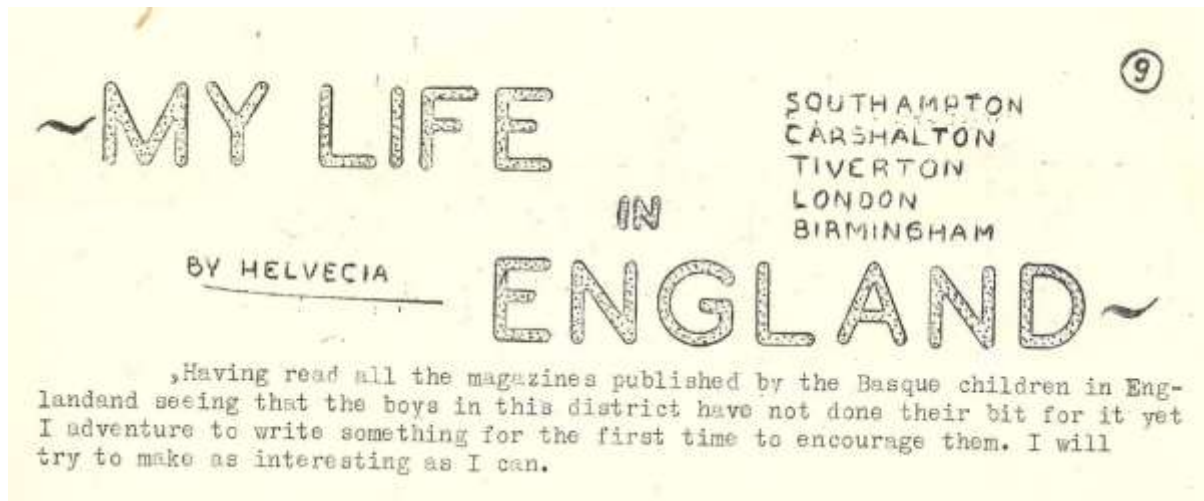


**Telling our stories - writings of the Basque child refugees:  
(7b) “My life in England” by Helvecia Hidalgo - Southampton,  
Carshalton, Tiverton, London, Birmingham - in *Amistad* no 5,  
December 1940**



“Having read all the magazines published by the Basque children in England seeing that the boys in this district have not done their bit for it yet I adventure to write something for the first time to encourage them. I will try to make [it] as interesting as I can.

I am living in Birmingham since May, after having lived in the Basque Children’s Home in Carshalton for one year from where a generous English family adopted me and my brother and sister. When the war finished, as we did not wish to go back to Spain (in the state that it was and still is) our guardians decided to send us to an English boarding school so that I should learn the English language, and my brother and sister, who are younger could obtain an English education. I found that life quite difficult at first as I did not know sufficient English to do the class work as the English children did, and I thought I should never be able to learn it. But when three months passed by I realised that there was no alternative but to learn the language thoroughly if I wanted to get on, which I did, so I tried hard to learn it and when I left at the end of the year, I was able to do the work that the others in the form did.

When my guardians knew that I wanted to be a shorthand-typist, they sent me up here, and I go to college where I am learning shorthand and typing, and I hope to be in the future what I have always wanted to be. I know that should I have been at home they could not afford to give me this pleasure and, therefore, besides being grateful to the family who so kindly have taken us as if we were their own children, I do my best to please them with my work and not to waste my time and hope that all the other children placed in my position are doing the same.

My brother and sister are still at school and their English has improved tremendously though, unfortunately, they are forgetting their Spanish, but that does not matter very much because, when Fascism is overthrown from Europe (which will be very soon) and we go back to Spain to build it up, they will pick it up again very soon and their English will be very useful to them.

I hope that the children who remain in Charshalton who were there during the time we were, have not forgotten us for we think of them constantly and hope to visit their new home as soon as we can.”