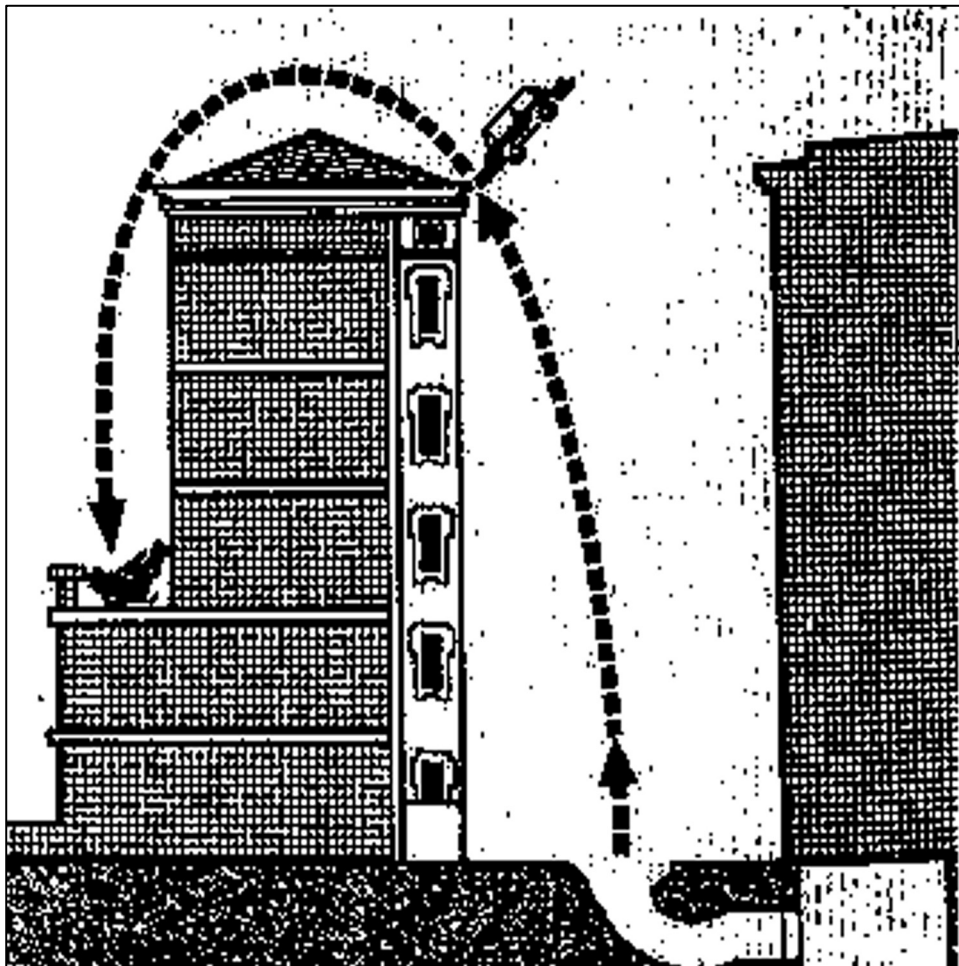




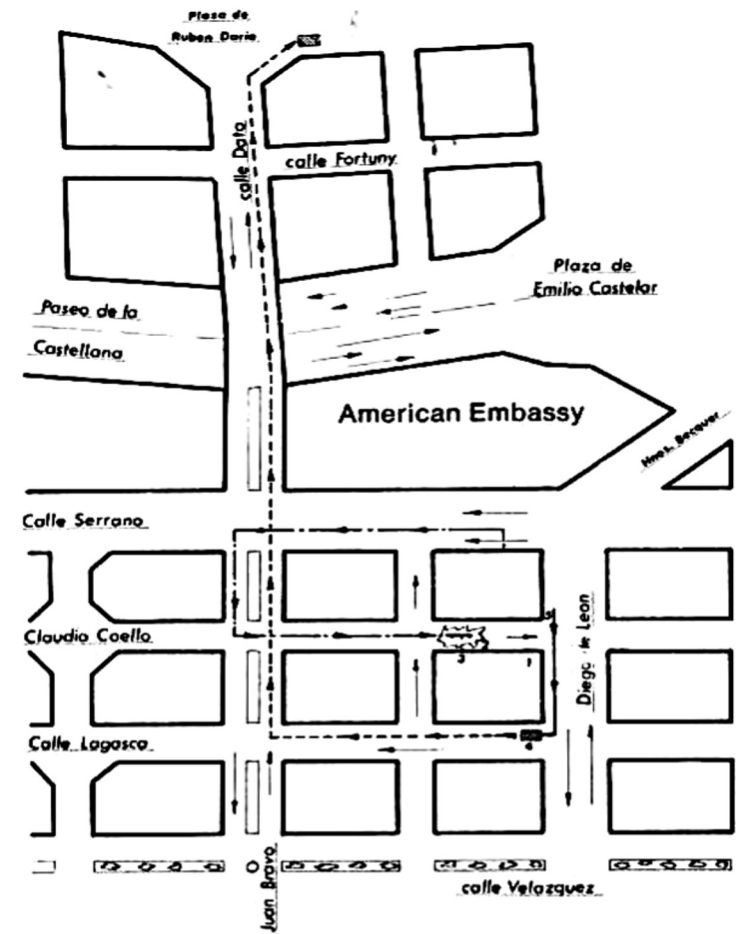
KILLING CARRERO

Madrid: December 20, 1973

**A Debrief by Four Basque
Separatists After
Assassinating Luis Carrero
Blanco, Spain's Prime
Minister and Franco's
Right-Hand Man**



DETONATION AND WITHDRAWAL



- Traffic direction
- Car get-away—first section
- Withdrawal of the commando on foot
- The Ogro's route—final phase

1. Site where the two "electricians" carried out the detonation.
2. The double parked Austin 1300. It served to:
 - 1) signal the closing of the circuit which produced the explosion at the moment the Ogro's vehicle arrived;
 - 2) to force the Ogro's vehicle directly over the explosive charge.
3. The direction of the tunnel's construction and the charges.
4. Parked automobile for the first part of the get-away; the chauffeur was inside and the engine was running.
5. Location of the fourth man who, in order to prevent any accidents, covered commandos who carried out the detonation.

"It's true," Iker broke in, "they did say 'Gas... Gas...' but in voices filled with emotion, mere threads. But they didn't attract any attention to themselves. I could tell that while they were walking toward our car," Iker explained. "It looked very natural to the people watching—to see that somebody had been frightened by the explosion. They got into the car, and there was a short exchange among us. While I was driving the car away, I asked, 'Did it all go off all right?' Then they answered me. Jon said it had been terrible. He *meant* that it had been a big explosion, but he *said* 'terrible.' I asked him if the car had kept on going. They told me, no, they hadn't seen anything. I remember that Jon said only two things to me... 'hit in the middle' and 'it was terrible.' He didn't say anything more. And Txabi, he only kept saying... 'Josu is avenged... Josu is avenged...' and 'Josu gave me courage... Josu give me strength.' Mikel was silent. But when we crossed Claudio Coello, and we saw the smoke, he grabbed me tightly by my shoulders, and he said, very emotionally: 'We overcame everything. We have won.' I gently pressed the accelerator and, until we changed cars, we didn't say anything more."



Car belonging to Prime Minister Luis Carrero Blanco after the explosion. Witnesses said the Prime Minister's car was hurled against the edge of the roof of the church, bounced over it and landed on the second floor terrace on the other side of the building. (UPI)

Editor's Foreword

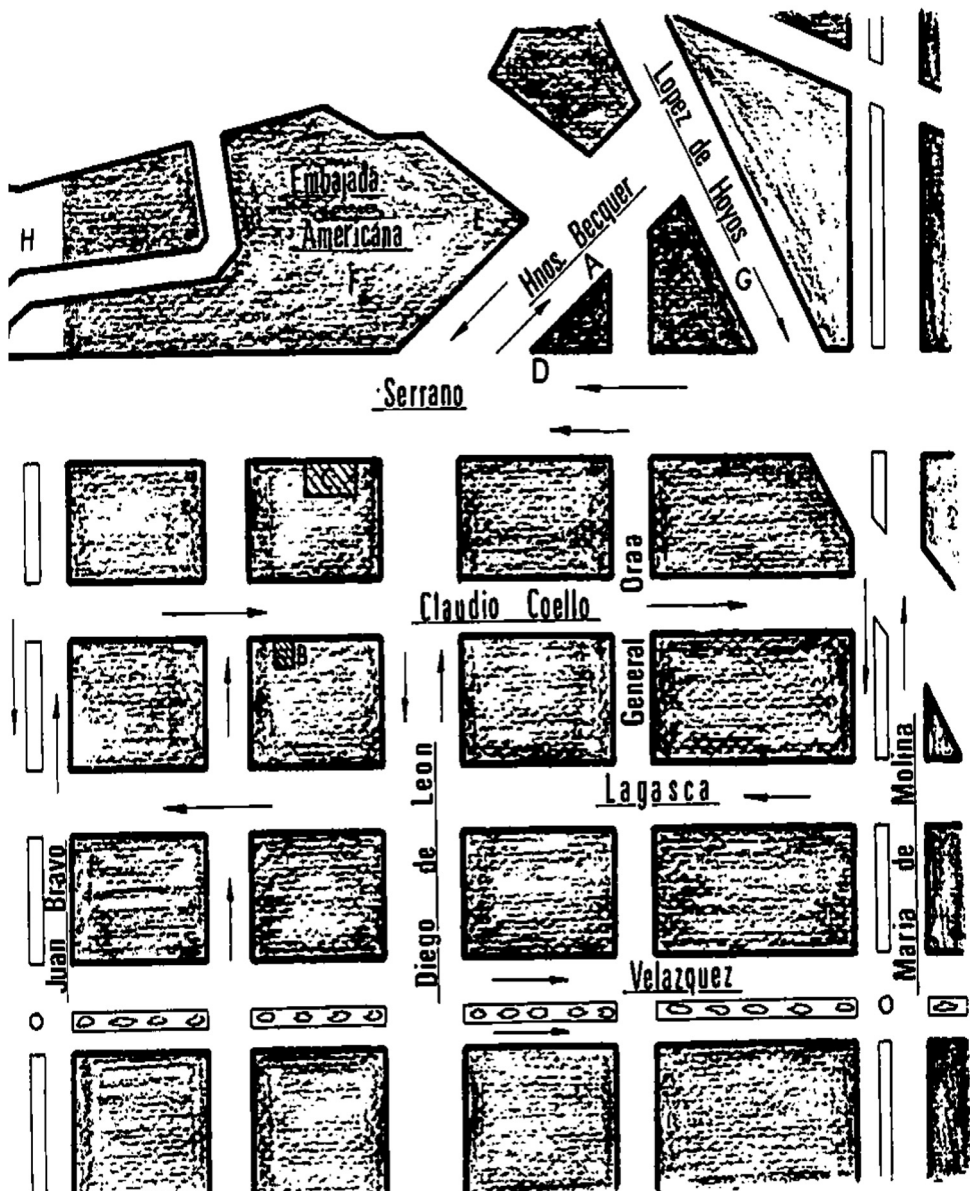
This zine is a condensed reading of the longer book *Operation Ogro*. The entire book is composed of an interview with four Basque separatists from the ETA ("Euskadi Ta Askatasuna" or "Basque Homeland and Liberty") in the days following their successful assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco, a fascist politician serving as the prime minister of Spain at the time.

The group that executed this assassination went by the name "Operation Ogro," as well as "Commando Txikia" after the nom de guerre of a much-admired ETA militant Eustakio Mendizabal who was killed by Spanish police in April 1973 while Operation Ogro was in its planning phase. The team was composed of four young Basque men using the codenames Iker, Mikel, Jon, and Txabi, who was their leader. At first they planned to kidnap Carrero in order to exchange him for Basque political prisoners, who at the time were typically swiftly executed by the Spanish legal system when captured. However, after more than six months of planning a detailed kidnapping, Carrero was made the prime minister of Spain and his security detail was greatly expanded, making the original plan impossible. After deliberation, Commando Txikia opted to assassinate him, ultimately setting a bomb off in a tunnel under his car and launching him over a five-story church building before he landed on a second story balcony on the other side of the building. In pop culture, Carrero is called "Spain's first astronaut" for his lofty final moments.

Such detailed and personal accounts of complicated and impactful actions such as the assassination of Carrero are relatively rare. Usually after an action like this, no one will ever speak of it again for fear of implicating others. While this makes sense, it is also extremely informative to hear the thinking behind the planning of such massive actions, and inspiring to hear the human fears, hopes, mistakes and successes behind these stories.

Whether they are terrorists or freedom fighters, the four young Basques spent more than a year scouting and planning this action and got away with it clean. Killing Luis Carrero Blanco has been considered one of the final blows to the Franco era of Spanish fascism.

If you like this condensed reading, we highly recommend reading the full book, which goes into incredible detail and discusses other exciting actions performed by commando Txikia during their year undercover in Madrid.



- A. Home of the Ogro
- B. Studio of the "sculptor"
- C. The Church of San Francisco de Borja
- D. Arab Embassy
- E. British Embassy
- F. American Embassy
- G. Original site chosen for kidnapping
- H. Bridge over the Castellana

AREA MAP OF OPERATION OGRO

When his car reached Maldonado a woman with a child was crossing the street. So his car stopped there again. After the woman and child had crossed, the car came slowly... slowly ... slowly.. up Claudio Coello."

"The car reached the place... in the end... in the end, what a person feels at a moment like that is something one can't even begin to imagine. His car reached our Austin... and I said to Txabi... 'Now.' I didn't see the car... but I saw that it went up into the sky. The explosion made a muffled sound. There was a moment... it was when Txabi pressed the button... I had already said 'now,' and I imagined that he had pressed the button. I didn't know, because I couldn't see. There was a moment when it seemed that nothing had happened. Those are the particles of a second that feel like years. That's the way it seemed—that nothing had happened. And then, suddenly, I saw—almost without any noise—it had made a noise, but very gentle, very soft—I saw the street suddenly open up! The street went upward... and a black cloud of smoke went up as high as the rooftops. We began to cry, 'Gas! Gas!' We had decided beforehand to create the impression that there had been an explosion of gas."

Txabi picked up the story. "In those last seconds, while we were waiting for Jon's signal—I was thinking only of one thing—Josu [4]. I couldn't get him out of my mind. I imagined his body, riddled with bullet holes.... that's the way they killed Josu," said Txabi quietly. "More than one hundred and fifty policemen surrounded the house. They ripped off his neck by firing at him—one bullet after another—I felt that *he* gave me courage—and I remember whispering to Jon in a low voice... when I pressed the button I didn't see anything. It was impossible, from where I was. It also took me several particles of a second to hear the explosion. But Jon was already running. I saw Mikel, across the street, coming toward us. I dropped the briefcase with the batteries. I started to run."

"We all ran," Jon continued. "In the middle of the street, there was construction going on—in Diego de León—on the right—between Claudio Coello and Lagasca. A man from the construction site, a construction worker, stared at us and asked, 'What is it? What happened?' And while I was running... bueno... we weren't really running—we were walking rapidly—between walking and running, I said to him, It's a gas explosion, a gas explosion.' Iker later said that we *thought* we screamed 'Gas explosion!—but in reality, we said it very softly, almost without any voice."

[4]. Josu was a childhood friend of Txabi and a fellow ETA militant who was killed in a shootout with Spanish police forces.

his car in reverse and backed into the same precise place from where he'd started! He started to stare at us again. Then he looked away again. He looked at something he had in the car. He picked up something. He got out of the car. He kept on staring at us and closed the car door. Then, he walked toward us, going in the direction of Claudio Coello. He turned around again. He went back, another time, to the car. He opened the car door and sat down inside the car again still another time. Then he looked at us again. He fiddled around some more. He got out of the car still another time. This time out, he locked the car door. He walked over to where we were standing—stared at us—looked over toward Claudio Coello. He sure was busy thinking about something. Sounds crazy, but—still another time back to his car! He sat down in the car again—looked inside the car for something—got out and locked it again. I think he had a tape measure in his hand, and some papers. He came over to where we were standing, looked at us again... and then kept on walking. He'd kept up this back-and-forth routine for at least three or four minutes. We were tense... waiting ... I saw Mikel across the street, looking at us nervously. I thought I could hear Tabi whispering to me, 'They're watching us ... They've surrounded us ... What's going on around us?'"

"Remember," Iker broke in, "we'd seen the grise leaving 104 shortly before. You start adding up incidents, and you get nervous."

"On an ordinary day, you don't pay attention to what's going on around you," Txabi added, "but on a day like that—*everything* takes on a different aura."

"Yes, but that man, he kept staring at a fixed point—and we were the fixed point!" said Jon.

"About 9:25, a boy passed by," continued Txabi, "a kid around 16 years old, tall, skinny. He asked me for a light. Hombre! I had my hand in the briefcase, the batteries were connected—and the kid asks me for a light! I didn't even know where my matches were ... nothing ... but I also didn't want to ignore the kid. I found my matches and gave them to him. Two minutes later, another kid, but slightly younger, around 14—the same thing! He wanted a light! Finally, the second kid left." Txabi paused a moment. "Then I saw that Jon was staring fixedly toward the end of the street, and I waited for his signal."

"That's when I saw Carrero's car coming along Juan Bravo," Jon broke in. "I saw the two cars coming—his car and the guard car following him. They had to stop at Juan Bravo. His car was in the far right lane, and they had to wait for the cars passing in the opposite direction—going toward Serrano—before his car could make the left turn onto Claudio Coello. The other cars, in the opposite lane, passed him... and his car came up Claudio Coello slowly... slowly... slowly..."

Luis Carrero Blanco



"The myth ETA sought to break was that the Spanish police were invincible. Prior to Premier Luis Carrero Blanco's assassination, in the 34 years of the Franco regime, there had been no attempts made against the lives of any of the leaders of the regime.

But why Carrero Blanco? Franco's greatest weakness was his fear of losing power. Consequently, the dictator ran his country virtually single-handedly. ... The one man Franco did trust was Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco. ... Aside from being the only man Franco actually confided in, Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco was the one man who seemed to have enough power to glue Spain's political future together. Under Franco, he was the arch symbol of the regime. The Spanish oligarchy counted on Carrero to assure their easy passage into the post-Franco era.

Luis Carrero Blanco, born in 1913, was a rather colorless man, whose most prominent feature was his bushy eyebrows, which is why the Basques nicknamed him "Ogro" (translation: ogre). He was given to obsessions about early Christianity and wrote on these various historical preoccupations under the pseudonym Juan de la Cosa. He had a somewhat simplistic view of the world as divided into forces of good (those with God) against the forces of evil (communists, masons, anarchists, and Jews). He was a man of rigid habits and had an extreme distaste for all intellectuals. He was known for saying he "would rather die in an atomic explosion than live in a world dominated by communists." Carrero Blanco was a figure out of Spain's melancholic, super-authoritarian past. With the exception of the ultra right and General Franco himself, in Spain there was singularly little grief displayed at the time of his funeral."

Operation Ogro

"In Bayonne, France, on December 28, 1973, eight days after Carrero Blanco's assassination, hooded members of "Commando Txikia" gave their first news conference to the foreign press to explain the rationale of Operation Ogro and how they did it.

Though there were some political round-ups in Spain directly after the assassination, the police were not able to make any significant arrests. Despite the regime's angry demands for extradition of members of ETA at large in France, Belgium, and other European countries, since the end of World War II no European country has handed back political exiles to Spain.

At the end of July 1973, the Spanish edition of *Operation ogro* was published in Paris. Of course the book was banned in Spain, but it was selling briskly in France, and Spaniards, in France for summer holidays, rapidly brought the book back home. Excerpts were printed in the Barcelona newspaper, Mundo. The injury to the pride of the Spanish police was enormous. Not only had they been unable, in six months, to make any arrests—now all of Spain could read how four young Basques, with extraordinary insolence, had outwitted the invincible Spanish security system."



Commando Txikia and colleagues in a press conference with the international press sometime after the incident.

safely inside the car—making an unspectacular escape."

"We made a right turn on Juan Bravo," Iker continued, "and then, when we crossed Claudio Coello, we saw a cloud of smoke and people gathering in the distance. It was our bad luck, just at that moment, that the traffic light turned red. We waited for the light to change—our car was alongside a black police car. They looked at us. We looked back. There were other cars, but nobody seemed to notice that anything had happened. In spite of being in the vicinity of the explosion, clearly, nobody had realized what had happened. We could see that the people were going about their business half-asleep. The Madrileños were on their way to work—they still weren't fully awake. That red light took a long time to change—but there was nothing alarming in the mood of the people around us. We saw a grise coming from the direction of the American Embassy. He walked over to the six policemen in the car alongside us. But we realized he was just following his usual routine. We sensed that, in those first two minutes, nobody had realized what had happened. The light finally changed. We drove fairly rapidly—but not so quickly as to call attention to our car. By this time, Jon and Txabi had taken off their overalls. We got to the Plaza Reuben Darío. I turned right, continuing along Miguel Angel. I stopped directly in front of the military school. Our third car was parked there, ready for us to make our final escape."

After Iker completed his account, the other three backtracked to tell what they were doing for the last half hour, while he was in the car.

Jon began. "When Txabi and I saw Iker driving past us, smiling, signaling that the Ogro was in church, we immediately went on alert. That was when I joined Tabi, and the two of us went back into the basement apartment for the last time, so that he could connect the battery."

"Jon came over to me and whispered, I would have preferred it if Carrero hadn't come," said Txabi.

"Yes," Jon admitted, "that's true. I did say that. When we went back to the corner of Diego de León and Claudio Coello, we also began to notice odd things in the atmosphere around us. There were a lot of guards. We realized that we could be seen by the men in the jeep in front of the American Embassy. The grises were all inside the jeep, but they still had a perfect view of us from Serrano. There was one of those street vendors—cigarettes and matches—on Diego de León. He also had a clear view of what we were doing. Then, at 9:15, a man pulled up in a car. He parked the car just at the corner. He kept looking at us, sort of pensively. The guy seemed to be thinking about something. He was staring at us with a steady, fixed gaze. Then he looked away from us. He started his car, advanced a short distance, then stopped again. He put

was never any free space?" Iker paused a moment before continuing. "During those final minutes—between 9:15 and the moment of the action—strange things started to happen. In the entryway of a garage on the corner of those two streets—Lagasca and Diego de León—there was a four-door 1600—half-in and half-out of the entryway. Then, when I pulled up, the man at the wheel of the 1600 drove his car out, letting me take his place, and he double-parked. He kept the windows closed, and stayed inside the car. That made me a little suspicious. But I didn't think it was too important. That was at 9:20. Right after that, a small truck drove up—and parked just behind the 1600. This meant that, during the getaway, I was going to have to steer our car around both the 1600 and the truck. This would certainly slow down our escape." Iker paused.

"This was *minutes* before the action. I was nervous. I had to quickly maneuver the car slightly farther out into the street to facilitate our escape. I began to feel that the place was filled with guards—that everybody was watching me. It also struck me that all sorts of odd things were going on around me. Then there was another mishap. A man—he looked like a worker—pulled up and parked his Citroen 4L in front of the 1600. Nervously, he kept looking at his watch—his car was also double-parked. During those last seconds, I thought: Fuck! Something is going on here! These guys are getting ready for something! I opened all four car windows. In case of a gunfight, it would be easier for me to shoot. Unobtrusively, I unlatched three of the car doors—for Mikel, Txabi and Jon. It was already zero hour. It couldn't happen any later. For me, those last few moments were an eternity." Iker paused once more.

"Then, at exactly 9:36 according to my watch, I heard a sharp explosion. Not too loud an explosion. Nothing shook. I heard hardly any noise. It seemed strange. I'd been revved up for the sound. Then I was surprised—the sound was so muffled."

Iker continued the account. "Where were my pals? I looked down the street, anxiously. They were only a few seconds late—but for me, it felt like hours. For a moment, I thought they weren't going to make it. Finally, I saw them coming quickly down the street. Txabi got in front, next to me. Jon opened one of the rear doors and climbed in. Mikel, the last one, entered the other rear door. I saw it all—and I saw nothing. Just before the three of them got into the car—at the very moment of the explosion—the worker, who was standing by his Citroen 4L, looked at his watch, jumped into his car and started the motor. There were several suspenseful seconds. But I saw in the rear-view mirror that he was racing to take the parking space I'd just vacated! I breathed a sigh of relief. We drove out of there rapidly—with Mikel, Jon and Txabi all

December 1st, 1972

"Some Useful Information Is Given to Operation Ogro"

Txabi started the tape; "ETA was given a secret news report that in Madrid Luis Carrero Blanco went to mass every morning at 9 in a Jesuit church on Serrano Street.

"In the beginning," Txabi added, "it was a piece of information like many others that come our way—nobody placed much hope or importance in knowing where Carrero went to mass—but we finally decided that one of the militants of ETA should go to Madrid and check out the report. The militant found out that the Madrid information was accurate. In addition, it appeared that there wasn't much guarding of Carrero. It might even be possible to kidnap him. That's the real way the idea of kidnapping Carrero came about. It would have been more logical first for us to have planned to kidnap Carrero and then to find the means of doing it. But life is always a little topsy-turvy, and in this case, we did it backwards. So, with this information as a base, a small group of militants began to analyze the situation. Clearly, Carrero was the key man in the regime. He was the man who for many years had prepared the way for the continuation and perpetuation of the Franquist regime. Carrero was now the real guarantee of this regime. He was precisely the man we should try to kidnap. He was actually one of the few people—perhaps the only person with whom we might obtain the liberation of Spanish and Basque political prisoners. More than 150 members of ETA were in prison with sentences over ten years each. The summer before, three militants were killed by the police. Just recently more than 70 Basque militants had been taken in Galdakano. The repression was fierce and brutal."

Jon broke in, "The organization's first plan was to kidnap Carrero Blanco. Since the Burgos trial in December 1971 the organization has made a priority of getting imprisoned militants out of jail. We didn't have much faith in prison escapes because, aside from the fact that the militants are scattered throughout many prisons, we lacked the kind of structure in the rest of Spain—outside of the Basque country—that would have made such a tactic practical. We didn't see any, possibilities of success along those lines. As an alternative we thought of kidnapping somebody important—but not an ambassador or a consul. Not enough impact. It had to be somebody who had a great deal of weight within the Spanish government. When the news about Carrero's going to the mass was confirmed, we decided that he was the ideal choice."

Iker continued, "In line with ETA's concern for liberating prisoners,

we gathered information for a long time. In the case of the Basque worker-priests who were incarcerated in Zamora clerical prison, a prison escape was attempted from the inside, with support from the outside. It didn't work."

"We had a lot of underground information," added Txabi, "but our problem was that we lacked a sufficiently strong organization and time to develop what we needed—the right place and the right contacts. For example, imagine managing a prison escape, say, in Extremadura. To start with, you'd have to have the means of getting to Madrid. That would take two or three hours, which would be very risky, with the police guarding the roads. Because we Basques don't know areas like Extremadura, that adds to the danger. In addition, we had the problem that any Basque activists in Spain proper would immediately be recognized by their Basque accents as soon as they made contact with people from the area. Prison escapes are rough to pull off—there are a thousand problems that make it not a very practical solution."

Jon spoke again. "The trouble has always been that Spaniards outside of the Basque country don't really understand the Basque problem. Each time we actually established some contact with people from Madrid or Barcelona, it didn't work. Spaniards even the Spanish opposition—don't really understand us Basques. For example, the problem we presented of the necessity for armed resistance to the regime simply was beyond the comprehension of opposition circles in Madrid and Barcelona. And as far as talking about a national problem, they see it from a completely different point of view. They don't really understand that the Basque country has suffered from its own unique form of repression. This is, without a doubt, one of the results of Franquist propaganda. Ninety percent of the political arrests in Spain are of Basques. This is a truth that Spaniards don't want to hear about—and that's the way it is."

Mikel broke in, "Spaniards have an enormous incapacity to understand that Euskadi [the Basque nation, also known as the Basque autonomous community] is a country, and, as such, it has a right to its national liberty."

"In general," added Txabi, "the oppression of minorities is not understood by those who don't suffer from it. This is a reality that we have to live with."

He continued, "During the fall of '72 our commando—which consisted of the four of us—had been given the information about Carrero's going to mass. We limited ourselves to trying to carry out what the central committee of ETA asked of us. We didn't even know who had given the information to ETA. Of course, in Madrid, as in many other cities in Spain, we have informants. ETA has an information network—

get dizzy and fall to the street. We were both down on the street. The ladder's function had terminated. But we were scared of a possible accident. We were stationed right next to a store with an enormous beveled-edged glass window—the sort of window that could shatter all over the two of us."

Mikel broke in, saying, "Earlier, around 8 in the morning, Iker and I had gone to have breakfast at the Cafeteria Chiquito while the 'electricians' were finishing connecting the cables. We bought *La Prensa*, *ABC* and *YA*. We leafed through the papers. Kissinger had already left Madrid. After that, we went over to the cars."

Iker now took up the narrative. "That was about 8:30," he said, and continued, "my mission was to leave the Austin well placed—double-parked—for the action. I parked the car as planned. I left the window slightly open, as though I were just leaving the car for a moment while running a quick errand—as though I'd be right back. But, to make it look natural, I left the door locked. And the window was sufficiently closed so that nobody could get his hand through the window—nobody would be able to move the car. Then Mikel and I went to warm up the 124. December 20 was one of those typical freezing Madrid winter days. The car—the 124—had been out on the street during the whole night, so it needed to be warmed up, ready for the getaway. First, we drove it around a little to warm it up. At 9 we drove past Carrero's house—to make sure he was going to mass that morning. After three months of following his routine, it might have worked out that—just that day—he didn't go to church. But we saw him leave his house."

"Seeing him in the flesh made a strong impression on me," said Iker. "The last time you see a person... when you know that right after ... you are going to send him flying ... Hombre! Mikel and I talked about that. Mikel said he'd got the same queasy feeling when he had observed the Ogro in church. We talked for a while, about that. Then Mikel said to me, 'When they assassinate our brothers—the workers—those who are in the struggle—they don't stop a minute—and they don't think anything.'"

"We saw Carrero get into his car," Iker went on. "We followed him up to the church. We continued to Juan Bravo. We turned into Claudio Coello—and passed over the tunnel. We made certain everything was perfect—and that there was no danger of an accident. When we passed by the corner—at Diego de León and Claudio Coello—we gave a signal to the 'electricians'—a smile—that meant that the Ogro was in church—and he would be passing over the tunnel. About a yard further down the street, I dropped Mikel off so that he could take his position. Then I drove to the corner of Lagasca and Diego de León. Then something very peculiar happened to me. Remember, at the beginning of 'Ogro' we mentioned that everybody in this quarter parked very badly—and there

"disguised as electricians. This was a little after 8 in the morning. Naturally, we had to appear to be working during normal working hours. When we started to 'fix' the cable, which we had hidden near the doorway of 104—and just at the moment we had run the cable down, ready to bring it into the apartment through the basement window—a grise came out of our own building! He was young, around 30. We were startled. Bizarre! A policeman—living in such a high-rent building—with the low salary he got?" Jon paused a moment, then continued his story. "Txabi and I didn't recognize him at the time, because only Iker had spoken to him, but that grise turned out to be our own super! Later, we read in the newspapers that the super at 104 was a member of the armed police!"

"We finished lowering the cable meant for 104," Txabi went on calmly, "and ran it through the basement window. Now there remained only the other end of the cable—which we had left rolled up, hidden behind the ledge at 110, the corner building. We went to 110, lowered the cable to the ground, and connected it to the battery in the 'electric box.' We had to make a final test to make sure that the cable worked—that there were no breaks at any point," commented Txabi, who always meticulously explained the scientific details of the operation. "We used one-and-a-half strength batteries. Actually, we used two batteries. We used a tester to check the current, to make sure it was live. Then we made the final connections. We attached the cable, which we had run through the basement window to the detonators. Then we left the apartment—*finished*. We left the window to the apartment slightly open, with just enough space for the cable. We closed the apartment door and, dressed as two electricians, we went out to the Diego de León. It took us very little time—five or six minutes. We left the battery unconnected until the last possible moment—to avoid an accident. We had to wait until about 9:15—just before Carrero left the church—to come back and connect the battery."

"So, by 9:10," interrupted Jon, "Tabi and I—the two 'electricians'—were at the corner of Diego de León and Claudio Coello waiting, and we saw Mikel circling the corner across the street."

"My function was to protect them," explained Mikel. "I was on guard, just in case there should be a last-minute mishap. We thought that after the explosion Jon or Tabi might get dizzy, or fall down—we weren't sure just what would happen. This way, if one of them fell down, the other two of us could carry him to the car."

"Neither Txabi nor I was on top of the ladder," said Jon. "We left the ladder against the wall of the building after lowering the cable. But nobody climbed up it again. We thought that would be very dangerous. With the noise of the explosion, whoever was on top of the ladder could

other political information gets to ETA by the same means that information was leaked to us about Carrero Blanco."

Txabi went on, "In general, ETA has a lot of support in the Basque country. But there are Basques who help and others who don't. And there are Spaniards who help and others who don't. When we receive some political information, two members of the commando of four go to check it out.

"Just two of us," Jon broke in, "Mikel and I went on that first trip to Madrid. Though we have ways of getting information reports on what is going on in other Spanish cities, ETA has no real organization outside the Basque country. So we were on our own in Madrid. We had no contact with other left-wing Spanish groups who would have been ready to help us in our plan for armed resistance—or if there was any such group, we didn't know of their existence. Once in Madrid, we rented, on our own, several rooms in a pension. We carried with us false papers and false identification cards. All our false papers were in order. As we were only going to spend a few days in the pension, we managed to avoid giving the owner any real explanation about who we were. Madrid is complicated. In all the pensions and hotels, they ask a lot of questions."

Jon paused, then continued the tape.

"It was in the beginning of December, '72—the first or second of December—because I remember that as soon as we finished in Madrid, we came back to Euskadi to spend Christmas vacation with our families. As soon as we got back to Euskadi, we reported on the Madrid situation to ETA. Then we joined our families for the Christmas holidays."

Jon paused again, as though remembering back.

"I had only been in Madrid once before, and it was a long time ago. Mikel had never been in the city. I remember we arrived during the Madrid afternoon—around 6 or 7 o'clock. It was already dark, December dark, and I was startled by all the noise, the traffic jams, the lights of Madrid, the mobs of people milling in the streets. During that entire week in Madrid, I always felt dizzy—and disoriented. The distances in Madrid seemed enormous to me, the air unbreathable, filth in all the streets..."

Mikel interrupted, "I also had an awful impression of Madrid. Everything was very different from Euskadi. The people in the streets were fancily dressed, completely different from the way we go around here. They wore jackets, ties . . . and the men had moustaches. Christ, to me, they all looked like they were policemen or informers."

Jon went on, "Their moustaches made a big impression on me, too. All different styles—small ones, military cut, Fascist cut those moustaches were the first thing that caught my attention. After a while

it all began to look normal to us. But I still remember that first terrible feeling of arriving in a strange city. You don't know your way, you are lost—disoriented. But bueno—we managed to locate ourselves in a pension. The next day we went out early. We went to a bar and we asked for a telephone book. We looked up the name Carrero Blanco—and we found it right away in the telephone book. He lived in Hermanos Bécquer. In number 6, I think. Christ, it seemed incredible that it was all that easy—somebody that important in the telephone book! Anyway, with that done, we looked at a subway map and figured out the location of his street, and we figured out that it was near the church. This made us think that the information about his going to the Jesuits' church was probably accurate.

"We walked over to the church," Jon continued. "During the walk over, Mikel and I made plans where to meet later, and then we separated. Each of us reconnoitered the church separately. The church was very big. A real Jesuit temple. I remember that as soon as I entered the church, I walked over to the middle—slightly to the right-hand side. Mikel entered the church a few minutes later. He placed himself behind me just in case I ran into trouble. We were a little afraid. The church could have been very well guarded. Without our realizing it, they could have observed the people who entered the church. They might search us and ask for our papers. Anyway, it was past 9 and still no Carrero. When the mass was over, people started to leave. That was when I saw him. He was accompanied by a man of around 70. Anyway, he looked very old—his hair was very white, his build small. Carrero passed directly in front of us. I was standing staring at the altar, and Carrero passed right alongside me. I recognized him as soon as soon as he came close to me even though I had only seen pictures of him in the movie newsreels and in the newspapers."

Mikel interrupted Jon, "Yes, the same for me. Although we had in addition the closeup of his face that the central committee of ETA had given us. And we also were aware that he always went alone to the church. Our information was that he didn't take any visible security measures—anyway, none that could be observed.

Then Jon said, "At any rate, we took a great deal of precaution, because it could very easily have been that our informant hadn't realized all the security measures that Carrero could have taken. And for that reason, we moved cautiously. Also, the first day, we ourselves hadn't seen how and in whose company Carrero had entered the church. Because we had only seen photographs of him, we didn't recognize him from the distance. But when Carrero was leaving the church, I realized immediately which one he was. I watched him talking to the old man, and after that I followed him—at quite a distance—but without losing

December 20, 1973

"The Day of the Action"

"We got up very early on the twentieth," said Jon. "We went to the basement apartment. We still had to put the dynamite into the tunnel; we made sure it was well-wrapped before we started. This was the final installation. We checked everything out. We had to be ready for zero hour—nine or ten minutes past 9."

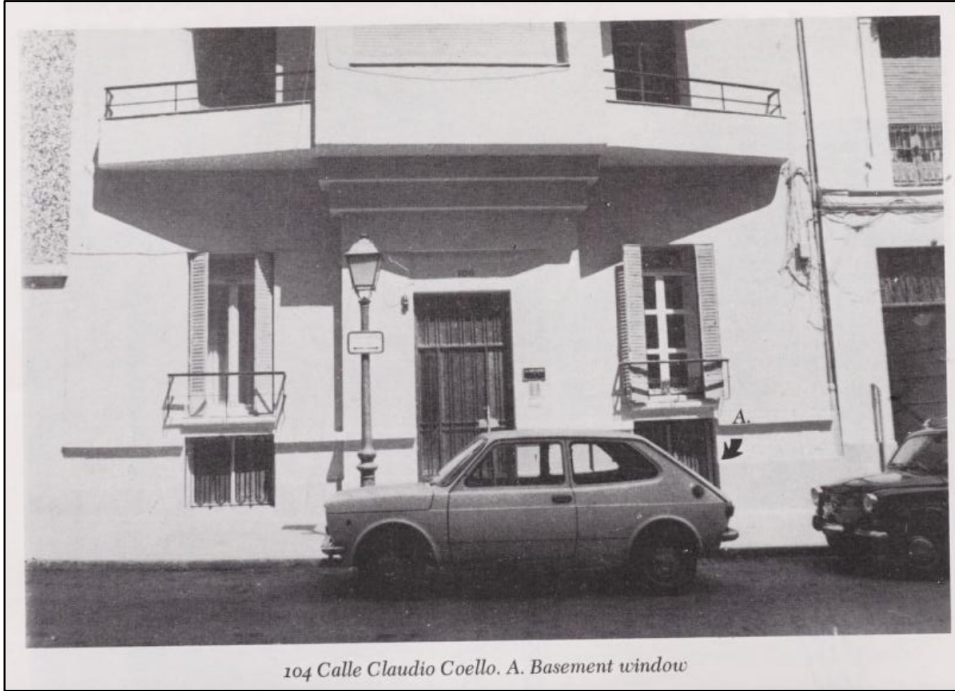
"Our last visit to the apartment at 104 was very normal," said Iker. "Nobody saw us enter. It was still dark outside."

"But we began to notice things that were sort of bizarre," interjected Txabi. "Until the moment of the action, everything on that last morning, the morning of the twentieth, suddenly struck us as odd. But that's a normal reaction under such circumstances." He paused. "First, when we arrived, we saw a car parked at the corner of Maldonado and Claudio Coello—a man was sitting inside it. That immediately struck us as peculiar. We were startled. We didn't say anything to one another, but we all noticed that car, and we all had our private fantasies about it. Later, when we went out to pack the dynamite in the trunk of our car, we saw that he had moved his car. Now it was in front of our door. That bothered us even more. It was very early in the morning. Not the normal time for somebody to be reparking a car on that street. But right after that, a girl came out of one of the buildings and jumped into the car. The two of them drove off. We all breathed a sigh of relief. They looked like a working-class couple. The man must have been waiting for her, to take her to work. At the time, none of us made any comment; it was only later, when we were remembering all the different stages of the action, that we admitted our fears to each other—that there had been something strange about that car. None of us wanted to bring it up at the time—we didn't want to panic. Then we packed the dynamite into the tunnel. The packages were tightly tied with cord, for a more effective explosion. We ran the detonator cord into the apartment. For the time being, we left the detonator cord loose inside the apartment. Then we filled up the hole to the tunnel with dirt, packing it down well."

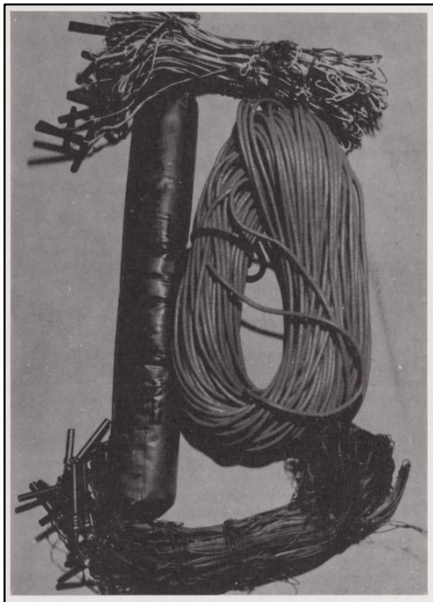
"We packed the tunnel hole with dirt about 3½ feet deep into the tunnel," said Mikel. "With the tunnel sealed this way, the explosion would be much stronger. This meant that the explosion had to go straight up—the dynamite was prevented from exploding horizontally and going back into the apartment. As we said before, we were very much worried that there might be an accident. We wanted to avoid that."

"Then Txabi and I went outside, dressed in our overalls," said Jon,

a swig of wine. He is more austere than the holy wafer itself. So, that night, Jon invited us for a whiskey. We went to a bar, drank a whiskey, and went home. Almost in silence. Very different from the night before, when we'd stayed up until 3, talking. This night, we went straight to bed" Iker concluded.



104 Calle Claudio Coello. A. Basement window



Detonators, fuse and explosives belonging to the kit which Operation Ogro used to set off the charges in the tunnel. These materials came from the "Riotinto Explosive Union S.A." The Material was part of the ammunition taken in Hernani by the Commando Txikia.

sight of him. At the bottom of the church stairs he said goodbye to the old man, then he got into his car with a second man who carried a briefcase and they drove in the direction of Calle Serrano. Christ, we were elated. The information given to us about Carrero was accurate!"



The Church of San Francisco de Borja, where Don Luis Carrero Blanco attended mass daily.

February, 1973

“Kidnapping Carrero”

“The four of us—Jon, Mikel, Txabi, who was the one in charge, and I—arrived in Madrid in the beginning of February [1973],” Iker started.

Mikel continued, “We didn’t remember the exact date, but it coincided with the kidnapping of the Basque industrialist, Huarte, in Pamplona [1]. We arrived late at night in Madrid and read in the next morning’s newspapers about Huarte’s kidnapping. We didn’t know that ETA was going to kidnap Huarte, because each commando works independently. But we figured out that the organization must have sent us to Madrid just before the Huarte kidnapping in order to avoid possible problems we might have had with police controls.”

“We didn’t know anything about the Huarte affair, nor did we have a clue, technically, how it was carried out,” Iker said.

We also learned from the Huarte case a great deal about the reactions of the workers. They did what they had to do. They kept quiet and accepted what they had won. If they had made any overt demonstration of joy, or support, or solidarity, they would have been lost. All the Government’s repressive measures would have fallen on their shoulders . . .

“This is exactly what happened after the execution of the Ogro. Fairly recently, while I was at work, one of the workers said to me, ‘How great that was, the execution of Carrero. That’s giving it to Franco. What a pity that the people didn’t take to the streets...’ He said all that with the best of intentions, but he was wrong. If the people had expressed themselves during that period, naturally they would have been killed. There would have been bad reprisals. The people did the best they could. They bought cider and privately celebrated in their own homes. Christ, here, in this town the stores ran out of cider. It was the same all over Spain.

“This doesn’t mean that the people are marginal to the struggle, but merely that each form of protest needs its own tactics. And in this the people are smarter and know more than is obvious from the surface,” Mikel explained.

Txabi paused. Then he went on to describe the main sequence of events. “Now, right after the Huarte affair, we arrived in Madrid. If we made an exchange Carrero in exchange for freeing the political prisoners, this would have meant an enormous victory, because of all the political consequences that would have followed. Of course, we

basement window, with the loose end discreetly rolled up. As I said, we followed the telephone line with the cable. At first, we tried to attach the cable with electrician’s nails, both to the telephone line and to the wall of the building. But at that height, nearly all the apartment houses on that street had marble facades. The pronged nails wouldn’t work. Finally, we used insulating tape to attach the cable to the telephone wires and to the facades of the apartment buildings.”

“While they worked,” broke in Iker, “Mikel and I—each of us stationed on a different corner—maintained our vigilance of the street. I was at the far corner—some distance away from my basement apartment window—in a place where people wouldn’t recognize who I was. The grises were still parked in the street, in their jeep. Kissinger had already left; there were no more police on the rooftops. But the police in jeeps and the police on the street were still patrolling the area. They weren’t paying too much attention—but they were still present in the neighborhood. Our function was to intervene if the ‘electricians’ ran into any trouble,” added Iker. “To cover them if they had to make a quick getaway.”

“That night we finished our work. We felt good. We were filled with joy. The thing to do was to have a great dinner.”

“Yes,” said Jon. “We had been surviving on an endless stream of sandwiches. We’d been eating badly during the whole time we were digging the tunnel. We’d been half-intoxicated by the gas fumes, and this had taken away some of our appetite. So, that night, the night of the nineteenth, we decided to have a first-class dinner.”

“We didn’t know if it was going to be our last dinner for a long time,” added Iker, “so we decided that this dinner should be super.”

“Iker was obsessed with the idea of eating a dish of baby eels as a celebration,” said Mikel. “But Jon said no—that the baby eels were for afterward—if the operation went well—not before. Our pal Iker disagreed. Look, he said, ‘after the operation—that means if it’s a success—but if it’s not? No, I think it’s more practical to eat the baby eels before. The two of them argued about those baby eels. In the end, we went to a good restaurant, and Iker had his plate of baby eels,” said Mikel, deadpan.

“For days Iker had talked about the baby eels, and, in the end, he ate them,” remembered Jon, speaking very seriously. “I remember that, when we left the restaurant, when it was getting close to zero hour, I began to think—Fuck! Christ only knows if we’ll ever get out of here! And I remember that I said to Iker, ‘You did well in eating the baby eels. Now, I am sad that I didn’t ask for them, too.’”

“A wave of depression overcame Jon,” said Iker, “and he invited us all for a whiskey—something he never does... Jon never takes more than

[1]. Huarte was kidnaped on January 16, 1972.

knowing that he is a torturer. Those are the things that eat at your guts. We talked, that night, for hours. We finally went to sleep at 3 in the morning. The following day was the nineteenth.”

“We got up early,” said Iker. “We did our gymnastics. It was the last time we were going to use those dumbbells and weights. We had breakfast. And by 9 we were in the basement apartment. We made the last trial run. The next day would be the twentieth—the day of the action. Once again, we went through an entire trial run with the car. This time, the ‘electricians’ wore their overalls to test how long it would take to get out of them—we wanted everything timed exactly. The ‘electricians’ peeled off their overalls even before we’d reached Juan Bravo in the car. We also carefully observed the people passing by us in the street—this was something that had worried us. We saw that hardly anybody passed by. Several people could be seen wandering in the distance—but nobody came directly into the zone of our explosives. We also saw that the jeep with the grises—because of Kissinger— was still parked at the corner. But right after that, Kissinger left Madrid,” Iker concluded.

“It was a very cloudy day,” added Jon. “Very cold, too. Later, in the afternoon, it started to rain. After eating lunch, we waited for several hours before returning to the basement apartment. Toward the end of the day, we went out to work in the street. We went out to set up the wires, as ‘electricians.’ Because our overalls, even though we’d managed to make them look dirty, still looked new, we picked an hour when there wasn’t much light. We didn’t want people to get a good look at our overalls—or our faces. Actually, it was almost nighttime when we took our ladder and tool chest out into the street,” Jon remembered. “We were fairly well disguised. I don’t believe that anybody who knew me would have recognized me. The same for Txabi—he was well disguised, too. And we didn’t want to leave any clues. We knew that afterwards the police would go to that street and ask questions. It was important that any information people could give would be inaccurate.”

“We placed the ladder,” continued Txabi, “and I climbed to the top. My balls were in my throat every step of the way. I wasn’t afraid of the police—I was terrified of falling from that height. Once I got to the top of the ladder, I twisted my feet around the top rung. I held on to that ladder with my legs, gripping it as tightly as I could without losing my balance. I needed to keep both hands free. Later—near the end—I became more used to the ladder. But in the beginning... Fuck! I had to keep swallowing my balls! On the day of the action, I was still stiff from being, on the ladder. Everything ached—my legs, my back, my kidneys” Txabi paused. “I started to hang the cable, laying it along the telephone line; we didn’t want to run the cable through the basement window yet. Too early for that maneuver. So, we left the cable just outside the

couldn’t figure everything out. But we saw that it would have forced Carrero to radicalize himself more—in one direction or the other. It would break the equilibrium of the regime, creating an enormous conflict within the regime itself. It always could have happened that the Government itself, in spite of Carrero being the key figure, wouldn’t have wanted to show this sign of weakness—even though in reality it wouldn’t have been a weakness, and it would not have given in. If that happened, we would have had to execute Carrero.” Txabi paused. “For the same reasons that in the end we did execute him, because the execution in itself also had a goal and clear political objectives.

“Beginning in 1951, Carrero was practically the head of the Government within the regime. Carrero symbolized more than anybody the idea of ‘pure Francismo.’ Without allying himself directly with any of the Franquist groups, he clearly was the chief person who pushed the Opus Dei into power. He was a man without scruples, absolutely determined to build up his own power within the regime.

“The Spanish oligarchy counted on Carrero to assure the passage of the post-Franco era without any internal convulsions. In my opinion, it was clearly more important, from the point of view of attacking the ‘Spanish state’ to execute Carrero rather than kidnap him. Therefore, the idea of taking Carrero as a hostage was with the plan in mind of freeing political prisoners, and the second plan had in mind the future political consequences for Spain.”

Jon took over. “What happened is that the political objectives and consequences were maybe even more important than an immediate objective. For example, if we obtained the exchange prisoners, and Carrero was freed after that, this would have changed many things in Spain. If the Government had had to accede to a general amnesty, this would have created an enormous crisis, and Carrero wouldn’t have had any other solution except either to go in a more right-wing direction or to open himself a little to more liberal ideas. He couldn’t have stood still. This would have created a disunity within the regime itself. If the Government would not have acceded to an exchange of prisoners, they would have had another problem.”

Txabi interrupted Jon. “We wanted to show the whole opposition that there was a possibility of destroying the regime by armed battle.”

“We know that when you kill the head of any system, somebody else is substituted,” Iker explained. “But damage has been done. Look what happened to us. Eustakio, one of the heads of ETA, was killed. This caused tremendous damage within ETA. This was also a change of the Government’s repressive tactics toward us. Clearly, they didn’t want another Burgos trial—a public trial. They prefer now to eliminate one by one the heads of ETA, and kill them instantly, before taking them

prisoners, which would mean a trial. We know for certain that they killed Mikelon, Iharra, and Txikia once they were wounded. They shot them on the spot,” Iker paused. “Our idea of Carrero was that the Government has created an image of such invincibility by their repression that any mass action using arms, violence, on the part of the workers would be impossible, and that they have convinced the people that the only way they have of liberating themselves is by cooperation with the system. This is the idea of the Pact of Liberty” [Communist Party pact involving alliances with middle-of-the-road and conservative groups in the regime. ETA wanted to “radicalize” workers. Communists wanted, as in France and Italy, a piece of the system.]

“In the beginning of the second stay in Madrid, we had many difficulties. We were new in Madrid; we felt like outsiders. Every-thing was so different from what we were used to. We could make a lot of mistakes,” Mikel remembered. “Later, we became accustomed to the city. In the end, we even felt sad to have to leave. I want to go back one day. I feel close to Madrid now.”

“The biggest difference,” said Jon, “between Madrid and Euskadi is that in Euskadi we work with militants of ETA or close sympathizers with people whose support is unconditional. When there’s trouble and we can’t stay in our own homes in the Basque country, we can always be taken in by people who them-selves are legal residents—we are protected. The Basques help pass on information to us and get us from place to place. They’ll transport us in their own cars. In Euskadi we were backed up by tremendous support; in Madrid we had only ourselves. We were alone, isolated.”

“When you have nobody backing you, and you are alone in a strange city, it all becomes very difficult and scary,” Txabi mused.

“God, I felt the same thing. Being alone, having no Basque support is what hit me the most emotionally. I felt, every day, I am in a mousetrap’—if anything happened to us, there was no escape route. We didn’t know a soul,” said Mikel, echoing their fears.

“As soon as we hit Madrid we tried *to acclimatize ourselves to the Madrileño atmosphere,” Txabi continued. “We changed our way of dressing. In Euskadi young people our age dress in pants, a shirt, and a sweater thrown over. Our habits, our ways of acting in the Basque country were all very different. We were sure the way we were, people could instantly take us for Basques, that we were recognizable. As soon as we opened our mouths, they could tell we were Basques. When we had to invent explanations for ourselves, our accent was an enormous problem. Our false papers said that we were from Burgos and Palencia, but people instantly said to us, ‘Ay—You’re from Bilbao.’ Spaniards identify Basques with Bilbainos. They think all Basques come from

knows how many millions of pesetas, and then, after the action, kicked him in the ass and dropped him without paying—there was all sorts of garbage in the press” Txabi concluded.

“After leaving the movie theater, we went home. We kept on talking about the Ogro until late into the night. We couldn’t go to sleep. We smoked cigars,” remembered Mikel. “Jon told me that the whole operation was very important for him personally. A series of myths he had lived with had been destroyed, and this gave him greater confidence in himself.”

“I never would have imagined that a person as important as Carrero would have been so available, so easy to take,” Jon broke in. “One of the last times I saw Carrero was during the Fiesta of San Francisco de Borja. I don’t remember the exact date. In Carrero’s church it is the custom, on that day, to kiss the relics of San Francisco. When Carrero went up to kiss the relics, I went up right behind him—my chest was practically touching his back. I had him right in front of me, even though, by this time, because he was President, he was now surrounded by many guards.” Jon paused a moment, then continued. “Experiences of this sort change a person, and his view of how things actually work. I lost my preconceived notions and ideas of what is possible. You realize that you’re stronger than you think! Frequently, you don’t go ahead with ‘actions’ because it all seems so impossible, so unattainable.”

“During that long night, listening to Jon, I knew he was right,” continued Mikel. “I had the same emotions. The entire operation had been a tremendous experience for me. I was learning a new form of reality. There was one thing about the Ogro that made a deep impression on me. It was seeing him looking just like a normal person. He looked like a decent person, who took his communion regularly, each morning. He had a daughter who always smiled at his grandson. The family looked the very picture of normal respectability,” he said. “And then, to think, this man in reality was a killer—that, during most of his lifetime, he left church, went home for his breakfast, and then went to the Pardo—or someplace like that—and gave his support—indeed, pushed for many death sentences. He was the man who signed those death sentences. The enormous contrast between Carrero the family man and Carrero the assassin... Hombre!” Mikel paused.

“I felt that same mixture of emotions,” he went on, “the first time I was arrested by the police. First, they beat you—they destroy you—then they take you in to see someone who does the soft pedaling—‘You poor thing.’ They try to butter you up. I was with the good torturer when he got called to the telephone in the next room. I could hear that he was talking with one of his daughters... and he was saying, ‘Adiós, Bonita... Adiós’... Just as though he were a normal man! Fuck it! There you are,

seemed to be under military guard. We realized that the heavy military guard in the streets was because of Kissinger's visit that week. Christ! We had everything prepared—everything ready—and now Kissinger fell on our heads!”

“Of course, we had known that Kissinger was coming to Madrid and that he'd visit the American Embassy. But we never imagined that there would be that much military protection during his visit,” Iker explained. “We thought there would be some surveillance—to prevent demonstrations, protests, things of that sort—but nothing more than that. We never imagined that all the roofs and subway entrances would be manned by grises with machine guns [3]. In every corner there was a pair of grises. Soldiers were patrolling the streets of Madrid in army jeeps. There was a jeep stationed on the corner of Diego de León and Serrano. There was too much police and military vigilance. During our lunch, we decided to delay the action.”

“It's impossible to describe how crowded that quarter of Madrid was—because of Kissinger. We ourselves saw crowds of people. Also, it's very probable that the place was saturated with plainclothesmen,” said Jon. He paused, then added, “That day, it felt as though all of Madrid was on the street.”

“If we had been sure that Kissinger was going to go to mass the following day with the Ogro, we would have run the risk, because it was worth it—even if just to show our solidarity with the Palestinians. But we had no certainty of what conditions would be with Kissinger in Madrid, and no really compelling reason for doing the action on the nineteenth, so it didn't seem worth our while to take any additional risks,” continued Iker. “We decided to postpone 'Ogro' until the twentieth, when we would be operating under safer conditions.”

“We didn't have anything to do that night,” Txabi went on, “we took advantage of having some free time and went to see *The Day of the Jackal*. It got very good reviews,” he added. “After the execution of Carrero, people identified us with the Jackal. I don't remember where I read it, but according to some report, ETA had contacted 'the Jackal' to help us kill Carrero. Later, the press reported that, according to well-informed sources, it was known that the Jackal had participated in the action. The Jackal also, no doubt, slept with the Virgin Mary! Fuck! What bullshit! And then—before that one—there was another newspaper report that said we'd hired a Légionnaire, had promised him Christ

Bilbao, because it's a big city. Our accents constantly gave us enormous problems of this sort.”

Mikel agreed with him. “It sure did create problems. We had to say that we had worked in Bilbao, or that when we had been young children we had lived in the province of Vizcaya, because our fathers had gone there to work. All these explanations made our lives much more complicated.”

“Another big problem,” added Txabi, “was that we didn't know Madrid; we walked the streets completely lost. During the first part of the second stay, we spent a great deal of our time simply learning the city. We always met in the Gran Vía, very frequently in the same café. This was a mistake. It was a neighborhood where one could easily bump into other Basques or the police. One day we bumped into a crowd of Basques—they all knew us! This was dangerous. After that experience, we immediately changed our meeting place. We finally decided not to have any one café or place for our rendezvous.

“We didn't know anybody, really, in Madrid, nor did we want to have any connection with people who lived in Madrid. We wanted to avoid, in case of the kidnapping, any relation with the police. We knew that members of the police could come to the house where we were living. If the police later asked the super or the neighbors questions about us, with the descriptions the neighbors and super could give them, the police would be able to make fairly accurate drawings of our faces. That was one of the reasons we didn't want to see anybody. We were better off if we managed to avoid bumping into people—it would be impossible for the police to find us. The police didn't have the vaguest idea that we were in Madrid . . . nor that we existed; we were invisible.”

Iker agreed. “To this day, the police have no idea who we really are. For them, we are still incognito—a mystery. Everything the police say about their proof and information is false.”

Txabi underlined the point, saying, “The police had no idea of our existence. For this reason, we were much better off alone without anybody's help. We deliberately made no attempt to see anybody, not even Basques we knew were in Madrid. We were determined to remain invisible.”

“We gave false explanations of our whereabouts—both to our families and at work. The proof that they were good explanations is that now we are still here, in the Basque country,” Jon explained. “There were several reasons why we didn't want help from other people in Madrid. First, Basques, or people from other opposition groups who would have wanted to help us, could have become frightened once they realized the danger of what we were planning to do. Second, even though we knew that people in the Basque country are used to this sort

[3]. “Grises” is the nickname given to the civil military police because of their grey uniforms. They are the police used to break up political demonstrations, for arrests of students, etc., and are much feared.

of direct action, and we knew that when Basques get caught, they act well, we didn't know how people in Madrid would react in the sort of situation that involves an armed struggle. They have no experience with this type of action. And this isn't the sort of operation that can be an education course."

Iker said, "We thought that after the kidnapping the police would arrest all the Basque students in Madrid, and round up other Basques living in Madrid. Clearly, the police were going to make enormous efforts to locate the Ogro. If we were known to other Basques in Madrid, the police could easily have tracked us down."

"If the operation went off without any mistakes, the best guarantee of our safety was to be totally unknown to the police and the Madrileños. The police wouldn't know where to look, or for whom. This gave us a sense of security. We knew that we were living our lives on an island—isolated—on an island nobody knew existed," Mikel recalled.

"We knew from the beginning that even though it was much harder, we had to do the whole job ourselves," Iker added. "It was our only chance."

"Our isolation made for many hardships, obstacles . . . sometimes it got comical," said Txabi, his mood changing. "One day, while Jon was walking along the Gran Via, a guy he didn't know came up to him. He called Jon by his real name and said, 'Ola, qué tal?'—'Hi, how are you?'—So Jon had to reply that he, Jon, wasn't really Jon. And to make it look more legit, Jon showed him his identity papers. The Basque looked a little puzzled, but he finally went away."

Jon broke in, "I didn't recognize the man—actually, I thought he was from the police. I told him I was from Bilbao—but that I wasn't me and that I wasn't from ETA—he had asked me that, too. Imagine! All this took place in a cafeteria filled with people. The man stood talking to me in an extremely loud voice—and, I must admit, even now I haven't the vaguest idea who the hell he was. I didn't recognize his face. I'll bet that since Carrero's execution he's wondered about that meeting—plenty!"

"A lot of people, joking, always told us that we were from ETA—people in the street—a Madrid joke," Mikel added. "In the beginning, we were pulverized, but after a little while, we got used to the Madrid sense of humor. In the Basque country, no-body jokes with you about belonging to ETA."

"In Spain," Txabi said, "as soon as they hear a Basque accent they start to kid you about being from ETA."

"That's right," Jon agreed, "Spaniards assume that all Basques—belong to ETA—and above all, Basque students—'Oh, a Basque, well, well, and so how is the ETA?'"

"What drove me wild," Iker went on, "was the way Spaniards

covering makes it very difficult to tamper with them. On my phony identification card, my name was José M. Casas Blanco. That also made me nervous. We had stolen the card from a man who actually lived in Madrid. By some crazy coincidence, maybe I was renting a car at his garage! Those were the wild thoughts that were going through my head. The man in the garage who drove the car out for me asked to see my driver's license. I gave him the same wallet I'd given the man in the rental office—with both the false identification papers and license inside. The man—the one who drove out the car—was looking at a list he had. I was thinking that if the man whose driver's license we'd filched had reported it—and his name was on that list—we were snafued... lost. But then I figured out that the list was a list of those people who owed the company money." After a few minutes, this man returned my papers. He gave me the car keys. It was a white Seat 124. I don't remember the license number. It was a new car—had about 4000 kilometers on it."

"With the car at our disposal, we made a trial run of the action on the eighteenth," said Jon. "We precision-timed the operation. First, we picked the safest place to leave the car during the action. Then we practiced the escape and the changeover of cars. At first we thought we would leave the car in Diego de León, right near the corner of Claudio Coello. But we decided it was too near the church. There was a lot of traffic in this neighborhood—and we could run into problems. We finally chose Lagasca. We would go down toward Juan Bravo, take that street, pass next to the electric car race game, then to the Plaza de Ruben Darío, crossing by Miguel Angel, and, finally, stop in front of the Police Training Academy, where we'd swap cars. We planned to park our getaway car there—something the police would never in a million years imagine that we'd do! We made our trial run at 9:30 in the morning—the same time the actual action would take place. And we saw that, if everything worked well, the entire maneuver would take us three minutes."

"But," explained Iker, "there was the problem of one traffic light. If we hit the traffic light during a stop period, we had to figure on taking more than three minutes. It's the traffic light in the street where Juan Bravo and Serrano cross. When it's red, it takes a long time to change to green, because of traffic. If we hit red, it would be dangerous for us, because we would be stopped at a point very near the locale of the action itself. We couldn't race through the light—that would call too much attention to us and be even more dangerous. In spite of the problems with the traffic light, in the end, we decided that this was the best escape route at our disposal."

"Then we went out to eat," Txabi continued. "Sitting in one of the local taverns, we saw quite a panorama all of Madrid suddenly

December 17-19, 1973

"The Last Three Days"

"On Monday morning, December 17, we packed all our belongings," began Iker, "in order for Txabi and Mikel to take our things to the militants they were meeting in Aranda de Duero, near Burgos. The militants planned to get our belongings back to Euskadi for safekeeping. We started wrapping our books. We looked carefully in every corner: but we didn't take everything. We left many things there—my new suit jacket, the gymnastic equipment and dumbbells, and a lot of bed linen. We put in the car only the most indispensable items. Then Tabi and Mikel went to Aranda de Duero. We were supposed to pay our rent on the twentieth." Iker paused. "Listen, now I remember ... we never paid it ..."

"Should we apologize from here?" Jon asked, amused.

"No—no apology," Mikel rejoined, "we left our landlord two months advance deposit—he ended up with more than enough."

"While Txabi and Mikel went to get the luggage, Iker and I went to rent the car," Jon added.

Iker continued, "I filled out all the papers in a car rental office in the Plaza de España—the office was next to a self-service cafeteria. I took out my money. I had only about 4500 pesetas [about \$80] on me. They asked me for 5000. I was short 500 pesetas. We wanted to leave as little deposit money as we could get away with—we didn't want to lose money unnecessarily. But this seemed okay to everybody. They asked me for my driving permit. I was a little antsy, because my driving permit actually belonged to a man 28 years old. By this time my hair was cut short. I had had a shave, too—not with an electric razor—but with a sharp razor, by a professional barber—so now I looked like a clean-shaven bourgeois. This face of mine makes me look even younger than I am, so I still felt a little uncertain about the permit's saying I was 28. But the panic was momentary. They told me, in the car rental office, to go to their garage on Alcántara Street—where the company's rental cars were stored. That took me an additional twenty minutes or half hour. During the negotiations, I was still scared that the main office might notice something odd about my papers, investigate, and telephone ahead to the garage. Jon and I were both worried about this. So, just in case, I went into the garage alone, and Jon waited outside for me. Anyway, I had taken certain precautions. When they had asked me for my driver's license, instead of simply handing it to them, I included my identification papers. It's easy to forge a driver's license—but everybody knows that it's hard to fiddle with identification papers. This plastic

pronounced ETA—they don't say 'ETA'—they say '*la* ETA.' Everybody in the neighborhood where we lived teased us about *the* ETA. When we went to buy food or go to the laundry somebody would always say, 'Here they come—the boys from *la* ETA.'"

"Finally," Jon said, "we handled it like any normal person who wasn't from ETA would have. We giggled and made jokes ourselves. We got along great with the neighbors, and the people in the local stores. Like in the grocery store, the owners wanted to fix up Mikel with the young cashier. We knew that if any armed action took place in Euskadi, our neighbors would have teased us—'Look—they did it, the boys from *la* ETA.'"

"In the beginning," Iker interrupted, "I was startled, scared. Txabi was the one who always went to the butcher. But one day he wasn't home, so I went. When I walked into the butcher's, the butcher looked up and asked me, deadpan, 'Well, have they already expelled your pal from *la* ETA?' I was stunned. I thought, 'Wow, what the hell is going on? We're fucked. Every body knows the truth here!'

"At the same time that we were learning to live with the Madrileños—and their crazy wit—and learning the city and trying to adapt ourselves to their crazy hours, their habits, and so forth, we started to make a plan for Carrero's kidnapping," Txabi said. "We had no set deadline for the execution of the plan. After we had made careful preparations and everything was in order, we could pick the day. We were determined to make sure that all our arrangements were foolproof: we wanted to make sure that it was going to work."

"We worked hard. We wanted to do everything as quickly as possible—but we wanted to do a good job. If we couldn't do the job well, we were willing to spend more time in Madrid," Iker said.

"We worked extremely systematically," Jon explained. "We watched the church, the church zone, Carrero's movements, his bodyguards, and the police. We timed Carrero's auto route. We timed the traffic lights, the amount of traffic, and how much this varied from day to day. Everything that was necessary to coordinate the action."

"This took us about a month," added Iker, "because there were some days that we didn't go. We watched the situation almost continuously, because occasionally there were changes that we wanted to take note of."

Mikel broke in with the dates. "It actually took us from January to the middle of February to have the plan of action well laid out. By the end of February we also had a good plan of the zone marked out."

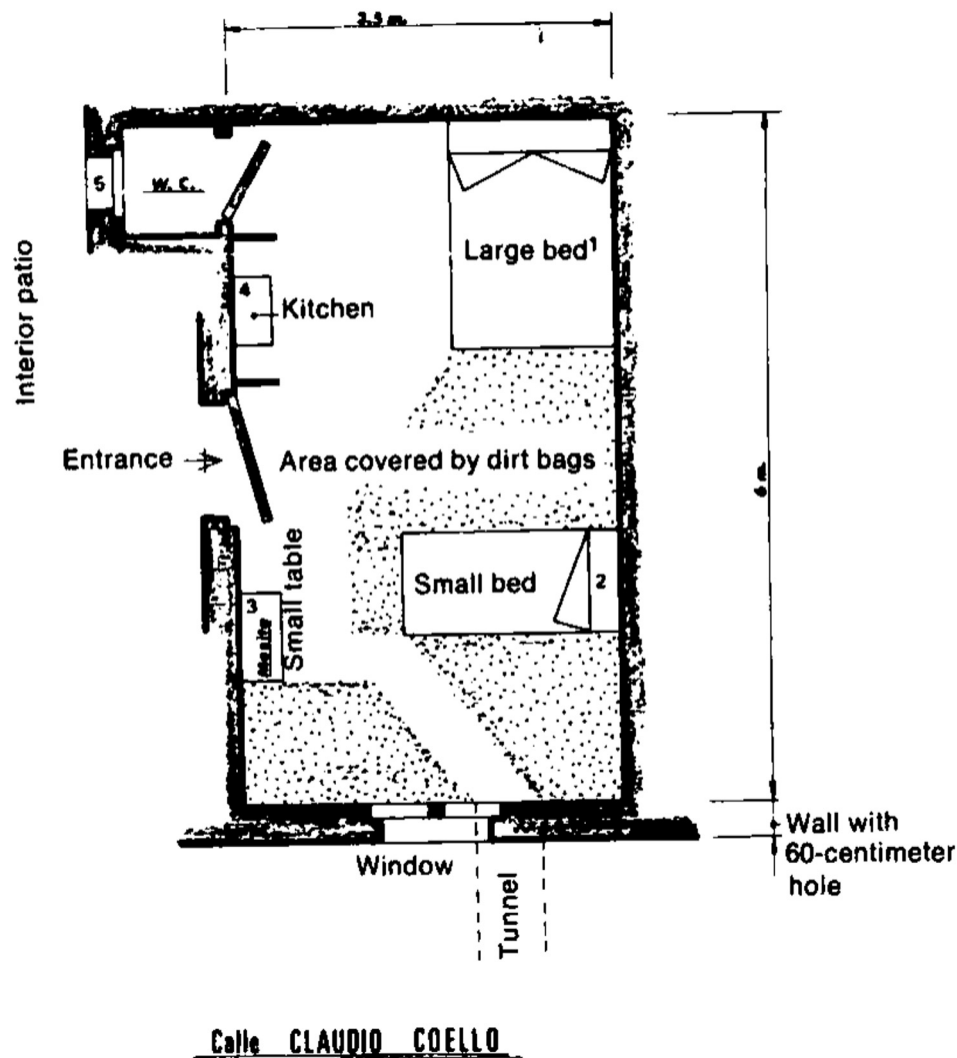
ROUTE TAKEN BY THE OGRO

A. Home of the Ogro
----- Ogro's route to the church
B. The Church of San Francisco de Borja
- - - - - Ogro's route for returning home
→ Arrows showing traffic directions

The map illustrates the route of the 'Ogro' (a mythical creature) through a neighborhood in Lima, Peru. The route starts at 'A', the home of the Ogro, and goes to 'B', the Church of San Francisco de Borja, and then returns home. The map shows various streets and landmarks, including Serrano, Claudio Coello, Logasca, Velazquez, Juan Bravo, and Diego de Leon. Arrows indicate traffic directions, and dashed lines show the Ogro's path.

The diagram illustrates the layout of the bombing site. At the top, a dashed rectangle represents the 'Premises used'. Below it is a cross-hatched area labeled 'Sidewalk'. A vertical line labeled 'Tunnel' extends downwards from the sidewalk. A horizontal line with three small squares represents 'Explosive charges (25 kilograms per charge of the #2 rubber type explosive)'. The charges are positioned 3m apart, with a total width of 9m. The tunnel is 2.4m wide. Below the charges is a box labeled 'Austin 1300'. At the bottom is another cross-hatched area labeled 'Sidewalk'.

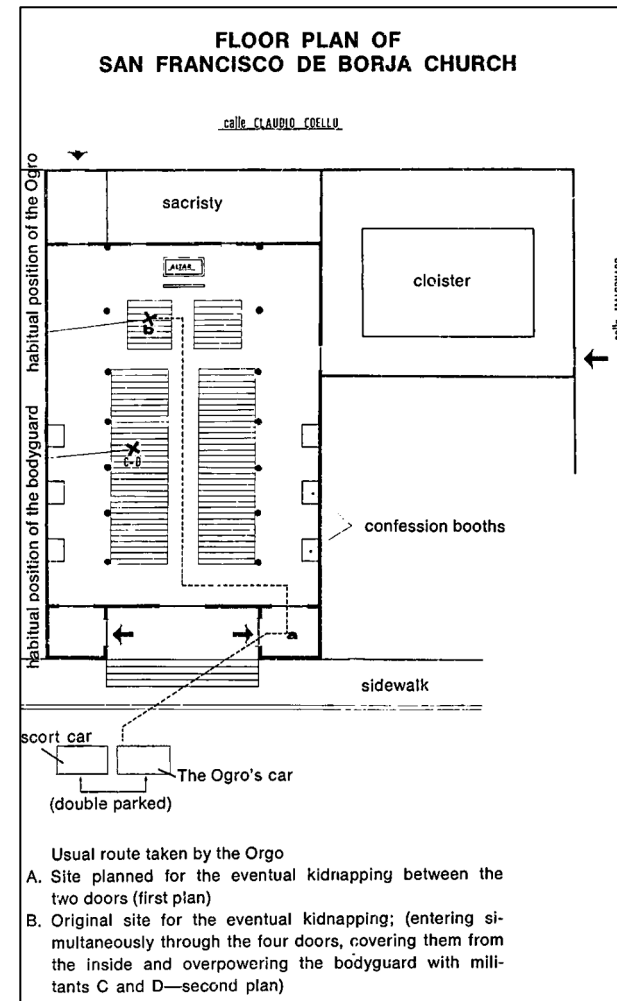
THE PREMISES AFTER COMPLETION OF THE TUNNEL



1. Double bed
2. Old bed with tattered mattress
3. Small cabinet with odds and ends in it.
4. Double burner camping stove.
5. Bathroom window facing the inside patio.
6. Window facing Claudio Coello

Editor's Interlude

On June 9th 1973, Luis Carrero Blanco promoted from Deputy Prime Minister to Prime Minister of Spain. Commando Txikia at this point had spent more than six months planning an incredibly well thought out kidnapping. We recommend reading *Operation Ogro* to hear the full explanation, but there were multitudes of charts, maps, safehouses, and contingency plans that had to go out the door due to Carrero's promotion. One of the main considerations that led to the scrapping of the kidnapping plan was the addition of more bodyguards to Carrero's security team and the ETA's desire to avoid prolonged gunfights in civilian areas. At this point, Commando Txikia briefly departed from Madrid in order to attend an ETA assembly and conferred with ETA leadership before deciding to assassinate Carrero.



Map from the original kidnapping plan at Carrero's church.

September, 1973

“Plans for the Execution”

Txabi began, in his usual even, analytical style of narration, “we weren’t starting out from zero. The information about the neighborhood, about the habits of Carrero—all this was going to be useful. What we had to do now was to study the way of doing the execution. Even though this might have appeared to have been an easier sort of operation, this actually was not the case. It carried with it all sorts of new complications. Even though it’s true we didn’t have to use a great part of our original plan—the apartments and so forth—which simplified Operation Ogro, we still had the problem of accomplishing the execution without leaving victims. If we had intended to execute Carrero without worrying about additional victims, we wouldn’t have had any problems... we simply could have driven along Serrano and machine-gunned him from the moving car. Or we could have used two cars with explosives, left the car in that narrow street we discussed before—the street Carrero used—and, as soon as he walked by the cars, we could have dynamited him. We also thought of setting off a bomb that would have blown off the roof—the dome of the church. All sorts of solutions could have been found. Our problem was—how were we going to keep innocent bystanders from getting hurt?”

“We got headaches over this thing,” said Iker. “You begin to think of the people involved. We wanted to make sure there were no innocent victims. We wanted a ‘clean’ operation—one directed at Carrero, who was the real enemy—at him—and no one else. We wanted to do this for the good of the people—and if you hurt somebody innocent? It just wouldn’t work. We were very worried about this. We had tons of ideas. We rejected all of them for the same reason—they didn’t offer enough guarantees of safety for innocent people,” Iker said firmly.

“An action like this carries the risk of backfiring,” said Jon, backing up Iker. “If it turns out badly, it can boomerang against you. To a large degree, the success of Operation Ogro was dependent on how the execution of Carrero was carried out—how clean an operation it was. We weren’t afraid of risks to our own lives—we were afraid of anything that would risk the success of ETA’s long-term struggle. We had to be sure of what we did. If you end up killing innocent people, for whatever reason—a mishap, an ill-thought-out plan—you are creating enormous problems for yourself. Even though it’s also true that sometimes, if the consequences are important enough, certain risks are worth taking,” he added. “But it is always better not to kill anybody. I know that in all the actions of ETA in which I participated this preoccupation for the safety

depicted us as ‘exceptional.’ It was so well done, they said—it couldn’t have been ETA. It was the work of technical experts—geniuses! They made the general public believe this. The truth of it is that our group of militants had very little technical experience or training in explosives. But this is how the media manipulate the thinking of the general public, by making them believe all the time the exact opposite of what is really going on,” concluded Jon.

“They want to keep the general public in ignorance,” Mikel said. “On the pretext of giving information, they confuse and slant the truth. Operation Ogro—and how it was treated in the press—all their misconceptions—taught us a lot about mass media. Even other anti-Francquist groups mixed up the information, gave out the wrong data. Fuck! It was disgusting, their performance,” Mikel added angrily.

“It was an aberration on their part to think that an operation so well thought out couldn’t have come from the left. That indicates a lack of belief in the people and their struggle that is unpardonable,” Jon added.

“In brief,” he continued, “it doesn’t take a mining engineer to make a tunnel! Nor an expert in explosives to dynamite the tunnel. Nor does one have to be a specialist in optics to have a car well placed, signaling the exact spot to be dynamited. Nor is it impossible to have a man standing nearby, ready to give the go-ahead signal. All that myth must be eliminated. Nobody is a god—nor is a god needed. This was the work of normal men.”

nearly a year before. Which meant that the dynamite we used had already lost about half its strength—quite a bit more than half its strength. The essential ingredient, what was absolutely necessary—and about this they wouldn't have had the slightest comprehension—was the reason for our struggle. Our belief was the true dynamite that gave us strength ...our real secret power for finding solutions to the problems that came up. Clearly, from what we've said, Operation Ogro wasn't easy..."

Mikel suddenly allowed himself to become emotional. He continued. "We had to overcome many difficulties. We were often discouraged. We won't deny that. But we overcame everything. And we will overcome future problems, and be victorious in even more difficult undertakings. Many of us will die along the road... but new members will join us, and each time we will grow bigger. And we will strike back even harder."

Iker joined him. "I want to underscore that the reason we did Operation Ogro wasn't that technically we were well prepared for it—but because of the necessity of doing it. We understood that Operation Ogro had to be—and then, we found the way to go about it. If you see the justice of doing an action—that it is for the good of the people—well, then, you simply do it. Hay que hacer lo [It must be done]—that's Jon's phrase. When you have clear objectives, the difficulties along the way can be overcome."

"Remember, when we first came to Madrid, in our guts most of us felt the action would be impossible to accomplish," said Jon, echoing the feelings of Iker and Mikel. "As time passed, though, little by little we learned to overcome each obstacles in our way—and that was how we finally got to Operation Ogro."

"To say the contrary would be to negate the potential revolutionary power of the people," added Txabi, more calmly. "They have to be awakened—to see the necessity of liberating themselves, of organizing for the struggle."

"In respect to this action, I realized something very concrete—the way the bourgeoisie is able, through the media, to manipulate the thinking of the general mass of people," said Jon—he always came back to his disgust with the press. "For example, fifteen days ago, two militants of ours were killed. Two young boys, carrying a bomb, which exploded in their arms and killed them. Result: In the newspaper, it was reported that they were two very young boys who didn't know anything about bombs, and, because of their inexperience, the bombs exploded. This is what the people were taught to believe. But it is not what happened. Those two boys were both technically well trained in explosives. One of them was the best technical expert the organization had. On the other hand, in describing Operation Ogro—the press

in your way—at any rate, some little detail always could go wrong. This sort of risk constantly worries ETA. We're not worried about the real enemy, the Spanish state—they will always think we are assassins. What worries us is the average person. We want him to understand our struggle, and not to see us, falsely, as killers—which ETA has not been. It hasn't been a band of killers." Jon paused.

"When the actions are successful," said Txabi, "a lot of people think 'What luck!'—Well, perhaps—sometimes—but 99 percent of our success is not luck, but the result of hard, meticulous work, with small details carefully planned out—good, scientific analysis. We made a scientific study of our work in connection with Operation Ogro because we thought it would serve as an interesting document, an example for the future. We have showed the Spanish people, with Operation Ogro, that the most difficult goals—if people try hard enough—can be obtained. The very heart of the regime was not invincible. The police were not invincible. We proved all this with Operation Ogro. We were showing that revolutionary struggle—armed struggle—opened new possibilities to the people," concluded Txabi, always interested in commenting on revolutionary theory.

"A new action of this sort cheers people up," added Mikel. "After every successful action, we have seen new militants and new sympathizers join up with ETA. It's a matter of esprit de corps. That's why it was so important that Operation Ogro worked well. If not, it would have been a negative example and then we would have had all those 'theoretical types' who are against armed struggle on principle explaining what was wrong with ETA! The theoreticians would say, 'You see, that is no way to plan an action... that is not the way of the future...' All that paralyzes ETA's struggle, holds us back," Mikel said. "What we want to show is that our way is one of many ways to attack the regime. We want to amplify the struggle—instead of using limited means, we want to be part of a varied struggle, with varied techniques—ETA is one of many ways."

Now Txabi took up the narrative again. "After we had eliminated all the possibilities that had occurred to us, and when we were very depressed and discouraged, we noticed one day that there was construction under way right next to the Jesuits' building, at the corner of Claudio Coello and Diego de León. We thought perhaps we could build a tunnel, about 7 meters long, from that construction site up to the center of the street. We wanted to make the tunnel during the night... So that it could be exploded the following morning. We immediately realized that this was crazy. Nobody could build a tunnel that quickly. We abandoned the project. Still . . . we liked the idea of a tunnel."

"During early November we were looking for a way to execute

Carrero,” said Jon. “It was during this period that we bought a car. We found out at that time that the police were controlling rented cars, so because of that, we decided to buy a second-hand Austin—1300—cream-colored. It’s a very powerful car.

“We bought it at a Madrid Seat agency with false papers. The car was in bad condition. It had poor brakes, a hole in the gasoline pipe, and there was a leak in the oil valve. In the end, it would have been cheaper for us to have bought a new car this one was a mess,” Iker sighed.

“Now that we had the car, we studied the neighborhood carefully. We noticed that there were two basement apartments for rent in Claudio Coello—also, several furnished apartments. In that neighborhood,” Mikel went on, “which is the Barrio de Salamanca, there are many apartments for rent, especially in some of the grander, older homes—it’s an elegant, old neighborhood—you could see there were many vacancies. Clearly, the owners of some of the older buildings had gone to live in newer parts of Madrid. We decided to rent the basement apartment at 104 Claudio Coello. We picked Iker to handle the landlord.’

With the apartment rented, we decided to go back to Euskadi to talk things over with ETA direction. We were going to explain our new plans. We were going to dig a tunnel between the basement and the church and fill it with explosives. We had to find out whether we should start digging the tunnel right away, or leave it for later. There was no point in digging a tunnel unless it was for immediate use. Otherwise it would be too dangerous because it could be discovered immediately. The direction gave us the go-ahead. They wanted us to have everything ready, and then wait for just the right moment. This time we were fairly precise in our dates. The meetings of the workers’ legal syndicates—which gave them their small benefits were scheduled for January. We weren’t sure whether the execution of Carrero should take place before or after these meetings. We came back to Madrid. Four days later, the direction sent us their reply. After analyzing the situation, they decided that the execution should take place before the labor agreements in January.”

“In the end,” Mikel began, “we decided to go ahead with the execution before January, and, as soon as we got the reply from the direction, we immediately started to work on the tunnel. During those November days we had everything planned out in our imagination. We had to dig a tunnel 21 feet long, which would reach the middle of the street. This tunnel was to be T-shaped. The explosives were to be placed where the ‘T’ crossed the long part of the tunnel. One in the center, the other two explosives on either side of the transverse.

hand inside the briefcase, on the switch—he would wait until one of the other men gave him the signal. One of us would be stationed on the same corner—but watching to see when Carrero’s car passed just over the tunnel.”

Txabi broke in, pointing out that none of the men was a specialist in explosives. “But we did have some rudimentary knowledge,” he went on, “even more than rudimentary knowledge about how explosives worked. All militants of ETA do. This operation didn’t demand any extensive or complicated knowledge of explosives. The only real problem was to make sure that the explosion didn’t go horizontally through the tunnel—we needed vertical force—straight up through the street! We figured out how to manage such an explosion—and we did it.”

“We were worried about the foundations of nearby houses,” added Iker. “There could have been a lot of damage. We studied rather carefully how to set off the explosives in order not to overdo the force and cause damage to the other houses on the street.”

“We carefully calculated a way to place the explosives so that all the force would go upward,” Mikel continued. He paused, then said, “It’s true, though—none of us had any real experience with explosives before Operation Ogro. All those speculations in the newspapers—that we were technical experts—were ridiculous,” said Jon. “Everything that was reported on this subject was a lie—and absurd! It was even rumored that there was an expert in optic lenses—an electrical engineer—a mining engineer—ridiculous! People were trying to appear smarter than they really were about how the execution was done. Also, the Government had to deny what had happened—that in reality it could have been so simple to kill Carrero Blanco—the head of the Government. They had to show the people that the forces that destroyed Carrero had some tremendous, omnipotent power. The regime intimated that it was an international conspiracy—international Communists, united with Swedes—elements of the IRA, helped by the OAS—the CIA—and all the rest of the crazy rumors printed in the press,” commented Jon impatiently.

“As for all those scenarios,” interjected Txabi, “they didn’t believe a word of it themselves. Fuck ... the Government isn’t that naive... what happened is, they couldn’t accept the simple truth. They killed our Carrero Blanco? Hombre! Then the greatest technical skills of the world must have been used in this conspiracy.”

Mikel commented, “If the military thought that this was an operation that demanded a great technique, as they kept saying— all it meant is that they were actually in the dark as to what took place. They didn’t have one fucking idea what happened! What they called ‘tank mines’ in the press were ordinary packages of dynamite that had been stolen

used Goma Two, because that's what we were given, and we had the guarantee that this was an explosive with sufficient force to explode the tunnel upward. As a matter of fact, not all of our explosives were Goma Two. We had 50 kilos of Goma Two—the rest was a variety of weaker explosives. But those sausages of Goma Two were stupendous! Just like sausages from Pamplona. Huge! Each sausage weighed over a kilo. Also, they were extremely well packaged. Each one came wrapped in heavy plastic to protect the explosives against any premature damage,” concluded Txabi.

“They weighed a lot of milk. Those sausages-nearly killed me—getting them packed into the tunnel!” Iker burst out.

“But that was also due to the cramped position we were in. The tunnel was so narrow that you had to move about in an awkward way. When the time came to actually put the dynamite inside the tunnel, it was very difficult—and awkward,” Mikel added.

Jon began speaking, taking over the explanation of the explosive system that the commando used. “Now that we'd finished the T-shaped tunnel, our plan was to distribute three packages of explosives—20 kilos each—two in either extreme of the arms of the T—the third, in the middle, where the T crossed. Therefore, all three packages had to be placed in a straight, horizontal line. This line of explosives was 7 meters long, just below the street in the place where Carrero's car had to pass. The three packages of dynamite were joined by a detonator cord, which also ran the length of the tunnel, back into the apartment. Actually, there were three detonator cords, one for each package of explosives. The three detonator cords and three electric wires from the detonator cable were joined inside the apartment. In the middle of all the explosives we put an electric detonator with several ordinary detonators around it, to make sure of even greater explosive power. All these cords and wires were wrapped together with heavy-duty rubber tape. The ends of the electric detonator cable were joined to an electric cable. This electric cable was drawn through the window, then it continued the length of the whole street—Claudio Coello—alongside the electric telephone wires. It stretched the length of Claudio Coello up to Diego de León. There, it dropped to the street. At street level, we put the end of this cable inside an ‘electric box’ hidden inside a briefcase. Naturally, the cable inside the electric box was split into two wires—negative and positive. There was a battery inside the box, too—and the cable was joined to the battery.” Jon paused a moment, then continued. “The battery had a switch. The switch turned on the current—and set off the explosion. Therefore, one of us had to be at the corner of Diego de León— Claudio Coello isn't visible from this vantage point. He would be carrying the briefcase with the electric box containing the battery. Then—with his

December 7-16, 1973

“We Make a Tunnel Under Unfavorable Conditions”

“The work in the basement was started on December 7. We had no previous experience in building tunnels,” Iker began.

“None of us! Can you imagine—and me, with my claustrophobia on top of everything else. For me to put myself in a closed place makes me gasp for breath. I become asphyxiated,” Jon complained.

“We brought some pickaxes from Euskadi,” Iker added, “which turned out to be too large for that type of work, and, in the end, we couldn't use them. We had to buy chisels and other instruments of that sort.”

Now Mikel spoke up. “The first part of the work consisted of making a hole that somebody could enter to get underneath the sidewalk. But in order to do this, we had to bore a hole through the foundations of the cellar apartment—this was hell!”

“Later,” Jon went on, “once the wall was broken, we had to dig deeper.”

Txabi now spoke, with his usual calm precision. “The hole began 5 inches above the floor. It was about 20 inches high. We began picking away with a chisel and a mallet, because the wall was very solid and there wasn't enough room to use picks. Each time we penetrated farther along into the tunnel, we had to buy longer chisels.”

“The hardest part was this first part,” said Iker. “We felt we would never see the end of it—the first day, we didn't even get beyond the wall to the earth. The whole time was used in picking away at the wall. We became more and more discouraged,” Iker remembered. “We'd no sooner get rid of one piece of brick than, right behind it, would be more brick! As time went on, we became more and more exhausted, and the work seemed harder. In the beginning, we were only able to penetrate the wall—at first, only 9 inches at a time—then that went on—more bricks—finally, we were maybe 15 inches deep ...”

“The construction bricks were very tightly packed, with no air holes,” added Txabi. “Very hard to work with.”

“And the concrete mortar was damned hard!” interrupted Jon.

“I remember that first night—we went back to our own apartment extremely depressed. We weren't used to that type of hard work—digging with chisels—and we hadn't worn gloves, but had worked with our bare hands. Our hands became completely blistered in our struggles with the concrete.” ...

“It was heavy going—chiseling through that wall. Took us one solid day. We worked in relays, taking twenty-minute shifts—more than that was impossible. We hadn't even hit dirt by nightfall! The following

morning we came back. By noon the second day we perforated the wall," Jon said.

"But just barely," Iker added. "We could just manage to get one arm through the hole and start digging dirt out with the other hand. We worked all day on enlarging that hole—and by that night, one person could crawl into the space. We picked the skinniest man in the group for that job—he'd take up the least space. Now, with this much space at our disposal, we were able to make better work plans for the following day. We kept working in shifts. Each three-quarters of an hour, we'd rotate. It was impossible for a two-man team to take more than four turns per day—too exhausting. We would have ended up sick. Not so much because of the work itself, but because of the conditions in which we had to work." Iker paused a moment, then continued. "The stink was atrocious! As soon as we hit earth, it began to reek of escaping gas. There wasn't a large gas leak—but the earth was impregnated with gas. It was soft, greasy, humid earth. When I touched it, I could see and feel that it had been impregnated by gas. And every time we pulled the toilet chain in the water-closet—*hombre!* —there was a stench that just about knocked us out. of the conduits to the toilet disposal. It was impossible to withstand that stink."

"There were small leaks throughout the earth. Nothing big, but still, leaks everywhere—old pipes, sewage, filth. It was a *bouillabaisse* of the world's garbage!" remembered Jon.

"But we didn't run into any real obstacles—like gas pipes, electrical wiring, things of that sort," Mikel explained. "We could see the gas pipe, and we worked beneath it. We started digging 5 inches above the floor of the basement apartment, so when we started digging into the earth, we realized that the height of our own ceiling was on a level with the gas pipe—so we worked a little lower. Once into the earth, we planned our work better. We had five or six of those plastic garbage bags ready, and we began filling them with debris." ...

Iker was good at recalling this sort of detail. "We had moments of real panic. When we were 4 or 5 meters inside the tunnel, there was a small landslide. A lot of asphalt, rocks, and dirt suddenly started to fall into the tunnel. We were scared shitless!—Our balls were in our throats! After that, we decided to take our pistols with us while we worked in the tunnel—in case of an accident. Mikel and I wanted those guns with us, because if something happened inside that tunnel, we didn't want to die of asphyxiation. Better to use the pistol. Working in the tunnel was very frightening—aside from the feelings of asphyxiation, we heard everything that was going on above us in the street. What made far more noise than the passing cars was the sound of women walking—clack-clack—in their high heels on the sidewalk just above us."

transferred the explosives into my car. The men who delivered the explosives didn't know about Operation Ogro. They merely knew they had to bring a certain quantity of explosives to a certain agreed-upon destination—this they did. After the transfer, they followed me for several miles as a support convoy, in case of trouble. As soon as they were sure I was in no danger, they drove off. They went back to Euskadi. I went on to Madrid."

There was a long pause. Txabi seemed to be thinking. "The explosives fit very easily into the trunk compartment. They weighed a lot, though ... around 80 kilos. We had asked for more explosives ... but they sent us 80 kilos." He paused a moment, then continued. "Transporting the dynamite wasn't too dangerous. When dynamite is well protected, well wrapped, it's not very likely that there will be an accident. A detonator is needed to set it off. Without a detonator connected to the dynamite, an accident is unlikely. While the detonator—the system for setting it off—and the explosives are kept separated, it is almost impossible for the dynamite to explode. Naturally, something could always go wrong. In order for an explosion to occur, you'd have to have an accumulation of great density of heat in one spot. This could happen, say, if two automobiles collided— but the possibility of this happening is very small, provided, of course, that the explosives are extremely well wrapped." Txabi paused thoughtfully, then went on. "We also transported two rolls of cord for the detonator, each 100 meters long—also, a dozen detonators. We had both electric detonators and ordinary ones. We needed both kinds because, in order to insure maximum force during the explosion, we'd place the ordinary detonators around the electric ones. It was very easy for us to get the explosives into the basement apartment. Around 10:30 in the evening, which was the time we generally left the apartment, neither the super nor the *sereno* was guarding the building. This was the hour we picked for slipping in the explosives. Our car was parked near the apartment. We took out our suitcases, much in the manner of people returning from a trip."

"There were two huge bags and two suitcases," Jon recalled. "We moved like lightning. Nobody had a chance to realize what we were up to."

"The explosives were 'Goma Two'—these explosives were taken from the Hernani Powder Magazine—which has a big warehouse of explosives. More than 3000 kilos of explosives had been stolen from Hernani. Later, the police were able to trace and get back only 1000 kilos. Of all the industrial explosives, the strongest is pure Goma— virgin Goma. The strength of explosives is judged from the starting point of pure Goma—all are made in Río Tinto. There are all sorts and classes of Goma. We

"If you could have seen us then—we were really a sad crew," Jon sighed. "After four or five days of working in the tunnel, our skin was ashy-green and had a greasy texture. We had deep shadows beneath our eyes. At night we would go out for a quick sandwich and a beer. That basement apartment didn't even have decent enough sanitary conditions for us to wash ourselves. So we were pooped out exhausted—and dirty. The only thing we wanted to do was to lie down and stretch out on the bed—but we had to go to the café first and get something to eat and drink. In the café, the clientele moved away from us. We *stank*—our hair, our clothes, our skin—you could smell us several feet away. Even now, as I try to describe it, the stench comes back to me, like a bad dream."

"It actually took us about eight days to build the tunnel," Iker said. "We started it around the seventh of December, and worked until the fifteenth. By the thirteenth, we realized that we had to do the execution as quickly as possible. That was when Txabi went to get the explosives."

"No," broke in Txabi, "I got the explosives later—when the tunnel was already completed. I remember that I had an appointment scheduled for December 15, and we had planned by then to give very exact measurements of the tunnel—and what was needed in the way of explosives. That was when Iker bought the tape measure."

"Yes, that's right—you gave me a hard time about that tape measure! Me, I did exactly what was necessary. I went out, bought the tape measure, and came right back to the apartment," said Iker.

"Yeah, but they managed to sell you the most expensive tape measure in all of Madrid," Jon teased. "You'd think it was made of gold—hombre, you got creamed! You paid 400 pesetas [about \$7] and all we needed was a simple measuring stick, to use once, to measure the length and width of the tunnel." ...

"On December 15 we went to get the explosives," said Txabi, taking over the narrative. "Our rendezvous was a halfway point between Madrid and Euskadi. The meeting went off without incident. The men who brought us the explosives didn't run into any problems along the way. They used the same precautions as on previous occasions. They weren't stopped en route—they had no problems with police controls, or things of that sort. They arrived at the meeting place exactly as planned. We

"That was a very critical moment," agreed Mikel. "When we had gotten so far, had worked so hard on our plans, inside the tunnel—to think that at any moment, we could be killed by a landslide—or that the sidewalk could cave in and our whole show be discovered. Fuck! We sure were scared shitless."

"That was a real worry for us," Txabi went on, calmly, but solemnly. "We stopped at that point, and talked over our plans for the tunnel. We now had no choice, no exit. The tunnel was well under way. We had to continue it, but it was now getting more dangerous. We had to finish that tunnel as quickly as possible. At any moment the super or the landlord—who was no bargain and a bit of a crook as well—could have come snooping around the apartment. The only real solution was to get a technical engineer, who could advise us about the construction of the tunnel. Someone to tell us how to proceed, what the dangers were. But we didn't have a technical advisor—nor was there any time to go to Euskadi to find one—so the four of us decided that we had to keep on going. This is when Mikel came up with a new solution."

"I thought we should consult a technical book on the construction of mines," said Mikel. "It would at least give us some idea of what we should be doing. We'd feel a little less disoriented and have a little information to go on. We had to try everything! That's when I told the others I would go over to 'Casa del Libro'—I think that's what it's called—a large bookstore in the Gran Vía. They knew me in that bookstore. I had already purchased all sorts of books there. There was a very simpático salesman there."

"I knew he'd let me browse among the books on my own. Other times, when I'd gone there to get information on graphic arts, he let me take notes from books I didn't even buy. So, we decided that Jon and I would visit the bookstore."

"Because it was already around 5 in the afternoon, Txabi and Iker were going to take a nap and then go home. Iker reconnoitered the situation—when the coast was clear, he signaled the rest of us, and we all left the apartment. By then, it was miserable—freezing Madrid winter weather. We got into a taxi and shut the windows—as soon as we did, a stench from the tunnel filled the cab. We'd become so used to that stench we didn't realize we carried it with us. But all our clothes were permeated with the smell—we stank. The fresh air from the street seemed to make the stink even worse. The cab driver looked at us in his front mirror; he must have been thinking—these men are either excavating sewers—or they walk in shit. We arrived at the bookstore—we must have looked—and smelled-terrible. Two walking disasters! When you're living in tense circumstances, you don't always think of things like that."

[2]. In Spain, supers and serenos (men who have the keys to all the buildings on each street) are a major problem for the opposition. Serenos usually are retired policemen. They play a significant role in helping the Spanish police check on the movements of the population at large.

"Inside the bookstore, I spoke to the salesman I knew. I told him I wanted to look at some books on mine construction. We had a friend, I explained, to whom we had to give a present. The book had to be on mines—his specialty—but we didn't know which of the books to choose. He was extremely courteous. He took us over to one of the book stands, showed us where the books on mines were—and then he let us browse. There were several books. One two-volume set looked good. One chapter in this set explained how to prop up tunnel walls. We read that chapter, and Jon took notes. It didn't seem to be a difficult procedure to follow—but for the sort of tunnel we were constructing, the information wasn't applicable."

Mikel sat back, and Jon took up the story. "We read that the easiest way of propping up tunnel walls was to put a wooden pole in the center of the tunnel with two wooden planks—one supporting the pole on the bottom, the other supporting it at the top. But this technique was for much larger excavations! In our passageway, which was so tiny, it was hard to make room for even one human body—there was no room for a wooden column and two supporting planks in the middle! A second method we read about was equally impractical—we would have had to put boards across the ceiling of the tunnel and along either wall. But our tunnel was too small—it would have been filled with boards! So, the only solution was to keep our pistols with us, and put up with all the difficulties," Jon said, and paused. "We just had to hope things worked out for us..."

Mikel spoke once more. "I told the others what we had found out by reading the books on mining in the bookstore. But for some reason, the panic we'd felt about building that tunnel had quieted down. I relaxed a little, once I understood that the complicated interior propping up of tunnels—building an interior structure—was meant for much larger tunnels. Clearly, our tunnel, because of its small size, presented less of a risk. In height, it was no more than 24 inches—and in width, no more than 20," Mikel concluded.

"The next day we made more progress," Iker went on. "Our working conditions were really fucked up! Now the problem wasn't landslides—it was that the earth inside the tunnel was completely impregnated with gas. And the deeper we dug, the worse the gas leaks became. There were many times we were dizzy... and a couple of times, I passed out."

"We couldn't stay inside the tunnel more than a quarter of an hour at a time, added Txabi. "By the time we'd gotten about 25 feet in, which was when we started to construct the arms of the "T"—digging lateral holes to the left and to the right—the air became completely unbreathable. Putrid. We couldn't last in that hole even ten minutes—air too foul," Txabi commented.

"The problem wasn't only that the tunnel was longer now— and we had to go farther in—but that we were now working in teams of three, which meant that there was less oxygen for each of us," explained Mikel.

"In the final stages," Jon broke in, "one man would be positioned in the extreme end of one arm of the T—for example, in the left arm of the T—while another man would be at the point where the two lines of the T crossed. The third man stayed in the long part of the T—in the part of the tunnel leading from the apartment to the arms of the T. During this stage of the dig, there were always two of us who were in the far depths of the tunnel. The man positioned at the very end of an arm of the T now had to work under extremely adverse conditions. The hole was so small he couldn't stand up—or even sit up! He had to lie flat in the dirt, stretched out on his stomach, and dig from a prone position. The small amount of oxygen in the tunnel was now completely contaminated with gas." Jon paused a moment in his account, then went on. "I've already mentioned that I'm claustrophobic—I panicked.... felt I was choking in that unbreathable mess. But... when you have to do a job, it has to be done ... and that's that. There are worse things in life than digging a tunnel," he concluded quietly.

"Many times I'd come out of that stinking tunnel half asphyxiated," said Iker. "And I had such terribly violent headaches I thought my head was exploding. We were all suffering from the severe aftereffects of being continuously intoxicated by the gas fumes," he added.

"And we couldn't open the windows of the apartment to ventilate it," said Jon, "because the air in the room smelled. With the windows open, people walking along the street would have noticed the fumes. And the entire floor of the apartment was covered with dirt—the putrid stench of that dirt also contaminated the room. By this time, there was the same stench in the basement as in the tunnel. We couldn't open the apartment door, either, because the smell instantly escaped into the hallway and up the staircase leading to the first floor. We had to seal up the door frames, so that none of the smell would escape into the outer hall," Jon concluded.

"In the beginning," Txabi recalled, "we tried to ventilate the apartment. One night, before going back to our own apartment, we left the window open. We just couldn't take being in that basement any longer without airing out the place. When we came back the next morning, the whole street was permeated with a horrible stink. I don't know why the *Sereno* didn't sense that something was wrong; the smell of the escaping gas fumes was overwhelming [2]. After that, we decided that it was safer to put up with the sealed apartment—and the fumes. If the neighbors or the super thought there was a gas leak—and reported it-well, this could have been very dangerous for us."