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A25

# Juan Carlos' Popularity Soars After Delicate Trip to Basque Country

By Tom Burns  
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MADRID, Feb. 7 — The Spanish left used to call him "Juan Carlos the Puppet." To the right he was "Juan Carlos the Fool." Even those who liked and supported him wondered whether he would turn out to be "the Brief."

But after three days of seeing separatist problems and violence at close quarters this week and dealing with them adeptly in the first royal visit to the Basque country, the king of Spain is now being acclaimed "Juan Carlos the Brave," and critics and supporters alike acknowledge that his popularity is at an all-time high.

After an indifferent beginning with scattered protests and a hostile demonstration during a major speech at Guernica, Juan Carlos' visit gathered momentum as he made clear his commitment to democracy, and it ended Thursday with the king and the leader of the autonomous Basque government embracing effusively as Juan Carlos left to return to Madrid.

In visiting the Basque country, Juan Carlos toured the region that has been the most destabilizing factor in the transition from Francoism's dominant central government to the present policy of autonomy for nationalist groups within a unified Spain.

Political killings in the Basque country in 1980 stood at a record high of 110 with Basque separatists of the Marxist organization ETA claiming responsibility for about 80. Adolfo Suarez, who resigned as prime minister last week, consistently had advised the king against such a tour for security reasons. Reliable sources said the trip was undertaken on the king's own



An old man reaches out to grasp the arm of King Juan Carlos in Vitoria during his visit to the Basque country last week. United Press International

initiative and organized directly with the autonomous Basque government.

In the Basque country Juan Carlos succeeded in driving a wedge between the moderate Basque nationalists that form the autonomous regional govern-

ment and the extremists who back the terrorist methods of ETA and seek secession of the Basque country from the rest of Spain. The extremist demonstration at Guernica outraged the moderates while the conciliating pitch

of the king's speech broke through the mutual suspicion that has dominated their contacts with the central government.

The concluding impact of the first royal trip to the politically charged

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At Guernica, the king spoke at length about the ancient ties that the kings of Spain had forged with the Basque people and how those ties were strongest when Basque freedoms were most observed by his royal ancestors.

Basque country of northern Spain has been an undoubted personal triumph for the 43-year-old Juan Carlos, who came to the throne five years ago. Ironically it was leftist extremists who made the triumph possible and, with

fortunate timing, the king's stock is at its greatest when he needs it most — as he prepares to choose a successor to Suarez, architect of the Spanish transition.

The high point of the Basque was the speech at Guernica, the spiritual capital of the fiercely independent Basques. Guernica was blanket-bombed by the German Luftwaffe in 1937 as Hitler backed Francisco Franco's civil war against the Spanish republic.

Juan Carlos, with his wife Sofia, entered the ancient stone-walled assembly hall preceded by wigged mace bearers in livery and accompanied by thundering clarion calls. When his turn came to address the assembly of Basque politicians, radical nationalist deputies leaped to their feet, gave the clenched fist salute and sang a Basque separatist anthem until they were forcibly ejected by Basque security agents. Juan Carlos bore out the pandemonium with aplomb and when order was restored he restated his faith in democracy and his confidence in the Basque people.

The king spoke at length about the ancient ties that the kings of Spain had forged with the Basque people and how those ties were strongest when Basque freedoms were most observed by his royal ancestors. Politicians of all shades of opinion saw it as a speech of major political importance. Juan Carlos had committed the crown unequivocally to the post-Franco democratic process and especially to the delicate policy of creating autonomous regions that will replace the previous

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# Mexico to Assist Cubans Under Agreement

MEXICO, From A25

With technical assistance, an accord with the Mexican government is more favorable and secure from Cuba's point of view.

While the text of the agreement gives few financial details, it says that Mexico will supply "equipment and materials produced in Mexico" on a basis of "cost plus expenses" and will "make its best efforts" to help Havana acquire equipment in other countries when necessary.

U.S. law bans sale of American goods to Cuba and U.S. officials are said to be watching for evidence that Mexico might act as an intermediary in channeling American oil machinery or raw materials to Havana.

Mexico was the only Latin American nation not to break diplomatic relations with Cuba in the 1960s, but it implicitly supported the U.S.-initiated embargo imposed in 1964 by halting most of its trade with the island. However, 10 years ago it began improving political and commercial ties with Havana to the point where they are very close now. Last year, President José López Portillo went to Cuba following an earlier visit from President Fidel Castro here.

There has been widespread speculation as to Mexico's motives for reaching the energy agreement with Cuba. Some analysts have suggested it is merely one additional way for Mexico to assert its independence of Washington.

Others say the real reason is that it was promoted

by Pemex Chief Díaz Serrano as a way of furthering his domestic political career. Díaz Serrano, a close friend of López Portillo, is among several aspirants to become the next president of Mexico. One of his handicaps, these analysts say, is his image of being too pro-American and too pro-business. These analysts suggest that his trip to Havana, where he delivered a strongly pro-Cuban speech, was an attempt to redress the balance.

The deal also comes at a time when Pemex has been rapidly expanding its activities abroad. It has bought the majority share in a refinery in the north of Spain and is studying joint ventures in several other nations. Pemex workers are exploring or providing technical aid in Panama, Nicaragua and Costa Rica and are also to go to China and India.

# Basque Visit Boosts Spanish Monarch's Popularity

SPAIN, From A25

repressive centralism with a virtual federal state structure.

Juan Carlos returned to Madrid to an enthusiastic welcome from crowds that were furious at the affront that he had undergone in Guernica and delighted that he had carried off the tense situation in a masterful manner. Newspaper headlines called him "Juan Carlos the Brave."

He also returned to a political vacuum.

tional role of naming a new prime minister after consultation with the political parties.

The king is awaiting the outcome of the Majorca convention to name the successor to Suárez, the man he chose in 1976 to speed up the democratic process. In the meantime he is consulting with political leaders in an effort to assure his candidate for premier of a strong backing that will ensure a stable government until general

elections. The monarch's traditional role of "giving and receiving advice," Juan Carlos' powers are in theory severely limited, but in practice they can be used with considerable muscle. Spanish commentators point out a key difference from the British system: the lack in Spain of consolidated democratic institutions with the corresponding degree of influence that the monarch is expected to exert.

Profound problems remain unsolved

against the king centered on the issue.

Garaikoetxea, however, was the first to term the tour "a historic and positive" success. His effusive backslapping embrace, Spanish style, with the king as Juan Carlos left San Sebastian airport to return to Madrid, linked the chief of the Basque executive with the fortunes of the crown and by implication with the rest of Spain.

For all the problems of