

Far-right Violence during the Spanish Transition (1973-1982)

Violencia ultraderechista durante la Transición (1973- 1982)

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ABSTRACT

Between 1973 and 1982, several far-right groups in Spain engaged in various forms of violence: identity-based violence, uncontrolled violence, and terrorist violence. These actions were characterized by armed spontaneity and police permissiveness. The objective of this violence was to undermine the democratic order. In addressing this article, we have relied on secondary sources from newspaper archives with varying ideological perspectives.

KEYWORDS

Spain, Violence, Far-right, Spanish Transition.

RESUMEN

Entre 1973 y 1982 varios grupos de extrema derecha española ejercieron diversos tipos de violencia; violencia identitaria, de la violencia incontrolada y de la violencia terrorista. Esas acciones respondieron al espontaneísmo armado y a la permisividad policial. Esa violencia quiso subvertir el orden democrático. Para abordar el artículo hemos recurrido a fuentes secundarias de la hemeroteca de diverso sesgo ideológico.

PALABRAS CLAVE

España, Violencia, Extrema derecha, Transición Democrática Española.

ABBREVIATIONS

A.A.A	Alianza Apostólica Anticomunista
ATE	Antiterrorismo ETA
ANE	Acción Nacional Española
AVT	Asociación de Víctimas del Terrorismo
BNA	Brigada Nacional Antiterrorista
BPS	Brigada Político Social
BVE	Batallón Vasco Español
COVITE	Colectivo de Víctimas del Terrorismo
EEL	Ejército Español de Liberación
ETA	Euskadi Ta Askatasuna
FOP	Fuerzas del Orden Público
FRAP	Frente Revolucionario Antifascista y Patriota
FNT	Fuerza Nacional de Trabajo
FdJ	Frente de la Juventud
FJ	Fuerza Joven
FN	Fuerza Nueva
FNJ	Frente Nacional de Juventud
GAE	Grupos Armados Españoles
GAL	Grupos Armados de Liberación
GRAPO	Grupos de Resistencia Antifascista Primero de Octubre
GCR	Guerrilleros de Cristo Rey

HB	Herri Batasuna
JEP	Junta Española en Pie
MSE	Movimiento Social Español
MSI	Movimento Sociale Italiano
OAS	Organisation de l'Armée Secrète
OCN	Organización Contrasubversiva Nacional
PENS	Partido Español Nacional Socialista
SCAH	Sexto (VI) Comando Adolfo Hitler de Orden Nuevo
SECED	Servicio Central de Documentación
RN	Revolución Nacionalista
TL	Terra Lliure

1. INTRODUCTION

Entre las características del mito transicional figura pues la de haber sido un proceso pacífico, ejemplar por no haber provocado derramamiento de sangre alguno (BABY, 2018).

With this statement, French academic Sophie Baby challenged the idealized image that had been associated with the Spanish Democratic Transition for decades, and which, to this day, continues to be exploited by political leaders during times of socio-political instability.

In this article, we focus on the political violence carried out by the far right in Spain between 1973 and 1982. This chronological framework was chosen as the subject of study because many violent groups emerged in 1973, while 1982 marks their dissolution. To conduct this analysis, we have relied on Sophie Baby's work *Le mythe de la transition pacifique. Violence et politique en Espagne (1975-1982)*, which explores the diverse and varied violent groups that arose during this period. We have also consulted the contributions of Xavier Casals i Meseguer, particularly *La Transición española: el voto ignorado de las armas* (2016), in which he documented political violence carried out by all groups active during the Transition, regardless of their ideological stance, and his 2020 article, *El terrorismo parapolicial y de ultraderecha en la Transición: Entre la argelinización, la argentinización y la italianización*.

In 2021, Luis Miguel Sánchez Tostado published *La Transición oculta: Ni modélica ni pacífica*, where he systematically debunked the myths surrounding the Transition as an idyllic process. Additionally, we considered the 2012 articles by Juan Manuel González Sáez, *Balance de víctimas mortales del Terrorismo y Violencia política de la extrema derecha durante la Transición (1975-1982)*, where he examined far-right violence and its murders. Finally, the works of journalist Mariano Sánchez Soler have been crucial, particularly *Hijos del 20-N* (1993), which highlights the direct actions of uncontrollable youth, and *La transición sangrienta. Una historia violenta del proceso democrático en España (1975-1983)* (2010), focusing on far-right violence during that period.

Moreover, we have consulted secondary sources from newspaper archives with diverse ideological perspectives. Our goal is to shed light on certain groups that have been overlooked in academic discourse, showing that despite their disorganized nature, these violent groups laid the groundwork for the Dirty War carried out by the Anti-terrorist Liberation Groups (GAL) between 1983 and 1987 in the Basque Country against the nationalist terrorist group Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, translated into Spanish as *Basque Country and Freedom* (ETA).

Overall, we consider that the multiplicity of names, which on several occasions claimed responsibility for the same attack, reflects a common strategy, wherein recognizable patterns emerge. Lastly, it is important to note that the actions of these organizations went unpunished, as far-right violence did not feature prominently on the government's political agenda, and, except in rare instances, security forces did little to address these groups.

2. POLITICAL VIOLENCE AS A "GUARANTOR OF ORDER"

Before delving into the topic at hand, it is important to highlight the significance of the Nazi-fascist exiles who settled in Spain from the 1950s onwards, with the approval of dictator Francisco Franco Bahamonde. Although figures such as Otto Skorzeny, former colonel of the Waffen-SS, Leon Degrelle, leader of the Belgian Rexist Party, and Horia Sima, former member of the Romanian Iron Guard, were prominent in far-right circles, the Argentine, Italian, and Algerian diasporas were fundamental to the development of political violence. The Argentine diaspora formed around José López Rega, architect of the Alianza Anticomunista Argentina or Triple A, which was a state-sponsored terrorist group that, between 1973 and 1976, killed approximately one thousand people. The Italian presence was represented by the neofascist Stefano della Chiaie, who had been involved in the Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI), the first party of this nature to gain parliamentary representation. Finally, the Algerian group was composed of former terrorists from the Organisation de l'Armée

Secrète (OAS), which carried out clandestine attacks during the Algerian War of Independence. Among its former members, Jean Pierre Cherid stands out, who will be discussed later (CASALS i MESEGUER, 2020, pp. 169-201). These three groups aimed to implement the Strategy of Tension in Spanish territory, a strategy launched in Italy during the 1970s that sought to subvert the democratic order through violence perpetrated by both the far right and far left, with the goal of facilitating a military coup to put an end to the violence. Although this led to the opposite effect in Spain, accelerating the consolidation of democracy, it was effective in other countries such as Argentina.

The early years of the Transition were characterized by the systematic use of political violence, in part because it was a newly established and therefore fragile democratic regime, where violent groups from both the far left and the far right operated. On the far left, the Grupos de Resistencia Antifascista Primero de Octubre (GRAPO) and the Frente Revolucionario Antifascista y Patriota (FRAP) were active. Nationalist organizations included Terra Lliure and the aforementioned ETA, which, despite having been formed in the late 1950s, had a significant impact during this period. On the far right, we encountered groups such as the Alianza Apostólica Anticomunista or Triple A, the Batallón Vasco-Español (BVE), the Grupos Armados Españoles (GAE), and the VI (Sexto) Comando Adolfo Hitler, among others (SÁNCHEZ CUENCA, 2009, p.74).

To examine the phenomenon of the far right, we encountered several obstacles. First, the large variety of far-right bands during these years may have been a strategy employed to prevent the media and authorities from associating a single group with all crimes. Second, official databases of terrorism victims, such as the Asociación de Víctimas del Terrorismo (AVT), provide an inaccurate count of fatalities attributed to the far right. The AVT recorded six deaths attributed to the far right using the abbreviation E.D., meaning *Extrema Derecha*, while the Colectivo de Víctimas del Terrorismo (COVITE) cites twenty. Third, only those acts that were premeditated have been classified as terrorist practices. Therefore, one of the challenges in linking the far right to terrorism lies in

determining which acts qualify as such. Finally, many members of the Law Enforcement Forces (FOP), including police and security forces, supported the criminals, as asserted by Xavier Casals i Meseguer (2009a, pp. 25-38). One example is Commissioner Jesús Martínez Torres, who assisted Ignacio María Iturbide (GARCÍA, 1985), a member of the Batallón Vasco-Español (BVE), in escaping. Moreover, in 1976, following the dissolution of the Brigada Político Social (BPS), torturer Roberto Conesa Escudero was recommended to lead the Brigada Nacional Antiterrorista (BNA), which was composed of police officers (*Diario 16*, 1976).

Francoist-affiliated press outlets such as *El Alcázar* and the political organization Fuerza Nueva (FN), led by Blas Piñar López, supported counterterrorism forces and glorified coup attempts. Piñar himself acknowledged that many members of his organization had been involved in violent attacks (CASALS i MESEGUER, 2009b, p.31).

«Nunca he negado que [en el crimen] estaban implicadas personas que habían frecuentado esta casa [FN], pero que se habían separado hacía bastante tiempo. Entre otras cosas porque los servicios de información (y de acción, como se ve) buscaron gente en esta casa. Personas que, entre defender el ideal que nosotros defendíamos aquí o hacerlo en los servicios paralelos del oficialismo, optaron por lo último».

The proliferation of these violent acronyms, from both the radical left and the far right, is indicative of the balkanization and lack of coordination among these organizations.

3. THE POLITICAL VIOLENCE OF THE FAR RIGHT

During this period, various dynamics characterized ultraright violence, including armed spontaneity, strategic violence, and the involvement of state

security forces in the networks of these groups (CASALS i MESEGUER, 2009b, pp. 25-28), as well as ideological motivation (GONZÁLEZ SÁEZ, 2012, pp. 365-376). However, the dominant traits were armed spontaneity and police participation. Simultaneously, three types of violence emerged. Identity violence referred to the direct action carried out by youth who sported a falangist aesthetic that distinguished them from other violent factions. Uncontrolled violence alluded to the commands that operated freely in assaults, acts of vandalism, and street altercations, most of which went unpunished. Finally, terrorist violence was the least prevalent and was planned, but it lacked organization.

3.1 IDENTITY-BASED VIOLENCE

The extremists associated with this category attended rallies of antidemocratic organizations dressed in Falangist uniforms, where they sang Francoist hymns such as *Cara al Sol* and Carlist songs like *la Marcha del Oriamendi*. Among these groups, we can include Guerrilleros de Cristo Rey (GCR), which, despite having formed during the late Franco regime, had a significant impact during those years. In demonstrations, their chants were accompanied by the slogan «¡Viva Cristo Rey!», which they recycled from other far-right movements, such as the Mexican Cristeros, the Belgian Rexists, and the Carlists of *Comunión Tradicionalista*.

These guerrilleros were involved with the political party *Fuerza Nueva*, so it is not surprising that their protests featured slogans like «¡Viva Blas Piñar!» or «¡Caudillo Piñar!» (MADUEÑO ÁLVAREZ, 2017, pp. 158-180). Their leader, Mariano Sánchez Covisa, a veteran of the infantry unit *División Azul* (Blue Division), declared that the guerrilleros did not belong to any organization; they were merely patriots who acted whenever they felt like it (*El País*, 1977). Although they were associated with the murders of María Norma Menchaca Gonzalo (ORDAZ and AIZPEOLA, 2002), Carlos González Martínez (both in 1976), and Arturo Ruiz García in 1977, they also committed acts of vandalism

against cultural centers, leftist priests who supported marginalized proletarians, and against democrats.

On the other hand, in 1968, the Partido Español Nacional Socialista (PENS) emerged in Barcelona as one of the first Spanish antisemitic, racist, and anticomunist groups, which was led by Fernando Poveda until 1971. From that year onwards, the leadership fell to Ernesto Milá Rodríguez, one of the most recognizable figures of the Spanish far right, who later held a position in Fuerza Nueva. The intelligence service Organización Contrasubversiva Nacional (OCN), which was renamed Servicio Central de Documentación (SECED) in 1972, collaborated with this movement (BABY, 2018). Like the previous case, it threatened bookstore owners such as El Cau Ple de Lletre, which offered Marxist works to the public (*Informaciones*, 1973). It also sent aggressive letters to the editorial offices of publications like *El Ciervo*, *Agermanement*, or the editorial house Nova Terra, which had openly declared themselves socialist (*Informaciones*, 1973). The PENS claimed responsibility for its crimes using its acronym, often accompanied by the subtitle V Comando Adolfo Hitler, a swastika, and/or a Nazi cross (*Informaciones*, 1973).

Although the organization dissolved in 1973, it published the bulletin *Hojas de Combate* (*Cambio 16*, 1974, pp. 32-41). In 1971, neonazi cells were established in Alicante, Madrid, Murcia, and Valencia under the label Movimiento Social Español (MSE), which a year later associated with the PENS to create the bulletin *Nuevo Orden: Órgano del Consejo Político Unificado del PENS-MSE*, accompanied by a swastika.

With the dissolution of the PENS, the VI Comando Adolfo Hitler of Nuevo Orden emerged, employing the same tactics as previous organizations. This group operated between 1973 and 1977 in various autonomous communities, and although the identities of its members remain unknown, the police arrested José Alberto García Beríoía, Alfonso Moreno Álvarez, Ricardo Manteca López, and Francisco Alemany Pérez-Cremos (Ya, 1976). Their signature was the Nazi cross, which was used in the attack on the editorial office of the magazine *Pueblo*

(*Informaciones*, 1973), but they also marked walls with expressions like «Joglars a la Prisión», referring to the independent Catalan theater company, Els Joglars, which was always critical of government policies.

They also stormed the headquarters of *El Ciervo* (*Informaciones*, 1973), vandalized bookstores that sold works in Catalan, Valencian, Basque, or Galician, and on some occasions sent threats to their owners, such as César Peña, who managed the Hispano-Argentina printing house in Santander in 1974, demanding that he remove the musical *Jesucristo Super Star* from his shelves (*Informaciones*, 1974). Peña, refusing to be intimidated, later found his store ransacked. The same occurred at the Donostian stationery store Yette (*ABC*, 1974, p. 39).

From 1976 onward, the Command initiated the «blue autumn», which consisted of a series of death threats sent to various editors of progressive media (SÁNCHEZ TOSTADO, 2021, p. 357), as well as to labor lawyers like Amparo de las Heras Gainzarain from Vitoria, who received a note stating that there would be no beatings, but there would be death (Arriba, 1976). The same happened to the singer-songwriter Gorka Knörr, who received death threats demanding that he eliminate Basque from his songs (*Diario 16*, 1977). He had been the target of several attacks due to his association with Eduardo Moreno Bergaretxe, nicknamed Pertur, who had been involved in the section of ETA known as ETA político-militar (AMIGO, 1978, p. 21).

3.2 UNCONTROLLED VIOLENCE

Direct action materialized against demonstrators attending democratic and antifascist events, as well as against leftist sympathizers or anyone advocating for social advancements. The unregulated factions employed various mechanisms of coercion ranging from symbolic violence to sporadic violent episodes. Therefore, it is not surprising that many random victims were citizens who bore a disheveled appearance that, during those years, was associated with the left.

In this context, the impact of the speeches by Blas Piñar López, leader of Fuerza Nueva, was fundamental, as their warlike content incited the youth to fight. In this sense, the party was antidemocratic; thus, Piñar justified a military uprising to restore the Francoist order (PIÑAR, 1978). Authorities sanctioned several leaders of the party for illegal possession of firearms in 1978, but the monetary penalties they were required to pay were minimal (BABY, 2018), even though in practice, many of these groups continued trafficking in them.

The youth wing of Fuerza Nueva, *Fuerza Joven*, was advised by José de las Heras, who proposed introducing paramilitary elements into the ranks. However, due to the authoritarian drift of the organization, many militants left this section and created other alternatives still linked to Fuerza Nueva. A notable split in Madrid was the *Frente de la Juventud* (FdJ), which received support from de las Heras, who fled Spain to evade international arrest warrants due to his involvement in violent altercations (IRUJO, 2016). Nevertheless, these youth were led by Juan Ignacio González, who maintained the same political program as Fuerza Nueva, namely anti-communism, antiliberalism, ultranationalism, and an exacerbated Catholicism. Two violent sections were deployed within the group. The first, the *Sección Especial* or Section C, was active from 1977 to 1978 (SÁNCHEZ SOLER, 1996, pp. 96-124) and adopted a paramilitary structure like fascist squads, consisting of fifty members who were skilled in martial arts and used bladed weapons, and in some cases, firearms (El País, 1977). The second was the *Sección Mazinger* or Section Z, which emerged a few months after the dissolution of the former. In this case, the provincial delegate of the party selected twenty unregulated individuals to carry out direct action. Both Section C and Z attacked elderly individuals and were attributed with the assault that left Pedro Candela in a coma after he removed a promotional poster of the Fuerza Nueva organization while walking (El País, 1982).

In both squads, the «bateadores del Retiro» emerged, who, as their name suggests, unleashed violence in the vicinity of the Retiro Park. We know with certainty that the teenagers committing these acts belonged to these sectors

because when the police arrested them, they seized their baseball bats, which bore the acronyms S.E., that is, Sección Especial, or the inscription «Viva El Fascio Redentor» (SÁNCHEZ SOLER, 1996, p. 99). Although most of these assaults went unpunished, such as the murder of communist militant Andrés García (HERAS DE LAS, 1979), the police detained the murderers of the young José Luis Alcazo, alias Josefo (SERAL, 2019), who declared that their objective was to cleanse the area of drug addicts, homosexuals, and criminals.

In another municipality in Madrid, Parla, they carried out acts of vandalism against the headquarters of democratic parties and against the town hall. However, when Fuerza Nueva dissolved in 1982 (GIL PECHORROMÁN, 2019, p. 346), many of these youths integrated into the little-known Revolución Nacionalista (RN), which sent anonymous letters and presented slogans such as «Pinochet, estamos contigo» or «Muerte a los gitanos», all marked with swastikas. Like Section Z, it was composed of twenty members aged between sixteen and twenty years (CASTILLA, 1985).

The unregulated factions operated in other provinces where nationalist circles were resurfacing. In 1978, in the Levante region, the Batalla de Valencia emerged, promoting violent clashes between sectors of anticatalanist Valencianism, or blaverismo, who advocated for their flag, history, and legitimate language, and members of Fuerza Joven (COSTA, 2013). With the resurgence of peripheral nationalisms, the ultras planted bombs in the homes of Manuel Sanchis Guarner, who wrote *La llengua dels valencians* in 1933, and Joan Fuster, author of *Nosaltres els valencians* from 1968, two key authors for political Valencianism. It is also necessary to highlight that these explosives were manufactured in a property of Fuerza Nueva by an individual known as SMBM, who conducted courses for other youths on how to handle explosives (SÁNCHO LLUNA, 2020, p. 261). Nevertheless, one of the most shocking violent episodes occurred on October 9, 1979, the date commemorating the promulgation of Los Fueros, when a group of ultrarightists assaulted citizens carrying the four-barred

Valencian flag without a stripe, which had been adopted by the leftist Valencian forces (MILLÁS, 1979, p. 19).

In Catalonia, there were other attacks, such as in Argenton, when Cristóbal García, a militant of Fuerza Joven, and Salvador Durán, who claimed to cooperate with the police, ended the lives of Juana Caso González and José Muñoz Expósito, leaving another victim severely injured. The prosecution sentenced them to over twenty years in prison and opened an investigation to discover if Durán had planned to create an autonomous violent action group (*Ya*, 1982). Similarly, in 1980, José Llobregat, known as El Loco, murdered the anarchist Jorge Caballero from the CNT after he left the cinema. Even though police operations had arrested his accomplices, he fled to the United States and later moved to the Dominican Republic, where he settled permanently (GIL, 2015).

Finally, in Valladolid, Antonio Gurruseta Bedoya, Juan Ramón Alonso García, and Carlos Francisco Artigas, captivated by Piñar's combative rhetoric, distributed leaflets urging supporters to carry out a military uprising before the 1982 elections (*El País*, 1984).

Meanwhile, in the Barcelona, the youth who separated from Fuerza Joven promoted a clearly neofascist organization known as Frente Nacional de Juventud in 1977, led by Ernesto Milá Rodríguez, responsible for Fuerza Nueva's propaganda, and Ramón Graells (CASALS i MESEGUER, 2009a, p. 244). Unlike many of his peers, Milá argued that the program proposed by FN was rooted in archaic postulates that were unattractive to young people who admired the new ultraright currents. A year later, the organization was legalized as a political association, opening various offices in several autonomous communities such as Ciudad Real (Madrid), A Coruña (Galicia), Salamanca, and Valladolid (Castile and León). However, the sector led by Graells maintained connections with Piñar's organization, causing disagreements between Graells, who advocated for tactical and financial support from Fuerza Nueva, and Milá, who sought to

transform the party into a neofascist force. Ultimately, the party dissolved in 1979 (RODRÍGUEZ JIMÉNEZ, 1994, p. 228).

3.3 *TERRORIST VIOLENCE*

There are several challenges in categorizing a violent act as terrorism. Firstly, this phenomenon cannot be exclusively reduced to direct violence against civilians; it must also encompass symbolic violence expressed through coercion aimed at affecting the psychological integrity of an individual or a group (SÁNCHEZ CUENCA, 2002, p. 315). Secondly, while direct violence is not a *sine qua non* condition that determines whether an act is terrorist, it does become relevant when planning is involved (KREIBOHMK, 2002).

In this regard, it is essential to highlight the actions of the Spanish Triple A (Triple A), the Batallón Vasco-Español (Basque-Spanish Battalion), and certain members of Fuerza Nueva, linked to the Sindicato Vertical (Vertical Syndicate) (SANCHO LLUNA, 2020, p. 211). These groups were involved in the murder of Yolanda González and the labor lawyers from the Calle 55 de Atocha office.

3.3.1 The Alianza Apostólica Anticomunista or Spanish Triple A (AAA): A Transatlantic Brand

In contrast to other examples, three organizations claimed responsibility for attacks across three different countries under distinct nomenclature and in various periods. Thus, while the Alianza Anticomunista Argentina operated in Argentina from 1973 to 1976, the Alianza Americana Anticomunista was active in Colombia from 1977 to 1982. Finally, in Spain, the Alianza Apostólica Anticomunista de España (AAA) operated from 1977 to 1980. Unlike its Latin American counterparts, the AAA did not consist of paramilitary elements; instead, it comprised command units that had been in contact with extreme right-

wing European and Argentine exiles (*Diario 16*, 1977). Among its advisors were Stefano Della Chiaie, the exiled Peronist José López Rega, who promoted the Argentine Triple A, and former members of the OAS (CASALS i MESEGUER, 2009b, pp. 233-258).

Given the academic gap on this issue, it is difficult to ascertain whether this group truly existed, as the State Security Forces did not confirm its existence (CIA, 1983, pp. 29-32). Ernesto Milá Rodríguez claimed that the group did not exist and that the signature accompanying the attack on *El Papus* was an ufologically symbol (MILÁ RODRÍGUEZ, 2009). These command units were present in several cities, but they particularly focused on Catalonia (CASALS i MESEGUER, 2016, p. 268). In Barcelona, two organizations using the initials AAA were established. The first was the Junta Española en Pie (JEP), founded in 1976 by Miguel Gómez Benet, known as *El Padrino* or *El Metralleta*. Benet was supported by Juan José Bosch Tapies and Isidro Carmona Díaz Crespo to promote this group (*El País*, 1982), which was given several premises by former members of the División Azul for holding assemblies. The other was the Ejército Español de Liberación (EEL), created by Manuel Reinero Banda and Julio González Palomares, a former police agent. When authorities dismantled one of their premises, they found hoods embroidered with the acronym A.A.A (*El País*, 1980) and, at their headquarters in Ripollet, bullets marked with those letters (SÁNCHEZ SOLER, 2010, p. 209). Simultaneously, Banda established a section known as Comando Número Tres de la Triple A, which received ammunition from the Civil Guard.

The Triple A claimed responsibility for several assaults, including the attack on the editorial office of *El Papus*, a satirical magazine in Barcelona, on September 20, 1977, which resulted in the death of Juan Peñalver Sandoval, the janitor, and injured seventeen others. Before the attack, the Alianza Apostólica Anticomunista sent several threats to the magazine's director for publishing cartoons that ridiculed the group (Annex II).

The group also operated in the Basque Country on October 7, 1977, when they killed David Salvador Bernardo, a taxi driver accused of collaborating with ETA in Andoain (*ABC*, 1977). In Bilbao, they murdered the gypsies María Contreras Gabarri, who was seven months pregnant, her brother Antonio, and Anastasio Leal Terradillos. Finally, in August 1980, they killed Jesús María Etxebeste from Irun (*La Vanguardia*, 1980). Their activity extended to San Juan de Luz when they attacked Rosario Arregui Letamendi in 1978, and their last known crime occurred in January 1982 when they claimed responsibility for the homicide of Pablo Garayalde in Leiza (AIZPEOLEA, 2010).

To conclude, Triple A claimed two murders that were simultaneously attributed to other gangs. The first occurred on January 23, 1977, when the leftist activist Arturo Ruiz was killed. Although several witnesses stated that he was murdered by Guerrilleros de Cristo Rey (CASTILLO JIMÉNEZ, 2013, p. 28), others claimed that he was shot at close range by Fuerza Nueva militant José Ignacio Fernández Guaza, who was accompanied by Jorge Cesarsky(i), a former member of the Triple A in his country (MARTÍNEZ REVERTE and MARTÍNEZ REVERTE, 2016, p. 33). However, the Spanish Triple A claimed responsibility for the crime via a phone call. To this day, it remains unknown who committed the murder. The second incident occurred on May 6, 1979, when José Ramón Ansa Echevarría was murdered in Andoain. Although the Triple A initially claimed the homicide, investigations later focused on two members of the Batallón Vasco-Español (*Naiz.info*, 2013).

3.3.2 The Batallón Vasco-Español (BVE) as the initial manifestation of vigilantist terrorism¹

Its attacks predominantly occurred in the Basque provinces, but its initials resonated in other autonomous communities. The Batallón Vasco-Español (BVE), along with the obscure Antiterrorismo ETA (ATE), was active between 1975 and 1981 (CASALS i MESEGUER, 2016, pp. 108-109). Members of the police and the Civil Guard were involved in this terrorist network, including the torturer Antonio González Pacheco, better known as Billy El Niño, who recruited far-right sympathizers and was accused of committing crimes against humanity (MIRALLES y MACCA, 1986, p. 13). He died a free man in 2020 due to COVID-19.

The State Information Services funded this squad (SÁNCHEZ SOLER, 2010, p.138), and although it is not certain who exactly comprised this organization, General José Antonio Sáez de Santamaría stated that (CASALS i MESEGUER, 2020, p. 173):

«Estaba integrado por militares e hijos de militares, en su mayor parte de Valladolid, aunque también contaba con oficiales y suboficiales con base en Irún y en Pamplona. Poseía armas procedentes del Ejército y sus movimientos, mal coordinados, gozaban de total impunidad».

For this reason, it is not surprising that the four most well-known commands were named after the children of prominent figures from the regime: the Comando Zabala, named after Ladislao Zabala; the Comando Iturbide,

¹ The term "vigilantism" refers to the involvement of military personnel who played a role in that terrorist group.

referencing Ignacio Iturbide; the Comando Berastegui, after Luis Berastegui; and the Comando Medrano, alluding to Rogelio González Medrano (SÁNCHEZ SOLER, 2010, pp. 140-142). It is estimated that this organization was behind approximately fifty attacks, resulting in around thirty fatalities (BABY, 2018).

This organization received advice from Algerian terrorists who had joined the ranks of the Organisation de l'Armée Secrète (OAS), which played a prominent role during the Algerian War as a counterinsurgency force. In fact, two units were named after former members of the OAS: the Comando Cherrid, in honor of Jean-Pierre Cherid, and the Comando Perret, led by brothers Gilbert and Clement Perret (*El País*, 1985). These individuals had maintained a friendly relationship with Roberto Conesa and Manuel Ballesteros (PASCUAL, 2019, p. 73). Finally, the name of a victim killed by ETA was also used, such as the Comando Emilio Guezala, which claimed responsibility for the kidnapping and murder of Pertur, declaring through a message: *Eduardo Moreno Bergaretxe, Pertur, ha sido ejecutado y enterrado en un pueblo de Navarra. No será el último. Ojo por ojo, ¡Viva la unidad de España! Batallón Vasco-Español, Comando Emilio Guezala* (CEBERIO, 1976). Bergaretxe, a leader of ETA p-m, settled in the French town of Saint-Jean-de-Luz in 1972 after drafting the *Otsagabia*, a project that presented political alternatives that set aside armed struggle at the onset of the Transition (*Informe sobre el caso Pertur*, 2017).

The Batallón not only targeted citizens involved with ETA (or those who could be) but also committed sexual violence against teenagers aged between fourteen and nineteen. Considering the permissive attitude of law enforcement, feminist associations in Biscay led demonstrations denouncing the crimes committed by terrorists in Elorrio, Portugalete, Errenteria, and Uruña, which were also claimed by Grupos Armados Españoles (GAE). Out of the nine reported cases of sexual assault, there may have been more, but many families refrained from reporting due to fear; only the names of young women murdered due to the brutality of the acts were recorded. Ana Teresa Barrueta received a threat days before she was murdered, which contained her death sentence with

the phrase, *Marxista, cerda: te vamos a violar* (EGAÑA, 2014). On the other hand, María José Bravo was found with her body naked, and carved into it with sharp objects were the Nazi swastika and the symbol of the GAL, which was established three years later (Diario 16, 1980, p. 2). Finally, Cristina and Irune, two high school students accused of cooperating with the ETA gang, were later found to have no evidence against them (*Punto y Hora de Euskal Herria*, 1980, pp. 16-18).

Two significant episodes merit mention as they may connect these tactics to the terrorism of the Argentine Triple A. In 1980, a young woman managed to escape from a Seat 128 after two assailants, posing as Civil Guard officers, attempted to kidnap her. This model was identified by eyewitnesses outside a bar when two alleged police officers detained Iker Ibarlucea for interrogation at the station. Hours later, his body was found with a fractured skull. That vehicle was also spotted at a nightclub where the gypsy, Andrés Echeverría of Urnieta, was last seen (RUÍZ DE AZUA, 1981), although we do not believe there was an anti-Romani sentiment at that time, as the singer-songwriter Enrique Castellón Vargas, known as El Príncipe de los Gitanos (GILMOUR, 1992), repeatedly expressed his trust in the Piñarist formation. What is clear is that the Seat model was a sales failure and was generally in high demand among national security forces. Therefore, it is worth noting that the Alianza Anticomunista used the green Ford Falcon without license plates and tinted windows, which roamed the streets to abduct passersby (FEIERSTEIN, 2007, p. 28). We suspect that the Batallón sought to imitate this tool of coercion, although we cannot assert this definitively as we lack official documents to support it, making it mere conjecture.

In 1981, numerous citizens protested the release of Zabala and González Medrano after they were linked to the murder of Francisco Javier Ansa, believed to be a member of Herri Batasuna (HB). Additionally, a few months earlier, it was revealed that Medrano had claimed responsibility for several attacks under the name of the Triple A (MUGUERZA, 1981, p. 13). These demonstrations aimed to

highlight the liberties and judicial immunity enjoyed by far-right individuals when committing such crimes, like the assault on bar owner Víctor Fernández Ochoa, who became tetraplegic after being shot (*Diario 16*, 1981). The Batallón pursued Basques who had fled to Venezuela, such as Esperanza Arana and Joakin Etxeberria, who were murdered in Caracas (*El País*, 1980).

In the French Basque Country, between 1975 and 1979, Antiterrorismo ETA claimed attacks that, while denying involvement in attacks in Spain, operated similarly to the BVE and threatened Spanish refugees. They also claimed responsibility for the bomb attack on the *Ruedo Ibérico* publishing house located in Paris (*Informaciones*, 1975, p. 9). In 1979, they, along with Triple A, claimed responsibility for the murder of José Manuel Pagoaga Gallastegi, known as Peixoto, a leader of ETA-militar (*El País*, 1979).

In this context, ephemeral labels emerged, such as Acción Nacional Española (ANE) (*Diario 16*, 1979, p.1) or Grupos Armados Españoles (GAE) (*El País*, 1979), which claimed responsibility for the homicides of Justo Elizarán, Tomás Alba, a counselor for Herri Batasuna, and Emilio Goitia, who was part of the left-wing coalition Euzkadiko Ezkerra (*ABC*, 1979, p. 7). The GAE issued a statement declaring their relentless pursuit of ETA members, vowing to kill them because that gang had taken the life of Jesús García, who had advised far-right commands (*ABC*, 1980).

Subsequently, this seed of the Dirty War served as a precursor to the terrorism of the GAL, where members of the BVE, such as Jean Philippe Labbade and Patrick de Carvalho, integrated and used the same ammunition in that group as in the GAL when they murdered Herri Batasuna councilor Justo Elizaran Sarasola (*Diario 16*, 1979, p. 2). The Batallón, far from being organized, was driven by armed impulsiveness to eliminate the «other», that is, anyone who might collaborate with ETA. In this regard, the Algerian component of this armed organization cannot be dissociated; the widow of Cherid, Teresa Rilo, noted in an interview that her husband, who had participated in this group, had been in

contact with young members of Fuerza Joven who frequented neofascist circles (PASCUAL, 2019, pp. 18-19).

3.3.3 Fuerza Nueva, a Remnant of Francoism

Fuerza Nueva was the quintessential far-right party during the Democratic Transition. It was established in 1976 as a political group but had originally been created as a magazine in 1966 when its president, Blas Piñar López, decided to defend the ideals of the Franco regime after a meeting at the Monastery of Priego, Cuenca. Its members wore a black armband on the national flag, symbolizing mourning, when the Constitution was enacted (BABY, 2018). During the Transition, the party was linked to several terrorist attacks.

The first of these occurred on May 9, 1976, which was the only attack considered state terrorism prior to the emergence of the GAL. This episode is known as the Events of Montejurra. On that date, Carlists had been making pilgrimages to this Navarre Mountain since the end of the Civil War to pay homage to the *requetés* who died in the fratricidal conflict. Carlos Hugo de Borbón, a candidate for the royal throne, led the Carlist Party, which embraced self-managed socialism (SÁNCHEZ TOSTADO, 2021, p. 104) advocating for federalism and joining the antifrancoist opposition. Considering this progressive shift, a schism occurred, crystallizing into a traditionalist alternative led by Carlos Hugo's brother, Sixto Enrique de Borbón. On the indicated date, Sixto Enrique de Borbón, accompanied by violent far-right extremists, participated in a massacre carried out by several Falangists, guerrilla fighters, members of Fuerza Nueva, and Italian, Argentine, and Algerian mercenaries hired by SECED (SÁNCHEZ TOSTADO, 2021, p. 105). The episode resulted in over thirty injuries and two fatalities.

On January 24, 1977, extremists Fernando Lerda de Tejada, Carlos García Juliá, José Fernández Cerrá, Francisco Albadalejo Corredra, Leocadio Jiménez Caravaca, and Gloria Herguedas, linked to FN (MARTÍNEZ REVERTE and

MARTÍNEZ REVERTE, 2017, pp. 258-260), massacred five of the nine labor lawyers present in their office on Atocha Street. One of the culprits, Carlos García Juliá, was imprisoned in 1980 and, although he was sentenced to one hundred ninety-three years, he only served eleven years because he was granted parole, which he violated and settled in Brazil. It was not until February 2020 that authorities from the Ibero-American country extradited him to Spain, where he was imprisoned until November of that year when his sentence was commuted and he was released (Antequera, 2020). On the 28th of that month, two militants from the youth wing of the party shot at law enforcement officers, resulting in three deaths.

The next incident occurred on January 9, 1980, during the Vallecas Crime when the trade union branch of the Fuerza Nueva grouping, Fuerza Nacional de Trabajo (FNT), organized a rally in the Madrid municipality. Thirteen leftist organizations attended to prevent the event from taking place. Two militants from Fuerza Nueva stabbed Vicente Cuervo Calvo, leading to his death. Despite police units detaining far-right members carrying knives, the homicide went unpunished (Hoja de Lunes, 1980).

The fourth terrorist act took place on February 1, 1980, when David Martínez Loza, a collaborator of Blas Piñar, provided the address of Yolanda González Martín to Emilio Hellín Moro and Ignacio Abad Velázquez (MADUEÑO ÁLVAREZ, 2017, p. 173). They kidnapped and murdered her, believing her to be an ETA informant; however, she was a member of the Communist Party. Following these two murders that year, the Communist Party and the PSOE proposed legislation in Congress to outlaw Blas Piñar's party, but the initiative ultimately failed as, by 1982, Fuerza Nueva had gained parliamentary representation (SÁNCHEZ SOLER, 1996, pp. 110-113). Finally, on May 1, 1980, to commemorate the victims of the Semana Negra and Yolanda González, a minute of silence was held, and Arturo Pajuelo Rubio, one of the protesters, stepped away from the crowd and received several stab wounds, as did two of his companions. Hours later, the young man died (ABC, 1980, p. 8).

In conclusion, during this period, the total number of recorded homicides amounted to sixty-one, but less than half of the casualties were categorized as victims of terrorism (Figure 1).

4.FINAL REMARKS

The violence perpetrated by the far-right from 1973 to 1982 materialized in four distinct currents. The first is the reactionary far-right represented by *Fuerza Nueva* and the *Alianza Apostólica Anticomunista*, better known as Spanish Triple A, which upheld national-Catholic tenets reminiscent of the Francoist dictatorship. The second is the neofascist extremism exercised by sections C and Z, respectively, or the *Frente de la Juventud*, which adopted methods like those of their Italian counterparts and, to some extent, sought to disrupt the national-Catholic agenda that predominated in the post-Francoist far-right. The third current is neonazism, represented by the *Partido Español Nacional Socialista* and the *Sexto Comando Adolfo Hitler de Orden Nuevo*, which incorporated national-socialist elements such as the Celtic cross, which became a symbol of the movement in the late 1960s, and the swastika. Finally, the counterterrorist far-right, exercised by *Antiterrorismo ETA* and the *Batallón Vasco-Español*, conducted the first dirty war in the Spanish state, and after their dissolution, many of their members joined the *Grupos Armados de Liberación*, which perpetrated the second and final dirty war in the country.

These four ideological divergences, although distinctly differentiated from one another, shared certain patterns, partly because the groups representing them were connected to the same Nazi-fascist exiles who had settled on the Iberian Peninsula and, in turn, advised them on violent tactics. Despite their synchronies and differences, we contend that at times they claimed the same terrorist attacks to divert media attention; for this reason, there were messages stating that the name was of little importance, as they could have also claimed

responsibility under the name Batallón Vasco-Español or VI Comando Adolfo Hitler (*Arriba*, 1977), with the aim of generating more confusion and maximizing the impact of the anti-democratic forces.

Finally, it is essential to acknowledge the protection provided to the far-right by certain sectors of the security forces, which were undoubtedly opposed to the democratization process. This can be explained by the effects of sociological Francoism, as for nearly forty years, Francoism had infiltrated educational institutions to indoctrinate society and enjoyed the influence of the Catholic Church, as well as the strength of the military and other repressive apparatuses. In this context, the anti-democratic factions hoped that the military, facing terrorism of various ideological biases, would execute a coup d'état, as this sector was the primary target of ETA and the GRAPO and one of the most affected during the transitional process.

We can conclude by asserting that, during these years, a culture of silence prevailed that affected the democratic collectives who had witnessed violence, disturbances, and ultimately police inaction, making it unsurprising that in most cases, many citizens refrained from reporting out of fear of reprisals.

5. ANNEXES

5.1 ANNEX I. THREAT FROM THE SEXTO COMANDO ADOLFO HITLER DE ORDEN NUEVO

A TODA LA REDACCION DEL PAPUS y especialmente a echarri molto:

La proxima vez que en vuestra podrida revista veamos la mas leve insinuación al poder nacionalsindicalista os visitaremos con la escopeta recortada y nos joderemos a toda la masa judeico-masona que trabaja en tu revista.

ALIANZA Sexto Comando ADOLFO HITLER - GUARDIA AZUL y
Comite de Lucha Antisemita.

5.2 ANNEX II. THREAT FROM THE SPANISH TRIPLE A²

AVISO

Grandísimo cerdo !

Ya te habíamos advertido que lo ibas a pasar muy mal si seguías atacando al pueblo español con tus asquerosas revistas, y por lo visto sigues por el mismo o parecido camino.

Si no liquidas "ipso facto" las 2 indecentes revistas que ofenden a España, encomendate a los santos de tu devoción, pues nuestros comandos te ejecutarán.

Ya sabes ! Desaparición de la circulación de tus guarras revistas. Tienes de plazo 5 días !

A.A.A. de España

² Both threats are taken from the website *Spain Crisis*. Catalá, J. (January 21, 2015). *Antes del ataque terrorista a Charlie Hebdo existió el de EL PAPUS*. *Spain Crisis*.
<https://spaincrisis.blogspot.com/2015/01/antes-de-charlie-hebdo-existio-el-papus.html>

Transcription:

Aviso¹/

Grandísimo cerdo! ²/

Ya te habíamos advertido que lo ibas a pasar muy mal si seguías³/

Atacando al pueblo español con tus asquerosas revistas, y por ⁴/

lo visto sigues por el mismo o parecido camino ⁵/.

Si no liquidas “ipso facto” las 2 indecentes revistas que ofen-⁶/-

dan a España, encomiéndate a los santos de tu devoción, pues ⁷/

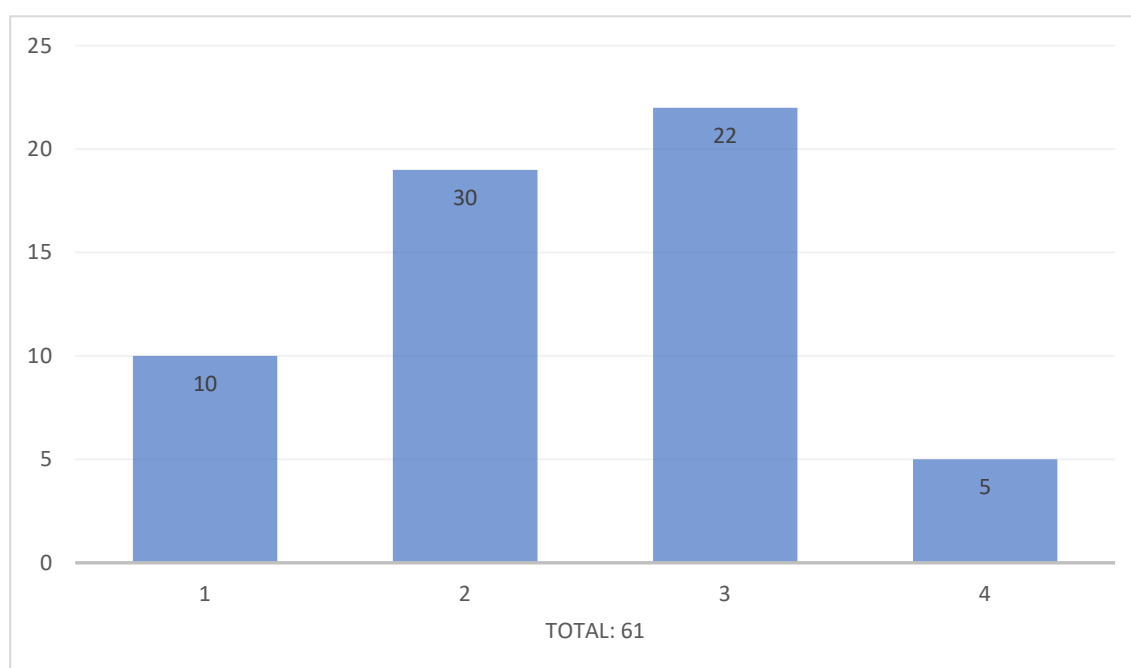
nuestros comandos te ejecutarán ⁸/.

Ya sabes! Desaparición de la circulación de tus guarras revis-⁹/-

Tas. Tienes de plazo 5 días! ¹⁰/

A.A.A. de España ¹¹/

5.3 FIGURE I. FATAL VICTIMS OF THE FAR RIGHT (1975-1982)



The graph is our own creation based on the contributions of Mariano Sánchez Soler, the archives of the newspaper *El País* (which have been very helpful in tracing the violence perpetrated by Fuerza Nueva and by sectors aligned with the party), and finally, the platform of COVITE

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