

Report from Paris by Yves Messer

Dismantling separatist terrorism

French police have launched the most severe and efficient crackdown yet in both Corsica and the Basque region.

French police have launched a massive crackdown against separatist terrorists from Corsica and the Basque region. Since the actions of the separatists are coordinated on a continent-wide basis, the twofold front against the Corsicans and Basques is proving more efficient than hitting each separately.

This is the strategy of the Gaullist government of Prime Minister Jacques Chirac, his Interior Minister Charles Pasqua, and Security Minister Robert Pandraud. The same examining judge, Legrand, is overseeing both dossiers.

The recent actions are a sharp change from the previous regime of socialist Interior Minister Pierre Joxe, a member of pro-communist CGT trade union. His policy granted virtual safehousing to Spanish ETA terrorists in the French Basque region.

In Corsica, the FLNC terrorists responded very violently to the first anti-terrorist operations by the new Chirac government. In May, 20 FLNC terrorists were arrested and their network dismantled. The FLNC answer was the spectacular June 16 assassination of Dr. Lafay, president of the Association of Victims of Terrorism. The defenders of terrorism screamed that any further moves by the government carried a "risk of escalation."

But instead of retreating, Pasqua launched a series of deadly operations against the terrorist organization, the last being a raid Oct. 1 on the separatist newspaper *U Ribombu*. Police seized more than 200 documents and arrested director Yves Stella, an FLNC

"theoretician." Also found was a 25-page document signed by the FLNC, calling for "the large-scale physical elimination of French nationals living in Corsica."

A day earlier, police hit the Basque ETA organization, with the Sept. 30 arrest of one "Santi Potros," the number-two man in the ETA military arm. His arrest was followed a day later by a series of interceptions on both sides of the Spanish-French border. Fifteen persons were arrested on the basis of documents found at Santi Potros's safehouse. Also discovered was an apartment used as a prison for kidnap victims, and an arsenal including 14 grenade-launchers and 100 kilos of explosives.

During their search of an isolated farm at Saint-Pée-sur-Nivelle, police also found a dozen blank Spanish passports, money, and archives with documents that included a hit list, and a list of some 500 contacts working on behalf of ETA at various levels. Most were Basque refugees, most of whose apartments were empty by the time they were raided immediately afterward. But some 97 persons were finally arrested, of whom 55 were expelled back to Spain, and 12 to Algeria.

This success is due to cooperation between Spanish and French police, resulting from the agreement signed during the last visit of French Security Minister Pandraud to Spain. There have been many arrests on the Spanish side of the border, including at least 30 ETA sympathizers, and an ETA

member responsible for reestablishing the so-called Barcelona Commando Group, famous for a recent terrorist bloodbath in Barcelona. The group was dismantled in early September. Spanish police also found plans for a suicide-car-bomb attempt against a government agency and an arms cache, including mortars, bazookas, and grenade-launchers.

On Oct. 7, French police arrested two more important ETA leaders: Gonzales-Valderrama, an electronics expert who trained members of the German terrorist Red Army Faction, and Miguel Miguez García, arrested by French police at Ciboure, in the French Basque country.

The very day that García was arrested, a demonstration was organized in the streets of Bayonne, the capital of the French Basque region, opposing the police action against ETA. The protest was supported by pro-terrorist radical-left organizations like the Revolutionary Communist League of Alain Krivine, which compared Charles Pasqua with Chile's General Pinochet. Demonstrators screamed that this police roundup was the "biggest since the [Nazi] Occupation."

Several Basque priests participated in the demonstration, and Amnesty International was worrying about "the risk of ill treatment feared by the Basques arrested by the Spanish policer." Even, the Bayonne bishop denounced the French government, while praising the "antiquity of the Basque race" and its "nobility," suddenly uncovering the cultural ideology behind the ETA fundamentalist movement. The ETA emblem is a round swastika, which is displayed throughout the region.

The heat is now on for certain terrorist-supporting networks in the Church, especially since the Sept. 3 raid by French police on the Benedictine Abbey of Belloc.