

week end
Spain
Prime Minister
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SAVING TELEGRAM

BY BAG
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FROM: MADRID

To FCC telegram No 9 Saving of 4 August 1980. RFI Saving to Lisbon, Rome, Ankara, UKDEL NATO.

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SPAIN: THE IMPACT OF TERRORISM

1. Spain has been spared terrorist atrocities on the scale of the Bologna explosion and political instability aggravated by terrorism on the Turkish model. ETA (politico-militar)'s beach-bombing campaign appears to have died out, having taken its toll of tourist earnings. But the rival military wing of ETA has stepped up its campaign of terror against the state. A succession of incidents in the last few weeks suggests that the Government's efforts have achieved only limited success.

2. ETA (m)'s campaign of intimidation and murder within the Basque country has not slackened. But a sensational variant was introduced with the robbery of nearly 8 tons of high explosive from an ill-guarded warehouse in Santander, and by the ambushing of two Civil Guard convoys. In the second of these ambushes, which took place outside the Basque country itself, one officer was killed and at least 30 other Civil Guards escaped death only because half of the charges placed failed to explode. And the urban terrorist organisation GRAPO, whose leadership the Government claimed to have dismembered earlier this year, was almost certainly responsible for an attempt to assassinate a General in Madrid last week: the General was only lightly injured but his bodyguard was killed.

3. The Government has put a brave face on this latest wave of violence. The new Minister of the Interior, Sr Rosón (recently Mr Whitelaw's host), has some grounds for his recent claim that police successes were reducing ETA's capability to sustain continuous activity (though he rightly avoided suggesting that the Government had got on top of ETA). He has also broken with tradition in criticising the vigilance of the security forces

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themselves: his report to the Council of Ministers on the latest ambush was highly critical of their self-protection measures. General Santararía, the Government's special representative for security matters in the Basque country, has belatedly met the Basque Prime Minister Garaicoetxea, who has been more forthright in his condemnation of terrorist violence. But winning the support of the Basque public for the security forces remains a slow and uphill business.

4. The cool efficiency of the theft of such a vast quantity of explosive pointed up continuing weaknesses in the Government's response to ETA. It was also a knock to public confidence, even though terrorism has been a feature of life in Spain for long enough to dull the sense of popular outrage at each new incident. With the public irritated by roadblocks and street searches but now diverted by holiday-making, ETA's insolent successes have probably not much lowered the Government's stock. But the failure to make headway despite sustained efforts and some signs of increasing political maturity among Basque politicians must be depressing for a Government which has yet to emerge from a bad patch on other counts. Politicians to the Right of the governing UCD find ready ears with their facile calls for the law to be enforced and authority restored. There is evidence that the Chiefs of Staff are concerned that the explosives now in ETA's hands will increase the terrorists' capability to attack the armed and security forces. But morale lower down remains high and there is no sign of the terrorists succeeding in provoking military counter-action, within or outside the Constitution. This is therefore one of the areas (high and rising unemployment is another) where Suárez can expect increasingly searching questions from allies and Opposition when political life resumes this autumn. Meanwhile his Government will continue its war of attrition in what still looks likely to be a long haul.

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