

# March against terror is a march for Spain

by Katharine Kanter

On Feb. 19, over a million people marched from the Plaza Colón to the Puerta del Sol in Madrid, under the slogan, "Down with the Assassins! Freedom!" Tens of thousands marched in Valencia, where Tomás y Valiente, the latest victim of ETA, the Basque separatist terrorist organization, was born.

On Feb. 6, in San Sebastián, the lawyer Fernando Mugica, brother of the former Socialist interior minister, was shot before the eyes of his son and daughter-in-law as he left chambers. One week later, Prof. Francisco Tomás y Valiente, a renowned constitutionalist, was shot in his office at the university. His murderer, Jon Bienzobas Arretxe, was recognized by students as he fled, because the Interior Ministry had put up 20,000 "wanted" posters with his picture. Both Mugica and Tomás y Valiente were personal friends of Spain's Prime Minister Felipe González.

The march was marked by great dignity. A group of right-wing revolutionists carrying banners in favor of restoring the death penalty, were thrown out of the demonstration. Centrist (UCD) and Conservative (PP) leaders marched in the second row, alongside the leaders of the Socialist government. In the first row, were the sons and widows of those who have been murdered by ETA.

Only the United Left, successor party to the Communist Party (PCE) chose not to be associated with the march: Its former secretary general, Santiago Carrillo, was found lurking among a gaggle of bystanders, and forced, albeit reluctantly, to march. The current secretary general, Julio Anguita, flew off to electoral events in Saragossa, declaring that "terrorism is not going to stop me from campaigning."

The march was no expression of sentimental pity for the victims and of revulsion against the aggressor. One million people demonstrated for their country. It was above parties, above policing, and above politicking, as such. In that, this march was much like the mass strike that seized France last December. A sizable fraction of the European population has arrived at a state of mind, able to understand that "the leadership" is unwilling or unable to solve the existential problems facing the continent, and that the individual citizen is going to have to go out and force them to decide, by voting with his feet.

In the Basque provinces, over a hundred demonstrations

took place the day after the murder of Fernando Mugica, several thousand people in San Sebastian alone. The Mugica brothers, incidentally, were the most prominent Jewish political figures in Spain. José María, Fernando's son, who had run into the street barehanded to try and seize the murderers, said, "My family was in the concentration camps. What happened then is what is happening now. Neither should one forget, that in a country very close by, mass murder has just taken place. So fascism exists. . . . But my father was a deep optimist, convinced that this country can yet be saved, and that the seed of evil can be rooted out. I believe that. I believe it is written in history that, no matter how high the price now, evil will be crushed."

## Wrestling with Herri Batasuna

Were it not for these mass demonstrations, which have placed the political debate onto a fresher plane, ETA would have become the centerpiece of the electoral campaign. As it is, things are already bad enough. The ETA electoral front, Herri Batasuna, which is running candidates in the Basque provinces in the March 3 elections, has been escalating tension in the run-up to the election, trying to provoke the government into over-reacting. Since Herri Batasuna has been allowed to take over the streets with impunity, and build up a violent youth movement, called Jarrai, the iron fist has gone rusty for lack of use. Earlier in February, Herri Batasuna, in a calculated move, presented regional public television with an electoral spot, on which masked ETA members read out ETA's program for "national liberation."

To suddenly move toward repression only one week before the general elections, is hazardous, because the government has dithered over outlawing Herri Batasuna for a decade, in the shade of which hesitancy, the movement has grown to control 15-20% of the Basque vote. Nevertheless, on Feb. 21, Instructing Magistrate Garzón issued an arrest warrant for Jon Idigoras, the secretary general of Herri Batasuna. He is now in jail awaiting bail, accused of collaborating with a terrorist group. At the time of writing, riots have already broken out in various Basque cities.

## A gift of great value

It seems almost certain at this point, that the Socialist government will lose the elections, after losing so many opportunities to turn the Spanish economy around. But the González team has left both Africa and Spain a gift of great value: On Feb. 6, the governments of Spain and Morocco signed an agreement to build a railway tunnel under the Straits of Gibraltar. The tunnel, which has been under discussion since the 1920s, will be 40 kilometers long and cost about \$20 billion. All African countries north of the Equator, save for Ethiopia and the Central African Republic, will directly benefit, as, of course, will Spain. Although history may consider the tunnel to be President González's only real achievement, that alone will be something to be proud of.