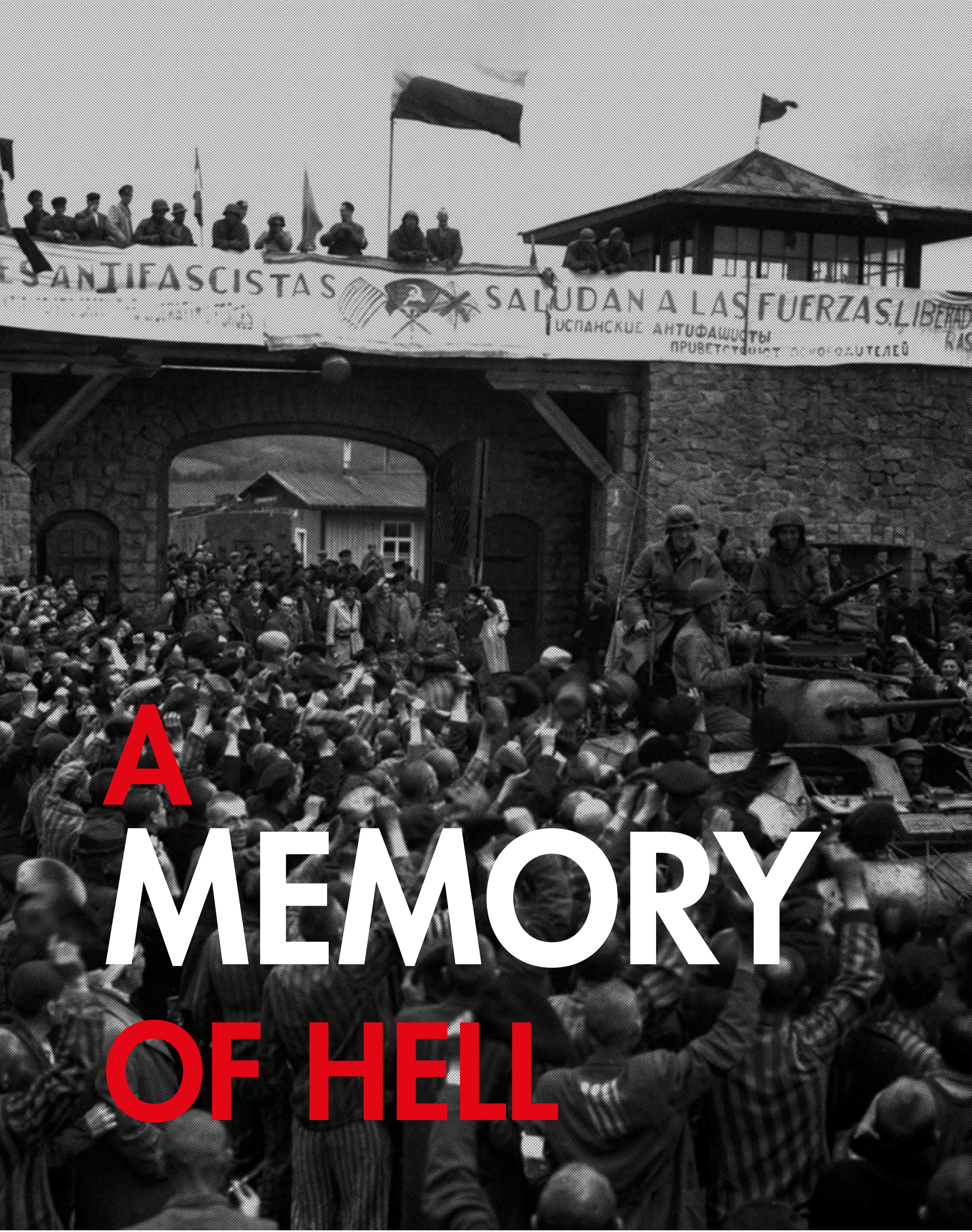
More often than not, the prisons or the Stalags supplied the forced laborers. Such is the case of Sitgetan Ramón Silla Iborra (Sitges, 1897) (aka *Cul d'Angònies*)<sup>1</sup> and his wife, Aurora Guillot Gustems (Sitges, 1903). Since 1942 the couple worked at Turbinenfabrik Brucker, Kani & Co. in Dresden. She would continue to do so until 1944; he, until 1945. Ramon Silla had played an important role in local politics and in the riots that took place in Sitges in the summer of 1936. Captured, they had probably been locked in camps or prisons and their only way out had been to sign a work contract in Germany. This meant they had to work in armament factories where they were part of the so-called "free workers", who in reality were far from being so.

The war over, they settled in France, where they set up a shoe workshop in Brignoles (Provence), together with Aurora's sister and brother-in-law, Teresa Guillot and Manuel Grossi.

A very different case is that of Enrique Salafranca Rabassa (Sitges, 1923). After the Civil War, Spain was mired in misery and he, like so many others, volunteered to work in Germany. Franco's government created the Interministerial Commission for the Dispatch of Workers to Germany program (*Comisión Interministerial Para el Envío de Trabajadores a Alemania*, CIPETA); in November 1941 Enrique Salafranca became part of it. Through this program, Spain supplied labor force to Germany in return for the help received during the Civil War.

Different documents certify that Salafranca worked in at least three places: Gera Technischen Werkstätten (2-12-41/25-8-42), Arado aircraft manufacturer (23-3-43/30-6-43), and Siemens (5-7-43/24-8-43).





**A**  
**MEMORY**  
**OF HELL**



# END OF WORLD WAR II AND LIBERA- TION

Stalingrad was the key. The city on the banks of the Volga, named after the communist dictator, became a crucial battlefield between August 1942 and February 1943. Building after building, street after street, in scorching temperatures, the Red Army managed to defeat the German troops, thus marking the turning point of the war.

On the Eastern front the battle was devastating. Stalin would have to wait for the allies to disembark in Normandy to relieve pressure in the East. On 6th June, 1944, American, English and Canadian troops landed on the French coast, in eighty days they had reached Paris, in six months they had chased the German troops out of France and Belgium. The *führer* would end up killing himself in his bunker on April 30, 1945, and, between 8 and 9 May his generals signed the unconditional surrender of Germany. In Europe the war was over, in the Pacific it was not. In the morning of August 6 and 9 the United States detonated two nuclear weapons over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, respectively, causing the largest explosion in history. Japan surrendered on August 14.

It is estimated that, between 1939 and 1945, a total of 36 and a half million people died in Europe from war-related causes (the equivalent to the French population at the start of the conflict). More significant, however, is the fact that, in comparison to World War I, more than half the victims were civilians. The continent was devastated and the survivors had ahead of them a long period of hunger, disease and large migrations, especially in the East.

With the war near its close, as the ally troops advanced on Berlin, they were confronted with the reality of the Nazi extermination camps. Although the camps were known to exist, the full horror that they encountered surpassed, by far, anything they could have imagined. In July 1944, the soviet troops arrived at Majdanek concentration camp, near Lublin (Poland), and throughout the summer they would find Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka. The German had tried to hide any evidence of their mass killings, but reality spoke for itself. On January 27, 1945, the Soviets liberated the largest camp of all: Auschwitz. The rest of camps followed: the British troops liberated Bergen-Belsen and Neuengame; and the US forces liberated Buchenwald, Dora-Mittelbau, Flossenbürg, Dachau... and Mauthausen on May 5th, the last camp to be freed. Two or three days earlier, the SS had abandoned the camp and left it under the control of the Vienna police. Just before the arrival of the American forces, the Spanish Republicans had climbed the towers and hung a welcoming banner, done by the painter Francesc Teix, that read: "Los españoles antifascistas saludan a la fuerzas liberadoras" ("The Antifascist Spaniards Salute the Liberating Forces").



# RETURN TO NOWHERE

The camps had been liberated, and corpses and disease surrounded those who had managed to survive. Many would discover they had no home to return to, especially the Jews, stripped of all their material possessions and their jobs, and at odds in a society that no longer was theirs. Spanish Republicans did not have it easy either. They could not go back to their country. Spain was under Francisco Franco's iron fist. Jorge Semprún, recalling the liberation of Buchenwald, wrote: «I have thought of everything that can be said of these words: return, repatriation. The latter, obviously, was void of any meaning to me. Firstly, I hadn't returned to my homeland, I had returned to France. Moreover, all things considered, it was obvious I would never return to my homeland. There was no homeland for me. And there would never be. Or there would be many, which, in any case, amounted much to the same.»<sup>1</sup>

Once freed, many of the Spanish deportees returned to France, where, finally, they managed to obtain the status of political refugees. In their minds, however, their return to Spain was but a matter of time. They thought the allies would put an end to Franco's dictatorship, that Fascism would be wiped out of Europe. They were wrong. The allies decided not to intervene; and, though Spain was isolated for some years, the dictatorship emerged victorious in the international context dominated by the Cold War. In February 1948 France reopened its border with Spain. The isolation years were nearing its end. In 1950 the US started providing Spain with credits, while the UN revoked the resolution that had condemned the regime four years earlier.

By the end of the 40s decade, close to a hundred thousand Spanish refugees were living in France. Realizing the dictatorship was far from over, many decided to settle in the French country, while others chose to return, in small groups, to Spain. Those who decided to stay in France (the immense majority) developed an extensive social network, mainly in the south of the hexagon, with more than 160 highly politicized and diverse political and cultural organizations, with their own bulletins and newspapers. On the other hand, those who chose to return found themselves in a country steeped in misery, where the government issued ration coupons. They were reunited with relatives that had not gone into exile, men and women who were maybe ignorant of the fate of their loved ones, while struggling to survive in adversity. Spain was a huge prison where, in the aftermath of the Civil War, people were persecuted and executed; a lifetime under the watchful gaze of the dictatorship, having to show up at the Guardia Civil's garrison periodically, carrying the weight of social stigma.



# THE MEMORY OF THE CAMPS

The year 1962 held an enormous significance for deported Republicans for two reasons. Firstly, thanks to the efforts of Mauthausen's survivors –many living in France and members of the National Federation of Deported and Imprisoned Resistance Fighters and Patriots (*Fédération nationale des déportés et internés résistants et patriotes*, FNDIRP)—a monument in memory of the deportees was erected in the camp. Secondly, the association l'Amical de Mauthausen was founded in Spain.

That year, the general secretary of the French Amical, Émile Valley, travelled to Barcelona to deliver the donation of 3000 powder milk cans to the civil government. The donations, made by former French and Spanish deportees, sought to alleviate the catastrophic effects of the floods in the Vallès area. During his stay in Barcelona, Valley, and former deportee Joan Pagès, organized a dinner party to bring together survivors of the Nazi concentration camps and propose the creation of Amical de Mauthausen. Although the association would not be legalized until 1978, the 1962 gathering marked the beginning of the first nationwide association that united all the deportees of the Nazi concentration camps.

Among the association's duties was to keep memory alive. For this, on marked days, such as April 14th (proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic) or May 5th (liberation of Mauthausen) special gatherings were organized. One of them, on May 5, 1968, was held in Sitges, at the Hotel Arcadia; on that occasion each of the 65 attendants (and members of Amical) received an inverted blue triangle, on it, a white "S" and, at the top, in red letters on a white background, "Mauthausen".

Through the years, the association has not only striven to keep the memory of so many deportees alive, it has also been in charge of the administration of the German restitution payments and has actively campaigned against right-wing racist movements, against war, and in favor of Human Rights. The publishing of books such as *K.L. Reich* (1963), by Joaquim Amat-Piniella, and, in special, the book by journalist Montserrat Roig, *Els catalans als camps nazis* (1977), made the realities of Republican deportees better known to society. Yearly visits to the camp in Austria –some including the participation of the families of Sitgetan deportees—, served to honor all the fellow men and women that perished in the Holocaust; from 1983, the association promoted the erection of monuments through Spanish territory in memory of the victims. They also undertook the task of teaching the new generations about their past through talks and exhibitions in schools and high schools.

In the 21st century, with the importance of historical memory more present than ever, new associations (such as Triangle Blau or Amical Ravensbrück) have joined the cause. On the other hand, the public administration, urged by different associations' demands, has tried and is trying to recognize their task and give voice to their message –with more or less fortune— through memory policies.



# NEVER AGAIN

## JOSÉ EGEA PUJANTE, A MAN COMMITTED TO AN OATH

MAIG DE 1945, Gusen;  
"It's all over" [US Army]]

The youngest of the group of Sitgetans that had been sent to Mauthausen on January 27, 1941, the very same day he was turning twenty, finally heard these words *It's all over*. The horror was over, the war was over. Mere shadows of men and women were liberated by the ally troops between January and May from the Nazi concentration camps.

José Egea was no longer just number 5894, he went back to being a person with a name and surname. El "Chiquillo" (the Kid), as he was known among his fellow prisoners, walked away from the camp leaving behind the stones of 186 steps "soaking in blood". He had survived, but so many others had not, and he would never be able to forget that hell.

In 1947 he settled in Toulouse and made a living as a construction worker, occupation he had been forced to take up in 1943: in Steyr, where test benches for aircraft engines were constructed, a kapo had forced on him this new profession, despite Egea's insistence that he was a shoemaker.

At home in Sitges he was missed, and he also wished to return. He was finally able to do so after obtaining the necessary guarantees from the mayor Felip Font. José was returning to Franco's Spain, to Sitges, to his home. José Antonio married on January 27, 1949, a key date in his life and not chosen at random, to Encarnació Martínez. He continued to work as a construction worker.

Not much is known of his life after the camp, but it is certain that some memories would be with him forever: "the red snow" of the Gusen camp; the camaraderie in barrack 10, where he lived with Romani prisoners; the beatings by "Popeye" and "el Puta"; the weight of the stones in the quarry; the end of his father's life, cut short forever within the walls of Hartheim castle... As soon as they were able to do so, the deportees, true to their oath: "Never again", undertook the task to make the atrocities committed known to all.

With the foundation of Amical, in 1962, José Egea, Joan Pagès, Edmon Gimeno and other survivors spoke up; Franco's dictatorship, however, denied that the camps ever existed, denied the reality they had suffered. Those were years of invisible commitment, of secrecy, and many silences; but also years of unrelenting persistence. The many deportees behind the initiative, headed by Joan Pagès, proved indefatigable in their efforts to make their reality, the reality of concentration camps, known. They never ceased to bear witness to the years spent in the camps.

Egea worked elbow to elbow to keep their motto "Never again" alive, to make the horror known, in remembrance of all those men and women who suffered it.

In his commitment to "Never again", Egea came to be president of Amical and representative of the organization in Aragon. Wherever he was asked to talk about the horror, he went; he visited towns and cities, and he wrote about his experience in *K.L. Mauthausen 5894* and in six pieces published in the newspaper *L'Eco*, between 17 May and 19 July, 1986. Egea visited high schools, schools and cultural centers; his words firm, but not devoid of pain and sentiment, he talked about life in Mauthausen, SS cruelty, the exploitation and degradation they suffered, the hunger, and death, the death of so many fellow prisoners, his bunk neighbor, the weak in the gas chambers, the elderly, the children. The horrible sight of the chimney, its black smoke forever rising into the sky. The smoke of so many souls that had been unable to withstand so much cruelty.

Thanks to people like him, thanks to their work, thanks to their commitment to not forgetting, thanks to their efforts to speak up about some of the most inhuman episodes in the 20th century, the generations of today, the descendants of Francoism and those of democracy can shout: WE DON'T FORGET, WE DON'T WANT TO FORGET!

And, in their words: forgive, but not forget!

