

Another Monument

NL-Doet

Nominated 2019

Dear Friends,

2020 started a few weeks ago.

Still we would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your loved ones a happy and healthy 2020.

Another Monument

This monument drew my attention during our holiday in Spain last October.

Monument Internment camp for Spanish Republicans

At this memorial stone at the boulevard, the following tekst is written in French:

In memory of 100.000 Replublican Spaniards, who were interned in the camp of Argelès-sur-Mer during the Retirada (exodus of Spanish Republicans) of February 1939.

Their bad luck: having to fight in defense of the Republic against the fasiscm in Spain from 1936 to 1939. Liberated people, don't forget about us.



Retirada

End of January/ early February 1939, almost half a million Spanish civilians and soldiers fled to France. The word Retirada (Spanish for withdrawal) has been adopted by historians to mention this exodus, the biggest invasion of fugitives ever in France.

In the last phase of the Spanish civil war (1936-1939), the coup army of general Franco ended the occupation of Catalonia February 10th 1939. When they were confronted with the rise of this army, more than 450.000 Spanish Republicans fled across the border to France. This enormous ban was known as *la Retirada*. Some months before, the government of Édouard Daladier in France approved a law at November 12th 1938 that the internment of “unwanted foreigners” had to be under constant supervision. This law was used by the French government to imprison approximately 350.000 banned Spanish Republicans in, incredibly fast built concentration camps of which the majority in the area around Roussillon.



The concentration camp of Argelès was the first camp for civilians in France. The chosen location was a piece of land of 100 acres along side the coast and the build of the camp only started a few days before the French authorities opened the borders. At March 1, 74.000 people, amongst which both civilians and soldiers, were held in an enormous beach area, surrounded by barbed wire and under surveillance of colonial troops of the French Navy.

The absence of housing, besides unsafe water supply and food scarcity, added to the bad health of the banned people, causing spread of several diseases, which eventually led to an enormous increase of death. Approximately 15.000 died because of dysentery and related diseases.

When World War II started, “hostile inhabitants”, foreign Jews and political refugees (mainly German and Austrian) were brought to the camp. Later, under the collaborating Vichy regime, a specific sector for Jews was created, however the only distinction was made between soldiers and civilians. The banned (male separated from female and children) were transported to “concentration camps” throughout Southern France: to Bram (west of the Carcassonne), Agde, Vernet in the Ariège and Rivesaltes where they would be after the German occupation (May 1940) and joined by other “unwanted” Eastern-European Jews and Gipsy.

The amount of Spanish Republican decreased over time as a consequence of pressure to be repatriated or join foreign workers’ companies.

In March of 1941 Argelès inhabited around 14.000 prisoners. They were slowly being deported to more recent camps like Rivesaltes or Barcarès and St Cyprien.

End of July the camp was disabled and officially closed in December 1941.

A long road was travelled on the remembrance field in Argelès from the first steps taken on the old grave yard – known as the Spanish grave yard – to the recent opening of the Exile and Retreat Interpretation and Documentation Centre (CIDER) promoted by the city council. Family members of the banned, played a key role in this step forward. They are deeply conscious that the memories received, is an inheritance full of

values that go beyond their collectiveness. Thanks to their efforts, the memory of the Spanish Republican ban will be treasured and projected towards the future as an instrument to support the critical spirit as without it a true democracy is not possible.

A few Republicans were taken in by compassionate and friendly French Catalonians. Some succeeded to emigrate to South America or else where. Others chose to go back to Spain, often to be prosecuted, imprisoned or killed. The majority of the banned were employed by the 'Squads of Foreign Workers' (unpaid) or the Foreign Legion.

After the German occupation, the repression of the banned grew and thousands of them were murdered in Nazi's gas chambers, mainly in Mauthausen.

Many of the survivors, despite how they were treated, applied to be part of the French resistance and were of great importance for the liberation that started June 6th 1944, as "Guerilleros Espagnols". March 15th 1945 was finally the day that the banned received the official status of political refugees. A third of the current population of the Languedoc-Roussillon are descendants from these Spanish refugees.



The picture on the left, made at Prats de Mollo early February 1939. The statue on the right can be found at Vajol, l'Alt Empordà

NL-doet



Roll up your sleeves!

Spring will be here soon. De lente komt er weer aan.

NL-doet, will be March 13 and 14.

Our foundation signed up officially again, tot he initiative of the “Oranje fonds”.

A lot of fun



Together with the board and the children of OBS 't Hout, group 7, we will be joining forces on March 13th 2020 from 10am to 12pm.

We will be doing several chores on and around the monument and the small monument in the Slegersstraat.

By involving the children, we would like to show that we cherish our youth. Group 7 has taken on Adoption year 2019/2020.

In our next newsletter we will give you an impression of this morning.

Nominated 2019

Our foundation Herdenkingsmonument Mierlo-Hout was one of the nominated groups to become Mierlo-Hout Group of the year 2019.

During the new years reception in venue “de Koning” the winner was announced. Unfortunately we were not the winner, RKSV Mierlo-Hout (soccer) won, mainly due to their 100 years of existence. We congratulate them with this honour!

If you have any interesting stories or other information we can publish, please contact us by mail. secretaris@monumentmierlohout.nl

Feel free to check our website : www.monumentmierlohout.nl where you can find all newsletters published so far.

