

Association of Relatives and Friends of Political Prisoners

A Brief History of the Armed Struggle of GRAPO in Spain

Published: *The Communist* Issue 6 July 1999, published by the Communist Action Group and DHKC London, the Revolutionary People's Liberation Front of Turkey.

Transcription, Editing and Markup: Paul Saba and Sam Richards Copyright: This work is in the Public Domain under the Creative Commons Common Deed. You can freely copy, distribute and display this work; as well as make derivative and commercial works. Please credit the Encyclopedia of Anti-Revisionism On-Line as your source, include the url to this work, and note any of the transcribers, editors & proofreaders above.

The First of October Anti-Fascist Resistance Groups (GRAPO) were formed in the summer of 1975. At that time twenty members of the Re-Constituted Spanish Communist Party (PCE-r), an underground party formed five months before, carried out their first armed action against the fascist security forces.

On August 2, 1975 two Guardia Civil (Civil Guard) members were shot in the centre of Madrid. One died and another was seriously injured. This was the first strike back of GRAPO against the wave of fascist-inspired terror known as "the summer of terror".

The PCE(r) had its own "technical section" created to carry out expropriations of banks to support the revolutionary struggle and punish police informers. From the core of this section emerged GRAPO.

On October 1, 1975 five different GRAPO commandos executed four policemen and seriously injured another one in Madrid. This was their answer to the assassinations of five anti-fascists (two members of ETA and three members of the now defunct FRAP organization) killed on September 27, by police firing squads applying death penalties ordered by the military authorities.

GRAPO didn't claim responsibility for these actions until July 8, 1976 when 60 bombs blasted fascist targets throughout the country. It was the 60th anniversary of the beginning of the Civil War won by the fascists.

In January 1977 the police arrested 40 PCE(r) and GRAPO members in Madrid and Barcelona and succeeded in freeing Lieutenant-General Villaescusa and a member of the Spanish oligarchy Oriol, who had been kept prisoner by GRAPO commandos for 60 days in order to exchange them for political prisoners and to force the government to apply an amnesty.

A few days before two GRAPO commandos had executed two policemen and one Civil Guard in Madrid and injured three more Civil Guards in two separate attacks on the fascist forces as a reaction to the killings of five leftist lawyers by a paramilitary gang acting under Civil Guard orders.



On June 4, two Civil Guards were shot dead in Barcelona, this was the day of the first general election since 1936 and the reformist farce was going on. This action was a clear sign that showed that the revolutionary organizations would not accept the renewal of fascism under any "democratic" mask.

On September 27, 1977, Captain Herguedas, of the National Police was shot dead by a GRAPO commando in Madrid. He had been one of the fascist volunteers who executed five anti-fascists just two years earlier. In 1977 and 1978 GRAPO actions continued, mainly bomb attacks against army and military quarters but also against government facilities.

Some selective assassinations were also carried out. On March 22, 1978, the General Manager of Prisons was shot dead near his house in Madrid. He was responsible for the killing of an anarchist prisoner in Carabanchel Prison, who was beaten to death by guards who tried to get information from him about an escape plan of GRAPO and PCE(r) prisoners.

1979 was the year in which GRAPO carried out its most actions: on January 9 a judge from the Supreme Court was shot dead, on March 5 an Army General was executed when his car was attacked by a GRAPO team on a centre street of Madrid, and on April 6, a chief of the "Antiterrorist" Brigade of the National Police (NP) was executed in Seville.

Altogether 20 members of the fascist police were executed that year in a combination of actions by the urban guerrilla throughout the country, and there were many bombs attacks that year as well.

On the other hand GRAPO and PCE(r) militants

paid a high price for this: 100 people were jailed - accused of membership in these organizations. (Police claimed that the PCE(r) and GRAPO were the same thing and many PCE(r) militants were arrested without any evidence against them. The Party was banned again, just as it had been under the military dictatorship). Seven members of the PCE(r) and GRAPO were killed by the police that year.

On June 28, Martin Eizaguirre and Fernandez Cario were assassinated by a special team of the Spanish military secret service in Paris. They were members of the Committee of Foreign Relations of the PCE(r) and were in exile. On April 20, Juan Carlos Delgado de Codes, a member of the Central Committee of the PCE(r) was shot dead by the police in Madrid - he was unarmed and didn't belong to the guerrilla.

Between April and May GRAPO carried out 30 armed actions in response to the killing of Delgado de Codes. This was later criticized by the Central Commando of GRAPO and the PCE(r) as a falling into blind militaristic tactics.

From that moment on GRAPO aimed all its efforts at maintaining the armed struggle and giving it a protracted character, assuming that it is not only possible but also necessary to follow a Protracted People's War strategy and that it is possible to develop this strategy in a developed European country.

On December 17, 1979 five prisoners of GRAPO escaped from Zamora jail through a tunnel dug for months by GRAPO and PCE(r) prisoners (some of them were miners). It was a real shock for the government, which tried to recapture them at any cost. Three of them were finally killed by the police (in 1980, 1981 and 1982) and the other two were recaptured shortly after they rejoined the struggle.

In 1980 and 1981 GRAPO was a weak organization due to the repression carried out against its supporters. In these years GRAPO carried out eight executions, including two Army Generals and one Colonel to denounce the role played by the army in the dirty war and counterinsurgency. A few policemen and civil guards were also executed.

GRAPO, as an organization that aims at becoming the core of the future People's Army has never targeted innocent civilians nor used dangerous devices against civilians in its military actions and sabotage.

In 1980-81 nine members of GRAPO were killed by the police in a clear shoot-to-kill policy. One PCE(r) militant died as consequence of torture in 1980 and on June 19, 1981, Crespo Galende, PCE(r) prisoner, died in a hunger strike (he lasted 94 days) against the policy of torture, isolation and annihilation of the political prisoners.

The government was forced to reunify the prisoners and allow them to keep their Communes in the jails. (The Karl Marx Commune - 80 prisoners of PCE(r) and GRAPO - in Soria Prison lasted until 1989 when the social-fascist government dismantled it).

In October 1982 the PSOE (social-fascists) came to power. The PSOE began by killing Juan Martin Luna, leader of GRAPO, who was shot six times in Barcelona in an undercover-operation. He was un-

armed, and some years later three policemen were charged with murder, but they were acquitted.

On the eve of the elections, (October 28), GRAPO planted 30 bombs in Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and twelve other parts of the country. The blasts were aimed at promoting a boycott and to denounce the electoral farce.

In 1983 and 1984 GRAPO recovered from its previous weakness and carried out many armed actions. During this time GRAPO carried out about 70 bomb attacks - aimed at police targets, in support of worker's strikes, in support of other countries revolutionaries, etc., and also against the bourgeois mass media (eg., bomb attack against the German consulate in support of the RAF prisoners, bomb against the Employers organization)...

During this time GRAPO also carried out some executions. In April 1983, a Lieutenant of the National Police and a Civil Guard were executed in Valencia and Coruna, the first one by a bomb in his car and the second one was shot dead.

On January 2, 1984 two policemen were shot dead in Madrid. 1984 saw GRAPO make frantic efforts to support the proletarian struggles throughout the country (46 bombs attacks that year), to strike back against the repressive forces and to collect the revolutionary taxes needed to keep the struggle alive (100 businessmen paid the revolutionary tax that year).

On September 5, three separate GRAPO commandos launched an offensive to force the exploiters to pay the revolutionary tax. In Madrid a businessman who had refused to pay was shot dead and in Seville another GRAPO team executed Manuel de la Padure, a well-known businessman and chairman of the Employer's Association.

In Coruna the head of the National Radio Broadcasting was seriously injured in retaliation for his counter-revolutionary propaganda. This was a warning to the reactionary mass media which continually discredits the revolutionary struggle.

One of the GRAPO militants who had carried out the action in Coruna was killed by the police some hours later and another one was injured and captured when the GEO-Squad (NP special assault squad) raided the house where they were hidden. The repression launched against GRAPO and the PCE(r) that year was very harsh.

In June, Manuel Perez Martinez "comrade Arenas," secretary general of the PCE(r) left prison after having been jailed since 1977 accused of "unlawful association". He, as many other former prisoners of the PCE(r), had to go underground again as the only way of developing the struggle away from police control.

Since the 70's some of the PCE(r) and GRAPO leadership and clandestine organization has been based in France, and the Spanish police have never been able to destroy it.

On January 19, 1985, the Spanish political police succeeded in capturing most of the GRAPO militants in Spain: 19 of them were captured in nine different provinces, the police discovered 17 apartments, lots of weapons and ammunition and money collected through the revolutionary tax.

This disaster was possible due to the breaking of many security and clandestine rules by GRAPO in its aim of carrying out too many actions in support of the people's struggles. The strict compartmentalization within the organization had been broken and this allowed the police to carry out this strong strike in only forty-eight hours.

The reorganization of GRAPO was slow and difficult, in 1985 it almost ceased to exist but the spirit of sacrifice of the new militants, most of them without any previous guerrilla experience, allowed the struggle to continue.

In 1985 and 1986 they carried out some bank expropriations, some went wrong and seven GRAPO members were captured. Money had become the main problem since they were not strong enough to collect the revolutionary tax - they needed apartments, cars, and facilities to develop the urban guerrilla successfully from the underground. Weapons were also desperately needed.

1987 was a small turning point. In that year they carried out six armed actions according to police sources. There were some successful bank expropriations (small ones) and a headquarters of the local police in Malaga was attacked to obtain weapons. Three constables were disarmed and tied up. (They were not executed as they were not considered proper targets. The local police are mainly concerned with motor vehicle traffic and play no special repressive role).

In another operation, a GRAPO commando tried to attack a National Police station in Valence to seize blank identity cards - there was a shooting and a policeman was seriously injured.

In 1988 GRAPO carried out some armed actions to collect the revolutionary tax again. On May 27 the President of the Bank of Galicia was shot dead in his house; he had refused to pay the tax and had alerted the police about GRAPO activity. He was a well-known exploiter who had impoverished many people (especially poor farmers), and he was also responsible for the closing of many factories due to banking speculation. Two months later another businessman was shot and seriously wounded.

On October 4, GRAPO succeeded in seizing 800 blank identity cards from a police station in the centre of Madrid. A policeman was shot dead and his weapon seized. (Most of GRAPO's weapons came from its actions against the police and security guards).

On March 10, 1989 GRAPO executed two Civil Guards in Santiago, the same day that the TREVI group was having a meeting in Madrid. (TREVI was then the visible head of repression in western Europe). In July 1989 GRAPO solved their money problems by expropriating 148 million pesetas (one million dollars) from a bank in Castellon.

In November the political prisoners of PCE(r) and GRAPO started an indefinite hunger strike demanding an end to isolation and their reunification in a single prison. (The political prisoner's communes had been dismantled by the PSOE government in 1987).

To support the struggle of the prisoners GRAPO launched an offensive in December. On the 13th an

Army Commander was shot in Madrid and seriously injured; on the 15th an Army Colonel was shot three times and seriously injured in Valencia; on the 18th a member of the secret police was shot dead near Barcelona while he was leaving his house, and on the 28th two Civil Guards were executed in Gijon while they were guarding an official building.

The government's response was to arrest militants of the PCE(r), jail them and blame them for these armed actions. (One of the lies spread by the mass media is that GRAPO members are recruited only from among the militants of the PCE(r), so trying to present this clandestine revolutionary party as the "political branch" of GRAPO).

As the hunger strike went on many prisoners were moved to hospitals where they were chained to their beds, disturbed by police and forced to receive "forced feeding" in a desperate and torturous measure by the government to avoid the death of these revolutionaries at that very moment (preferring instead to annihilate them slowly and silently in the prisons).

On March 27, 1990, a GRAPO commando executed doctor Munoz in Zaragoza. In their statement GRAPO called him "a torturer" ready to follow the government's instructions to submit the prisoners to the agony and torture of the forced feeding. He had refused orders from a judge to stop this kind of torture and was a firm supporter of the government plans of extermination. (As well, he was a cousin of the Spanish Attorney General).

As a consequence of the force feeding the hunger strike became very prolonged. On May 25, Jose Manuel Sevillano Martin died after 177 days on hunger strike - he was a member of GRAPO and had been imprisoned since 1987.

GRAPO decided to avoid entering into a tit-for-tat battle - because this could only benefit the already alert security forces and after a retaliation action (the execution of an Army Colonel on June 15 in Valladolid) centred themselves on carrying out an offensive to take the initiative again in September.

In September 1990 GRAPO planted six bombs in Madrid, Tarragona, Barcelona and Gijon. On the 6th three bombs went off in Madrid (one in the Stock Exchange, another one in the Supreme Court and the last one in the Ministry of Economy). None of these actions resulted in any civilian casualties.

On September 8, a bomb blasted petrol facilities in Tarragona causing damage of 3 million dollars; and on the 10th the PSOE central office in Barcelona was bombed causing damages valued at 100,000 dollars.

September ended with a GRAPO action in Gijon in which a commando raided an official building seizing one thousand blank driving licenses and then planted a bomb that blasted the facilities. In November 1990 two more bombs rocked two official buildings in Barcelona.

In 1991 and 1992 GRAPO continued with its bombing campaign against official buildings: in April 1992 GRAPO bombed the National Institute of Industry and the Ministry of Employment in Madrid,

two Civil Guards were injured. One year earlier, in February 1991 a GRAPO bomb cut, for six hours, the military NATO pipeline that supplies the U.S. air bases in Spain. The intent was to sabotage this pipeline which was being used by the U.S. B-52 Superfortresses that had devastated Iraqi cities. There were also sabotage actions against the facilities of the energy monopolies in 1991 and 1992 as well as bank expropriations.

In 1993 three GRAPO militants died in Zaragoza in an attack on an armoured car that was blown up with explosives to expropriate the funds that it contained. One security guard died and two more were seriously injured. That year seven bombs exploded in official buildings in Madrid (in the Employers Association, PSOE offices, and other offices involved in the industrial reconversion which had laid off thousands of workers).

In 1994 GRAPO actions were intended to seize funds that were desperately needed. Some expropriations were carried out. In January two bombs exploded in Madrid on the eve of a general strike, a Tax office and an Unemployment office were bombed. In July and December two armoured cars were attacked and money was expropriated (about a half million dollars).

In 1995 GRAPO carried out one of the most important and decisive actions of the last few years. On June 27 they kidnapped Publio Cordon, wealthy businessman and president of the insurance company PREVIASA; he was freed on August 17 in Barcelona after paying 400 million pesetas (about three million dollars). He had to pay another 800 million pesetas after his liberation but he decided to flee (his businesses are not very clean, he was also consul of Guatemala and has important business in that country.) In November the police arrested three GRAPO members in Barcelona and Valencia but they could not recover the money.

Nowadays it seems that GRAPO is undergoing a new re-organization and one thing is very clear: the fascist Spanish state has lost the battle in the sense that it has not been able to annihilate the armed organization nor the revolutionary party, the

PCE(r).

In the past 21 years, 3,000 people have been arrested by the police in relation to GRAPO and the PCE(r), of which 1,400 have been jailed. Nowadays there are 54 prisoners of PCE(r) and GRAPO in Spanish jails.

From 1975 to 1995 GRAPO has carried out 60 executions, more than 300 bombs have been planted and over 3,000 armed actions have been carried out. (The Spanish government recognizes 545.) Twenty GRAPO militants have died by police action or as a result of premature explosions. Seven PCE(r) militants have been killed by the police and paramilitary gangs. According to police sources there about 100 PCE(r) and GRAPO members in clandestinity.