

In the shadow of the Eagle.
**War, changes and the (re)adaptation of Basque politics in America
 (1937-1979)**

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RESUMEN
LABURPENA
ABSTRACT

Este breve artículo analiza la acción exterior del Gobierno Vasco en Estados Unidos entre 1937 y 1979. Una acción que vino definida por una estrategia atlantista que buscó el mantenimiento de una relación privilegiada con el Gobierno de Estados Unidos. Esta fue la vía más apropiada para recuperar el autogobierno vasco previa restauración de la legalidad democrática en España. Este artículo reconstruye y analiza sucintamente el proceso de diseño de esta estrategia, sus diferentes fases cronológicas, y su evolución, teniendo en cuenta los diferentes agentes e instrumentos del Gobierno Vasco.

Artikulu labur honetan, Eusko Jaurlaritzak AEBetan 1937tik 1979ra bitarte garatutako kanpo-ekintza aztertzen da. Ekintza hori, nolana ere, Estatu Batuetako gobernuarekiko harreman pribilegiatuari eutsi nahi izan zen zion estrategia atlantista batean oinarritu zen. Bide hori izan zen egokiena Espainiako legezotasun demokratikoa berrezarri ondoren euskal autogobernua berreskuratzeko. Artikuluak estrategia hori diseinatzeke prozesua, haren fase kronologikoak eta bilakaera berregiten eta aztertzen ditu labur-labur, Eusko Jaurlaritzaren agente eta tresna guztiak kontuan hartuta.

This brief essay analyzes the external action of the Basque Government in the United States between 1937 and 1979. This action came defined by an Atlanticist strategy that aimed at the search of a privileged relationship with the US government and it was an appropriate channel for the recovery of the Basque's self-government previous restoration of the democratic legality in Spain. This article rebuilds and analyzes succinctly the design process of that strategy, its different chronological stages, and its evolution by taking into account the different agents and instruments of the Basque Government.

PALABRAS CLAVE
GAKO-HITZAK
KEY WORDS

Gobierno Vasco en el exilio, Departamento de Estado, Franquismo, Guerra Civil española, II Guerra Mundial, Guerra Fría.

Erbesteko Eusko Jaurlaritzza, Estatu Departamentua, frankismoa, Espainiako Gerra Zibila, II. Mundu Gerra, Gerra Hotza.

Basque Government in-exile, State Department, Francoism, Spanish Civil War, World War II, Cold War.

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1. FROM THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR TO THE COLD WAR

During an initial phase¹, occurring in the course of the Spanish Civil War years, the political activities of the Basque Government in the United States were confined to establish the delegation of New York, to the anti-Franco propaganda and to the search of funding and initiatives in order to promote the lifting of the arms embargo towards the Republican Spain². From the very beginning, the Basque delegates decided to focus on gaining trust of the Catholic public opinion in the United States with the belief that with their support, they would have a more direct access to the White House. According to this belief, they thought that together with the Catholic public collaboration and pressure that they would be able to convince the Government of Franklin D. Roosevelt to revoke the support to the non-intervention policy related to the Spanish Civil War³.

The Basque delegates showed the American Catholic hierarchy their own interpretation of the Spanish Civil War and the Basque cause. At the same time, they took the equivalent steps with members of the State Department: American members of Congress and trade unionists. In order to convince them, Claude G. Bowers, the US Ambassador to Spain (1933-1939) and a good friend of the Basques, reported to the US Secretary of State, Cordell Hull: “The Basque Country is predominantly clerical and its nationalism is to a great extent to be interpreted as an effort of the clerical forces to keep control over the life of this stronghold of clericalism”⁴.

However, the relatively quick recognition of the Franco Government –with the objective of safeguarding the American interests in Spain– together with the no-policy-change regarding the United States Government’s support to the non-intervention policy –determined by the pressure of powerful State politicians– coincided with the end of the Spanish Civil war on 1st April, 1939. An issue that raised hackles in

1 I am so thankful for the time that Greg Clark and Amaia Conde took to help me with the translation’s revision.

2 In respect of these issues: Aurora Bosch: “Del embargo moral al embargo legal: Estados Unidos ante una Guerra Civil en el precario equilibrio europeo, julio-diciembre de 1936”, in Aurora Bosch: *Miedo a la democracia. Estados Unidos ante la Segunda República y la guerra civil española*, Barcelona: Crítica, 2012, pp. 109-148. Id., “Entre la democracia y la neutralidad: Estados Unidos ante la Guerra Civil española”, *Ayer*, 90, 2013, pp. 167-187. Gabriel Jackson: *La República española y la guerra civil: 1931-1939*, Barcelona, Crítica, 1999, pp. 233 y ss.

3 Gloria Totoricagüena: *The Basques of New York: a Cosmopolitan Experience*, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Gobierno Vasco, 2003. William A. Douglass y Jon Bilbao: *Amerikanuak. Vascos en el Nuevo Mundo*, Leioa, Universidad del País Vasco, 1986, p. 341

4 Claude G. Bowers to Cordell Hull, 3rd July 1936, Madrid, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), RG 59, US State Department of State, 1930-1939, box 6390, folder 852.00/2199.

5 Enrique Moradiellos: *El reñidero de Europa. Las dimensiones internacionales de la guerra civil española*, Barcelona, Península, 2001, p. 89 and 95-103. Id.: “La intervención ex-

some media, as noted by the journalist Jay Allen: “Our diplomats remain hog-tied by expediency, a self-imposed strangulation by the Old-School ties”⁶.

These new circumstances brought about a change in plans for Basque politics in the United States, due to the fact that it was necessary not only to hamper Franco’s victory in the Spanish Civil War but also to highlight to the interlocutors the anti-democratic nature of the Franco Government.

As a result, they focus their efforts on revealing the deeply antidemocratic nature of Franco’s regime, which would prevent the United States from recognizing such a regime and from conferring its legitimacy. Nevertheless, the response of Americans to the Basques was in the line with the following excerpt:

With reference to the recognition of the existing National Government of Spain, I should like to point out that when that Government was recognized by the Government of the United States on April 1st, 1939, it was in complete control of the entire country. The previously existing Government disappeared, and the Spanish Ambassador in Washington had informed this Department that in view of this fact he was vacating the Spanish Embassy and departing from his post. Under the circumstances the establishment of normal diplomatic relations between this Government and the existing Government in Spain was the natural and logical procedure. The maintenance of normal diplomatic relations by this Government with other governments throughout the world does not, of course, imply either approval or disapproval of their policies or actions⁷.

In the period leading up to the entry of the United States into World War II, the Basque external action focused on gaining supporters for the Basque cause –not only within the State Department but also within the New York liberal society– and on obtaining funding mechanisms for refugees.

tranjera en la guerra civil: un ejercicio de crítica historiográfica”, *Ayer*, 50, pp. 199-234. Id.: “El gobierno británico y la guerra de España: apaciguamiento y no intervención”, *Historia del Presente*, 7, 2006, pp. 71-88. Id.: “El mundo ante el avispero español: intervención y no intervención extranjera en la guerra civil”, in Santos Juliá (coord.): *República y Guerra Civil*, Madrid, Espasa Calpe, 2004, pp. 287-362. See Ricardo Miralles: “La incidencia de la situación internacional en la guerra en Euskadi, 1936-1937”, *Historia Contemporánea*, 35, 2007, pp. 491-506. Juan Avilés: “Las potencias democráticas y la política de No Intervención”, *Historia del Presente*, 7, 2006, pp. 11-27. Ángeles Egido: “Los compromisos internacionales de un país neutral”, *Historia del Presente*, 7, 2006, pp. 27-42.

6 Jay Allen to Harold Ickes, 28th March 1939, Washington, NARA RG 59, US State Department of State, box 6415, folder 852.00/9111.

7 George Messersmith to Guy E. Shipler, 27th April 1939, Washington, NARA, RG 59, US State Department of State, box 6339, folder 852.00/9171.

The outbreak of World War II and the defeat of the French army in June 1940 resulted in a very complex situation for the Basque Government members. The French Government decided to keep distance between themselves and the Spanish Republican exile in order not to antagonize Franco and also to avoid the emergence of a new military front in the Pyrenees which would have taken place if Spain would have entered the war in favour of Germany. Even if Jose Antonio Aguirre – the first president of the Basque Government– gave the order to support the Allies unconditionally, the French Government’s attitude had forced the Basque Government to search for other interlocutors, calling for collaboration in order to end with the totalitarianism in all its forms; from Nazism and Fascism to Franco dictatorship⁸.

As a result, while *lehendakari* Aguirre was trying to survive his long odyssey in German-occupied Europe, Irujo tried to reach some agreements with Great Britain and with the De Gaulle Government in London. The Basque delegates in the United States created closer ties with the Government of the U.S., which was still a neutral country in the war.

The resurgence of Aguirre in New York in 1942 brought out the establishment of the United States as the Basque political hub. Initially, the Department of State was sought to avoid any official relation with a lower institution. However, after the entry of the United States into the war in December 1941, Roosevelt’s Cabinet started to entertain requests made by the Basque Government to collaborate.

As a result, *lehendakari* Aguirre found some interlocutors in the State Department and the White House that were willing to listen to his interpretation about the ideological nature of World War II. Thus, the Basque external action –through the Basque Information Service (Servicio Vasco de Información) and with full co-operation of the Basque Government– focused itself on offering to certain American agencies of the State Department (COI, OSS, CIAA), of the Justice Department (FBI) and of the Defense Department (U.S. Military Intelligence Service [MIS]) propagandistic, informative and espionage services in order to deal with the Axis powers in Europe and in Latin America. Precisely, in the American subcontinent, the Basques helped play an important role due to an agreement reached by the Basque Government and the U.S. intelligence services signed in May 1942 and whose precise con-

8 See Enrique Moradiellos: *Franco frente a Churchill: España y Gran Bretaña en la Segunda Guerra Mundial*, Barcelona, Península, 2007. Richard Wigg: *Churchill y Franco. La política británica de apaciguamiento y la supervivencia del régimen, 1940-1945*, Barcelona, Debate, 2005. Stanley G. Payne: *Franco y Hitler: España, Alemania, la Segunda Guerra Mundial y el holocausto*, Madrid, La Esfera de los libros, 2008. Donny Gluckstein: *La otra historia de la segunda guerra mundial: Resistencia contra Imperio*, Barcelona, Ariel, 2013. Manuel Ros: *Franco/Hitler 1940: de la Gran Tentación al Gran Engaño*, Madrid, Arco, 2009. Id.: *La Gran Tentación. Franco, el imperio colonial y los planes de intervención en la Segunda Guerra Mundial*, Barcelona, Styria, 2008.

tent is still unknown. Indeed, the Americans showed their interest in the services that the Basques could provide to defeat the Axis, as Gregory Thomas told William Donovan:

Although profoundly Catholic, the Basques in the Spanish Civil War opposed General Franco and the members of the Basque Government led by President Aguirre are now living in exile. Aguirre is in the United States and has maintained the closest cooperation with OSS for the purpose of affording the intelligence facilities of his people to the United States Government in the present war. [...] the majority of the Basque people and their political leaders have maintained an intelligence network in Spain which stretches into France, penetrating some of the highest German military circles as far north as Paris. Inside Spain the Basque intelligence operatives who have remained following the Spanish Civil War maintain communications through members of this organization who work as personnel of ships between Spain, South and Central America and the United States. Much information of a military as well as a political nature is made available to the Basques in exile through Basque priests who travel from Spain to South America, there are no Spanish ships which do not have Basque personnel⁹.

Thanks to the Catholic confession and the Christian-democrat political agenda of PNV, the Basque Government was considered an advantageous ally in order to assure harmony in the Latin American territory, through the use of propaganda and information, in the light of the evident fascist ideological currents which promoted the anti-American sentiment over this territory. In this context –where the Basque leaders had great prospects for success in their objectives– the Basque Information Service became an instrument to assure the success of the Basque Government and PNV political project.

However, this collaboration was demoted to second tier given the attention the American Government paid to other issues such as the European reconstruction and the rise of communism. Although, some OSS officials, such as Spencer Phenix, argued to their supervisors that, “the consequences of a hands-off policy could be so disastrous not only for Spain but also for the cause of democracy and liberty in other parts of the world, that the seizing of even a forlorn chance would seem worth while”¹⁰.

In the end, the amount of responsibilities Washington undertook during the post-war years lead to the United States to delegate part of its political management in Europe to Great Britain, exactly when the British sought closer contact with the Spanish dictatorship.

⁹ Gregory Thomas to William J. Donovan, 9th April 1943, no place, NARA, RG. 226, OSS Files, Entry 106, box 32, folder 151

¹⁰ Spencer Phenix to William Donovan, 16th December 1944, Washington, NARA, RG 59, US State Department of State, box 5234, folder 852.00/12-1944.

The rise of the Soviet Union –greatly strengthened after World War II– together with the fear of communism spreading all around Europe was alarming for the American policy planners who saw the United State’s international hegemony in danger. All these issues, already proven by other authors, have provided me with the contextual basis of proof that the US did not reward the help of the Basque exile during World War II with a vigorous action against Franco, as the Americans did not commit politically to do so. At the same time, the US found a strategic solution: a progressive movement towards the Francoist Spain in order to curb the spread of communism along the Mediterranean Sea¹¹.

From that moment on, the Basque leaders restructured their strategy settling new elements. They adapted the Basque Government external action according to the political and economic interests of the United States in order to avoid sticking points and to show that the Basque Government would be a useful ally whenever the Americans would stand up for the Spanish democracy. That way, the relationships between the Basque Government and the United States advance towards a new phase marked by the Cold War (1947-1991)¹².

Within this new context, the Basque Government made a qualitative leap. They did not longer stand up for sovereignty, unique politics, and they stopped acting independently to the Spanish Republican Government, as had happened since April 1939.

On the contrary, they co-operated with their interlocutors towards the

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11 Rosa Pardo: “La política norteamericana”, *Ayer*, 49, 2003, p. 30 y ss. Manuel Espadas: *Franquismo y política exterior*, Madrid, Rialp, 1988, pp. 90-136 y ss. Misael Arturo López Zapico: *Las relaciones entre Estados Unidos y España durante la Guerra Civil y el primer franquismo (1930-1945)*, Gijón, Trea, 2008, pp. 236 y ss. José Ramón Díez Espinosa: “La Segunda Guerra Mundial: la defensa de la democracia”, in José María Beneyto; Guillermo A. Pérez y Ricardo Martín de la Guardia (coords.): *Europa y Estados Unidos: una historia de la relación atlántica en los últimos cien años*, Madrid, Biblioteca Nueva, 2005, 123-155. Florentino Portero: “España entre Europa y América: un ensayo interpretativo”, *Ayer*, 49, 2003, pp. 203-217. Id. y Rosa Pardo: “Las relaciones exteriores como factor condicionante del franquismo”, *Ayer* 33, 1999, pp. 187-218. Ángel Viñas: “Autarquía y política exterior en el primer franquismo 1939-1959”, *Revista de Estudios Internacionales*, 5, 1980, pp. 61-92.

12 Juan Carlos Jiménez de Aberásturi: “De la Guerra Civil a la Guerra Fría (1939-1948)”, in Joseba Agirreazkuenaga y Jaume Sobrequés (ed.): *El Gobierno vasco y la Generalitat de Catalunya: del exilio a la formación de los Parlamentos (1939-1980)*, Oñati, IVAP, 2007, p. 59 y ss. In respect of the Cold War see Tony Judt: *Postguerra. Una historia de Europa desde 1945*, Madrid, Taurus, 2010, pp. 164 y ss. See also Ronald Powaski: *La guerra fría: Estados Unidos y la Unión Soviética 1917-1991*, Barcelona, Crítica, 2000. Charles Zorgbibe: *Historia de las relaciones internacionales 2. Del sistema de Yalta a nuestros días*, Madrid, Alianza Universidad, 1997, pp. 75-85. John Lewis Gaddis: *La Guerra Fría*, Barcelona, RBA, 2008.

American authorities. Their main objective was to convince American authorities there was an alternative to Franco's regime and this alternative, in case of seizing power, didn't mean communism at all. To that end, the policy planners of the Basque Government external action combined to the Atlanticist strategy with the Christian-democrat political doctrine, using arguments that were essential for the United States and President Aguirre knew, to enlist their support against Franco: "the dissatisfaction of the great mass of the people inside Spain would be so strong that they would return to Russia for support as the only solution to their miseries"¹³.

The Christian-democrat political doctrine was one of the main pillars they used in order to carry on anti-Franco propagandistic campaigns in the United States, where the democratic alternative for Spain became an important option. Once again, the confusion between PNV and the Government chaired by Aguirre was evident in this strategy, which was defined by the ideology of the main political party of the Government. Certainly, the main part of the political parties that were part of the Basque Government weren't Christian-democrat at all, to the extent that between 1946 and 1948 hosted a communist counsellor. However, the image the Basque delegates showed in the United States and Europe was mainly the one belonging to PNV¹⁴.

The main goal was to take part on any initiative which might allow bringing the democracy back in Spain, as this was the only option to restore the Basque self-government. In this way, when the UN General Assembly and the Security Council began the discussion the Spanish Question in 1945, the Basque leaders engaged vigorously as they understood that the key to waging a successful struggle lied on the side of the UN politicals. This international institution and its connection with the United States, and the main promoter of this body, were seen as the best option to fight against Franco regime, isolating it diplomatically and economically. Although from the outset, US diplomats as Paul T. Culbertson point them out, regarding the restoration of the democracy in Spain that: "the manner in which this was to be accomplished was a matter for the determination of the Spanish people themselves"¹⁵.

Nevertheless, the Basque leaders were decided to try to obtain the support of the United States in this official body, convinced that this

13 Memorandum of conversation with Aguirre, Irujo and Horsey, 17th October 1945, no place, NARA, RG 59, US State Department of State, box 6336, no folder.

14 Leyre Arrieta: "Landaburu, el alavés europeísta", *Sancho el Sabio*, 31, 2009, pp. 199-220. Id.: "Años de esperanza ante la nueva Europa: la estrategia europeísta del PNV tras la Segunda Guerra Mundial", *Ayer*, 67, 2007, pp. 207-233. Ludger Mees: *El profeta pragmático. Aguirre: el primer lehendakari (1936-1960)*, Irún, Alberdania, 2006, p. 273-275 y ss.

15 Memorandum of conversation Aguirre-Culbertson, 20th August 1945, Washington, NARA, RG 59, US State Department of State, box 6335, folder 852.00/8-2045.

would be the way which would overthrow Franco's regime. As a result, between 1945 and 1953 they provided guarantees of the practical usefulness of the Republican Government and of the socialist plan laid out by Indalecio Prieto and his socialist colleagues in order to establish a monarchy.

These two democratic alternatives were presented as viable for the containment of communism. This was a Basque Government strategic shift, promoted and led by Aguirre, Irala and Galíndez, and carried out with an overly optimistic view regarding the international context as well as the real possibility of the United States taking effective measures against Franco. This particular optimism led the Basque political leaders to misinterpretations like the following, at a time when the United States began to see Franco's regime as a desirable partner:

Culbertson no puede ir a Madrid sino a facilitar un tránsito del régimen, favoreciendo a los elementos democráticos. [...] es oportuno recordar las dos manifestaciones más características que este amigo me hizo [...]. Una fue convenciéndome de que no sería posible la ruptura de relaciones diplomáticas, porque no era conveniente, añadía que incluso para el tránsito era sumamente útil la presencia de la representación diplomática americana en Madrid; otra manifestación fue que la Monarquía era la revolución¹⁶.

The origin of judging and considering the American foreign affairs as actions more favorable to their interests is the result of the Atlantacist strategy designed by Aguirre. This strategy presented a tendency towards utopian desires which overstated the organizational performance and capability of the Basque Government and, at the same time, it also showed an American hypothetical willingness to work towards the democratic restoration in Spain. On the basis of this notion, the *lehen-dakari* and the planners of the Basque external action understood that, deeply in the Washington's Spanish policies, there was some kind of ideological and moral commitment with the Spanish democratic exile. They believed there was a plan to finally root out Franco's regime¹⁷. They obviously misunderstood the key elements of the American policy. They didn't bear in mind that the State Department could also leave aside the Basque leaders' opinions and that it could consider the democratic alternative to Franco's regime as an unrealistic option and dangerous as it could develop towards communism.

The genuine turning point of the relations between Basques and Americans took place on the signing of the Madrid agreements (pactos de Madrid) in 1953. This Hispano-American Convention guaranteed eco-

¹⁶ Aguirre to Irala, 15th April 1947, Saint-Jean-de-Luz, Centro de Patrimonio Documental de Euskadi Irargi, GE-77-2.

¹⁷ Mees: *El profeta*, p. 277.

conomic and military assistance to Spain and meant a decisive American approach to the Franco Government¹⁸. From that moment on, the Basque leaders became more conscious of how difficult it would be to obtain positive results from a Government hosting friendly relations with their main enemy. However, the Basque leaders persisted in their relations with Washington, even interpreting the agreements as unimportant because of the ambiguous American attitude:

It is a cruel paradox that when fighting for the freedom of others, we may strengthen tyranny. It is not enough to foresee such contradictions and even less to be regretfully inactive. From this very moment we have to go all out to fight against such absurdity being made possible [...] This is the right opportunity for the mobilization of all the forces which in the Basque Country, in Spain and elsewhere are in one way or another coincident with the true Western values¹⁹.

From that moment on, the goal of the Basque representatives in the United States was to avoid the renewal of those agreements made in 1953, to condemn the socio-political situation in Spain as well as the Basque Government's repression.

Nevertheless, the course of action of the United States' foreign affairs politics towards Spain was designed to give priority to the geostrategic and military interests that maintained the *status quo*; political approach motivated by the distrustful feeling generated by any alternative to democratic opposition during the exile period. This Washington's strategy undermined, without a doubt, the expectations of the Basque leaders, as they were forced to face a very different reality from the one expected from a country leader in international democracy. In fact, this disillusion pushed them to experiment different feelings that, somehow, were reflected in the evolution that the Atlanticist strategy had. This was reflected Francisco J. Landaburu in of his writings:

[No entiendo que] quien dirigió tan brillantemente la segunda guerra mundial por salvar la democracia, y cuya causa servimos muchos vascos a través del mundo y aún en territorio enemigo con riesgo evidente de nuestras vidas, haya claudicado tanto en sus principios que considere necesario, por lo que sea, prestar armas y dinero al ex-amigo de Hitler y de Mussolini²⁰.

18 Ángel Viñas: *En las garras del águila. Los pactos con Estados de Francisco Franco a Felipe González (1945-1995)*, Barcelona, Crítica, 2003, p. 90. Espadas: *Franquismo y Política Exterior*, p. 193. Arturo Jarque: "Queremos esas bases": *el acercamiento de Estados Unidos a la España de Franco*, Alcalá de Henares, Universidad de Alcalá, 1998, p. 311 y ss.

19 Aguirre to Acheson, 8th January 1951, Paris, NARA, RG 59, US State Department of State, box 3704, folder 752.00/1-851.

20 Francisco J. Landaburu: *La causa del Pueblo Vasco. Razones de una actitud. Posibilidades de actuación*, Paris, Société Parisienne d'impressions, 1956, p. 5.

These strategic changes were also consistent to the actual action possibilities in the American, European and Spanish panorama. In fact, Pedro Beitia saw an opportunity in the new US Foreign policy on Spain:

Se comprende aquí perfectamente que el pacto era para nosotros una píldora bastante amarga, pero lo que sorprende es que al cabo de catorce semanas no haya un solo dirigente responsable antifranquista o no-franquista –ni dentro ni fuera– que haya pensado o haya dicho que el pacto es un instrumento aprovechable para apretar las clavijas –o meter una cuña– al régimen. [...] Es la primera vez que se abre a la infiltración; a la presión directa internacional. Por lo visto, las gentes no parecen darse cuenta de las posibilidades de explotación de este hecho²¹.

After the difficult Civil War stage, whereby the Basque delegates conducted a study reaching anti-Francoist sympathizer circles, came the hope during World War II, that it was expected Franco would take part in the conflict on the Axis side and, consequently, the Allies would intervene putting the Franco dictatorship to an end. The optimistic mood changed into a progressive and growing disappointment, which led to a loss of expectations placed on the United Nations and to the decision of the United States to stand by Franco's regime.

This disenchantment became an adaptation to the new times and it was even exacerbated after the Galíndez disappearance in 1956, the death of Aguirre in 1960 as well as the different political agenda implemented by the successor of the Basque presidency, Leizaola (1960-1979). The new circumstances led the Basque leaders to adapt to a different strategy in the United States, distancing themselves from the State Department and Government and closing themselves to American members of the Congress, trade unionists and American anti-Francoist sympathizer journalists.

Such changes, of course, of the Basque Government politics during Leizaola presidency did not stop the Basque delegations' lobbying works in New York and Washington. Nevertheless, this symptom meant that the Basque exile had not many alternatives and that the planners of the Pro-American policy maintained the conviction that because of a constant pressure over the political circles partners, Franco's regime and its external policy could have felt upset. All in all, however, despite the fact that in 1953 the United State's rapprochement to Franco's regime was evident, the drivers of the Basque external action in the Uni-

3. CONCLUSION. ACCEPTANCE OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES

21 Pedro Beitia to Jose Rezola, 14th January 1954, Washington, NARA, RG 59, US State Department of State, Political Affairs-Political Parties (POL 12), Basques, Container 4, p. 1.

ted States continued to rely on the lobbying actions over the American political environment as a method to overthrow Franco's dictatorship. Indeed, in 1961 the president of the Basque government Leizaola made the following official statement to State Department:

The Government of Euzkadi, which maintains relations with the Spanish Republic in-exile and with the Spanish and Catalanian democratic and free trade union groups, is already today, and will be more so, an effective and irreplaceable instrument in any action toward the re-establishment of democratic normalcy²².

In this new phase, the key man of the Basque American relations was Pedro Beitia. His works in the United States, practically unknown until now, are useful to give value to his unofficial delegate work. From 1956, and especially after 1960, he represented the main Basque policy director in the United States who relocated the Atlanticist political strategic focus from New York to Washington. In the U.S. capital, he committed himself to work closely with senators, Congress members and State Department agents presenting them with diverse information regarding the situation of Spain –different from the one provided by the Spanish Government– as well as to carry out anti-Franco regime propaganda works in order to gain supporters for the Basque cause. Nevertheless, even if the Basque policy focus in Washington revolved around the Beitia management in Washington, his functions and activities carried out as an unofficial Basque Government delegate had to be concealed by the New York delegation in order to avoid controversies which could harm his international civil servant role.

Thus, Beitia was the main promoter of the Basque cause between 1961 and 1976 and cooperated closely with the *vicelehendakari* Joseba Rezola (1963-1971) with whom he shared the following idea: The *vicelehendakari* encouraged Beitia to maintain cohesion between Basque communities in America as well as to establish more regular contacts between them and the Basque Government in exile. The relationship with *lehendakari* Leizaola was not friendly, at least initially, due to the fact that the Basque President neglected Beitia's requests about organizing more visits to the American continent –specifically to the United States– as well as showing a bigger interest about the Basque communities settled over in the states beyond a purely economic sense. Even if their relationship improved during the years, Beitia was the one in charge of establishing contact with the Americans between 1960 and 1970 decades. However, during those years there was a progressive decline concerning the contacts between the Basque leaders and State

22 Leizaola to State Department, 22nd May 1961, New York, NARA, RG 59, US State Department of State, Bureau of European Affairs, Western European Affairs, Records relating to Spain, 1953-1962, box 7, folder. 239W14X4.

Department agents. This decline was motivated by the successive ten and five years' extensions of the 1953 agreements. In 1970, the signing of a new bilateral agreement between the United States Government (with Nixon as president) and the Franco Government led to a break of relations. Thus, reported Pedro Beitia to George Landau of the reasons for the end of their collaboration:

Nuestra decisión es la de cesar toda la colaboración activa –por modesta que haya podido ser– con los organismos del poder ejecutivo del Gobierno de los Estados Unidos, tanto aquí como en el Estado español, es decir, con el propio Departamento de Estado, con la Embajada en Madrid y con el Consulado norteamericano en Bilbao, mientras dure la Administración Nixon, cuya actitud y política respecto al régimen del General Franco son totalmente contrapuestas a la causa democrática [...]. Sería un contrasentido que siguiéramos manteniendo relación alguna –por extraoficial que fuera– con los órganos de una Administración que actúa con tanto desprecio respecto a los elementos representativos de corrientes de opinión que, a plazo más o menos corto, habrán de servir inevitablemente a una situación de transición²³.

From that moment on, the Basque policy directors stopped collaborating with the Government that, in their opinion, undermined the democracy initiatives and supported Franco's regime with their policy measures. As a result, Beitia reconfigured the political Atlanticist strategy, focusing only on those Basque cause sympathizers located in Congress and in the media in order to put the United States Government under pressure. That pressure would mean the United States Government could condition the Spanish Government towards liberalization measures, which could lead Spain to a democratic system. Nevertheless, it wasn't until the decade of 1970 when there would be a positive change, even if it were necessary to wait until Franco's death in November 1975. In June 1976, Beitia's lobbying works obtained a decisive victory when his Capitol relatives were able to condition the renewal of the mutual assistance and defense agreements to the establishment of democratic measures in the Spanish institutions. By that time, the rehabilitation of the democratic institutions in the Basque Country was an achievable and realistic goal.

128 ²³ Pedro Beitia to George W. Landau, 23-9-1970, Washington DC, Irargi, GE-0076-03.

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