

The ETA: Spain Fights Europe's Last Active Terrorist Group

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One week after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001, President George W. Bush marshaled the American people and allies of good will everywhere to a new course through his speech to Congress. In it, he resolutely condemned the attacks and promised sustained retribution. "It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated," he announced.

The world knows that he was speaking of Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda network, but shortly thereafter, media commentators posed the question whether all nations on the list that the United States says sponsor terrorism, including Iraq, Iran, Sudan, and Syria, were potential targets. Others wondered whether all organizations that the United States has officially condemned as terrorist, including Shining Path in Peru and the Basque Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) in Spain and France, were included in the president's announcement.¹ The ETA had again been designated a foreign terrorist organization by the secretary of state on 5 October 2001.

One way to move away from the terrorist label is to negotiate. It may be coincidental, but it struck me that on 26 September, just two weeks after the attacks, Palestinian chairman Yasser Arafat sat down for preliminary talks with Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres. Furthermore, at least one well-known group took quick pains to disassociate itself from America's potential

1. Sally Buzbee, "Nations Debate Who Terrorists Are," Associated Press, 23 September 2001.

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target list, as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) issued a statement on 20 September condemning the 11 September attacks and announcing an intensification of its dialogue with the International Commission for the Disarmament of Northern Ireland.² The fact that the IRA's announcement was featured by the website of the Basque provincial government in northern Spain was revealing, as the ETA is thought to have close links to the IRA and may occasionally follow its tactical lead.³

It did not do so at this time, however. After a period of relative inactivity following 11 September, the ETA hinted in late October that it would stop fighting if its maximum demand was met: that Spain must hold a vote on Basque independence. Prime Minister José Maria Aznar refused, saying that the 11 September attacks on the United States showed that it was "suicide" to deal with terrorists. "They must be defeated," he said, "because the only aim of killers and fanatics is to kill and exclude those who don't think as they do."⁴ And so the stage was set for the violence to continue.

It helps to personalize the developments in Spain. Otherwise one can be caught up in waves of revenge killings and the logic of retribution. Two incidents seem to have formed the brackets for the ETA's current activities. The first was the kidnapping of Segundo Marey in the French Basque region on 4 December 1983 by an extralegal group of paramilitary thugs in the pay of the Spanish government called the Group Antiterroriste de Liberation (GAL). That incident, and the twenty-seven killings that followed, underlined the brutality of the counterterrorist effort and seemed to illustrate what the ETA was fighting against. The second marker event was the ETA's 10 July 1997 abduction and murder in the Spanish Basque region of Miguel Angel Blanco, aged twenty-nine, an unpaid town councilman and member of the ruling Popular Party, who was looking forward to his wedding soon. This senseless and premeditated murder of an appealing victim that all Spain could identify with seemed to illustrate for many the cruel and pointless violence of the ETA. Taken together, the two events seem to encapsulate the current impasse.

2. "IRA Se Suma A Las Criticas Por El Atentado Contra EEUU," at www.euzkadi.com, 20 September 2001.

3. "Letter from Euzkadi: Home Fires, Basque Separatists Are Escalating Their War against Spain," *New Yorker*, 12 February 2001, 40, 46.

4. Jerome Socolovsky, "Basque Group Lays Claim to Attacks," Associated Press, 28 October 2001.

Marey died on 13 August 2001. He was an office furniture salesman who was abducted from his home while watching the Benny Hill program on television. The mercenaries who abducted him thought they had nabbed an important ETA terrorist. They had not. They kept Marey in an abandoned stone farmhouse for ten days until his release. It is not known whether the chronic bronchitis and bone marrow disease that were exacerbated by the cold and the binding of his limbs contributed to his death at the age of sixty-nine. The eventual trial of those responsible for his kidnapping was a major scandal for the Spanish government of the Felipe Gonzalez era and still raises questions regarding the ultimate responsibility of those who carried on paramilitary operations against suspected Basque terrorists across the French border.

Blanco was murdered in cold blood with two shots to the head and left to die on a hillside near San Sebastian after Madrid refused the ETA's demand to transfer some five hundred ETA members held in Spanish prisons to prisons in the Basque region. In death the young man became a martyr to violence and a national rallying point against ETA terrorism. In Madrid and Barcelona, 2 million people marched in protest, and in Pamplona, where the famous running of the bulls was under way, festivities were suspended. For a while, the murders continued, but after each ETA killing, enormous popular marches throughout Spain memorializing each ETA victim and demanding an end to the violence became a regular feature of Spanish public life, illustrating the ETA's lack of mass support, even in the Basque region.

How Did Matters Go So Far?

The ETA was born in 1952 in response to hostilities directed against the Basque people and region by Francisco Franco both during and after the Spanish Civil War, the most celebrated of which, the bombing of Guernica by Franco's Nazi ally in 1937, inspired the world-famous painting by Pablo Picasso. The Basque people thought that Franco was trying to root them out as a people and turn their homeland into an industrial wasteland. After the end of the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War, when anti-Basque measures not only were not eased but became an institutionalized response

to Basque agitation by the Franco regime, the situation in the Basque region became unbearable. Over time political groupings appeared espousing Basque nationalism, and in their wake armed Basque nationalists gradually organized and turned to violence.

The initials ETA are an acronym in the Basque language for Basque Homeland and Freedom, or Euskadi Ta Askatasuna. (The group's first, and similar, name had an acronym of ATA, which was discarded when the founders discovered that in one Basque dialect, *ata* means *duck*.)⁵ The group became the ETA in 1959, and 13 July, the Saint's Day of Ignatius Loyola, perhaps the most well-known Basque and the founder of the Jesuit order, was selected as the founding date. Since *eta* is Basque for the conjunction *and*, any Basque document, however innocent, will be full of references to the acronym, a public relations windfall for the organization.⁶ During the period before Franco's death in 1975, Basque pressure for an independent nation became more serious under the ETA's prodding. In 1968, following recruitment and political radicalization by the ETA and repression by Spanish authorities, particularly the police (Guardia Civil), the first killings took place. At a roadblock, the inevitable happened. "Txabi" Etxebarrieta (all ETA activists have code names), a member of the three-man ETA executive committee, was stopped by a Guardia Civil. Etxebarrieta killed the man, and was in turn later killed by the authorities.

Other ETA killings, and retaliation by the authorities, soon followed. During this period, the ETA seemed careful to target figures who had been identified with the Franco regime and the repression of Basques. In the early days, the assassination of such figures gave the ETA an image borrowed from the days of heroic Basque resistance to fascism, even to the point of other governments petitioning the Spanish government not to execute convicted ETA murderers.⁷ Finally, in 1973, the ETA decided to target the prime minister, Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco. They launched Operation Ogre in an attempt to prevent Carrero Blanco from succeeding Franco and ensuring the

5. Mark Kurlansky, *The Basque History of the World* (New York: Walker, 1999), 234.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*, 243–4.

continuation of his policies. They killed him on 20 December 1973 with the help of 165 pounds of dynamite planted in the street under his car, which was always parked outside a church in the same spot while the prime minister attended mass each morning. From those beginnings, the violence, arrests, and killings in the Basque region and then beyond have multiplied, assuming their own logic and justification. It is estimated that the ETA has killed more than eight hundred people since 1968. There are now some five hundred of its members in Spanish prisons. They are not held in the Basque region, a perennial sore point for Basque nationalists, but are scattered for security reasons throughout the nation.

Over the years, the ETA has even attempted several times to murder King Juan Carlos. The organization's targets have gone far beyond the unpopular figures from the Franco period that were the early victims of their wrath. More recently, they have targeted politicians, reporters, businessmen who refused to pay their extortion demands, and increasingly, the public at large. As with the Angel Blanco assassination, such killings have shown their determination but decidedly narrowed their appeal, uniting the Spanish nation and most Basques against them. Recent ETA attempted bombings have even included international airports in Spain that are geographically removed from the Basque region. In March 2001 the ETA issued warnings against tourist travel in the Basque region, and on 27 August 2001, a car bomb exploded in an underground parking lot at Madrid's Barajas airport.

Killings of British or American tourists seemed inevitable. In a benchmark of sorts, in November 2000, an article in the international press even noted that the Basque conflict was "the only major one still troubling Western Europe," adding that "the Spanish public is losing patience."⁸

The Basque quest for nationhood may be quixotic, but it does not lack logic, and it enjoys broad popular support, quite apart from the terrorist methods of the ETA. The Basque people are an ancient one, mentioned by the Romans, speaking an agglutinative language that, like Hungarian, is not

8. This designation followed the beginning of serious negotiations between the IRA and authorities in Northern Ireland and a cease-fire there. See Ciaran Giles, "Killings Put Spaniards on Edge," Associated Press, 6 November 2000.

part of the Indo-European group.⁹ They inhabit portions of northern Spain and southwestern France. They have defended their territory for centuries and were probably the actual enemy that defeated Roland, Charlemagne's rear guard, in a founding legend of France. They have had autonomy in the past, notably from 1371 to 1876, when rulers of Spain confirmed Basque rights in *fueros*, or charters, in ceremonies held under the Tree of Guernica. Tradition has it that seven provinces made up the Basque homeland. The total area is about the size of New Hampshire, and it lies on both sides of the Pyrenees. The Basque region of Spain, which is 220 miles west of Barcelona on the Atlantic coast, contains 2 million inhabitants, many of whom are not Basque. It contains four of the claimed Basque provinces: Navarra (a separate region, not part of Spain's autonomous Basque region), Alava, Vizcaya, and Guipuzcoa. The main towns of the claimed region are San Sebastian, Pamplona, and Bilbao. In France, the three provinces, which do not literally exist as a geographic entity, are Labourd, Lower Navarre, and Soule. This is roughly the territory covered by the French *département* of Pyrenees-Atlantiques. Main towns in the French Basque area include Biarritz, Bayonne, and St. Jean de Luz on the coast (where Louis XIV was married to Maria Theresa, Infanta of Spain, in a magnificent Basque church, the Eglise St. Jean Baptiste), and a large section of the interior, stretching to St. Jean Pied de Port near the border. All told, the ETA claims that there are one million Basques on the Spanish side and two hundred thousand in France.¹⁰

In 1973, there appeared an ETA counterpart organization in the French Basque region, Iparretarak, which issued a manifesto. In 1980 two members of this group attempted to murder the wife of the *sous préfet* in Bayonne (and blew themselves up instead). Although the question of Basque terrorism in France lingered for some time, Iparretarak seems to have closed up shop, and for good reason. As the violence intensified in Spain, the Basque region

9. Some cite the curious fact that Basques have a high incidence of Rh-negative blood to show that they are genetically different from other peoples. Daniel Woolls, "Basque Politician Stirs Anger," Associated Press, 7 November 2000. The Basque politician who made this point, however, failed to inform his listeners that he himself had Rh-positive blood.

10. The question of who is a Basque is a vexing one. Definitions include those who have Basque parentage and those who have learned the language. Following Franco's policy of settling the Basque region with persons not of Basque ethnic origin, it was estimated that by his death in 1975, over 40 percent of the population in the Basque region had no Basque parent. See Kurlansky, 239.

across the border in France became increasingly a rearguard area for the ETA. For years there seemed to be an unspoken and uneasy pact. There would be no violence committed by Basque nationalists in France, and French authorities would not arrest Basques who committed terrorist crimes in Spain, or permit their extradition.

That silent devil's bargain began to come apart during the second Mitterrand presidency. After all, there was a fellow socialist prime minister of Spain, Gonzalez, and so the old human rights justification against sending people back to Franco's Spain wore thin. France instituted an active program of cooperation with Spanish authorities. They began to round up Basque terrorists, even allowing their extradition, where appropriate, back to Spain. France was no longer a reliable safe haven.

Then came the GAL. Its members carried out paramilitary actions on both sides of the border. It was thought at the time that they were perhaps mercenaries, hired by the population at large, who were fed up with paying the "revolutionary taxes" required by the ETA. Eventually, that explanation lost credibility. A different truth emerged, and the Gonzalez government itself fell because of the matter. It turned out that the GAL was an extralegal group, certainly started by the Spanish government itself. The mercenary explanation was a cover story, and the only question that remained was how high up the blame could be proved. Attempts to indict former prime minister Gonzalez were denied by the Spanish Supreme Court on 22 November 1999. The court refused to lift Gonzalez's parliamentary immunity from prosecution, although the request was put forward by Magistrate Baltasar Garzon, the same judge who has sought to try the former dictator of Chile, General Augusto Pinochet. The Supreme Court referred to its 1996 ruling that declared there was no evidence linking the prime minister with the 1983 Segundo Marey kidnapping.

However, the Spanish interior minister for the Gonzalez government during this period, Jose Barrionuevo, the secretary of state for security, Rafael Vera, and the civil governor of Vizcaya, Julian Sancristobal, were convicted in 1998 and sentenced to prison for ten years each for their illegal activities in connection with the Marey kidnapping. Lesser conspirators have also received lengthy prison terms for their part in the criminal GAL venture.

The GAL certainly did have some effect, but not the one intended. It was

responsible for the deaths of twenty-seven people. A number of their victims, including the very first one, Marey, whose kidnapping formed the basis for the convictions of Barrionuevo, Vera, and Sancristobal, were totally innocent persons who were picked up or murdered by mistake. It has been estimated that nine of the twenty-seven persons murdered were not even members of the ETA. Others were, in fact, ETA activists. The feeling that France was a safe haven certainly faded at this time. Also, French authorities must have realized that their best course was to cooperate with Spanish authorities before increased violence spread to France itself.

The activities of the GAL seem to have had the further effect of galvanizing the ETA, giving it a new impetus and justification for its terrorist activities. The ETA redoubled those activities on the Spanish side of the border, culminating in repeated attempts on the life of Juan Carlos. In the process, ETA attacks spread far beyond the familiar targets of police and political figures of the Franco era. The target list was expanded to young Spanish politicians and more broadly to journalists and to any public figure that opposes the ETA. Nobody is entirely safe. The threats have even extended to entertainment figures. A popular Basque singer who opposes the ETA, Imanol Larzabal, announced in October 2000 that he was leaving the Basque region due to repeated ETA death threats and the "suffocating atmosphere of fear and repression in the Basque region" that the ETA had created over the years. In the process, the ETA has also repeatedly caused great popular anger, as crowds estimated in the hundreds of thousands have marched across Spain in protest against ETA killings.

In the Franco years, the ETA may have enjoyed some understanding if not support from the public at large. Even speaking Basque (or anything other than Castilian Spanish, including Catalan) was then a crime. But times have greatly changed, and the Spanish state is no longer a repressive totalitarian regime but an evolving democracy with an appealing monarch as head of state. Also, the Basque region enjoys extensive autonomous powers under Spain's post-Franco 1978 constitution, including its own parliament, police force (the Ertzaintza), tax collection system, health system, and public education system in the Basque language. (Madrid controls central matters, including foreign and defense policy and national security, encompassing border crossings and airports and seaports.) So the ETA is more clearly seen

as a terrorist group without justifiable grievances, a perception that is heightened by the broadened list of ETA targets.¹¹ The result of the continuing violence can be seen to have further reduced the maneuverability of the Spanish government to deal with the Basque issue, if indeed there still existed any inclination to be flexible. The stakes are high, for the truth of the matter is that complete autonomy, or a referendum for self-determination, cannot be granted to the Basque region without sparking similar demands from the other presently autonomous regions of Catalonia and Galicia. Furthermore, the Basque region is an economic asset for Spain. Its chemical and metallurgical industries are extensive, and the region contributes 9 percent of the nation's gross national product. Meanwhile, the violence has gone on. Understandably in the meantime, Spanish opinion polls have shown that Basque violence is considered Spain's biggest problem.¹² Since the death of Franco, the seventy-five-seat regional Basque Parliament created by the 1978 constitution has been in the hands of those who favor creating a separate Basque nation through peaceful means. The leading party, the Basque Nationalist Party (Partido Nacionalista Vasco, or PNV) has led the regional government since its inception in 1980 and won the 2001 elections. The PNV leader, forty-three-year-old Basque president Juan Jose Ibarretxe, first took office in 1996. His party, which received thirty-four votes, including those cast for its moderate coalition partner Eusko Alkartasuna, condemns ETA violence and backs independence by legal means.

The PNV is in the middle. It is viewed by the governing Popular Party as soft on the ETA. At the same time it is scorned by the Euskal Herritarok, an independence party thought to be the political arm of the ETA, as no better than the anti-independence Popular Party. Faced with this unenviable position, since the 2001 elections Ibarretxe has used the Basque police force more vigorously, cracking down against the ETA in a series of productive raids.

Euskal Herritarok (formerly called Herri Batasuna, or Popular Unity)

11. Daniel Woolls, "Basque Separatist Violence History," Associated Press, 21 August 2000.

12. Daniel Woolls, "Spaniards Mark Milestone in History," Associated Press, 22 November 2000. The milestone referred to was the quarter century of Juan Carlos's accession to the Spanish throne. Ceremonies were dampened by the ETA's assassination of a former health minister, a popular figure who had ushered in universal health care following Franco's death.

began as a faction that split off from the PNV. It has been strong enough to win several seats when national parliamentary elections are held, but it refuses to take those seats in Madrid as a sign of protest. Euskal Herritarok was the big loser in the 2001 elections. Previously, it had been part of a coalition with the PNV, until expelled for its refusal to disassociate itself from the ETA's killings. Its fourteen-member parliamentary total was cut in half, owing probably to popular revulsion against a series of ETA killings that took place just before the elections. Its leader, Amaldo Otegi, is often compared to Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams, who had been prominent in persuading the IRA to enter negotiations.¹³

Indeed, in September 1998, after hugely popular demonstrations against the ETA in the wake of the Angel Blanco and other murders, the ETA did declare a truce, which it kept until announcing its end fourteen months later, in December 1999. Since that time the killings have been resumed, with thirty-five ETA murders committed through September 2001. The ETA, in announcing the end of the truce, blamed an unproductive political process during the cease-fire. Its representatives met with Spanish government negotiators just once. There was no common ground, as the ETA wanted to discuss independence, and the representatives of Madrid wanted only to consider the modalities of the ETA's disarmament. The killings started again all over Spain in January 2000, this time including car bombs outside popular Madrid department stores and incendiary devices at Spanish airports.

The ruling Popular Party went all out to win the 2001 regional elections in the Basque Parliament, in order to show that Basque nationalists did not represent the will of the region. The regional Popular Party leader, Jaime Mayor Oreja, was a controversial choice to lead this effort. He is a Basque who does not speak the Basque language, and as interior minister in the Aznar government in Madrid had led the national security effort against the ETA. He was the target of an unsuccessful ETA assassination attempt in 1982. The Popular Party made common cause with the Socialist Party in opposing Basque independence and took nineteen seats while the Socialists took thirteen. The close showing may demonstrate that this political line resonated with many, who are sick of the violence. Meanwhile, the regional

13. Jerome Socolovsky, "Profile of Basque Separatist Otegi," Associated Press, 13 May 2001.

Popular Party headed by Oreja reflects the line of the national party, which opposes negotiations with the ETA while acts of violence continue.

After the May 2001 regional elections, the conventional wisdom held that the PNV would attempt to gain a parliamentary majority and form a coalition government with either Euskal Herritarok or with the Socialist Party. If any such attempts were made they did not succeed, and in July 2001, two months after the regional elections, leaders of the PNV and the moderate Eusko Alkartasuna signed a coalition agreement at the headquarters of the Basque regional presidency. A vote on installing the new government prevailed, as incumbent PNV leader Ibarretxe was the only candidate, and a minority government was installed.¹⁴ To mark the event, the ETA notched two more killings, a car bombing of Jose Javier Mugica, a photographer and town councilman who belonged to a small party opposed to Basque independence, and the point-blank shooting of Basque policeman Mikel Uribe on the day of Ibarretxe's inauguration. Observers noted that, as usual, the ETA was making a point. It was unusual for them to launch separate murderous attacks in a single day. The reelected Ibarretxe and other political figures, including Spanish prime minister Aznar, himself the target of a failed ETA assassination attempt in 1995, spent the next day, a Sunday, at the funerals.

The Popular Party soon illustrated its strategy of putting pressure on the PNV to isolate the ETA and try to persuade its members to disarm, as uneasy preliminary discussions between Ibarretxe and Aznar were held the day after the funerals. The Basque leader reportedly raised issues about the status of the Basque region, while Aznar demanded more "coordination" between national and local authorities. Neither participant took any questions from the media after the meeting. It all sounded like a more moderate replay of the broken-down talks between the ETA and Madrid. Meanwhile, the assassinations continued, including attacks against the regional police force under the direction of the Basque government, perhaps a sign of greater vigor by the latter in pursuing the ETA.

14. Voting rules in the Basque Parliament made a plurality victory legal in a second-round vote, if nobody won a majority in the first round. "Basque Parties Reach Accord," Associated Press, 6 July 2001.

The ETA is thought to be headed by a three-man executive committee.¹⁵ There are thought to be two hundred active ETA members and a support network of perhaps two thousand people. Sympathizers, judging from the numbers who have recently voted for the Euskal Herriarok party in regional elections, may number another 180,000.

The ETA finances itself through extortion, kidnappings, and the forced payment of what it terms “revolutionary taxes.” On 3 December 1999, the Madrid daily newspaper *El Pais* printed extortion letters written in Basque and sent to businessmen, demanding payment of \$75,000 to \$93,750 and threatening retaliation if the demands were not met. The letters were signed with the ETA's symbol of a snake wrapped around an axe. In a related matter, on 28 March 2001, Magistrate Baltasar Garzon ordered the Basque language magazine *Ardi Beltza* to be shut down and its editor, Pepé Rei, indicted. His magazine had been distributed with a video naming journalists who were critical of the ETA. Rei was also suspected of publishing the names of people who failed to pay their “revolutionary taxes.” These people were subsequently murdered. Rei had been acquitted in an earlier case of helping the ETA target businessmen for extortion, kidnapping, and possible murder.

Most discouraging from the standpoint of the Spanish authorities may be the ETA's ability to regenerate itself. Arrests of cadre leadership, often across the French border, are not unheard of, but they now invite attention to the fact that a previous leader of the same cadre was arrested a year or two earlier. For example, the arrest by French police of Francisco Javier Garcia Gaztelu, said to be the head of ETA commando units, or strike forces, in the border town of Anglet on 21 February 2001 recalled that his predecessor, Javier Arizcuren-Ruiz, known as “Kantauri,” had been arrested in Paris on 8 March 1999. Clearly there is enough recruitment to provide for some continuing leadership changes in case of arrest or death. Similarly, the arrest of Ignacio Garcia Arregui, at Bidart, France, recalled that Garcia Arregui's predecessor as leader of the ETA's military wing had been arrested in the same town in 1992. Garcia Arregui allegedly had ordered the attempted assassination of King Juan Carlos in 1995. On 16 September 2000, French

15. “France Seizes a Spanish Basque Rebel Leader,” *New York Times*, 24 July 1996.

police arrested eleven alleged ETA members and destroyed their clandestine bomb-making factory. The group was led by Jose Luis Turrillas-Aranceta, believed to be the head of the ETA's logistical unit, a group that has operated throughout France, stealing explosives and other devices for use in Spain.

The ETA strategy in its armed struggle for Basque independence seems to have evolved over the years. No longer able to make a convincing case of oppression from Spanish authorities, it now seems able to position itself only as a terrorist group, willing and able to inflict casualties far beyond the Basque region, but has thus far refrained from carrying out an implicit threat of mass murder. Let us go our way, or things will get much worse, with violence carried throughout Spain, is its implicit message. It has seemed to be looking for further publicity, and perhaps even some outside intervention, as its IRA models have in some sense managed. With regard to publicity, not many outside Spain have appeared to pay much attention, although both Juan Carlos, in his visit to the White House on 2 February 2000, and Pope John Paul II, during his 10 March 2001 beatification of hundreds of nuns, priests, and lay people who were killed in Spain's Civil War, have explicitly condemned ETA terrorism.

If publicity has been one of the ETA's goals, in the wake of the 11 September terrorist attack the tactic has surely backfired. The ETA had thought to damage Spain economically by threatening Spain's extensive tourist industry. Should its cadres be foolhardy enough to carry out their threatened assaults on tourists, particularly if Americans were involved, the ETA action would surely now not bring benevolent political intervention. They could at a minimum expect explicit condemnation, and in a maximum scenario even joint action under Article 5 of the NATO Charter is no longer unthinkable.

There is a broader reference point for a peaceful future. As I was able to see during a trip to Bilbao when I served as consul general in Bordeaux, the recent history of the Spanish Basque region has not been focused exclusively on the ETA and terrorism, by any means. On the positive side, the imaginative Guggenheim Museum recently erected in Bilbao has been a successful cultural landmark, a sort of symbol of a newly emerging Basque region with a proud heritage and something new and vibrant to show. It would of course also be highly appropriate if authorities in Madrid would

permit the showing of Picasso's *Guernica* in this internationally celebrated setting, but so far they have refused to do so.

In these days of enhanced attention to terrorism it would also be appropriate, and in the interests of the United States, if the consulate general in Bordeaux (the oldest American consular mission) and the consulate in Bilbao should now be reopened. They were two listening posts on the two sides of the frontier that attempted to monitor the issue of Basque terrorism. Both were closed in the Clinton administration as budgetary measures.

To a great extent, the ETA and the Spanish government are now faced with a new situation. Even beyond the transforming events of 11 September 2001, political currents in Europe are moving rapidly toward internationalism, not regionalism. At a time when national currencies are being dropped in favor of euros, a movement in favor of the creation of another small nation seems ill timed at best. The Wilsonian era of proliferating small nations is dead. The time for an independent Basque state, if it ever existed, may now have passed. More important, terrorism no longer can bestow legitimacy in today's Europe. Events have outpaced the possibility of a separate Basque nation, certainly one created by violent means.

After Aznar refused to hold a vote on Basque independence, the ETA struck again, disappointing those of us who had hoped there was an opportunity for a fresh attempt to settle the Basque issue by peaceful means. In early November 2001, the ETA set off a car bomb in a busy commercial district of Madrid during rush hour, injuring nearly one hundred people. The following day it assassinated a provincial judge in the Basque region. Then it issued a communiqué on 4 November claiming responsibility for both events.¹⁶

There is evidence of a broader context for Spain's antiterrorism efforts. Following a two-year investigation, Spanish police arrested nine members of a group linked to al Qaeda.¹⁷ Furthermore, Spain will assume the six-month presidency of the European Union in January 2002. Prime Minister Aznar has indicated that he will use this opportunity to toughen Europe's fight against terrorism.¹⁸

16. "ETA Claims Responsibility for Car Bomb," Associated Press, 15 November 2001.

17. "Spain Arrests Nine Linked to Al Qaeda," *Washington Post*, 14 November 2001, A22.

18. Jerome Socolovsky, "Poll: Spaniards Skeptical of Strikes," Associated Press, 20 October 2001.

This will be good news in Washington, which has sought a greater response from America's European allies in the antiterrorist effort. Whether the renewed Spanish effort sounds the beginning of the end of the ETA remains to be seen. Without statesmen willing to negotiate its grievances seriously, the ETA has wasted yet another opportunity to see whether they could be settled by peaceful means. Unless and until the ETA begins to emulate the IRA's shift of strategy, more terrorism and retaliation will continue to be the order of the day in Spain.