

EXCURSUS 1

Alfred Hassler on
SPANISH DEMOCRACY HELD HOSTAGE

For the second time in its modern history, and to the distress of the majority of its people, Spain is experiencing major internal dissent. Contrary to pundits of the press, the problems emerging in Spain these days do not come principally from the military and the minuscule far Right, but from small bands of extremists seeking to worsen conditions to the point of government collapse.

The two principal groups are the Antifascist Resistance Groups of October 1 (GRAPO) and the Basque ETA. The first is politically oriented and without geographical or nationalistic footing—Marxists of the breed that not long ago were called Maoists. The second represents the extreme nationalists of the Basque region. Both have been specializing in the kidnapping and murder of officers of the army and the paramilitary Guardia Civil, government officials, and prominent industrialists.

The Madrid government, which under Adolfo Suarez and King Juan Carlos performed magnificently in the first years after Franco's death, itself has been shaken recently by standard-issue interparty wrangling (the Union of the Democratic Center, UCD, is not truly a party but a coalition), and has not behaved at all intelligently in the matter of the Basques. Had it removed from the Basque region the Guardia Civil, who are regarded there as an occupying army, and permitted the newly established Basque government to police the area with its own forces—which it had agreed to do—it would have done much to defuse the situation.

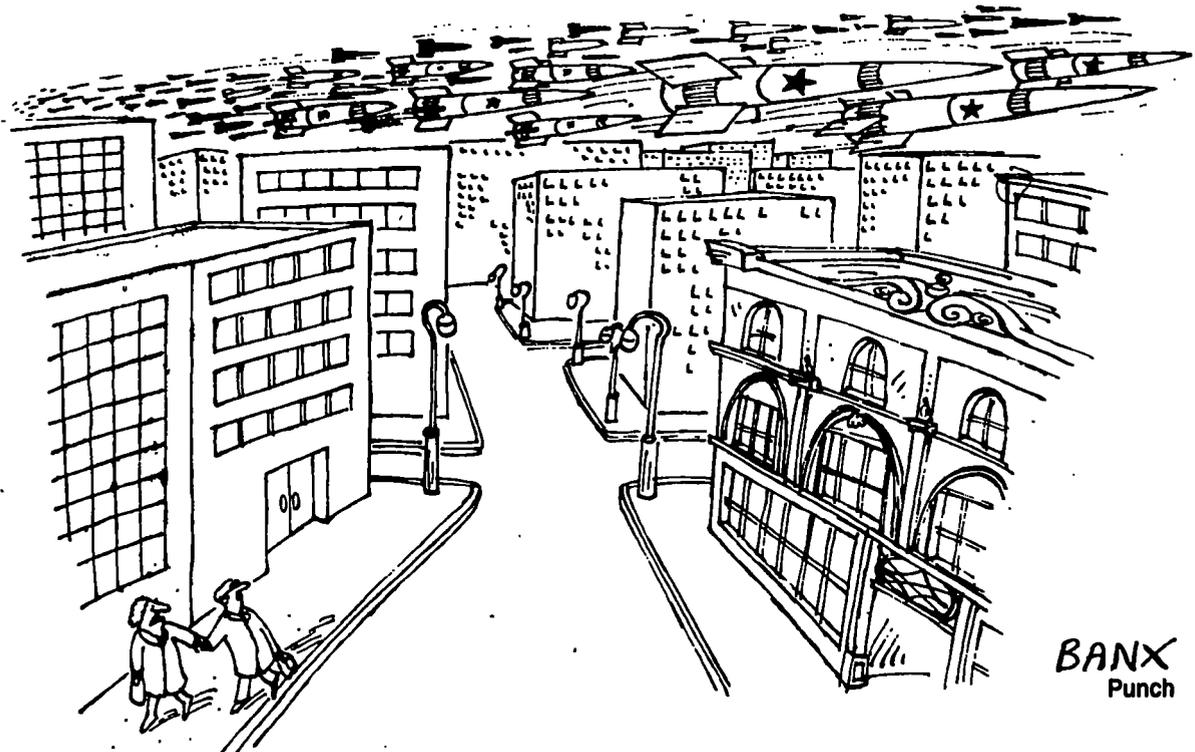
Of course Madrid faced and faces a complicated situa-

tion. Democracy here is fragile, supported by the majority of the people but regarded with hostility by its two historical adversaries: the military and the Roman Catholic Church. The military's hostility is not surprising, since it owes its establishment to General Franco and still is commanded at the top levels by men who remain loyal to his antidemocratic views. (A younger general charged with proposing a system to speed up the retirement of aged officers was found dead recently in his barracks—a reported "suicide.")

Church hostility is not surprising either, though it is disappointing after the strong opposition to Francoism that developed within its ranks in the last years of the dictatorship. But the Church too is governed by old men with long memories of the anticlericalism that flourished during the days of the Republic. Moreover, whatever liberal tendencies might exist are weakened by the pressure of the Vatican's fierce opposition to birth control, divorce, and the right to abortion, all of which have the support of the majority of Spaniards.

Faced with those opponents, the country's largest single party, the Socialists, have cautiously refrained from pressing their own claims to forming a government out of fear that such a development would precipitate a military uprising. The government itself has yielded to counsels of timidity. The extent of the malaise was illustrated by Suarez's unexpected resignation in February from the premiership and the leadership of his party, reportedly because of fatigue and discouragement.

The failure of the February 23 coup attempt, largely because of the king's determination, brought a period of elation. But the jubilation has subsided, and the terrorists are responsible. For a moment wisdom appeared to have asserted itself when ETA's political wing declared a unilateral cease-fire in its struggle against Madrid, with the sober observation that the coup attempt had demon-



BANX
Punch

"Come on, Brian—don't let's get involved."

strated how great a danger Spanish democracy faces. But ETA's military wing and GRAPO soon resumed their campaigns, and with each new murder the arguments of the coup's leader, Guardia Civil Colonel Tejero, grow stronger: The government is too weak and ineffectual to control the terrorists, he says; Spain needs a military government to take effective action.

The government, now under conservative Leopoldo Calvo Sotelo, has been buying time by yielding where it thinks it must. Since this has been notably in the stationing of troops along the Basque border and a startling leniency toward Colonel Tejero and his co-conspirators, journalists have begun to suggest that the coup actually succeeded.

The conclusion is probably exaggerated. A transition such as Spain is experiencing is certain to have difficult moments, and of course the whole problem has been exacerbated by the world economic crisis, for which Spain was ill prepared. Yet the outlook is unmistakably dark. It might well be impossible for the government to take the brave step of removing the Guard from the Basque region; it is unlikely even to try. And the Guard, whose members have been most often the targets of terrorist guns, is understandably outraged.

Not far from my home in the southern province of Almeria three young men were shot dead the other day by Guardsmen who were taking them to Madrid for interrogation as suspected Basque terrorists. The three turn out to have been on vacation from Santander, which is not a terrorist center. Friends and relatives deny vigorously that they were terrorists, and workers in the factory at which they were employed held a protest strike. Conflicting and unconvincing statements have come from official sources, and the Guard may suffer a considerable public relations setback if it turns out, as it now appears to some, that they shot three unarmed and innocent youths.

Still, the lesson is there. Historically a trigger-happy force, the Guardia Civil is smarting under the humiliation of seeing its members killed and remaining—in its view—impotent to do anything about it. And sympathy for them grows. The graffiti on the walls say "Viva Tejero"; and the colonel, "imprisoned" in a luxurious apartment, where he entertains guests and receives hundreds of letters of support, is complacently unrepentant. With each new political murder his cause grows stronger and democracy weaker.

What can be done? The terrorists seem locked into their suicidal absurdities. The government is locked into its own impotence and probably will give the military increasing authority to deal with the situation. If real help is to come to what was recently the world's most promising new democracy, it must come from outside, especially from the United States and the European Economic Community.

The role of the U.S. has not been one in which Americans can take much pride. The money it poured into the country during the Franco reign was principally for military purposes; there are Spaniards who say that the only U.S. interest in the Iberian Peninsula is as a military base in southern Europe. More important, U.S. political figures have been markedly reticent in expressing support for the beleaguered democracy, especially after the February coup. Values that many Americans have thought central to their political system are at stake in Spain today. Their government should be sending the strongest possible signals of support for Spanish democracy and unqualified statements of opposition to a military government. Such signals would carry weight.

At least as important is the attitude of the EEC. Through the Franco years its member countries refused Spain

admission because of its undemocratic government, an attitude that gave comfort and encouragement to Franco's victims and enemies. When the dictatorship finally fell, Europe's politicians and press were jubilant and congratulatory. Spain's application for admission to the EEC was encouraged and, when presented, approved. But approval was the first stage and implementation, with all the complexities of trade and tariff agreements to work out, was a few years down the line.

Today actual membership in the EEC might well be the strongest single measure of support Spanish democracy could receive. One would assume that the wise men and women of Brussels and Strasbourg (read Paris, London, and Bonn) would take steps to speed up the process. The reverse is the case. Hit by recession, Europeans are having second thoughts about admitting new competition to their club. Spain makes excellent wine cheaper than its French counterparts, so the French wine makers lobby against Spain's membership. Spanish laborers still work very hard for lower wages than northern European workers, and there is unemployment in EEC countries. And so on and on.

Time is running out for Spain, and for the world. The Spanish Civil War, which began forty-five years ago, was a watershed in world history, and not a happy one. A collapse back into dictatorship will be another, no less damaging.

Alfred Hassler, former editor of Fellowship magazine and Executive Secretary Emeritus of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, writes from southern Spain, where he now makes his home.

EXCURSUS 2

Robert F. Drinan on TEN YEARS AFTER MYLAI

In the fall of 1971 the nation was perplexed, anguished, and angry over the March 29 conviction of Lieutenant William Calley and the acquittal on September 22 of Captain Ernest Medina in the case of the Mylai massacre.

I, like everyone else, should be happy to forget this melancholy chapter in our history, but my memory is constantly jogged by an event that occurred in 1969. I was in Saigon then as a member of a team sent by the Fellowship of Reconciliation to investigate the number and nature of political prisoners. One day I visited an attorney recommended by some Buddhist monks as a person knowledgeable in the area of human rights. The lawyer was careful not to reveal his thoughts about the propriety of American forces being in his country but told me quietly about the extensive files he had accumulated on what he said might be war crimes. He pointed to two long walls of his office along which hundreds of manila envelopes reposed. Each of these files, he explained, contained evidence of acts by Americans which, in the opinion of the Vietnamese who reported them, violated the rules of war set forth in the Geneva Conventions. I recall well the Vietnamese lawyer's words, though scarcely audible over the noise of a window air conditioner:

After the war is over and you Americans have left Vietnam, we will have our own Nuremberg. You will dismiss it as sheer Communist propaganda, but the one-half of