

FRANCO COMMUTES DEATH SENTENCES FOR SIX BASQUES

Decisión, Following Many
Clemency Appeals, Eases
the Tensión in Spain

TERMS TO BE 30 YEARS

Announcement Comes After
Cabinet Meeting—General
Speaks to Nation on TV

Special to The New York Times

MADRID, Dec. 30—Generalissimo Francisco Franco today commuted all the death sentences imposed in the Burgos court-martial of 15 Basque guerrillas charged with banditry and the killing of a police inspector.

The decisión put a dramatic end to the tensión that had built up in Spain and abroad over the last month, and that has provided the Franco leadership with its most serious political crisis in the 30 years since the civil war.

General Franco's decisión, in the face of worldwide clemency appeals, was officially announced immediately after a Cabinet meeting.

Six of the convicted Basques would have been shot by firing squad tomorrow morning in Burgos if the sentences had not been commuted. They are now to serve 30-year prison terms.



United Press International

TELLS OF ACTION ON BASQUES: Generalissimo Francisco Franco addresses the Spanish nation on television.

Prisoners Are Notified

The six—Francisco Izco, Eduardo Uriarte, Francisco Javier Larena, Joaquín Gorostidi, Mario Onaindia and José Mana Dorronsoro—were taken to the judges' chambers in the Burgos prison this afternoon as soon as General Franco's decisión had been announced.

Their lawyers, who went immediately to inform them; found that they thought they had been brought there to start the vigil that precedes execution.

"They were in good spirits anyway," one of the lawyers said, "but naturally they were happy to hear the news.

"One of them told me they had been saving wine from their meáis to drink on New Year's Eve," the lawyer said. "However, they drank it up last night because they thought they would be shot tomorrow before evening came, and they didn't want to waste it."

The 30 years that will replace each death sentence—in the case of the three men who had been given double death sentences this meant 60 years

Continued on Page 2, Column 5

Franco Spares the Six Basques, Easing Political Crisis in Spain

Continued From Page 1, Col I

—are added to other sentences ranging from 20 to 30 years that each of the six received et the court-martial, The 80 or 90-year tótotals are theoretical. however, since by Spanish law no one may serve more than 30 years in prison.

The cabinet had been tapatiently waiting all morning for ratification of the sentences by Gen. Tomas García Rebull, commander of the Burgos Military Región. Once the ratification arrived, the Cabinet was called quickly into session. This was reauied by law, but the decision wheteher to approve ot commute the sentences was General Franco's alone.

The widespread sense of relief was perhaps expressed most vividly by the officially controlled news agency Cifra, which is one of the less liberal Spanish news organizations. Its first news flash, sent after the Cabinet meeting, said simply:

"Amnestied. Amnestied. Amnestied."

Address to the Nación

Tonight General Franco appeared on television to deliver his customary year-end address to the Spanish people. The 78-year-old Chief of State was dressed in a dark suit, a white shirt with a stiff collar and a patterned tie. He spoke while standing up and looked well, though his delivery was jerky. bis voice often quavery and his words indistinct. Spaniards are used to this, however.

His address was low-keyed. As usual, it alluded mostly to the country's growth and progress. At the beginning he briefly mentioned "the splatterings of the winds of convulsion in which the world lives."

Only at the end did General Franco refer directly to today's

decisión. He linked the commutation directly to the recent demonstrations of support for his Government that have been organized in major Spanish cities,

"The immense vote of loyalty in the Plaza de Oriente in Madrid and throughout Spain that you nave offered, not only to my person but also to the Spanish Army and our institutions, has reinforced our authority to the point that it allows us, after consulting the Courtcil of the Realm, to use our right of commutaioin, despite the gravity of acts that the Burgos court-martial has judged with high patriotism," he said.

Sentences Caused Shock

General Franco's decisión followed an erratic series of rising and waning expectations about the fate of the prisoners.

Late last week there was a wide-spread conviction in Government circles that the sentences of the five-man court-martial panel would avoid the death penalty altogether, or impose it only in one or two cases.

The announcement on Monday of the six death sentences came as a shock, even to right-wing sectors of the regime. Three of the six doomed Basques faced double sentences of death, on separate counts. There were renewed reports that the army, angry at having been saddled with responsibility for an unpopular trial, was deliberately handing an explosive issue back to the Government.

The shock of the sentence: set off a campaign for clemency. All the press, from right-wing to moderate, insisted that the regime had amply shown its firmness. The recent series of pro - Franco demonstrations across the country had proved, the newspapers said, that reports abroad of opposition to the leadership were false.