



## Discourses and public policies on memory: The narrative construction of the violent past in the Basque Country (1936–2020)

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On 3 May 2018, the terrorist organization Euskadi ta Askatasuna (ETA, Basque Homeland and Freedom) issued a statement announcing the definitive end of its 'political activity'. The announcement came after a trajectory of more than half a century that had left a tragic total of some 850 victims killed, 2,500 injured, 80 kidnapped, thousands of cases of extortion, and attacks of various kinds against property and people, as well as an ingrained culture of violence and hatred that fuelled the group's actions and the dehumanization of its victims.<sup>1</sup> This definitive renunciation was largely thanks to successful police and judicial action against the group, greatly accelerated since 2001, such as the immediate arrest of commandos and leaders, which pushed the group into a situation of extreme structural weakness. But it was also due to factors such as the rising mobilization of citizens against ETA, the emergence of new forms of international terrorism and growing internal dissent against the use of murder because it was deemed strategically useless.<sup>2</sup>

As is often the case after the end of long processes of violence, in the Basque Country a series of opposing narratives are currently proliferating – unequal in terms of objectives, rigour and social projection – regarding the violent past. This past is not exclusively limited to ETA terrorism (1959–2018), but also incorporates periods such as the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) and the dictatorship (1939–1975), as well as the victims of extreme right-wing groups (1975–1982) and para-police terrorism, such as the GAL (1983–1987).

In general terms, these accounts occupy two broad parallel spaces, which sometimes also intersect. On the one hand, there are academic works that are the product of historical research: increasingly abundant and exhaustive, these



works gradually cover the existing historiography gaps on the subject, but their social diffusion is limited, so their findings do not always transcend public debate. On the other hand, there is another series of discourses, generally outside of academia and mainly supported by memory narratives, which is established by different political associations and institutions whose primary objective is memory and its management (memory policies), more than the rigorous interpretation of the fact itself. In essence, they are the ones with the greatest means available to intervene in opinion and in public space. In this chapter, I will try to present the main narratives and public policies of memory constructed around the different phenomena of political violence in the Basque Country (and in the whole of Spain) from the Spanish Civil War to the present, while also addressing the most significant public debates in this regard.

### The war of 1936

As in the rest of Spain, the 1936 war in the Basque Country was a fratricidal war that pitted Basques against Basques. It could not have been otherwise in a territory characterized by broad political plurality. The Spanish right, represented mainly by Carlism and monarchist Alfonsism; Basque nationalism, represented mainly by the deeply religious and traditionalist Basque Nationalist Party (PNV); and the Left, with a strong presence of Socialists and Republicans, had competed electorally on an equal footing until July 1936, when a sector of the army, in an armed uprising, decided to violently break the constitutional legality then in force.<sup>3</sup>

The evolution of the coup in the Basque Country reflected the complex and varied panorama of politics and identity that characterized Basque society at the time: Álava, with the exception of a small area in the north, was soon in the hands of the Francoist rebels. Gipuzkoa surrendered two months later, after quelling the initial attempt at uprising thanks to the prompt response led by the anarchists, and experienced the intense revolutionary process before surrender.<sup>4</sup> And Biscay, where there was no coup or revolutionary outbreak due mainly to the skill of the political and military commanders loyal to the constitution, maintained a relatively stable political and social order, violently broken on several occasions, until the Navarre brigades occupied Bilbao on 19 June 1937 after several months of harsh conflict.<sup>5</sup>

The repression carried out by the coup plotters in Álava killed 228 people, mostly supporters of left-wing political groups. Eighty-six per cent of whom

were extrajudicially killed in 'sacas' – removals organized by patrols of Requetés and Falangists – during the so-called hot terror in the first hours. Before this, Republican violence had left a total of forty-seven killed in the province.<sup>6</sup> Around the same time, the 'spontaneous' violence of leftists also killed 248 people in Gipuzkoa. Similar situations occurred in Bilbao in September and October 1936 and in January 1937, when crowds violently killed more than 200 'right-winger' prisoners under the pretext of the Francoist air raids suffered during those days. In total, 569 people lost their lives as a result of rearguard violence in the province.

The repression led by the plotters also left a total of 604 fatalities in Gipuzkoa, 86 per cent of whom correspond to extrajudicial killings, and 636 in Biscay, the majority (90 per cent) executed after court-martial sentencing. After the fall of Bilbao, most of the military contingents, including many civilians, fled to Cantabria in a general atmosphere of defeatism, evidenced by the constant trickle of uncontrolled desertions. Finally, approximately 30,000 combatants, mostly assigned to battalions of Basque nationalism, surrendered in the coastal town of Santoña (Cantabria) on 25 August 1937, after an agreement reached between Juan Ajuriaguerra, a prominent leader of the PNV, and the Italian Fascist military commanders of the *Flechas Negras*.<sup>7</sup> It is estimated that a total of 111 Basque combatants were executed in Cantabrian territory.<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that the consequences of Francoist repression in the Basque Country, in terms of killing, were far from the figures of the majority of other Spanish regions, where repression was significantly more intense.<sup>9</sup>

In the post-war period of repression and social control, the Franco regime initiated an intense policy of memory aimed at the remembrance of the war and its deaths. The 'fallen' coup plotters became the pillar on which to establish a set of measures officially intended to combat 'time and forgetting' and to consecrate 'the martyrs of the Movement'. This particular policy of remembrance, in a first phase that lasted until the 1950s, exclusively honoured the victors of the war. There was no Spanish town that did not have at least one monument in memory of the 'fallen'. References to the war flooded the public space through new street names and the erection of crosses, busts, plaques and various other monuments.<sup>10</sup>

Besides pursuing the legitimization of the military coup, this policy of public space launched by the new state sought the cohesion of its ranks and, at the same time, the perpetual stigmatization of the defeated.<sup>11</sup> It was a memory of the war based on a discriminatory Spanish nationalist vision, integrated into an instrumental and combative reading of history that connected the coup against

the Republic with medieval crusades. This circumstance did not impede the new regime from assuming and promoting some regional discourse and its traditions, including those of the Basque Country, insofar as they remained subordinate to the exaltation of the Spanish nation.<sup>12</sup>

The political cultures that made up the defeated side also developed their particular account and memory of the war. In the Basque case, these memories were far from synchronized, especially among Basque nationalists and leftists. Despite forming a coalition government during the war and fighting together on the front lines, the mutual hostility between many *gударis* (combatants loyal to the PNV) and militiamen (left-wing combatants) resulted in numerous confrontational situations. This was not surprising, given that these antagonistic political cultures had been confronting each other dialectically since their very origins in the late nineteenth century.

Since the immediate post-war period, Basque nationalism developed an account of the war that fundamentally revolved around the same idea: the



**Figure 9.1** Monolith in memory of victims of terrorism and violence (San Sebastián-Donostia, Spain), 2007. © Histagra Collection / Histagra Research Group.

Basque people – always identified with Basque nationalists, heroically defended by the *gudaris* – had been singled out as victims by the Spanish invasion.<sup>13</sup> This narrative would subsequently achieve great social projection in the Basque Country, due to the lack of a strong and refuting alternative narrative from the leftist forces, amongst other reasons. For instance, the bombing of Guernica (26 April 1937) was presented by Basque nationalism as the greatest example of the Spanish exterminating intent against traditional Basque essences.<sup>14</sup> The reports by British journalist George L. Steer, a direct witness of those events, replicated that image of the Basque people as particularly subjugated by Spanish fascism.<sup>15</sup>

The Francoist rebel air force bombed more than thirty towns in Biscay, causing even more fatalities on some occasions; however, none of these spaces has acquired the relevance of Guernica, which was turned by Basque nationalists into the site of war remembrance par excellence.<sup>16</sup> Picasso's 1937 painting *Guernica*, commissioned by the government of the Republic, gave that attack even more significance. On a smaller scale, though also carrying certain social relevance, there are other sites of violence such as former battlegrounds, including Mount Intxorta (Elgeta, Gipuzkoa), Peña Lemona (Biscay) and the defensive line that protected Bilbao and its adjacent municipalities, which are currently the subject of exhibitions and guided tours. On the contrary, most other sites of violence, such as places of confinement or execution – many of them redefined or no longer in existence today – continue to be pushed into the background socially, if not completely ignored.

In any case, since the immediate post-war period, Basque nationalism has passed a distorted narrative of the war down through the generations, via the most intimate social circles of family and friends. In general terms, this account, presented in the Basque nationalist context, omitted references not only to the fratricidal nature of the war but also to the plurality of Basque society, the scope of the repression in the whole of Spain, the initial doubts of the PNV before the coup as well as the final outcome of the war in the Basque Country.<sup>17</sup>

### ETA, the 'new gudaris'

Created in 1959, ETA assumed and adapted much of the Basque nationalist community's anguished and victimizing memory to give meaning to its own existence and actions, which ETA considered necessary in light of the passivity it attributed to the PNV in defence of the 'Basque people'.<sup>18</sup> The search for historical

legitimacy meant that many nationalist references to the war were exploited<sup>19</sup> by the terrorist group to establish a logical line of continuity between the war of 1936 and the context of the 1960s, although the origins of the secular conflict were sometimes traced to an even more distant past.

ETA gradually assumed – not without internal controversies – the idea of the use of violence as inevitable to forging the nation. The terrorist organization defended the inevitability of ‘armed struggle’ until the end of its days. It argued that the adoption of such a measure was justified as a response to external issues, thus minimizing the responsibility of the voluntary and reasoned individual decision to use murder as a tool to achieve political ends. Julen Madariaga, a historical leader of ETA, said in 1964 that ‘our policy of defending ourselves from the violence of the tyrannical occupier through violence has not been chosen by us, the Basques; they have imposed it on us. We are only applying the very just right to legitimate defence.’<sup>20</sup> One of the group’s last statements insisted on that same idea, the inevitability of violence: ‘we did not go looking for war. The conflict was brought to us at home.’<sup>21</sup>

Somehow, this Providence-like reading of history – in which the subject is not the owner of its decisions, and there is a tendency to claim to genuinely represent the national will – shared certain foundations with the discourse that the Francoist rebels used for forty long years to justify the military uprising against the government of the Republic; the subsequent repressive policy directed against the internal enemies of the national community (the so-called anti-Spain); and the public policies of commemoration carried out during the dictatorship. This is reflected in the ‘explanatory note’ of the Causa General of 1940:

The National Uprising was inevitable, and it emerged as the supreme reason of a people at risk of annihilation, in anticipation of the imminently threatening communist dictatorship. When it took place on 18 July 1936, this legitimate defence movement led by General Franco [...].<sup>22</sup>

On 7 June 1968, ETA claimed its first victim. Two gunmen of the group killed Civil Guard traffic officer José Pardines in cold blood in the Gipuzkoan town of Aduna, initiating an escalation of violence that would not stop until the declaration of the ‘permanent ceasefire’ of terrorism in October 2011.<sup>23</sup> The existence of fatalities was part of the action-reaction-action strategy designed by the organization in the spring of 1965. As the Franco regime’s response to the group’s actions became more violent and indiscriminate, the more possibilities there would be to mobilize and gather support in a society ‘made drowsy’ by

the Franco regime. Growing labour conflicts and the progressive escalation of terrorism made the Basque Country, this time indeed, the focus of Francoist repression in Spain.<sup>24</sup> The Basque people, a synecdoche for the Basque nationalist community, were depicted as the favourite victim of the Franco regime both inside and outside the Basque Country.<sup>25</sup>

The collective victimization of the Basque people that ETA encouraged acquired even greater social projection with the Burgos trial in 1970. This conveyed the idea that (Spanish) repression was suffered not as a result of being an activist for a particular ideology, but as a result of being a member of the Basque community.<sup>26</sup> Years later, various ETA members of the time acknowledged that during their militancy, they had been imbued by a desire for sacrifice that had more overtones of political-religious fundamentalism than traditional nationalist values.<sup>27</sup> In other words, they recognized that they had developed ideological foundations and practices that resembled the national-Catholic premises that they claimed to be fighting against. According to Martín Alonso, these were characterized by the following aspects: the creation of a suffering 'we', the hostile representation of the enemy, the belief in the inevitability of violent confrontation, the designation of a vanguard of struggle, the natural assumption of violence, a concept of the fallen as martyrs and conviction in the saving power of violence.<sup>28</sup> Mario Onaindia himself, sentenced to death in the Burgos trial, was surprised by these concomitances upon reading the works of José Antonio Primo de Rivera, founder of the Spanish Falange, while serving a prison sentence for belonging to ETA.<sup>29</sup>

The handling of the memory of Francoist repression carried out during the Transition has been (and still is) the subject of a heated debate. In general terms, while some scholars maintain that there was not a pact of forgetting but one of remembrance instead, others blame the Transition for confusing reconciliation with forgetfulness and argue that it even built a hegemonic account of denial and impunity.<sup>30</sup> In the Basque case, the dominant discourse resulting from the Transition institutionalized the narrative that had been forged since late Francoism, where the Basque Country was presented as a collective and resistant victim of a conflict imposed from outside.<sup>31</sup> Francoism was presented as a foreign element to the Basque body, without roots in the territory. The natural heirs of Basque sociological Francoism, who had consented, with greater or lesser enthusiasm, for so many years to the dictatorship, were first erased from the social imaginary and later 'crushed' by the terror campaign implemented by ETA against the representatives of the right in the Basque Country. The group killed twenty-seven civilians accused of sympathizing with the Franco regime

between 1976 and 1983, practically eliminating their presence in public space.<sup>32</sup> The exceptional circumstance of being subjected to a spiral of silence, a product of the fear caused by the suffocating terrorist pressure, made it extremely difficult for right-wingers to disseminate their political project affiliated with the Spanish democratic right, and to possibly challenge the hegemonic account of the time.<sup>33</sup>

The most significant reminders of the war and the dictatorship in the public space were suppressed in most Basque towns after the constitution of the first democratic city councils in April 1979. In Bilbao, for example, almost eighty street names referring directly or indirectly to the war were eliminated, including 'January 4th Street', which was a reminder of the victims of the tragic events that occurred that day in the prisons of Bilbao.<sup>34</sup> However, some references were kept after being previously resignified, such as references to relevant battle sites. Likewise, along with all the new memory policies implemented by democratic institutions, ETA continued its particular war against the monuments associated with the Franco regime.<sup>35</sup> No one rebuilt those destroyed tombstones and memorials dedicated to the 'fallen'. In this way, the Franco regime gradually lost all symbolism of memory instituted after the war, to the point of disappearing from the memory of the Basques. They, in turn, had been converted by the new hegemonic account into the genuine representatives of anti-Francoism, thanks in large part to the activity of ETA, the crushing of the Right and the institutionalization of a suffering Basque 'we'.<sup>36</sup>

## Contemporary narratives

The collective affiliated with radical Basque nationalism, which has historically supported ETA, is currently seeking to adapt to the new situation of the absence of terrorism. While assuming the 'suffering caused' by ETA, the discourse of this collective avoids the explicit condemnation of the group's crimes, as it frames them within a global armed confrontation between ETA and the Spanish state during the last sixty years that caused 'pain and suffering' on both 'sides'.<sup>37</sup> This narrative deliberately ignores explosive issues, such as the fact that 95 per cent of ETA's killings were committed after Franco's death. The anti-Francoist nature of ETA's struggle continues to be accentuated, although historiography has already demonstrated that its anti-Francoism was purely incidental.<sup>38</sup> ETA continued to act, with much greater brutality if possible, in the context of democracy, confirming that the group's ultimate objective was to attack the Spanish state, whether it took the form of a dictatorship or parliamentary democracy.



In essence, this narrative continues to be an updated version of the message that ETA has been transmitting since the end of the dictatorship to justify its existence and crimes. Thus, the violence practised by ETA is generally presented as a reactive response in defence of the 'Basque people' – always understood as a recognizable natural entity – compared to 'Spain', identified as an aggressor and annihilator of 'Basqueness' in a historical conflict dating back to ancient times.<sup>39</sup>

The foundation Euskal Memoria, created in 2009, is one of the institutions that works most tirelessly to disseminate the narrative of the 'two types of violence' described above.<sup>40</sup> To this end, it draws up lists of fatalities attributed to the Spanish state (the French state has also been included). In addition to the Basque victims of Francoist retaliation – who adhered to various ideologies – and the killings committed by extreme right-wing and parapolic terrorism between the end of the 1970s and the mid-1980s (which historiography estimates at sixty-two),<sup>41</sup> the lists include deaths such as those that were the result of manipulating explosive devices as well as others caused by suicide, natural illness, traffic accidents or even physical disappearances, for instance that of ETA political-military (ETApM) member Eduardo Moreno, otherwise known as Pertur – though not proven, the most corroborated indications about the cause of Pertur's disappearance point to the ETA organization itself. This clumsy increase in the number of victims attributed to the 'Spanish side' is intended to convey an equalizing idea of the two types of violence, balancing responsibilities in some way, and consequently minimizing the centrality of ETA in the recent violent past.

On the other hand, thanks to the determined commitment of regional and municipal institutions, in recent years the Basque Country has become, together with Navarre, the autonomous community with the largest number of memorials dedicated to the reprisals of the Franco regime.<sup>42</sup> Between 1987 and 2017, a total of thirty-five monuments were built for this purpose, the majority (85 per cent) erected since 2006, in the wake of social movements that emerged after the exhumation of thirteen bodies in Priaranza del Bierzo (León) in 2000 and the Law of Historical Memory of 2007.<sup>43</sup> Along with these constructions, monuments have also been erected in tribute to the dedication and courage of Basque fighters who died in combat against the Francoists.

At times, the monuments and plaques suggest that all or the vast majority of the war's fatalities fought for the Basque nationalist cause, while other political persuasions and identities that defended legality in the Basque Country remain hazy.<sup>44</sup> This is the case in the last inscription that accompanies the considerably large cross located on Mount Sabigain (Biscay), a former battle site, in which only

the courage of the *gudaris* is mentioned, when Basque socialist and communist battalions, and even some Asturian detachments, also fought in those conflicts.<sup>45</sup> Another notable aspect of the public memory policies promoted in the Basque Country is the striking absence of references to the victims in the area controlled by the Republicans. Their suffering is not explicitly mentioned in the plaques erected in memory of the victims of the war, nor in the other public memory policies. It is as if these politically motivated killings had never taken place, even though some of the most significant personalities, such as mayors or deputies, are among the 936 victims.<sup>46</sup>

On the contrary, in recent years, the Basque government has been promoting different policies for the search and identification of disappeared persons as a result of war violence, as well as the removal of Francoist symbols, to the point of eliminating most vestiges in memory of the 'fallen' erected during the dictatorship. In line with the Historical Memory Law, city councils, which are ultimately the ones with authority over the matter, have progressively eliminated references to the Franco regime that were still present in the public space. The elimination of these symbols, many in a clear state of abandonment, is generally carried out without drawing excessive social attention; however, on other occasions, mostly at the initiative of radical Basque nationalism, a whole ceremony is prepared to give meaning to this collective's particular account of history, enabling them to make political gains in the present.<sup>47</sup> One example in this regard is the action and message that a youth group affiliated with radical Basque nationalism published in 2019 on social networks. Upon taking down a column located in Ondarroa (Biscay), built in honour of the residents of the town who had died serving on the Francoist side during the war, they stated: 'We are the generation that is going to defeat fascism. [...] We will fight fascism everywhere as we did in 1936. They will not come through Euskal Herria!'<sup>48</sup>

Basque institutions, like other state institutions, have gradually devoted greater attention to the victims of ETA terrorism since the rise in memory movements and social awareness of the victims triggered after the kidnapping and subsequent killing of Miguel Ángel Blanco in July 1997, a 28-year-old councillor for the Popular Party (PP) in the town of Ermua (Biscay).<sup>49</sup> Until then, for a long time, the victims of terrorism had little social and political presence. Currently, the Basque Country has approximately ten artistic pieces dedicated to the victims of ETA, half of them located in the three Basque provincial capitals.<sup>50</sup>

These tributes do not always fit in harmoniously with the rest of the monuments erected in memory of the retaliation of the Franco regime. Sometimes, as in the case of San Sebastián, where they are separated by a few metres, the idea of

opposing memories is misleadingly transmitted: as if some (the victims of ETA) were the consequence of the others (the victims of Francoism).<sup>51</sup> Historically, Basque public space, especially in towns where radical nationalism is strongly present, has been occupied by graffiti and posters with both slogans of support for the group and its members as well as explicit messages of intimidation against multiple individuals and collectives. Even today, when that scene has practically disappeared, news occasionally still appears about vandalism carried out against tributes to ETA victims. However, social and political support for attacks of this kind has been declining, to the point that even the top leader of the Basque nationalist left, Arnaldo Otegi, showed public disapproval of a recent attack on the plaque commemorating the killing of Gregorio Ordoñez, a city councillor of the PP in San Sebastián.<sup>52</sup>

### The conflicting management of memory

Likewise, over the last decade, both the regional and national governments have set up institutions based in the Basque Country to preserve the memory of the victims of the various contemporary phenomena of violence that have occurred on Basque soil (and in the whole of Spain): the Gogora Institute for Memory, Coexistence and Human Rights, set within the framework of the Basque government and based in the National Historical Archive of Euskadi, in Bilbao, created in November 2014; and the Memorial Centre for Terrorism Victims (CMVT) based in Vitoria and promoted by the government of Spain, launched in 2016. Both centres share some general objectives, such as the need to preserve a memory of the violent past and to increase the visibility of the victims; however, there are profound differences related to the way in which this traumatic legacy is managed.

The first major difference between the two bodies lies in the chronological range and in the scope of action. The CMVT exclusively covers the victims of the different terrorist groups that have operated in Spain from 1960 to the present, such as the various branches of ETA, far-right and far-left organizations, and the GAL, as well as Islamist terrorism. ETA terrorism is featured the most prominently, due to the greater impact of its activity; approximately 60 per cent of the total fatalities of terrorism in Spain correspond to ETA and its related groups (a figure that rises to 92 per cent in the Basque Country).<sup>53</sup> In contrast, Gogora not only covers forms of terrorism after the 1960s, but also handles public policies related to the Spanish Civil War, the Franco dictatorship and police abuse. In this sense, Gogora goes far beyond the common norm of other

regional laws enacted in terms of historical memory, which focus exclusively on the victims of Francoist retaliation.

The mission of managing memory is also different; each centre offers different answers to the question of what to remember and why. Gogora, for example, is in favour of reflecting a multifaceted account of memories of the suffering and violation of human rights as a result of the multiple forms of violence that have taken place in the Basque Country during the last eighty years.<sup>54</sup> The cornerstone of this account is the unjust suffering caused by various types of violence, and the memory, therefore, is primarily aimed at stitching the fractured community together. Thus, for the sake of community reconciliation, a narrative of a series of violent phenomena is transmitted that, ultimately, ends up strengthening the historical account constructed by Basque nationalism in which the Basque people are presented as a collective victim.<sup>55</sup>

An illustrative example of this is one of the highlighted activities organized by Gogora, called Plaza de la Memoria, which travelled through different Basque towns for three years (2016–2019). The exhibition featured multiple testimonies on an equal level that referred to different episodes of violence from 1936 to 2010, with the aim of constructing ‘the puzzle of collective memory’.<sup>56</sup> In reality, behind initiatives of this type, there is no discernible will to understand the key factors that enabled the development of each form of political violence, since issues such as the intent of the perpetrators, the social support they amassed and the responses of citizens to the crimes are hardly addressed. Academic historians have already warned that the accumulation of memories without contextualization or interpretation does not permit an exhaustive understanding of victimization processes – which are, in the end, those that serve to identify and better prevent future analogous episodes.<sup>57</sup>

For its part, the Memorial Centre (CMVT) also promotes the need to build a collective memory of the victims; however, in this case, the defence of that memory is inexorably linked to the political significance of each victim. This positioning is unequivocal, as can be seen in the 2011 law to establish the Centre, which explicitly mentions the search for

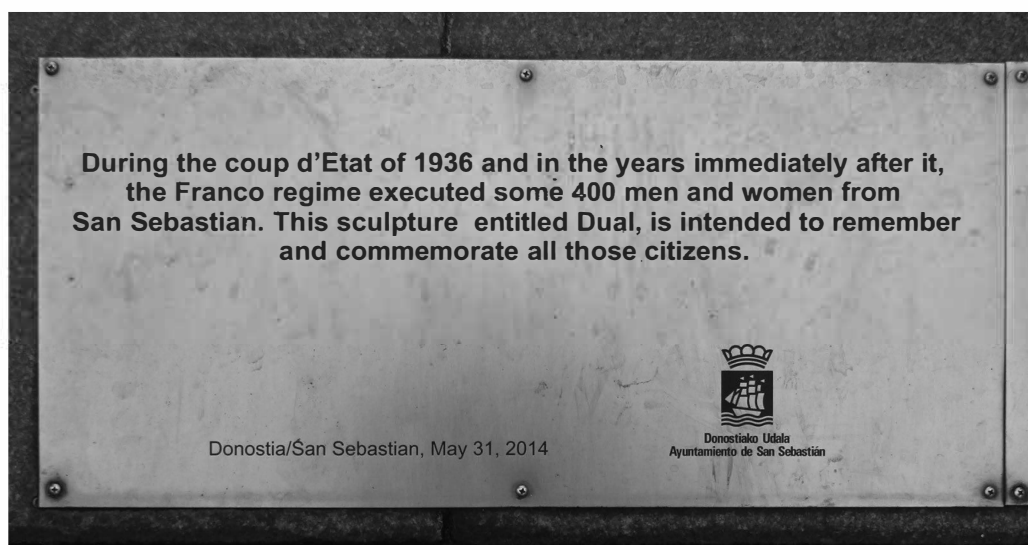
knowledge of the truth, attending to the real causes of victimization and contributing to an account of what happened that avoids moral or political equidistance, value ambiguities or neutralities, that collects with absolute clarity the existence of victims and terrorists, of who has suffered harm and of who has caused it [...], without any justification of terrorism and the terrorists.<sup>58</sup>

To achieve these goals, the CMVT has a museum in Vitoria – scheduled to open at the end of 2020 – which will house a permanent exhibition and

aims to incorporate diverse activities. Likewise, it will have a documentation centre specialized in terrorism and its victims, equipped with primary sources on victims' associations, pacifist movements, judicial and police reports, and documents related to terrorist organizations, amongst others, that will be available for use by academic researchers.<sup>59</sup> The first investigations developed and promoted by the centre, most of them in collaboration with university groups, are already bearing fruit in the form of conferences and the publication of various reports, journals and books.<sup>60</sup> Thus, in addition to the intention to preserve the democratic and ethical values of the victims through acts of remembrance and activities of various kinds, the centre has a clear vocation to contribute to the search for historical truth through historiographic methods that enable rigorous knowledge of the forms of terrorism that have acted in Spain. The CMVT considers this the best way to raise awareness in society as a whole about the ideas of 'the defence of freedom and human rights and against terrorism'.<sup>61</sup>



**Figure 9.2** Sculpture in memory of Francoist repression victims (San Sebastián-Donostia, Spain), 2014. © Histagra Collection / Histagra Research Group.



**Figure 9.3** Plaque in English. Sculpture in memory of Francoist repression victims (San Sebastian-Donostia, Spain), 2014. © Histagra Collection / Histagra Research Group.

The treatment of the memory of political violence continues to cause controversy among different Basque political groups. Not all of them share the same objectives in this regard, as evidenced by the construction of two memory centres in the Basque Country with non-matching strategic policies. Recently, for example, a bitter debate has risen around the publication of the 'Herenegun' pilot didactic materials, prepared by the Basque government's Human Rights Secretariat to explain the phenomena of political violence that occurred in the Basque Country between 1968 and 2018, and destined for use in secondary schools.<sup>62</sup> Be that as it may, the management of public memory, as this chapter has attempted to demonstrate, is constantly being built and rebuilt in a conflictive context that varies depending on the conceptions and political interests of the moment. Historiography, as until now, will continue to travel its path, with greater or lesser success, covering new fields of knowledge and participating in public debate. However, this circumstance does not offer us certainty about the future. Only time will tell which of the competing accounts will achieve greater social and political penetration in the future, as well as whether the memorials that have been erected will attract the interest of future generations – or if, on the contrary, they will simply become decorative structures devoid of meaning.

## Notes

- 1 'ETA anuncia su disolución', *El País*, 3 May 2018. Available online: [https://elpais.com/politica/2018/05/03/actualidad/1525336524\\_523980.html](https://elpais.com/politica/2018/05/03/actualidad/1525336524_523980.html) (accessed 18 May 2021); Rafael Leonisio, Fernando Molina and Diego Muro, *ETA's Terrorist Campaign: From Violence to Politics, 1968–2015* (London: Routledge, 2017). The 'permanent ceasefire of armed activity' was announced on 20 October 2011, see 'ETA pone fin a 43 años de terror', *El País*, 20 October 2011. Available online: [https://elpais.com/politica/2011/10/19/actualidad/1319056094\\_153776.html](https://elpais.com/politica/2011/10/19/actualidad/1319056094_153776.html) (accessed 18 May 2021).
- 2 Florencio Domínguez, 'Las claves de la derrota de ETA', *Informe del Centro Memorial de las Víctimas del Terrorismo* 3 (2017): 1–63. Antonio Rivera, 'Una paz donde no hubo guerra. El final del terrorismo en el País Vasco', *Vínculos de Historia* 7 (2018): 115–31.
- 3 José Luis De la Granja, *República y guerra civil en Euskadi. Del pacto de San Sebastián al de Santoña* (Oñate: IVAP, 1990).
- 4 Pedro Barruso, *Violencia política y represión en Guipúzcoa durante la guerra civil y el primer franquismo 1936–1945* (San Sebastián: Hiria, 2005).
- 5 Juan Pablo Fusi 'La Guerra Civil en el País Vasco: Una perspectiva general', in *La Guerra Civil en el País Vasco 50 años después*, ed. Universidad del País Vasco-Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea (Bilbao: UPV-EHU, 1987), 49.
- 6 Gogora, *Primera fase del Informe base de violaciones de derechos humanos en Euskadi durante la Guerra Civil y el Franquismo: Víctimas mortales durante la Guerra Civil y el primer franquismo 1936–1945* (Bilbao: Gobierno vasco, 2019). Available online: [https://www.gogora.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/gogora\\_dokumentuak/es\\_def/Informe%20violaciones%20DDHH%20en%20Euskadi%20Guerra%20Civil%20y%20Franquismo%20CAST%20\(azke....pdf](https://www.gogora.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/gogora_dokumentuak/es_def/Informe%20violaciones%20DDHH%20en%20Euskadi%20Guerra%20Civil%20y%20Franquismo%20CAST%20(azke....pdf) (accessed 18 May 2021). Gómez puts the number of victims of rebel-led repression in Álava at 193, see Javier Gómez, *Matar, purgar, sanar. La represión franquista en Álava* (Madrid: Tecnos, 2014), 339–45 and 347.
- 7 Fernando De Meer, *El partido nacionalista vasco ante la guerra de España 1936–1937* (Pamplona: EUNSA, 1992), 534–35.
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