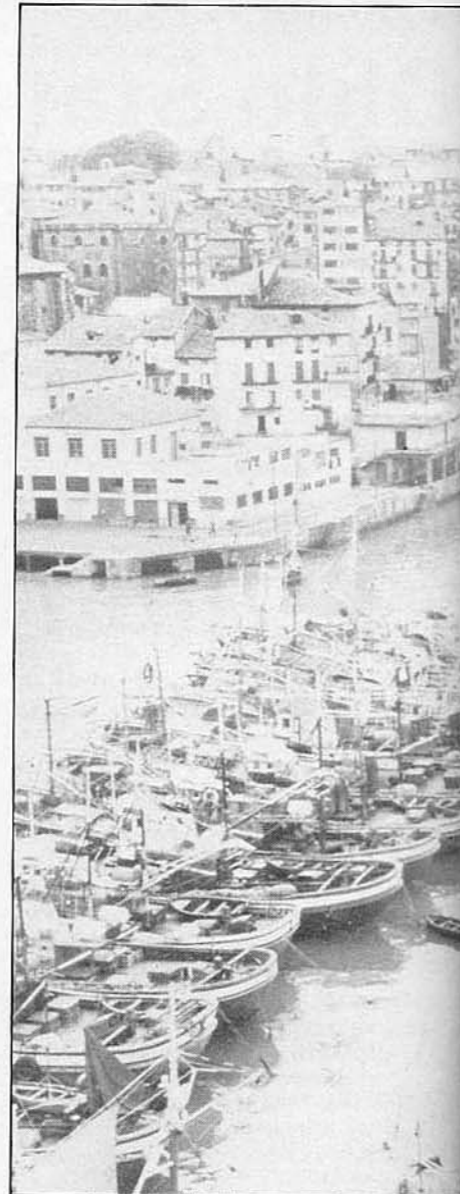
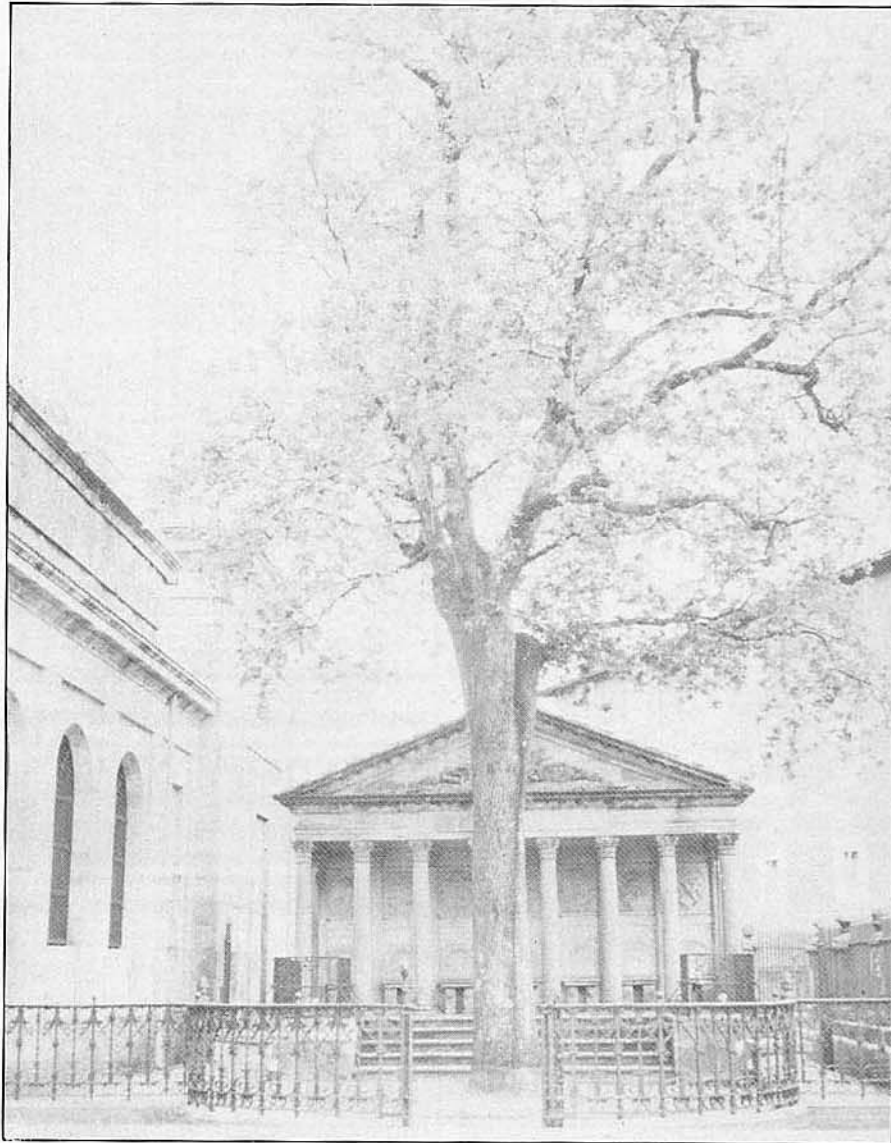
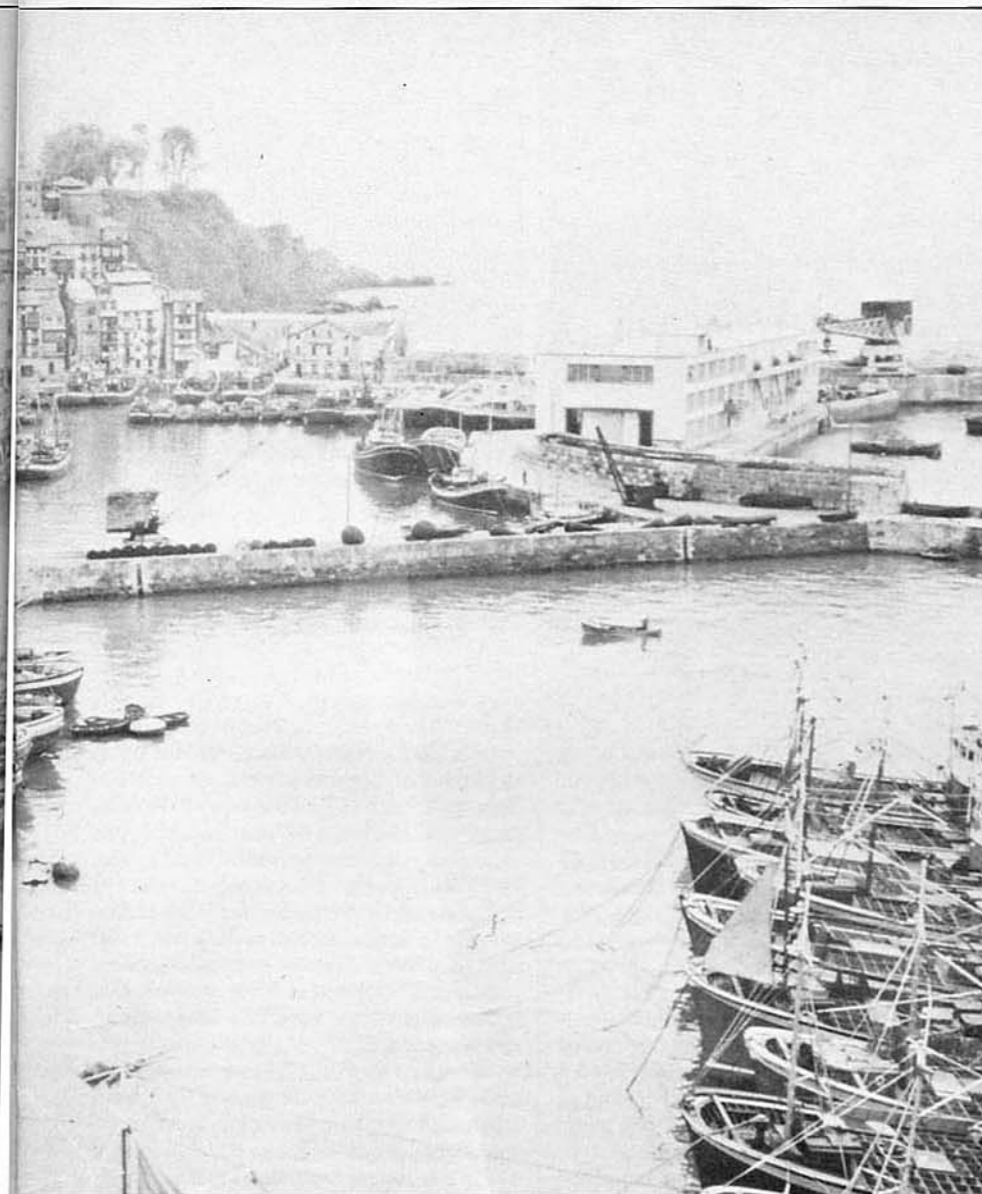


The Mysterious Radio Euzkadi

40 Years Of Deception! BY DON JENSEN



Port of Bermeo in Basque province of Vizcaya. (Photo courtesy of Spanish National Tourist Office)



The Oak of Guernica, showing the Casa de Juntas. (Photo courtesy of Spanish National Tourist Office)



Jesus Maria de Laizaola in early 1970 at the age of 74. He was the president of the Basque government while in exile in Paris.



Modern apartment building at 48 rue Singer in Paris. In the 1970's, the Basque exile government was headquartered on the ground floor of this building.

What and where was Radio Euzkadi? And why did it broadcast—off and on for 40 years—as the secret station of an invisible government of a non-existent nation?

Radio Euzkadi, until it closed down in 1977, was one of the most persistent of the clandestine stations that seem to flourish on the shortwave bands whenever and wherever there is political turmoil. The mysterious station had shortwave listeners baffled for years. And when the truth was finally known, it was a fascinating tale of intrigue and deception, with a million-dollar twist and, at least peripherally, involved kidnapping, torture, and murder.

Radio Euzkadi operated from at least

three locations during its long history, including an old fishing boat in a French harbor. In its final years, it pretended to operate from the mountains of northern Spain, while it was actually on another continent 5,000 miles away.

Radio Euzkadi broadcast to the Basques, a strange people with an even stranger language, whose traditional homeland straddles the Spanish/French frontier. Some people claim the 2.5 million Basques are descendants of the last survivors of legendary Atlantis. Most scholars, however, now believe their distant ancestors were a Bronze Age people who migrated westward from Asia Minor some 4,000 years ago.

The origins of their language, mostly X's,

K's, and Z's, are also uncertain. It is probably the oldest language still spoken by man. There are those who claim it was spoken by Adam and Eve, and was the only language to escape the Tower of Babel.

During the reign of Julius Caesar, the Basques settled in the green valleys and fir-covered Pyrenees Mountains of northern Spain. For a thousand years, they fiercely fought off waves of invaders—Phoenicians, Visigoths, Arabs, and the armies of Charlemagne. In time, they accepted the sovereignty of the Spanish kings, but only in return for solemn pledges, regularly given beneath the sacred oak of Guernica, to respect their rights of self-government.

But a little more than a century ago, the

Basques chose the wrong side of an internal Spanish squabble and their ancient laws and privileges were suspended. Since then, they have struggled with a succession of governments, trying to regain semi-autonomy.

In 1936, they were briefly successful. In a bid for Basque loyalty in the Spanish Civil War, the Republican government restored self-government. Under Guernica's tree, a young lawyer, Jose Antonia de Aguirre y Lecube, was sworn in as Basque president.

But ten months later, the short-lived republic was crushed by the armies of Franco and his German and Italian allies. It was during that embattled period that Radio Euzkadi first went on the air. Little is known about its early operations, except that it was located in Bilbao, near Spain's northern coast. When Bilbao was captured by the fascists, the station was silenced for the first time.

Aguirre and his cabinet fled first to Paris; when WWII began and the Nazis entered the French capital, they moved to New York, where the exiled president took a university teaching post. After the war, the Basque

government-in-exile returned to Paris, although a number of the members of the shadow government settled in the French fishing port of Bayonne, and its neighboring town of St. Jean-de-Luz, not far from the Spanish border.

In December 1946, a reborn Radio Euzkadi began broadcasting clandestinely from an old, weatherbeaten fishing trawler tied up in Bayonne's harbor. Its signals apparently were not regular nor strong enough to be heard in the U.S., but some European SWLs caught a few shortwave transmissions on 6,300 and 7,000 kHz. Most of the broadcasts, however, were aired by a medium wave station just powerful enough to be heard by the Basque audience across the line in Spain.

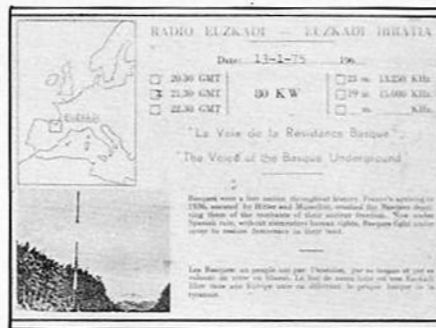
The French government must have known of Euzkadi's broadcasts, for a clandestine station cannot operate without at least the tacit consent of its host country. The French seemed willing to look the other way as long as the station didn't spark an international incident. In the early 1950's, though, two

such incidents struck sparks, which ignited a diplomatic "4-11" blaze!

The first incident involved a Basque priest named Onaindia who was hired by the official Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française to broadcast during a daily 45 minute European Service transmission in Spanish. The priest's talks were more theological than political, but they did point up the problems of the Basque minority and that made Madrid decidedly unhappy.

More provocative was an incident involving a Spanish medium wave radio station in the northern city of San Sebastian. One night, the Basque underground, operating from French soil, somehow managed to cut the electric power circuit to station EAJ8. For half an hour, the silenced Spanish station was replaced on its usual 1068 kHz frequency by Radio Euzkadi. That broadcast was heard throughout the Basque provinces and embarrassed the Franco regime.

Under diplomatic pressure, France cracked down on the Basque exiles. Father Onaindia was fired and, in August 1954, Radio



QSL received from Radio Euzkadi in 1975, just two years before its final broadcast.

Industrial area of Bilbao. (Photo courtesy of Spanish National Tourist Office)

Euzkadi was shut down for the second time. Its medium wave transmitter was dismantled and shipped to the exiled government's headquarters in Paris, where it was stored for at least two decades in the basement.

In those days, the Basque government operated from a "chilly baronial mansion" in the French capital, according to a prominent visitor, author Irving Wallace. Within a few years, however, the headquarters was moved to the ground floor of a modern glass and stone apartment building at 48 rue Singer in the pleasant Passy District of Paris' 16th Arrondissement. Led by Aguirre and, after his death in 1960, by Jesus Maria de Leizaola, the aging band of exiles kept the torch of hope aglow.

In the summer of 1964, Radio Euzkadi began its third and longest period of operation, beaming a message of resistance into Basque Spain.

A few years earlier, however, another Basque organization, ETA (Euzkadi ta Askatasuna: Basque Homeland and Liberty) had begun to challenge the old men of the exile government in Paris. Soon ETA would be making headlines with a campaign of terror and assassination in Spain, overshadowing the old guard's more passive approach.

Still, through the new Radio Euzkadi, the exile government spoke to the Basques and to the world. In the 1960's and 70's, the station, with two moderately powerful short-wave transmitters (the station claimed they were 80 kilowatts each), broadcast three times daily, half hour repeated programs in the Basque language, Eukaera, Spanish, and English. To dodge the Spanish jamming stations, its frequencies varied, but generally it could be found near 12,100 and 13,250 (briefly around 15,100) kHz.

Probably because of past experiences, the Basques were tight-lipped about the station's location, though they implied it operated from within Spain itself. When I got too

inquisitive about the whereabouts of its transmitters, a touchy exile official snapped: "If the word clandestine means secret, why should you be the exception?"

DXers took logs on the Radio Euzkadi programs they monitored. The broadcasts began with an eight note tuning signal, the opening bars of the Basque anthem. The identification announcements followed in Euzkera and Spanish: "Enmen Euzkadi Iratua . . . Radio Euzkadi, la Voz de la Resistencia Vasca." The station even responded to SWLs with QSL cards, which showed a photo of an antenna with a background of snowcapped mountains, implying a secret transmitter site high in the Pyrenees.

In reality, though, the station broadcast from Venezuela, not far from Caracas. Direction finding experiments indicated Radio Euzkadi was not in Europe, but along the northern coast of South America. The more precise location came from an off-hand remark by a Basque official, during an unguarded moment while being interviewed at the Paris headquarters.

The station was tolerated by the Venezuelan government, which surely was aware of its operations, and was supported by a large and active group of Basque immigrants living in Caracas.

Some SWLs assumed, incorrectly, that Radio Euzkadi was another Red clandestine, like the Soviet-backed longtime Radio Espana Independiente. But most Basques, devout Roman Catholics, are staunchly anti-communist.

"Radio Euzkadi does not harm any true democrat," a Basque spokesman told me.

Other listeners suspected the behind-the-scenes string-pulling of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. But there was no evidence of that either.

How then did the Basques do it? Equipping and operating a major clandestine broadcaster takes money!

A clue to the mystery was suggested by an incident that began in Manhattan on the night of March 12, 1956, involving Dr. Jesus de Galindez, a 42-year-old professor of Hispanic-American civilization at Columbia University. He also happened to be the Basque exiled government's chief fund raiser in the U.S. Shortly before 10 p.m., a student gave the professor a ride to the subway station at 57th Street and 7th Avenue. Galindez walked down the steps to the platform and disappeared!

There was another side to the professor's life. Also a Basque exile, he had fled Spain and found his way to the Dominican Republic, where he took a job with the dictatorship of the late Rafael Leonidas Trujillo. But he was soon shocked by the Caribbean strongman's terror tactics and, in 1946, left for New York. There, he met a fellow instructor at Columbia University, Basque president Aguirre. When Aguirre returned to Paris, he named Galindez the official Basque representative in the U.S.

Galindez continued his fight against the oppressive Dominican regime as well, and at the time of his disappearance had completed a book manuscript that painted a highly unflattering portrait of the dictator Trujillo, who was then trying to lure American tourists to his island country. Rumors that the book would contain personal slurs on his manly honor were too much for the fiery strongman to endure.

Eventually, evidence was unearthed indicating Professor Galindez was kidnapped by Trujillo agents, drugged and smuggled unconscious aboard a chartered plane. He was flown to the Dominican Republic and, presumably, tortured and slain!

When the hired American pilot, who thought his passenger was only an invalid, began asking too many questions, he was pushed into the shark-infested sea behind a Ciudad Trujillo slaughterhouse.

Trujillo himself was assassinated a few years later during a coup d'etat allegedly encouraged by the U.S. government.

The grisly story bears on the Radio Euzkadi mystery because of newspaper articles published shortly after Galindez disappeared. They told of reports the professor had filed, as a foreign agent, with the U.S. Department of Justice. The reports showed he had collected \$1,023,004 over several years, but the newspapers said only half that amount had found its way into the coffers of the Basque government-in-exile.

President Aguirre denied any shortage, insisting "every cent was accounted for."

But, as *Time* magazine put it, how could an "obscure exile . . . pass the hat for a non-recognized government of a nonexistent country—and take in a cool million?"

The money, in fact, came from a voluntary head tax paid by Basques living outside of Spain, most of them in the western hemisphere. Each year, these emigrants contributed to the exiled government as a show of solidarity with their compatriots back home, and to maintain a dual "citizenship" in the Basque "nation." Overseas Basques were reminded annually to renew their "citizenship card" by sending in their contributions.

There was ample money to finance the clandestine station. Its programs were produced in studios in Caracas, although its daily "News of Spain and the World" were culled, in part, from newspapers in the Paris headquarters and scripts were airmailed to a blind postal drop in Venezuela.

The Spanish answer to Radio Euzkadi was jamming and more jamming. The technique was to bracket the clandestine's frequency with a pair of rapidly beeping signals. But the jammers seemed to have trouble following Euzkadi's frequency shifting. Because of the sloppy jammer operation, the station was heard with relative ease in the Basque provinces.

This went on until 1975, when Francisco Franco, Spain's longtime foe of Basque autonomy, died. It was Franco who had, since Spanish Civil War days, considered the Basques traitors and treated the northern provinces accordingly.

A more liberal, democratic regime followed. In early 1977, the political association law was reformed and most political parties were legalized. The way was open for a return to democracy.

The Basques were promised their own justice system, taxation, education, and police force. They were to have a local parliament and be permitted to speak their ancient language and fly the red, white, and green Basque flag. By 1980, much of the old autonomy was restored. There no longer was a need for a clandestine radio "voice of the Basque resistance."

After four decades, Radio Euzkadi announced it was shutting down. At 2208 GMT, April 30, 1977, the station signed off for the last time, saying:

"Since the Basque national flag is once again flying proudly from all mastheads in the Basque country, Radio Euzkadi can withdraw from the air with honor!"