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# 'MENDEKU'

## [revenge]

*«an attempt to clarify the truth about some events that took place in the basque country in the spring/summer of '87.»*



We are writing to you from Portugalete, a town of 70,000 inhabitants, 12 Km from Bilbao, with the specific aim of explaining a whole number of facts, which would help to clarify the situation which has taken place after the petrol-bomb attack on the " Casa del Pueblo" of Portugalete, the H.Q of the Portugalete PSOE (1) on 25/4/87 which resulted in the death of 2 PSOE militants, a lot of casualties, and substantial damage to property.

We imagine you would have heard about this, since there has been a lot written, said, manipulated, misrepresented etc.... by the organs of power ( Media, Political organisations, Institutions ) about this event. All this has once again called our attention to the existing crap, making obvious everything we have discussed so many times - the necessity of creating and spreading counter-information by any means possible.

. Therefore in order to clarify things, we are going to give you the facts.

For a better understanding of the ins and outs of the whole story, we need to go back to the summer months, when on the initiative of Jarrai ( the youth organisation of Herri Batasuna )(2) the Gazte asanblada ( youth assembly ) appeared in Portugalete with the intention of giving expression to the specific demands of local youths. This assembly is made up of about 30 young people.

Jarrai's real intentions concerning this assembly soon became clear. A trick that hoped to strike a chord with the young people of the town, which they had not managed with their organisation; a movement that would follow the campaign they had organised throughout Euskadi, attempting to win over or recuperate loads of young people, who are out in the street, who don't give a shit about acting as militants in any political organisation, and who take orders from no-one. They are trying to win back areas which they have been losing, because the locals are getting involved in different things, acting as an assembly, getting stuck in, which it seems H.Baren't interested in. What they can't control they try to crush.

For a clear example of the crap: the "Martxa eta Borroka" (3) (Marcha and struggle) promotion by H.B of what they called Radical Basque Rock, which has a clear vote-catching intention, and hopes to either win, recuperate or redirect lots of young people who don't give a toss about what H.B are doing. Another example is the Gaztetxes (4) which they promoted and then tried to control at all cost. And what they helped to organise, hoping to score a big political success, is beginning to organise itself, generally ignoring H.B's orders.

It's within this context that we have to place the row, which took place within the Gaztetxes between Jarrai and other people who didn't want anything to do with their blatant manipulation and who understood that things had to be done another way. These major differences caused the split and later disappearance of the youth assembly.

A group of people who had participated in the Gaztetxes together and who had kept themselves to themselves from the beginning believed it necessary to form a collective which continued to fight against those things which oppress us, taking no notice of the people who are trying to profit from our lives.

In this context, in the middle of march, Mendeku ( revenge ) emerged.

The points of departure are clear, we are talking about an open collective, an alternative of an assemblyist nature, with no dominant ideology, which brings people together who want to act within an autonomous context.

The first assemblies took place and the idea started to take shape. About 30 of us young people met regularly and the first project we organised was a popular mural in the "Casco Viejo" (5). Some walls were whitewashed, everybody was called together to paint what they wanted, without any restrictions. Quite a few people turned up and the results were great. A whole load of subjects were covered, including ; military service, sexuality, squatting, anti-pigs, anti-politicians, the basque language, anarchy....

After this first action, we realised the need to bring out a magazine, creating a space where the youths could express themselves and tell their story outside the media controlled by the system. Some stickers were produced demanding the right to a home, to get some money for the magazine.

*NOTE 1: PSOE: Partido socialista obrero de Espana : The present socialist government.*

*NOTE 2 : HERRI BATASUNA (HB) : the political wing of ETA.*

*NOTE 3 : MARTXA/MARCHA: A word with no english equivalent which can mean; what's going on, energy, excitement, fun. "BORROKA" means struggle. H.B used the feelings behind this slogan in promoting their own slogan "High and combatitive" within the activities which preoccupy young Basque people: "Radical Basque Rock" groups, squats, fanzines, radio stations, womens' groups, anti-drug groups, Basque language schools etc....*

*NOTE 4 : GAZTETXES : places where the gazte asanblada meet.*

*NOTE 5 : CASCO VIEJO: the "traditional" working class area in most spanish towns/cities.*

In Easter week, an atheist procession was organised - the first in Bizkaia (the basque provinces) - and the meeting was a complete success. About 200 people got together (which for Portugalete is a hell of a lot of people). There was fancy dress, crucifixes and puppets, a lot of Calimotxo (wine and coca cola), burning depictions of priests, hymns, "Marcha"(3) and provocation....enough for 6 van-loads of National police to turn up and attack people. They got as good as they gave for several hours and there were clashes in the "Casco viejo" (5).

Right from the beginning, the existence of the Mendeku collective provoked a hostile reaction from H.B, with them accusing us of trying to split the Basque National Liberation Movement (which they seem to have a monopoly of). The arguments continued, they hassled us one by one and they even ended up by threatening us. Two comrades were expelled from Aizan (a feminist organisation close to H.B) for belonging to Mendeku. H.B got pissed off about the mural against military service and in support of refusing it, against politicians, demanding free booze and anarchist activities.

After the atheist procession H.B flipped their lid. They accused us of having fucked up their politics for the last four years, their potential voters would have identified the procession with them and as this would have been harmful to their electoral hopes (they couldn't steal votes from PNV (6) or keep their supporters happy by displaying their atheism in the streets).

After all this past history we arrive at the day of the attack on the PSOE H.Q. You more or less know how things happened but we think it's necessary to explain a bit of the context in which it took place.

Portugalete had been in the forefront recently, because of the violence of its protests against extraditions.

From the beginning there were demonstrations after deportations, and on certain occasions in response to police attacks, there was rioting. These demos called by the pro-amnesty co-ordinations became more and more succesfull, due to the increasing campaign of collaboration between the spanish and french States against basque refugees. There were regular clashes with the filth, actions became more and more radical.

It came to the point where it was no longer possible to have demos in Portugalete. Before every rally the governor responded with tons of cops, brought in especially from Logrono for the occasion. Rioting became commonplace, buses piled up and burnt, attacks against the H.Q of the PSOE and french car showrooms, petrol bombs, stones, catapults, destruction of banks and similar places, brutal charges by the police, evacuation of the Casco viejo, beatings inside the bars, police using live ammunition, lots of injuries etc....

The pro-amnesty co-ordination tried to avoid the radicalisation of the struggle which was slipping out of their hands and prejudicing their electoral interests. The confrontations between the coordinations and the rest of the people (the majority of people who go to the demos) were commonplace. The situation was "out of control".

It is in this climate of total tension, of daily rioting that the attack on the Portugalete Casa del Pueblo needs to be explained and understood.

We aren't going to enter into an evaluation of the action itself. Everyone has their own opinion about it. But Mendeku as a collective has no position.

One thing which we all agree on, is that the action, a result of the anger about the two extraditions which had taken place that same day, wasn't done consciously, and didn't take into account the consequences that could have resulted (the dead, the wounded).

On many other occasions the H.Q of the PSOE had been fire-bombed without anyone getting injured. But on the 25th of April there were people still inside the bar at the time the attack took place, and you all know the results. We know for sure that the young people who did this neither intended nor hoped for the consequences which the attack brought.

Maybe all these facts will help to explain the ease with which the police solved the case, the confessions etc....

After the attack in Portugalete there was total paranoia, everybody was shitting themselves. The place soon filled up with Píkolos (Guardia civil), Maderos (Policia National), Munipas (Policia municipal), Ertzainas ("Autonomous" Basque Police), firemen, ambulances etc...There were rumours of 3 deaths. The story went from mouth to mouth, and more or less everybody knew who was behind the affair.

The reaction of the PSOE wasn't long in coming. In their first announcement they accused H.B of being the people responsible and that is where the whole thing starts getting complicated. H.B brought out some posters denying their involvement in the affair, and at the same time strongly condemned the attack.

In the early morning of 26/27 April the arrests began. The first to get nicked (about 10 people) were the people close to H.B already known by the police. After 3 hours the police changed their tune and started arresting supposed members of the "Mendeku Brigade" (7). Two members of our collective were arrested accused of belonging to this "Brigade". Later, more people were nicked until finally the alleged culprits were arrested. The number of those arrested went up to 21.

They are all interrogated by the usual methods and after two days some of them are released, leaving 11 inside who are kept in for another 6 days. This group includes 2 Mendeku comrades who had nothing to do with the matter and 3 of the supposed culprits who also belong to the collective. After 6 days in the police H.Q at Indautxu, they are moved to the security command in Madrid called the DGS.

Finally on Monday May 4th, after 8 days in solitary confinement, they are taken to Crown court, where 6 of the prisoners are released without charge. The Mendeku comrades are among those freed. The rest are sent to Carabanchel (Prison in Madrid).

We don't want to go into detail about what happened at the police station because nearly all of you know what that means, and what's more, whilst people are banged up, the real action is in the street.

After the arrests, the whole media starts speculating about the attack, and the story makes the front page in all the papers. The political organisations continue to hurl accusations at each other. The PSOE carries on accusing H.B of being behind the attack. But the best part of the story is that H.B (we have to remember that we're in the middle of the holy electoral campaign) doesn't limit itself to denying its involvement in the affair and condemning the attack, but what a surprise! - they look for a scapegoat and openly accuse the Mendeku collective of being the perpetrators. They know well that it's totally false but they set it up with the shameless intention of killing two birds with one stone, cleaning up their public image, and to do that, what better than to look for a guilty party, and even better if on the way they can get rid of a collective that will bother them less by not being around. They and only they put Mendeku in the trap.

The media, including Egin (a newspaper managed by H.B, and supposedly directed at the radical, alternative, combative sectors) support this theory and spit their ink at Mendeku, defining it as a direct action brigade, a group of young marginals, habitual delinquents, violent by nature, punks, degenerate anarchists etc....

But H.B's crap doesn't stop here. Some important leaders of "la Mesa Nacional" supreme body of this organisation, like Jon Idigoras, Txomin Ziluaga or Txema Montero (European candidate representing revolutionaries, radicals, alternatives etc... from Euskadi and the rest of the State) make declaration to any sector of the media that will listen to them accusing Mendeku of being the "ideological and political enemy" and of being "outside the Basque National Liberation movement". What's more, they challenge the civil governor about the date on which he said our collective appeared, the middle of March - which was the right date - but Jon Idigoras deny this and claims we had been going for several years, and taking advantage of the similarity of names accused us of being responsible for the death of the socialist candidate Enrique Casas (7). Later we were accused of being a brigade organised by the Ministry of the Interior which in close collaboration with GAL (8) was trying to fuck up H.B's campaign.

For their part Txema Montero and Kepa Landa (lawyers for the pro-amnesty coordinations) announce that they are going to search for the perpetrators of the crime, considering them their enemies, until the events have been completely clarified, and declare that they are going to make use of "popular action": that is to say they are going to act like public prosecutors shoulder to shoulder with the two public prosecutors which the PSOE and the state Attorney General are going to present.

You can imagine our surprise and anger in the face of this avalanche of accusations, including those coming from people who we thought were on the same side of the barricade as us (now we can see with whom and on what side they are). The media are attacking us on all sides, also the political organisations, and the police continue to put pressure on us.

We decided to publish a communique explaining to people, that Mendeku is not a Brigade, it is a collective, open, alternative and assemblyist, which being what it is, has nothing to do with the attack. We condemned the manipulation of H.B and the rest of the friends of power and we demanded the public withdrawal of the accusations hurled by the members of the Mesa Nacional.

*NOTE 7 : MENDEKU BRIGADE : The name of a brigade belonging to the autonomous anticapitalist brigades (CAAC) who were smashed several years ago. They shot dead the socialist Enrique Casas in 82/83. Of course the people from Portugaleta have nothing to do with CAAC and don't constitute in any way a brigade. Despite this the confusion remained for some time.*

*NOTE 8 : GAL : Killers connected with the french and spanish police which mainly carry out assassinations against spanish basque refugees in France.*

This communique appeared, pretty much censored, in the media.

On the other hand while our comrades are still inside, H.B and the rest of the organisations in Portugalete, are not only doing nothing to bring out the freedom of those arrested, but, what's more, are exercising a total boycott of the whole gang connected with Mendeku, who are trying to find out the situation of the people inside. Tense arguments are still taking place in which it becomes more and more clear that H.B are trying to get out of the whole situation and criminalise Mendeku. There are even death threats; we are totally pissed off.

The pro-amnesty coordinations maintained an ambiguous position about whether or not they were going to support the defense of the arrested people, which is why, and having seen the press announcements, Mendeku got in contact with the lawyers' collective, Berdin de Donosti, (which usually defends alleged members of the CAAC) and which has always been prepared to support us when we've needed them.

In the Crown Court, the ambiguity kept up by H.B (deceiving the families and not wanting to get its feet wet) went up the wall. Gestoras' lawyer, Kepa Landa, simply represents "popular action", ignoring the defendants. The female lawyer from Berdin has to defend the five people accused of the action against PSOE, which she hadn't expected, since no-one would represent them (the co-ordinations had told the families that they would defend them).

Whilst from the system the attacks have been continual, the solidarity action by loads of collectives from the Gazte asanblada, fanzines, pirate radio etc... has been brilliant. Everyone understands the fact that H.B supposedly linked to the "popular sectors" in criminalizing Mendeku implies the criminalization of all the collectives and people in Euskadi who are trying to wage their struggles without taking any notice of the theories of H.B's "organisation". This attack, which is not the first, is, in this case, totally blatant. You are either with them or against them. If they don't control the street, not even God himself will control it, if you don't follow their orders, you will be threatened and declared outside of the MVLN (10).

Thanks to the support of people outside of official organisations, we managed to bring out a pamphlet (10,000 copies) with an explanation, which is being distributed throughout Euskadi, through pirate radio, fanzines, and all the means of counter-information collaborated with us to clarify the affair.

There have been loads of discussions in many villages and towns in Euskadi directly explaining the whole thing to people. Mendeku continues and we are preparing the "Fuerzas Mamadas" (11) week. The fanzine will be out soon. We'll send you a copy. The clashes in Portu carry on everyday. We are threatened and insulted. The pigs are still everywhere.

We don't know what's gonna happen but we'll let you know. Oh we forgot: we set up a fucking brilliant "Vote Fumeiro" (vote for a spliff) campaign with posters, stickers, and the rest of it.

Thanks in advance for your solidarity and support.

CUENTA APOYO  
CAJA LABORAL POPULAR  
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MENDEKU

Translated from Spanish in December 1987.

NOTE 9 : MVLN : *Movimiento Vasco de Liberation Nacional* , *Basque National Liberation Movement*.

NOTE 10 : FUERZAS MAMADAS : *Every year the spanish State organizes the celebration of the armed forces called fuerzas armadas. But Fuerzas mamadas is a play on words using the word "mamon" which means bugger.*