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25th May, 1960.

The Minister of State,
Foreign Office,
Whitehall,
LONDON, S.W.1.

Dear Sir,

At the request of his Excellency the President of the Government of Euzkadi Dr. Jesús Ma. de Leizaola, I enclose herewith for your information a political memorandum and also, an Obituary of the late President, Dr. José Antonio de Aguirre.

Yours faithfully
p.p. Basque Delegation

J. Hickman.

MEMORANDUM

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On October 7th, 1936, in the midst of a war that had been imposed on peninsular democracy by a military uprising which prepared and waged with the support of the totalitarian powers, the Government of Euzkadi was constituted.

On that date the freely elected Councillors of the Basque country elected, by unanimity, as President of Euzkadi his Excellency Dr. José Antonio de Aguirre.

The Basque President formed his Government from political personalities representative of all the Basque democratic parties. The Labour Unions as well lent their unconditional support to the elected President and his Government.

The act of investiture took place under the tree of Gernika, symbol of Basque liberties.

The aggressive war waged against the Basque country was personified by the presence among the enemy lines of important Italian infantry units and by the inhuman action of the German Air Force which reached its zenith in the destruction of Gernika.

When the war ended, the Basque Government continued to lend her maximum support to her nationals, exiled in their tens of thousands, organizing and financing Basque emmigration to several Latin-American countries.

During World War II she continued the fight against the Axis forces, side by side with the French and British troops, communicating information and actually taking part in the last clashes before the liberation of France.

The Basque communities exiled in different countries in America and Europe contribute the necessary funds to the Basque Government thus ensuring its continuity.

The Basques who remained in Euzkadi continue to lend the Basque Government their moral and material support.

The "Congreso Mundial Vasco" held in September 1956 gave evidence of the representative nature of the Government of Euzkadi even 20 years after the formation of its constitution. All the Basque communities sent their accredited representatives to the Congress. The Basques from inside Euzkadi were also represented.

ON OCTOBER 7TH 1936 IN THE MIDDLE

MEMORANDUM

In the course of the debates, the Congress, which was constituted of representatives of all the political parties and labour organizations, approved the signature of a political pact binding them to and reiterating their support and trust in the Government of Euzkadi.

On the 22nd. March 1960 his Excellency the President of the Government of Euzkadi, Dr. José Antonio de Aguirre, died suddenly in Paris.

The funerals held in Paris and later on the 28th. March in St. Jean de Luz (Basses Pyrénées), eight miles from the Spanish frontier, clearly demonstrated the gratitude and deep affection the Basques bore for their President.

In spite of the threats and pressure exerted by the Franco authorities inside Euzkadi, more than 3.000 Basques representing every town in Euzkadi travelled to St. Jean de Luz to render a last homage to their beloved President who died in exile.

On that same day, the 28th. March 1960, at the cemetery of St. Jean de Luz and in the presence of representatives of all the political parties and labour organizations, just before the remains of the first President of Euzkadi were lowered into his Christian grave, the vice-President of the Basque Government, his Excellency Don Jesus M. de Leizaola, assumed the presidency of the Government.

On the 29th. March, gathered in Bayonne (Basses Pyrénées), the Basque Consultative Council, which consists of all the political parties and labour unions of Euzkadi, made public the following statement:

"The Basque Consultative Council, gathered in Bayonne on the 29th. March 1960, attended by all the political and labour representatives, is profoundly moved by the sudden death of Dr. José Antonio de Aguirre, our beloved President, and after rendering a last and intimate homage to his memory, agrees to make public the following statement:

- 1.- On the 31st. March 1960 next will be the XV anniversary of the signature of the PACT OF BAYONNE and CONSIDERING that it constitutes a guaranty for the unity agreed to by Basque democracy, The Consultative Council RATIFIES the said pact in every detail.

Consequently, we REAFFIRM our confidence in the new President, Don Jesus M. de Leizaola, and in his Government, as the legitimate representation of the Basque country, DECLARING that the Consultative Council will lend to it the necessary support as the appropriate instrument in continuing the work which will lead to the liberation of our country.

The living and constant allegiance of Basque democracy to their Government was expressed with the character of a plebiscite during the religious acts organized by the Basques in all the towns of Euzkadi in memory of the deceased President.

The Franco authorities have found themselves incapable, in spite of their threats, reprisals and provocations, of curbing the religious and patriotic fervour of the Basques gathered to pray for their mourned President.

The Government of Euzkadi, presided now by Don Jesús M. de Leizaola, well aware of the citizens' yearning for National freedom and with the authority bestowed upon them by the trust and allegiance of all the Basques inside and outside Euzkadi, is resolved to continue the fight against anti-democracy which is personified by Franco, and is certain of the final victory of a just cause: the freedom of the people and countries of our peninsula.

FUNERAL ORATION ON PRESIDENT AGUIRRE
PRONOUNCED AT ST. JEAN DE LUZ
BY
H. EX. MGR. MATHIEU
BISHOP OF AIRE AND DAX.

Dear Brethren,

If death is indeed sorrowful when it strikes in later years, at lives well worn, how much more tragic it seems when it tears away from us, at the mature age of 56, a man in full possession of his intellectual and moral faculties, exercising his heavy task with perseverance, and whose life promised all professional success and civic ambitions.

We are gathered here in this church where before us many exiled Basques have come to pray.

The religious significance of this building suggests that we are not here to assist at a partisan political meeting. We have come here to pray together, to partake in the unexpected mourning which has shocked us all; to share the sorrow of a family and also of that larger family which is our people, who have lost in President Aguirre, the lucid guide, the eminent servant of a cause to which he dedicated his whole life.

In him we shall hail the Basque and the Catholic.

THE BASQUE

Basques twice over are they who are born and have become Basque by their sacrifices in maintaining whole their loyalty to their small country. For the greater part the quality of a Basque is a gift received from God. A passive acceptance which shows no merit on our part.

But there are some who were born and have become Basques by accepting exile, through loss of their positions, their property, and by abandoning all that they held dear.

The unjust criticism, which if not excusable could be explained by that cruel and tragic ambiguity where two opposing parties fought together because they had both been attacked together.

It was scandalous to my eyes, at least in my diocese, to see that those alone who offered to receive the Basque Catholics were groups hostile to their religion.

It was because of this scandal that I felt deeply in my heart of a Basque, a Catholic and a Bishop, it was of this scandal that was born the "L'Association des Amis des Basques", I being made President and another friend of the Basques, a man of great heart and intelligence, Cardinal Verdier, became Honorary President.

Saint Vincent de Paul often said: "True Charity closes its eyes and throws open its arms". But we did not have to close our eyes, we could look the exiles in the eye and the exiles did not have to bow their heads. Their leaders were Aguirre, Leizaola, Monzón, Eliodoro de la Torre who one day in Bilbao accompanied me on a sinister trip to the ships anchored on the Nervion where the hostages were held.

Sénateur Pezet, whom the French Government had entrusted with the care of refugees has told me: "the only refugees I can not complain about, the only ones whose attitude has been both noble and correct, are the Basques.

No well-informed person will be surprised at this, knowing that many of the Basque exiles belonged to a social elite and the greater part to a moral elite.

Sleep in peace, dear President, the exiles have been worthy of you, worthy of the solemn oath which you took, and unites, without contradiction, the pride of the Basque and the humility of the Catholic.

"Humble before God, standing on Basque soil and beneath the tree of Gernika, invoking the memory of our ancestors, I swear to carry out my mandate with undivided loyalty."

Unfortunately, you are standing no longer but soon you shall be lain beneath Basque soil, no longer with the pride of your stature but prostrate in the humble position of the Catholic who trusts in Him who said:

"I am the Resurrection and the Life, he who believes in Me shall have life everlasting"

Exile separated his body from his native Basque soil. But this separation had fortified, if it were possible, the attachment of his heart.

His Basque horizon went with him everywhere. Everywhere! in his life filled with travel where the least of incidents could not have been his journey from "Gernika to New York passing via Berlin".

Everywhere and always the President has upheld the poetic defiance of Arana Goiri:

Euzkadi is our cherished garden,
Our tongue is its flower,
The enemy toils in vain
To kill the beloved flower.
The assassin shall never enter
Into our Basque country.

Unfortunately, he has entered! But that beloved, the Basque language was cared for with love by the President. Never did it leave his lips because it never left his soul.

THE CATHOLIC

His soul was moulded by Basque tradition deeply imbued of Catholic tradition.

Two traditions intimately joined together, where the language has proved itself guardian of the Faith and Faith guardian of the tongue.

The Catholic Faith inspired the President's whole life.

I make no mistake, his whole life!

Not only in its short existence but also in its entire scope; inspiring and dominating not only his private life but also his public life.

THE PUBLIC FIGURE

With him the two attitudes did not exist; the attitude of the private individual subject to Christian morality and the attitude of the public figure subjected to realism.

We know the significance of this word; it expresses the independent position of a man conscious, not of morality, but of efficiency, not of truth and justice, but of success. The position of a man indifferent before the means he uses, choosing these with the sole concern of achieving the end he pursues.

This duality so close to duplicity was never practised by the President.

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A note which I have had in my possession, a short exposé on the character of the eminent deceased, ended thus: "Tal era el político tal era el hombre". The political figure was no other than the private individual. Both were united in their subservience to the laws brought to us by Our Lord.

He would affirm his Catholic convictions without ostentation but without weakness before the Cortes where sat a majority of "Frente Popular", a caricature of the French Popular Front.

10th. JULY 1936.

I was in San Sebastian on the 18th. July 1936. The atmosphere was stormy. In the afternoon I had said the first Vespers of St. Vincent de Paul and in the morning a murder had been committed after Mass on the steps of the church of the Good Shepherd. It was the first spark of the fire that was to burn through the whole of Spain.

Already in October crimes and atrocities had multiplied.

And before all these atrocities the young M.P. Aguirre would affirm: "Our position is very clear..."

It is a protest against violence: "Christ never preached the doctrine of the bayonet, the bomb or the explosive in order to conquer hearts, He preached love. We condemn energetically, for we must condemn, the burning of churches, wherever they may be, for our Faith is Universal. We condemn energetically the deaths of certain persons guilty only of having a certain character or a determined significance.

We will remain close to the Right in order to bring about an efficient campaign against the sectarian legislation of the constitution but never to bring about a revolution!"

Here we come across the word "right" as opposed to the word "left" which the young M.P. describes as a "ridiculous phraseology".

In anti-clerical Spain, as in anti-clerical France, between "izquierda y derecha", between left and right, the separating line does not rely on the social question but on the religious question.

"In placing God's name as the first word in our motto we wish to affirm this: that in this phraseology of left and right, ridiculous phraseology, we have taken a definite position. We are virile and undivided Catholics, whose Catholicism is sincere and not sickly sentimentality. If by being of the Right we understand opposition to the legitimate progress of democracy against absolute power, then we are "a la izquierda" of the left. If being of the Right consists in identifying religion with any regime and not independence, in their respective fields, of the two powers, then we are of the left. But on the other hand, if being of the left consists in fighting to destroy the family, the Sacred principles of the Catholic Church, whose doctrines we profess, in this case, according to this phraseology which I consider ridiculous, in this case we are of the Right."

To explain this position which is so precise let me remind you of certain positions adopted on social matters by M.P.'s of the "Right". The Church affirms the individual's right to property. Wordly goods are not the property of all. But the right to property is not absolute. For if the goods are not of all they are for all. The right of property is not a social function but it does have a social function.

The Catholics against whom stood the young M.P. would give to the right of property an absolute power. One of them declared that he was prepared to become a schismatic if the reforms heralded in the Encyclicals were ever applied.

Before a project inspired by social reform which was presented by an M.P. a right-wing Catholic who opposed it declared: "This reform attacks property and to us it is the same to be robbed in the name of Christ as in the name of Lenin", and following quite logically with this doctrine an ex-right-wing minister concluded: "The only remedy for the Marxist advance is the Civil Guard", that is to say the whip!

The social work of the Basques was qualified by the right-wing as "a new form of phariseism", as "demagogic bigotry", as "disguised Marxism".

VIOLENCE SUFFERED

Supporter of social reforms, enemy of the violence that wanted to solve social conflicts through the action of the Civil Guard and world problems through the bayonet, and yet the President was forced to violence.

He did not want this violence, he did not pursue it, he suffered it. The Basques did not choose violence, but violence fell on them and drove them to defend themselves.

War has always been barbarous, but the utmost barbarism is modern warfare because barbarity is multiplied by science.

What can one say of a Civil War that adds to this the horror of fratricide.

It is to the Basques' honour to have allowed a ray of humanity or of Christian charity to shine in the midst of all this barbarism. When Franco's troops captured certain positions the vanquished, before leaving, executed all their hostages. In Bilbao not one hostage was executed and Mr. Herbelette, then ambassador in Madrid sent a telegram congratulating me. This telegram was sent to me. But the congratulations are not for me. I place them here on the coffin of the man who deserved them and who at that time bore the brunt of a savage war on his young shoulders.

A TESTAMENT

The President has left us.

No longer shall we see his robust figure nor hear his moving eloquence which was always put at the service of truth. But he has left us a message and this message, to all his admirers and friends, is like a spiritual testament and they will make it their duty to remain faithful to it. This message was given in 1935 and reads thus:

"Before ending these pages I should like to reach the depth of the soul of my compatriots and to give them a word of advice which can be summed up as follows: Reaffirmation of principles, and in the first place, Faith in the one God, Master of the destinies of men and countries. Because our Faith would be in vain if there were to remain in our hearts, even well hidden, a hearth for hatred."

The President knew that the attitude of the Basques would not be well understood.

That does not matter! We shall always be able to outline the clear form of a movement that with the eternal elements offered by the Christian concept of society underwent every day its revolution and moulds the soul of a people who want to be free.

"Undergoing each day its revolution"! For as Proudhon said, revolution is eternal. This does not mean to be always changing institutions but changing oneself because the Kingdom of God is within us. We must incessantly strive for our conversion because the world never ceases to pervert us.

The President has gone before God's court: he had extinguished in his heart every fire of hatred. He did not carry in his soul principles that were made shreds but the Catholic principles which he had not only affirmed but which had ruled his private life and also his public life. That was the destiny of the President.

Let us make this dream our dream and try to make of it our destiny.