

Report from Paris by Katherine Kanter

ETA feeds on French weakness

France provided sanctuary to terrorists on the condition that no operations are carried out on French soil.

A French gendarme was assassinated near Bayonne in the French department of the Pyrénées-Atlantiques on Aug. 7. The authors of the crime were a number of Frenchmen claiming to sympathize with the aims of the Basque Spanish terrorist-separatist group, the ETA; the group included one Philippe Bidart, responsible for the 1981 assassination of two other gendarmes, officers Buyer and Roussarie.

Philippe Bidart is an ex-Jesuit seminarist—an important connection, since the Jesuits on both sides of the Franco-Spanish border have promoted so-called Basque culture since the 19th century. They have also encouraged the idea of creating the provinces of “Euskadi North” and “Euskadi South,” by separating regions from France and Spain.

A number of organizations have sprung up over the last 15 years on the French side of the border, including Iparretarrak, the French ETA (“ETA from the North”), Herri Taldeak (the equivalent of the ETA political front Herri Batasuna), Seaska (a so-called cultural organization which manages the Basque schools).

Newspapers and magazines of very limited circulation, like *Euskadi Norte*, and *La Voz de Euskadi*, are distributed on both sides of the border to promote a “feeling” of Basque unity beyond national frontiers. The Spanish San Sebastian football club and the Royal St. Germain of Paris hold benefit football matches in Bayonne to promote Euskera, the Basque language, a practice forbidden under Giscard for se-

curity reasons.

Nothing seems to be forbidden under the Mitterrand regime, however. Despite repeated warnings by the Spanish police that the security situation on the Spanish side of the border was getting increasingly out of control, in part because of the French government’s refusal to cooperate by handing over wanted ETA members, the French authorities turned a deaf ear. But the chickens have now come home to roost.

In the context of an overwhelming deployment of separatist, terrorist, and environmentalist groups this fall, there will be no way for the French authorities to maintain their “special agreements” with Armenian, Kurdish, Basque, or other terrorists to grant them sanctuary, as long as they do not commit terrorist acts on French territory.

Cancer spreads. On the Spanish side of the border, the weeks of late July-early August have witnessed scenes reminiscent of Hitler’s rise to power. Members of the ETA front Herri Batasuna mailed the Spanish flag to Socialist Interior Minister with a label “undesirable”; in the town of Irún they threw the ballot box full of just-cast votes out the window to prevent the election of a Socialist mayor; they stoned the Socialist municipal councilmen in Rentería as they were holding an emergency meeting to discuss the situation.

All this happened under the smiling gaze of the Partido Nacionalista Vasco (PNV), headed by Xavier Ar-

zallus, an ex-Jesuit priest, and Carlos Garaicoechea, a slick businessman with shady ties to the pro-ETA financial community in Venezuela, where he just made a visit demanding to be treated as a head of state.

Arzallus and Garaicoechea have declared war on the Socialist Party, which they want to expell from the Basque country. They have hypocritically refused to comment on the battle over whether or not the Spanish flag should fly there, but have covered the provocations of ETA-front Herri Batasuna, which is only slightly to the right of the Moscow-controlled Movimiento Comunista and Liga Comunista Revolucionaria.

In the French-border province of Catalonia, Barcelona was put under a virtual state of siege as police searched for seven bombs which ETA claimed had been laid to provoke the liberation of “political prisoners.” The Barcelona chief of police stated that ETA’s links to Catalonian separatists have been reactivated. The French government would do well to remember that a key nerve-center for these various independentist movements, the CIEMEN, is extremely active on their side of the border.

On Aug. 6, a Barcelona daily, *Diario de Barcelona*, reprinted extensive quotes from *Nouvelle Solidarité*, the LaRouche-linked French weekly, denouncing the CIEMEN as a Libyan-funded terror front. This provoked something of a political storm, and angry denials from the mouthpiece of the KGB in Spain, the daily *El Pais*. Security forces in France are convinced that the problem on the French side could rapidly become extremely grave unless stern measures are taken. But French culture minister Jacques Lang’s recent contribution of half a million francs to the Celtic nationalists’ festival, which he also did last year, is not a good sign.