

Pour la renaissance des villages abandonnés:
Quaker Humanitarian Aid in a France at War

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Abstract

Pour la renaissance des villages abandonnés was an ambitious project organised by the Quakers in late 1940—at the height of the Second World War in France—and led by an exiled Catalan, Josep Maria Trias Peitx. The aim of the project was to repopulate abandoned or semi-abandoned villages in southern France with displaced persons mainly from the area of Alsace and Lorraine in the north-east of the country, but also with some exiled Spanish families. A detailed analysis of the plan, which can be considered a paradigm of the Quakers' highly valued self-sufficiency projects, also poses some interesting questions: what obstacles did French authorities (and also the local inhabitants) place in the way of the Quakers and their associates, and how did the Quakers deal with them? What conflicts did the humanitarian drama trigger within the Quaker movement itself?

Keywords

Second World War, war relief work, humanitarian aid, Spanish refugees, displaced people, Alsace and Lorraine, France, Josep Maria Trias Peitx

Introduction

It is 81 years since the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, and the Quakers' humanitarian work in Spain during the conflict has been assessed in several studies published in recent decades.¹ Rather surprisingly, Quaker humanitarian

1 See Mendlesohn, F., *Quaker Relief Work in the Spanish Civil War*, Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002; Petrus, G., *La ayuda humanitaria en la guerra civil española: 1936–1939*, Granada: Comares, 2015; and the recent Spanish edition of Howard Kershner's memoirs: Kershner, H. E., *La labor asistencial de los cuáqueros durante la Guerra Civil española y la posguerra: España y Francia 1936–1941*, Madrid: Siddharta Mehta Ediciones, 2011.

work from January 1939 onwards has not aroused the same interest, although certain groups (e.g., women and children) have attracted the attention of some researchers.² In February 2017 Kerrie Holloway presented her PhD thesis, entitled ‘Britain’s Political Humanitarians: The National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief and the Spanish Refugees of 1939’, at Queen Mary University of London. Holloway’s thesis dedicated a very interesting chapter to the humanitarian aid provided to the Republican exiles during the ‘Retirada’ and the first months of 1939 in the refugee camps in the south of France.³ In this chapter she mentioned the Comité National Catholique de Secours aux Réfugiés d’Espagne,⁴ a humanitarian agency created in February 1939 to help refugees, and headed by Josep Maria Trias Peitx.⁵ My initial interest in the Quakers originated precisely in their involvement with the Comité, because both organisations shared the same goal: to help Spanish refugees in France between 1939 and 1940. This first contact gave rise to my subsequent interest in Quaker humanitarian aid during the Second World War and, specifically, in the project that will be analysed in this article: *Pour la renaissance des villages abandonnés*. But we cannot understand the complexity of Quaker humanitarian aid between 1939 and 1945 if we do not look back to humanitarian aid at the beginning of the twentieth century⁶ and, specifically, during the Spanish Civil War. This article reveals some difficulties that Quakers

2 It has been difficult to establish the Spanish exile as an object of research—that is, something worthy of analysis in itself rather than as a mere appendix of the Spanish Civil War. This situation has had serious consequences for the study of humanitarian aid to the exiles. In addition, the outbreak of the Second World War, the magnitude of the Holocaust and the displacement of millions of people fleeing Nazi terror have reduced the impact of the drama of the Spanish refugees and have led historians to focus their attention elsewhere, at least until very recently. As the historian Geneviève Dreyfus-Armand pointed out, new ways of approaching the Spanish exile are currently emerging, based on its reassessment in the European and world context. This research is an example of this.

3 This chapter, entitled ‘The Flight to France and Concentration Camps: the NJC and the Spanish refugees’, won the 2016 George Watt Prize (Graduates). <http://www.albavolunteer.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/HollowayKerrie-Watt.pdf> [accessed 24/11/17].

4 Caballer, G. and Solé, Q., ‘El Comitè Nacional Catòlic de Socors als Refugiats d’Espanya, una aproximació’, in *Catalans du Nord et languedociens et l’aide à la République Espagnole, 1936–1946: actes de la Journée d’études de l’Association Maitron Languedoc-Roussillon...*, Ville de Perpignan: Presses universitaires de Perpignan, 2009, pp. 109–34.

5 Josep Maria Trias Peitx (Barcelona 1900–Sant Miquel de Cuixà, Conflent 1979) was a Catalan politician. In 1931 he was one of the founders of Unió Democràtica de Catalunya, a Christian Democrat Catalan party. When the Spanish Civil War broke out, UDC remained loyal to the Republican government and, during the conflict, Trias Peitx worked to save prosecuted people for reasons of conscience and to restore relations between the Spanish government and the Holy See. At the end of January 1939, when Franco’s troops were arriving in Barcelona, he left for France, where he lived in exile until his death.

6 The Quakers’ activity during this period was very extensive. Quakers organisations provided relief during the First World War. After the war, the Quakers carried out an important aid and reconstruction campaign in the affected territories of Europe. The Quakers, especially the British, interceded by means of the emigration to England of people

had to deal with in a particular project during the Second World War and the invisible line that connects these difficulties with the Quakers' previous and subsequent experiences.

In order to draw out all of these connections in this essay I will use a wide range of sources. My goal is to offer a multi-faceted and rich approach to the subject.⁷ On the one hand, it is important to acknowledge the significance of secondary scholarly resources—books, theses, articles and so on—that focus on different aspects of humanitarian aid and specifically Quaker humanitarian aid in the twentieth century. On the other hand, it is also important to draw on other sources to provide different perspectives on the project, such as the valuable memoirs and testimonies of Quaker aid workers such as the Norwegian Alice Resch and the American Howard Wriggins, which contrast markedly with the view of the American diplomat Howard E. Kershner.⁸ These memoirs offer different visions of humanitarian aid but were also written with very different intentions: if Kershner was looking for a long-lasting personal and public testimony, Alice Resch was only trying explain to her mother (who was deaf) her experiences in France, and never intended to publish her memoirs. Another important source are biographies of aid workers such as Mary Elmes and Gilbert Fowler White. My research also draws on oral history, through the interviews that are the core of the Trias Peitx memoirs (recorded 30 years after the Second World War and so possibly affected by issues of subjectivity and memory). Finally, my research also uses archival material: the personal archive of Josep Maria Trias Peitx, the administrative documentation of the relief agency American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)—where the correspondence and the interpersonal relationships demonstrated have a very important weight—and, lastly, the administrative documentation of the French authorities.⁹ These represent a wealth of resources—most of them unpublished—and perspectives that allows us to reflect on the complexity of Quaker aid and deeply explore a specific Quaker aid project during the Second World War.

Before examining *Pour la renaissance des villages abandonnés* in more detail, those aspects that typify the initiative are first introduced and contextualised. The AFSC played a principal role during the conflict. The Spanish Civil War should be seen not only as the precursor of the Second World War but also as a landmark

threatened by Nazi persecution. During this period they were active in other territories, such as Serbia, Poland and Russia.

7 This research is a summary of my Master's thesis, defended in February 2017.

8 Howard E. Kershner (1891–1990) held the positions of vice president and executive director of the International Commission for the Assistance of Child Refugees in Spain in 1939. From 1939 to 1942 he served as director of relief for the AFSC in France and headed the AFSC's main delegation in Marseille.

9 The materials belong to different archives and institutions: the Pavelló de la República Library (University of Barcelona) in Catalonia, Spain, the relief agency American Friends Service Committee in Philadelphia and the Archives départementales du Tarn, in France.

for the humanitarian help that came afterwards. As Paul Preston affirms in the prologue of Gabriel Petrus' book, the Spanish Civil War was 'an ideal training camp for many subsequent initiatives'.¹⁰ Certainly, the Spanish Civil War acted as a catalyst for the actions of the American Quakers. If, during this conflict, the AFSC initially maintained a cautious position, based on the actions and advice of the British Quakers, the experience gained provided the AFSC with a boost in prestige, ultimately turning it into a global player prepared to act as representative and intermediary of American aid abroad and to deal with the US administration, foreign governments and international agencies alike—if not on equal footing, at least with a high degree of self-confidence.¹¹

The preeminence of the role played by the AFSC, combined with the extreme rigours of the Second World War, highlighted the existing disagreements within the Quaker movement itself. The project should also be considered in a broader context, because, beyond the difficulties in its management, a more fundamental problem was rooted in the philosophy of the Quakers (masterfully summarised by the writer and historian Farah Mendlesohn¹²) which, to some extent, is reflected in the Quakers' management of the project. This was a doctrinal conflict dating back to the beginning of the twentieth century, which was not resolved until 1920, at the Conference of All Friends held in London.¹³ During this meeting, a renewed Peace Witness was established after years of debate, which involved a greater emphasis on action and international participation in pacifist groups and the growing peace movement. The premise of a 'religion of works not words' thus prevailed over the evangelical vision or, in the words of Thomas C. Kennedy, 'a revival of the centrality of the Inward Light of Christ to Quaker belief and practice', meaning the subordination of the authority of the Bible to the authority of the Light.¹⁴ But while the English Friends Service Council was able to resolve this difficulty, the American Quakers could not. Quakerism in the US was fragmented and the AFSC, based in Philadelphia, was not held in high regard by many Quakers belonging to the evangelical branch. Eastern Quaker activism raised suspicions, and one of the consequences of these internal divisions was an excess of professionalisation, which was perceived as 'a defence against accusations from within the society that the AFSC might be too liberal'.¹⁵

10 Petrus, G., *La ayuda humanitaria en la guerra civil española: 1936–1939*, Granada: Comares, 2015, p. 50 (translated from Spanish).

11 Maul, D., 'The Politics of Neutrality: the American Friends Service Committee and the Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939', *European Review of History = Revue européenne d'histoire* 23/1–2 (2016), p. 95.

12 Mendlesohn, *Quaker Relief Work in the Spanish Civil War*.

13 See Kennedy, T. C., *British Quakerism 1860–1920: the transformation of a religious community*, Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

14 Kennedy, T. C., 'Early Friends and the renewal of British Quakerism, 1890–1920', *Quaker History* 93/1 (2004), p. 82.

15 Mendlesohn, *Quaker Relief Work in the Spanish Civil War*, p. 11.

This excess of professionalisation clashed with the ethical labour of a vast section of the Quaker collaborators who participated in the initiative. As the anthropologist Ilana Feldman explains,

The conceptual field of Quaker ethics includes both a set of values and an array of techniques for enacting these values Quakers believe this capacity can be brought out through person-to-person interaction and they place great value on individual relations in all aspects of their work.¹⁶

Professionalisation entailed a great deal of administrative work, as Philadelphia required a huge volume of information in the form of reports and statistics, which detracted from the time the Quakers spent on humanitarian aid. This dynamic, which generated additional work and required a new *modus operandi*, was not to everyone's liking. For many Quakers of European origin,¹⁷ who were more sympathetic to the ethos of the British branch—far removed from the philosophy of the evangelical branch of the American Quakers—the emphasis on professionalisation was regarded as a loss of both spontaneity and of the preeminence of consciousness and concern for others. And we cannot overlook the fact that the weight of the Quakers of European origin working in France during the Second World War was overwhelming, as Mohaupt points out: 'In early 1942, fifteen Americans and 150 European volunteers composed the main workforce for the Committee.'¹⁸ This problem was not exclusive to Quaker workers: the professionalism and planning-orientated approach to humanitarian aid that became widespread during the Second World War meant that, in the different organisations, 'relief workers constantly complained that they were unable to do their jobs properly because they were constantly grappling with meaningless red tape.'¹⁹ The genuine volunteerism and informality of the early 1940s contrasts with the bureaucratisation, rationalisation and professionalisation of the form of humanitarian aid that was consolidated during the Second World War. As the development of Quaker initiatives in this period shows, the rethinking of the practical philosophy of humanitarianism, its tools and techniques, resulted in a change in the aid worker's relationship with the objects of their compassion.²⁰ As we will see, it was a key aspect of the controversy surrounding the initiative *Pour la renaissance des villages abandonnés*.

16 Feldman, I., 'The Quaker Way: ethical labor and humanitarian relief', *American Ethnologist* 34/4 (2007), pp. 692–93.

17 It is important to point out that not all Quaker relief workers were Quakers. On the contrary, some sources note that the number of Quakers was very low. In this article, when I refer to Quakers I allude to people that participated in a Quaker-run organisation.

18 Mohaupt, H., "'All in the Same Boat": non-French women and resistance in France, 1940–1944', Master's thesis, University of Delaware, 2010, pp. 34–35.

19 Gemie, S., Reid, F. and Humbert, L., *Outcast Europe: refugees and relief workers in an era of total war: 1936–1948*, London and New York: Continuum, 2012, p. 174.

20 Barnett, M., 'Faith in the machine? Humanitarianism in an age of bureaucratization', in Barnett, M. and Stein, J. (eds), *Sacred Aid: faith and humanitarianism*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 189.

Another significant issue was the concept of impartiality. During the Second World War the Quakers had to deal with the principle of impartiality, but it had become a controversial subject earlier, during the Spanish Civil War, as the discrepancy between some historians—such as Mendlesohn and Petrus—evinced. Gabriel Petrus alludes to a ‘pro-Republican’ feeling and notes the words of Charles Chatfield, a historian of pacifism in the United States, who emphasised ‘the obvious socialist backdrop of British Quakers’. Mendlesohn, on the other hand, refers to the fact that Quakers worked mostly alongside the Republicans—which caused them to strengthen ties—and that relations with the Nationalist authorities—and with the Spanish humanitarian organisation Auxilio Social—were not good, since they limited the aid that Quakers carried out. Furthermore, when conflict arose in relation to the issue of neutrality in the Spanish struggle some Quakers argued that it was understandable to feel closer to the legitimate party, meaning, to the legal Government. The ideological tendencies that—despite their theoretical impartiality—accompanied the work of some Quaker collaborators, for example their hostility towards the Catholic Church or their sympathies to the Republicans who they had got along with, had an immediate impact on the work carried out. One possible reason for this difficult neutrality was that, during the Spanish Civil War, the AFSC and the FSC decided to recruit ‘persons such as social workers, doctors and businessmen with relevant vocational experience and only secondarily considered their fidelity to Quaker principles’.²¹ This dynamic was maintained during the Second World War and can help us to understand some misunderstandings that surfaced inside the Quaker movement itself.

One final point that will be more deeply analysed in this article is the question of gender relations within the Quaker environment. Apart from the tension generated by the circumstances that the Quakers had to face, some additional friction arose as a result of the fact that, even though women were very active locally (and some of them had extensive experience in humanitarian aid), they were not proportionally represented at a higher administrative level and their opinions were not always taken into account. This was not a new circumstance. As Siân Roberts points out, Tammy M. Proctor has analysed the problematic relationship between American and British Quaker relief teams in the first two decades of the twentieth century and demonstrated that there was an obvious problem of confrontation between gender and authority because, despite the experience and leadership abilities of British women relief workers, the tendency in American Quaker relief work was for men to assume leadership roles.²² Daniel Maul, in relation to the role of the women during the First World War, fully agrees with Proctor’s assessment:

While women had long occupied important and responsible positions within the Quaker relief, the AFSC as an organisation was male-dominated. Most of the time

21 Maul, ‘The Politics of Neutrality’, p. 94.

22 Roberts, S., ‘A “Position of Peculiar Responsibility”: Quaker women and transnational humanitarian relief, 1914–24’, *Quaker Studies* 21/2 (2016), p. 246.

its executive board was overwhelmingly male and only one of its subcommittees, that on Women's Work, was led by a woman. The situation in the field was not better The AFSC's policy thus mirrored the ARC's ambivalent position vis-à-vis the role of women: while it offered women unique opportunities to follow professional careers as social workers or doctors, it was extremely restrictive in affording them opportunities to occupy leading positions within the organisation.²³

Again, this problematic question was not limited to the Quaker environment. Gemie, Reid and Humbert examine the same issue during the Second World War with a focus on the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), and maintain that 'alongside the organization's avowed refusal of gender prejudice, there was the obvious reality of a gendered hierarchy and division of labour.'²⁴ This is a very important point and it is not by chance that the historian and director of the Leibniz Institute of European History, Johannes Paulmann, refers to a 'long-standing ambiguity' related to the role of women in humanitarian aid and includes this aspect as one of the 'essential dilemmas' that humanitarianism, even today, must deal with. Paulmann underline two aspects that the initiative analysed here reveals: in spite of the active engagement of women in humanitarian aid it is important to remark that, on the other hand, 'in terms of organization leadership the ceiling for them remained low'.²⁵

The Spanish Refugees and Quaker Humanitarian Aid in France

Since late 1938 there had been a steady trickle of Quaker aid workers to the south of France in response to the humanitarian crisis caused by the arrival of Spanish refugees.²⁶ Thousands of Spaniards were locked up in refugee camps—also called concentration camps by many historians, since the inmates were subjected to military discipline—where there was nothing: in the harsh winter months the men had to sleep in the open on cold beaches, with little food, separated from their families. Many perished in these circumstances. But at the time of this catastrophe, the Quakers were already in the midst of things, providing food, medicines, clothing, shoes, tools, books and notebooks, trying to pass on family news, organising transfers, emigrations and children's colonies, creating social premises, making clothes or providing prostheses for amputees.

23 Maul, D., 'American Quakers, The Emergence of International Humanitarianism and the Foundation of the American Friends Service Committee', in Paulmann, J. (ed.), *Dilemmas of Humanitarian Aid in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 82–83.

24 Gemie et al., *Outcast Europe*, p. 180.

25 Paulmann, J. (ed.), *Dilemmas of Humanitarian Aid in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 29.

26 The Valière report, presented on 9 March 1939, calculated the number of refugees who crossed the French border between January and February 1939 at 440,000 (210,000 civilians, 220,000 soldiers and 10,000 wounded).

The files relating to the activity of the Comité National Catholique de Secours aux Réfugiés d'Espagne²⁷ contain frequent references to the cooperation that the Comité established with the Quakers. One of the first letters that Ferran Ruiz-Hébrard (one of Trias Peitx's colleagues at the Comité) sent from France a few days after crossing the border—the letter is dated 2 February—complained: 'Nobody is helping us. I mean, nobody "official".'²⁸ But some lines further down he describes how, despite the circumstances, he has already had a meeting with representatives of other aid organisations, specifically mentioning the Quakers. At that time, the International Commission for the Assistance of Child Refugees in Spain²⁹ had begun looking into establishing a neutral zone in Catalonia, close to the border, where children could be fed and primary care provided to refugees. Kershner remembers that

Before these messages came, I had called on the French Foreign Minister to try to learn the stand France would take about admitting the refugees, and if they were admitted, what arrangements the Commission and the Quakers could make for their assistance.³⁰

These efforts, according to Kershner's memoirs, took place between 23 and 27 January—the French frontier would be opened the night of 28/29 January—so demonstrating the Quakers' ability to foresee adversity and clearly reflecting the new dimension that the work of the Quakers had been taking on as the Spanish Civil War advanced. Several emergency canteens were organised, from which the Quakers offered hot milk and bread to refugees headed north. According to a report, it is estimated that they managed to distribute 200,000 hot portions to both parts of the border.³¹ The French magazine *L'Écho des amis* detailed how:

Several English and American Quakers settled in Perpignan have helped the people fleeing the Catalonia invaded. They provided stretchers, beds, medicines, condensed milk, etc. under the direction of Edith Pye. Friends have inspected eight departments where the refugees are staying. Norma Jacob (previously in Barcelona) also visited several camps, especially in the Deux-Sèvres and the

27 Personal archive of Josep Maria Trias Peitx. Pavelló de la República Library (University of Barcelona), 6 boxes.

28 Letter from Ferran Ruiz-Hébrard to Josep Maria Trias Peitx, 2 February 1939. Personal archive of Josep Maria Trias Peitx. Pavelló de la República Library (University of Barcelona). FP(Trias)3(1)bl (translated from Catalan).

29 The International Commission was created in October 1937 with the objective of coordinating international child support. This organisation received funds from 24 states, as well as from non-state groups and associations. It seems that the initiative arose from the English Quakers and they joined, among others, the Friends Service Council, the American Friends Service Committee, the International Civil Service (Bern) and Save the Children International Union (Geneva).

30 Kershner, H. E., *Quaker Service in Modern War: Spain and France*, New York: Prentice-Hall, 1950, pp. 18–19.

31 Mendlesohn, *Quaker Relief Work in the Spanish Civil War*, p. 111.

Hauts-Alpes. Our Friends Jacqueline Cook (Le Havre) and Edmond Duménil (Nantes), agreed to visit the refugee children's colonies in their departments on behalf of the 'Comission neutre', created by members of the 'Office française pour l'enfance' and only recognised by the Ministère de l'Intérieur.³²

Another example of the strong relations that were established between the Comité and the Quakers is a letter from the Quaker Donald Darling to Trias Peitx—oddly enough, written in Catalan, on the official paper of the International Commission for the Assistance of Spanish Child Refugees.³³ Darling, after evaluating the organisation of aid in the camps (the Quakers were among the few humanitarian aid organisations that were allowed access), the specific Quaker help given to maimed refugees and the creation of some workshops for making shoes, concluded: 'Nothing more for today. Thank you for your help, and if you feel troubled and angry like me, think that we will have our reward, perhaps, in heaven, if they give us a travel permit.'³⁴ In spite of the adversity, and as a sign of the familiarity and mutual understanding between the two individuals, Donald Darling did not lose his sense of humour.

In September 1939 the Second World War broke out. In the following spring, before the advance of Nazi troops into France, there was a significant diversion of funds to help the refugees leaving the territories occupied by the Germans. The Quakers had already sent teams to western and south-western France to collect data about the needs of displaced people and what might be done for them. At this point it should be recalled that, at the end of the 1930s, in addition to their work with the Spanish refugees in southern France, the Quakers were also carrying out important humanitarian aid in the north of the country: the number of Jews coming from Germany and Austria had been increasing since the early 1930s and particularly after November 1938 and the Decrees of Nuremberg.³⁵ France was becoming a land of refugees.

The situation was so dramatic that both the International Commission and the AFSC abandoned their policy of caring mainly for children and mothers and extended their attention to the majority of refugees. Because of the extreme situation, by December 1939 the funds of many aid organisations were already

32 *L'Écho des amis*, 18 année, num. 126 (avril 1939), p. 10 (translated from French).

33 This Commission—created in 1939—was, in fact, the previously mentioned International Commission for the Assistance of Child Refugees in Spain, created two years before, that had modified its name to indicate that Spanish refugees in France, England and Africa were also included. With the outbreak of the Second World War the name changed again—International Commission for the Assistance of Child Refugees—to point out that the organisation had expanded its humanitarian aid to children of other nationalities.

34 Letter from Donald Darling to Josep Maria Trias Peitx. 11 December 1939. Personal archive of Josep Maria Trias Peitx. Pavelló de la República Library (University of Barcelona). FP(Trias)3(1)bIV (translated from Catalan).

35 See Schmitt, H. A., *Quakers & Nazis: inner light in outer darkness*, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997.

exhausted and the International Commission was forced to take on more responsibility. These new circumstances had a direct influence on the Quakers' policy in relation to the Spanish refugees, as the arrival of millions of refugees 'overshadowed the issues of Spanish relief'.³⁶

At the end of 1939 the word 'Spain' was removed from the official name of the International Commission, which became the International Commission for the Assistance of Child Refugees. Subsequently, in April 1940, the AFSC's Committee on Spain, which until that moment had directed the provision of aid to this particular group, was absorbed by the Refugee Section. The AFSC considered that the best way to help refugees in France at that time was to create a general aid service, focussing on needs rather than on nationality.³⁷ That spring, the Comité National Catholique de Secours aux Réfugiés d'Espagne broke up because of the lack of funding. Little by little, Spanish refugees became invisible to humanitarian aid, but not to the eyes of the French authorities. In fact, the reception of Spanish refugees had become the epicentre of a fierce debate in France: some favoured respecting the right of asylum, but others—including Marshal Pétain³⁸—called for immediate repatriation.³⁹ France wanted both to avoid a stalemate in domestic politics as a result of this divergence between the different sectors and parties of the Third Republic and to ward off a sanitary and humanitarian disaster, and also needed to stabilise diplomatic relations with Spain by officially recognising the Francoist regime. Perhaps the expression that best summarises the circumstances of the Spanish refugees in France is the one used by Francesc Vilanova:⁴⁰ 'between a rock and a hard place'. In addition, when the Second World War broke out and the Nazi–Soviet pact was signed, attitudes towards the Spanish refugees worsened: they were considered vandals, murderers, 'Reds' and communists, and French policies towards them became extremely harsh. The shadow of distrust was upon them.

On 14 June 1940 Paris was taken by German forces and, with the government displaced to Bordeaux, the armistice was signed on 22 June. The Third Republic collapsed, and the Reich divided France into two large areas: the occupied area, under Nazi control, and the free zone, under the authority of the Vichy government. In addition, further areas were also established: a Northern Department, linked to

36 Mendlesohn, *Quaker Relief Work in the Spanish Civil War*, p. 127.

37 This decision met with the disapproval of certain organisations that collaborated with the AFSC, such as the Spanish Refugee Relief Campaign (SRRC), which argued that Spanish refugees should have priority over the money raised.

38 Marshal Pétain (1856–1951) was a French general officer who attained the position of marshal of France at the end of the First World War. In 1939 he held the position of French minister of war and, with the fall of France in June 1940, he was appointed prime minister of France.

39 Gemie et al., *Outcast Europe*, 'The Retirada: Spanish republican refugees, 1939', pp. 29–53.

40 Vilanova, F., 'Entre la espada y la pared: el franquismo, la III República Francesa y los exiliados republicanos en 1939–1940', in Mateos, A. (ed.), *¡Ay de los vencidos!: el exilio y los países de acogida*, Madrid: Eneida, 2009, pp. 13–40.

the German military government in Belgium; a 'reserved area' in the east (Alsace and Lorraine); a 'prohibited area' along the coasts of the English Channel and the Atlantic; and a small area occupied by Italy. The last Nazi advance and the capture of the French capital generated a new wave of refugees. With hundreds of thousands of people leaving the capital, humanitarian agencies had to abandon Paris in a hurry and momentarily put an end to the organisation of aid. The British Embassy gave the order that all its citizens should be evacuated and the British Quakers had to leave the country; thereafter, their activities took place under the aegis of the International Commission.⁴¹ Quakers of other nationalities who were forced to evacuate the occupied area of France moved to the south with their American colleagues, who, after leaving base staff in the French capital, joined the hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing the advance of the German army. In the summer of 1940, although it did not close down, the Paris office transferred all its functions to Marseille, where the Quaker centre was established. The Quaker centre in Marseille headed four delegations located in Toulouse, Montauban, Bordeaux and Perpignan. With the signing of the armistice, all humanitarian aid work was handed over to nationals of neutral countries and, as a consequence of the division of France into two zones, the AFSC had access only to the delegations of the Vichy area.

Among the multiple and diverse projects the Quakers launched in France, one is particularly interesting, though almost entirely unknown: *Pour la renaissance des villages abandonnés*. A detailed analysis of this project raises some important questions. What complications did the Quaker delegates face when pursuing their activities in a France at war? Did the attitude of the French authorities change over those years? How did the entry of the United States into the Second World War affect the work of the Quakers? The analysis of the Quakers' involvement in *Pour la renaissance des villages abandonnés* sheds light on a unique experience: while it began in the unoccupied zone, from November 1942 it was subject to the rigours of Nazi occupation. The presence of Spanish refugees had consequences for the Quakers' work.

The Project: *Pour la renaissance des villages abandonnés*

Pour la renaissance des villages abandonnés—'For the rebirth of abandoned villages'—was launched in late 1940 under the leadership of Josep Maria Trias Peitx, an exiled Catalan, who was appointed CEO of the Toulouse and Region American Friends Service Committee for the reception and accommodation of refugees. Trias Peitx was not a Quaker, but had begun his association with the Quakers in the previous year while helping the Spanish refugees in camps in southern France as the head of the Labour Service of the Comité National Catholique de

41 The International Commission withdrew from France in July 1940. Its work would be taken on by the American Friends Service Committee, who would keep workers until the total occupation of France by German forces at the end of 1942.

Secours aux Réfugiés d'Espagne. The aim of the new project was to repopulate abandoned or semi-abandoned villages in southern France with displaced persons, especially those from the area of Alsace and Lorraine, and also some exiled Spanish families. People from Alsace and Lorraine were chosen for the project because of the vast numbers of refugees from this area: it is estimated that the government evacuated half a million people from Alsace and Lorraine to the south and west of France.⁴² Their expulsion from their homes on the outbreak of war was especially dramatic, as Quaker co-worker Alice Resch describes in her memoirs:

During the first days of September, they were forced to leave their homes with only a couple of hours' notice, and only what they could carry. Refugees had to be put up in ruins and dilapidated farms that had been uninhabited for the last 40 years, in schools where there were no beds, and in churches that were no longer used for worship. The poor evacuees were bitter and disappointed.⁴³

Subsequently, as a consequence of the armistice and the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine to the territory of the Reich, many of these evacuees saw no hope of returning to their homes. The French authorities were especially generous in relation to Alsace and Lorraine refugees because they could do nothing to protect their territory and prevent their escape: of all the regions of France, Alsace and Lorraine suffered the most because of the armistice. Frédérique Barbara⁴⁴ noted the French feelings of guilt regarding the fate of this group.⁴⁵

The first site chosen for the project was Puycelci,⁴⁶ a small walled town in the Midi-Pyrenees. Situated in the forest area of Grésigne, the town had a long artisan tradition, but production had died out by the early 1940s. It is not clear who decided on this town. One of the reports implies that the idea was Trias Peitx's—'Le restauration de Puycelci est une idée espagnole'⁴⁷—but the Norwegian nurse Alice Resch confirms that it was the idea of Helga Holbek, the Danish Quaker delegate of the Toulouse office:

She [Holbek] recognised that it was fine to donate food, clothing and money, but it wasn't truly help, and did not make the refugees happy. On the contrary,

42 Nivet, P., 'Les réfugiés de guerre dans la société française (1914–1946)', *Histoire, économie & société* (2004/2) (23e année) <https://www.cairn.info/revue-histoire-economie-et-societe-2004-2-page-247.htm> [accessed 15/05/18].

43 Resch, A., *Over the Highest Mountains: a memoir of unexpected heroism in France during World War II*, Pasadena, CA: International Productions, 2005, p. 38.

44 Barbara, F., *Les populations réfugiés dans le Tarn pendant la seconde guerre mondiale*, unpublished thesis, Université de Toulouse Le Mirail, 1990, p. 65.

45 In 1871, after the Franco-Prussian War, Alsace and Lorraine had come under German rule; in 1918, after the First World War, they became French again.

46 Since 2011, Puycelci.

47 Capitaine Séré de Rivière report 'Sur le repeuplement et la reconstruction du Village de Puycelci'. January 21, 1941 [i.e. 1942]. 32 p. Archives départementales du Tarn. Fonds 'Accueil des réfugiés': Centre de Puycelci-Lorraine (348 W 100).

nothing was more demoralising as being dependent, and the best way to help one's fellow human beings was to enable them to become self-sufficient. With the help of José Maria Trias she found two deserted villages: Puycelci (which means heaven's mountain in the local dialect) and Penne du Tarn, and she asked: 'why not use them?' The Tarn Prefecture was interested, and gave us permission immediately.⁴⁸

The Quakers made their first visit to Puycelci on 15 December 1940, and four days later a letter with the proposal for reconstruction and repopulation was sent to the Prefect of Tarn.⁴⁹ At that time in Puycelci there were approximately 300 houses and 92 people, all of them over the age of 40. The idea was to acquire homes in need of reconstruction and restoration. The Quakers set up workshops and proceeded to return agricultural land that had become derelict to cultivation. So there was a double 'rebirth': that of the village, with the reconstruction of the houses, the creation of workshops for furniture making and the reuse of land that had until then been left fallow; and the 'rebirth' of people who could start a new life with a home and a *modus vivendi* that would allow them to be self-sufficient, which of course was one of the basic principles of Quaker aid.

The idea took shape rapidly and by 18 February 1941 the first family of refugees from Lorraine had arrived. On 7 March work began and ten days later the first school opened. By 4 June the first two carpentry workshops had been opened. The families made use of the area's timber, making agreements with the major suppliers in the Grésigne forest, and they slowly improved the manufacture of furniture, introducing original artistic touches and contrasting woods of differing tones. In the end, the project found work and a home in Puycelci for 27 families. On 3 October Puycelci received its first large order and a month later, on 3 November, the Société d'Etudes et de Coopération Artisanale Lorraine (SECAL) was created.⁵⁰ By then, 74 people from Alsace and Lorraine had settled in the town: 16 families and five other people, with professions including carpenters, masons, locksmiths, blacksmiths and farmers; there was also a nurse and a teacher. Later, in the nearby town of Penne, a cottage industry of toy manufacture was set up, comprising a group of Catalans and an excellent draftsman from Málaga, Spain. Alice Resch tells us that the making of wooden toys was supervised by the Spanish artist Ángel Lescarboursa Santos and the Danish designer Kay Bojesen, who provided the first models, although the refugees would soon create their own designs.⁵¹ Thirty-two families of Catalan refugees who initially set out to rebuild the houses settled in the village. The toy factory remained in operation until 1948 and was successful because its products were always needed in the

48 Resch, *Over the Highest Mountains*, p. 89.

49 Helga Holbek report, 19 December 1940. Archives départementales du Tarn. Fonds 'Accueil des réfugiés': Centre de Puycelci-Lorraine (348 W 100).

50 Henches, J. T., 'Une journée en Lorraine: Puycelci, miracle lorrain du Tarn', *L'écho des réfugiés: organe d'entraide des Alsaciens et des Lorrains*, 3er année, no. 16 (10 juin 1943).

51 Resch, A., 'She Who Saves One Life, Saves the World', manuscript, 1998, p. 105.

children's colonies;⁵² despite the war, the sale of these toys allowed the artisans to be completely self-sufficient. Proof of its success is the assessment of the project made by Gilbert White, a member of the Quaker Delegation of Montauban, in 1942:

Good financial position; orders for at least three months in advance; volume of production has been curtailed by experimentation with new models; haven't yet found completely distinctive line of toys but getting close to it; could use more workmen; work hampered by friction among Spaniards; also hampered by feeling of Spaniards that they are not being allowed to operate as completely business-like enterprise; machine equipment adequate; prospective supply of wood and other materials adequate; patents and brevets being perfected.⁵³

But the work did not end here. In July 1941 another scheme was launched in Puycelci with the support of the Quakers: the Service Social Rural Quaker (SSRQ), which tried to redress the manifest shortcomings in two specific areas, health and social services.⁵⁴ As regards health care, the SSRQ had the services of a nurse offering primary care within a radius of 25 km. As well as travelling constantly, this nurse arranged doctor's visits when necessary. In the first eight months of service, 109 people were seen. Of course, the issue of child health was of particular interest to the SSRQ, because one of the main concerns of young families settling in rural areas was the fear of isolation in case of illness or pregnancy; obviously, the availability of social and medical assistance, supported by the Quakers, would go some way to alleviating this concern. For this reason a weekly consultation for newborn children and a service providing powdered milk was organised. The SSRQ also asked the doctor of the commune, who lived 14 km from Puycelci, to visit them monthly so as to oversee the children's growth, but this request could not be satisfied because there was no way to guarantee the supply of the fuel needed for travel (15 litres per month). As regards social care, the SSRQ launched a *Service de Ravitaillement ou de vestiaire*, which distributed food and clothing to needy families. The SSRQ also had the material support of the Unitarian Service Committee, an organisation that had already contributed financially to the implementation of the project *Pour la renaissance des villages abandonnés*.

52 In 1942, Quakers had in operation 17 children's colonies in which they attended 650 children. See American Friends Service Committee, *L'Aide quaker en France, 1942* (AFSC, 1942), 17 min. <http://museedelaresistanceenligne.org/media5951-Laide-Quaker-en-France-1942> [accessed 10/05/18].

53 Letter from Gilbert White to Helga Holbek. 4 November 1942. AFSC b28f17p96.

54 Rapport sur le Service Social Rural Quaker de Puycelci (March 1942). AFSC b25f8p81-84.

Assessments of the Project

In her memoirs, Alice Resch recalled:

The project's success surpassed all expectations. The refugees soon had more orders than they could fill, and eventually they were able to be completely self-sufficient The projects went so well that some of the villages' original inhabitants even moved back. They found work, and got on well with the newcomers.⁵⁵

These words may suggest an idyllic experience, but other sources show that this was not always the case. In a letter that Trias Peitx sent to his friend Maurici Serrahima he talks about 'the resistance of the local people', how French people 'despise us' and 'the villagers do not accept us'. Trias Peitx sadly concluded: 'it has been hard'.⁵⁶ So what was the real situation?

First of all, the Quakers faced some difficult logistical problems. Puycelci's location on a hilltop meant that the supply of water was very difficult to maintain. In addition, a lack of transport made it hard to ensure an adequate provision of food, and as a result many refugees from Alsace and Lorraine rejected the offer of settlement. Hillary Mohaupt reproduced part of a report sent by the AFSC to Philadelphia in 1942 stating that, as the months passed, the situation in France was getting worse: 'less food, shabbier clothing, almost no heat, less transportation, increasing ill health, and hardships of all kinds'⁵⁷—circumstances that ultimately hampered the activities that Quakers were carrying out. At the same time, the impossibility of obtaining a sufficient supply of wood affected the economic activity and hindered the production of furniture and toys. In addition to these logistical issues, the archive documentation reveals other problems linked to the management of the project in two areas especially: problems with the French authorities and the local inhabitants, and conflicts within the Quaker environment.

The French Response to the Project:

'un danger auquel il conviendrait de mettre fin'?

Throughout the Second World War Quakers had direct contact with the French authorities, but they had to convince these authorities of their humanitarian and apolitical principles in order to earn their trust. Indeed, their activities always aroused suspicion and mistrust and their work in Puycelci was not easy. Various reports provide evidence of the difficulties they faced, including, for example, the systematic opposition to their work from a small number of

55 Resch, *Over the Highest Mountains*, pp. 89–90.

56 Letter from Josep Maria Trias Peitx to Maurici Serrahima. 28 August [1943?]. Fons Maurici Serrahima (Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya).

57 Mohaupt, "All in the Same Boat", p. 27.

military and civil members of the commune. This resistance was manifested in the incomprehensible delay of the *Chambre des Métiers*—the body responsible for providing support to workers—in seconding the project. The participation of Spanish refugees was an added problem. As Howard E. Kershner states in relation to the work carried out by the Commission: ‘Our own status had been briefly in jeopardy after the conclusion of the Russo–German pact. At that time any organisation engaged in helping Spaniards was looked on with suspicion.’⁵⁸ We must remember that the mass arrival of Spanish refugees in February 1939 had caused trepidation in southern France and now, with the outbreak of the Second World War and the signing of the Nazi–Soviet pact, attitudes towards the Spanish refugees hardened: Russia had helped the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War by contributing men and ammunition, and now, with the recent alliance with Germany, serious doubts were cast on the loyalty of the Spanish refugees. The authorities’ mistrust of the Spanish refugees is reflected in official papers. A report dated 26 February 1943 sent by the head of the *Section régionale de police économique du sûreté* to the *Intendant régional de police* mentioned Trias Peitx and his wife Clara Candiani, the economic infractions that the SECAL might have committed, the evolution of the Penne toy industry and the presence of suspicious foreigners in the town. The papers produced by the French state are numerous, but there were non-governmental reports as well: pro-Nazi or pro-fascist organisations provided information not only about Jews but about leftists or Spanish ‘reds’, and Puycelci was no exception. A report of the *Legion française des combattants* dated 19 May 1943 and addressed to the Prefect of Tarn claimed that Trias Peitx was a ‘communist’,⁵⁹ described Quakers as a ‘sect’ and branded their activities as ‘sinister’. Gemie, Reid and Humbert note the genuine difficulty that French people had in distinguishing the differences between Spanish republican refugees: it was usual, and far easier, to characterise all Spanish republican refugees as ‘rouges’, and the same criterion was applied to the Quakers. ‘This fear is embedded in our language: the stranger is strange; the foreign body is dangerous and should be removed; the alien is not simply unfamiliar but unknowable.’⁶⁰ But the speculations did not end here: the report claimed that the Quaker house in Puycelci was a meeting point for foreigners (especially Spaniards and Americans) who were not registered in the town census and were obviously in hiding. The author of the report asked the Prefect of Tarn to clarify the murky activities the Quakers were carrying out. The report also stressed the ‘particularly intense’ vehicle traffic in recent months, especially at night (the report provided the number plates), and emphasised that the Quakers had a great many vehicles and appeared to

58 Kershner, *Quaker Service in Modern War*, p. 176.

59 Trias Peitx was member of a Catalan Christian democrat party, *Unió Democràtica de Catalunya*.

60 Gemie et al., *Outcast Europe*, p. 10.

have an unlimited quantity of fuel at their disposal. The Quaker activities were considered by this informant as ‘un danger auquel il conviendrait de mettre fin’—‘a danger that should be ended’. The atmosphere of mistrust around the Quakers’ work reached a new high point when they were accused of setting up a clandestine weapons depot in the nearby forest of Grésigne, establishing a connection between their activities (recall that the Quakers were associated with the US) and the French resistance. Spanish refugees—all of them—suffered the added indignity of being considered undesirables, ‘Reds’, Communists, Socialists or Anarchists, and those who helped them also came under suspicion. The situation deteriorated further in November 1942, when the United States entered the war, by which time the American Quakers were seen as enemies in a France under Nazi control.

Quakers, ‘a Religion of Works not Words’

Beyond the problems with the French authorities, a key point in this analysis of the project is the conflict that was generated within the Quaker environment. These disputes demonstrate the difficulties of carrying out projects of this scale in such an adverse context. Indeed, despite the experience acquired by the Quakers in the management of humanitarian aid in previous conflicts, in the Second World War they faced a changing context and a set of extreme circumstances that generated particular tensions and damaged relationships. This study of *Pour la renaissance des villages abandonnés* allows us to explore this point in depth and, although we cannot claim that these dynamics were necessarily reproduced in other projects, it is obvious that this project experienced problems that were quite likely to be repeated during the years in other similar actions carried out by this group.

Although we cannot establish conclusively who it was who conceived the project, it is clear that *Pour la renaissance des villages abandonnés* was born as a result of the proposal of a Quaker associate, rather than a Quaker. The project was started in 1941, not without controversy, and was initially opposed by Howard E. Kershner. The reasons for the objection were clear:

because the cost per person to the AFSC of such long term-rehabilitation greatly exceeded the cost per person of feeding and clothing destitute children, Gilbert sided with Kershner’s earlier judgment that it should not be the AFSC and American Quakers directing such long-term rehabilitation.⁶¹

Alice Resch also mentions this fact, pointing out that ‘Our headquarters in Marseille felt the idea was not good. So Toulouse paid out of its own funds.’⁶² It has to be acknowledged, as seen above, that Kershner’s opposition was by no means misguided: the location presented serious difficulties and the economic

61 Hinshaw, R. E., *Living with Nature’s Extremes: the life of Gilbert Fowler White*, Boulder, CO: Johnson Books, 2006, p. 56.

62 Resch, *Over the Highest Mountains*, p. 89.

investment that had to be carried out would be expensive and ineffective in the long term. But the problems did not end there. At the time of the plan's launch, France was divided and the Puycelci project was developed in the unoccupied area, under the watchful eye of the Vichy government. At that time the Quakers had several delegations in the so-called free zone and the project was directly dependent on the delegation of Toulouse, a delegation which since the occupation of Paris in June 1940 had been dependent on the delegation of Marseille, which in turn controlled the management in southern France. The archive of the AFSC, as well as providing valuable information on the activities carried out by the Quakers, also highlights the conflicts between delegations in the management of humanitarian aid; the correspondence analysed shows that the conflicts were caused, mainly, by differences in opinion regarding the management of the limited resources they had at their disposal.

These issues, of course, were not exclusive to the initiative *Pour la renaissance des villages abandonnés*. Clodagh Finn, biographer of the Irish Quaker collaborator Mary Elmes, who was working in the Rivesaltes refugee camp, explains that 'there were increasing tensions within the organisation about how aid should be allocated: to the needy French population or to the refugee "undesirables" in the camps', referring to the various encounters of Howard E. Kershner with the Quaker collaborators Mary Elmes, Helga Holbek and Ross McClelland. McClelland went so far as to affirm that Kershner 'was interested in French children only because it might bring him positive publicity'.⁶³ But this was not a new conflict. Rebecca Gill highlights some humanitarian dilemmas thrown up by the Franco-Prussian War in the form of two potentially conflicting demands: motivation as a result of a genuine 'calling' to aid the suffering of strangers, which spoke of personal responsiveness and heartfelt sympathy, but the requirement to be efficient, impartial and systematic in the provision of relief. Grounds for intervention based on an ability to 'calculate compassion' thus required careful and continued calibration: too systematised a humanitarian intervention and one risked seeming inflexible and overly bureaucratic; an overly effusive or unmediated response, however, and one risked appearing partisan. For much of the subsequent period, these counter-vailing tendencies existed in tension, especially given the increased regulation of voluntary relief provision.⁶⁴

Siân Roberts, in her study of the activity of the Quaker Florence Barrow in Russia and Poland during and after the First World War, highlights how, beyond the difficulties caused by the uncertain military context and the political tensions with the local authorities—characteristics also seen in the initiative we are analysing—personal disagreements among the management about their activities

63 Finn, C., *A Time to Risk All: the incredible untold story of Mary Elmes, the Irish woman who saved children from Nazi concentration camps*, Dublin: Gill Books, 2017, p. 109.

64 Gill, R., "'The Rational Administration of Compassion": the origins of British relief in war', *Le mouvement social*, 227/2 (2009), pp. 24–25.

were also hindrances to the work: 'There were personality differences among the team, and a feeling that the administration in London did not understand their difficulties and had made unwise decisions relating to the deployment of particular members of staff and the direction of the work.'⁶⁵

The Second World War put the Quakers' discipline and management ability to the test once more. The movement did not start projects that it did not think it could run successfully, but the management of the provision of aid to southern France was gradually taking another direction. The hallmarks of the Quakers—their foresight and organisation, their idiosyncratic approach to conflict resolution, their desire for unanimity in the decisions adopted—were all coming under severe pressure. The situation triggered two main foci of tension: first, between the headquarters of the AFSC in Philadelphia and its workers in France; and, second, between the different delegations working in France. This situation was compounded by the fact that, with the occupation of the whole of France, the Americans were forced to leave and the separation of the delegations of the occupied and unoccupied areas disappeared—with the result that the Quakers in Paris tried to regain control of the activities carried out in the south.

Howard E. Kershner had a difficult relationship with the AFSC and also with his colleagues, due above all to his management style. Among other decisions, in February 1939 he had proposed that all the accounting and control of the associates' wages should be centralised, a move that met with fierce opposition. He also wished to centralise the administrative procedures and the decision-making process. In his memoirs he justifies his position on the grounds that the circumstances of the moment did not allow any delays, but of course the result was that Philadelphia felt that it was not being kept up to date with the situation in France. Philadelphia asked for copies of the reports made by their associates, as did London. In addition, the political climate in the United States was growing increasingly hostile to the French government and humanitarian aid was subject to constant criticism because it was considered partial and favourable to the interests of France. As the historian Farah Mendlesohn points out: 'a dispute had arisen between the organisations which contributed to the AFSC—who wished to see more advocacy on behalf of the refugees, and who had been alienated by Howard Kershner's acceptance of French conditions—and the AFSC itself.'⁶⁶

These unremitting disputes also had consequences for the relations between the delegations. Philadelphia's wish to supervise the work done was matched by a similar desire among the Quakers in France. By the middle of 1942, when Howard E. Kershner had to return to the United States, Gilbert White—an American Quaker who had been working in Lisbon until then—was sent to Marseille, where he was entrusted with sending the reports requested by the headquarters of the AFSC in Philadelphia. In this work he was helped by Russell

65 Roberts, 'A "Position of Peculiar Responsibility"', p. 246.

66 Mendlesohn, *Quaker Relief Work in the Spanish Civil War*, p. 130.

Richie, a young volunteer who had also been sent to France after a period at the Quakers' office in Lisbon. Gilbert White was 'critical of the lack of consensus among the branch offices regarding priorities and the need for central leadership' and reaffirmed the need to systematically monitor all the projects so as to manage the available resources in the most effective way possible.⁶⁷ The problem was not new, and nor was the proposed solution. The situation with the management in Puycelci and Penne bore a certain similarity to that of the colonies: 'the constant task of dispensing as many resources as possible to the greatest number of people with the most need, while spending as little money as possible, meant that each home colony was closely monitored and evaluated.'⁶⁸ In practice this entailed more interference from the delegation of Marseille in the work being carried out by the delegation of Toulouse, as Alice Resch recalls in her memoirs:

The main office in Marseille discovered that the village project was good, and wanted to take over supervision. Who was this unknown Monsieur Trias? Two young Americans: Henry Harvey and Gilbert White were sent up to take charge of things When the Marseille office later decided that it was illogical for Toulouse to be supervising the work of the villages, they suggested that Montauban—the nearest neighbor—should lead the project. But Henry [Harvey] protested: 'The villages are Helga's baby!' And that was that.⁶⁹

Unfortunately, in spite of Alice Resch's conclusion, that was *not* that. The supervision of the *Pour la renaissance des villages abandonnés* project by the Marseille delegation, although it depended on the delegation of Toulouse, stoked a feeling of unease and a growing tension that is reflected in the archives of the AFSC. In a letter of 18 January 1943, Trias Peitx was accused of having 10,000 francs in his possession.⁷⁰ Two weeks later, with the conflict still open, Nora Cornelissen of the delegation of Montauban expressed her grievances to Helga Holbek. Cornelissen complained that her letters to Trias Peitx, especially those related to economic matters, were not answered. Besides, Cornelissen also complained of one of the purchases made by Trias Peitx, of which she did not approve.⁷¹ In her letter dated the following day, Helga Holbek apologised on Trias Peitx's behalf and attributed his lack of response to an excess of work in both towns and the illness of his wife, Clara Candiani, who was fighting for her life.⁷² But Holbek stood her ground: she said that it did not make sense to demand the money from Trias when the towns of Penne and Puycelci had no money, because the sum of 500,000 francs had

67 Hinshaw, *Living with Nature's Extremes*, p. 55.

68 Mohaupt, "All in the Same Boat", p. 29.

69 Resch, *Over the Highest Mountains*, pp. 91–92.

70 Letter from Nora Cornelissen (Montauban) to Helga Holbek, 18 January 1943. AFSC b29f21p28.

71 Letter from Nora Cornelissen (Montauban) to Helga Holbek, 2 February 1943. AFSC b29f21p32.

72 Letter from Helga Holbek to Nora Cornelissen (Montauban), 3 February 1943. AFSC b29f21p34.

remained blocked in the delegation of Marseille for more than a year. What did Holbek mean when she talked about money being blocked? Owing to the desire to control and monitor, a part of the money that belonged to the delegation of Toulouse and had 'theoretically' been assigned to the project was deposited (but could not be withdrawn) at the delegation of Marseille, specifically at the request of Lucien Cornil,⁷³ who asked the Toulouse Quakers to demonstrate that the project depended on them and that it was not a personal initiative (as he believed it to be) of Josep Maria Trias Peitx and his wife. Cornil ignored all the requests and the delegation of Marseille did not return the 500,000 francs. The delegation of Toulouse reported that the project was a great success, but that the money was urgently needed to invest in the forests and to continue working with the wood obtained. One of the letters contains a fierce criticism of Lucien Cornil's position, stating that 'Unfortunately, Professor Cornil has never been able to find the time to come to Toulouse, Montauban and the villages.'⁷⁴ The correspondence suggests that Trias Peitx did indeed receive (or had possessed at some time) 10,000 francs from the Marseille delegation that did not belong to the project, but his boss, Helga Holbek, justified the fact that he did not return the money to Marseille precisely because the latter delegation had not returned the money that belonged to them. Economic management generated many tensions: everyone considered that their projects were important.

Another point of discord unrelated to the efficiency of the management was the fact that the Quakers' associates who had direct contact with the refugees and lived with them had a vision that was far removed from that of the managers. This is precisely the criticism that Holbek made of Cornil and it perhaps influenced Trias Peitx's decision not to return the money. Beyond this specific case, the controversy surrounding the money destined for (but unavailable to) *Pour la renaissance des villages abandonnés* illustrates the major differences between the vision of the Quakers doing field work and the vision of the managers, as well as between the different delegations. In addition, the context of the war meant that decisions had to be made quickly and the solutions adopted were not always accepted by everyone. We have introduced this subject before and the initiative is a good example of the disfunctions that existed between American and British Quaker relief teams: Holbek defended a greater degree of closeness between the providers and the recipients of relief. AFSC's correspondence provides many

73 Lucien Cornil (1888 Vichy–1952 Marseille) was the dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Marseille. When the United States entered the conflict and all the assets of the American Friends Service Committee were handed over to the Secours Quaker, the heads and associates, who were of American origin, also had to be replaced. Cornil was designated by the Quakers to become the president of the Secours Quaker. He does not seem to have been a Quaker, although obviously he was interested in the work they were doing.

74 Letter by B.O. [Toot Bleuland van Oordt (?)] to Henry Van Etten, 27 August 1943. AFSC b29f24p97 and b29f24p98 (translated from French).

examples of such discrepancies in management. One of them is this harsh letter, in which Helga Holbek expresses her nonconformity with John Wood, Jr.—a member of the delegation of Montauban—because of his refusal to allow the project to start a farm without offering any alternative in return. Here, I specifically wish to point out how Holbek defends her role as leader and how she uses the concept ‘our’:

and the time just passes and we shall have to face next winter without food for our villages and our people for whom we have taken the responsibility. When you talk so much about how many Spanish families might be helped for that money, etc. ... you have probably forgotten that that money and a lot more was given to me personally because I explained to the donors the kind of work I wanted to do with it and of which they approved.⁷⁵

The feeling that the refugees themselves were not important to managers was one of the criticisms that managers often received from their own aid workers; once again, this problem was not exclusive to this particular initiative. Helga Holbek shared the feelings of the Quaker Florence Barrow, who ‘placed great emphasis on building personal relationships with the recipients of relief’ and defended ‘living in the villages among the people’⁷⁶ as a way to maintain close links with the population. As the cultural and historical anthropologist Ilana Feldman points out:

Quaker ethics are concerned with both method and mission. They stress both the ethics of interaction (with a focus on personal relations between the givers and recipients of aid) and the ethics of outcome. It is not only the ‘improvement’ of others that is at stake in the Quaker way but also work on themselves.⁷⁷

This ideological background, foregrounding the interpersonal dimension, could help us to understand Holbek’s criticism of Cornil’s position and others of these disagreements.

Along the same lines, at a conference in London, Mary Elmes’ biographer, the British Quaker Bernard S. Wilson,⁷⁸ referred to a dispute between Helga Holbek and Lindsley Noble in October 1942 when, in desperation, Holbek asked Noble to help save two members of her team who had been interned in Rivesaltes. Noble suggested that she should ‘not irritate the authorities with individual requests for exemption which might jeopardise larger projects’ and Holbek openly expressed her profound disagreement with this policy of ignoring individual cases so as not to undermine the negotiations with Vichy regarding larger groups. For Holbek it was unacceptable that avoiding Vichy’s displeasure should be the

75 Letter from Helga Holbek to John Wood, jr., April 8 1942. AFSC b28f17p60.

76 Roberts, ‘A “Position of Peculiar Responsibility”’, p. 244.

77 Feldman, ‘The Quaker Way’, p. 693.

78 Wilson, B. S., ‘Mary Elmes (1908–2002) the First Irish “Righteous”’: can Quaker relief be non-political in the face of evil?’ Conference at Friends House (London), 25 November 2014.

priority, since each individual case represented a life. This was not an isolated controversy. Some Quaker associates considered that Lindsley Noble represented a continuation of the position defended by Kershner in Marseille: that is to say, of 'a man concerned to work with and through governments and who saw himself responsible to official authorities rather than directly to the recipients of the relief he dispensed',⁷⁹ and who saw the refugees 'as an abstract'. In this regard, in the correspondence, Quaker associates often stated that they were the only ones working directly with refugees and spending time with them, and that they suffered many hardships. This is clearly reflected in Helga Holbek's dispute with Lucien Cornil, whom she accused of making unilateral decisions (such as blocking access to money) without having even visited the refugees. Tellingly, Gemie, Reid and Humbert's analysis of texts from great leaders, generals and diplomats who collaborated in humanitarian aid concludes that this minor sub-genre of literature could be termed 'the refugee as seen through the windscreen of the diplomat's limousine'.⁸⁰

In November 1942, when the Germans invaded the hitherto unoccupied area of southern France, the work of the AFSC was paralysed for a few days by the French government. Helga Holbek and some of the Quakers' associates went to Vichy and asked Prime Minister Laval to change his mind. The Quakers had come under even more suspicion because of their insistence on working with the Spanish Republicans and also, of course, because of their mainly American origin, given that the US was now at war with Germany, the occupying power. To continue working, the Quakers had been forced to break off their relations with the US and the Secours Quaker⁸¹ took control of their activities. Lucien Cornil, a Frenchman who seems to have been above any suspicion of exerting political interference, was named Secours Quaker's president. This was a provisional solution until a more permanent move could be organised, but it inevitably generated conflicts between the various Quaker offices in the area. In addition, although the Marseille delegation had always been the centre and headquarters of the AFSC, the regional offices had traditionally sought greater freedom. Now that the line between the occupied zone and the free zone had disappeared, the Quakers of Paris—who had been forced to relinquish their control over the work of the AFSC in the south—felt that they should take up the management of Quaker affairs throughout France once again. In their favour, they pointed out that hardly any of the 'officials' of the regional offices were

79 Mendlesohn, *Quaker Relief Work in the Spanish Civil War*, p. 158.

80 Gemie et al., *Outcast Europe*, p. 13.

81 Anticipating the occupation of all of France, the AFSC had created—in December 1941—on paper and with all the corresponding approvals, a 'French' group, the Secours Quaker, which would later become key. In November 1942, with the entry of the United States into the conflict—and the forced evacuation of all Americans in France—the AFSC delivered its assets and liabilities to the Secours Quaker, who were in charge of driving operations from then on.

Quakers—neither Mary Elmes,⁸² nor Helga Holbek, nor Lucien Cornil—and this, in their view, was one of the reasons for the ‘loss’ of a Quaker perspective. For instance, the Paris Quakers were astonished by the economic disputes that were taking place in the south. These kinds of disagreement became widespread and the correspondence often refers to them in colourful language, describing ‘the rain of acid reproaches’ that took place during the meetings or assertions such as ‘Quakerism is in danger.’⁸³ A letter from Lucien Cornil to Henry van Etten, Secrétaire général de la Société religieuse des amis, indicates that the Assembly of France was unimpressed by the work and the composition of the Secours Quaker: ‘l’attitude de l’Assemblée de France envers le Secours Quaker qui est, pour l’instant, plutôt dans l’expectative.’⁸⁴ On this matter, some Quaker collaborators tried to defend their principles when they had the opportunity, as this letter shows: ‘I wish specially to call your attention about the subject that we have always worked in the Quaker spirit All the collaborators and our own typists have followed the spirit of our work and have participated in it with all their hearts.’⁸⁵ In all likelihood, the distrust of the Assembly of France also exerted pressure on the management of the Secours Quaker, causing them to make greater demands on the rest of the delegations that depended on Marseille in an attempt to justify their actions in the eyes of those who claimed to represent the ‘purity’ of Quaker principles.

Finally, as I have already discussed, the project had to face an additional—but not new—problem: the gender controversy. As mentioned above, Tammy M. Proctor has pointed out an obvious problem of confrontation between gender and authority because of the tendency in American Quaker relief work for men to assume leadership roles. This problem was also apparent in the initiative analysed here. There are many examples in the correspondence and, as Mohaupt points out:

Letters often bore unapologetic reminders of the hard work some offices carried out under challenging circumstances—intimating an underlying tension among some that was fueled sometimes by apprehensions regarding the continued situation in France, but more often by defensible indignation regarding parity, both for women with men and among regional offices.⁸⁶

This conflict is neatly summarised in a letter that Howard E. Kershner sent to Helga Holbek announcing that the collaborator Henry Harvey was going to join the village team (meaning Holbek and Trias Peitx) and then:

82 Mary Elmes (Cork, 1908–2002) had worked with the Quakers during the Spanish Civil War. In May 1939 she crossed the border and continued her work in southern France, in the delegation of Perpignan.

83 Letter from Ernest Leroy (Centre Quaker, Paris) to Toot Bleuland van Oordt, 20 March 1943. AFSC b29f24p32–34.

84 Letter from Lucien Cornil to Henry van Etten, 22 March 1943. AFSC b29f24p35–37.

85 Letter from B.O. [Toot Bleuland van Oordt (?)] to Henry Van Etten, 24 March 1943. AFSC b29f24p39 (translated from French).

86 Mohaupt, “All in the same boat”, p. 31.

As he acquires a knowledge of the situation and accumulates experience, it might be well to anticipate his eventually being placed in charge of the project The village work has taken on such importance in the eyes of certain interests in America that it does seem necessary to have someone well known in America in a position of influence in connection with the work here.⁸⁷

We do not have Helga Holbek's official answer, but we can read in the margins of Kershner's letter the following hand-written words: 'With pleasure, as soon as he has learnt to speak French and to take the necessary responsibilities.' This is a good example of the lack of consensus about how the Quaker leadership imposed young associates (or supervisors) who had no prior experience in assisting refugees or any knowledge of the language of the country. In this situation, we should not be surprised by Hinshaw's claim that, because of these different employee backgrounds, the branch offices, under the leadership of strong, experienced women (notably Helga Holbek), were understandably sceptical of the Marseilles office and of Kershner's attempted leadership there.⁸⁸

1944: The Quakers' Farewell

In the spring of 1944 Quakers decided to disassociate themselves from the project *Pour la renaissance des villages abandonnés*.⁸⁹ One of the reasons they gave was its poor management, due, according to Helga Holbek, to the fact that Secours Quaker had insisted on dealing directly with Trias Peitx instead of carrying out the proceedings through the delegation of Toulouse.⁹⁰ Holbek's assessments were not unusual: poor management was the reason given for the cancellation of other Quaker projects, often due to the lack of funding or suitable personnel. In this case, Josep Maria Trias Peitx had been director of the Labour Service of the Comité National Catholique de Secours aux Réfugiés d'Espagne for more than a year, but he had no other skills or qualifications that certified his ability to carry out the task. Despite the supposed professionalisation of his staff, the fact was that good intentions often replaced experience, and on some occasions their lack of expertise caught up with them. This lack of professionalisation is an important point that negatively affected other Quaker projects, as we can see from other studies. For example, the historian Imma Colomina has analysed a project that Quakers launched in Marseille in 1940: the Club Cooperativo. Its goal was to take care of pregnant women and women with newborn babies, but the experience was only partially successful. According to the documentation, 'the two basic difficulties the Club had to face were, on the one hand, insufficient supervision of the project by the Quakers and, on the other, the need

87 Letter from Howard E. Kershner to Helga Holbek, 13 October 1941. AFSC b27f4p32.

88 Hinshaw, *Living with Nature's Extremes*, p. 54.

89 Letter from André Lebel to Helga Holbek, 3 April 1944. AFSC b29f30p48.

90 Letter from Helga Holbek to André Lebel, 10 April 1944. AFSC b29f30p51.

for a competent manager.⁹¹ We can establish certain parallels in terms of the end of the two projects: in both cases the reason for their failure was management problems. Because of this, a new and highly professionalised model that would be pioneered by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) during the Second World War⁹² would be welcomed with open arms by some Quaker collaborators.⁹³ In addition to these internal dysfunctions, the Quakers had to deal with particularly adverse circumstances. When, in 1942, economic problems became more pressing, they were forced to be more selective in their choice of projects to support. And we should not forget that they had been especially critical of the project *Pour la renaissance des villages abandonnés* from the very beginning. Before abandoning the project, Secours Quaker delivered the amount of two million francs to ensure its continuity and took the necessary steps to give the project the independent status it needed to be able to apply for subsidies from the French state.⁹⁴ The head of the creation of crafts cooperatives in France, which was dependent on the Ministry of Employment, stated that he had studied the situation and considered that he could intervene in favour of the towns through the Service du crédit artisanal.⁹⁵ Everything seemed to be under control: Holbek wanted to ensure that the work carried out until then and that the dependent families in Puycelci and Penne would not be affected by the decision. Although the Quakers continued to support the SSRQ for a while longer, *Pour la renaissance des villages abandonnés* now branched out on its own.

Conclusions

Pour la renaissance des villages abandonnés was an ambitious Quaker project in which many of their principles came together. The project was a success: they managed to get refugees out of the camps or shelters by offering them an employment contract and a stable future, and they also reunited families. The social benefit of the project was immense, as it involved individuals in a collective project and

91 Colomina, I., 'Fuera de los campos: acciones de ayuda humanitaria para las mujeres españolas refugiadas en Francia', in Alted Vigil, A. and Fernández Martínez, D. (eds), *Tiempos de exilio y solidaridad: la Maternidad Suiza de Elna (1939–1944)*, Madrid: Universidad Española de Educación a Distancia, 2014, p. 96. (translated from Spanish).

92 Reid, F. and Gemie, S., 'The Friends Relief Service and Displaced People in Europe after the Second World War, 1945–48', *Quaker Studies* 17/2 (2013), p. 224.

93 A good example was Francesca Wilson, an experienced relief worker who had been involved in Quaker relief programmes since 1916. Wilson, despite her initial positive attitude, soon realised that professionalisation also implied a qualitative problem in terms of the way the relief was provided.

94 Minutes des entretiens des 10 et 11 mai 1944 a Toulouse de Helga Holbek avec André Lebel. AFSC b29f30p71 and b29f30p72.

95 Letter from Helga Holbek to André Lebel, 21 June 1944. AFSC b29f30p94 and b29f30p95.

offered them a ray of hope in a desperate situation. As Helga Holbek emphasised in the project proposal, 'It is essential that this first nucleus be aware of the mission entrusted to it and feel that it must hold on to its new country for a long time and live there not as a refugee but as an active and productive element.'⁹⁶

When the war ended, many of the people who had contributed to the project returned to their homes—but not all. The Spanish refugees feared reprisals in their homeland under Franco's repressive dictatorship, and the work of the Quakers in Puycelci and Penne offered them the opportunity of a new life. Quakers had followed the African-American activist Ella Baker's premise: 'Give light and people will find the way'. Avoiding nostalgic and idyllic views of the initiative, *Pour la renaissance des villages abandonnés* shows the difficulties (both internal and external) that Quakers had to face during the Second World War in France and how they were the object of significant harassment from French authorities and organisations as a result, especially, of their close relations with Spanish refugees. Their humanitarian aid amply qualified the Quakers for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947, which recognised 300 years of Quaker 'in favour of peace, cooperation and coexistence'. Both Helga Holbek and Alice Resch received the accolade of 'Righteous Gentiles' from the state of Israel; in addition to working on the project studied here, these two women risked their lives to save Jewish children.⁹⁷ I hope that this study will help to keep alive the memory of a group who acted with altruism and selflessness in an extremely adverse context, defending their ideals with courage and taking the side of the victims of two terrible wars.

Personally, I find it surprising that the work of the Quakers during the Second World War has not been the object of more in-depth studies. As Hillary Mohaupt says, although the memoirs of Howard Kershner and some Quaker associates such as Alice Resch, Howard Wriggins and Gilbert White have been published, 'they and their work have not been the subjects of secondary scholarship.'⁹⁸ The explanation given by a German researcher at the 2016 QSRA and CQHA Joint Conference held at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham was that Quakers are more interested in acting than in bearing witness to the work that they have carried out. Yet while it cannot be denied that these were men and women of action, it is also evident that the Quakers have a great interest in their own history, as reflected in the great quantity and quality of their academic production. Might there be other reasons for this lack of scholarly analysis? In

96 Helga Holbek report, 19 December 1940. Archives départementales du Tarn. Fonds 'Accueil des réfugiés': Centre de Puycelsi-Lorraine (348 W 100) (translated from French).

97 In 2015, Mary Elmes, the delegate in charge of the Perpignan office who had been imprisoned for six months by the Gestapo, became the first Irish person to be awarded the same honour. She carried out important work in the Rivesaltes camp, which in 1942 became the centre for the internment of all the Jews in unoccupied France. Elmes saved the lives of many Jewish children by falsifying the documentation and finding places for them in the Quakers' colonies.

98 Mohaupt, "All in the Same Boat", p. 9.

her memoirs,⁹⁹ Alice Resch explains that her parents insisted that the text should transcend the strictly family environment. But, as she notes: 'Who bothered to think about the war? Thoughts of that time were repressed. No one wanted, or could stand, to talk about the war. Now was the time to think about the future. We were going to build up a new and better world, start a new life ... or so we thought.'¹⁰⁰

But, beyond the desire to look towards the future, were there other reasons? My study of the sources over the last few years can provide us with some hypotheses that deserve consideration. First of all, humanitarian aid during the Second World War is a complex issue, full of nuance. We find an example at the beginning of 1941, described by Bernard S. Wilson,¹⁰¹ when the French Ministry of the Interior considered using the Rivesaltes camp as a 'model' camp where families with children from other concentration camps would be transferred. The response by the Nîmes Committee was negative: the feeling of the majority of the aid organisations was that the offer to collaborate in Rivesaltes should not be accepted until the camp conditions improved and the organisations' representatives were allowed to set up offices. It was generally agreed that the presence of aid organisations, including the Quaker delegation, would offer the impression that the conditions in the camps, after all, were not so bad. The refusal of the Nîmes Committee was not supported by all the Quaker associates: Mary Elmes disagreed entirely with the decision, arguing that a boycott in Rivesaltes would only cause more suffering for the internees. Her view, though not shared by the Quaker colleagues with whom she worked, was accepted. Clodagh Finn, Elmes' biographer, describes the Rivesaltes camp as 'a thorny subject at the Nîmes Co-ordinating Committee'.¹⁰² This case further illustrates the internal disagreements that occurred during the war between the various aid organisations and within the Quaker environment itself,¹⁰³ which we have seen exemplified in the project *Pour la renaissance des villages abandonnés*. The Quaker acceptance of the conditions imposed by the Vichy government is another point of controversy, as the Quakers' dealings with the French authorities have been seen as excessive. After the conflict, and when the entire world knew of the Nazi atrocities, the Quakers may have felt a certain sense of guilt, perhaps considering that they had not done enough or that they should have acted more forcefully when faced with French authorities. The dispute between Helga Holbek and

99 Alice Resch did not write her memoirs with the intention of publishing them. She had a totally different reason: her mother was deaf and, although she could lipread, Resch decided to write her story so that her mother could read it easily.

100 Resch, 'She Who Saves One Life', pp. 6–7.

101 Wilson, 'Mary Elmes'.

102 Finn, *A Time to Risk All*, p. 99.

103 Discrepancies of this kind were not new. We must remember that some Quaker associates refused to continue helping on the 'national side' once the Spanish Civil War had ended.

Lindsley Noble is a good example. As Bernard S. Wilson suggested, could the Quakers have saved more lives if they had spoken clearly? Howard Wriggins¹⁰⁴ reflects on this point in his memoirs:

We assumed at the time that these unfortunates were to be sent to work in military industries far into Poland and further east. However, it was hard for us to imagine how many of these uprooted people—especially the old and decrepit—could be useful in war industries. We heard rumours of extermination camps. In 1942 we simply could not believe that, in the midst of a desperate war, the Nazis would waste their energies—and scarce railroad cars—on non-military objectives. We were also well aware that the British during World War I had used exaggerated stories of German brutality toward the Belgians to help justify the slaughter in the trenches. Could these be similar exaggerations?¹⁰⁵

Hinshaw, for his part, refers to Burrirt Hiatt, a Quaker who took over the control of the delegation from Marseille:

when Hiatt arrived in early October 1942, the deportation of Jews to Nazi concentration camps had been under way for several months. To his horror, he realised that they were being deported to be exterminated. It had been many weeks after the deportations began before the Quaker team became convinced of this. Suspicious, they began giving postcards to deportees to send back. Not one was returned.¹⁰⁶

In stark contrast to an excess of caution is the role that the Quakers played within the resistance. On some occasions the tasks they carried out bordered on the illegal (in the exceptional circumstances of the time) and would probably not have been sanctioned by their organisations. Alice Resch refers to several episodes that went beyond what could be considered the ‘relief work’ established in the Quaker guidelines and would qualify fully as resistance activities. Indeed, the line that separated one type of activity from the other was extremely vague. Resch remembers how Helga Holbek warned her at a certain time: ‘You have to choose if you want to work for the Quakers or for the resistance. We can’t risk compromising our work. If you are discovered, it will be the end of us.’¹⁰⁷ Holbek’s words show that Quaker associates did not have the freedom to act according to their own convictions beyond the guidelines set by the aid organisations to which they were attached. However, many Quaker associates broke the law with the noble goal of saving innocent lives.

104 William Howard Wriggins (1918–2008) was a US diplomat, author and academic. He worked for the AFSC from 1942 to 1948 (with a short break after the war to pursue graduate studies), in Portugal, Algeria, Egypt, Italy and France, and in Palestine after the first Israeli–Palestinian war.

105 Wriggins, H., *Picking up the Pieces from Portugal to Palestine: Quaker refugee relief in World War II, a memoir*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004, p. 41.

106 Hinshaw, *Living with Nature’s Extremes*, p. 56.

107 Resch, *Over the Highest Mountains*, p. 112.

The Swiss historian Philippe Burrin¹⁰⁸ claims that the German occupation of France caused not only physical injuries but also moral and political wounds, wounds that have still not healed. Events in Europe during the Second World War tested both society and the work of the Quakers. In spite of their goodwill and generosity, the work the Quakers carried out was not free of tensions. It is possible that the weight of the decisions they took and the disagreements these decisions generated—together with the feeling, when they learnt of the savagery of the Nazi regime, that they had been excessively cautious—conditioned their later evaluation of their work. But, beyond these feelings, the fact is that, despite all the obstacles the Quakers faced in a totally exceptional context, their bravery and selflessness deserve to be remembered and recognised. We should never lose our critical spirit, but it should not hide the importance and nobility of the work they did. As Thomas C. Kennedy concludes, ‘to the critically admiring outsider there would seem to be much to be gained if more Friends acquired a deeper understanding of and appreciation for both high and low points in the history of their most remarkable and esteemed Society.’¹⁰⁹

Archives

American Friends Service Committee

1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102 (United States of America)

Archives départementales du Tarn

Avenue de la Verrerie, 81000 Albi (France)

Fonds du cabinet du préfet (Série 506 W ‘Réfugiés à Puycelsi et à Penne’)

Accueil des réfugiés, camps d’internement (Séries 348 W, 493 W, 495 W)

Pavelló de la República Library (University of Barcelona)

Av. Cardenal Vidal i Barraquer, 34–36, 08035 Barcelona (Spain)

Personal archive of Josep Maria Trias Peitx.

Personal archive of Domènec Ricart i Grau.

Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya

Carrer de Jaume I, 33, 08195 Sant Cugat del Vallès, Barcelona (Spain)

Personal archive of Maurici Serrahima

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank the Centre for International Historical Studies (CEHI) of the University of Barcelona for their support of this study, which is part of the

108 Burrin, P., *Francia bajo la ocupación nazi: 1940–1944*, Barcelona: Paidós, 2004, p. 14.

109 Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, p. 429.

‘Proyecto I+D del Programa Estatal de Fomento de la Investigación Científica y Técnica de Excelencia, subprograma Estatal de Generación del Conocimiento del Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad: ‘La Guerra Civil española y tres décadas de guerra en Europa: herencias y consecuencias’ (1914–1945/2014) (HAR2013–41460-P)’. I also wish to express my most sincere thanks to the British Quakers Bernard S. Wilson and Janet, his wife. Without their generous help, support and encouragement this study would never have seen the light of day.

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