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Euskadi-bulletinen:
**Swedish solidarity with the Basque
independence movement during the 1970's**

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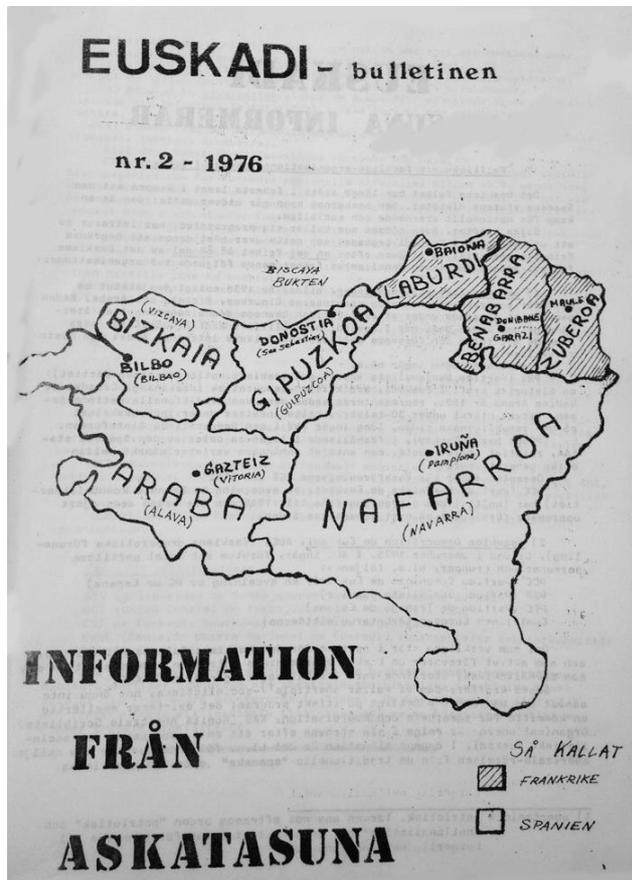
In the Swedish national library catalogue *Libris*, there are some 200 items in the Basque language. Many of them are multilingual and also have text for example in Spanish or French. Only one of them has the rare language combination Swedish and Basque: *Euskadi-bulletinen*, which was published in 1975–1976 in solidarity with the independence movement in the Basque Country. This short-lived publication and its historical context are described in this article.¹

Euskadi-bulletinen was published by Askatasuna ('freedom' in Basque), which described itself as a "committee for solidarity with the Basque people's struggle for freedom and socialism (1975:1, p. 24). "Euskadi" in the bulletin's title did not only refer to the three provinces Araba, Biscay and Gipuzkoa in northern Spain, but also to the neighbouring region Navarre and the three historical provinces Lapurdi, Lower Navarre and Zuberoa in southwestern France. This could be seen directly on the covers which all are decorated with maps including all seven provinces.

However, the focus of the texts in the bulletin was most often on the development in the southern part of the Basque Country, that is the part within the borders of Spain. At one place the purpose of the bulletin is even said to be to give "descriptions and analysis of the struggle in Euskadi and of the situation in *other parts* of the Spanish state" (p. 24, my italics). The first number was published in the autumn of 1975. At that time, Spain was still ruled by the dictator Francisco Franco, who had just had five people executed, amongst them two members of the armed Basque organization Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA). This was met by international protests. In Stockholm, there were some 8,000 demonstrators gathering outside of Spain's embassy, the labor

¹ *Euskadi-bulletinen* has previously been described in the Finland-Swedish journal *Nya Argus* (Lilljegen 2015). As far as I know, this is the first description of it aimed towards an international readership. All quotes in this article, except the one from Kurlansky (2000), are my own translations.

union LO called for a tourist boycott, and the Prime Minister Olof Palme hold his famous speech where he called the Franco regime “bloody murderers”.²



Cover of *Euskadi-bulletinen*, 1976:2

The death sentences are given most of the attention in the first issue of the bulletin. It contains biographies of the two executed ETA members, Juan “Txiki” Paredes Manot and Angel “Azpeiti” Otaegui Etxeverria, and a letter written by “Txiki” in prison whilst waiting for the execution. The issue also contains a statement by ETA, published at *Aberri Eguna*, the Basque national day, which in 1975 was celebrated the 30th of March. In addition, there are some short news articles, and an introduction to the Basque language and culture, with a very idealized view of the country’s history:

The Basque institutions and laws were erased in 1759 in the areas lying north of the Pyrenees, today belonging to France, and in 1876 in the south of the Basque Country, which is a part of the Spanish state. These forbidden laws were the foundations of the Basque people's fundamental rights, for example social equality, democracy, federalism, independence at all levels, denial of the right to conquer, equality between the people, and the right to rise against the power that does not equal the will of the people. (P. 3.)

² Grinell 2004:176.

The issue ends with a call for supporting “the Basque people’s struggle for freedom and socialism” by transferring money to the account of Askatasuna.

The second issue came in January 1976, two months after Franco's death the 20th of November 1975. Of course much of the issue revolves around this; what new possibilities that arise thanks to the dictator's demise and what structures that still remain in spite of it. Two full pages deal with the “Franquist heritage”, a register of police, military and para-police forces active within (and to a certain extent outside of) Spain’s borders. Among the news material, there is a report of a failed prison escape in Segovia, a murder of a teen that the police conducted in Ondarroa and hundreds of arrests that had been carried out at various sites in the Basque Country. Furthermore, there is a declaration from “400 intellectuals in Madrid”, and a communiqué from ETA and two other left- wing nationalist groups; Catalan PSAN(p) and Galician UPN. At the end of the issue, there is a full-page poster where parts are inspired by Pablo Picasso's painting *Guernica*,³ which he made in 1937 after the bombings of the Biscayan town Gernika. The rest of the poster depicts a street patrolled by members of the Spanish Civil Guard (recognizable by their characteristic hats) with the call to “boycott fascism” and show “solidarity with the Basque people's struggle” (p. 23).



Illustration from *Euskadi-bulletinen* 1976:1. The texts are written in Galician, Spanish (Castilian), Basque and Catalan and reads as follow translated: “Long live the Galician people”, “A people that suppresses others cannot be free!”, “Long live the free Basque Country” and “Free Catalonia!”.

The third and last issue must be said to be the thinnest one, since most of it consists of a copied register of political prisoners in Spain. Apart from that, one spread presents different political parties and labor unions active within the Basque Country, and one news spread reports about strikes after two people got killed by the police in Vitoria

³ Ed. Note: the Spanish spelling is Guernica, while the Basque spelling is Gernika.

(Gasteiz).⁴ On one page, the account of Askatasuna is printed next to a request to support “the Basque people’s struggle at their own conditions” (p. 6). This could be seen as a direct parallel to the slogan of the United FNL Groups, a Swedish solidarity organization during the Vietnam War, about supporting the Vietnamese people on its own conditions. This slogan was used in contrast to the Swedish Vietnam Committee’s aim of giving impartial help to humanitarian projects but not contributing with money to military means.⁵ The wording therefore indicated that Askatasuna and *Euskadi-bulletinen* did not distance themselves from for example ETA’s use of violence, but let the ones who received the collected money decide how it should be used.

Exactly where the money went and how big the amounts were is not clear. Unlike for example *Vietnambulletinen*, the bulletin published by the United FNL Groups, *Euskadi-bulletinen* did not present donors and sums. Neither is it clear who wrote and translated the texts. The only contact information is a *poste restante* address in the Stockholm suburb Norsborg and a post box in Malmö (1976:1, p. 24).



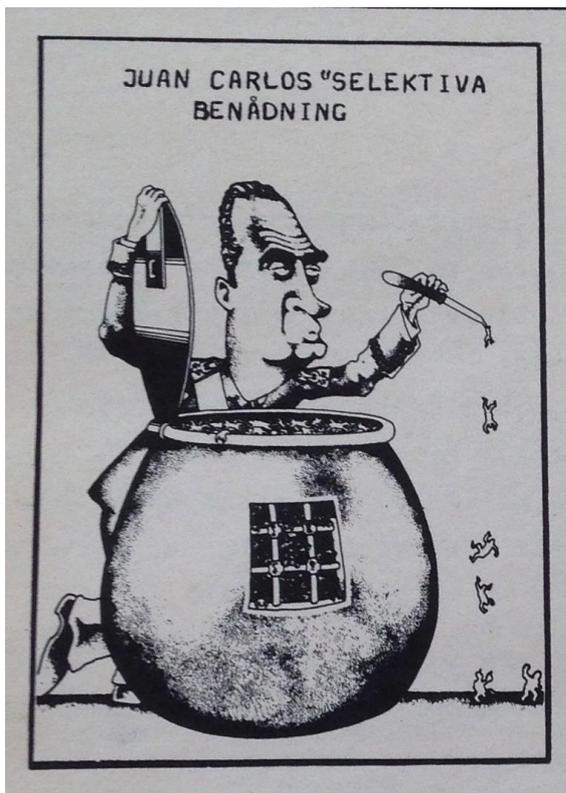
Poster inspired by Picasso's "Guernica", *Euskadi-bulletinen* 1976:1.

⁴ The total number of people killed that day, the 3rd of March 1976, ended at five, while some 100 got injured. This event has recently gained attention again when the Argentine prosecutor María Servini de Cubría called for several ex-ministers for crimes against humanity, among other things for their responsibility during the killings in Gasteiz. *Diario Vasco*, "Una juez argentina ordena el arresto de Martín Villa y otros siete exministros franquistas", , "Argentina ordena detener al exministro Martín Villa y a otros 19 imputados por crímenes del franquismo," 31.10.2014. *El Diario* http://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/exministro-Martin-Villa-imputados-franquismo_0_319519072.html.

⁵ Kilander 2007:79–80, 98–99.

Euskadi-bulletinen was printed in black and white and was sparsely illustrated with photographs and drawings. It cost three crowns each (which equals 15 crowns with today's value, or 1.5 euro). There is no information about how many copies were printed, except that the editor did not think it was enough: "We need economic support and the bulletin needs to be spread and sold more" (1976:1, p. 24). At the same place, they lament that they had printing problems and no own premises. There are only three libraries where the bulletin is kept: The National Library of Sweden, the University Library of Lund and the Jan Myrdal Library in Varberg.

Apart from a few headlines and slogans, the only substantial text written in Basque in *Euskadi-bulletinen* is a support declaration from Galician UPG to ETA (1976:1, p. 22). It is printed next to a Swedish translation of the same text and is dated the 27th of September 1975, the same day as "Txiki", "Azpeiti" and the three others were executed. Native-speakers have confirmed for me that the text is linguistically correct, which indicates that the board had knowledge of the Basque language.⁶ It is thinkable that one of the creators of the bulletin was a Basque in exile in Sweden, or that Askatasuna had contact with and got help from other pro-Basque groups in Europe. There are also elements written in Spanish, for example the headlines, occupations and toponyms in the prisoner register mentioned above.



Caricature of the Spanish king's "selective pardon" of political prisoners, *Euskadi-bulletinen* 1976:1.

⁶ Since the Basque language got standardized first during the latest half century and has undergone many reforms, there are many modern rules and conventions concerning spelling and vocabulary that the text in *Euskadi-bulletinen* does not follow. Nevertheless, at the time the text was idiomatic.

In the middle of the 1970's in Sweden, there were several left-wing periodicals with focus on the Iberian Peninsula, for example *Spanienfront*, *Spanien-information*, *Sydeuropa-information*, *Portugal Spanien information* and *Spaniensolidaritet*.⁷ During the same period in the rest of Europe, several publications with special focus on the Basque Country were given out. In Belgium there was a paper called *Askatasuna* given out from 1974 and in France there was one with the same name around the years 1976–1977. Also Dutch *Anai-arte*, French *Euskadi information* and Catalan *Butlletí informatiu* could be mentioned in this context.⁸ Therefore, *Euskadi-bulletinen* could both be seen as one of many Swedish anti-fascist papers with a focus on the Iberian Peninsula, and it can also be placed in an international context together with the pro-Basque publications that were published in many other European countries during the 1970's.

It might seem surprising that the Basque Country attracted so much attention that there were several bulletins in Europe supporting the Basque independence movement. Maybe this could be explained with the words of the American journalist and writer Mark Kurlansky. He dwelled in the French part of the Basque Country in the beginning of the 1970's and tells how his interest in the Basques awoke: “I was interested in the Basques because I was a journalist and they were the only story, the only Spaniards visibly resisting Franco”.⁹ This visible resistance is also underlined in *Euskadi-bulletinen* which highlighted that the three greatest crises for the regime during the last years all had a Basque connection; the international protests after the Burgos Trials in 1970 when several Basques were sentenced to death, the murder of admiral and Prime Minister Luis Carrero Blanco in 1973 and the general strikes in the Basque Country after the executions of the five dissidents in 1975 (1976:1, p. 6).

After Franco's death, a process of democratization and regionalization began which led to that the Basque Country together with Catalonia became the region in Spain with most far-reaching autonomy. Meanwhile, ETA did not desist, and instead increased its attacks which led to a loss of much of the organization's popular and international support that it had enjoyed during the days of the dictatorship.¹⁰ Apart from the financial difficulties and printing problems mentioned by the publisher, this might be one of the reasons that *Euskadi-bulletinen* ceased to be distributed after only one year; it supported a struggle with methods that many did not support any longer.

⁷ Grinell 2004:177.

⁸ The titles are collected from the international library database WorldCat (<http://worldcat.org>). The information about publication period is often incomplete and at several places it just says “197?” as publication year.

⁹ Kurlansky 2000:1.

¹⁰ Eriksson 1998:8–10

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