

## AVISO

### *InfoGibraltar*

#### **La Evacuación contribuyó a definirnos como pueblo**

**El Viceministro Principal, Joseph García, lidera la organización del Gobierno de los eventos conmemorativos del 75º aniversario de la evacuación de la población civil Gibraltareña durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Como historiador ha investigado y publicado extensamente sobre este tema.**

**Artículo de Joseph García publicado en *Gibraltar Chronicle* el jueves, 21 de mayo de 2015**

Gibraltar, 21 de mayo de 2015

No cabe duda de que la evacuación del pueblo gibraltareño fue un momento decisivo en nuestro desarrollo como pueblo. Impuso, en el difícil contexto de la guerra, una serie de factores que se aliaron para reforzar nuestra identidad y nuestro sentimiento patriótico. Pero también es importante recalcar que este sentimiento identitario distintivo germinó cuando la población civil se estableció en esta tierra después de que Gibraltar fuera tomada por tropas angloholandesas en 1704.

Por lo tanto, cuando estalló la guerra en 1939, ya existía un importante arraigo en el Peñón entre las personas que lo habitaban y cuyos orígenes se remontaban a 230 años atrás. En pocas palabras: Gibraltar era su hogar. Cuando las autoridades militares decidieron trasladar a más de 16.000 personas que se consideraban un obstáculo al funcionamiento de la fortaleza durante la guerra, poco podían imaginar la concatenación de acontecimientos que acababan de desencadenar involuntariamente. Las experiencias que vivieron los evacuados, la preocupación de los hombres que dejaron atrás en el Peñón y las reivindicaciones para que aquellos que habían sido trasladados volvieran al Peñón tan pronto como acabara la guerra en Europa terminaron por conformar una combinación explosiva. El estallido de la Segunda Guerra Mundial y la posterior evacuación de gibraltareños sirvieron de catalizador a las reivindicaciones para una reforma más profunda a nivel político y constitucional que llegarían poco después.

En Gibraltar, la posibilidad de una evacuación masiva de civiles había estado sobre la mesa tan pronto como estalló la guerra. Se acentuó cuando la Italia de Mussolini se alió con Alemania, abriendo un nuevo frente en el Mediterráneo. El miedo a que España se uniera a dicho Eje y atacara Gibraltar reavivó los planes de evacuación de la población civil. Cuando, a mediados de mayo de 1940, se anunció a una población desprevenida que los que pudieran permitírselo hicieran las gestiones necesarias para abandonar Gibraltar, la suerte estaba echada.

El golpe se vio intensificado con los posteriores anuncios de que se llevaría a cabo un plan de evacuación del Gobierno al Protectorado francés de Marruecos y que mujeres, niños y otros no combatientes debían marcharse. El primer contingente partió el 22 de mayo, tan sólo unos días más tarde.

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Esta fecha marcó el inicio de una saga que duraría más de una década hasta que los últimos evacuados volvieron a casa. Su repercusión en el estrecho entramado de la comunidad gibraltareña fue devastador. Se originaron multitud de problemas: el primero, fue de índole personal, centrado en la separación de las familias durante la guerra, con el desconsuelo y los sentimientos que conllevó. El segundo, que se sucedió posteriormente, fue una demostración clara de que el pueblo gibraltareño tenía muy poco control sobre sus propios asuntos cuando, de un momento a otro, podían meterlos en un barco en cuanto lo decretara un Gobernador. Ambos factores se mezclaron durante el tormento causado por la propia evacuación y la presión que la repatriación provocaría algunos años después.

La evacuación inicial, cuyo 75º aniversario celebramos hoy, fue al Protectorado francés de Marruecos. Más de 13.000 personas cruzaron el Estrecho de Gibraltar y fueron acogidos en campos y otro tipo de alojamientos repartidos en nueve ciudades. La [posterior] caída de Francia<sup>1</sup> y el hundimiento de la flota francesa<sup>2</sup> por las fuerzas británicas, colocó a los evacuados en un territorio hostil prácticamente de la noche a la mañana. Gracias a la presión ejercida por los hombres que quedaron atrás en el Peñón, se permitió el regreso de los evacuados y el 13 de julio se completó el traslado a Gibraltar. Para el entonces Gobernador, no eran más que “bocas inútiles” que impondrían necesidades logísticas adicionales a la fortaleza, a la vez que retrasarían el trabajo de preparación de la defensa del Peñón.

El recuerdo de la primera evacuación era profundamente desagradable para los evacuados y los que permanecieron en el Peñón. La rabia y el resentimiento que se acumuló en consecuencia se vieron amortiguados únicamente por el sentimiento patriótico y el deber de cara a los esfuerzos bélicos. Pero lo peor estaba todavía por llegar.

El 19 de julio de 1940 dio inicio la evacuación de 2.000 gibraltareños a Madeira. Cuando en la actualidad hablo de la situación con aquellos que fueron trasladados a este territorio, resulta obvio que se consideran afortunados. También tuvieron sus problemas, pero no tenían nada que ver con lidiar con los bombardeos en Londres, [la situación] en los campos de Irlanda del Norte y el largo trayecto para cruzar el Atlántico hasta Jamaica. A finales de 1940 se contabilizaban 11.000 evacuados en Londres, 2.000 en Jamaica y un número ligeramente inferior en Madeira.

El grueso de los evacuados fue trasladado a Londres al mismo tiempo que se libraba la Batalla de Inglaterra, lo que alimentó las demandas gibraltareñas para que los evacuados fueran trasladados a un lugar más seguro del Reino Unido. Del mismo modo, los riesgos que los submarinos alemanes entrañaban para los buques con destino al [otro lado del] Atlántico dieron pie a las demandas para el cese de los traslados a Jamaica.

Era evidente que en esta etapa tan incipiente, la evacuación había enseñado al pueblo gibraltareño a organizarse. Esto constituyó un avance de gran calado que se debía a la necesidad y a las circunstancias en vez de a una libre elección. Este hecho se reflejó en la crítica inflexible de la situación en la que se encontraron los evacuados en diferentes

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<sup>1</sup> 22 de junio de 1940

<sup>2</sup> El 3 de julio 1940 en Mers-el-Kebir, Argelia, los británicos atacaron la flota francesa para impedir que cayera en manos alemanas

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momentos de aquellos años turbulentos y también en la actitud de los civiles que quedaron atrás para defender sus hogares.

El 1 de enero de 1941, el Ayuntamiento de Gibraltar quedó suspendido y el Gobernador asumió las competencias y deberes del mismo. El Consejo Ejecutivo (Executive Council) fue también suspendido. El mismo Gobierno colonial que determinó unilateralmente que el pueblo gibraltareño abandonara sus hogares de forma forzosa acabó con los pocos logros políticos obtenidos en el periodo de entreguerras.

Como consecuencia, se suprimió el único espacio que permitía la expresión de las visiones políticas locales. Muchos de los individuos más adinerados que monopolizaban la vida política de Gibraltar se habían marchado. El descontento engendrado por la evacuación fue aprovechado por la Asociación gibraltareña de Defensa de los Derechos Civiles (Association for the Advancement of Civil Rights, AACR), formada a finales de 1942.

Los impulsores del movimiento, Joshua Hassan y Albert Risso, entre otros, estaban motivados tanto por la preocupación que ellos mismos albergaban por sus compatriotas ausentes como por la problemática social en general. De hecho, las normas del movimiento excluyeron inicialmente los temas de índole política y religiosa. No obstante, dicha cláusula de no intervención política se revocó en apenas cinco meses.

Existe, por lo tanto, un hilo conductor iniciado con el estallido de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, que recorre el periodo de evacuación y lleva a la formación de la AACR. Personalmente, veo claro que todos ellos están estrechamente relacionados y que uno de los efectos más importantes de la evacuación fue la organización de los gibraltareños en torno a la AACR. En una fortaleza en guerra, se trató de un acontecimiento revolucionario.

La AACR fue el primer partido político de la historia de Gibraltar. Albert Risso se convirtió en el primer presidente en diciembre de 1942 y Joshua Hassan fue su vicepresidente, tomando el relevo cuando Risso asumió la dirección de la central sindical Gibraltar Confederation of Labour<sup>3</sup>. Los problemas sociales que debió afrontar la Asociación fueron consecuencia de la guerra y de la separación de las familias. La evacuación supuso un estímulo para los hombres que quedaron atrás para luchar por el bienestar de sus allegados y su retorno a Gibraltar. Asimismo, trasladó a la Asociación a la arena política con la reivindicación de un autogobierno más fuerte una vez que terminara la guerra en Europa.

Los evacuados en Londres, Madeira y Jamaica también se organizaron. Formaron comités para mejorar sus condiciones de vida. Por ejemplo, en Londres, se producían discusiones constantes entre estos comités y la dirección de los albergues donde se alojaban los gibraltareños, como las polémicas por el deseo de los evacuados de cocinar platos mediterráneos en sus habitaciones y los continuos esfuerzos de la dirección para impedirselo.

Las peticiones y las quejas eran también corrientes en [el campo de evacuados] Camp Gibraltar, en Jamaica. En un momento dado, los evacuados demandaron la destitución del Comandante de Camp Gibraltar, cuya estricta disciplina era considerada la causa del malestar.

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<sup>3</sup> Establecida en 1947 bajo los auspicios de la AACR

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Cuando llegaron a Gibraltar las noticias de dichas quejas, alimentaron el descontento de los que habían quedado atrás.

Se registró, asimismo, un intenso intercambio epistolar entre los miles de evacuados y los hombres que habían quedado en el Peñón. Fue un terreno fértil para la AACR, que recogió toda esa insatisfacción y la canalizó de forma efectiva. La rendición de Italia en septiembre de 1943 aumentó la presión sobre el Gobierno colonial para que repatriara a los evacuados y, en abril de 1944, el primer grupo de 1.367 personas llegó a Gibraltar directamente desde el Reino Unido. El segundo grupo de más de 3.000 llegó en agosto.

En mayo, el primer grupo de repatriados partió de Madeira. Cuando los misiles<sup>4</sup> empezaron a surcar los cielos londinenses, algunos de los centros de evacuados se vieron afectados y se contabilizaron seis víctimas mortales. Desde el Peñón, se pidió el traslado de los gibraltareños y, como resultado, a finales de julio de 1944, 6.800 evacuados fueron trasladados de Londres a Irlanda del Norte, donde se alojaron en tiendas de campaña en 17 campos en los condados de Down, Antrim y Londonderry.

Tanto en casa como en el extranjero, los gibraltareños aprendieron rápidamente que las reivindicaciones organizadas daban sus frutos. Todos entendieron que ante las negativas de Londres, se trataba de seguir llamando a esa puerta cerrada sin descanso hasta obtener una respuesta positiva.

La evacuación también sirvió para cimentar la identidad de los gibraltareños de una forma diferente. Las 13.000 personas que fueron desarraigadas y trasladadas a Londres, tomaron conciencia de que, a pesar de ser británicos, sus opiniones y su cultura, definitivamente, no eran inglesas. Para muchos fue un *shock* en un primer momento y se conservan testimonios de gibraltareños que escribían a sus familiares en el Peñón relatando precisamente estas impresiones. Se trataba de la comida, las tradiciones, el estilo de vida y la cultura, incluso el clima. No cabe duda de que la lejanía con Gibraltar contribuyó a poner de relieve el tema de la identidad gibraltareña.

Sin embargo, la trascendencia de la Evacuación no se limita a un pequeño pueblo colonial que compartió una experiencia traumática. Los documentos históricos muestran que de no haber sido por la AACR, las campañas organizadas, los comités, la correspondencia epistolar, las protestas y las reivindicaciones, Gibraltar no sería la que conocemos hoy en día. Algunos en Londres mantuvieron que debía aprovecharse la evacuación de civiles para mantenerlos alejados de Gibraltar permanentemente. Debemos mucho a la generación de la Evacuación, cuyo combate incansable consiguió que esto no ocurriera.

Las luchas que acompañaron la Evacuación reforzaron el sentimiento patriótico y el surgimiento de un interés común del pueblo gibraltareño. Es lo que ocurrió a lo largo y ancho de todo el Imperio [Británico] de diversas formas. En Gibraltar, en suma, toda la experiencia de la Evacuación está cargada de trascendencia política. Los gibraltareños llegaron a la mayoría de edad.

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<sup>4</sup> [http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fieseler\\_Fi\\_103](http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fieseler_Fi_103)

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**75 Gibraltar Evacuation during WWII**

# 'The Evacuation helped to define us as a people'

Deputy Chief Minister, Dr Joseph Garcia, is leading for the Government on the events to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the evacuation of Gibraltar's civilian population during the Second World War. Having researched and written on the subject extensively, in his non-political capacity as a historian, he now shares his thoughts on the significance of this event in our history.

by **Dr Joseph Garcia**

**T**here is no doubt that the wartime evacuation of the people of Gibraltar was a defining moment in our development as a people. It brought together, under the extreme conditions of war, a number of factors that combined to strengthen our identity and our sense of nationhood. It is important to point out that this distinct sense of identity had started to develop from the moment that civilians settled here after an Anglo-Dutch force captured Gibraltar in 1704. Therefore by the time war broke out in 1939 there already existed a well-formed attachment to the Rock on the part of the people who lived here and who could trace back their ancestry over the preceding 230 years. In short, Gibraltar was their home. When the military authorities decided to send away over sixteen thousand people who were seen as a hindrance to a fortress at war, little did they realise the chain of events that they had inadvertently unleashed. The experiences that the evacuees underwent, the concern felt by the men left behind on the Rock and the demands that those who had been evacuated should return home as soon as the war in Europe had ended turned out to be an explosive combination. The outbreak of the Second World War and the subsequent evacuation of Gibraltarians served as a catalyst to the demands for greater political and constitutional reform which followed.

In Gibraltar the possibility of mass evacuation of civilians had been on the cards as soon as the war broke out. It accentuated after Mussolini allied Italy with Germany and opened a new theatre of war in the Mediterranean. It was the fear that Spain would join the Axis and attack Gibraltar that revived the plans to evacuate the civilian population. When the unsuspecting Gibraltarians were told in mid-May 1940 that those who could afford it should make their own arrangements to leave Gibraltar, the writing was on the wall.

The shock was intensified with further announcements that a Government evacuation scheme to French Morocco would be implemented and that women, children and other non-combatants would have to leave. The first contingent would sail on 22 May, just a matter of days later.

This date marks the start of a saga that was to last more than a decade until the last evacuees returned home. The impact on the close-knit Gibraltarian community was devastating. There were several issues here. The first was a personal issue which centred on the separation of families during wartime and the heartbreak and emotion that went with it. The second, which follows from it, was the clear demonstration that the people of Gibraltar had very little control over their own affairs when they could be bundled on a vessel at a moment's notice on a Governor's decree. These two factors interplayed and fed off each other during the torment posed by the evacuation itself and the pressure that the repatriation was to generate a few years later.

The initial evacuation, which is the 75th anniversary that we celebrate today, was to French Morocco. Over 13,000 people crossed the Straits of Gibraltar and were housed in camps and other accommodation scattered over nine towns. The fall of France and the sinking of the French fleet by the British placed the evacuees in hostile territory almost overnight. Under pressure from the men left behind on the Rock, the evacuees were allowed to return to Gibraltar and by 13 July the re-evacuation was complete. For the then Governor they were no more than "useless mouths" who would place extra logistic demands on the garrison whilst seriously retarding the work of preparing the Rock's defences. The trauma of this first evacuation was a profoundly unpleasant experience for the evacuees and for those who remained on the Rock. The anger and resentment that built up was tempered only by the sense of patriotism and of duty



to the war effort. There was worse to come. On 19 July 1940 the evacuation of 2000 Gibraltarians to Madeira commenced. When discussing the situation today with those who were sent there, it is clear that they saw themselves as the lucky ones. They had their issues too but it was hardly the same as facing the blitz in London, the camps in Northern Ireland or the long journey across the Atlantic to Jamaica. The position at the end of 1940 was about 11,000 evacuees in London, 2000 in Jamaica and a slightly lesser number in Madeira. The bulk of the evacuees were moved to London at the same time as the Battle of Britain was underway. This prompted complaints from Gibraltar that the evacuees should be moved to a safer part of the United Kingdom. In the same way the dangers posed to Atlantic convoys by German U-boats led to demands that the crossing of Gibraltarians to Jamaica should cease. It was evident already, at this very early stage, that the evacuation had taught the people of Gibraltar how to organise themselves. This was a hugely significant development and something that had happened through necessity and through force of circumstances rather than by choice. It was reflected in the uncompromising criticism of

**'The evacuation had taught the people of Gibraltar how to organise themselves. This was a hugely significant development and something that had happened through necessity and through force of circumstances rather than by choice. It was reflected in the uncompromising criticism of the position that the evacuees found themselves in at different stages during those turbulent years.'**

There is therefore a thread which commences with the outbreak of the Second World War, runs through the evacuation of the civilian population of Gibraltar and leads also the formation of the AACR. It is clear to me that everything is inseparably linked and that one of the more significant effects of the evacuation is the organisation of the Gibraltarians under the banner of the AACR. In a fortress at war this was a revolutionary event. The AACR was the first political party in the history of Gibraltar. Albert Risso became its first President in December 1942 and Joshua Hassan its first Vice President, taking over from Risso after the former went to head the Gibraltar Confederation of Labour. The social issues that the Association faced were a consequence of the War and of the separation of families. The evacuation served as a spur to the men left behind in Gibraltar to push for the welfare of their loved ones and for their return to Gibraltar. It also moved the Association firmly into the political arena with demands for increased self-government once the War in Europe was over. The evacuees in London, Madeira and Jamaica also became organised. They formed themselves into committees in order to campaign for improved living conditions. For example, in London there were all sorts of wrangles between



**LONDON:** Children of Class III 1943 of St Patrick School near Warren Street Tube Station at the end of Tottenham Court Road. The tall girl at the back is Dolores Vila (later Mrs Bosano).

◀ these committees and the management of different hotels where the Gibraltarians were billeted. This included rows over the wish of the evacuees to cook Mediterranean food in their rooms and the continuing efforts by hotel managers to stop them.

Petitions and complaints were also common at Camp Gibraltar in Jamaica. At one point, the evacuees called for the removal of the Commander of Camp Gibraltar whose strict discipline they blamed for the unrest. As news of these complaints reached Gibraltar, it fuelled the discontent amongst those who were left behind.

There was also a constant exchange of letters between thousands of evacuees and their menfolk on the Rock. This was fertile ground for the AACR who became the focus for this dissatisfaction and who effectively channelled this unrest. The surrender of Italy in September 1943 increased the pressure on the colonial Government to repatriate the evacuees and in April 1944 the first group of 1367 arrived in Gibraltar directly from the United Kingdom. The second batch of over 3000 arrived in August.

In May, the first group of repatriates left Madeira. When the flying-bombs made their appearance in the skies over London, a number of evacuee centres were hit and six casualties resulted. On the Rock there was a call for the Gibraltarians to be moved elsewhere and, as a result, by the end of July 1944 6800 evacuees were moved from London to Northern Ireland where they were housed in 17 hutted camps in County Down, County Antrim and County Londonderry.

Both at home and abroad, Gibraltarians quickly learned that organised action produced results. Everyone understood

that when the answer from London was "No", you simply continued knocking at the closed door again and again until the answer became "Yes". The evacuation also served to cement together the identity of the Gibraltarians in a different way. Uprooted and transplanted to London, over 13,000 people realised that while they were British, they were certainly not English in their culture or in their outlook. This came as a shock to many at first and there are records of evacuees writing back home to their families on the Rock making this precise point. It was about food, about traditions, about lifestyle and about culture – even about the weather! There is no doubt that being away from Gibraltar served as a spur to bring the Gibraltarian identity to the fore.

Yet the significance of the evacuation was more than just about a small colonial people sharing a traumatic experience. The records show that were it not for the AACR, the organised campaigns, the committees, the letter-writing, the protests and the petitions we may not even have had the Gibraltar that we know today. There were those in London at the time who argued that they should take advantage of the evacuation of the civilian population to keep the evacuees away from Gibraltar permanently. We owe a great debt to the evacuation generation whose relentless campaigning made sure that this did not happen. The struggles surrounding the evacuation strengthened the sense of nationhood and of common interests of the people of Gibraltar. This was happening all over the Empire in different ways. In Gibraltar the whole evacuation experience was therefore loaded with political significance. The Gibraltarians had come of age.



**MADEIRA:** Mrs O Olivero is in the picture but the rest of the people have not been identified. Can you name them?

21/05/2015

Pictures by courtesy of Joe Gingell's evacuation memorabilia in aid of cancer charities.

# And so the journey begins

Today the Chronicle continues the journey the evacuees would take, first suggested in a notice carried in the newspaper in May 17. By kind permission of Tommy Finlayson, we publish the next passage from his book 'The Fortress Came First,' on the key dates.

## Part Two - the first evacuees.

### Extracts from 'The Fortress Came First' by Tommy Finlayson

**T**he uncertainties over, the process of evacuating civilians from Gibraltar finally got under way on Tuesday, 21st. May, 1940.

Matters were to proceed very rapidly over the ensuing few weeks: sometimes too rapidly for those who had to make the reception arrangements at the other end!

On Tuesday, 21st. May, 1940, the s.s. Gibel Dersa, a vessel of 1,226 gross tons employed in the Gibraltar-Tangier service, set out from Gibraltar bound for Casablanca. On board were Mr. Charles Gaggero, a medical officer and control staff, including Police, and several hundred persons (328 adults and 166 children) who could be classified as independent evacuees: i.e. in a position to pay for their own passages and to arrange their own accommodation.

Those not in such a fortunate position set out the following day, Wednesday 22nd. May, on board the Mohamed Ali Kebir. This first contingent of Government evacuees comprised 950 women and children and a few old men. They came under Category A of the City Council Scheme: i.e. women and children under the age of fourteen. It is not difficult to imagine the anxiety suffered by these souls and the relatives whom they had to leave behind so suddenly, and the effects of this were to become apparent in the subsequent report of the Medical Officer on board, Dr. J J Giraldi. Meanwhile, the Gibraltar Chronicle of Friday, 24th. May, 1940, tried to make light of the problems involved, no doubt in an attempt to maintain the morale of those yet to be evacuated and of those who would have to stay behind. Over 900 evacuees belonging to Group A of the City Council Scheme, consisting of women and children under fourteen years of age, and a few elderly and infirm persons left Gibraltar on Wednesday evening for Casablanca by the ss Mohamed Ali Kebir, which had been chartered by His Majesty's Government for that purpose. The Mohamed Ali Kebir arrived at Casablanca early on Thursday morning. Cheers and greeting were exchanged between those on the ship and friends ashore

as the steamer left the wharf. Certainly the younger element regarded the evacuation as a great adventure and for many of them it was their first experience of travel. Lorries were provided by the City Council for the conveyance of the belongings of evacuees from convenient points to the wharf in the Dockyard.

The evacuees appeared to have carried out the instructions issued by the ARP organisation to whom the detailed work was delegated, and embarkation arrangements worked satisfactorily.

It should be remembered that in the carrying out of a large scheme of this nature, some hardship to individuals cannot be avoided, particularly in view of the short time available. A few of the inconveniences of the first day will doubtless be averted in the light of the experience gained in the initial stages.

Three days later, the same periodical stated that according to those in a position to judge, the first embarkation went off most satisfactorily, and the greatest credit is due to the City Council and its ARP organisation, and others responsible, not overlooking the evacuees themselves for their orderly and cheerful behaviour.

The report of the Medical Officer on board the Mohamed Ali Kebir on that fateful day paints a rather different picture! He stated that of 800 persons taken, 100 had been allotted to cabins, the rest having to travel on troop decks. The ventilation of these quarters had been quite efficient and the atmosphere did not become unpleasant until the next morning at about 4am., when it was markedly 'heavy', the place then being thoroughly messed by vomited matter and evacuations of children. The sanitary arrangements had been good and close at hand, but by early morning most children had been too sick to ask for, or go to the lavatories provided.

The evacuees, continued the report, had come on board rather tired and in low spirits. They had apparently been kept on the quay for about three hours. From the start some people had refused to go down



to the decks and had loitered about the promenades. They had been down and stated that they could not stand it. As the boat left the quay there had been a few hysterical fits and other expressions of emotionalism. (The "cheers and greetings" of the Chronicle report!). The thirteen hour journey must have been a nightmarish experience. Six hours after leaving port about ninety per cent of the evacuees had been seasick and from midnight until about 6am. there had been a continuous demand for medical attention. The two midwife nurses had also gone sick and the aid of the three special constables on board and their officer had had to be enlisted. In addition to their own duties, these men had had to carry people from troop-decks to the fresh air and others who had fainted in the open and were chilled had to be carried below. Not surprisingly, these men were overtaxed to the point of exhaustion.

Apart from sickness due to the ship's movements there had been a series of cases of collapse. The Medical Officer attributed this to exhaustion due partly to lack of food (especially hot food) and cold. Some of the evacuees, owing to worry, had not been eating well prior to embarkation and once on board had had very little. In addition, some people had tied their blankets with their belongings so that they could not get at them when they were most needed.

During the night the Medical Officer had had to attend to between 200 and 300 cases, some requiring the administration of medicines. Such, then, was 'the great adventure' described by the Gibraltar Chronicle! There were to be many more over the ensuing weeks. Nor was the ordeal over once the ship had berthed at Casablanca, for this contingent was destined for Rabat and this entailed a further hour's journey by train.

Part three tomorrow