

LETTERS | TO THE EDITOR

Spain and terrorism

Regarding the editorial "Dealing with the Basques" (June 25):

The editorial surprisingly — and extremely unfairly to the victims — uses the term "separatists" to describe ETA, then adds that ETA has killed 800 people through terrorist actions. Calling ETA a separatist organization is tantamount to likening Al Qaeda to a mere religious group.

The editorial appears to overlook the fact that ETA and Batasuna have been expressly declared terrorist organizations by both the State Department and the European Union, after detailed analysis that showed, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that both organizations are part of the same murderous structure. In Spain, decisions on the matter have been made by the courts, acting independently as is natural in a country governed by the rule of law.

The fight against terrorism is not limited to the capture of the actual snipers and bombers. It is also vital to target the sources of funding and the logistic structures that allow them to carry out their attacks.

The line of argument in the editorial appears to disregard this blatant reality and advocates the use of purely police means against individuals in the fight against ETA.

Terrorist organizations are not just bands of criminals. They seek to portray themselves as legit-

imate members of political life. In Batasuna, the terrorist organization ETA had merely set up a legal cover to avail itself of the privileges that the democratic system confers on political parties.

Two examples will suffice to illustrate this. Electoral rolls made available to Batasuna during election campaigns were used by ETA to select potential victims of extortion rackets to raise funds. Public funding given to Batasuna as a political party were used to fund terrorist attacks.

It is not that ETA and Batasuna simply share the same objectives. Rather, they represent a division of labor within a single organization headed by the terrorist group. Other political parties that support independence for the Basque country, but have refused to submit to the terrorist organization, continue to go about their work in a perfectly normal way.

One could argue that outlawing Batasuna has served to radicalize moderate nationalism or even that the confrontation between the central government and the autonomous Basque government has now reached absurd extremes.

However, to argue that these repercussions should have led Spanish judges to give Batasuna a role in political life is the same as advocating that one should ignore one's obligations in the fight against terrorism for reasons of political and electoral expediency.

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