In July 1938, the Republican army launched its largest offensive of the war. The crossing of the Ebro river caught the enemy army by surprise. Franco, who never accepted the loss of even an inch of land, responded to the Republican offensive by concentrating his troops on the river. The battle of the Ebro would be the longest battle of the Spanish Civil War. This newspaper article chronicles the crossing of the Ebro by the Republicans during the first days of the offensive.

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(From *La Humanitat*, 30 July 1938)

**Republican Soldiers Cross the River**

The Ebro River, with its hanging bridges and its banks guarded by rifles and protected by machine gun nests hidden in the underbrush, had interrupted the enormous struggle in March in the sector from Mequinenza to Amposta.

Faced with this deep and wide band of water and mud, the invaders stopped their hurred plunder.

Our soldiers, their spirit of resistance firm, waited with impatience for the precise hour when they would put their boats to water, set up gangways and footbridges, and leave the river in their wake.

Finally the hour arrived. A few minutes earlier, news of the order spread. The command was met with every fighter’s enormous enthusiasm and infinite happiness:
'We are crossing the Ebro!…'

Preparations for the attack were accompanied by words of joy, bursting forth from every soldier's throat. Immense and unanimous joy, which was tested later in the difficult, harsh battle that forced the invader to flee in disarray in various sectors of the fight.

**How It Began**

Dark night; of an anxious silence, where it seemed that even just breathing would reveal you to the enemy.

The banks of the river were covered with rifles and outstretched arms that dragged boats and latched the cables for the hanging bridges. With each man in his place, the attack and reconquest began.

In this task, one had to fight with alert senses, because the difficulties were enormous. One of them – the first – was there, in the river itself, not at all easy to cross in the rush of the attack and with rapidly improvised methods for crossing. And this was even more difficult if the enemy had the easy target of thousands of heavily encumbered men who could not cross from one side to the other in just a few moments.

But an avalanche of will and enthusiasm was leaping to the conquest. Our arms against the enemy could not have been more effective. The evening before, the surprise and the difficulties provided by the Ebro's natural defences had been overwhelming. But these defences were overcome by the titanic efforts of thousands of patriots.

**Soldiers, Sailors**

The enemy was vigilant.

They believed – so we are told by the men of the Battle of the Ebro – that it was a changing of the guard.

When they began to organise their defence, with anguished hurry, with the desperation of failure, it was already too late.

On the river there was an avalanche of boats. Rowing at top speed, the Republican soldiers carried with them the fervour of victory all the way to the very banks where the invaders shielded themselves with their weapons.

And with the soldiers of these divisions went sailors as well, who, in a battalion that today shares the glory of the attack on this front, came to fight, tenacious and victorious, on the banks of the Ebro.

Once on the other side, a good number of soldiers began, under desperate enemy fire, the necessary task of connecting the hanging bridges, extending over