

## ETA's split | Basque Peace Process

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Meanwhile, the Basque Country also underwent deep social changes in the 1960s and 1970s. As a consequence of industrial development, farmers started working in factories and urbanisation increased. Nationalists and young people of immigrant origin were jointly confronted with hard working conditions as well as national, cultural and linguistic oppression. They were the basis of the new Basque patriotic movement.

This changing political landscape, and the intensified Spanish repression, also affected ETA's internal organisation. The movement's fifth assembly (1972) was marked by a shift within the leadership, as the political section started moving towards more leftist positions, including a 'workerism' that denied the national nature of the struggle and focused on social/worker issues.<sup>23</sup> These developments provoked a further separation of the political section from two other tendencies: a minority group composed by a few founders of Ekin and ETA who were close to the cultural branch and were profoundly nationalist but not Marxist, and a majority made up of some founders and members of the new generation, highly influenced by the third world struggles. This last group defended revolutionary nationalism, and the idea of national and social liberation as two faces of the same coin, while understanding that in the Basque Country the national contradiction is the main one.<sup>24</sup> During the fifth assembly ETA's new strategy was formulated by this latter group, with the Basque workers as a leading force together with the nationalist petit bourgeoisie. The organisation reaffirmed action-repression-action as its chosen instrument to oppose the repressive regime and promote liberation. Based on the front model mentioned in the writings of the Vietnamese Truong Chinh's "The Resistance Will Win", ETA organised itself into four (military, cultural, political and worker) fronts. The objective was to activate the masses, to radicalise the struggle and to confront the state openly.

However, the context of severe repression faced by the militants affected this organisational structure, and the front model they had started faced some internal criticism as ETA faced some problems organising the masses properly. It was argued that while working with the masses was necessary for the political-cultural front and the workers' front, the military front needed secrecy and security. Thus, some members considered that the organisation had to be just military, so that the workers', political and cultural movements could organise themselves separately. In that way, the left-wing political organisations would not suffer oppression and the abertzale left could take part in the political space offered by the prospect of formal democracy. However, ETA did not believe that the democratic regime to come would recognise the national rights of the Basque people, and thus considered that the armed organisation had to continue fulfilling all its functions and objectives, in complete separation from future political and social organisations. Another wing of ETA considered that they had to create a political-

military organisation. It would be organised in two autonomous branches (political and military) at the local level, but coordinated at the regional and national levels by one direction board.

As a consequence, military ETA (ETA-m) and political-military ETA (ETA-pm) split in 1974. Those backing ETA-pm ended up creating a political party of Basque workers (Party for Basque Revolution, EIA) and a political coalition called Basque Left (EE). Its objective was to work in the new democratic framework, with ETA (pm) acting as a rearguard for the masses in their struggle.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, several additional left-wing organisations were created on the Basque political scene during the 1970s. Most of them derived from extreme-left groups which did not accept the national nature of the liberation process and favoured a workerist perspective. They considered the class struggle as the main and only real contradiction within the Spanish state, and treated the national struggle as a 'petit bourgeois' question. The Communist Movement (MC) and the Revolutionary Communist League (LKI) were created respectively by splits in ETA's fifth and sixth assemblies. ETA's actions thus encouraged a lot of people to get involved in political activism. However, it could not take a decisive advantage of this radicalisation of the Basque society, because it could not offer any framework to those people who identified with its ideology but did not want to join the armed organisation.

Meanwhile, ETA started to understand that it was not possible to apply the principles of a people's war to the conditions of the Basque Country. Given the impossibility of defeating the enemy by military means, ETA started to talk about a possible war of attrition to force the rupture of the regime, rather than a mere transition.

### From the Law for Political Reform to the Spanish Constitution

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23 This group was greatly influenced by some European leftist writers and movements (e.g. the so-called New European Left, Ernest Mandel, André Gorz) who also spoke about the need for a progressive transformation and the non-viability of armed struggle in the current scenario.

24 They were strongly influenced by documents like "Vasconia" or "Nacionalismo Revolucionario", written by Federico Krutwig, based on the Vietnamese politician Truong Chinh's works.

25 In 1982, a few members of this party negotiated its dissolution with the state and accepted the autonomy framework established by the new constitution. Some years later, some members of the coalition Basque Left (EE) agreed to join the Spanish Socialist Party's Basque branch (PSE), while the majority of ETA-pm decided to join ETA-m, the only remaining organisation linked to ETA.