

160 INMIGRANTES EN TIMES NEW ROMAN

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POR
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160 IMMIGRANTS IN TIMES NEW ROMAN

UN PROYECTO PARA
A PROJECT FOR ATLÁNTICA

* 160 Illegal Canary Islands Immigrants Arrested

CARUPANO, Venezuela, 26th May.- A rickety sailboat named "La Elvira" arrived on the Carúpano shores with 106 irregular immigrants aboard. Among the undocumented persons, there are ten women and a 9-year-old girl. There are also three people from Tenerife, 10 from Las Palmas, five Cubans who are children of Canary Islanders, and 15 people from the Spanish mainland. All were in poor condition, half-starved, sunburnt, filthy, and in rags. The hold of the 19-metre-long boat is also in terrible condition amid a carnival of bad smells.

The people under arrest say that the crossing took a little longer than one month. It all began at the docks of Las Palmas, where 100 people embarked in several tenders. Most are poor peasants from the island of Gran Canaria who had to sell or pawn all their possessions to pay the high price of 4,000 pesetas for the fare. Prior to embarkation they hid in local homes. One of the organisers, Juan Azcona, said that he had housed more than 20 in his home. Ramón Redondo, owner of the schooner, bought it recently for 250,000 pesetas. Redondo hoped to be able to pay it off with his earnings from the passage and a cargo of salt that he carried but that has now been impounded.

The tenders sailed from the island of Fuerteventura, where they met "La Elvira". The irregular immigrants say that when they boarded the schooner they heard two shots from a government patrol boat, which overtook them and ordered them to surrender. But, thanks to the wind, the sailboat raced ahead and reached international waters. "La Elvira" took 36 days to cross the Atlantic. Her passengers ate potatoes and grain, which became spoiled midway through the journey. Water was rationed, and, to avoid the sun, they spent nearly all day in the holds, where they lay down, crowded and dirty.

At the stern, they used planks to separate off a bathroom area, which was soon filled with vomit, they said. The vomit and the saltpetre of the sea affected their clothing, turning it into rags. Antonio Domínguez was the pilot who navigated the schooner to the high seas, where he was supposed to surrender command to Antonio Cruz Elórtogui, who had said he was a deep sea captain, but this turned out to be a lie he had told in order to embark, since he had no nautical experience, but in fact was a Basque fugitive. He says that he was nearly lynched at sea, but that this was prevented by the owner, the pilot, and the five sailors. At that point, Domínguez said he was setting sail back to the Canary Islands, but a passenger named Regino Camacho, whom others said had been accused of a murder before the Civil War, led a mutiny, and, pistol in hand, obliged Domínguez to carry on. As if that weren't enough, in the middle of the Atlantic, a hurricane threatened to swamp the boat, and broke the rudder.

A number of firearms were found aboard and confiscated. The arrested, who have been declared involuntary immigrants, will be sent to a prison camp for the time being.

Picture of the crew of "La Elvira"

** Picture of the crew of "La Elvira" on its arrival at Puerto de Garupano, Venezuela, in May 1949.

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Circulating for some time on the Internet is a powerful image that attracts us as much for what it shows as for the headline. In it, we see the sailing boat "La Elvira", which had sailed from the docks of Las Palmas in the Canary Islands, reaching the Venezuelan coast in May, 1949, and the headline tells us that all the crew was later arrested.

The photograph is genuine, as is the name of the boat and the date. We know that the crew was composed of people not only from the Canary Islands but also from Murcia, Madrid, Almería, León, Orense, Asturias, Cuenca, Cadiz, Navarre, and the Balearic Islands, plus one Spanish-American, one Spanish-Frenchman, and five Cubans.

What is also apparent is that the masthead of the now-defunct provincial Venezuelan newspaper *Agencia Comercial* and the layout shown in this reproduction are not genuine.

The writing style of the news item is not like that used in Venezuela at the time. The dateline is given as "May 1949", instead of 25 May, 1949 (the date of the event). The port of arrival is wrongly identified as Garúpano instead of Carúpano.

It is not known who designed this "reproduction of a press cutting", but it was used by the Canary Islands government for its campaign entitled "We Too Were Foreigners" in 2004, and the story it contains was published in the book *Fugados en Velero: Historia de La Elvira* ["Runaways in a Sailboat: The Story of La Elvira"], written by Gonzalo Morales Hernández for the Canary Islands Centre for Popular Culture.

Tomás Bárbulo referred to the incident in a story in the Canary Islands edition of the newspaper *El País* on 16 July, 2001, which ran the same photograph.

The Venezuelan Blanca Edelmira Azcona Flora, daughter of Paco Azcona, one of the immigrants pictured, says she owns the original photograph used in the layout. Since then, the photograph, with its headline, has appeared on all sort of websites, and thousand of stories about it and its meaning have been told.

Probably, and on a very small scale, it has become nearly a myth on the Web because of the imaginings it has spawned, its confirmation of the play of historical cycles, and even an almost Biblical and morbid sensation of punishment and redemption.

Apresados en Venezuela 160 inmigrantes ilegales Canarios

CARUPANO, Venezuela 26 de Mayo.-Un velero destartado bautizado La Elvira ha llegado a la costa de Carúpano con 106 inmigrantes irregulares a bordo. Entre los sin papeles detenidos hay diez mujeres y una niña de cuatro años. También hay 15 tinerfeños, 10 palmeros, cinco cubanos hijos de isleños y 15 peninsulares. Todos se encuentran en paupérrimas condiciones, casi desnutridos, insolados, sucios y vistiendo harapos. La bodega del barco, que mide 19 metros de eslora, también se encuentra en pésimo estado dentro de un carnaval de malos olores.

Los detenidos cuentan que la hazaña duro poco mas de un mes. Todo comenzó en el muelle de Las Palmas, y cien personas embarcaron en varias falúas. La mayoría campesinos pobres provenientes de Gran Canaria que tuvieron que vender todo y empeñar los que le quedaban para poder pagar el elevado billete de 4.000 pesetas. Antes del viaje permanecieron ocultos en casas del sector. Juan Azcona, uno de los organizadores, declaró que alojó en su vivienda a más de 20. Ramón Redondo, el dueño de la goleta había pagado recientemente por ella 250.000 pesetas. Redondo aspiraba poder pagarla en su totalidad con el precio de los billetes y un cargamento de sal que trajo pero que ha sido decomisado.

Las falúas partieron desde Fuerteventura, donde se encontraba La Elvira. Cuentan los irregulares que cuando abordaron la goleta oyeron dos tiros de una patrullera oficial que al final les alcanzó y ordenó a que se entregaran. Pero gracias al viento el velero tomó ventaja y llegó hacia aguas internacionales.

La Elvira tardó 36 días en cruzar el Atlántico. Sus pasajeros se alimentaron de papas y granos que a mitad de viaje ya estaban en mal estado. El agua estaba racionada y para evitar el sol pasaban casi todo el día en la bodega, donde sólo cabían tumbados y apretados en el suelo.

Detrás al fondo, unos tabloncillos hacían de baño, que rápidamente se llenaba de vómito según los pasajeros. Entre el vómito y el salitre del mar afectaron la ropa hasta desgastarla para ser convertidas en trapos.

Antonio Domínguez fue el capitán que llevo la golera a altar mar y según, debía darle el mando a Antonio Cruz Elórtégui, capitán de altura. Pero fue una mentira que usó Elórtégui para poder embarcar, ya que el no posee conocimientos marinos, en realidad es un perseguido vasco. Este cuenta que casi lo linchan en alta mar, aunque gracias a el armador, el costero y los cinco marineros lo evitaron. En ese momento Domínguez anunció que volverían a Canarias, pero un pasajero llamado Regino Camacho, que otros alegan que ha sido acusado de asesinato antes de la guerra civil, armó un motín y pistola en mano, obligo a Domínguez a proseguir. Por si fuera poco, en medio del Atlántico un huracán amenazo la nave, rompió el timón y estuvo a punto de hacerlos naufragar

En el velero han sido encontradas y decomisadas varias armas de fuego. Los detenidos, que han sido declarados inmigrantes involuntarios, serán enviados a un campo de reclusión momentánea.

Imagen de los tripulantes de "La ELVIRA" -





Imagen de los tripulantes de "La Elvira" a su llegada a Puerto de Garupano, Venezuela, en Mayo 1949

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