

## ETA and the Public, 1959-1987

KYLE McCREANOR<sup>1</sup>

*After an ephemeral moment of autonomy during the Spanish Civil War, the Basque Country was conquered by Spanish Nationalist forces. Under the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco, the Basque people were subject to heavy oppression. The Francoist state sought to eliminate the Basque language and culture as part of a grand vision to create a 'unified Spain.' In 1959, a Basque guerrilla resistance movement, Euskadi ta Askatasuna (ETA: Basque Country and Freedom) was born with a mission to preserve their unique language and culture, and ultimately, to secure an independent Basque state. Their initial strategy was to incite a revolution by symbolic acts of violence against the Franco regime and gain popular support in the Basque Country. This paper explores ETA's relationship with the public, analyzing the ways in which they cultivated support and disseminated their ideas to the masses. However, what the research finds is that as ETA's strategy changed, so did their relationship with the public. After Spain's democratization, ETA abandoned the idea of bringing about a revolution of the masses, and sought only to wage a violent war of attrition against the Spanish state in order to establish a sovereign Basque nation.*

The Basque Country, or *Euskadi*, is a region straddling the Northern Pyrenees, falling under the jurisdiction of Spain and France. It is the homeland of the Basque people, an ancient

---

<sup>1</sup> This research paper was made possible by a Directed Reading course in the Department of History, supervised by Professor Matthew Koch. I am eternally grateful for the Elias Mandel Prize for Study Abroad in the Humanities, which allowed me to travel to the Basque Country after having written this paper to study Euskara at Maizpide Barnetegi in Lazkao. Thank you to Professor Matthew Koch and Professoressa Daniela Lorenzi for recommending me for such a generous award. And finally, thank you to the hardworking team at The Corvette who made the publication of this volume possible.

ethno-linguistic group whose origins remain a mystery, although they are undoubtedly pre-Indo-European. After the Spanish Civil War, most of this region lay under the heel of the Spanish dictatorship led by *Caudillo* Francisco Franco. The Francoist state uncompromisingly asserted the importance of Spanish unity. Any subversion of national Spanish cohesion was brutally suppressed. Basque literature was burned and Euskara (the Basque language) was eliminated from schools and banned in radio broadcasts, public gatherings, and publications. Basque names were converted to their Spanish equivalents, tombstones and funeral markers were defaced to remove traces of Euskara, and the nascent Basque university was shut down indefinitely.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, in 1952, a small group of Basque students began to collect and discuss illegal books.<sup>4</sup> Within a few decades, this well-intentioned study group became one of the most infamous terrorist groups in European history: *Euskadi ta Askatasuna* (ETA), meaning “Basque Country and Freedom.” A key element in explaining how ETA functioned is examining how it was able to cultivate popular support and how it communicated with the public.<sup>5</sup> The fight for the mind of Euskadi was a broad campaign that ranged from small-scale vandalism to international media relations. ETA managed to garner considerable support in its

---

<sup>2</sup> All translations from Basque, Spanish, and French herein are my own unless otherwise noted.

<sup>3</sup> Daniele Conversi, *The Basques, the Catalans and Spain: Alternative Routes to Nationalist Mobilisation* (London: Hurst, 1997), 81.

<sup>4</sup> *Documentos «Y»* (Donostia: Hordago, 1979), vol. 1, 11-12; This source is an anthology of ETA primary source documents.

<sup>5</sup> For slight simplification, ETA is treated a singular organization unless otherwise stated. There are instances in this research paper where it is useful to distinguish between ETA-m and ETA-pm (see page 7). Overall, there simply is not enough evidence nor discernable reason to sustain a differentiated analysis between divisions such as ETA-Berri, ETA-Zarra, ETA-V, ETA-VI, etc. for what is treated herein.

early years, but by the 1980s its relationship with the public had changed substantially.

A group of young Basque students disillusioned with the apparent inaction of the *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* (PNV, the Basque Nationalist Party) formed a study group in 1952 and convened regularly in Bilbo to discuss politics and philosophy.<sup>6</sup> The group was called Ekin, meaning ‘action,’ denoting a fundamental opposition to the PNV’s alleged passivity regarding Basque issues.<sup>7</sup> The members of Ekin realized that something needed to be done to prevent the death of Basque language and culture, but the means were unclear. For its first four years, Ekin did not engage in any activism or dissemination of propaganda outside of its immediate membership.<sup>8</sup> Membership surged from 1955 to 1956, when a substantial portion of the youth branch of the PNV, *Eusko Gaztedi* (Basque Youth), cut ties with the PNV and joined Ekin. Like the founding members of Ekin, the young Basques of *Eusko Gaztedi* advocated for separatism rather than the autonomy desired by the PNV.<sup>9</sup> Following the influx, Ekin took on the name of *Eusko Gaztedi*, and finally began to take action.<sup>10</sup> They publicly distributed small ikurriña (Basque flag) stickers that read “Euskadi is the homeland of the Basques.”<sup>11</sup> Their actions were not unprecedented; the *Euzko Ikasale Alkartasuna* (Society of Basque Students) distributed subversive materials to the public from 1947 until the arrest or exile of the

---

<sup>6</sup> *Documentos «Y»* vol. 1, 11-18.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Ekin’ translates literally as “to do” and so the English translation varies by author. I opt for ‘action’ because I believe it most accurately reflects that the choice of name was a conscious separation from the PNV and the inaction associated with it.

<sup>8</sup> *Documentos «Y»*, vol. 1, 18.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

entire leadership in 1951.<sup>12</sup> Ultimately, ideological tensions culminated in the division of *Eusko Gaztedi*; one group chose to remain under the leadership of the PNV, and the remainder went on to form a new group in 1959: *Euskadi ta Askatasuna*.<sup>13</sup>

At the first *Biltzar Nagusia* (General Assembly) in 1962, ETA deemed propaganda to be its most urgent issue.<sup>14</sup> ETA released *Declaración de principios* to inform the public of its intent. Their goal was made clear: ETA would lead the struggle against the Franco regime for an independent Basque state. ETA officially defined itself as a “Basque revolutionary movement for national liberation.”<sup>15</sup> *Principios* was published in Basque, Spanish, French, and English, and fit onto a single double-sided sheet. Thousands of copies were produced, most likely in Iparralde (Northern [French] Basque Country), and then distributed by associates in Hegoalde (Southern [Spanish] Basque Country).<sup>16</sup>

The first *Biltzar Nagusia* also decided to continue publication of ETA’s official publication, *Zutik* (Stand Up), which by then had reached its third series.<sup>17</sup> *Zutik* was to be prepared in Bayonne and then printed and distributed throughout Euskadi.<sup>18</sup> Publication quality varied, as circumstances sometimes made the logistics of printing extremely difficult. Access to printing presses was limited in some instances, resulting in the production of copies via a mimeograph in an

---

<sup>12</sup> Conversi, *The Basques, the Catalans and Spain*, 82.

<sup>13</sup> André Lecours, *Basque Nationalism and the Spanish State* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2007), 75.

<sup>14</sup> *Documentos «Y»*, vol. 1, 523.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Clark, *The Basques: The Franco Years and Beyond* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1979), 158.

<sup>16</sup> *Documentos «Y»*, vol. 1, 523.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

attic.<sup>19</sup> The scale of distribution is uncertain, but ETA claimed a readership in the tens of thousands.<sup>20</sup> Unsurprisingly, *Zutik* was primarily political in nature, but ETA also offered some lighter readings. The ‘*Cuadernos ETA*’ were brief leaflets on a range of Basque topics. They covered Basque history, linguistics, anthropology, culture, and of course, more politics.<sup>21</sup> A recurring theme throughout was the uniqueness of Basque identity. The linguistic discussion focused on designating Basque as an ancient language completely unrelated to any other. Likewise, anthropological research indicates a very long human presence in Euskadi, of which the modern Basques are a continuation.

It is important to note that possession of any ETA propaganda, including *Zutik*, was a punishable offence in Francoist Spain.<sup>22</sup> Dissemination of ETA propaganda involved two of ETA’s six branches. The ‘Secretariat’ was responsible for the creation of various publications such as *Zutik*, *Zaldabun*, and *Eutsi*.<sup>23</sup> Another branch, designated simply as ‘Propaganda,’ was in charge of printing and distributing propaganda material.<sup>24</sup> The evidence indicates that typically, these materials were conceptualized by senior etarras (ETA members) in Iparralde and then mass produced in Hegoalde, as this made most sense considering logistics.<sup>25</sup> Propaganda centres were based around Hendaya and Biarritz, which were among the most popular

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 380.

<sup>20</sup> *Documentos «Y»*, vol. 2, 490.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 52-227.

<sup>22</sup> Xabier Zumalde, *Las botas de la guerrilla: Memorias del jefe de los Grupos Autónomos de ETA (1969-1977)* (Arrigorriaga: Status Ediciones, 2004), 393.

<sup>23</sup> *Documentos «Y»*, vol. 1, 22.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> For example, from his experience in Operation Lobo, Mikel Lejarza identified Emiliano Carlos as a renowned etarra who would occasionally pose as a trucker to bring propaganda materials from Iparralde to Hegoalde, see: Xavier Vinader, *Operación Lobo: Memorias de un infiltrado en ETA* (Madrid: Temas de Hoy, 1999), 59.

places of refuge for etarras in Iparralde.<sup>26</sup> In the early sixties, ETA developed secret paths between Spain and France to facilitate smuggling of propaganda materials.<sup>27</sup> *El País* reported an incident in 1976 in which a car crashed into a tree, injuring the driver and killing the passenger. The Spanish-registered vehicle crashed in Gironde, en route to Iparralde. The collision scattered the contents of the vehicle: a load of Basque separatist propaganda, including pamphlets, posters, and photographs, across the road.<sup>28</sup> It is impossible to derive any certainties from this single event, but it perhaps indicates that ETA had centres of propaganda production outside of Euskadi.<sup>29</sup>

For all intents and purposes, *Zutik* was the voice of ETA. For many, *Zutik* was the bridge between themselves and the elusive organization. In terms of its political content, it generally aimed to create support for violence as a means of national liberation. One early *Zutik* issue featured a prominent article titled “When the violent condemn violence” which read:

Several young Basques have just been sentenced to lengthy terms. They were accused of having resorted to violence to express their opposition to the regime. The prosecutors are the Francoists. The same ones who, 25 years ago took up arms against the established power, launched an army

---

<sup>26</sup> Paddy Woodworth, *Dirty War, Clean Hands: ETA, the GAL and Spanish Democracy* (London: Yale University Press, 2002), 68.

<sup>27</sup> *Documentos «Y»*, vol. 2, 6.

<sup>28</sup> EFE, “Se estrelló en Francia un coche con propaganda separatista vasca,” *El País*, July 1, 1976.

<sup>29</sup> In 1976, ETA would have still enjoyed widespread support in Western Europe. It is not unfeasible that ETA had sympathizers abroad willing to assist in the production of propaganda materials. Moreover, one cannot rule out the possibility of collaboration with the FLB (Front de Libération de la Bretagne), with whom ETA admittedly had connections, see: Robert Moss, *Revolutionary Challenges in Spain* (London: Institute for the Study of Conflict, 1974), 25.

of requetés, falangists, moors, Italians, and Germans against Euskadi, incinerated Guernica and Durango with barbaric bombings, and murdered thousands of Basques.<sup>30</sup>

This kind of dichotomization is typical of ETA's publications, which refused to acknowledge a middle ground between Francoism and Basque separatism. This excerpt also demonstrates the role of national memory in the cultivation of separatist sentiment. To radical Basque nationalists, the bombing of Gernika was not just a war crime; it was a symbolic strike at the heart of Basque culture. The bombing of Gernika was thus evoked as a clear indication of the necessity of armed struggle. According to ETA, a non-violent approach, such as that taken by Gandhi in India, was only possible in civilized regime, and clearly not an option in Francoist Spain.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, ETA believed that any collaboration with Spanish authorities amounted to treason, and disparagingly called collaborators *txakurrak* (dogs).<sup>32</sup>

One of ETA's most important means of making its presence known was graffiti. Political graffiti in Spain predates ETA, but was much less common before 1959.<sup>33</sup> In ETA's first two years, its activities were limited to holding meetings, circulating literature within its membership, and graffiti.<sup>34</sup> 'Euskadi ta Askatasuna' was painted on walls for the first time in 1959.<sup>35</sup> When spray-paint was not obtainable, the alternative was

---

<sup>30</sup> *Documentos «Y»*, vol. 1, 405.

<sup>31</sup> *Documentos «Y»*, vol. 2, 300-301.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 444.

<sup>33</sup> Lyman Chaffee, "Social conflict and alternative mass communications: public art and politics in the service of Spanish-Basque nationalism," *European Journal of Political Research* 16, no. 5 (Sep. 1988): 550.

<sup>34</sup> Lecours, *Basque Nationalism and the Spanish State*, 79.

<sup>35</sup> Woodworth, *Dirty War, Clean Hands*, 156.

a simple paint can and brush, or less commonly, tar, which was tremendously difficult for authorities to remove.<sup>36</sup> In 1966, ETA organized a training course for militants which detailed how to create homemade aerosol spray paint.<sup>37</sup> Initially, pro-ETA graffiti was limited to simple slogans or the ETA acronym, but it became more complex, involving “statements identifying their issues.”<sup>38</sup> Murals were also employed, many commemorating the bombing of Gernika.<sup>39</sup>

Graffiti is significant for several reasons. Firstly, the act itself was designated as ‘propagandizing’ and was illegal, so it was inherently subversive.<sup>40</sup> Secondly, it indicated ETA presence or support within communities. It is a visual representation of political ideology, and its visibility was an integral part of ETA’s psychological battle for support. Furthermore, it is a form of communication. Lyman Chaffee’s analysis of Basque nationalist graffiti (and visual art more generally) revealed that it was sufficiently widespread to warrant a distinction as ‘mass communication.’ He emphasizes its importance as a form of communication, stating that “[a]rt and mass communication form part of the process of saturating the citizens with values, influencing the formation of political consciousness, and shaping public opinion.”<sup>41</sup>

An important issue for clandestine groups such as ETA is their interaction with the media. Working with the media in Francoist Spain was off the table for obvious reasons, so beyond their own publications, ETA was featured in various international media. Etxarra refugees in Iparralde were sometimes treated as

---

<sup>36</sup> Vinader, *Operación Lobo*, 119; *Documentos «Y»*, vol. 1, 56.

<sup>37</sup> Vinader, *Operación Lobo*, 119.

<sup>38</sup> Chaffee, “Social conflict and alternative mass communication,” 550.

<sup>39</sup> Lyman Chaffee, *Political Protest and Street Art: Popular Tools for Democratization in Hispanic Countries* (Westport: Greenwood, 1993), 92.

<sup>40</sup> Chaffee, “Social conflict and alternative mass communication,” 546.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 569.

local heroes, recounting their exploits in French periodicals, radio broadcasts, and television programs.<sup>42</sup> Other examples include an ETA presentation on the torture of political prisoners in Spain for Swiss television, an informative report for the Italian press and television, and interaction with countless other foreign media during the Burgos Trial of 1970.<sup>43</sup>

The trial began in December 1970; sixteen ETA leaders were put on trial in connection to the murder of police commissioner Melitón Manzanas. The trial lasted one week, and the verdicts were delivered soon after.<sup>44</sup> Six were sentenced to death, nine sent to prison, and one found innocent.<sup>45</sup> A conservative ex-member of the PNV, Telesforo Monzón, served as a spokesperson for ETA during the trial. Through him, ETA was able to communicate frequently with international media.<sup>46</sup> This event was ETA's first significant international exposure, and put the broader Basque conflict in the international spotlight.<sup>47</sup> The trial itself has been called "an unprecedented national and international propaganda platform" for ETA.<sup>48</sup> During the trial, surely aware that there was no justice to be had in a Francoist military court, the *etarras* made little attempt at an actual legal defence. They opted to use the platform to proclaim the Basque right to sovereignty and call for international solidarity.<sup>49</sup> At one point, they requested their lawyers to leave, and sang revolutionary songs in the courtroom.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Zumalde, *Las botas de la guerrilla*, 276-277.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 145-146; *Ibid.*, 244; *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>44</sup> Clark, *The Basques*, 185-186.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Conversi, *The Basques, the Catalans and Spain*, 101, 150.

<sup>47</sup> Gurutz Jáuregui, "ETA: Orígenes y evolución ideológica y política" in *La historia de ETA*, ed. Antonio Elorza (Madrid: Temas de hoy, 2000), 251.

<sup>48</sup> Woodworth, *Dirty War, Clean Hands*, 39.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

Mass demonstrations of support were held all across Europe. Many ambassadors were recalled from Spain, and the Vatican requested that the defendants be shown mercy.<sup>51</sup> Mobs attacked Spanish embassies, and people petitioned their governments to cut all diplomatic ties with Spain.<sup>52</sup> Ultimately, Franco commuted all the death sentences: it was a clear victory for ETA. ‘The Burgos 16’ were hailed as heroes. In the words of Jean-Paul Sartre: “For the first time, the Basque question was put before international opinion: Euskadi made itself known as a martyred people fighting for national independence.”<sup>53</sup> ETA cleverly utilized this event to gain support not only in Euskadi, but worldwide. Three years after the Burgos Trial, ETA made international news again when the Spanish Prime Minister and Franco’s heir apparent, Luis Carrero Blanco, was killed in Madrid. ETA members packed seventy-five kilograms of explosives under a road frequently used by Blanco on his way to Mass, and detonated them as his vehicle passed over.<sup>54</sup> This assassination demonstrated their capabilities and “ETA’s prestige among the Basque youth soared.”<sup>55</sup>

However, in 1974 ETA committed an attack so objectionable that it resulted in an irreconcilable division of the group.<sup>56</sup> The target was Cafetería Rolando, an establishment frequented by the police in Madrid.<sup>57</sup> A bomb killed twelve people and injured seventy. None of the immediate casualties

---

<sup>51</sup> Conversi, *The Basques, the Catalans and Spain*, 100-101.

<sup>52</sup> Clark, *The Basques*, 186.

<sup>53</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, introduction to *Le procès de Burgos*, by Gisèle Halimi (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), xxix.

<sup>54</sup> Zumalde, *Las botas de la guerrilla*, 275.

<sup>55</sup> Woodworth, *Dirty War, Clean Hands*, 41.

<sup>56</sup> ETA never officially claimed responsibility for the attack, but they were almost certainly the perpetrators, see: Woodworth, *Dirty War, Clean Hands*, 50.

<sup>57</sup> Vinader, *Operación Lobo*, 70-71.

were police, although a police inspector died three years later from injuries sustained in the explosion.<sup>58</sup> It was undoubtedly a disaster for ETA, and they had to decide whether to accept responsibility for the attack. The more militant members wanted to publicly accept responsibility, but the more diplomatically inclined members believed that it was better to remain silent.<sup>59</sup> ETA claimed that authorities were warned about the bomb well in advance, but that they intentionally failed to evacuate the premises in order to turn popular opinion against ETA.<sup>60</sup> The controversial attack exacerbated tensions between the military front and the political front, and the two factions split as ETA-Militar (ETA-m) and ETA-Político-Militar (ETA-pm).<sup>61</sup> ETA-pm emerged from this arrangement with a large numerical superiority over ETA-m and more support overall, but ETA-m left with most of the money and weapons.<sup>62</sup> ETA-m shortly thereafter published a manifesto that declared their unflinching belief in the necessity of armed struggle, explicitly inspired by the Palestinian Black September Organization.<sup>63</sup> This point marks ETA's (ETA-m) transformation into a 'terrorist organization' and the beginning of their decline in popularity.<sup>64</sup>

Yet for some, it was not until over a decade later that supporting ETA became an obvious moral reprehensibility.<sup>65</sup> In 1987, ETA committed the deadliest act of terrorism in its history.

---

<sup>58</sup> Gaizka Soldevilla and Raúl Romo, *Sangre, votos, manifestaciones: ETA y el nacionalismo vasco radical. 1958-2011* (Madrid: Tecnos, 2012), 76-77.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>60</sup> Conversi, *The Basques, the Catalans and Spain*, 106.

<sup>61</sup> ETA-pm officially disbanded in 1983, while ETA-m continued activity. The distinction was no longer necessary after 1983, so 'ETA' beyond 1983 is implicitly ETA-Militar.

<sup>62</sup> Soldevilla and Romo, *Sangre, votos, manifestaciones*, 79.

<sup>63</sup> Vinader, *Operación Lobo*, 73-74.

<sup>64</sup> Soldevilla and Romo, *Sangre, votos, manifestaciones*, 117.

<sup>65</sup> Carrie Hamilton, *Women and ETA: The Gender Politics of Radical Basque Nationalism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 11.

In the parkade of the Hipercor shopping centre in Barcelona, ETA detonated a car bomb—a stolen Ford Sierra packed with thirty kilograms of ammonal and 100 litres of gasoline.<sup>66</sup> On the day following the attack, fifteen deaths were confirmed, but this figure eventually rose to twenty-one.<sup>67</sup> Among those who died *in situ*, most could not be identified because their bodies were too badly burned. It took rescue teams hours to recover the charred corpses.<sup>68</sup> Two days after the disaster, ETA issued a statement, making sure to inculcate the Spanish government:

We hope that the time and advancement of our process helps to situate this disgraceful accident and irreparable damage [...] in their rightful place [...] The responsibility of all material and human costs falls on the royal powers of the State for having delayed the opening of a peace process leading to a ceasefire, which ETA has offered unilaterally upon completion of negotiations based on the KAS alternative and the effective recognition of our national sovereignty.<sup>69</sup>

Through various newspapers, ETA admitted that the Hipercor mall bombing was a grave error.<sup>70</sup> On the same day as ETA's apology, 70,000 people marched through the streets of Barcelona

---

<sup>66</sup> Luis Aizpeolea, "Un coche bomba en los pilares de ETA," *El País*, June 15, 2012.

<sup>67</sup> "ETA asesina a quince personas, entre ellas mujeres y niños, en el atentado más sangriento de su historia," *La Vanguardia*, June 20, 1987; Aizpeolea, "Un coche bomba en los pilares de ETA."

<sup>68</sup> "ETA asesina a quince personas, entre ellas mujeres y niños, en el atentado más sangriento de su historia," *La Vanguardia*.

<sup>69</sup> *Egin*, June 22, 1987, qtd. in Iñaki Egaña and Giovanni Giacopucci, *Los días de Argel: crónica de las conversaciones ETA-Gobierno español* (Tafalla: Txalaparta, 1992), 126.

<sup>70</sup> "Los 'errores' de ETA," *El País*, June 22, 1987.

in condemnation of the attack.<sup>71</sup> The popular Catalan newspaper, *La Vanguardia*, delivered a scathing response to a defence of the Hipercor attack:

Why would one who doesn't intend to inflict a large number of casualties place an explosive in a department store, moreover, on a Friday afternoon during the busiest hours? Why would one who doesn't wish to kill in cold blood use a mixture of explosives and gasoline, apparently ignoring that it produces a fire of incalculable dimensions, and above all, clouds of smoke capable of killing across a great distance? Because, let us not forget, many of the victims perished from the smoke intentionally caused by the murderers. Why would one who attempts a 'clean' attack (if this word can be applied to such a savage action) place an incendiary device by dozens of cars whose gasoline tanks can easily explode? Let us not be told now that this was some sort of 'surprise' for those poor little inexperienced murderers who seem to urgently need more training.<sup>72</sup>

Once again, ETA blamed Spanish authorities for failing to evacuate the area. They claimed to have given the police advanced warning of the attack, and accused them of deliberately ignoring the threat, presumably to destroy any existent Catalan sympathy for ETA.<sup>73</sup> One ETA sympathizer says that the mistake was not the act of placing a bomb in the parkade, but in trusting

---

<sup>71</sup> "Unos 70.000 barceloneses acuden a la marcha contra el terrorismo convocada por entidades ciudadanas," *El País*, June 22, 1987.

<sup>72</sup> "La 'condolencia' de HB," *La Vanguardia*, June 22, 1987.

<sup>73</sup> Woodworth, *Dirty War, Clean Hands*, 147, 154.

the police to warn the civilians.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, according to this sympathizer, “if they had known what was going to happen [...] they would have preferred to die themselves, with the bomb in their hands, than cause the barbarity that happened afterwards.”<sup>75</sup> Nonetheless, any defence of the Hipercor attack was engulfed by the media firestorm condemning it.

Contrary to popular notions of ETA being totally removed from political processes, they did have some presence in various parties. Despite its early divergence from *Eusko Gaztedi*, ETA remained amicable with them throughout their earlier years. Although it was officially the youth branch of a group that did not necessarily condone ETA’s activities (the PNV), *Eusko Gaztedi* cooperated with the clandestine organization. In the early 1970s, the wide distribution of propaganda in Hegoalde would not have been possible without the assistance of *Eusko Gaztedi*.<sup>76</sup>

In 1977, Telesforo Monzón realized the importance of democratic representation and called for a coalition of the main parties that endorsed revolutionary violence in Euskadi.<sup>77</sup> In 1978, HASI (*Herriko Alderdi Sozialista Iraultzailea* [People’s Revolutionary Socialist Party]), LAIA (*Langile Abertzale Iraultzaileen Alderdia* [Revolutionary Patriotic Workers’ Party]), ESB (*Euskal Sozialista Biltzarrea* [Basque Socialist Assembly]), and ANV (*Acción Nacionalista Vasca* [Basque Nationalist Action]) united and officially became *Herri Batasuna* (HB: Popular Unity).<sup>78</sup> Of course, ETA and HB had no official connection, but a relationship between the two is undeniable.

---

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> José Garmendia, “ETA: Nacimiento, desarrollo y crisis (1959-1978)” in *La historia de ETA*, ed. Elorza, 164.

<sup>77</sup> Conversi, *The Basques, the Catalans and Spain*, 149.

<sup>78</sup> Soldevilla and Romo, *Sangre, votos, manifestaciones*, 125-128.

Several people influential in the politics of HB were closely aligned with ETA-m.<sup>79</sup> There was an almost total overlap of nationalist dogma between ETA and HB, which surely served to legitimize ETA.<sup>80</sup>

HB was not subtle about its support for ETA. Pro-ETA demonstrations were organized by HB.<sup>81</sup> Some members were arrested for ‘apología del terrorismo,’ including Telesforo Monzón in 1979.<sup>82</sup> HB even defended ETA in regard to the Hipercor attack, claiming that the police and mall management, “knowing an hour in advance of the existence of a car bomb, caused an avoidable tragedy through their silence in order to use it as propaganda.”<sup>83</sup> HB actively fought for the relocation of ETA prisoners from Soria to Euskadi.<sup>84</sup> Telesforo Monzón evidently did not see much difference between ETA and HB when in correspondence with foreign press he stated: “There is a solution to the Basque problem through speaking with ETA and HB.”<sup>85</sup> The connections went beyond cooperation; some HB members were ETA militants themselves.<sup>86</sup> Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, HB insisted that it had no contact with

---

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>80</sup> Lecours, *Basque Nationalism and the Spanish State*, 88.

<sup>81</sup> Tonia Etxarri, “Gritos a favor de ETA Militar en la estación por Santiago Brouard,” *El País*, 24 Nov. 1985; José Barbería, “Manifestación de 5.000 personas en Fuenterrabía convocadas por Herri Batasuna en apoyo de ETA,” *El País*, August 16, 1984.

<sup>82</sup> Javier Angulo, “Telesforo Monzón procesado por apología del terrorismo,” *El País*, February 21, 1979.

<sup>83</sup> “‘Enérgica crítica’ de HB y condena de dirigentes europeos y del papa,” *El País*, June 21, 1987.

<sup>84</sup> Fermin Goñi, “Herri Batasuna exige el retorno de los presos navarros reclusos en Soria,” *El País*, April 26, 1979.

<sup>85</sup> “‘Hay solución al problema vasco si se habla con ETA y HB,’” *El País*, September 26, 1979.

<sup>86</sup> “Los miembros de Herri Batasuna detenidos en Madrid son presuntos militantes de ETA militar,” *El País*, February 15, 1979; Fermin Goñi, “Detenidos en Navarra tres presuntos miembros de ETA (m),” *El País*, February 2, 1980.

ETA.<sup>87</sup> These transparent claims did not stop HB from gaining the reputation of being the political branch of ETA-m.

The success of HB came as a surprise to rivals such as the PNV.<sup>88</sup> In the Basque parliament's first election in 1980, HB won 16.5% of the vote.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, in the subsequent elections of 1984 and 1986, HB received 14.5% and 17.4% of votes, respectively.<sup>90</sup> In an interview with a French newspaper, ETA declared that "votes for Herri Batasuna will allow us to count our sympathizers."<sup>91</sup> For ETA supporters, HB was the political representation of their beliefs; a vote for HB was a vote for ETA. A striking example of the connection between HB and ETA is the statistical correlation between votes for HB and ETA violence. Security forces were more likely to be targeted in a town with high support for HB.<sup>92</sup> This is because in these areas ETA was more likely to have a support network and informants able to help coordinate attacks.

Evidently, ETA had established itself throughout Euskadi in various ways. What then were the perspectives of common people in Euskadi who were plunged into this conflict? To be clear, many Basque people did not support ETA, but in order to trace the extent and nature of ETA's influence in Euskadi one must examine those who were inspired to join the group. Several events served to boost ETA's popularity, which was undeniably

---

<sup>87</sup> Javier Angulo, "Herri Batasuna afirma que no mantiene contactos con ETAm," *El País*, July 19, 1980; Victorino Ruiz de Azua, "Herri Batasuna niega tener contactos con ETAm," *El País*, April 5, 1981.

<sup>88</sup> Javier Angulo, "El éxito de Herri Batasuna sorprende al PNV y preocupa al PSOE y UCD," *El País*, March 3, 1979.

<sup>89</sup> Lecours, *Basque Nationalism and the Spanish State*, 96.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> Feliciano Fidalgo, "ETA militar: 'Los votos de Herri Batasuna permitirán contar nuestros simpatizantes,'" *El País*, February 27, 1979.

<sup>92</sup> Luis de la Calle and Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca, "Killing and Voting in the Basque Country: An Exploration of the Electoral Link Between ETA and its Political Branch," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 25, no. 1 (2013): 103.

widespread in Euskadi throughout the 1960s and 1970s. In fact, most of ETA's membership were regular citizens, called 'legales.'<sup>93</sup> These etarras were unknown to authorities, lived normal lives, and were often well-integrated community members.<sup>94</sup> ETA support manifested itself through various public events in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>95</sup> Etarra funerals could attract crowds in the tens of thousands.<sup>96</sup> Large demonstrations involving pro-ETA chants were numerous in Euskadi.

There were many different reasons to join ETA. For young people, there was the obvious appeal of adventure and rebellion, further intensified by radical nationalism. However, the influence of friends, family, and even the clergy must not be understated. An important part of Basque social life is the 'cuadrilla,' which is an informal, regular meeting of close friends in a very exclusive group of no more than twenty people. Cuadrillas are usually solidified in one's young adult years, and can remain as a social group for the rest of one's life.<sup>97</sup> This system of social organization, very particular to Basque culture, was instrumental in bringing new recruits to ETA. The friends within a cuadrilla were immensely loyal; therefore it would only take one member with connections to ETA to inspire the rest to join.<sup>98</sup>

---

<sup>93</sup> Florencio Iribarren, "El enfrentamiento de ETA con la democracia," in *La historia de ETA*, ed. Elorza, 285.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 285-286; Fernando Reinares, *Patriotas de la muerte: por qué han militado en ETA y cuándo abandonan* (Madrid: Taurus, 2011), 146.

<sup>95</sup> Of course, ETA support at public events did not definitively end, but public displays of support became increasingly marginalized after the seventies.

<sup>96</sup> Jesús Ceberio, "Quince mil personas, en los funerales de los dos jóvenes vascos," *El País*, March 11, 1977.

<sup>97</sup> Marianne Heiberg, "Inside the Moral Community: Politics in a Basque Village," in *Basque Politics: A Case Study in Ethnic Nationalism*, ed. William Douglass (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1985), 301.

<sup>98</sup> Reinares, *Patriotas de la muerte*, 143-147.

Another element within communities which could serve to promote ETA was the clergy. Basque priests were frequently accused of supporting ETA. In 1960, 339 Basque priests signed a petition denouncing the oppression of Basque people by the Francoist state and equating the situation to genocide.<sup>99</sup> Looking at a brief excerpt of arrests in Euskadi, one can see that Basque priests were incarcerated for distributing ETA propaganda, helping etarras escape from prison, and various other subversive activities.<sup>100</sup> It should be emphasized that the clergy could be very influential, especially in the traditionally conservative Catholic society of Euskadi.

Ultimately, popular support became much less important to ETA in the late seventies. In its early years, ETA was substantially influenced by anti-colonial movements, and shaped its rhetoric around the idea of a Spanish occupation of Euskadi.<sup>101</sup> ETA hoped to incite a mass rebellion in Euskadi and drive out the Spanish invaders, as was discussed in ETA's forty-five page pamphlet *Insurrección en Euskadi*.<sup>102</sup> As ETA's so-called 'revolutionary war' dragged on, it became clear that it was unrealistic, especially in light of the shift to democracy following the death of Franco in 1975. Furthermore, the French government finally began to take measures against ETA in 1975. This had serious consequences for ETA, because Iparralde had theretofore been a sanctuary for its leadership.<sup>103</sup>

ETA's strategy then shifted from 'revolutionary war' to a war of attrition against the Spanish state.<sup>104</sup> It may also be said that ETA's membership was mostly solidified around this time.

---

<sup>99</sup> Conversi, *The Basques, the Catalans and Spain*, 95.

<sup>100</sup> Clark, *The Basques*, 181.

<sup>101</sup> Lecours, *Basque Nationalism and the Spanish State*, 77.

<sup>102</sup> Clark, *The Basques*, 158.

<sup>103</sup> Vinader, *Operación Lobo*, 99.

<sup>104</sup> de la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca, "Killing and Voting in the Basque Country," 98.

After the division of ETA in 1974, ETA-m emerged as a group much smaller than ETA-pm, but this was a key part of their strategy. ETA-m remained a very intimate organization and was generally not interested in recruiting new members.<sup>105</sup> This exclusivity protected it from infiltration such as that which devastated ETA-pm. With the abandonment of the ‘revolutionary war’ and active recruitment, maintaining a relationship with the public was no longer a necessary element of ETA’s strategy.

ETA’s first priority was making its ideals known to the public. Through publications, propaganda, graffiti, media coverage, and politics, ETA communicated with the people of Euskadi. The clandestine organization enjoyed a broad base of support in Euskadi during the Franco years, but Spain’s transition to democracy led many to question the necessity of armed struggle. As ETA continually splintered, eventually all that remained was a small group of the most radical members. Its practice of indiscriminate terrorism indicates that popular support was no longer relevant to ETA by the late 1980s. What began as a courageous group of students with dreams of national liberation ended as an organization known for the murder of hundreds of innocent civilians.

---

<sup>105</sup> Vinader, *Operación Lobo*, 82.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aizpeolea, Luis. "Un coche bomba en los pilares de ETA." *El País*, June 15, 2012.
- Angulo, Javier. "El éxito de Herri Batasuna sorprende al PNV y preocupa al PSOE y UCD." *El País*, March 3, 1979.
- Angulo, Javier. "Herri Batasuna afirma que no mantiene contactos con ETAm." *El País*, July 19, 1980.
- Angulo, Javier. "Telesforo Monzón procesado por apología del terrorismo." *El País*, February 21, 1979.
- de Azua, Victorino Ruiz. "Herri Batasuna niega tener contactos con ETAm." *El País*, April 5, 1981.
- Barbería, José. "Manifestación de 5.000 personas en Fuenterrabía convocadas por Herri Batasuna en apoyo de ETA," *El País*, August 16, 1984.
- de la Calle, Luis and Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca. "Killing and Voting in the Basque Country: An Exploration of the Electoral Link Between ETA and its Political Branch," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 25, no. 1 (2013): 94-112.
- Ceberio, Jesús. "Quince mil personas, en los funerales de los dos jóvenes vascos." *El País*, March 11, 1977.
- Chaffee, Lyman. "Social conflict and alternative mass communications: public art and politics in the service of Spanish-Basque nationalism." *European Journal of Political Research* 16, no. 5 (September 1988): 545-572.
- Chaffee, Lyman. *Political Protest and Street Art: Popular Tools for Democratization in Hispanic Countries*. Westport: Greenwood, 1993.
- Clark, Robert. *The Basques: The Franco Years and Beyond*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1979.
- Conversi, Daniele. *The Basques, the Catalans, and Spain: Alternative Routes to Nationalist Mobilisation*. London: Hurst, 1997.
- Documentos «Y»* Volumes 1-2. Donostia: Hordago, 1979.
- EFE. "Se estrelló en Francia un coche con propaganda separatista vasca." *El País*, July 1, 1976.

- Egaña, Iñaki and Giovanni Giacopucci. *Los días de Argel: crónica de las conversaciones ETA-Gobierno español*. Tafalla: Txalaparta, 1992.
- “‘Enérgica crítica’ de HB y condena de dirigentes europeos y del papa.” *El País*, June 21, 1987.
- “ETA asesina a quince personas, entre ellas mujeres y niños, en el atentado más sangriento de su historia.” *La Vanguardia*, June 20, 1987.
- Etxarri, Tonia. “Gritos a favor de ETA Militar en la estación por Santiago Brouard.” *El País*, November 24, 1985.
- Fidalgo, Feliciano. “ETA militar: ‘Los votos de Herri Batasuna permitirán contar nuestros simpatizantes.’” *El País*, February 27, 1979.
- Garmendia, José. “ETA: Nacimiento, desarrollo y crisis (1959-1978).” In *La historia de ETA*, edited by Antonio Elorza, 77-170. Madrid: Temas de hoy, 2000.
- Goñi, Fermin. “Detenidos en Navarra tres presuntos miembros de ETA (m).” *El País*, February 2, 1980.
- Goñi, Fermin. “Herri Batasuna exige el retorno de los presos navarros reclusos en Soria.” *El País*, April 26, 1979.
- Hamilton, Carrie. *Women and ETA: The Gender Politics of Radical Basque Nationalism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013.
- “‘Hay solución al problema vasco si se habla con ETA y HB.’” *El País*, September 26, 1979.
- Heiberg, Marianne. “Inside the Moral Community: Politics in a Basque Village.” In *Basque Politics: A Case Study in Ethnic Nationalism*, edited by William Douglass, 285-307. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1985.
- Iribarren, Florencio. “El enfrentamiento de ETA con la democracia.” In *La historia de ETA*, edited by Antonio Elorza, 277-420. Madrid: Temas de hoy, 2000.
- Jáuregui, Gurutz. “ETA: Orígenes y evolución ideológica y política.” In *La historia de ETA*, edited by Antonio Elorza, 171-276. Madrid: Temas de hoy, 2000.
- “La ‘condolencia’ de HB.” *La Vanguardia*, June 22, 1987.

- Lecours, André. *Basque Nationalism and the Spanish State*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2007.
- “Los ‘errores’ de ETA.” *El País*, June 22, 1987.
- “Los miembros de Herri Batasuna detenidos en Madrid son presuntos militantes de ETA militar.” *El País*, February 15, 1979
- Moss, Robert. *Revolutionary Challenges in Spain*. London: Institute for the Study of Conflict, 1974.
- Reinares, Fernando. *Patriotas de la muerte: por qué han militado en ETA y cuándo abandonan*. Madrid: Taurus, 2011.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. Introduction to *Le procès de Burgos*, by Gisèle Halimi. Paris: Gallimard, 1971.
- Soldevilla, Gaizka and Raúl Romo. *Sangre, votos, manifestaciones: ETA y el nacionalismo vasco radical. 1958-2011*. Madrid: Tecnos, 2012.
- “Unos 70.000 barceloneses acuden a la marcha contra el terrorismo convocada por entidades ciudadanas.” *El País*, June 22, 1987.
- Vinader, Xavier. *Operación Lobo: Memorias de un infiltrado en ETA*. Madrid: Temas de Hoy, 1999.
- Woodworth, Paddy. *Dirty War, Clean Hands: ETA, the GAL and Spanish Democracy*.
- Zumalde, Xabier. *Las botas de la guerrilla: Memorias del jefe de los Grupos Autónomos de ETA (1969-1977)*. Arrigorriaga: Status Ediciones, 2004.