

Constructing the ‘Third Europe’? The International Connections of Radical Nationalist Organizations in Western Europe, 1960-1980

by
Kyle Thomas McCreanor

Supervised by
Dr. Perry Biddiscombe

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Prefatory Notes:

Any translations from Basque, French, or Spanish herein are the sole responsibility of the author unless otherwise noted.

This work makes use of the primary source anthology *Documentos Y*, a compilation of documents published by ETA. Where possible, I have endeavoured to cite the original document reproduced within the volume. Bibliographic information for these sources is not always available, in which case I have cited only their place in *Documentos Y*.

INTRODUCTION

“The new political romanticism perceives Wales and Corsica, Friesland and the Basque Country as so many detachments of the same army, fighting broadly the same battle.”

Tom Nairn, 1977¹

The 1960s and 1970s gave rise to an endless stream of ‘national liberation’ movements across Europe, which drew influence from romanticized guerrillas such as Fidel Castro, Mao Zedong, and Võ Nguyên Giáp. Anti-colonial thinking defined much of the character of these movements, but at their core they were nationalist organizations. One of the salient characteristics of postwar Europe was the resurgence of ethnic minority nationalism. Nationalism had been discredited by the Second World War, and as Europe seemed to be moving towards some form of unity, it appeared that nationalism was to be superseded by a more international outlook. In a 1974 interview with the Basque separatist group, *Euskadi ta Askatasuna* [Basque Country and Freedom] (ETA), the German interviewer commented: “This return to nationalism is anachronistic though, at a time when the states of the European Community—albeit not very successfully—are trying to break down nationalism.”² But to the revolutionary nationalist organizations, there was nothing incoherent about a national and a ‘European’ identity coexisting.

¹ Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (Altona: Common Ground Publishing, 2003), 190.

² “Interview mit einem Führer der baskischen Eta-Bewegung,” *Der Spiegel*, Mar. 11, 1974, 100-103, <http://magazin.spiegel.de/EpubDelivery/spiegel/pdf/41739071>.

In fact, among the many philosophical influences on radical nationalist groups in twentieth-century Europe was the growing European consciousness sweeping the continent. In his 1968 work *L'Europe aux cent drapeaux*, Breton nationalist Yann Fouéré wrote that the secessionists across Europe “have been in fact the pioneers of the Europe of peoples that we must finish building. Their leaders and militants have been the first of the ‘Europeans’ in the modern sense of the word, the prophets and the precursors of the Third Europe.”³ According to Fouéré, the ‘Third Europe’ was to replace the decrepit Europe of his era, a continent dominated by imperial states born from the time of the Reformation and consolidated during the “European civil wars” of the 19th century in which the number of nation-states in Europe was reduced.⁴ This so-called Europe of empires superseded the ‘First Europe’, of which he speaks most romantically:

On the frontiers of the Christian world, facing barbarians and infidels, the first European Armies were on guard, that of the knights of all nations who guarded the borderlands. Whether we like it or not, it was in this age that Europe was born, and that a European supranationality was affirmed for the first time.⁵

For Fouéré and other like-minded Europeanists, the ‘Third Europe’ that lay on the horizon was in some sense a return to the imagined unity of Medieval Europe. In this narrative, violent separatist organizations were crusaders of progress. Their objective was to beat back the borders of the current European states until each ‘nation’ had been liberated from the yoke of imperialism. These ideas are a clear synthesis of anti-colonialism and Europeanism, the implication

³ Yann Fouéré, *L'Europe aux cent drapeaux: Essai pour servir à la construction de l'Europe* (Paris: Presses de l'Europe, 1968), 194.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

of which was that the separatist movements must work together to tear down the old Europe and build it anew.

This research paper focuses on three groups: *Le Front de Libération de la Bretagne* [Breton Liberation Front] (FLB), ETA, and the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA). The rationale for focusing on these three organizations is that the contemporary media claimed that they had formed a tripartite alliance after meeting in Northern Ireland in 1972 (which will be explored in detail in the first chapter). Furthermore, ETA and the PIRA were by far the two most prominent militant nationalist organizations in Western Europe in this era. In the popular imagination, these groups undoubtedly had a close relationship and actively cooperated with each other. In 1978, policy analyst Samuel Francis wrote:

The different terrorist organizations discussed above [several organizations related to the cause of Palestinian separatism] often cooperate with each other and receive moral, financial, tactical, and training support from certain countries, notwithstanding the ideological differences among them. Thus, the IRA has developed links with the FLB, the ETA [sic], and a Welsh nationalist group called the Free Welsh Army.⁶

Ovid Demaris wrote in his 1977 book *Brothers in Blood: The International Terrorist Network* that the radical nationalists of Europe had close ties with each other, as well as with far-left groups like the Italian *Brigate Rosse* [Red Brigades] and the West-German Baader-Meinhof Gang (or *Rote Armee Fraktion* [Red Army Faction]), Arab terrorists, the Soviet Union, and other radical groups in the Americas. This terrifying global alliance actively conspired to coordinate attacks,

⁶ Samuel Francis, "The Terrorist International and Western Europe," (Washington D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1978), 12.

buy and sell weapons, and provide logistical support, claimed Demaris.⁷ Likewise, the French media spoke of a “*complot international*” in regard to the activities of the FLB and their ‘relations’ with the PIRA.⁸ Following ETA’s assassination of Spanish Prime Minister Luis Carrero Blanco in 1973, the press in Spain asserted that an operation of that calibre was only possible because of aid from the IRA and/or international communists, among other similar theories.⁹ However, it is to be expected that the press will sensationalize and exaggerate stories, but they were not the only group responsible for perpetuating myths about radical nationalist organizations. The organizations themselves were also guilty of this! Motivated by a desire to increase their prestige, they frequently exaggerated their interconnectedness with other nationalists and spoke of ‘contact’ with such groups as though it meant something much more serious than it did in reality.

The aim of this paper is to address the following questions: Was there a proto-Pan-European liberation front fostered by the connections between radical nationalist organizations? Did the members of the FLB, ETA, and the PIRA perceive their respective conflicts as separate national projects, or as part of a larger European movement? To what extent did these organizations work toward combining their efforts to bring about the ‘Third Europe’? Conversely, were any

⁷ See Ovid Demaris, *Brothers in Blood: The International Terrorist Network* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1977).

⁸ “Les activités du F.L.B. Yann Goulet : chef d’orchestre clandestin ou “ Général Micro ” ?,” *Le Monde*, Feb. 2, 1974, http://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1974/02/02/les-activites-du-f-l-b-yann-goulet-chef-d-orchestre-clandestin-ou-general-micro_3090204_1819218.html.

⁹ Julen Agirre (pseud.), *Operation Ogro: The Execution of Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco*, trans. Barbara Solomon (New York: Quadrangle, 1975), 103-104.

links between such groups simply a matter of pragmatism, and was Europeanism, or the spirit of international cooperation more generally, just a fringe idea limited to a few ideologues within these organizations? This research exposes the fact that the radical nationalist organizations in Europe were *not* part of a coordinated international effort, nor were the connections between them nearly as advanced as many believe.

CHAPTER ONE

THE BRETONS (FLB-ARB)

“Nous devons multiplier entre nous les rencontres, les colloques, et les contacts, dégager en commun les idées-forces du combat qui nous unit. Malgré les difficultés qu’elle rencontre, une union de nos efforts est possible.”

Yann Fouéré, 1968¹⁰

There were perhaps no other separatists in Europe as eager to establish international connections as the Bretons. The struggle for an independent, or at least more autonomous, Brittany predates the 1960s, as does the international dimension of Breton nationalism. The Breton nationalist journal *Breiz Atao* [Brittany Forever] was founded in 1919 and in its first issue stressed the need to “develop lines of friendship between all the Celtic peoples.”¹¹ The Bretons played a very active role in the Pan-Celtic movement, and were the most zealous supporters of Ireland after the 1916 Easter Rising.¹²

However, their sympathies were not limited to their Celtic brethren. Breton nationalists organized a conference in Rosporden in 1927 attended by Alsatians, Corsicans, and Flemings, alongside the regular Celtic ensemble.¹³ They also founded the *Comité central des minorités nationales de France* [Central Committee of the National Minorities of France] (CCMNF) in 1927, which held its first meeting in Quimper. At this conference, the Breton, Alsatian, and Corsican

¹⁰ Fouéré, *L'Europe aux cent drapeaux*, 203; “We must multiply the meetings, discussions, and contacts between us, and synergize the main ideas of combat that unite us. Despite the difficulties that it will encounter, a union of our efforts is possible.”

¹¹ Morvan Marchal, “Ce que nous sommes,” *Breiz Atao* 1, Jan. 1919, 1, quoted in Alain Déniel, *Le mouvement breton de 1919 à 1945* (Paris: François Maspero, 1976), 59.

¹² Justin Stover, “Modern Celtic Nationalism in the Period of the Great War: Establishing Transnational Connections,” *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 32 (2012): 296-300, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23630944>.

¹³ Déniel, *Le mouvement breton de 1919 à 1945*, 92.

delegations agreed that the doctrine of the CCMNF was based on international federalism in the form of “une fédération de peuples.”¹⁴ In 1928, the *Parti autonomiste breton* [Breton Autonomist Party] (PAB), published the *Déclaration de Châteaulin* which clarified its then-nebulous doctrine: Their immediate goal was to attain an autonomous Brittany within a federal France, but their long-term aim was different:

We believe that Europe is destined to form, sooner or later, an economic unity, and we see this transformation as the sole means of eliminating this universal calamity that is standing armies and wars. But we believe that this unity will not be a federation of the current states.¹⁵

Nearly identical to what Yann Fouéré would write forty years later, the PAB envisioned a federal European system comprised of autonomous nations rather than multinational states.

Breton nationalism began to assume a much more radical character in the 1930s, owing to the influence of Fascism, which by then was attractive to nationalists across Europe. By 1934, members of *Breiz Atao* had indirect contact with the German Gestapo through Gerhard von Tevenar, a German celticist who made frequent visits to Brittany.¹⁶ They also began to strengthen their ties with Welsh and Scottish nationalists, hoping to create “a common front against centralism.”¹⁷ In 1936, the eruption of the Spanish Civil War provided the greatest source of inspiration for the radical Breton nationalists since the Irish War of

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Parti autonomiste breton, “Déclaration de Châteaulin” Aug. 18, 1929, quoted in Déniel, *Le mouvement breton de 1919 à 1945*, 348.

¹⁶ Solange Gras and Christian Gras, *Le révolte des régions d'Europe occidentale de 1916 à nos jours* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1982), 155.

¹⁷ Glaoud Planson and Erwan Koshaneg, *Histoire de la nation Bretonne* (Paris: La table ronde, 1977), 129.

Independence. *Breiz Atao* idolized the Basque army and the *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* [Basque Nationalist Party] (PNV), and published many sensationalized articles on the Basque war effort and general Basque history.¹⁸ However, Breton internationalism went beyond simply mythologizing fellow nationalist groups and expressing solidarity. Many Breton nationalists welcomed Basque refugees into their homes after their defeat in the Spanish Civil War.¹⁹ Moreover, in 1938, Breton nationalists received a 2.5-tonne shipment of explosives, rifles, and ammunition from the IRA.²⁰

By the late 1930s, the most prominent nationalist party was the *Parti national breton* [Breton National Party] (PNB), which was strongly pro-Nazi and anti-French.²¹ The prospect of war between France and Germany was increasing, and the PNB hoped to use the opportunity to further their political objectives.²² They eagerly supported the supposed Nazi plan to create “a new nationalities-based European system” in which Brittany would be finally autonomous.²³ Just a few days before the beginning of the Second World War, PNB leaders Olier Mordrel and Fañch Debeauvais fled to Berlin, from where they launched separatist propaganda and encouraged sedition in the French army.²⁴ During the war, many Breton nationalists collaborated with the Nazis. The most radical members of the PNB formed a military unit, the *Bezen Perrot* [Perrot Unit]

¹⁸ Severiano Rojo Hernández, “Breiz Atao y la mitificación de los vascos en Bretaña (1919-1939),” *Historia Contemporánea* 32 (2006): 245-251.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 246.

²⁰ Planson and Koshaneg, *Histoire de la nation Bretonne*, 130.

²¹ Jack Reece, *The Bretons against France: Ethnic Minority Nationalism in Twentieth-Century Brittany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 142-143.

²² *Ibid.*, 143.

²³ *Ibid.*, 147-148.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 151.

in 1943 to support the German war effort, acting primarily as an anti-partisan force.²⁵ That at least 60 Breton militants chose to don SS uniforms and fight against the French Resistance and the Allies was to have enormous repercussions for the reputation of the Breton nationalist movement later on.²⁶

During the war, Yann Fouéré had strong Vichyite tendencies and served as an editor of *La Bretagne*, a collaborationist publication.²⁷ After liberation, France began an extensive purge of Breton nationalists.²⁸ Fouéré himself fled France in March 1946, believing that the French were overzealous in their hunt for suspected collaborators and that he had no chance of a fair trial.²⁹ Basque nationalists, with whom he had become acquainted through his help of Basque refugees, invited him to stay in the Basque Country. However, like many Breton exiles he chose to go to Wales.³⁰ There he was given shelter by *Plaid Cymru*, a Welsh nationalist party.³¹ In 1955, Fouéré was ultimately acquitted of any collaboration with the Germans.³²

It was not until decades after the Second World War that violent Breton nationalist activity reared its head again. An epoch that offered endless role models for aspiring anti-colonial guerrillas, in conjunction with the ever-present

²⁵ Perry Biddiscombe, "The Last White Terror: The *Maquis Blanc* and Its Impact in Liberated France, 1944-1945," *Journal of Modern History* 73, no.4 (December 2001): 833-834, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/340147>.

²⁶ Daniel Leach, "Bezen Perrot: The Breton nationalist unit of the SS, 1943-5," *e-Keltoi: Interdisciplinary Journal of Celtic Studies* 4 (February 2008): 19. http://www4.uwm.edu/celtic/ekeltoi/volumes/vol4/4_1/leach_4_1.pdf.

²⁷ Daniel Leach, *Fugitive Ireland: European Minority Nationalists and Irish Political Asylum, 1937-2008* (Portland: Four Courts Press, 2009), 82-83.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 79.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 84.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 122-123, 81-82.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 81-82.

³² Lionel Henry and Annick Lagadec, *FLB-ARB: L'Histoire (1966-2005)* (Fouesnant: Yoran Embanner, 2006), 84.

discontent with French centralism, and perhaps a hint of youthful unrest, provided fertile soil for a radical nationalist resurgence. In 1966, a series of bombings in subprefectures across Brittany was claimed by a then-unknown organization, the *Front de Libération de la Bretagne*, the very name of which evoked the trauma of the Algerian War.³³ Over the course of the next three years, the FLB committed 33 attacks against perceived symbols of French ‘colonial power’, such as tax offices, police stations, and administrative buildings.³⁴ French authorities had few leads on the composition of the group, other than that it was in some way linked to the Dublin-based *Comité National pour une Bretagne Libre* [National Committee for a Free Brittany] (CNBL).³⁵ The CNBL was organized by Yann Goulet, a militant Breton nationalist who fled to Ireland after the Second World War to escape persecution in France.³⁶ In effect, he was the ambassador of the FLB in Ireland, and in the words of Goulet himself: “In order to facilitate contact at the international level, the seat of the committee has been fixed in Dublin.”³⁷

Another foundational member of the FLB was René Vaillant, a Breton who had previously lived 11 years in Quebec.³⁸ Vaillant had been involved with the early activities of the *Front de libération du Québec* [Quebec Liberation Front] (FLQ), and helped to organize Breton diaspora activity by founding the *Union des*

³³ Planson and Koshaneg, *Histoire de la nation Bretonne*, 146; A connotation which its members would have welcomed, for some of whom the Algerian War of Independence was the catalyst that radicalized their ‘national consciousness’. See Alain Cabon and Erwan Chartier, *Le dossier FLB: Plongée chez les clandestins bretons* (Spézet/Speied: Coop Breizh, 2007) (2nd ed.), 89.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 146-147.

³⁵ Reece, *The Bretons against France*, 202.

³⁶ Cabon and Chartier, *Le dossier FLB*, 42.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 42, 57.

³⁸ Henry and Lagadec, *FLB-ARB*, 68.

Bretons de Montréal.³⁹ FLB leaflets were produced in Quebec and brought to Brittany by Vaillant, who is also suspected of using his Canadian connections to obtain and export explosives.⁴⁰ However, Vaillant was no intellectual, and the fact that the FLB counted on him to print propaganda and bring it to Brittany was just a pragmatic security measure rather than any attempt to forge an alliance with the FLQ. Nonetheless, the FLB did seek a concrete political direction, because according to Vaillant, “the movement needed a real political representative.”⁴¹ The FLB therefore recruited Yann Fouéré in the late 60s as their *de facto* ideological director.⁴²

Fouéré served on the *état-major* [General Staff], the pseudo-military head of the FLB, which also included René Vaillant.⁴³ He frequently travelled to Dublin to represent the FLB in the CNBL, and also had contacts in the Free Wales Army and the IRA.⁴⁴ Much in the tradition of using Ireland as a safe haven, recruitment for the FLB took place there, free from the reach of the French authorities. Throughout the 1970s, countless young Bretons made a pilgrimage to the heavily-mythologized Éire in order to join the FLB, or visit during Easter celebrations.⁴⁵ With the escalation of The Troubles and the birth of the PIRA in 1969, the Bretons were further emboldened to escalate their desired conflict. According to one FLB veteran:

³⁹ Cabon and Chartier, *Le dossier FLB*, 43-44.

⁴⁰ Henry and Lagadec, *FLB-ARB*, 66-67.

⁴¹ Cabon and Chartier, *Le Dossier FLB*, 46.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 111; Henry and Lagadec, *FLB-ARB*, 254.

We were young, and thus impatient. The idea of placing France in a situation that would oblige it to regard Brittany as a danger, and every Breton as a potential enemy, was seductive. All that remained was to create a situation *à l'irlandaise*, with its point of no return.⁴⁶

Yann Goulet was a good friend of Seán Mac Stíofáin, the first Chief-of-Staff of the PIRA.⁴⁷ However, the ties between the PIRA and the FLB are often exaggerated. Owing to Goulet's personal ties, a handful of militants probably received some instruction in bomb-making and sniper tactics mastered by the Irish guerrillas.⁴⁸ Allegedly, sixteen FLB members "received arms training in secret camps in Ireland" in 1972, not from the PIRA but from *Saor Éire* [Free Ireland], a fringe Irish Republican organization.⁴⁹ Although the Breton nationalists idolized the IRA, the feeling was far from mutual. The relations between the FLB and PIRA, beyond perhaps a few Bretons who received some training in Ireland, never exceeded the "stage of diplomatic exchanges."⁵⁰ 'Exchange' may even be a misnomer because it implies that the PIRA had any reason to visit the poorly-equipped and inexperienced 'militants' in Brittany (as much as the Breton nationalists surely would have appreciated it).

In 1968, the FLB assumed a rigid military organization divided into *kevrennoù* [divisions], *bagadoù* [groups], and *strolladoù* [teams], in that order, headed by the aforementioned *état-major*.⁵¹ In theory there were supposed to be

⁴⁶ Henry and Lagadec, *FLB-ARB*, 253.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁴⁹ Christopher Dobson and Donald Payne, *The Weapons of Terror: International Terrorism at Work* (London: Macmillan, 1979), 177.

⁵⁰ Marie Pierre Bonnet, *Bretagne 79: Des années de poudre* (Carhaix: Editions Egina, 1989), 112.

⁵¹ Cabon and Chartier, *Le dossier FLB*, 49-50.

9 *kevrennoù* corresponding to the 9 traditional bishoprics of Brittany, but it is doubtful that more than 4 of these had a concrete existence.⁵² Also in 1968, another organization called the *Armée républicaine bretonne* [Breton Republican Army] (ARB) merged with the FLB, in theory also adopting its name.⁵³ To confuse matters, in 1971 a faction broke off from the FLB-ARB and formed their own FLB-ARB—*Armée révolutionnaire bretonne*.⁵⁴ The *révolutionnaires* represented a break from the more conservative and hibernophilic Breton nationalism, instead favouring the leftist current strong in contemporary France.

The *républicaines*, whose members included Goulet and Fouéré, were initially much more numerous and active than the *révolutionnaires*.⁵⁵ In terms of international connections in the early 1970s, it was of course the Dublin-based original FLB-ARB that had closer ties abroad. On April 3, 1972, following a meeting in Northern Ireland, a communiqué signed off by the FLB-ARB “foreign delegation”, the Irish Republican Publicity Bureau (the PIRA), and ETA declared:

The fight against imperialism and colonialism in the Western European subcontinent calls for determined and fundamental opposition to the Common Market. The national oppression and economic exploitation suffered by the Irish, Basque, and Breton people can do nothing in effect but worsen by the development of this vast and dangerous capitalist enterprise.⁵⁶

⁵² Reece claims there were theoretically 8 *kevrennoù* but later sources (see Cabon and Chartier) make the much more convincing claim that the FLB had designated 9 such divisions, corresponding to the historical bishoprics of the peninsula. However, both sources agree there was one additional *kevrenn* in Paris. See Reece, *The Bretons against France*, 206-207; and Cabon and Chartier, *Le dossier FLB*, 49-50.

⁵³ Cabon and Chartier, 56.

⁵⁴ Cabon and Chartier, *Le dossier FLB*, 135; Henry and Lagadec claim that this split took place in 1972, see page 109.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁵⁶ FLB/ARB Délégation extérieure, ETA, IRPB, “Communiqué,” (Northern Ireland: 1972) in *Documentos Y* (Donostia-San Sebastián: Hordago, 1979), Vol. 12, 396.

The FLB and ETA also both urged readers to boycott the referendum in France on the enlargement of the European Economic Community (EEC) on April 23, 1972.⁵⁷ It is therefore obvious that the FLB, ETA, and the PIRA (or at least their ideological heads) rejected the contemporary European supranational project as an exploitative bourgeois plot—far from the ‘Third Europe’ envisioned by Fouéré.

In regard to the contact between ETA and the FLB, the Basques were somewhat more willing than their comrades in the PIRA to work with the Bretons. ETA and the FLB established contact in 1969, and it was through the Breton connection that ETA and the PIRA became acquainted around this same time.⁵⁸ Initially there was probably some sharing of intelligence and diplomatic exchanges.⁵⁹ After the 1972 meeting in Northern Ireland, a small selection of young Breton militants may have received training from ETA in clandestine camps in the Pyrenees.⁶⁰ However, cooperation between ETA and the FLB never went further than this, for reasons that will be explored in Chapter Two. One FLB veteran alleges that “some contact existed in that era, but it never led to anything other than some exchanges of opinion.”⁶¹ Nonetheless it should be emphasized that there was a real Basque-Breton solidarity, more so than there ever was with the Irish.⁶²

By the mid-1970s, the face of radical Breton nationalism had changed. The mainstream FLB was now the *révolutionnaire* FLB-ARB. In fact, by 1976 it

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Henry and Lagadec, *FLB-ARB*, 140.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 136.

⁶¹ Bonnet, *Bretagne 79*, 113.

⁶² Ibid., 112.

was unclear if the *républicaine* faction still existed.⁶³ The left-wing Breton militants reached out to 'revolutionary states' with the hope of obtaining much-needed financial aid. The Cuban embassy in Switzerland turned them down, not wanting to hurt relations with France. The Iranians had no interest in helping them, but the Libyans did—though this probably never resulted in any material support.⁶⁴ With regard to the infamous terrorist training camps in North Africa and the Middle East, it is unclear whether the Bretons ever participated (like the PIRA and ETA did). The French press alluded to the idea that Breton militants were receiving such training, but the FLB never admitted it, nor do any sources confirm their presence in Libya.⁶⁵

1976 marked the beginning of what is known as *les années de poudre*, the escalation of FLB attacks, which now included symbols of 'bourgeois domination' as legitimate targets.⁶⁶ Unfortunately for the wishful guerrillas, the French authorities finally decided to crack down. By 1981, their ranks had been decreased by 95%.⁶⁷ The FLB's last attempt to cultivate popular support was to mobilize around the controversial nuclear installation in Plogoff, western Brittany. They were probably disappointed when in 1981, François Mitterrand was elected as the President of France and followed his campaign promise to scrap the project.⁶⁸ Thereafter, the FLB dissolved and destroyed all of its internal

⁶³ Cabon and Chartier, *Le dossier FLB*, 174.

⁶⁴ Henry and Lagadec, *FLB-ARB*, 256-257.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁶⁶ Cabon and Chartier, *Le dossier FLB*, 155.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 187.

⁶⁸ Henry and Lagadec, *FLB-ARB*, 258.

documents.⁶⁹ Those who felt compelled to flee France had a number of options. Some fled to Ireland, the traditional land of Breton exiles (which had no extradition agreement with France). However, the Irish government pressured them to leave after they began protesting outside the French embassy and trying to attract political attention by hunger-striking.⁷⁰ Some FLB exiles were sheltered by the *Partido nacionalista vasco* (PNV) in the Spanish Basque Country for a few weeks but eventually had to leave. Authors Cabon and Chartier ask: “Why did the members of the FLB not make an appeal to the Basque radical left, which they were ideologically closer to?”⁷¹ In the words of one of the FLB exiles: “In Ireland like in the Basque Country, when we made contact with groups politically close, they were distrustful of us and they did not help us.”⁷² Some went to Latin America and Africa, while others travelled to Afghanistan to fight the invading Soviet Army, in search of the guerrilla war they never got at home.⁷³

In conclusion to this chapter, the FLB not only had international ambitions, but actually took steps towards realizing a cooperative strategy with the Irish and Basques. Their internationalist outlook was inherited from a longer history of Europeanism among Breton nationalists. However, did the average FLB member see the liberation of Brittany as part of a larger process that included other European sub-national groups? Did the average FLB member believe in joining

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Cabon and Chartier, *Le dossier FLB*, 196.

⁷¹ Ibid; The PNV has always represented the more conservative tendency of Basque nationalism, ideologically quite different from ETA and other radical organizations.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 197; Henry and Lagadec, *FLB-ARB*, 258.

forces with ETA and the PIRA in order to usher in the Third Europe? By one account, not at all:

We had to build a strategy of separation that would lead to total independence. It must also be said that in that era we were not interested at all in the construction of the European Union. Our preferred readings were *The People's War* by Mao Zedong, *The Rape of the Masses: The Psychology of Totalitarian Political Propaganda* by Sergei Chakhotin, *The Technique of Revolution* by Malaparte."⁷⁴

This quote clearly comes from a member of the *révolutionnaire* faction, following a philosophy more concerned with socialism worldwide than ethnonationalism and Europeanism. A seemingly contradictory statement from another FLB veteran reads: "I was very connected to the international struggles in Paris, in relation with the Occitans and the Algerians. My vision of Breton militancy was very international."⁷⁵ Although Yann Fouéré's call for a united European decolonization front is hardly representative of the thoughts of the average Breton militant, it can be said that the FLB was indeed more committed to strengthening ties with other European separatists than ETA or the PIRA.

⁷⁴ Henry and Lagadec, *FLB-ARB*, 252.

⁷⁵ Cabon and Chartier, *Le dossier FLB*, 113.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BASQUES (ETA)

“Estamos en pleno proceso de integración en una comunidad supranacional que llamaremos Naciones Unidas de Europa. Los vascos formamos parte de las minorías étnicas que habitan su suelo.”

ETA, 1962⁷⁶

Among the most powerful models of armed action and resistance that had deeply permeated postwar Basque nationalism was that of wartime anti-German resistance movements across Europe.⁷⁷ It should also be noted that this was noticeably absent from Breton nationalist discourse, for obvious reasons. An ETA publication from 1961 read: “All the countries of Europe, when they were occupied by Hitler, thought about the need of resistance, and made it a reality. The Basque Country cannot be an exception. Today is the hour of the Basque Resistance.”⁷⁸ Such calls were the product of a bitterly disappointed generation, who watched the Allied advance stop short of Francoist Spain. The expectation was that the tide of Allied liberation would sweep across the Iberian Peninsula too, and the President of the Basque government in exile, Antonio Aguirre, remained in New York to plead for American aid. But in the context of the Cold

⁷⁶ “Lo que esperan las minorías étnicas de La Nueva Europa. Siguiendo el espíritu del ideario ETA,” *Zutik!* 3rd series, no. 6, 1962, quoted in *Documentos Y*, Vol.2 (Donostia-San Sebastián: Hordago, 1979), 278; “We are in the middle of the process of integration in a supranational community that we will call the United Nations of Europe. Us Basques form a part of the ethnic minorities that inhabit its land.”

⁷⁷ *Documentos Y*, Vol. 1, 25.

⁷⁸ *Zutik!* Apr. 1961, in *Documentos Y*, Vol. 1 (Donostia-San Sebastián: Hordago, 1979), 384.

War, the Americans sided with the unwaveringly anti-communist Francisco Franco in 1951.⁷⁹

It was by no coincidence that the year 1952 marked the birth of the direct precursor to ETA: *Ekin* [Action]. Disillusioned with the passivity of the PNV, which remained in exile after its defeat in the Spanish Civil War, about a dozen students from Deusto University in Bilbao formed a study group to discuss Basque language and culture, which seemed to be in a precarious situation under the oppressive Franco regime.⁸⁰ At this time, a prominent role model for *Ekin* was Israel, both culturally for its Hebrew revival efforts (much-lauded by the Basque cultural nationalists who feared the extinction of the Basque language) and militarily for *Irgun*, the armed Zionist organization.⁸¹ In fact, the radical Basque nationalists evidently saw their own struggle as sharing key similarities with that of the Israelis, writing in 1962 that the territorially small size of the Basque Country would be no hindrance to becoming a sovereign actor on the global stage, since Israel was similar in size.⁸²

In 1956, *Ekin* experienced an explosive growth in membership. In 1959, this group, now numbering in the hundreds, renamed itself *Euskadi ta*

⁷⁹ Joseba Zulaika, *That Old Bilbao Moon: The Passion and Resurrection of a City* (Reno: University of Reno Press, 2014), 42-43.

⁸⁰ Cameron Watson, "Sacred Earth, Symbolic Blood: A Cultural History of Basque Political Violence From Arana to ETA," (PhD diss., University of Reno, 1996), 509.

⁸¹ Daniele Conversi, "Domino Effect or Internal Developments? The Influences of International Events and Political Ideologies on Catalan and Basque Nationalism," *West European Politics* 16 (July 1993): 254, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01402389308424973>; Conversi claims that the Israeli model was a phenomenon of the 1940s turned to again in the 1980s by the moderate Basque nationalists. However, I would argue that it was by no means limited to those two decades because ETA continued to write favourably about Israel until at least the early 1960s (see the following footnote). As ETA began to praise the Palestinians later in the 1960s (by which point most of ETA's founding members had left), anything pro-Israel disappeared from its writings.

⁸² Julen Madariaga, *Zutik!* Dec. 1962, 5, in *Documentos Y*, Vol. 2, 301.

Askatasuna. Again, this era provided an endless pantheon of anti-colonial heroes to draw upon. ETA considered the Basque Country itself to be a Spanish colony,⁸³ though one can discern from their writings that some believed this began in 1522 (when Spain fully consolidated its control over the Kingdom of Navarre), whereas others thought the situation can only truly be considered ‘colonial’ after 1839 (when the Spanish Crown stripped the Basque territories of their chartered rights).⁸⁴ More important, however, was the implication that as an imagined colony, there were lessons to be learned from the guerrilla wars across the Third-World. ETA wrote in 1962 that “the case of the Basque Country is similar to that of Algeria or Angola. [...] From this premise it is evident that the path we must follow is similar to that of Algeria or Angola.”⁸⁵ They also wrote about European separatist struggles, including that in South Tyrol, Wallonia, and Frisia.⁸⁶

Also in 1962, ETA officially incorporated European federalism into its doctrine.⁸⁷ Navarrese historian José Manuel Azcona writes that one of the primary philosophies of ETA in this era was Europeanism—“the mythification of the idea of Europe in counterposition to the ideas of Spain and France.”⁸⁸ The

⁸³ It should be noted that this idea was largely abandoned in 1968, when the de facto head of the *tercermundismo* camp (those who believed the Basque Country was comparable to a Third-World colony) within ETA, José Luis Zalbide, renounced the idea. See José Manuel Azcona Pastor, “El nacionalismo vasco y la deriva terrorista de ETA” in *Sociedad del bienestar, vanguardias artísticas, terrorismo y contracultura*, eds. José Manuel Azcona Pastor, Matteo Re, and Ma Dolores Azpiazu (Madrid: Dykinson, 2011), 226.

⁸⁴ See *Zutik!* Aug. 1960 in *Documentos Y*, Vol. 1, 439, and *Cuadernos ETA*, 1962, in *Documentos Y*, Vol. 2, 57.

⁸⁵ *Zutik!* Apr. 1962, in *Documentos Y*, Vol. 1, 420.

⁸⁶ *Documentos Y*, Vol. 2, 487-488.

⁸⁷ Pastor, “El nacionalismo vasco y la deriva terrorista de ETA,” 221.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 220.

intellectuals of ETA outlined five possible solutions for the Basque ‘problem’ in the 1960 *Libro blanco*:

- A) — Basque provinces in Spain and France
- B) — Federalization of Spain and France
- C) — Integration into Europe by means of the national federations
- D) — Direct federal integration into Europe
- E) — Total independence⁸⁹

Weighing their options, the europhile etarras [ETA members] wrote that option D, “direct integration of Euskadi into a European federation could be a perfect goal to obtain,” but it may have to be done initially via option C—first joining the European supranational community as part of Spain and France before negotiating their place as a separate entity.⁹⁰ However, they admitted that outright independence seemed to be the most convenient, and the best way to protect Basque culture and national interests, but economically speaking it was not the best option.⁹¹ ETA made clear its vision: “We want a federally united Europe in which Euskadi [the Basque Country] is an autonomous region (like Brittany, Catalonia or Wales; and like Spain and France, reduced to their non-imperialist borders).”⁹² In the same fashion as Fouéré (though predating *L’Europe aux cent drapeaux* by 6 years), ETA called for ‘a new Europe’:

The best human values of the old Europe face the enormous task of constructing a new Europe; a Europe based on respect for the distinct peoples that comprise it and give it life, as much the large [communities] as the small [communities]. A new Europe that progressively rejects the current gigantic states that deform it.⁹³

⁸⁹ ETA, *Libro blanco*, 89-90, in *Documentos Y*, Vol. 1, 237-238.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁹² *Documentos Y*, Vol. 2, 362.

⁹³ Begitxindor (pseud.), *Zutik!* 25, 1962, in *Documentos Y*, Vol. 2, 248.

ETA believed in the necessity of a radically new supranational European project, but to what extent did it promote a joint effort with other separatists to usher it in?⁹⁴ There are numerous contradictory answers to this question. At its second assembly in 1963, ETA had to address its daunting financial problems. ETA's foreign delegation, normally stationed in Paris (as one Breton militant alluded to earlier, it was a hub for international separatist movements), proposed that they contact the CIA through members of the wartime Basque Resistance, who still had close ties to the Americans.⁹⁵ Though this plan was never realized, ETA remained committed, at least in theory, to maintaining a presence internationally. In 1971, ETA outlined a 'new phase' of its struggle, which included "foreign relations" and a "foreign combat front".⁹⁶ Foreign relations meant pursuing recognition on the international level, accepting foreign aid (regardless of origin), and expressing total solidarity with "authentic movements of national liberation," but ETA did not believe it had the right "to intervene or take a position in internal affairs of other countries and political movements."⁹⁷ By "foreign combat front", ETA primarily meant establishing commandos outside of the Basque Country, in the "enemy territory" of Spain or France.⁹⁸

Yet for all its idealistic philosophizing of a decolonized, unified Europe, ETA did not believe in combining its efforts with other European separatist groups. One ETA publication read: "Freedom does not come from the outside.

⁹⁴ Although both ETA and the FLB rejected the label 'separatist' because they viewed their objective as not 'separation' but integration on a supranational European level.

⁹⁵ *Documentos Y*, Vol. 2, 434.

⁹⁶ Federico Sarrailh [Krutwig] and Zugasti, "Comentarios y proposiciones ante la próxima asamblea," 1971, in *Documentos Y*, Vol. 12, 112.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 113.

The Algerians liberated Algeria, the Tunisians Tunisia, and the Cypriots Cyprus.”⁹⁹ This sentiment is further affirmed by an ETA militant: “It is up to each to make revolution in his own country. The best help we can bring to the Bretons is to obtain our independence as soon as possible [...] Especial military support for the FLB could not have existed for obvious strategic reasons.”¹⁰⁰ The activities of the radical Basque nationalists abroad were thus mostly limited to expressing solidarity, diplomatic ventures, and signing various joint declarations.

Such activities included the aforementioned FLB-PIRA-ETA joint declaration in 1972. There was a declaration of solidarity with the PIRA, signed alongside the FLB, the FLQ, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and other communist and/or nationalist organizations.¹⁰¹ ETA also featured articles from the FLB in its regular publications, which served as a means to inform its readers of the Breton nationalist movement and to reinforce the narrative of a common struggle being waged by minority ethnic groups across Europe. ETA and the FLB also featured in a joint interview in the left-wing French periodical *Politique Hebdo* on June 29, 1972. The article claims that the the FLB, the PIRA, and ETA have forged an alliance (this impression seems to be based on the communiqué issued on April 3, 1972, after the three groups met in Northern Ireland) and that the three struggles highlight the problem of ‘internal colonialism’ in Europe.¹⁰² The PIRA, which generally speaking cared little about

⁹⁹ *Documentos Y*, Vol. 2, 443.

¹⁰⁰ Bonnet, *Bretagne* 79, 113.

¹⁰¹ *Documentos Y*, Vol. 12, 466.

¹⁰² Jean-Louis Calvet, “Avec l’ETA et le FLB: Notre Lutte Nationale est Révolutionnaire,” *Politique Hebdo* 35, June 29, 1972, in *Documentos Y*, Vol. 12, 398-400.

forging relationships with other groups unless there was some material gain to be made, did not have a representative present at the interview. *Politique Hebdo* probably did little to endear itself to the PIRA by erroneously calling Seán Mac Stíofáin “Max Stiofain.”¹⁰³

In 1974, ETA split into two factions, ETA-politikomilitarra [ETA-Politico-Military] (ETA-pm) and ETA-militarra [ETA-Military] (ETA-m). ETA had previously been divided into 4 fronts: political, labour, cultural, and military.¹⁰⁴ ETA-m was born out of the military front, which had by 1974 become increasingly autonomous from the Central Committee of ETA and had little interest in coordinating its efforts with the other fronts. The function of ETA-m was therefore solely terroristic, as they worked towards making the Basque Country ‘ungovernable’, an aim likewise pursued by the PIRA which had devastated Northern Ireland. The implication of this split was that there were two ETA’s, both with an international presence and both seeking alliances with ideologically similar groups. Their opposing international affinities are well exemplified by the Basque-Galician ties after the 1974 split. The *Union do Povo Galego* [Galician People’s Union] (UPG), founded in 1964, received its first visit from ETA-pm in the mid-1970s.¹⁰⁵ Meanwhile, ETA-m contacted the more militant Galician separatist group, *Loita Armada Revolucionaria* [Revolutionary Armed Struggle] (LAR). But like most of the international connections explored so far, nothing

¹⁰³ Ibid., 398.

¹⁰⁴ John Sullivan, *ETA and Basque Nationalism: The Fight for Euskadi, 1890-1986* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 65.

¹⁰⁵ Gras and Gras, *Le révolte des régions d’Europe occidentale de 1916 à nos jours*, 199; Xavier Vinader, *Operación Lobo* (Madrid: Temas de Hoy, 1999), 100-101.

serious came of these relations, which in reality were probably just a small number of protocolary visits.¹⁰⁶

Nonetheless, not all of ETA's foreign affairs were empty expressions of solidarity. Until its dissolution in 1975, the *Front d'Alliberament Català* [Catalan Liberation Front] (FAC), had been in contact with ETA, helping Basque militants cross the border into France or Andorra, and managing a support system for etarras who found themselves in Catalonia.¹⁰⁷ However, historically speaking, ETA was not always so sympathetic to the Catalan nationalist cause. In 1962, they wrote:

Catalonia is also a region of 'ethnic Spain' because the family that comprises it is one of the many families that through blood relation belong to the grand Spanish family. The cause of Catalonia is certainly not that of our homeland, nor is there even similarity between the two, neither by the historical testimony that confirms it, nor upon the historical grounds they allege, nor for the reasons that spawned them, nor in the ends they hope to achieve.¹⁰⁸

To be sure, ETA had changed significantly since then, both ideologically and in terms of actual composition. Nonetheless, it is striking because in 1962 ETA had already officially adopted a European federalist approach, yet the article in question would leave one with the impression that ETA saw absolutely no merit in working with the Catalans (even stranger considering the historical context of the Spanish Civil War). A possible explanation is simply that ETA, even in its early years, never maintained total ideological coherence among its ranks. For example, consider Federico Krutwig's infamous *Vasconia* which called the cause

¹⁰⁶ Florencio Domínguez, "Los años de plombo del terrorismo europeo y el caso español," in *Sociedad del bienestar, vanguardias artísticas, terrorismo y contracultura*, eds. José Manuel Azcona Pastor, Matteo Re, and Ma Dolores Azpiazu (Madrid: Dykinson, 2011), 193.

¹⁰⁷ Vinader, *Operación Lobo*, 235-236.

¹⁰⁸ ETA, *Cuadernos ETA* (1962), in *Documentos Y*, Vol. 2, 103.

of Irish independence a failure, because they had effectively lost their national language.¹⁰⁹ However, many ETA members would have rejected his assessment, probably including the main intellectual force in ETA at the time, Txillardegi (who in fact strongly condemned the book for a few reasons).¹¹⁰

Nonetheless, the Hiberno-skepticism of Krutwig (and some others) did not preclude ETA-PIRA ties. In a 1974 interview with *Der Spiegel*, an ETA leader said: “Our relations with the IRA are good, very good.”¹¹¹ According to the account of Maria McGuire, a young PIRA member turned disillusioned informant, an ETA contingent travelled to Ireland in the early 1970s to sell weapons to the PIRA. The etarras made a good impression on the Irish guerrillas, offering 50 revolvers in exchange for explosives training.¹¹² But journalist Martin Dillon claims this assertion was based on hearsay, and that ETA had no need for explosives training from the IRA, because some of its members had already received such instruction in Arab terrorist training camps (discussed later in this chapter).¹¹³ Moreover, I would add that this trade would be implausible any time after early 1972, by which point the PIRA had already received massive shipments of Armalite rifles from the United States, and would have hardly needed fifty revolvers.¹¹⁴ However, it is possible that the transaction occurred

¹⁰⁹ Conversi, “Domino Effect or Internal Developments?” 254.

¹¹⁰ Pseudonym for Jose Luis Alvarez Enparantza; *Documentos Y*, Vol. 2, 379-380.

¹¹¹ “Interview mit einem Führer der baskischen Eta-Bewegung,” *Der Spiegel*, Mar. 11, 1974, 100-103.

¹¹² Maria McGuire, *To Take Arms: A Year in the Provisional IRA* (London: Macmillan, 1973), 71.

¹¹³ Martin Dillon, *The Dirty War: Covert Strategies and Tactics Used in Political Conflicts* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 393

¹¹⁴ Richard English, *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA* (London: Pan Books, 2012), 117; And even further, this also seems strange because ETA primarily used smaller handguns with 9mm Parabellum rounds rather than revolvers.

before early 1972 (McGuire does not specify a date). Also, Dillon overzealously dismisses potential connections between European nationalist groups. With regard to the 1972 FLB-PIRA-ETA joint declaration, he writes that “[t]here is no evidence that this occurred, and people close to the Provisionals at the time deny that any agreement was signed between the two organizations [ETA and the PIRA].”¹¹⁵ First, there is no debate on the existence of this document, it was distributed to the press ten days after it was signed, and was discussed in a number of contemporary periodicals. It is also reproduced in the appendix of this work, obtained from the ETA primary source anthology, *Documentos Y*. Second, Dillon’s work does not employ citations, which it desperately needs for the unbelievable claim that people close to the PIRA deny that the Basques and Irish ever co-signed an agreement. Whether ETA traded 50 revolvers for explosives training from the PIRA remains uncertain, but it is possible.

One might also come across sources that claim ETA’s most famous operation depended on the Irish connection. “The IRA allegedly provided the explosives used by the ETA [sic] in the murder of Spanish prime minister, Adm. Luis Carreras Blanco [sic],” claims Demaris in *Brothers in Blood*.¹¹⁶ A fair question to ask is who is alleging such a thing? The ETA members themselves who planned the assassination published the logistical details of the operation, which was even available translated in English by 1975. In the book, they explained how the explosives used (80 kilograms of primarily Goma-2) were from a 1972 raid on a gunpowder magazine (located in the Basque Country!) in which

¹¹⁵ Dillon, *The Dirty War*, 393.

¹¹⁶ Demaris, *Brothers in Blood*, 355.

ETA stole around 3000 kilograms of explosives.¹¹⁷ Any claim otherwise is surely sensationalist nonsense cooked up by the Spanish press, placing ETA amidst an imagined communist, anti-Spanish global conspiracy, and aiming to minimize ETA's self-sufficiency and destructive potential. However, an unknown number of ETA militants did receive training in the use of mortars from the PIRA in the late 1970s, according to a private interview with repentant Irish terrorist Sean O'Callaghan.¹¹⁸

Another clandestine aspect of ETA's international involvement was its involvement in the terrorist training camps organized by Arab militants. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had training centres in Lebanon that hosted ETA members on at least one occasion, and may have also provided material support.¹¹⁹ In 1976, at least 60 etarras "received military, physical and communications training" in Algeria, sanctioned by the Algerian government.¹²⁰ The Basque separatists also made a number of visits to South Yemen from 1979 to 1980, where they trained under groups such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).¹²¹

ETA's international contacts were obviously far more serious and fruitful than those of the FLB. However, one would expect that with all of ETA's Europeanist rhetoric, it would have favoured closer ties with fellow European

¹¹⁷ Agirre, *Operation Ogro*, 99.

¹¹⁸ Rogelio Alonso "The International Dimension of ETA's Terrorism and the Internationalization of the Conflict in the Basque Country," *Democracy and Security* 7 (2011): 188, <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/10.1080/17419166.2011.572778>.

¹¹⁹ Raphael Israeli, *PLO in Lebanon: Selected Documents* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), 266.

¹²⁰ Alonso "The International Dimension of ETA's Terrorism and the Internationalization of the Conflict in the Basque Country," 188.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

groups rather than the Arab terrorist organizations from which its members received most of their training abroad. But in this case, receiving training from such organizations was pragmatic. In terms of actual cooperation, ETA never carried out attacks on behalf of any Arab terrorists nor vice versa (as was agreed upon by Palestinian terrorists and some groups including the Japanese Red Army and the Red Army Faction/Baader-Meinhof Gang).¹²² As discussed, ETA foremost believed in coordinating its own efforts and securing an independent Basque polity, as opposed to actively working with other separatists to usher in a 'new Europe' (which could come later). According to Ely Karmon, "[a]t the most, it [ETA] saw itself as a pan-Spanish movement, rather than a pan-European one."¹²³ This claim is mostly affirmed by ETA's own words, exemplary of its tendency to exaggerate its ties with other groups: "The struggle of the Basque people is an active part of the front of people who today shake off the yoke of *Spanish and French* imperialism, and is closely united to the fight of the Spanish and French proletariat for its social emancipation."¹²⁴

We are thus brought back to the central theme of this thesis, which is to address the existence of an international front against imperialism comprised of radical nationalist organizations in Western Europe. Evidently, by the 1970s (mostly the latter part of the decade), ETA did have concrete ties abroad. But as has been demonstrated, the form these connections took can hardly be

¹²² Simon Reeve, *One Day in September: The Full Story of the 1972 Munich Olympics Massacre and the Israeli Revenge Operation 'Wrath of God'* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), 45.

¹²³ Ely Karmon, *Coalitions between Terrorist Organizations: Revolutionaries, Nationalists, and Islamists* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 2005), 228.

¹²⁴ ETA, "La lucha de liberación nacional," 37, in *Documentos Y*, Vol. 12, 60; Emphasis mine.

considered 'a front' nor any significant unified effort. ETA, like other radical nationalist groups, extended its solidarity to 'oppressed peoples' around the world, signed joint declarations, and even engaged in some protocolary diplomatic meetings with other organizations. In their most advanced form, ETA's links abroad took the form of arms trading (though the one possible occurrence of this is debatable), a logistical support network in Catalonia, offering training (only on one occasion, and to what was likely only a handful of FLB members), and receiving training, mostly in Arab terrorist instruction camps. There were undoubtedly ideological underpinnings that should have encouraged ETA to coordinate its efforts more closely with other European nationalists, but a closer reading of its publications shows that the Basque militants believed an insurrection in their own nation would indirectly help their comrades abroad.¹²⁵ Therefore, despite contemporary press allegations and ETA's own overstating of its foreign relations, there is not an abundance of meaningful international activity to be found within Europe on the part of ETA in this era. Nor was the so-called United Nations of Europe ever anything but a distant dream that may or may not have come after ETA had dealt with its more pressing issues.

¹²⁵ 'Indirect' in the sense that they had no discernible intention to militarily join forces with other groups after gaining their own independence. The help they speak of would come in the form of inspiration after having seen the Basques win sovereignty.

CHAPTER THREE

THE IRISH (PIRA)

“I was politically naive. Barren of political thought. I thought I was doing the right thing because it was for my people. [...] I hadn’t a political thought in my head other than that I knew what we were doing was right because it was to get the ‘Brits’ out of Ireland.”

Terence ‘Cleeky’ Clarke, IRA volunteer¹²⁶

The sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland known as ‘The Troubles’ undoubtedly belongs to the broader phenomenon of postwar nationalist violence, but its scale was so unparalleled that it largely assumed a logic of its own. Unlike many of the nationalists they aligned with internationally, the Irish already had an independent state. However, most Irish republicans saw their struggle as more than simply joining the six counties of Northern Ireland to the 26-county Republic of Ireland. Many of them denounced the Irish state as neo-colonial and called it the ‘Quisling state’. The Irish Republic dreamt of by the IRA would therefore be born after British rule in Northern Ireland had been overthrown, alongside the supposedly illegitimate government of the 26 counties to the south. This peculiar state of affairs was not all that differentiated ‘The Troubles’ from its continental counterparts. While the FLB and ETA were new creations of the ‘revolutionary era’, the PIRA imagined itself as the legitimate continuity of the original Irish Republican Army, which fought the British forces in the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921).¹²⁷ In fact, the very name of the *Provisional* IRA was inspired by the ‘Provisional Government of the Irish Republic’ which signed the

¹²⁶ Peter Taylor, *Provos: The IRA and Sinn Fein* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), 104.

¹²⁷ English, *Armed Struggle*, 214; Though it could be argued that during the Franco years, ETA saw itself as the successor to the *Eusko Gudarostea*, the Basque army commanded by the PNV during the Spanish Civil War.

Proclamation of the Irish Republic during the 1916 Easter Rising. Another apparent anachronism was the distinctly religious character of the PIRA, which set it apart from most other contemporary 'revolutionary' movements in Western Europe.

Nonetheless, the PIRA was still firmly a product of its own era. In Seán Mac Stíofáin's autobiographical account of his time in the IRA (both before and after the birth of the PIRA in 1969), he recounts: "We watched new anti-colonial movements growing in one place after another across the world, and knew that the same determination would rise again in Ireland. We followed these liberation struggles closely."¹²⁸ The main role model for Mac Stíofáin was the *Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston* [National Organization of Cypriot Fighters] (EOKA). Several EOKA members ended up in the same prison as Mac Stíofáin in the 1950s, during which time he became closely acquainted with them. He studied EOKA tactics, went on hunger strike in solidarity with the Cypriot guerrillas, and even learned to speak and read Greek.¹²⁹ EOKA's struggle against the British forces was something that remained embedded in the consciousness of the future PIRA Chief-of-Staff's mind, and its influence should not be understated.

By the late 1960s, the IRA had a membership divided by lines that should be familiar by now. The revolutionary group was being pulled to the left, much to the discontent of the more conservative members. There are striking parallels to be drawn here with ETA in the mid-1960s and again in the early 1970s, as well as the FLB in the early 1970s. In the case of ETA's recurring divisions, the more

¹²⁸ Seán Mac Stíofáin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* (London: Gordon Cremonesi, 1975), 70.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 74-79.

conservative faction was always better-suited to gain ascendancy. The general issue with the radical leftist breakaway groups was that their inaccessible neo-Marxist ramblings and insistence on class struggle isolated the nationalist support base. As these organizations approached a rhetoric espousing an international revolution of the proletariat, any kind of nationalist outlook seemed counterproductive. The breaking point for the IRA was in December 1969, when the Army Convention voted in favour of joining the 'National Liberation Front' (NLF) with a number of radical left-wing groups. Thus occurred the split that spawned what came to be known as the 'Official Irish Republican Army' (OIRA) which belonged to the NLF, and the PIRA.

There is, however, a wider context for this split that needs to be explored. A civil rights movement emerged in 1968 for the Catholics of Northern Ireland who suffered social persecution in nearly every aspect of life at the hands of the Protestant majority.¹³⁰ Catholics faced discrimination in housing and on the job market, as well as electoral disenfranchisement through blatant gerrymandering that sought to maintain Protestant dominance even in Catholic majority areas.¹³¹ It hardly took an expert to predict that widespread violence would erupt from the tense state of affairs in Northern Ireland. Many in the IRA believed it was necessary to mobilize on a large scale to protect the Catholic population, and even the government of the Irish Republic had drawn up plans for a potential

¹³⁰ Taylor, *Provos*, 38-39; Tim Pat Coogan considers the civil rights movement to have begun in 1966, which it technically did but at that point it was confined to private meetings. The first march, as Taylor notes, took place on August 24, 1968.

¹³¹ Tim Pat Coogan, *The IRA: A History* (Niwt: Robert Rinehart Publishers, 1994), 263-266.

intervention.¹³² Though much to the disgust of those IRA militants who demanded that the organization adequately arm itself and take action, the IRA leadership chose not to mobilize.¹³³ Allegedly, the IRA sold most of their weapons to the Free Wales Army in 1968, thinking there was no foreseeable use for them.¹³⁴ This was probably an unwise move for the Irish paramilitaries, considering that the British Army was deployed in Northern Ireland in August 1969, and that the conflict would go on to become unrivalled in its scale and ferocity by any other nationalist struggle in Western Europe.

Angered with the IRA (now OIRA), which had gained a reputation as a bunch of communist foot-draggers, the PIRA tasked itself with entering the conflict on the side of the Catholics, but they lacked money and equipment.¹³⁵ Moreover, they lacked connections abroad and “the diplomatic resources to purchase ‘legally’ what was needed.”¹³⁶ By far the most-discussed aspect of the PIRA’s foreign ties was the massive import of arms from the United States. The Irish Northern Aid Committee (Noraid) was established in New York in 1970.¹³⁷ Noraid tapped into a very sympathetic Irish-American diaspora for fundraising. The money was used to purchase vast quantities of weaponry; throughout the course of the 1970s, the PIRA received an estimated 2500 arms and one million

¹³² English, *Armed Struggle*, 117-118.

¹³³ Mac Stíofáin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, 119.

¹³⁴ McGuire, *To Take Arms*, 38.

¹³⁵ English, *Armed Struggle*, 115.

¹³⁶ John Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army: The IRA, 1916-1979* (Dublin: The Academy Press, 1979) (rev. ed.), 373.

¹³⁷ English, *Armed Struggle*, 117.

rounds of ammunition from the United States.¹³⁸ Thanks to their American contacts, the PIRA was well-supplied with what would become their signature weapon, the Armalite (AR-18) rifle, as well as some M60 heavy machine guns.¹³⁹

The PIRA's European connections have been subject to a few commendable analyses. Particularly, I would note the work of Michael McKinley, whose revisionist approach has much the same tone as this present work. McKinley introduces his work by stating: "Indeed, it is the purpose of this essay to challenge the assertions that there existed in Northern Ireland an international terrorist network as evidenced by the contacts, supply of arms and operations of the paramilitary organisations involved in the conflict, particularly the Irish Republican Army (IRA)."¹⁴⁰ McKinley was undoubtedly correct in his observations that the imagined international terrorist network was primarily the product of exaggeration and misinformation. A striking example of this was the imagined PIRA-FLB relationship, in which the Bretons provided logistical support for arms trafficking into Ireland. In 1973, the Irish Navy captured the vessel *The Claudia* on its way to Cork, loaded with a Libyan arms shipment. The boat supposedly stopped at Bénodet (a small coastal town in Brittany) before its failed run to the Irish Republic. Naturally, the French media assumed the FLB was involved. Moreover, they claimed an FLQ member named Jean Marterot helped organize

¹³⁸ Rogelio Alonso and Florencio Domínguez Iribarren, "The IRA and ETA: The International Connections of Ethno-Nationalist Terrorism in Europe" in *Terrorism: Patterns of Internationalization*, eds. Jaideep Saikia and Ekaterina Stepanova (New Delhi: Sage, 2009), 5.

¹³⁹ Michael McKinley, "The International Dimensions of Terrorism in Ireland," in *Terrorism in Ireland*, eds. Yonah Alexander and Alan O'Day (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1984), 16; English, *Armed Struggle*, 117.

¹⁴⁰ McKinley, "The International Dimensions of Terrorism in Ireland," 4.

the whole thing.¹⁴¹ This account of events was evidently picked up outside of France, such as in Demaris' *Brothers in Blood* which says that "the weapons had come from Montreal through the French port of Le Havre, but they had been shipped to Canada by Arab terrorists in Syria and Libya, who had obtained them from Communist suppliers in Czechoslovakia and East Germany."¹⁴² Not only did an FLQ member named Jean Marterot not exist, but the FLQ had nothing to do with the operation, and neither did the FLB. There never was any established arms-route between Brittany and Ireland in this era, but the Breton separatists did not deny their involvement because if such claims had any effect at all they were to inflate the power of the FLB and overstate their much-desired connectedness with the Irish nationalists.¹⁴³ Furthermore, the weapons did not come from Montreal (which makes little logistical sense), but directly from Tripoli, as recounted by Joe Cahill, the infamous PIRA gunrunner himself who oversaw the failed smuggling operation.¹⁴⁴

Maria McGuire's comments on fellow 'revolutionary' groups are particularly telling of the PIRA's international connections and general feeling towards outsiders in the early 1970s:

We also received money from other revolutionary groups in Europe, of whom several came to visit us in Kevin Street. But they were mostly rather unconvincing people: the only ones who were of real use to us were the Basque resistance groups, who traded fifty revolvers in return for training in the use of explosives. [...] We had other visitors from Palestine and from the Breton resistance movement, but all they seemed to want was to express their

¹⁴¹ Henry and Lagadec, *FLB-ARB*, 139-140.

¹⁴² Demaris, *Brothers in Blood*, 353-354.

¹⁴³ Henry and Lagadec, *FLB-ARB*, 139-140.

¹⁴⁴ Ed Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002), 9.

solidarity with us. We didn't want their sympathy—we were only interested in concrete help.¹⁴⁵

Similarly, Seán Mac Stíofáin recalls receiving a letter of support from the “Breton Republican Army” during his 1973 hunger strike.¹⁴⁶ Many groups lent solidarity to the PIRA, sometimes in joint declarations, including one manifesto from the early 1970s co-signed by the FLB, ETA, the FLQ, the PFLP, and the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), among others.¹⁴⁷ But was there any ‘concrete help’ given by other European nationalist organizations in the 1970s? There is no evidence of such assistance, nor is there any reason to believe that the marginal radical nationalist organizations of Western Europe were sufficiently well-equipped to be of much use to the PIRA. The Irish guerrillas already had plenty of weapons, and they did not require outside help for the procurement or production of explosives, which they made primarily with legally purchasable (or at least easy to steal) materials from Northern Ireland.¹⁴⁸

Another factor which shaped the PIRA's international connections was its comparatively less intellectual foundation compared to other self-styled revolutionary groups. The PIRA had a reputation as having little political philosophy other than violence. The OIRA even disparagingly called Mac Stíofáin “The Man-Without-Ideas.”¹⁴⁹ Most of the young members of the PIRA cared little about politics, and even less about the intellectual credentials of their Chief-of-

¹⁴⁵ McGuire, *To Take Arms*, 110.

¹⁴⁶ Mac Stíofáin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, 360.

¹⁴⁷ *Documentos Y*, Vol. 12, 466.

¹⁴⁸ Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army*, 438.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 388.

Staff.¹⁵⁰ To be sure, there were some serious political thinkers linked to the PIRA. Ruairí Ó Brádaigh, president of the Provisional Sinn Féin (the political wing of the PIRA at the time) and Dáithí Ó Conaill, Adjutant-General of the PIRA, created the political program *Eire Nua* [New Ireland] officially adopted by the PIRA.¹⁵¹ The *Eire Nua* manifesto outlined the form that the future unified Ireland would take socially, economically, and politically, calling for a federal republic comprised of the traditional four provinces of Ireland (Connacht, Leinster, Munster, and Ulster).¹⁵² However, the program's only mention of Europe was that the imagined 'New Ireland' would withdraw from the EEC.¹⁵³ The Irish nationalists gave no attention to the 'Third Europe' much-worshipped by their continental counterparts. There is a connection to be drawn here with ETA-m, the 1974 breakaway faction that abandoned politics altogether in favour of waging a war of attrition against the Spanish state. Like the PIRA, it can be said that ETA-m ascribed no importance to forming a pan-European front to bring about a 'Europe of peoples'.

Nevertheless, did some members of the PIRA see it as worthwhile to work with other European terrorist groups? A 1978 article in the Red Brigade's periodical *ControlInformazione* quotes a PIRA militant:

The Nationalist factor has won vast popular support in our armed struggle to destabilize capitalism in Ireland [...] [but] it absolutely does not diminish the legitimacy of urban guerrilla bands [such as the Red Brigades or the Red Army Faction]. We recognize their

¹⁵⁰ Taylor, *Provos*, 104.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Mac Stíofáin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, 209.

¹⁵³ Edward Moxon-Browne, "The Water and the Fish: Public Opinion and the Provisional IRA in Northern Ireland" *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 5 (1981): 51, <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/10.1080/10576108108435502>.

motivation, based on social injustice. Our cooperation with international groups is certainly not based on narrow national considerations, but on the common struggle against colonial and imperialist domination.¹⁵⁴

This specific quote was a clear indication to historian Raymond James Raymond that “the Provisional IRA and their Irish-American network pose a threat to the stability of the Western Alliance and that the United States cannot stand idly by.”¹⁵⁵ Raymond wanted to de-romanticize the PIRA in the imagination of the Irish-American community and encourage the Reagan administration to provide military and financial aid to the Republic of Ireland to help them combat the destructive guerrillas. Raymond cited unnamed ‘confidential documents’ and several works by authors linked to the Institute for the Study of Conflict (ISC) and Forum World Features (FWF), which were later revealed to be fronts for the CIA to produce propaganda.¹⁵⁶ Unfortunately for Raymond, his career as a historian ended in 1983 when he was caught for blatant plagiarism. He then entered a political role, where in 2003 he claimed that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction and promoted American intervention.¹⁵⁷

Claire Sterling, who also quoted the *Controlinformazione* article, made many alarming claims in her well-known book *The Terror Network*. The PIRA, according to Sterling, relied on communist terrorist groups in Europe for logistical support. Italian, German, Dutch, and probably other radical communists were

¹⁵⁴ *Controlinformazione*, Nov. 1978, quoted in Claire Sterling, *The Terror Network: The Secret War of International Terrorism* (New York: Reader’s Digest Press, 1981), 169.

¹⁵⁵ Raymond James Raymond, “The United States and Terrorism in Ireland, 1969-1981,” in *Terrorism in Ireland*, eds. Alexander and O’Day, 47.

¹⁵⁶ Nial Meehan and Kerby Miller, “For God and the Empire: An Irish Historian’s Rapid Rise, Strange Fall, and Remarkable Resurrection” *Field Day Review* 7 (2011): 160, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/stable/41411799>.

¹⁵⁷ 163-165

closely working with the PIRA, whose wars were all nearly identical in their objective, claims Sterling.¹⁵⁸ The book also repeats a number of tired fear-mongering clichés already addressed, such as ‘Jean Marterot’ of the FLQ working with the FLB to transport weapons to Ireland. Sterling, however, does not claim that the PIRA supplied ETA with the explosives used in the assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco. Rather, these were provided by Swiss anarchists.¹⁵⁹ It is obvious that Sterling failed to even read the book published by the ETA militants who conducted the operation, because she claims they failed to mention the origin of the explosives (which they did, and we know for a fact these came from a 1972 raid on a gunpowder magazine in Hernani).¹⁶⁰ Nonetheless, the PIRA and ETA did work closely together, according to *The Terror Network*. Allegedly, ETA had been sending militants to Ireland for training from as early as 1972—something they had agreed upon earlier at an international communist conference in Italy.¹⁶¹

The impression given by *The Terror Network* is thus contradictory to this work, and it would seem that the terrorist network was far more advanced than has been indicated herein. However, Sterling’s work was subject to intensive criticism shortly after it was published. She was accused of completely misunderstanding the PIRA, unquestionably accepting what was quoted from a

¹⁵⁸ Sterling, *The Terror Network*, 169-170.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 174-175.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 175.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 194.

fringe member of the organization in the Red Brigades' article.¹⁶² In reality, the PIRA was nowhere near as left-wing as it is made out to be in *The Terror Network*.¹⁶³ The central thesis of Sterling's work was that the Soviet Union was behind the dangerous international terrorist network dedicated to bringing down the West. This included the FLB, ETA, and the PIRA. Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman had the following to say about *The Terror Network* in their ground-breaking work *Manufacturing Consent*:

Sterling's *Terror Network* is notable for its gullibility in accepting at face value claims fed her by Israeli, South African, and Argentinian secret police, and most notably, the Czech Stalinist defector, Jan Sejna, whose evidence for a Soviet terror network came from a document forged by the CIA to test Sejna's integrity!¹⁶⁴

Indeed, Sterling's account of connections between radical nationalist organizations seems mostly impressionistic, based on private 'intelligence sources', popular media, and literal CIA propaganda. Melvin Goodman, previously the head of the CIA Office of Soviet Affairs from 1976 to 1987, has admitted that *The Terror Network* was based on American anti-Soviet 'black propaganda'. Goodman also noted that her description of the PIRA's links to the international terrorist cabal was contrary to what the actual evidence suggests.¹⁶⁵

Like ETA, the PIRA's most useful links abroad were in the Arab world rather than Europe. Libyan leader Colonel Gaddafi infamously supplied the PIRA with weapons, stemming from a pathological Anglophobia and desire to stimulate

¹⁶² Edward Herman, *The Real Terror Network: Terrorism in Fact and Propaganda* (Cambridge [MA]: South End Press, 1982), 57.

¹⁶³ However, there was a shift to Marxism that took place in the 1980s, though this was mostly confined to the PIRA's imprisoned membership. See English, *Armed Struggle*, 232-233.

¹⁶⁴ Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002), 159.

¹⁶⁵ Meehan and Miller, "For God and the Empire," 160.

unrest in the West.¹⁶⁶ Of particular note is that it was the FLB who first suggested that the PIRA contact the Libyans, during their 1972 meeting in Northern Ireland.¹⁶⁷ PIRA militants also received training in Algeria, Lebanon, and South Yemen, often alongside groups such as ETA.¹⁶⁸ Contact with the PFLP and PLO existed in the sense that these organizations ran training camps sporadically attended by the Irish guerrillas, and solidarity was mutually expressed, but there is no indication that the PIRA was ever willing to carry out attacks on behalf of the Palestinian cause.¹⁶⁹ The PIRA also had a working relationship with the Palestinian group Fatah, which tried to assist them with an arms shipment on at least one occasion. However, Israeli intelligence had so deeply infiltrated Arab terrorist groups in this era that such arms deals were easily thwarted.¹⁷⁰ Of course, there could be instances of successful weapons importation aided by groups such as Fatah that we naturally do not know about.

All things considered, the PIRA likely had the most profitable international connections of the organizations we have considered. There is no comparison to be made in the Breton or Basque case with regard to the support of the Irish-American community or Colonel Gaddafi's regime. However, the PIRA seemed to care little about anything besides establishing a 32-county Irish republic. They exaggerated their leftist credentials when it was beneficial to do so, much like

¹⁶⁶ McKinley, "The International Dimensions of Terrorism in Ireland," 12-16.

¹⁶⁷ Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, 8-9; I have come across the claim that the Bretons were the first to promote the PIRA-Libya link in a few different works, though none have ever provided a source for this piece of information. It is certainly possible that it was originally one of the many erroneous or misinformed claims from the 1970s that have continued to be employed uncritically throughout the literature.

¹⁶⁸ McKinley, "The International Dimensions of Terrorism in Ireland," 17-18.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁷⁰ Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army*, 437-438.

they exaggerated their conservative religious character for the purpose of winning favour in the United States. Cooperation with other groups was not ideologically-based, but motivated by practical concerns. Most Irish Republicans probably had little genuine admiration for Gaddafi's Libya, and vice versa. In fact, Gaddafi was at one point very interested in simultaneously aiding the Loyalist paramilitary groups at war with the PIRA.¹⁷¹ Similarly, if Maria McGuire's testimony can be considered an accurate representation of the contemporary feelings of militant Irish Republicans, then the PIRA was only interested in meeting other nationalist organizations insofar as they had some concrete help to offer.

¹⁷¹ McKinley, "The International Dimensions of Terrorism in Ireland," 14.

CONCLUSIONS

Now decades removed from the heyday of 'liberation movements', scholars have a wealth of sources to consult in order to piece together the inner workings of these organizations. Yet many continue to take the word 'contact' at face value without exploring the real nature of the supposed international connections. It is an easy mistake to make, considering that the myth of the advanced 'terrorist network' has been perpetuated by outside observers and members of the clandestine organizations in question alike. Nonetheless, it is clear that the FLB, ETA, and the PIRA engaged only in very elementary forms of diplomacy with like-minded groups in Europe. The purchase and procurement of weapons, the planning and execution of operations, and training, were all things these organizations did on their own, save for the role played by the Arab terrorists in this era. There were perhaps a few isolated incidents of more advanced contact between the FLB, ETA, and the PIRA that have formed the basis for overestimations of their relationships. Some FLB militants may have been able to attend PIRA sniper training and bomb-making sessions, thanks to Yann Goulet's personal relationship with Seán Mac Stíofáin. This was likely limited to a few, if not only one, occasion(s). Likewise, there was probably just one instance of FLB members training in the Basque Country in the 1970s, and ETA did not seem very keen on working closely with other organizations. ETA might have reached out to the PIRA in search of training in the use of explosives in the early 1970s, but there are good reasons to doubt this anecdote. ETA militants received

training from the PIRA in the use of mortars in the late 1970s, which seems to be as far as the relationship went.

Why then, did these groups not work more closely together? And what about Yann Fouéré's calls for the radical separatists of Europe to come together as some kind of neo-Medieval pan-European crusader army? Were these simply the ramblings of an out-of-touch ideologue? To be fair, the FLB, ETA, and the PIRA had a lot in common. All three were Western European, based in traditionally Catholic regions, left-wing (to varying degrees), radical nationalist organizations that employed a rhetoric of anti-imperialism. Each of them also underwent divisions along the lines of a more conservative faction versus a more radical left-wing faction usually comprising younger members (the *républicaine* and *révolutionnaire* factions of the FLB-ARB in the Breton case, ETA *Zaharra* [Old ETA] and ETA *Berri* [New ETA], as well as ETA-V and ETA-VI in the Basque case, and the OIRA and the PIRA in the Irish case). All three evidently kept track of the formation of 'Europe' as a supranational political entity, the process of which they denounced in a jointly-signed manifesto. ETA was aware by the early 1960s that Europe was coming together in some form, which they called the "United Nations of Europe". Yann Fouéré saw violent nationalists not as representing single nations, but as soldiers of Europe fighting to reawaken a lost European identity. Yet there is no indication that the FLB, or any of the other national liberation movements, ever transcended a fundamentally nationalist character, regardless of how Europeanist they claimed to be.

There is perhaps a general comment to be made about the profoundly solitary and independent-minded nature of these radical nationalist organizations. It is hard to imagine, for example, an average ETA militant under the Francoist dictatorship perceiving of their struggle as a more abstract battle against European centralism as a singular phenomenon, rather than advancing the Basque national plight. Likewise, the average PIRA member wanted only to expel the British ‘colonial invaders’ from Ireland rather than usher in the utopic ‘Third Europe’. Members of these organizations had essentially been born and raised under the influence of nationalism, which provided an identity, a history, and a singular objective—liberate the homeland (which was one nation, not a whole continent!). What ‘European’ event could have instilled more vindictiveness in a young Basque than the bombing of Guernica? What ‘European’ event could have evoked more pride in an Irish Republican than the Easter Rising? While Fouéré idolized the crusader armies of Medieval Europe, most nationalists had much more relatable, immediate, and appealing role models.

There is also the question of prioritizing certain objectives during a separatist struggle. In the Breton case, there was never a ‘struggle’ in any meaningful sense of the word. The FLB had very limited support, and its campaign against French imperialism killed nobody during the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁷² They targeted empty buildings of apparent colonial power—

¹⁷² Cabon and Chartier, *Le dossier FLB*, 182; In fact, Breton terrorists killed nobody until April 19, 2000, when the dynamite they planted behind a McDonald’s exploded and killed an employee—a result that they did not intend.

subprefectures, tax offices, and police stations. Meanwhile, ETA was at war with an unforgiving dictatorship, and had a membership well in the hundreds. They assassinated high-ranking political figures and posed a real threat to the stability of the Franco regime. The Spanish government declared a state of emergency in the Basque provinces on multiple occasions, disrupting public life in order to find and arrest suspected ETA members. Since its first murder in 1968, ETA is said to be responsible for 858 deaths.¹⁷³ The Troubles was by far the bloodiest conflict of this nature, with the PIRA functioning like a coordinated urban guerrilla army against the British forces deployed in Northern Ireland. Over the course of The Troubles, over 3600 people lost their lives.¹⁷⁴ The PIRA was responsible for 1778 of those deaths.¹⁷⁵ What this says is that in the Irish and Basque cases, there were clearly more immediate concerns than fostering a spirit of cooperation between European minority nationalists. It was easy for an idealist such as Fouéré to imagine European separatists working closely together, because he did not understand the basic logistics of running a serious paramilitary organization.

Ultimately, despite all the rhetoric of 'solidarity' and 'cooperation', the FLB, ETA, and the PIRA were not part of any real alliance or advanced network. Even amidst the fervour of the epoch of revolutions, with its endless guerrilla icons and neo-Marxist literature, the separatists of Europe did not come together in a

¹⁷³ Alonso "The International Dimension of ETA's Terrorism and the Internationalization of the Conflict in the Basque Country," 185.

¹⁷⁴ British Broadcasting Corporation, "Violence in the Troubles," http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/topics/troubles_violence.

¹⁷⁵ English, *Armed Struggle*, 379.

European revolution. But these nationalist struggles in Western Europe are far from over, as the recent past has indicated. The United Kingdom's planned departure from the European Union has reinvigorated calls for a united Ireland, after the majority in Northern Ireland voted to remain. Scotland too seems poised to leave the union after a decisive 'remain' vote. France's amalgamation of many of its *régions* met criticism for further eroding regional identities and centralizing power. Besides the customary calls of the PNV for more autonomy, the Basque Country maintains a stable relationship with Spain. Yet the Catalan government has continued to promise that it will formally secede from Spain in 2017. It could prove to be the spark that reignites the nationalist zeal of a bygone era.

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APPENDIX

X:.....(Irlande du Nord)

le 3 Avril 1972

Communiqué

Les Mouvements de Résistance Nationale :

IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY,

EUSKADI TA ASKATASUNA,

ARMEE REPUBLICAINE BRETONNE,

considèrent que la lutte contre l'Imperialisme et le
Colonialisme dans le Sous-Continent Ouest Européen
passe par l'opposition fondamentale et déterminée au
Marché Commun.

L'oppression nationale et l'exploitation économique
dont souffrent les peuples irlandais, basque, breton, ne
peuvent en effet que s'aggraver par le développement
de cette vaste et dangereuse entreprise capitaliste.
Aussi, conviennent-ils de tout mettre en oeuvre pour
le combattre.

Dans l'immédiat, l'I.R.A., l'E.T.A., l'A.R.B., affirment
leur hostilité totale aux referendums préparés et
organisés par les administrations de Dublin et de Paris.

Diffusion presse le 13 avril.

F.L.B./A.R.B.
Délégation extérieureE.T.A.
Euskadi Ta AskatasunaI.R.P.B.
P.O'Neill, Runa

Dans l'hexagone, les Mouvements de Libération Nationale:
Euskadi Ta Askatasuna et le Front de Libération de la
Bretagne, appellent au boycott du referendum du 23 avril.

F.L.B.

E.T.A.