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A Conscious Image of Liberation: Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) in the Late Franco Regime,
Through the Lens of the Press

An Honors Paper for the Department of History,
By Sebastian de Lasa

Bowdoin College, 2022

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CONTENTS

- I. Introduction, Page 2
- II. Chapter 1: ETA's Emergence, Page 15
- III. Interlude: The Many ETAs of the Early 1970s, Page 33
- IV. Chapter 2: The Beginning of the End, Page 36
- V. Conclusion: ETA Dies a Slow Death, Page 53
- VI. Appendices, Page 58
- VII. Acknowledgments, Page 60

Introduction

As the winds of uprising, resistance, and revolution blew across Europe during the late 1960s, Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) was growing in prominence as the radical spear of the Basque nationalist project. Basque nationalism had been in a period of strife in the years after the Spanish Civil War (1936-39); the Franco regime strictly outlawed the use of the Basque language and the occurrence of Basque cultural festivals and gatherings. The Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) was in exile, barred from participation in Spanish politics, while an estimated 150,000 Basques were exiled after the Spanish Civil War in order to avoid retaliation from the Franco regime.¹ However, by the late 1960s cracks were beginning to show within the regime; ETA's membership was forming a cohesive strategy of resistance, and a new age of radicalism was ascending. Organized leftist groups throughout continental Europe had been flexing their power through protest, strikes, and armed resistance, and despite the strict limitations imposed upon those who espoused anti-regime ideology in Spain, ETA was increasing in visibility.²

The struggle for good public relations was at the heart of ETA's actions during the Franco regime—its status rose when it received positive press, empowering members to take bold actions, but when the same actions were dislocated by journalists from the ideological aims of the movement, the group stalled. The Burgos trial of December 1970 was a defining moment in ETA's history, as 16 suspected ETA members were tried in a military tribunal which aimed to link the accused to the 1968 murder of a police chief in San Sebastián. The trial, which took place in the Spanish city of Burgos five years before the dissolution of the Franco regime, served as the final attempt by the regime to crack down on this transient spirit of radical nationalism,

¹ Toticagüena, Gloria. *Basque Diaspora: Migration and Transnational Identity*. (Center for Basque Studies Press, Reno, NV. 2005), 15.

² Charalambous, Giorgos, *The European Radical Left: Movements and Parties since the 1960s*. (Pluto Press, London. 2022), 128.

and to show that Marxist dissent and new theories of national liberation were incompatible with their vision of a Spanish future. The plan backfired, as the domestic and international blowback to the harshness of the Franco regime throughout the Burgos trials exposed the fragility of the state to all who followed the press coverage of the event.

Three years later, the assassination of Spanish Prime Minister Luis Carrero Blanco became the definitive ETA attack, changing the path of Spanish history and confirming to the world that the Franco regime was weak and would not survive after the death of the Caudillo. However, despite the fundamental importance of ETA in facilitating the eventual overthrow of the Spanish dictatorship, internal strife prevented ETA from getting its hands on the levers of power. ETA would further commit itself to armed struggle in the years during and after the Transition (1975-1978)³, the period in which the Spanish state democratized into a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system. The aims of these attacks were to keep the notion of Basque independence firmly in the minds of those in power during this period—ETA would not tolerate a new Spanish state that included the Basque Country, and would pursue violent actions to make its viewpoints clear. But such actions proved to be increasingly unpopular, and by 1980 support for the group's military resistance would steadily decline.⁴ The notion of liberation movements and the revolutionary appeal of armed struggle faded from the consciousness of the international press, the Spanish public, and most fatally for ETA, the Basques.

The aim of this project is to better understand ETA's rise and fall by situating ETA within the world around it, using ETA's depiction in the press as a gauge for public perception of the group. I draw on Basque sources to provide local insight on ETA, along with Basques emigres in

³ The actual end of the period known as the Transition is debated. For this instance, I consider the end of the Transition to coincide with the approval of the Spanish Constitution through a public referendum in 1978.

⁴ Clark, Robert. "The Legitimacy of Ethnonationalist Insurgency," Presented at the Symposium on Political Violence, University of Massachusetts Amherst. Accessed from the Center for Basque Studies Archives. 7.

the United States. The domestic perspective is composed from how the Spanish state, Spanish writers and journalists, and Spanish workers viewed ETA. Ultimately it is the Spanish perspective which hindered ETA most significantly, but it was their original presence which gave ETA a reason for its existence. The final perspective is the international community—I will explore how and why writers, journalists, political scientists, historians, and revolutionaries paid any attention to a relatively small group of people fighting for their seemingly niche interests. The way the world changed around the Basque Country is vital to understanding how previously accepted notions of liberation and action became unpalatable as the international audience developed different perspectives on acceptable political action.

The span of my thesis will primarily cover ETA from 1968-1975, the period in which ETA gained international notoriety, held the greatest support domestically, and had a clear and widely disparaged enemy—the Franco regime.⁵ This history situates ETA within the rise of organized Marxist groups in the late 20th century, examines the role ETA played in accelerating the demise of the Franco regime, and shows how internal strife destroyed any possibility of ETA achieving its foremost goal, a Basque Country free from the dominion of the Spanish. This period sees ETA rise and fall, despite the public perception of ETA as the grand menace to a unified Spain in the decades to come. ETA killed the most people in a single year in 1980, after it had gone through multiple periods of fracture and shed much of its support base from the early 1970s. The fact that ETA operated well into the 21st century, despite the start of its decline hitting in the 1970s, is a testament to the endurance of the hardliners in the group.⁶ ETA had spent decades trimming the proverbial fat, until there was nothing else left.

⁵ Zulaika, Joseba. *Basque Violence: Metaphor and Sacrament*. (University of Nevada Press, Reno, NV), 99-100.

⁶ Sullivan, John. *ETA and Basque Nationalism*. (Routledge, London. 1988), 271.

This project positions ETA as conscious actors under the press microscope, as a group that acted with clear intentions to generate attention using self-published, domestic, and intentional media. The outward image of ETA was crucial for exposing new members or sympathizers, for developing an aura of infamy among its Spanish opposition, and for bringing wider attention to the Basque nationalist struggle. Early moments of significant public scrutiny for ETA were the Burgos trial and the assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco; the creation of hyper-visible moments by ETA sought to manipulate how the public, the state, and the press perceived the group. As the makeup of ETA shifted in the early 1970s, its aims for public perception changed; as the group became more violent, the generation of spectacle and shock became more prominent goals for ETA actions. But by this point, the ETA leaders with the greatest influence over ground-level ETA soldiers had dropped all pretenses of a democratic or negotiated solution to a liberated Basque Country, and had little interest in maintaining goodwill among Spanish or international sympathizers.

To explore ETA's intentions and efforts for creating its own public image, I draw upon a broad variety of historical, ethnographical, and mass produced sources. The search for this information brought me to surprising places. The Basque diaspora brought many ethnic Basques to the western United States, as they settled in gold rush towns and rural villages alike, including Reno, Nevada. Any research regarding the Basques will inevitably bring the researcher to Reno, as the Center for Basque Studies is located at the University of Nevada, Reno. Much of the material I draw upon comes from there—primary sources from the Jon Bilbao Basque Archives, books published by the Center for Basque Studies press, and material from its library dedicated to Basque studies. The holy grail for ETA researchers is *Documentos Y*, an 18 volume set of collected ETA documents from the founding of the group until the early 1980s. I briefly cite

Documentos Y directly, but much of the secondary source material that I used for my project also used *Documentos Y* as a central resource. This includes *ETA and Basque Nationalism: The Fight for Euskadi 1890-1986* by John Sullivan, a source that I frequently return to throughout the thesis. *ETA and Basque Nationalism* is a comprehensive overview of the group's activities and actions, internal struggles, and position within Spanish politics.⁷

The Basque sources I consult in this paper include the work of Joseba Zulaika, a Basque scholar whose work includes histories, ethnographies, and cultural theories of terrorism in the Basque Country.⁸ His book *Basque Violence: Metaphor and Sacrament* is an intriguing ethnography written about the Basque town of Itziar during a period of intense ETA violence, 1979-1981. Zulaika was originally from Itziar, but had not returned since he was 12. This ethnography explicitly does not aim to establish cause-and-effect relationships between the learned experiences of Basques and political violence, but rather creates a vivid landscape of the Basque culture to serve as context for the violent realities hanging in the background. This book was developed out of Zulaika's doctoral dissertation.⁹

In an effort to understand Spanish press coverage on ETA, this paper draws on the research of Eduardo Uriarte Romero, a former Basque politician and ETA member. He wrote a compelling chapter for *El atentado contra Carrero Blanco como lugar de (no-)memoria*, titled "El tratamiento de la prensa española del magnicidio de Carrero Blanco." It examined how three Spanish newspapers covered the assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco and the ensuing funerals and memorials.¹⁰ Other published works that review the relationship between ETA and the

⁷ Ibid, VII.

⁸ "Joseba Zulaika, PhD." *The University of Nevada, Reno*. Accessed through <https://www.unr.edu/basque-studies/people/joseba-zulaika>

⁹ Zulaika, Joseba. *Basque Violence: Metaphor and Sacrament*. XIII-XXXI

¹⁰ Uriarte Romero, Eduardo. "El tratamiento de la Prensa Española del Magnicidio de Carrero Blanco," in *El atentado contra Carrero Blanco como lugar de (no-)memoria*, ed. Patrick Eser, Stefan Peters. (Iberoamericana, Madrid. 2016).

Spanish press include “El cese de la violencia como 'bad news': la cobertura del fin de ETA en la prensa vasca y española” by Imanol Murua and Txema Ramírez de la Piscina; “El informador de los atentados de ETA en las fotografías de prensa” by Nekane Parejo Jiménez; and “La representación de ETA en la prensa española: el terrorismo en portada (1973-1998)” by Coral Morera Hernández. All of these works are thematically significant to my project, but my work diverges from them chronologically (1968-1975); it also covers the incorporation of international media rather than strictly Spanish press, and the connections between ETA’s internal and external image.

I have also consulted the work of historian Stanley Payne, especially his immense overview of Spanish history titled *The Franco Regime: 1936-1975*. Payne’s work has provided excellent insight to the inner workings of the Franco regime, the economic and social forces that existed within Spain, and examples of how the Franco regime responded to the rising tides of radical Basque nationalism.¹¹ I relied on *The Franco Regime* along with Cameron J. Watson’s *Basque Nationalism and Political Violence: The Ideological and Intellectual Origins of ETA* in order to conceptualize the state of Spanish and Basque society which ETA emerged from.¹²

Empire & Terror: Nationalism/Postnationalism in the New Millennium, edited by Begoña Aretxaga, Dennis Dworkin, Joseba Gabilondo, and Joseba Zulaika, is filled with some of the most compelling essays I came across concerning the reproduction and cycle of terrorism, theories on nationalist formation, and Basque issues in general. It is compiled from papers and lectures delivered at a 2002 conference entitled “Nationalism, Globalism, and Terror: A Debate on Stateless Nations, Particularism/Universalism, and Radical Democracy.” The Center for

¹¹ Payne, Stanley. *The Franco Regime: 1936-1975*. (The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, WI. 1987).

¹² Watson, Cameron J. *Basque Nationalism and Political Violence: The Ideological and Intellectual Origins of ETA*. (Center for Basque Studies, Reno, NV. 2007).

Basque Studies hosted the conference, with the goal of connecting Basque studies and other nationalist crises from around the world.¹³ The essays I cite from this collection include “A Basque Referendum: Resolution of Political Conflict or the Promised Land of Error?” by William A. Douglass and Pedro Ibarra Güell, which considers whether a peacefully negotiated ceasefire with ETA is possible given the factors leading to ETA’s formation; and “Out of Their Minds?: On Political Madness in the Basque Country” by Begoña Aretxaga, which explores the idea of how madness and insanity are conflated with political extremism in the Basque Country.

Lastly, this thesis draws on materials from the Jon Bilbao Archives at the Center for Basque Studies. Sources cited from the collection include the papers of Mario Salegi, a Basque man who immigrated to the United States in 1941 who was heavily involved with the Committee of Americans for Basque Independence and Survival (CAMBIAS). Included in his papers are theorizations on Basque violence, propaganda supporting ETA members on trial and distributed among Basque-Americans, and newspaper clippings regarding issues of Basque radicalism. I drew upon Salegi’s papers significantly, and was fascinated by his dedication to his homeland.¹⁴ While Salegi’s political leanings regarding Basque independence were more radical than the average Basque-American, his lifetime devotion to Basque issues helps show that for many emigres Basqueness transcended the geographic borders of the Basque Country.

As historian Sarah Maza stated regarding the practice of history, “Scholars are explicitly in the business of pushing the boundaries of knowledge, of finding new subjects or new approaches to old ones;”¹⁵ In this spirit this thesis aims to expand the current understanding of ETA by showing that the group’s actions, internal struggles, and goals were connected to the

¹³ Ed. Aretxaga, Begoña et al. *Empire & Terror: Nationalism/Post Nationalism in the New Millenium*. (Center for Basque Studies, Reno, NV. 2005).

¹⁴ “Mario Salegi Papers,” *University of Nevada, Reno*. Accessed through <https://archive.library.unr.edu/public/repositories/4/resources/3638>

¹⁵ Maza, Sarah. *Thinking About History*. (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago. 2017), 125

group's public image as constructed in self-produced, domestic, and international media. Through analysis of scholarly published research, shoddily constructed zines, personal manifestos, and many newspaper clippings, I will tie ETA's fortunes and fate in the late Franco period to the façade constructed of the group through what was written about them in the context of the Burgos trial and the assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco. There are three primary examples of this: ETA's efforts before the Sixth Assembly looked to gain popular support through visual and linguistic association with the rising protest movements of the late 1960s; ETA aimed to manufacture discontentment against the Franco regime through manipulation of the proceedings during the Burgos trial; ETA's plan for the assassination of Carrero Blanco to become a massive media event through spectacle and shock. All of this is to say, when agitating against the state, image is everything.

Before getting into ETA's heyday it seems important to review the circumstances that precipitated the chaos of the late 1960s/early 1970s. In the 1950s, a confluence of state repression, increased class consciousness among workers, and rising national liberation groups in the global south inspired Basques to pursue organized resistance against the Spanish state. The long-standing relationship between central governing powers in Madrid and the Basques had existed as a pendulum; while the state never granted the Basque Country outright political independence it allowed for local structures of governance and legislation to exist. The *fueros*, laws specific to the Basque Country, were indicative of the push-pull relationship between the governing forces in Spain in the 19th century and the Basques. Basque involvement in the Carlist wars largely depended on which side offered a more favorable view on the *fueros*—the distinction of the Basques as a separate identity to the Castilians was the ideological basis of

early Basque nationalism.¹⁶ This tension between Castilians and Basques would increase dramatically during and after the Spanish Civil War, when Francisco Franco became the leader of Spain concluding the right-wing victory in the war.

Decades under the Franco regime soured the dynamic between Basque people and the central government, infringing upon previous acceptance of Basque tradition, practice, and language. Joseba Zulaika, a Basque anthropologist and historian, wrote an ethnography of his home village, Itziar, written over a span of a few years in the early 1980s. Zulaika interviews villagers who spoke of repression of language and culture after the Spanish Civil War, beginning at a young age. One praised a teacher in Itziar's public school as "very good," but also "a staunch Francoist," who "would castigate harshly anyone speaking Basque, either in school or in the street. He had *chivatos* [informers] to tell him who had been speaking in Basque and then would hit them in school."¹⁷ Basque identity was a punishable offense during this period, and it created significant discontentment within Basque-speaking communities.

According to Cameron J. Watson, the Franco regime not only persecuted the Basques for their political orientation during the Spanish Civil War, in which the Basques largely sided with the Republic, but also held policies of ethnic differentiation and suppression.¹⁸ Watson and sociologist Alfonzo Pérez-Agote both distinguish the family and the household as the place where Basque children learned of their heritage, language, and politics, as public spaces strictly forbade these topics. A generational gap emerged, with young Basques looking to "[liberate] their parents from their humiliation and frustration and [achieve] their *redemption*."¹⁹ Where a

¹⁶ Watson, Cameron J. *Basque Nationalism and Political Violence: The Ideological and Intellectual Origins of ETA*. (Center for Basque Studies Press, Reno, NV. 2007.) 35-37

¹⁷ Zulaika, Joseba. *Basque Violence: Metaphor and Sacrament*. (University of Nevada Press, Reno, NV. 1988) 37.

¹⁸ Watson, *Basque Nationalism and Political Violence*. 174

¹⁹ Pérez-Agote, Alfonzo. "Self-Fulfilling Prophecy and Unresolved Meaning," in *Empire and Terror*. Ed. Begoña Aretxaga, et al. (Center for Basque Studies, Reno, NV. 2005). 180

sense of defeat, shame, trauma, and the fear of repression caused the older generation of Basques to suppress their political leanings, the younger generation viewed direct action, resistance, and violence as the only way forward. State repression is referred to as a radicalizing factor for ETA members tried at Burgos, and appears frequently throughout all research I've come across during this project.

National liberation movements in the global south, especially the National Liberation Front (FLN) of Algeria, provided ideological inspiration for some Basque nationalists in their pursuit of redemption against the Spanish state. Federico Krutwig Sagredo, a longtime occasional member of ETA leadership, is often associated with the conscious linking of Basque nationalism to anti-colonialist rhetoric. In a 1956 speech delivered to the World Basque Conference in Paris, "he called for an armed uprising to form the central basis of a Basque insurrection of national liberation. This insurrection, Krutwig contended, would be principally carried out by commando-style actions."²⁰ This speech came two years after the beginning of the Algerian Civil War, where French forces were embroiled in conflict with the National Liberation Army, the military arm of the FLN. The Algerian Civil War is a vital example for historians' understandings of nationalism, colonialism, and radicalization and the facet of the war most critical to understanding how it connects to ETA is the fact that although militarily, the French emerged victorious, in the international press, Algerian society, and even among French political actors of the time, the war was a perceived catastrophe. A 1964 article by political scientist Martin Harrison titled "Government and Press in France During the Algerian War" explored the chaotic and haphazard manner in which the French government conducted seizure and censorship of Algerian and French newspapers. One line is particularly striking: "At the close of 1956 Algeria had no independent publications in the languages of eighty percent of its

²⁰ Watson, *Basque Nationalism and Political Violence*. 196.

population.”²¹ The censorship of the war allowed the FLN to exploit the gap in media to its advantage, producing its own propaganda which cast the French as a mortal enemy to the Algerians. For the French populace, this ongoing conflict, which was receiving heavy censorship from the French government, seemed to be a sign of the incompetence of the state in an unwinnable fight.²² Thus, a seed was planted in the minds of ETA’s founding members—cemented by the 1962 Evian accords, which declared an independent Algerian nation—namely, that violent resistance could act as a way to appeal to hearts and minds, as well as a military tactic against the state. ETA did not need resolving wins on the battlefield, but could achieve its goals by convincing the world of its cause.

However, censored French newspapers still had significantly more control over editorial practices, distribution, and content than any Spanish outlet during the Franco regime, as the Spanish press was strictly regulated, even after the ratification of press reforms in 1966. These standards declared that censorship would be voluntary, and that publishing enterprises could choose their own directors. But this did not guarantee press freedom:

“A variety of sanctions, such as stiff fines, suspension, confiscation, or even arrest, could still be imposed on those publishing material damaging to the state, religion, or general mores, and any editor in doubt was invited to submit preliminary material for consultation.”²³

The internal press would be gagged by these restrictions, forced to comply with the state’s ideological line with the looming threat of punishment.

²¹ Harrison, Martin. “Government and Press in France During the Algerian War.” *The American Political Science Review* 58, no. 2 (1964): 276. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1952862>.

²² Harrison, Christopher. “French Attitudes to Empire and the Algerian War.” *African Affairs* 82, no. 326 (1983): 75–95. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/721479>.

²³ Payne, Stanley. *The Franco Regime: 1936-1975*. 511.

Stanley Payne, a historian of mid-century Spain and the development of fascism, contends that the development of the Spanish economy and the tourism sector in the 1960s marked the arrival of foreign cultural influences on the Spanish populace. The emergent outside influences would mark a transformation of the cultural environment “without parallel.”²⁴ Journalism is one aspect of cultural shifts coming from foreign influences—expatriate journalists often had greater leeway to report on the ground in Spain than their Spanish colleagues. In a retrospective of Walter Haubrich’s career (German journalist for *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*), he notes that Spanish journalists would give him stories that could not get published in Spain. This reporting angered the regime, and the information ministers threatened to kick him out of the country “at least 10 times.”²⁵ However, he never got kicked out, and at the time of the article’s publication was still writing and reporting in Spain. The regime could be brutal toward Spanish citizens, but lacked the jurisdiction to apply the same pressure on outsiders.

During the late-Franco period the number of international journalists operating in Spain was significantly increasing for the first time since the Spanish Civil War, when international media flooded the country, with around 1000 correspondents covering the conflict from 1936-39.²⁶ General interest in Spain decreased during WWII, and the hostility from the regime to the foreign press did not entice many news outlets to have Spanish posts. This changed in the 1960s, during the aforementioned economic development of Spain. The emergence of Spain as a modern European power led to a significant increase in foreign correspondents and foreign interest in Spanish news.²⁷

²⁴ Ibid, 492.

²⁵ Nogueira, Charo. “Living in the thick of the news,” *El Pais, English Edition*. Madrid. Published Sep. 8, 2010.

²⁶ Tobias Reckling, “Foreign correspondents in Francoist Spain: (1945-1975)”. PhD diss., (University of Portsmouth, 2016).

https://pure.port.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/7151114/PhD_Reckling_Complete_Final.pdf 105

²⁷ Ibid, 107-110.

This uptick in reporting included coverage of workers' movements and strikes, which were increasing in mass and frequency throughout the 1950s and 60s. This strike movement was strongest in the Basque Country, especially around Bilbao, which was also a major industrial backbone for the Spanish economy.²⁸ So well before the emergence of ETA as the dominant voice of radical Basque nationalism, there was a prior association in the international press connecting the Basque Country to strikes, protests, and anti-regime sentiment. *The New York Times*, *The Manchester Guardian* (they dropped "Manchester" from the title in 1959), *The Washington Post*, and smaller American outlets like *The Hartford Courant* all ran articles covering the Bilbao workers strikes of 1947, 1951, 1956, 1957, and 1965-68. This implicitly confirmed how critical the international press could be for radical groups like ETA. If Spanish outlets took a firm stance against any anti-regime sentiments, ETA would be villainized thoroughly by the domestic press. ETA had no interest in convincing Spanish reporters of its cause, and Spanish outlets either ignored the group or treated it with scorn. But international outlets would cover these topics out of the interest of selling newspapers: "250,000 SPANIARDS BEGIN NEW STRIKE" is an engaging headline that readers are drawn to, whether the story's agenda benefits the Franco regime or not.²⁹ Additionally, there was an understanding among some Americans that the Franco regime opposed the rights of a free press and the right to organize, and that Spain would be a better ally to the US with a different leader at the helm.³⁰

²⁸ Payne, Stanley. *The Franco Regime: 1936-1975*. Page 478, 499.

²⁹ 250,000 SPANIARDS BEGIN NEW STRIKE: PROTEST IS AGAINST RISING COSTS OF LIVING--REGIME ORDERS RETURN TO JOBS 250,000 SPANIARDS BEGIN NEW STRIKE 2 LARGE CITIES AFFECTED. 1951. *New York Times* (1923-), Apr 24. <https://login.ezproxy.bowdoin.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/250-000-spaniards-begin-new-strike/docview/112009228/se-2?accountid=9681>.

³⁰ *Spain Today: Committee for a Democratic Spain*, Vol. IV, No. 6. December-January 1966. Accessed in the Center for Basque Studies archives.

What ETA needed was a massive event that exposed the brutality of the Franco regime and offered the group a platform to share its grievances. In that sense, the Burgos trial fell into its lap.

Chapter 1: ETA's emergence

The Burgos trial was the regime's response to three increasingly violent years in the Basque Country. The center of the trial was the murder of Melitón Manzanas, the former police commissioner of San Sebastián. Manzanas was widely known among ETA members for being a torturer. The details of his career are discussed in a 2001 article from *El País*, which claimed that Manzanas collaborated with the Nazis during WWII along with his indiscriminate torture of Basque socialists and anarchists, men and women alike.³¹ His murder came after the police killing of a prominent ETA member, Txabi Etxebarrieta. Two days after Manzanas' murder on August 2, 1968, the regime declared a state of emergency in Gipuzkoa, suspending civil guarantees for three months and arresting approximately two hundred people over the next week. On August 14, martial law was declared for "repression of subversive acts and public disturbances."³²

Over the next two years, thousands of suspected ETA members or sympathizers were indiscriminately arrested throughout the Basque Country, which sent many ETA members into exile over fear of detainment.³³ A period of fracture ensued within the group, beginning with the old leaders removing a faction known as the Red Cells, while further disagreement among leadership saw the formation of ETA-VI and ETA-V. These splits meant there were multiple groups operating under the title ETA by the time of the trial, each of them disavowing the others as imposters to the name.³⁴ Despite the general disorganization of ETA, direct action continued

³¹ Iglesias, María Antonia. "Hablan Las Víctimas De Melitón Manzanas." *El País*, January 27, 2001. https://elpais.com/diario/2001/01/28/domingo/980653598_850215.html.

³² Payne, Stanley. *Basque Nationalism*. (The University of Nevada Press, Reno, NV. 1975), 246.

³³ Payne, Stanley. *The Franco Regime: 1936-1975*. (The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, WI. 1987), 558.

³⁴ Conversi, Daniele. *The Basques, The Catalans, and Spain*. (The University of Nevada Press, Reno, NV.), 100.

The consequences of this split are extremely significant, and will be further elaborated upon. It's important to note that this chapter refers to ETA as a singular entity, because the Burgos trial was an examination of

throughout 1969, with 70 acts of subversion attributed to ETA over the course of the year.³⁵ All the while, the Basque Country was militantly policed under a state of emergency, with 1,953 arrests and 862 imprisonments in 1969.³⁶

In documents released amidst the chaos of 1968, ETA was very clear about its militancy, the need for armed struggle, and the desired mobilization against the fascist state. “La lucha armada en la revolución vasca,” an article published in *Zutik*, and a document titled “Estrategia y táctica de la nueva fase ofensiva,” which is attributed to K. de Zunbeltz,³⁷ refer to the police repression taking place in the Basque Country as necessitating a “new phase” for ETA, the new phase being a significant increase in armed conflict against the state. The authors are generally in agreement on the notion that armed conflict was the only way forward, but they took drastically different approaches in explaining this. The *Zutik* piece, which was disseminated throughout the Basque Country to ETA members and Basque civilians alike, emphasizes the vigor of revolution and the need for Basques to join the cause.³⁸ The Zunbeltz piece has a similar revolutionary aura, but is more somber and calculated, settling at the conclusion that Basque people need to prepare for urban warfare in the streets of Euskadi.³⁹ By closely examining these documents, it becomes clear that what is stated, and what is omitted, from ETA’s publicly distributed documents is indicative of ETA’s conscious manipulation of its public image.

“La lucha armada en la revolución vasca” was originally published in volume 62 of *Zutik*, one of ETA’s main propaganda journals. The copy I found was actually reprinted in the April 26,

ETA in the public imagination. The public would not be informed on ETA’s split until years after it happened.

³⁵ Payne, Stanley. *Basque Nationalism*. 246

³⁶ Payne, Stanley. *The Franco Regime*. 560

³⁷ K. de Zunbeltz is a pseudonym for José Luis Zalbide, an early ETA member. <https://aunamendi.eusko-ikaskuntza.eus/en/zalbide-jose-luis/ar-145336/>

³⁸ “La lucha armada en la revolución vasca,” originally published in *Zutik*, vol 62. Accessed in *Documentos Y*, Vol. 5. (1981) 206.

³⁹ Zunbeltz, K. de. “Estrategia y táctica de la nueva fase ofensiva”, *Documentos Y*. Vol. 8. (1981). 137.

1969 copy of *Fuerza Nueva*, a right-wing publication, with an addendum titled “La E.T.A. es comunista.”⁴⁰ This is one of those fascinating details that arise when studying the media—the right-wingers were looking to use ETA’s own language to incite fear or animosity among the *Fuerza Nueva* readers, but the wider dissemination ends up working in ETA’s favor. ETA wouldn’t be looking to *Fuerza Nueva* in order to recruit new members or gain more support, but at this period, being able to establish themselves publicly as an ideologically aligned organization under the heavy press restrictions of the regime allowed ETA to solidify its association with the left-wing. Without subscribing to the notion that all press is good press, all press that portrays ETA in its own words (“La lucha” was reprinted almost verbatim) circumvented the roadblock of no official left-wing media in Spain.

The language and formatting of this piece are a reflection of its era—there is a clear eye for aesthetic detail, one that is very familiar to other booklets, zines, and journals distributed during the uprisings in Paris that May. The fonts used for titles and in the “Zutik” and “ETA” side headings are artfully hand drawn, designed to pop out at the viewer. Even the text is slightly off-kilter, as the attached photographs and graphic designs force the paragraphs to wrap around images. It’s not designed to look professional, rather to look engaging, raw, and cool. On page 14, there are Basque slogans of independence (Gora Nabarra! Gora Euzkadi Azkatuta!) above a promotion for a radio program—unsurprisingly, the details of where to listen to the program were obfuscated by *Fuerza Nueva*.⁴¹ The language is clear and impassioned with revolutionary energy; the first line in the piece claims that “the popular masses” have borne witness to the “violent character” of the fascist state, which exists to serve “the monopolist oligarchy” and the “international imperialism” led by the United States.⁴² There is a universality to this

⁴⁰ *Documentos Y*, Vol 5. 204.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

discontentment—this piece was intended for a Basque audience, but not necessarily for those already committed to Basque nationalism. The piece was published in Spanish, and the first mention of the Basque Country is at the end of the first paragraph, stating that “if the Basque Country wishes to be free, [ETA] should take the weapons from their enemies, arm themselves and crush the reactionary forces.”⁴³ It would be far fetched to assume the author of this piece was hoping for Spanish civilians to rise up and steal arms from their nearest military barracks, but rather that an armed Basque revolution can only succeed with Spanish collaboration. I interpret “taking the weapons from their enemies” as an intentional call for solidarity between Basque and Spanish leftists, or at least between those in opposition to the Franco regime.

This article should be assessed as an example of ETA’s desire to manipulate its image in the public imagination. There’s no one way to pursue revolution, but by mimicking the style and language of contemporary groups, ETA was looking for readers to associate its actions with the wider movements of the era rather than as an isolated organization. The outward facing ETA that’s constructed in this article is brash and aggressive, calling for violent action against the state, but it also takes a stylized approach to these ideas. It makes an effort to be digestible for those who aren’t necessarily versed in Basque nationalist history.

“Estrategia y táctica de la nueva fase ofensiva” seems likely to have been distributed as an internal document, as it was presented in Documentos Y without any indication of its publication.⁴⁴ There are no artistic flourishes or hand drawn fonts, no images, no slogans. The language is engaging and precise, while the events and figures referenced presupposes some knowledge of ETA’s history in recent years. More importantly, it makes no gestures toward solidarity with Spanish forces, with the primary stated motivation being the liberation of

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Zunbeltz, K. “Estrategia y táctica de la nueva fase ofensiva.”

Basques. The piece begins, “The execution of the chief of the political police in Gipuzkoa, on August 2, 1968, characterizes the new phase that has been entered in the Revolutionary Basque National Liberation Movement.”⁴⁵ “La lucha” has its eyes on the world, shoehorning ETA as a group belonging to the greater revolutionary period looking to take down the great evils of capitalism and imperialism. No lofty idealism is present in this piece.

Zunbeltz quoted the Spanish police chief of Bilbao—importantly, not distinguished as the Basque police chief despite Bilbao being a Basque city—to justify ETA’s new phase of action. The police chief declared, “we have started the hot war against ETA”; ETA’s response was attacks on newspapers, Guardia Civil barracks, and ‘Vuela a España’ in the Basque Country.⁴⁶ Zunbeltz noted this cycle as being one of revolutionary action followed by repression, which has led the two sides into a stalemate. However, Zunbeltz was aware that ETA stood no chance in an outright military conflict with Spain: “It’s evident that the Basque revolutionary forces don’t have the actual capacity to fight a classic war against the police, and even less against the Guardia Civil or against the Spanish army.”⁴⁷ The rhetoric of this statement is impressively honest, especially considering this was probably to be distributed to ETA soldiers motivated by the grand ideals of redemption, liberation, and revolution. Telling them that they would probably lose an outright war against Spain is bold—what’s the strategy in demoralizing your most eager supporters? He responded to this with a quote from the deceased Txabi Etxebarrieta in his final manifesto: “If the conditions don’t currently exist to complete the revolution, they are there to begin it.”⁴⁸ Invoking their fallen comrade, whose death incited the period of intense repression

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

from the Franco regime, acts to reinvigorate the spirit of the revolution despite the noted difficulties in the goal of liberation. It's a brief moment of hopefulness.

Zunbeltz went further into military strategy, noting that ETA needs to avoid confrontation and to maintain a strategic defense in the short term, due to the drastic gaps in military capacity between them and their opponents.⁴⁹ He was not advocating to stop armed struggle, but taking a cautious approach toward risk until the conditions can be created for ETA to strike back. He noted that offensive ETA attacks need to be planned and executed in order to always guarantee “pain for the oppressor and an advantage for the revolutionary movement.”⁵⁰ War is here—Zunbeltz knows it, the Spanish forces know it, ETA members in the interior or exile know it—but ETA could never win out in the open, in a traditional style of combat. It could take the utmost precision and organization for ETA's strikes to succeed, due to the outsized nature of their disadvantage. To this end, Zunbeltz advocated for urban warfare as the way forward.

“The general objective ... [is to] harass the enemy and force him to immobilize the greatest possible volume of military effects. At the same time, through carefully prepared attacks, the oppressive nature of the enemy is exposed to the masses, and the revolutionary forces acquire maximum weapons and equipment.”

In Zunbeltz's view, the war needed to be taken to the streets of Basque cities in order to incense the population into joining the cause. The fight would therefore become a question of Basque existence, as the repression would become increasingly indiscriminate as the line between ETA sympathizer and civilian would be further erased, thus radicalizing the populace and strengthening the cause. He's advocating for a brutal outcome—many people would inevitably

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

be caught in the crossfire—but in the opinion of Zunbeltz, the creation of an urban war would be the only way to properly prime the Basques for revolution.

These dual notions of ETA—the group simultaneously advocating for revolution in Spain, and revolution against Spain—would be very prescient in the internal discourse among ETA leaders in the years that ensued. However, their relevance for the Burgos trial is more subtle. These pieces prove that ETA’s ideology was not set in stone. The accused ETA members on trial and their lawyers were presented a platform during the Burgos trial, with the ability to label themselves in whatever way would be most advantageous for the survival of those on trial and for the success of the group itself. The ideological fluidity within the group would tear ETA apart due to clashing understandings of ETA’s purpose, but it also provided ETA maximum flexibility when publicly scrutinized.

The Burgos trial was intended by the Franco regime to be a public trial, hoping that ETA’s violence and revolutionary goals would dissuade supporters—it also would have the intended effect of setting a precedent for what the government would do to those who struck against them. However, this was a different approach to justice from the regime. As Payne recognizes in *Basque Nationalism*, “In earlier years most of the nationalist militants would have been quickly prosecuted under court-martial with only minimal public hearing and probably executed.”⁵¹ There is a strong connection to be made with the previously mentioned “othering” of the Basques and the decision to turn Burgos into a military tribunal. ETA’s guiding ideology was not its disapproval of the Franco regime, but toward Spain at large; its aims were to create an independent socialist Basque nation that would be out of the jurisdiction of any government in

⁵¹ Payne, *Basque Nationalism*. 247

Madrid, Francoist or otherwise.⁵² By having the trial be a public display of ETA's radical ideology—critically, in a nation not far removed from the period of ostracization, imprisonment, and murder of political radicals—the regime believed that ETA's goals would be distasteful for the Spanish public, and that they would not bat an eye when the accused were sent to the firing squad. The flip-side of that coin is the message sent to the Basque Country, that the government in Madrid would stop at nothing to crush any movement of independence.

The major miscalculation made by the regime was the role of reporting in a public trial. They could control the Spanish press as they pleased, but the foreign press would not be subject to the same scrutiny, and could portray the trial as they viewed it. The idea of making the trial public was with the intention of getting the Spanish populace to find the Basques anti-Spanish and unpatriotic,⁵³ but the aforementioned increase of foreign influence in the country meant that the Spanish public received vastly different accounts of the trial than what the regime wanted them to read. What ensued was a PR disaster for Franco.

The opening days of the trial alluded to how the regime wished for the proceedings to go. Richard Eder, a journalist for the New York Times, reported in a December 4, 1970 article, “The first day was taken up with the reading of the first part of a 30,000-word summary of an investigating officer’s report.”⁵⁴ All sources concur that the first two days of the trial, the third and fourth of December, were excruciatingly dull, as the defence lawyers were “frequently refused ... requests to speak.”⁵⁵ Eder’s opening reporting of the trial does little to hide his distaste for the hyper-militant environment surrounding the proceedings. In the first sentence he makes note of the “heavily guarded trial room of the Sixth Military District,” later referring to

⁵² Sartre, Jean Paul. “The Burgos Trial,” in *Life/Situations: Essays Written and Spoken*. (Pantheon Books, New York, NY. 1977.) Accessed through https://www.oocities.org/c_ansata/Burgos.html

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Eder, Richard. “TRIAL OF BASQUES STARTS IN BURGOS,” *The New York Times*. Published Dec. 4, 1970.

⁵⁵ Eder, Richard. “Burgos Court: Stage for Basque Cause,” *The New York Times*. Published Dec 7, 1970.

the trial as “a military tribunal, from whose sentence there is no appeal.”⁵⁶ From the first few paragraphs, Eder portrays the regime as cold and austere. His description of the interior of the courtroom continues this notion.

“The 120 members of the public and the 30 or so journalists allowed in the courtroom were searched. During recesses they were kept in a courtyard guarded by soldiers with submachine guns. The 16 prisoners—it has been recommended that one of them, Maria Aranzazu, be set free and there is no charge against her—sat handcuffed in pairs facing the military judges. Twenty-six gray-helmeted policemen stood behind them.”⁵⁷

The reader is given a front row seat to a brutal state, filled with guns and soldiers who loom over proceedings like hawks. I see Eder’s intentions with these two paragraphs as his way of conceptualizing the idea of humanity of the proceedings. From his viewpoint, everyone who isn’t working on the behalf of the regime receives the same dehumanizing treatment. Journalists, members of the public, and obviously, those on trial, are all enemies of the state in the eyes of the regime. The final point he makes in this article concerning the harshness of the proceedings is comical: “The defense lawyers asked the presiding judge, Col. Manuel Ordovas ... to have the handcuffs removed. The colonel, a gray-haired man with a thin mustache, asked the lieutenant of the court guard if he could guarantee security if the prisoners’ hands were free. He replied in the negative, but they were loosened.”⁵⁸ It’s been established that the military has enough firepower to destroy every person present, as there are 26 policemen standing over the 16 accused, but there is still the vague threat to security if the handcuffs come off. This detail is meaningless to the outcome of the proceedings, but Eder keeps it in, undoubtedly to highlight the absurd strictness on display.

Eder has two other articles for *The New York Times* that continue to bemoan the militant,

⁵⁶ Eder, “TRIAL OF BASQUES STARTS IN BURGOS”.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

undemocratic nature of the proceedings—they will come up later. He has an unflinchingly anti-regime stance, vividly situating the reader within the space with snappy sentences—reading his coverage was a breath of fresh air that stood out from stale and overly factual reporting that I came across. In this sense, he was likely inspired by the expat reporters who came before him to cover the Spanish Civil War, which ended only 35 years before the Burgos trial. Foreign journalists came in from around the world to cover the war, often embedding themselves within Republican-held territory to report from the viewpoint of anti-fascist soldiers on the front line. Eder’s reporting is designed to engage and immerse the reader, to make points about illiberalism within the trial and the regime’s unbothered nature toward creating a fair trial. He was writing to an audience of democratically minded Americans, who probably would be appalled by the violence done by ETA, but such violence isn’t the focus of the article. The article is about how brazenly militant the regime is, showing where Eder’s allegiances lie. He wasn’t looking to be a neutral reporter, but to have a critical pen to injustice. By being so overtly against the rigidity of the regime, he served ETA’s cause; being the opposition to this unsympathetic, undemocratic structure places ETA on a morally superior ground to the regime even without the generous portrayals of ETA members seen elsewhere in the article.

The Economist published an article titled “The aftermath of Burgos” on December 19, 1970. It’s an ironic title given the further action surrounding the trial still to come, yet the article is no worse for it. The writer is not named (the byline reading “From our Spain correspondent”), but someone at *The Economist*’s Spanish desk deserves credit for the excellent first line: Spain is again a police state.⁵⁹ This article has fewer of the literary flourishes than the Eder pieces, but it offers equally decisive criticism of the Franco regime and the harshness on display during the

⁵⁹ “The aftermath of Burgos,” *The Economist*, Dec. 19, 1970. The Economist Historical Archive

trial. The article begins by establishing the state of legal disarray in Spain while the trial was underway.

“On Monday night an emergency cabinet meeting decided to suspend for six months the right of arrested persons to be released within 72 hours if no formal charges are laid against them. This gave partial satisfaction to the right-wingers in the government who have been pressing for the declaration of a state of emergency throughout the country ever since the trial of the 16 Basque nationalists by a military tribunal started at Burgos. Now the Spanish police, either uniformed or secret, may detain anyone for up to six months without charge.”⁶⁰

The reader is introduced to this trial through the evocation of a police state, emergency cabinet meetings that can suspend basic civil liberties, and secret police with full jurisdiction to snatch civilians off the street at will. *The Economist* is today known for its conservative bent, but very few readers in the U.K. or otherwise would respond kindly to these images recalling the fascist states of the 1930s and 40s. This article largely focuses on covering the statements of men in the Spanish government, yet it arrives at the same conclusions as Eder’s article. On one hand, General Pinez Viñeta is quoted as stating, “the army will not allow disorder or ill-discipline to triumph; if necessary it will launch a new crusade against the godless and the lawless.”⁶¹ On the other hand, General Garcia Valiño said, “It is unwise to use the army to pass judgment in matters best left to the judiciary.”⁶² These are two very powerful men deeply entrenched in the Franco regime, whose disagreement unveils a clear lack of consensus among the top brass in the military. Although the guns and soldiers at Burgos are very real, doubts are starting to be revealed on whether it’s a good idea to stage a public execution with the eyes of the world upon

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

them. The voice of the writer comes through in the second to last paragraph, as they offer a summation of the internal chaos unearthed by the trial.

“The Burgos trial and its aftermath have exposed the perilous rigidity of a regime dominated by two old soldiers [Francisco Franco and his second-in-command, Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco] who cannot forget the civil war and an administration in the hands of young technocrats who have never really worked out their ideas about democracy.”⁶³

This is a scalding burn against the regime, cutting into the militant posturing of the old guard and the incapable minions who serve them. By construing the Spanish state as a web of unsympathetic actors, the state is sapped of legitimacy, thus supporting ETA’s defense of being punished for merely standing against an unjust state. Another article, another win for ETA.

Richard Eder followed up his initial coverage of the trial with a second article, published December 7, 1970. This was after the first day of the accused being able to speak, as the prior gag order on the defense was dropped. The testimonies of the accused focused largely on torture, so Eder opens the article with a quote from the defense lawyer questioning ETA member, Jesus Abriesqua, about the torture he and his comrades received while in police custody. The defense attorneys understood that reports of torture would not sway the judges or punish the torturers—bringing up torture was specifically intended to incite outrage in the press and among the populace. Eder goes into significant detail when relaying the testimonies of the accused as they discussed torture methods, indiscriminate shootings, and beatings.⁶⁴ Uneasiness over testimonies on torture is mentioned in *Newsweek*’s coverage of the trial as well, as it was reported that Col. Ordovas would cut off the accused when they attempted to share details on torture.⁶⁵

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Eder, “Burgos Court: Stage for Basque Cause.”

⁶⁵ “The Real Offense,” *Newsweek*. Published Dec. 21, 1970.

It's important to consider that ETA's lawyers understood that emphasizing torture would center the stories of the accused and provoke an emotional response from those following the trial in the press. The most notable example of this strategy were the accounts delivered by Holocaust survivors in the 1962 trial of Adolf Eichmann. The world was enraptured and horrified by accounts of concentration camps and death marches, which shifted the focus of the trial away from the man accused for crimes against humanity toward the public support of survivors. Annette Wieviorka noted that the witnesses were acting on behalf of the prosecutor in the Eichmann trial, which was the state of Israel, therefore "the state . . . underwrote their testimony and thus lent it all the weight of the state's legitimacy and institutional and symbolic power."⁶⁶ The lawyers for the Burgos trial flipped this strategy on its head. The testimonies of the accused were used to undermine the legitimacy of the Franco regime, as descriptions of beatings and indiscriminate violence constructed the state as violent oppressor in opposition to the brave men and women who chose to stand against them. By sapping the state of its implied power through exposé, ETA is consciously manipulating its own image by positioning themselves as victims of organized abuse.

John Sullivan notes in his book, *ETA and Basque Nationalism*, that the efforts of the defense lawyers to focus so heavily on torture was their greatest success, as these lines of questioning were aimed specifically for foreign journalists to write about.⁶⁷ The issue of torture further demonized the regime, incensed the Basque and Spanish public, and drew even more attention to the proceedings, which were quickly seeming to go downhill for the regime. More news outlets began to shift their coverage away from the courtroom toward the emerging political crisis that had erupted in the second week of December. *Newsweek* reported that

⁶⁶ Wieviorka, Annette. *The Era of the Witness*. (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY. 1999.) 84.

⁶⁷ Sullivan, John. *ETA and Basque Nationalism*. (Routledge, 1988). 95.

“opposition leaders representing the Liberals, Christian Democrats, Socialists and Communists issued a press statement criticizing the trial, and the conference of Spanish bishops called for clemency.”⁶⁸ This solidarity against the regime was not limited to political actors—thousands of Basques took to the streets to protest, both before and after the ruling was passed down that six of the accused were to receive the death penalty.⁶⁹ There were protests and acts of civil disobedience in other Spanish and European cities: clashes with the police in Barcelona, occupation of a monastery in Montserrat, dockworkers in France and Italy refusing to load Spanish ships.⁷⁰ Those who consumed the fiery international reporting on the trial were largely incensed, and did what they could to show their solidarity with the accused.

The regime was blasted by the international media, as highlighted by an excerpt from *Newsweek*'s January 11, 1971 coverage of the trial. They quote condemnations from *Pravda* (Moscow), *The Buenos Aires Herald*, *The Frankfurter Rundschau*, *Le Monde* (Paris), *The Miami Herald*, *Die Presse* (Vienna), and *The Times of London*, all of which strongly condemned the regime and the sentences delivered at the trial. Such international consensus on a given issue was practically unheard of; it was even more shocking that these major news outlets were siding with the fates of members of an openly revolutionary and Marxist organization over an established regional power.

Evidently, the Franco regime receiving universal criticism was a fantastic press response for ETA, and the accused were also construed in an extremely generous way throughout the trial. At some points they were portrayed as the victims of state oppression, on other occasions they were bold freedom fighters. For example, they were noted for their bravery when Mario Onaindia, one of the accused, rushed the judges as the defendants began to chant “Long live the

⁶⁸ “A Test of Strength,” *Newsweek*. Published Dec. 14, 1970.

⁶⁹ Sullivan, *ETA and Basque Nationalism*. 100-101.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 105.

Basque nation.”⁷¹ Eder is the source of the most gratuitous descriptions of the Basques (the last line in “TRIAL OF THE BASQUES STARTS IN BURGOS” gives them a sort of mythical, Hobbit-like description)⁷², but he also does significant work to link the actions of the accused to their ideological motivations. In “Burgos Court: Stage for Basque Cause,” he notes ETA’s strategy and tactics: “ETA has printed and distributed propaganda, set off small bombs, robbed banks to support its work, and taken credit for killing Inspector Manzanas ...”⁷³ Eder follows this with an ETA member’s explanation for being a Basque nationalist: social oppression, fighting fascism, and the limits of the Spanish state.⁷⁴ In a previous article, Eder notes that the Basque point of view of the Spanish state is that “Castille and the authoritarian Castilian spirit have been trying them and finding them guilty for years.”⁷⁵ By presenting the accused as people committed to a cause, who have a consistent enemy, and pursue violent tactics with the goal of liberation, Eder legitimizes ETA as an organized opposition, rather than outright criminals. Sympathy is generated out of its oppression, antipathy is directed at its enemy.

The articles released after Franco canceled the death sentences read like a sigh of relief on the behalf of the prisoners. They all mention the anecdote that the prisoners were happy even before they received the news that they would not be facing the wall the next day, as they were all drunk from their New Year’s eve celebratory wine.⁷⁶ Even before then, the Basques sentenced to death seemed fearless out of the belief of their cause: “We hope strongly that clemency will not be accorded ... We wish to die for the dignity of man and the liberty of our Basque land.”⁷⁷

The accused were willing martyrs, but still happy when they didn’t have to die—they were brave

⁷¹ “The Real Offense,” *Newsweek*.

⁷² Eder, “TRIAL OF BASQUES STARTS IN BURGOS”

⁷³ Eder, “Burgos Court: Stage for Basque Cause.”

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Eder, “TRIAL OF BASQUES STARTS IN BURGOS.”

⁷⁶ “Spain: The Crackdown that Failed,” *Newsweek*. Published Jan. 11, 1971.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

in the face of death, yet appreciated life. The coverage of ETA members makes them seem human, while the regime is made up of old, joyless men like Col. Ordovas.

The *Newsweek* article published after the trial concluded by situating Franco's immense failure within the uncertain future of the regime.

“For [Franco's] attempt to use the Spanish military establishment to punish domestic dissent had failed. Instead, he had been placed in an untenable position and had been forced to back down. This could only embolden the left-wing opposition while simultaneously antagonizing the hard-liners who have been Franco's chief source of strength.”⁷⁸

This analysis was spot on, as ETA reorganized itself, continued violent attacks, and in the years after Burgos declared allegiances with other national liberation groups such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA), The Liberation Front of Brittany (FLB), and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO).⁷⁹ The Burgos trial provided a platform for ETA to share its ideas and motivations, and international press coverage vastly expanded their audience. Within the regime, men jockeyed for position to replace Franco, as his age and declining health made it clear that a successor had to be chosen. Prince Juan Carlos had been recognized as heir to the Spanish throne after the death of Franco, but there was significant confusion among members of the regime as to the role he would play in the years to come.⁸⁰ By 1973, Franco recognized that he was too old to run the government and named Luis Carrero Blanco as prime minister, while Franco remained within the regime as a figurehead.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Alonso, Rogelio. “The International Dimension of ETA's Terrorism and the Internationalization of the Conflict in the Basque Country.” *Democracy and Security* 7, no. 2 (2011): 184–204. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48602794>.

⁸⁰ Payne, *The Franco Regime*. 575-577

⁸¹ Ibid, 586.

The Burgos trials were a confirmation that ETA could use the press to its advantage; ETA received positive coverage throughout the Burgos trial despite having 15 members receive lengthy sentences. It utilized the international media apparatus, exposed a regime on a sharp downward trajectory, and won. The regime was embarrassed on an international level, disavowals having come in from around the globe. Very few things could get journalists in Moscow, Buenos Aires, Miami and London to agree—the unanimous failure of the Franco regime did. I think ETA saw the world on its side, that it supposedly had the consent of the Spanish masses and the international press to continue to take on the regime. An independent, leftist Basque state remained the nexus of ETA's ideology, but the fragility of the regime made it clear that one strike could alter the direction of Spanish history for good. So ETA blew up the Prime Minister.

Interlude: The Many ETAs of the Early 1970s

To be very clear—the two years separating the Burgos trial and the assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco were not defined by linear continuity for ETA. The fracture of ETA into ETA-V, ETA-VI, and the Red Cells drastically altered the composition, the political and social goals, and the methods of action for ETA. This split took place at ETA's Sixth Assembly in 1970, which marked the expulsion of the Red Cells, the secession of ETA-V, and the existing interior leadership taking on the name of ETA-VI.⁸² At this point, ETA cannot be referred to as a unified structure. However, the ideological chasm between the different ETA groups was largely among the group leadership, not the rank and file. ETA soldiers would continue acting from the commands they received from their superiors, who could be receiving their orders from any of the ETA groups that had formed in the wake of the Sixth Assembly, but these communications would not be labeled as coming from a splinter group. ETA's divisions were massive for the path the group would take in the years to come, but did not make any blip on the radars of those who were not intimately involved with ETA's leadership.

Daniele Conversi elaborates on ETA's internal battles being out of the public eye: "Most people in Euskadi were unaware of these internal conflicts and saw ETA as a homogenous body. Holding a belief in ETA's ideological continuity, its external supporters and sympathisers understood these conflicts as nothing but detail."⁸³ Keeping internal debates out of view of the public was essential for ETA's growth post-Burgos. First of all, the Burgos trial granted ETA the symbolic position as the leading force fighting for Basque independence, a considerably popular notion within their base of support, the Basque Country.⁸⁴ Burgos also bolstered ETA's infamy

⁸² Sullivan, John. *ETA and Basque Nationalism*. 85.
See: Appendix 1.

⁸³ Conversi, Daniele. *The Basques, the Catalans, and Spain: Alternative Routes to Nationalist Mobilization*. (University of Nevada Press, Reno, NV. 1997), 99.

⁸⁴ Zulaika, Joseba. *Basque Violence: Metaphor and Sacrament*. 100.

among the regime controlled press, as Spanish outlets' coverage in the years before and after the trial established ETA as a major enemy of the Spanish state. If the press could report that ETA was falling apart, and that a majority of their members favored protest and influence over democratic processes rather than bombings and national liberation, then they would lose the aspect of fear that made them front page news. In a book chapter on the press coverage of the assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco, Eduardo Uriarte Romero claims that the Spanish press' treatment of ETA prior to the assassination effectively constructed them as a primary force of instability and an enemy of the Spanish state.⁸⁵ The positive attention from the international press combined with the demonization of ETA by the Spanish media inspired the two ETAs to go big on their goals.

ETA-V's driving goal was an independent Basque nation, seeing class struggle as a subordinate issue to eliminating Spanish power in the Basque Country. Federico Krutwig argued against ETA-VI using the language of Marxist critique, claiming that it was "un-Marxist to stress class struggle before national liberation was achieved."⁸⁶ ETA-V's effectiveness was in their fluidity of political ideology concerning class struggle with their single-minded goal of national independence, which weeded out the ETA members who considered themselves communist before Basque. Crucially, ETA-V welcomed armed struggle and violence as necessities for sowing revolution. The "V" in its name doesn't stand for violence, but in the years to come ETA-V would be involved with the kidnappings of Herr Beihl and Basque businessmen Lorenzo Zabala and Felipe Huarte; the destruction of property in San Sebastián; and the assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Uriarte Romero, Eduardo. "El tratamiento de la Prensa Española del Magnicidio de Carrero Blanco," in *El atentado contra Carrero Blanco como lugar de (no-)memoria*, ed. Patrick Eser, Stefan Peters. (Iberoamericana, Madrid. 2016), 82.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 128.

⁸⁷ Sullivan, John. *ETA and Basque Nationalism*. 132-141.

ETA-VI outwardly aligned themselves with Trotskyism, considered workers movements to be a foundation of solidarity for Basque independence groups, and generally were not inclined to support acts of violence as a part of ETA's struggle. In 1970-71, ETA-VI's popularity was at its peak, especially after the Burgos trial. As stated by Sullivan, "The agitation in support of the Burgos prisoners had demonstrated the organisation's ability to win support from both traditional nationalists, and from the 'Spanish' groups, in the illegal labor movement."⁸⁸ Although the support of the underground labor movement through mass-strikes helped save the six ETA members sentenced to death at Burgos, ETA-VI's collaboration with Spaniards made them highly suspect in the eyes of the hardliners.

At this point, there was no singular ETA left, and there never would be again. The splinter groups would splinter again, some groups merged with others, some became irrelevant in the rapidly evolving political sphere and would just wither away. But the lingering reality was that a cohesive, singular ETA was impossible to keep together. There were too many competing ideologies, strategies of resistance, and general goals—the Sixth Assembly was a disaster, but it confirmed that there was no such thing as solid ground for a group advocating revolution.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 113.

Chapter 2: The beginning of the end

ETA is widely known today as the group who assassinated Luis Carrero Blanco. The group continued to fight well into the 20th century, there were many years after the attack where ETA was more violent than in 1973, and ETA would be a mainstay in the Spanish media for decades to come. All of this pales in comparison to the death of Carrero Blanco, which irreparably altered Spanish and Basque history, and was ETA's greatest success. You can say ETA peaked early. Luis Carrero Blanco symbolically represented the regime's last hope for maintaining the dictatorship after the fall of Franco; in a sense, by blowing up Carrero Blanco ETA can be accredited for the final blow to the dream of fascist Europe from the 1930s. As William A. Douglass and Pedro Ibarra Güell put it, "At a stroke, ETA had created a void at the pinnacle of Spanish State power, a condition from which the dictatorship proved to be incapable of recovering. The door was open for Spain's subsequent transition to democracy after Franco's death in 1975."⁸⁹ The unintended consequence of the assassination of a widely disliked figure was that despite the relatively supportive reaction concerning the event from the Basque and Spanish populace and international media, ETA had lost its primary foe through the dissolution of the Franco regime and struggled to cohesively justify their existence in the next stage of Spanish government.

This chapter revolves around the idea that the assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco was a high water mark of political achievement for ETA and would represent the beginning of the end of good will among the Spanish and international community for ETA. This is a curious irony of ETA's complex history—at the point of ETA's greatest popular support, it chose the most divisive

⁸⁹ Douglass, William A. and Pedro Ibarra Güell. "A Basque Referendum: Resolution of Political Conflict or the Promised Land of Error?" in *Empire and Terror*. 141-2.

political strategy and received declining public levels of support until its demise in the 21st century.

Given the split within ETA, Carrero Blanco's role in expanding the intelligence service and becoming the foremost public antagonist of ETA behind Franco, and the exaggerated threat of ETA within the Spanish press, I argue that ETA intended the assassination to become a press spectacle. A massive, well-orchestrated strike was intended to make the attackers seem strong, decisive, and organized, although ETA was anything but that at the time of the bombing. Taking out Carrero Blanco not only threw a wrench in the regime's succession plans, but it undermined and embarrassed the regime, as killing the man most responsible for anti-ETA intelligence operations exposes the fragility of the state. ETA-V was the subset responsible for the assassination, a group that was ideologically invested in its antagonization of the Spanish state, Francoist or otherwise. Instead of looking to achieve solidarity with the significant portion of Spaniards who approved of the bombing, it continued to rail against ETA-VI members for collaborating with the Spanish, and further narrowed its organization by splitting again into ETA-M and ETA-PM. In the years after Carrero Blanco's death, ETA shed all efforts of maintaining a positive image in domestic and international spheres.

Three men died as a part of the assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco—Carrero Blanco, the driver, and Carrero Blanco's bodyguard. Carrero Blanco's companions were murdered in cold blood, in the wrong place at the wrong time, unfortunate participants in a fight they didn't need to be involved in. However, Carrero Blanco was responsible for maintaining Franco's regime for decades and worked tirelessly to undermine any possibility of a democratic Spain during his lifetime.⁹⁰ There's no use in pretending to mourn him or to ignore the fact that his

⁹⁰ Share, Donald. "The Franquist Regime and the Dilemma of Succession." *The Review of Politics* 48, no. 4 (1986): 571. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1407383>.

assassination is almost unparalleled in its awesomeness. The timeline of events is too good to not discuss, one of those historical phenomena that seem to be scripted for an action film. The unveiling of information took time to leak to the press—as we’ll see, most initial reports on the assassination include only a line or two on ETA’s suspected involvement in the murder. Knowing what we know now, the extravagance of Carrero Blanco’s assassination was a ploy by ETA to kickstart the end of the Franco regime. As stated by Julen Agirre, the attack was intended “to break the rhythm of evolution of the Spanish state, forcing it into an abrupt leap to the right.”⁹¹ This gets at the discussed cycle of revolutionary action/state repression—ETA’s hopes were that the Spanish state would strike back viciously, further inflaming anti-regime sentiments and creating a Burgos-like media frenzy. As we’ll see, this is not what happened.

The conspiracy to assassinate Carrero Blanco was known as Operación Ogro (Operation Ogre). ETA members rented a basement apartment on Calle Claudio Coello in Madrid, particularly selected because Carrero Blanco drove down the street daily after attending Mass.⁹² The ETA members dug a tunnel under the street, working for ten days prior to the attack under the alias of “sculptors creating large new art works with mechanical techniques.”⁹³ The murder was carried out by ETA members Jesús Zugarramurdi, José Miguel Beñarán, and Javier Larreategi, who were disguised as electricians wiring up the art installation.⁹⁴ On Saturday, December 20, 1973, the bombs were in place, the ETA soldiers ready to attack. The assassins waited for Carrero Blanco’s Dodge Dart to drive over the tunnel, pressed the button, and sent the car and its occupants flying 35 meters in the air.⁹⁵ The car landed on the roof of an adjacent

⁹¹ Julen Agirre [Genoveva Forest], *Operation Ogro* (New York, 1975). In *The Franco Regime*, Stanley Payne. 588.

⁹² Sullivan, John. *ETA and Basque Nationalism*. 141

⁹³ Payne, Stanley. *The Franco Regime*, 588

⁹⁴ LUIS R. AIZPEOLEA, “The day ETA struck a lethal blow to the Franco regime” *El País*. Dec. 18, 2013. https://english.elpais.com/elpais/2013/12/18/inenglish/1387374599_382537.html

⁹⁵ *Ibid*

building, before teetering over the edge and falling into the courtyard behind the building, a significant distance away from the crater formed by the explosion.

The divide within ETA at the time of the assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco led to a variety of explanations and justifications for his assassination, as the different factions used the event as fuel for their ideological flames. ETA-V claimed in a press conference that its members were responsible for the assassination and that “the assassination was an essential part of its strategy for preventing Francoism’s continuation after Franco’s death.”⁹⁶ In *Hautsi*, an ETA-VI aligned journal, it was claimed that “the disappearance of Carrero Blanco is not equivalent to the beginning of the fall of Francoism, and even less the fall of the fascist system. His precise execution creates more favorable conditions to fight for democratic demands at all levels.”⁹⁷ Obviously, both groups had to show support of the attack in order to not blow ETA’s cover as a deeply fragmented institution, but the different language used shows how the separate ETAs jockeyed for legitimacy in this period. ETA-V could use the bombing itself as self-promotion, while ETA-VI had the less compelling pitch of fighting for democratic demands. Sure, the ETA-VI statement is more aligned with a group willing to participate in political organization, but it lacks the vigor of revolution and action that outwardly claiming responsibility for the bombing would produce.

The most compelling and historically grounded justification for the assassination that I’ve found came from Mario Salegi, a Basque-American who did significant work advocating for Basque nationalist causes among Basque-American communities.⁹⁸ A document I found among his papers titled “The Reason Why The Nationalist Revolutionary Basque ETA Chose Carrero

⁹⁶ Sullivan, John. *ETA and Basque Nationalism*. 142

⁹⁷ *Hautsi*, Accessed from the Center for Basque Studies archives, Mario Salegi Papers.

⁹⁸ At the Center for Basque Studies there is a collection of documents labeled “The Mario Salegi papers”. These include writings and correspondences from Salegi, newsletters and propaganda from CAMBIAS (a Basque-American group advocating for the rights of radical Basques at odds with the Spanish state), and various journals and articles regarding Basque nationalism.

Blanco” supposedly offers his justification for the assassination.⁹⁹ The document is difficult to parse, especially concerning his citations of ETA communications—where his writing ends and citations of other communications begin is not very clear. Despite this, the document provides valuable insight toward the political motivations of the assassination. The most prominent and well established opposition to the Francoist government in Spain, at the time of the assassination, was the Communist Party of Spain (PCE). The PCE had abandoned armed struggle by this point and was pursuing a strategy dubbed the “Freedom Pact,” which aimed to unite all anti-Franco groups in order to attempt a peaceful transfer of power through negotiation.¹⁰⁰ In the author’s view, these goals are futile: “Trying to reconcile the antagonistic classes within Spanish society, the PCE is losing all of its support.”¹⁰¹ The oppositional nature of the groups that the PCE looked to unite caused distrust within the coalition, weakening the PCE and their supposed resistance to the Franco regime. Santiago Carrillo, the General Secretary of the PCE at the time, and the Executive Committee of the PCE, were hostile toward the assassins in their statements released in the days after the assassination.¹⁰²

The author positions the assassination as ETA attempting to prove its political worth to Spaniards oppressed under the Francoist state and dissatisfied with the lack of action from the PCE—ETA is an integral factor of the anti-Franco movement.¹⁰³ The author cites an ETA communication written on December 20, 1973: “This is why we consider that our action against the Head of the Spanish government will lead to a fundamental advance in the struggle against the national oppression and toward socialism in Euskadi and for the liberation of all those

⁹⁹ I say supposedly because there is no name stated with the title and I found no evidence that this document was published or distributed.

¹⁰⁰ “Porque la organización revolucionaria y nacionalista vasca E.T.A. escogió a Carrero Blanco,” 4.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 5.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, 6.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 4.

exploited and oppressed within the Spanish State.”¹⁰⁴ Through the assassination, ETA was flexing its military capabilities in tandem with its political aspirations. ETA presented a dilemma for not just the PCE, but for all Spaniards who wanted the swift destruction of the Franco regime—was it worth celebrating the death of an enemy against democracy if his assassins were strictly opposed to a Spanish state? Another ETA communication is cited in the document, this one from December 26, 1973. It strikes back against the press releases from the PCE, as well as a “slandorous dispatch” published in *L’Humanité*. But crucially, this communication puts the onus on the Spanish people opposed to Franco to consider their acceptance of Basque independence. “We are Basque patriots, not murderous terrorists; we distinguish between our friends and our enemies. Among the latter we only see the Spanish State with all of its fascist power apparatus. And in our struggle for independence we consider the Spanish people and all of the peoples in the Spanish State as our allies.”¹⁰⁵ From the perspective of an ETA-VI member, this is a fairly honest response—the group didn’t have any involvement in the murder of Carrero Blanco, so pleading innocence to the charge of terrorism is a valid response. However, this quote would be rebuked by ETA-V aligned members, who would never go as far to claiming the Spanish people as allies, but it should be noted that this ETA faction held the minority opinion among ETA members at the time. The surface-level interpretation of the scenario is that ETA is leveraging its primary goal—an independent and socialist Basque state—with the promise that it can lead the armed resistance against the existing state. There are faint glimmers of the Spanish Civil War here—armed struggle being waged by coalition forces with the most radical elements leading the military strategy, but nostalgia would not prevail for either group. ETA-V, proponents of armed

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. Again, this citation is given without context of where this was published. There is no mention of the split within ETA or any intra-group conflict. Contextually, the invocations of solidarity with Spanish workers and labor activists hints that this was released by members aligned with ETA-VI.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 7.

struggle, would not work with the Spaniards; ETA-VI, those who negotiated and made pacts with Spanish radicals, had no influence over military forces.

Luis Carrero Blanco was symbolically vital to the Franco regime at the time of his assassination—he was named prime minister when Franco’s health was failing, he represented a stable successor after the inevitable death of Franco, and importantly, he had been embedded within the regime since his appointment as subsecretary of the presidency in 1941.¹⁰⁶ Carrero Blanco represented the continuation of the Spanish Civil War, of the survival of the right-wing bloc that authorized mass destruction and casualty in Basque towns. Alfonzo Pérez-Agote’s essay on the importance of memory and vengeance as radicalizing forces for ETA members is brought into focus when considering Carrero Blanco’s symbolic position in the minds of Basques—especially as ETA was motivated by “the goal of liberating their parents from their humiliation and frustration and achieving their redemption.”¹⁰⁷ Carrero Blanco had long served as a reminder of the years of pain and violence, of the suppression of Basque culture and language. In this sense, sending Carrero Blanco’s car flying through the air was an act of attempted catharsis for Basques who had faced years of cultural repression from the regime.

Carrero Blanco’s role within the Franco regime prior to his ascension to prime minister made him an enticing target for ETA, considering his involvement with the Spanish military, intelligence services, and his founding of the Servicio Central de Documentación (SECED). SECED was set up by Carrero Blanco in 1968, its goal was “to gather systemic information about political attitudes and activities, including possible subversion, in key sectors of Spanish society and institutions, including the military.”¹⁰⁸ As discussed, 1968 was a crucial year in ETA’s

¹⁰⁶ Payne, *The Franco Regime*. 287

¹⁰⁷ Pérez-Agote, Alfonzo. “Self Fulfilling Prophecy and Unresolved Mourning: Basque Political Violence in the Twenty-First Century,” *Empire and Terror: Nationalism and Postnationalism in the New Millenium*. (Center for Basque Studies, Reno, NV. 2005). 180

¹⁰⁸ Payne, *The Franco Regime*. 571

history, as violent actions increased in response to the murder of Txabi Extebarrieta and the police crackdown after the murder of Melitón Manzanas. SECED aimed to root out any covert ETA members or collaborators, which posed a significant concern for ETA's aims of undermining the regime.

As noted in chapter one, the Spanish press had some of their restrictions theoretically loosened in the 1960s, as a part of the liberalization measures taken by the Franco regime. However, “liberalization” should be taken with a significant grain of salt, because there were still strict guidelines on what newspapers could and couldn't publish. All authorized publications adhered to the Francoist line, but with slightly different angles based on the editorial and regional bias from the editors. Eduardo Uriarte Romero, a former ETA-member turned Basque politician and writer, published a book chapter examining how *ABC*, *El Correo*, and *La Vanguardia* covered the assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco.¹⁰⁹ This chapter is rich with excellent analysis regarding the role of the press in bolstering ETA's status as rebels against the regime, but it also takes an analytical approach when examining the photos, language, space, and details used by each paper to explain and interpret the assassination. His chapter is an invaluable resource for understanding the reaction of the Spanish press to the assassination, given the consistent regime-supporting stance each publication takes.

The three publications examined in the chapter are from arguably the three most relevant cities regarding the assassination: *ABC* is based in Madrid, *El Correo* is based in Bilbao, *La Vanguardia* is based in Barcelona. All outlets had reporters in Madrid, so *ABC* didn't necessarily have the upper hand on the other publications regarding access to the scene of the attack. *ABC*'s angle was its access within the government and to high-ranking officials in the Franco regime.

¹⁰⁹ An aside—Uriarte Romero was actually one of the six sentenced to death during the Burgos trial! He was released from prison in 1977 and helped found Euskadiko Ezkerra, a socialist Basque nationalist political party.

“With these resources, the sensation of proximity with the political nomenclature is offered, the pain is participated in and the continuity around Franco is visualized.”¹¹⁰ *El Correo*, being based in Bilbao, is closest in proximity to ETA and has covered the group more extensively than the other outlets. As claimed in the chapter, *El Correo* pinned the attack on ETA in a more decisive manner than the other papers were willing to do on the first day. Uriarte Romero states, “This fact should be highlighted because the rest of the newspapers were clearly reluctant to accept [ETA’s responsibility], expressing a certain repugnance to the fact that ETA assumed the leading role in the attack.¹¹¹ At this point, ETA actions had been exclusively within the Basque Country, while it had never attempted an assassination of any figures of such prominence. The repugnance and reluctance expressed by other news outlets seems to contradict prior statements in the article, which claim that regarding its threat to the public, ETA had received exaggerated space and status within the papers. As for *La Vanguardia*, Barcelona was the largest city in Spain and was generally a hotspot of anti-regime sentiment, so the paper had to be as careful as possible not to set off the disaffected masses who could have taken the assassination as motivation for mobilization against the state.

The reluctance to name ETA in the papers reflects the general de-emphasis of the actual attack in the articles reporting on the assassination. Again, this seems contradictory—how do you cover an assassination without talking about who did it, how they did it, or why they did it? Uriarte Romero provides an excellent justification for this, that “the discursive response that is orchestrated in the face of an attack with profound consequences is far superior to the information that is offered, which is still highly measured and subordinated.”¹¹² Reporting on the assassination as it happened would expose major weaknesses within the regime, especially

¹¹⁰ Uriarte Romero, Eduardo. 87

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 90.

¹¹² *Ibid*, 84.

regarding the lack of proper security around high ranking officials. The goal for these newspapers was to inform the public on the event without encouraging revolt and to promise the security of the regime's succession plans, with the aim of instilling the idea that the attack was a tragedy and that the Spanish public should be in a period of mourning.

Uriarte Romero notes the language used in the articles and editorials published after the attack as being crucial to getting the ideas of security, stability, and mourning across. Some words that appeared in all three papers in their coverage of the attack, the public burial on December 22, and the formal memorial the next day, were “secure,” “criminal,” “pain,” and “serenity.”¹¹³ The significance of “secure” was to make it very clear to readers that this bombing was not the beginning of an insurrection and this event wasn't an open door for dissidents to rise up. The regime is secure, please continue with business as usual. “Criminal” was used to discuss the attackers, which is a more moralistic term than soldier. For every “criminal” there is a victim; the implication of that relationship helps to cast the assassins as inherently evil. This phrasing is commonly referred to when considering The Troubles, as the British government would approach IRA members as criminals rather than soldiers—the conflict between ETA members and the Spanish government was similar in this sense. The invocation of “pain” is to encourage the public to grieve and to accept the assassination as a tragedy. Carrero Blanco was not a beloved figure in Spain, but the newspapers discussed at length his devotion to the state, to Catholicism, and to his family, looking to garner sympathy from the masses rather than to stimulate questions about his involvement in state repression and antagonization of oppositional forces. Lastly, I am most impressed with how the newspapers disseminated the idea of “serenity” in the days after the assassination. On face value, blowing up the prime minister doesn't seem to exude peace and quiet. The papers used the word “serenity” to describe the aura of Madrid,

¹¹³ Ibid, 89-101.

which had essentially shut down on the day after the assassination.¹¹⁴ Payne discusses how the military was placed on high alert for any demonstrations or uprisings in the days after the attack, but none came.¹¹⁵ Considering the condemnation of the attack by the PCE and the invocation of serenity by the press, I imagine that dissidents did not want to break the silence and put themselves in danger of being isolated in an uprising.

The most iconic photographs to come out of the assassination were the ones depicting the massive crater and the wreckage caused by the bomb, but the images of Francisco Franco crying at the memorial on December 23 were of equal significance. These photos appeared in international publications, depicting Franco dressed in full military regalia. He looked old and frail, which justifies his absence at the public funeral the day beforehand. However, the Spanish papers took great caution to obscure the scene of Franco crying, with *El Correo* omitting the moment entirely. Uriarte Romero notes that *ABC* barely shows his face, while *La Vanguardia*'s shots of Franco in profile during this sequence also obscures the dictator's sobbing.¹¹⁶ Since Franco did not have the reputation of publicly displaying grief, so these photos would shock the Spanish public if they had been widely distributed. However, the international media spread the photos of Franco crying wide and far, with many outlets using Franco's tears as a lead for their story.

Uriarte Romero's assertion that the Spanish press did not sensationalize the event, rather that they "[demanded] adhesion and trust to the political system," supports the idea that the Spanish press successfully avoided a media frenzy, a phenomena which we've seen ETA work to its advantage in the Burgos trial.¹¹⁷ The metaphor evoked by the actions and rhetoric of the

¹¹⁴ Payne, *The Franco Regime*. 589

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Uriarte Romero, Eduardo. 87

¹¹⁷ Ibid

Spanish press and ETA leading up to the assassination is a massive game of tug-of-war. ETA actions would pull the rope one way, the press' exaggerated response pulls the other way. But when ETA launched its greatest offense, their strongest tug at the rope, the press refused to respond in equal force, putting ETA on its backside.

In contrast to the Burgos trial, which international outlets covered with a thinly veiled bias in favor of the Basque separatists, the assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco was reported on by major outlets in a strictly factual sense, with few of the endearing details about the appealing Basque culture or the staunchness of the military tribunal. The voices of the writers seemed largely subdued in favor of objectivity. There are a few reasons for this, the most prominent being that Spain had military alliances with the United States and the United Kingdom. The assassination of a head of state in an allied country would be considered a far less trivial matter than the Burgos trial, despite the general distaste for the Franco regime and its adherents. The articles examined in this chapter are from *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, and *The Guardian*—publications with different purposes, bases of readers, and ideological biases. These articles aren't condensed to the three days after the assassination; *The New York Times* articles are from December 21 and 22 of 1973, the *Newsweek* report was published December 31, 1973, *The Guardian* article came out on December 26, 1973. By expanding the scope to the week or so after the assassination, the facts surrounding the identity of the assassins, the reaction of the regime, and the response of the Spanish public become clearer.

The New York Times released their first dispatch the day after the assassination, it was released on the front page of the paper with a photo of the crater below the title, "SPAIN'S PREMIER IS KILLED AS ASSASSINS BOMB AUTO; APPARENT HEIR TO FRANCO."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ Giniger, Henry. "SPAIN'S PREMIER IS KILLED AS ASSASSINS BOMB AUTO; APPARENT HEIR TO FRANCO", *The New York Times*. Dec. 21, 1973.

It takes all of one sentence for the reporter, Henry Giniger, to make the very disputable claim of a “surface peace that had prevailed for more than 30 years.”¹¹⁹ Yes, there hadn’t been any assassinations on this scale, but there had been significant conflicts in the Basque Country and Catalonia, as well as periodic revolts and strikes. I disagree with the notion that this was a nation where citizens accepted the regime peacefully. ETA is mentioned in the fourth and fifth paragraphs; notably, it’s stated that this was ETA’s first time acting outside of the northern Basque country.¹²⁰ If ETA intended for the assassination to be a display of their might, discussion of their expansion would support their cause by portraying them as a group on the rise. This is also supported by the writing on the methods of the attack, which made ETA seem extremely professional.¹²¹ No Spanish outlet would mention that ETA used a remote control to trigger the explosion at the exact moment Carrero Blanco’s car drove over the tunnel, but the international media would be more than happy to pick up such a sensational story.

The next day, *The New York Times* published another dispatch from Giniger, titled “Spanish Rightists Disrupt Funeral of Slain Premier.”¹²² This article gets into the political backlash from the Spanish right, as they turned the funeral into a “political demonstration” by chanting “Death to the Communist priests! Death to the Reds! Long live Spain.”¹²³ The invocation of the communist priests (it is unclear why *The New York Times* capitalizes communist in this context) is a clear shot at Basque nationalism, as radical Basque priests had led protests over the collaboration between the Vatican and the Franco regime in previous decades. Former Vice President of the United States Gerald Ford was named in attendance at the funeral, but Francisco Franco curiously was not present due to illness. Later in the article,

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Giniger, Henry. “Spanish Rightists Disrupt Funeral of Slain Premier.” *The New York Times*. Dec. 22, 1973.

¹²³ Ibid.

Giniger goes into ETA's involvement with the assassination, expanding upon his previous article by verifying ETA's confirmation that they were the assassins. The story of ETA members pretending to be sculptors is also mentioned, which is the earliest reference I came across of ETA's assassination scheme becoming public knowledge.¹²⁴ Coverage like this would be relatively good news for ETA, as receiving credit for the assassination cements them in the international consciousness as a force to be reckoned with or a crafty ally to have on one's side. However, this article lacks the outright sympathy seen throughout the Burgos coverage. This may be because of Richard Eder's more radicalizing experience, having been thoroughly frisked in attendance of the military tribunal, but I think a more sensible conclusion was that Giniger's story was released into a vastly different America, one with greater detachment from the radical sensibilities of the late 60s, than the Burgos trial coverage. The notion of burnout is a useful one in finding what changed between 1970 and 1973—many had grown weary from the failures of the radical late 1960s, and the Watergate scandal did very little to boost public morale.¹²⁵ The audience that received the Burgos coverage would have been more sympathetic and interested in the tens of thousands who took to the streets to protest against the Franco regime; I believe the audience that received news of Carrero Blanco's assassination had less desire to find solidarity with the attackers, as the duel beasts of the Vietnam War and Watergate ruled the airwaves in 1973. This was a more demoralized America, downtrodden and distrustful—fact-based reporting without personal flourishes are a reflection of the desire for truth over embellishment.

Coverage from *The Guardian* reflected how English interests were transferred into coverage of events abroad, specifically the brutal nature of the conflict in Ireland being waged in

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ ROYSTER, VERMONT. "The Public Morality: Afterthoughts on Watergate." *The American Scholar* 43, no. 2 (1974): 249–59. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41207204>.

Schaufeli, W.B. (2017). Burnout: A Short Socio-Cultural History. In: Neckel, S., Schaffner, A., Wagner, G. (eds) *Burnout, Fatigue, Exhaustion*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-52887-8_5

this period. An article released by *The Guardian*'s Madrid correspondent on December 26, 1973, was titled "Basque assassins 'obtained explosives from the IRA,'" which covered a report made by *ABC* (Spain). The Troubles were well underway around the Burgos trial, but ETA hadn't formally declared their solidarity with the Irish Republican Army (IRA) until their joint communication (along with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)) in 1971.¹²⁶ According to the article, ETA received a shipment of explosives from the IRA after a secret meeting between representatives for the two groups in Andorra a few months prior to the bombing.¹²⁷ My interpretation of the relevance of this article is similar to Uriarte Romero's discussion of how the Spanish press puffed up the danger and volatility of ETA prior to the assassination. The IRA was extremely active at this point, to a far greater extent than ETA, but positioning them as having international allies united in their goal of destruction is powerful rhetoric in the war of hearts and minds. This article doesn't go into ETA's goals, their justification for violence, or the historical relationship between the Basques and Spanish, but strictly labels them as attackers. It's not as condemnatory as the Spanish press' use of the word criminal, but it doesn't allow for much nuance either—in this constructed reality, there are attackers and victims. Many Basques would not consider the ETA soldiers to be attackers—ETA was founded as a "subculture of opposition" that looked to redeem the years of Basque-ness lost due to oppression from the regime.¹²⁸ For ETA sympathizers, these men are responding to decades of attacks directed by the man who is receiving the title of "victim" as relating to this singular incident.

¹²⁶ Alonso, R. (2011). The International Dimension of ETA's Terrorism and the Internationalization of the Conflict in the Basque Country. *Democracy and Security*, 7(2), 184–204. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48602794>

¹²⁷ "Basque assassins 'obtained explosives from the IRA,'" *The Guardian*. Published Dec. 26, 1973.

¹²⁸ Pérez Agote, Alfonso. "Self-Fulfilling Prophecy and Unresolved Mourning," in *Empire and Terror*. (Center for Basque Studies, Reno, NV. 2005), 181.

The article published by *Newsweek*, titled “The Day of the Jackal,” is a lovely bit of sensationalistic reporting. It’s a joy to read, and there’s a fantastic diagram depicting Carrero Blanco’s path from a passenger in his car to a projectile in the air.¹²⁹ This article embraces storytelling over the factual dispatch-style reporting of *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* articles. The opening paragraph introduces the reader to Luis Carrero Blanco, “the starchy Premier of Spain and a man of unflinching habits.”¹³⁰ After discussing the bombing in fabulous detail, the writer envelops the assassination within the political chaos of Spain—the interrupted plan of succession, miners on strike in Asturias, labor leaders on trial.¹³¹ However, there is only brief discussion of ETA later in the article, naming them as the most likely assassins but welcoming the theory that “Carrero Blanco might have been done in by right-wing extremists who found even such meager moves as he had made in the direction of reform too much for their taste.”¹³² I’m fascinated by this hesitancy to name ETA as the definite assassins—ETA had claimed responsibility at this point, the regime had named ETA as the likely assassins, and it was being widely reported that ETA were the assassins. Perhaps *Newsweek* wished to cover all possible outcomes of the attack, but it still is a confounding decision on their part.

What every publication missed was that this attack was not carried out by ETA, as there was no singular ETA in December of 1973. The assassins received their instruction and permission to attack from the ETA-V sect.¹³³ At this point ETA-V was vastly outnumbered in membership by ETA-VI, but the assassination was the precipice of ETA-V’s attacks becoming symbolically definitive for ETA. The attacks continued in the years to come, and in 1974 there was a further split within ETA-V, as the group divided into ETA-Político-Militar (PM) and

¹²⁹ “The Day of the Jackal,” *Newsweek*. Dec. 31, 1973. See: Appendix 2.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Sullivan, John. *ETA and Basque Nationalism*. 142.

ETA-Militar (M).¹³⁴ This split took place due to the fallout from the Cafetería Rolando bombing, an attack that targeted Spanish police headquarters in Madrid but ended up killing and wounding dozens of civilians.¹³⁵ The ETA-V leaders who wished to continue armed struggle as the primary means of resistance formed ETA-M, while ETA-PM's leadership looked to find a middle ground in constructing a political and military apparatus.¹³⁶

This is all to say that those who favored violent revolution became more and more isolated from dissenters. Militancy is implied within ETA-M's name, and it was the longest surviving sect from the divisions of the 1970s. ETA-M would increase the violence in the years to come, while primarily avoiding political leanings outside of Basque independence. There were communists, anarchists, probably a liberal or two in the bunch—but ETA-M's sole reason for existence was fighting for the goal of liberation. Those within ETA who previously worked to convince the outside world that ETA had political justifications for its actions were essentially no longer involved with the group, or at least had no sway over the ground level actions of ETA soldiers. By focusing entirely on violent action as the means for achieving Basque independence, ETA-M put radical Basque nationalism on a path of declining returns.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 156.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 155.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 162.

Conclusion: ETA dies a slow death

I've agonized over the many paths that ETA could have taken in the early 1970s—based on what we know about the fragility of the Francoist state, the general support among Basques for independence, and the brief periods of collaboration between radically inclined Spaniards and Basques, I suppose that in some universe ETA played a prominent role in the secession of a Basque state. However, that's not the world we live in. The formation of ETA-M and the sharp uptick in violence and deaths attributed to ETA doomed the group to languish as unpopular outsiders, hated by the Spanish and increasingly scorned by the Basques.

In this project I have looked to develop an association with ETA's ambitions during the Franco regime and its public image. ETA rose to prominence in the late 1960s through their self-identification with Marxism and liberation movements, a connection that would be beneficial for the group's expansion. This also put ETA in the broad category of "anti-Franco political groups," a vast and ideologically incoherent lumping of differing political beliefs and goals, but one with significant momentum in the late-Franco period. ETA would capitalize on the discontentment against the regime through their manipulation of the proceedings in the Burgos trial, which brought international attention and support for the ETA members facing their impending doom. The trial exposed the Spanish state's widespread usage of torture and repression against Basques, while confirming that Spaniards and Basques alike would rise in protest against the Franco regime.

Behind the scenes, ETA's leadership were embroiled in ideological conflict with one another, fracturing into ETA-V and ETA-VI. These groups both identified themselves as the true ETA, but ETA-V's prevailing strength over its counterpart was its connection with ETA's foot soldiers. While ETA-VI worked to establish connections with Spanish and Basque workers,

ETA-V was developing a network of members committed to the advancement of armed resistance against the Spanish state. From this network came Operación Ogro, the spectacular assassination of Spanish Prime Minister Luis Carrero Blanco. This attack was intended to be ETA's greatest success, a triumph for all who wanted to get rid of Carrero Blanco and the regime he represented, with ETA receiving credit as a military force to be reckoned with. However, the outpouring of support that ETA received during the Burgos trial did not come, with the Spanish and international press minimizing the group's presence in their discussion of the events.

In these moments, representatives of ETA, whether they were soldiers, writers, lawyers or members of the group leadership, acted with an eye to the press and a finger on the pulse of the Basque Country. ETA was relatively unknown before 1968, yet it had the strategic wherewithal to assassinate the prime minister only five years later. This period of growth for ETA was fostered by the revolutionary moment taking place at the time, but it wouldn't have happened without ETA's self-conscious approach to its public image.

After the formation of ETA-M, the final product of the hardliner culls within ETA during the 1970s, ETA's killings of Spanish state armed forces and civilians alike would increase until 1980, while continuing steadily in the years to come before sharply declining in the 21st century.¹³⁷ The Spanish government claims that 486 members of Spanish armed forces or police were killed by ETA, while ETA also killed 343 civilians.¹³⁸ Most of these deaths were from bombings in public settings, which tended to maim far more people than they killed. ETA's official downfall came in the 2010s, having declared a permanent ceasefire in 2011 and officially disbanding in 2018.¹³⁹

¹³⁷<https://web.archive.org/web/20131226085229/http://www.interior.gob.es/prentsa-3/balantzeak-21/ultimas-victimas-mortales-de-eta-cuadros-estadisticos-630>

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ "ETA's bloody history: 853 killings in 60 years of violence," *Associated Press*. Oct. 19, 2020. <https://apnews.com/article/franco-paris-madrid-france-militant-groups-3d9686e56710eccee95d73f54b531ee0>

I see the formation of ETA-M and the ensuing increase in killings, especially the increase in civilian deaths, to be entwined with the group's abandonment of maintaining a public façade. There were moments of press spectacle that arose in the post-Franco period that displayed abuses from the Spanish state against ETA members, but ETA had lost the advocates who rose up in support in previous years, specifically the Spanish working class. Workers striking in response to the Burgos trial's original verdict makes sense, especially considering the work ETA-VI members did in establishing connections within the underground labor movement. But no such support would come from this bloc in the future, or really from any subset of the Spanish population. The writing was really on the wall for ETA when Basques began to show contentment with the establishment of the Basque Autonomous Community in 1979.¹⁴⁰ This resolution from the Spanish government declared that the provinces of Álava, Vizcaya, and Gipuzkoa could hold their own parliament, and have control of their own police force, education system, and cultural practices.¹⁴¹ If Basques had a governing body to represent them, no restrictions on their language or culture, and the oppressive Francoist state had been eliminated, then what would an independent Basque nation achieve for the Basques? Are hard borders, tariffs on Spanish goods, and the ability to represent Euskadi at the Olympics what ETA wanted? What does a 50 year war with the goal of liberation mean if there is nothing left to be liberated from? Did ETA just want someone to say it was all worth it, that the thousands of soldiers who died for independence had received their vengeance?

Frankly, no amount of violence could liberate the Basque Country, because class interests prevailed over the romantic ideals of an independent Basque state. The world turned away from

¹⁴⁰ Alonso Luzarra, J. "Independencia de Euskadi: idea obsoleta?," *Deia*. Mar. 13, 1983. Accessed through The Center for Basque Studies Archives.

¹⁴¹ "The Statute of Autonomy of the Basque Country."

https://www.basquecountry.eus/contenidos/informacion/estatuto_guernica/en_455/adjuntos/estatu_i.pdf

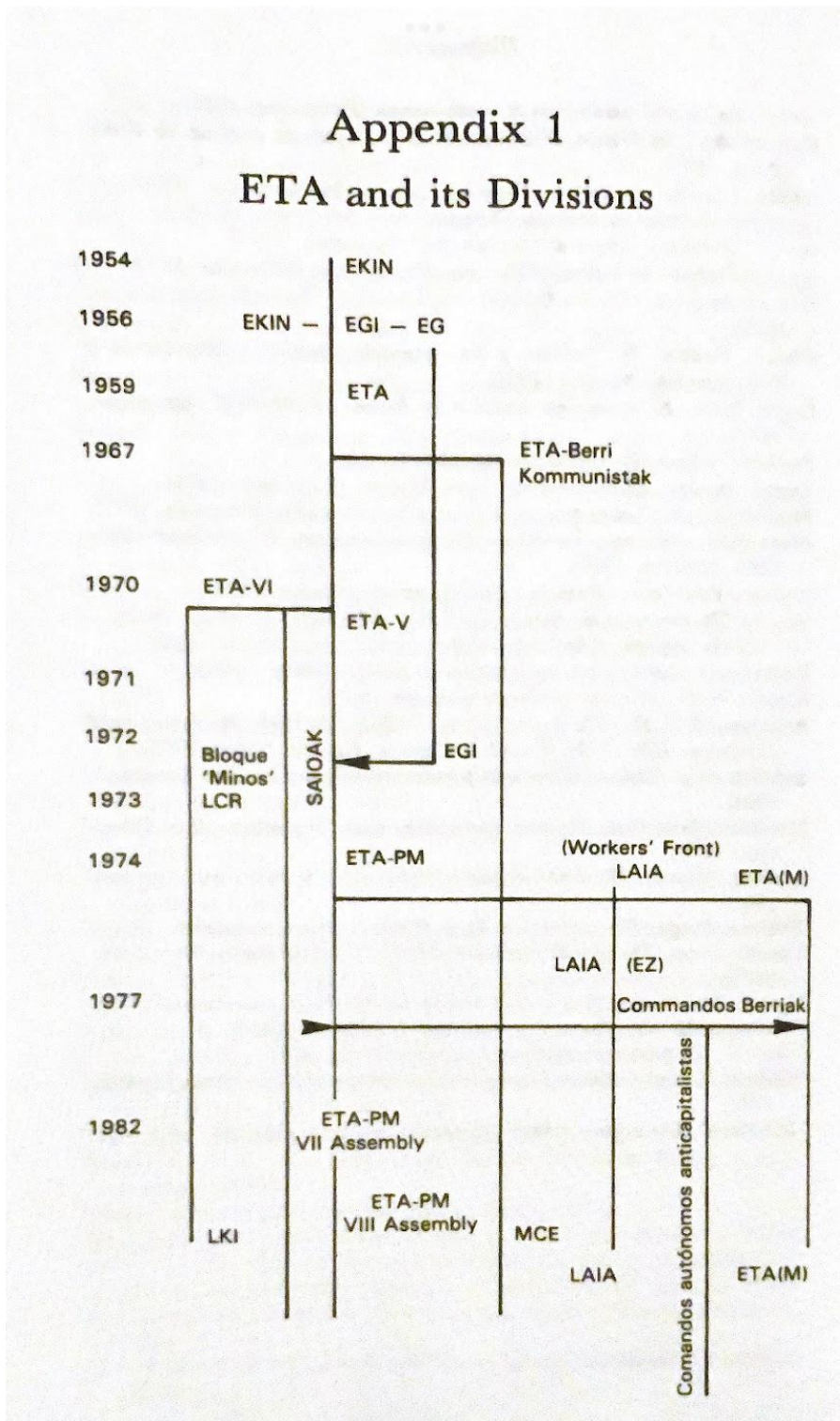
ETA and made its existence untenable in the age of globalization. Spanish democracy began alongside ETA's most violent years; perhaps one could argue that even more force from ETA could have made the Spanish government give in, but the more likely reaction to intensified violence would be significant pushback from the Basque and Spanish populace. After all, the Basques only really began to sour on ETA during the drastic increase in ETA-caused deaths in 1979 and 1980.¹⁴² All the while, Spain was welcomed as a major member of the European economy and as a regional political power, having joined NATO in 1982 and the European Union in 1986. The memories of resistance in Algeria, Cuba, and Vietnam were far in the past; the radicalism and revolution blowing in the winds of the late 1960s came to nothing in Western Europe.

ETA vastly overstayed their welcome in the world that was being constructed around them, leaving the egg on the existing ETA members' faces. A national liberation group represented a prior era of politics, a period of revolutionary activity that most had turned on after years of state repression and decreasing returns in popular support. ETA was a dinosaur in the modern world, but ETA members certainly not have cared less, because there was a war to be fought. Conflict was consistent and brutal between ETA members and state forces throughout the 1980s, and although killings had decreased from its high water mark in 1980, there would be major bombing events every now and then, killing a dozen civilians or so. I said that the egg was on these ETA members' faces, which is not entirely true—the egg is only on ones' face when a level of self awareness exists. The consciousness of ETA's image went out the window after the formation of ETA-M, as unflinching military action required a lot less strategic justification and

¹⁴² Clark, Robert. P. "The Legitimacy of Ethnonationalist Insurgency," Presented at the Symposium on Political Violence, University of Massachusetts Amherst. Accessed from the Center for Basque Studies Archives. 7.

press manipulation. Who needs public support when you're fighting for the grand notion of liberation?

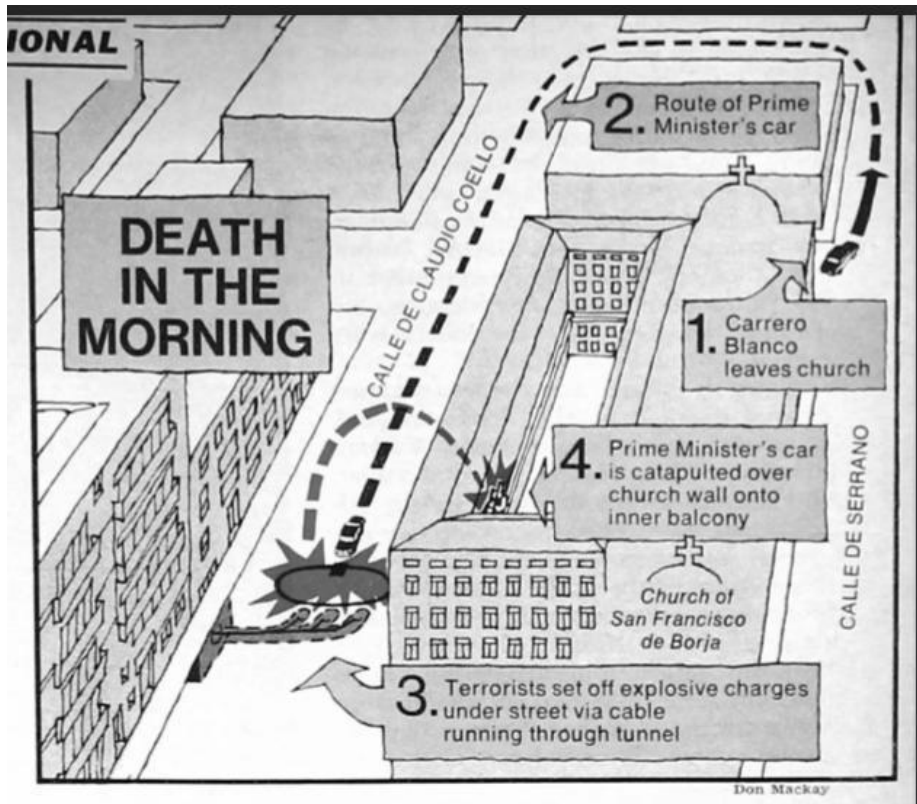
APPENDIX 1



143

¹⁴³ Sullivan, John. "Appendix 1: ETA and its divisions," *ETA and Basque Nationalism*. 294.

APPENDIX 2¹⁴⁴



¹⁴⁴ "The Day of the Jackal," *Newsweek*. Dec. 31, 1973.

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