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Supporting German occupiers: the pro-Vichy stance of the Basque newspaper 'Eskualduna'

Abstract

Eskualduna, a weekly newspaper edited in Bayonne and the oldest and most influential Basque language media publication of the time, was shut down in 1944 by the new post-liberation French authorities because of its pro-Vichy and pro-German stance, while its editor, the priest Sauveur Aroçarena, was arrested and convicted. This article examines the basis of the accusation under which *Eskualduna* was seized, i.e. to what extent its editorial approach favored the Vichy regime led by Marshall Pétain and the German occupation. For this purpose, a sample of 32 editorial articles signed by Aroçarena after four landmarks of the war (declaration of war in 1939, first German occupation in 1940, occupation of Vichy France in 1942 and Normandy landings in 1944) has been analyzed following source analysis methodology. The analysis of *Eskualduna's* editorials has been contextualized within the reality of the Basque society's attitude towards German occupation in order to understand that *Eskualduna's* position was in harmony with its community's way of experiencing the war, the regime and the occupation. This research confirms that *Eskualduna* had overall a pro-Vichy stance, and points out that this approach was framed within a discourse of French patriotism, defense of Catholicism, personality cult and affirmation of Basque identity.

Keywords

Eskualduna, journalism, editorials, Vichy, German occupation, collaboration, Basque.

1. Introduction

Eskualduna, meaning Basque speaker, was founded by the right-wing parliamentary candidate Louis Etcheverry in Bayonne in 1887, as a reaction to the creation of *Le Reveil Basque* by his republican opponent, Martial Berdoly, in Pau a year before (Xarriton, 1987). Both magazines were bilingual, but *Le Reveil* published half of its texts fully in Basque and the other half in French, whilst *Eskualduna* mainly used Basque. *Le Reveil Basque* disappeared at the end of 1894, but *Eskualduna* continued to be published (Diaz Noci, 1995).

Eskualduna became a very influential publication especially in the rural and very conservative inland of the Northern Basque Country, in France (Bidegain, 2013). During the Occupation period in World War II, *Eskualduna* maintained an editorial stance that was eventually considered pro-German by post-liberation authorities. The history of *Eskualduna* ended in 1944, when it was closed down and forbidden to republish, along with all regional, pro-German newspapers in the area of the Basses-Pyrénées. It was the end of the oldest Basque language publication in the entire Basque speaking territory.

This article analyzes the extent to which *Eskualduna* was in fact pro-Vichy and pro-German during the Nazi occupation of France, based on the articles signed by its editor Sauveur Arotçarena – also known and cited by his name in Basque, Xalbat Arotçarena – in four different periods: the first weeks after France's declaration of war against Germany in May 1939, the early stages of the German Occupation from June 1940, the period after the Allies' landing in North Africa in November 1942, and the weeks before the liberation of the French Basque Country in August 1944. Prior to this analysis of the contents of *Eskualduna*, the first part of this article will focus on the context in which *Eskualduna* shaped its position.

2. The Basque reaction to German occupation

Half of France was occupied by the German Army in June 1940. The armistice signed by Marshal Pétain on June 22 divided France into two parts. The line of demarcation separating the Occupied and Vichy zones also divided the Basque territory: Labourd and most of Basse-Navarre were in the Occupied Zone, while Soule and the eastern area of Basse-Navarre remained in the so-called Free Zone ruled by Pétain. The demarcation line ran north from the border town of Arneguy to Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port and Saint-Palais, and on toward Salies-de-Bearn (Sallaberry, 1997). This division lasted until November 1942, when the German Army occupied all of France, as a reaction to the Allies' attack on Vichy-controlled North Africa. German forces started to move into the Vichy zone on November 11, and they entered Maule on February 25, 1943 (Ott, 2008).

When the Germans occupied France in June 1940, the first reaction of most French people was relief, surprise and curiosity: "Relief that the fighting was over; surprise at the restrained behavior of the Germans; curiosity to see these godlike creatures who had triumphed so decisively" (Jackson, 2001: 272). Some authors who witnessed the occupation of Basque territory have given accounts that concur with this overview of French citizens' initial response to the defeat. According to the prominent priest Pierre Lafitte, who was involved in the Resistance, "the vast majority of Basques were either pro-Vichy or accommodated themselves to the Nazi occupation and sought simply to endure" (Jacob, 1994: 117). Exiled in the Northern Basque Country since 1941 because of the Spanish civil war, the well-known Basque anthropologist Barandiaran observed that everybody in the village of Sare seemed to sympathize with Pétain, who was considered "as the man that was going to save France" (1972: 59-102). Xarriton, a full member of the Basque Language Royal Academy, was a young seminarian in Bayonne at the time of the Occupation. Xarriton said that only "the minority of the minority" viewed Germans as enemies, that the dominant opinion was that "they were correct" and that many considered Marshal Pétain "the savior of France" (Murua Uria, 1996: 98-99). Arbelbide, author of several books, also had firsthand experience of the occupation as a child in his hometown, Heleta (Labourd). He remembers singing *Maréchal nous voilà* at school and that "everybody in Heleta was in favor of Pétain" (1997: 164).

The prevailing social order in the French Basque Country during the 1940s was "a rural, agrarian society with an overwhelmingly clerical and conservative political culture" (Jacob, 1994: 65), dominated by the "omnipresence of the priest and the rural notables" (Jiménez de Aberasturi, 1997: 70). By far the most prominent notable and most important political figure

in the continental Basque Country was Jean Ybarnegaray. First elected in 1914, Ybarnegaray was subsequently re-elected for the National Assembly until its dissolution by the Vichy regime in 1940, when he became a minister for several months. He was a lifelong militant in right-wing organizations, "active in the Jeunesses Patriotes of the 1920's, a leader of Colonel de la Rocque's Croix de Feu, and the most prominent deputy of La Rocque's Parti Social Français after 1936" (Paxton, 2001: 163). He openly supported Franco's regime during and after the Spanish civil war and fiercely opposed the Basque autonomous Government, led by the Basque nationalist Jose Antonio Agirre, which sided with the Republicans. The political career of Ybarnegaray culminated under Vichy, where he served as Minister of Family and Veterans in Pétain's first cabinet, which lasted less than a month, and as Minister of Youth and Family in Pétain's second cabinet, which lasted less than two months (Paxton, 2001; Jacob, 1994; Ott, 2008). Ybarnegaray left office in September 1940 after having served just three months, but his role as a minister strongly influenced his constituency's support of the Vichy regime (Jacob, 1994). Ybarnegaray ended up aiding the Resistance (Jiménez de Aberasturi, 1997). He was arrested, along with his wife, his chauffeur and two others, for having helped some fugitives escape to Spain, and he was sent to a concentration camp in the Tyrol (Paxton, 2001; Ott, 2008). He was tried by the post-liberation authorities and accused of treason, but was eventually released because of his service to the Resistance (Jacob, 1994).

The Basques' attitude toward the German Occupation, Pétain, and the Vichy regime evolved significantly as the Occupation went on. The continued German presence on French soil, the imprisonment of French POWs in Germany, rationing and high prices "diminished the enthusiasm for Vichy" (Ott, 2008: 83). Moreover, in February 1943, the introduction of Vichy laws on obligatory work service (STO) in Germany and the arrival of German troops in the Free Zone "greatly increased opposition to the Vichy regime and aided locally formed resistance groups" (Ott, 2008: 95).

However, the unpopularity of the German occupiers did not mean disaffection with the Vichy regime. Many Basques continued to regard Pétain as a father figure and hero of the First World War. Many notables and rural Basques retained an admiration for the marshal (Ott, 2008), and still hoped he would liberate France (Peillen, 1997). In September 1940, Colonel de la Rocque, leader of Ybarnegaray's party, distanced himself from the regime by urging his followers to display "formal discipline behind Marshal Pétain" but "absolute reserve" toward all members of the government (Paxton, 2001: 251; Vinen, 2006: 89).

Marshal Pétain not only seduced right-wing French nationalists, he also gained the support of Basque nationalists and regionalists. In July 1940, Pétain promoted regionalism by arguing for its role in generating "the rebirth of the old French provinces within the modern French state" (Jacob, 1994: 106). That statement revitalized the hope of some Basque regionalists and nationalists of reunifying the three Basque provinces of Labourd, Basse-Navarre and Soule into a specific département separated from the Béarn. Lafitte, a very influential priest involved in cultural, social and political issues, published three articles in *Eskualduna* in 1941, arguing that Basques should take advantage of Pétain's regionalist approach. He asked readers to send letters to Vichy demanding that Soule not be separated from Labourd and Basse-Navarre, and that Basques should not be included in an economic or administrative region with Béarn, as they had been since 1793 (Sudupe, 2001). These attempts, however, did not materialize at all, and "it soon became evident that Vichy's regionalism was as Jacobin as any which had come before it" (Jacob, 1994: 107).

Eugene Goyhenetche provided a very significant exception among Basque nationalists in terms of his attitude toward the occupiers. He was a militant and intellectual who was eventually imprisoned on a charge of collaborating with the Germans. Goyhenetche was an active member of the PNV (Basque Nationalist Party, the leading party of the Basque autonomous government in exile) who participated in the creation of *Aintzina* in 1934. In

Jacob's words, "Goyhenetche's ideological contribution to the Basque idea in the 1930's rivals Lafitte's own, and he remains one of the most important intellectual figures in the French Basque movement in the twentieth century" (1994: 71). Goyhenetche contacted a high-ranking SS officer, Dr. Werner Best, through the linguist Karl Bouda, a prestigious researcher on the Basque language. Goyhenetche was convinced that the Germans would win the war and that Basques had to be on the right side (Jiménez de Aberasturi, 1997). Goyhenetche favored, in the event of a German victory, "the creation of a Basque buffer state which would proportionally weaken both France and Spain" (Jacob, 1994: 118). Goyhenetche later explained that contacts with such as Best and Bouda gave him the chance to save many lives and to help many peninsular Basque refugees. Moreover, he claimed to have convinced the Germans not to expel all the inhabitants of border towns, after they had decided to do so in order to seal the frontier (Jiménez de Aberasturi, 1997).

Lafitte made a controversial statement about Goyhenetche in a long interview carried out by Monier in 1984, a year before Lafitte's death: "You know that Goyhenetche had bet on the Germans. And he was a Gestapo secretary of Bordeaux" (Monier, 1992: 534). Nevertheless, Lafitte himself explained during the same interview that Goyhenetche took serious risks to help people persecuted by the Germans, and that he actually was playing a double game. After the Liberation on January 10, 1945, Goyhenetche was brought to trial before the Court of Justice in Pau. He was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison with hard labor, but he ultimately served 37 months before being freed in November 1947 (Jiménez de Aberasturi, 1997). Lafitte regarded the imprisonment of Goyhenetche as "a drama" (Monier, 1992: 536) and it was "a monumental injustice" for Jacob (1994: 120).

As defined by Burrin, the attitudes toward German occupation can be classified as collaboration, accommodation and resistance, but they cannot be considered three separate categories, but a continuum with ambiguous limits. Most people tried to accommodate the new and changing conditions with attitudes sometimes close to collaboration, and sometimes close to resistance. All forms of adaptation constitute, in Burrin's words, a vast grey area of all kinds of different behavior and complex motives (1996: 1-4).

Just as Basque society as a whole, the Basque Catholic Church reacted in different and evolving ways to the Occupation. According to most of the scholars and witnesses, the majority of the members of the Basque Church were ideologically close to the Vichy regime and some of them clearly supported it, although some members of the hierarchy and many priests actively helped the Resistance. In Jacob's words, the Church was an institution "on which prefects could count for support, and remained a pillar of the regime until the end" (1994: 268). Xarriton states that very few among his colleagues in the seminary questioned the legitimacy of Pétain's government. He related that their superiors in the seminary asked them all to do their obligatory work service in Germany, warning them that they would not be re-admitted to the seminary if they did not do so. A notable exception was Bayonne's Bishop, Edmond Vansteenberghé. He openly opposed the Occupation and the Vichy regime and once delivered a sermon denouncing the STO. When German police surrounded the bishopric after that sermon, only one priest dared to stay in solidarity with the Bishop, while the rest left him alone "quietly" (Xarriton, 1997: 211-213).

Regardless of the position taken by the Catholic hierarchy, some members of the Basque clergy were particularly active in the Resistance. Lafitte, under the nom de guerre 'La Croix', along with several ex-seminarians and boy-scouts, helped persecuted people to cross the border into Spain and North Africa, even providing maps of German troop movements (Monier, 1992). He was not the only one: the Benedictines of the Abbey of Belloc smuggled more than a thousand individuals across the border, their actions being recognized by the French Government in 1951. On December 14, 1943, the three superiors of Belloc were arrested and sent to Buchenwald and Dachau. Nevertheless, resistance at Belloc continued (Diharce, 1997). One of the deported priests, Joannateguy, published a book (2003)

in which he describes the monks' services to the Resistance, their detention, deportation and survival. In Soule, "the much respected Maule clergyman Canon Ithurbide" also engaged in acts of resistance (Ott, 2008: 99).

The attitude of the French people towards the occupation and the Vichy regime changed over time. In general, the French were "immediately hostile to Germany, and progressively disillusioned with Vichy" (Jackson, 2001: 278). Barandiaran noticed a radical change at the end of the Occupation: "In April 1945, one often heard that Pétain had betrayed France" (Barandiaran, 1972: 59-102). In Soule the regime had less support from the beginning (Peillen, 1997): Maule's working-class community remained "extremely hostile to Vichy" and by the end of 1941 Maule's Police Inspector Carbou "reckoned that only a minority of citizens openly supported Vichy" (Ott, 2008: 87). By April 1942 Carbou estimated that "95 percent of Maule citizens firmly opposed collaboration with Hitler" (Ott, 2008: 85-88).

Three kinds of active Resistance took place in the Basque Country: firstly, the smuggling of Allied pilots, Jews, and STO evaders across the Franco-Spanish border; secondly, the development of a plethora of intelligence networks; and, finally, the underground armed Resistance, which was active mainly in Soule (Bellay, 1997). Two main rival groups challenged the Occupation in Soule: the red Maquis of the Secret Army were General De Gaulle's supporters, and the white Maquis of the CFP were General Giraud's followers (Ott, 2008). In any case, armed resistance was not especially intense in the Basque Country: Jiménez de Aberasturi (1997) contends that one of the reasons was that the people persecuted by the Germans could easily escape to Spain, as the border was so close. Furthermore, Allied intelligence services wanted the border area to be calm enough to facilitate fugitive escape.

After the Normandy landings in June 1944, armed resistance intensified. On August 11, the Germans abruptly left Maule due to the Allied landing in Provence. The local resistance, however, claimed that the maquis had driven the enemy out and liberated Soule. On August 23, the German troops in Tardets (Soule) surrendered. On the following day, the liberation of the Basque territories culminated when members of the Resistance entered Bayonne. Nevertheless, the war continued for a further eight months, until all of France was finally liberated in April 1945 (Jiménez de Aberasturi, 1997).

3. *Eskualduna*, a conservative newspaper in a conservative society

When World War II broke out, the priest Arotçarena was the editor of *Eskualduna*. Appointed in March 1937, he was its sixth editor after Arnaud Pochelou (1887-1904), Jean Hiriart-Urruty (1904-1914), Jean-Blaise Adema (1918-1924), Jean Saint-Pierre (1924-1930) and Domingo Soubelet (1930-1937) (Diaz Noci, 1995; Hernández, 2001). *Eskualduna* had achieved 7000 subscribers before World War I under Hiriart-Urruty, and reached its peak with a readership of 8000 under Soubelet's editorship in the 1930's (Diaz Noci, 1995).

The newspaper was created by Louis Etcheverry to promote the return of the Ancient Regime and to challenge Republican ideas. Its principles had always been religion, family and monarchy. Besides almost all the editors, most of the writers were religious men. Over time, it became the most important reference for the rural, religious, traditional, Basque-speaking community (Bidegain, 2013). "*Eskualduna* had a very big presence and influence on the inhabitants of the Northern Basque Country: it formed and fixed a whole way of thinking" (Diaz Noci, 1995: 51). *Eskualduna* always paid great attention to local news from rural towns and to information related to agriculture. Articles about religion also occupied considerable space in the paper. Nevertheless, political issues were always present in its pages, and it always backed right-wing candidates in elections. Through the entire interwar period, the aforementioned Ybarnegaray became the principle reference for Basque conservatives and, therefore, for *Eskualduna*. In the 1930s he was the most powerful

politician in the Northern Basque Country and he had direct influence on *Eskualduna*. Jacob points out that Ybarregaray “more than any other Basque politician of his age had succeeded in championing the reality of the rural Basque tradition” (1994: 87). Larronde sustains that he was even “the true editor of *Eskualduna*” (1990: 308).

Like Ybarregaray, *Eskualduna* had always been totally committed to “the sacred France, the France of the ex-soldiers” but it was Arotçarena the editor who went the furthest in this commitment (Xarriton, 1987: 250). Arotçarena took charge of the paper when the Spanish Civil War had already broken out. *Eskualduna* supported Franco’s rebels in its pages, and strongly criticized the autonomous Basque Government led by the nationalist Agirre. *Eskualduna* reported on the bombing of Gernika 11 days after the attack: the author of the article doubted that the Germans were responsible for the bombing and remarked positively that “the Basque soldiers of Mola [Franco’s ally] are taking care of the sacred tree of Gernika” (7-5-1937). When Bilbao fell to the rebels, *Eskualduna* highlighted the joy of the Bilbao people at seeing the rebel soldiers in town (26-6-1937). *Eskualduna* entered into public controversy with *Eguna*, the only Basque language daily newspaper, published in Bilbao by Basque nationalists during 1937, as *Eguna* criticized *Eskualduna*’s approach to the Spanish Civil War (Agirreazkuenaga, 1989).

After the German Occupation of France and the establishment of the Vichy regime in 1940, *Eskualduna* openly supported Pétain’s Government and his *Revolution Nationale* (Hernández, 2001). Jauregui (2000) contends that Marshal Pétain’s coming to power meant a hope of a return to traditional values in France for these very conservative priests who were leading *Eskualduna*. Moreover, *Eskualduna* shared the Nazi discourse against Jews and freemasons (Xarriton, 1997) and published Hitler’s full or summarized speeches, sometimes in French and sometimes in the Basque language. For instance, on December 11, 1942 *Eskualduna* published a full translation to Basque of the open letter that Hitler sent to Pétain right after the German occupation of Vichy France, in which the Fuhrer justified the occupation.¹ Xarriton (1997) claims that *Eskualduna* was also responsible for denunciations, as it published lists of the names and addresses of alleged freemasons. Meanwhile, the former editor of *Eskualduna*, Soubelet (1941), published a book in Basque about Marshal Pétain’s biography, in which “all the sentences are intended to generate passions in favor of Pétain” (Sudupe, 2001: 94-95).

Diaz Noci (1995) points out that *Eskualduna* lost many of its readers during the German Occupation because they disagreed with its political stance. In addition, *Eskualduna* also had some difficulties with the narrowing of its distribution owing to the demarcation line and severe paper shortages. In the end, *Eskualduna* had no more than 2,200 subscribers. Moreover, some of *Eskualduna*’s contributors ceased to write in its pages during the Occupation period (Hernández, 2001). The priest Pierre Lafitte, a prominent figure in Basque culture, published far less frequently than previously. For example, he published at least one piece almost every week when Soubelet was editor, but after Arotçarena was appointed editor, Lafitte only published fifteen articles in eight years (Hernández, 2001).

Indeed, from 1942 Lafitte favored another magazine in which to publish his writings. *Aintzina* was first published from October 1934 to September 1937 (Larronde, 1990) and, after a five-year-long parenthesis, resumed publication as a Basque language monthly magazine promoted by young Basque nationalists, under the direction of Lafitte. It was nothing like *Eskualduna*, but its contents also provide evidence that some Basques retained a positive attitude toward Pétain (Larronde, 1997). Jacob (1994) contends that the reemergence of *Aintzina* came with “the benediction and all the sacraments of the [German] Propaganda

¹ “Hitler-ek Marechalari” (11-12,1942, p. 4). The following week *Eskualduna* published Pétain’s reply to Hitler, in French: “Le Maréchal Pétain répond au Führer” (18-12-1942, p. 1).

Staff" (1994: 116). *Aintzina* did not distance itself from the Vichy regime, to the extent that some authors regard *Aintzina* as "essentially pro-Pétain" (Aranbarri, 1999: 129). Others sustain that the magazine neither opposed nor supported Pétain, but rather tried to invigorate Vichy's support for regionalism and to take advantage of Basque people's pro-Pétain attitude in order to promote Basque nationalist and regionalist views (Sudupe, 2001).

Eskualduna, the Basque language newspaper that has lasted longer than any other, came to a sad end. Its editor, Arotçarena, was arrested by the post-liberation authorities in late 1945. He appeared before the Court of Justice in Pau on January 8, 1946 on charges of having demoralized the French nation. The court concluded that he had posed a threat to the national defense during the German occupation and sentenced him to two years in prison with national degradation for life.² The paper was shut down and forbidden to be published again. He served less than seven months and was pardoned on July 26, 1946. Arotçarena went back to Bayonne, where he worked on a Basque grammar and the Bishopric archives. He was appointed Canon of Bayonne Cathedral and made a corresponding member of Euskaltzaindia, the Basque language royal academy (Xarriton, 1987). Following the disappearance of *Eskualduna*, another Basque language weekly paper, *Herria*, was founded under the direction of Lafitte, who served as its editor from 1944 to 1969. Nowadays, *Herria* is still an influential paper in the inland rural areas of the continental Basque Country, just as *Eskualduna* was.

4. Methodology

Newspaper editorials are instrumental in understanding each media outlet's information policy. They have "an important symbolic function" (Fowler, 1991: 208), as they are the distinctive voice of the media organization. The analysis for the contents of a given newspaper's editorials can be crucial in revealing the thematic strategy of the media towards certain subjects. Editorials are usually unsigned texts, written by qualified experts or by groups of editorialists, who express the point of view of each medium and not that of a particular journalist. There are, however, signed editorials, mostly in French or francophone newspapers like for example, nowadays, *Le Monde* in France or *La Presse* in Quebec. *Eskualduna* also had signed editorials, specifically signed by its editor, Sauveur Arotçarena. In this regard, the deconstruction of the discourse of Arotçarena's editorials reveals *Eskualduna*'s position regarding German occupation and the Vichy regime and enables the analysis of its evolution.

Eskualduna disappeared because it was considered a collaborationist paper. In order to analyze to what extent it supported the Vichy Regime and the German Occupation, I examined the contents of the leading editorial articles signed by its editor, 'S.A.' (Sauveur Arotçarena), during four periods: first, the weeks after France's declaration of war against Germany in September 1939 in the aftermath of the invasion of Poland; second, the early stage of the German occupation of France from June 1940; third, the period after the Allies' attack on North Africa in November 1942 and the consequent German occupation of Vichy France; finally, the days from the Normandy landings in June 1944 to the liberation of the Basqueland in August 1944. I examined eight editorials for each period, i.e. 32 articles overall. Arotçarena published articles in almost every issue. Thus, I will look at the eight articles signed by S.A. since the beginning of each chosen period, among the issues available.³

² Departmental archives of the Pyrénées-Atlantiques, dossier 1257W14, summary of trials in 1946.

³ Available online on the webpage www.armiarma.com, in the section 'Euskal prentsaren lanak'. The issues published right after the Occupation are missing both in this digital archive and the analog archives in the Municipal Library of Bayonne, the Basque Museum in Bayonne and the Koldo Mitxelena Library in San Sebastian. The first issue available after the beginning of the Occupation in May 1940 is the one published on August 16, 1940.

It is, therefore, a source analysis, a qualitative content analysis of a first source material, a systematic examination of themes and standpoints expressed by these primary sources (Howell & Prevenier, 2001; Startt & Sloan, 1989), in the sense that it studies how the editorial writer argues for his standpoint within these themes (Alía Miranda, 2005). For this purpose, I established the following thematic framings as objects of analysis, in order to establish what position *Eskualduna* took on these specific themes: 1) French patriotism; 2) Religion (Catholicism); 3) Basqueness; 4) Allied forces; 5) German occupation; 6) Resistance; 7) Collaboration; 8) Repression.

5. Investigation results

5.1. After the declaration of war

In the period after the declaration of war against Germany, *Eskualduna* was undoubtedly anti-German. Arotçarena stressed the evil of Nazism by comparing it with communism. He expressed confidence that Germany was going to be defeated. In addition, he warned that defeating Germany would not be enough to secure a lasting peace, and he advocated for provoking the breaking of Germany unity, as a way to eradicate Pan-Germanism. The editor of *Eskualduna* encouraged the war effort, praising the Basque youth going to war and asking the civilians to do their part on the home front. Moreover, Arotçarena's articles usually had a religious and moralist background, to the extent that he suggested that the lack of religiosity and morality of modern French society was the real reason of why France was going through such difficult times.

The anti-German position of *Eskualduna* in this early period of the war is evident in the editorial published in the first issue after the war declaration. Arotçarena used the analogy of a Basque card game, *mus*, to underline that it was time to reply to Hitler's continuous challenges. He noted that Hitler had played a very hard game through *hordagos* – a challenge through which the player forces an all-or-nothing result, and in doing so he had managed to take over the Rhineland, Austria and Bohemia. Arotçarena argued that until then France did not have good enough cards to reply to Hitler, but the time to reply had arrived: "The mus player who is always challenging with *hordago* runs the risk of finding out, unexpectedly, that the rival has better cards... and of breaking his nose because of that" (8-9-1939). Arotçarena insisted on the same stance a week later, even more aggressively, when he stressed that France had "to cut off the Germans' claws," and "to crush Germany forever, to leave it with no power" (15-9-1939).

Three weeks later Arotçarena developed his arguments against Hitler, comparing him with Stalin. He referred to the Treaty of Non-Aggression signed by Germany and the Soviet Union in August 1939 to stress that Hitler and Stalin were going "hand in hand". He pointed out that this alliance was not surprising at all, because "communism and Nazism have the same roots" and the same "fruits": regarding the government, the "slavery" of their citizens; regarding the family, "the children spying and denouncing their own parents"; and regarding the towns, "fear of the police and mutual distrust". It is interesting to note how Arotçarena responded in the same editorial to a reader's letter who apparently criticized *Eskualduna* for not attacking Nazism as hard as communism: "We don't forget Nazism. But, so far, we have communism at home and Nazism... in our neighborhood" (6-10-1939). The following week *Eskualduna* noticed the danger of Pan-Germanism, and suggested that the defeat of Germany was not enough, that the unity of the German state should be destroyed: "To remove Hitler and to destroy Nazism would be a small thing, a weak goal. The only right goal to secure peace is to divide Germany and, after all, to take Prussia away from the claws of Germany" (13-10-1939).

Beginning in the early period of the war, Arotçarena constantly encouraged the war effort, and especially called on the civil population to do their part on the home front. He

insisted that everyone had a duty: "The ones over there [in the frontline] and the ones here [in the rear], all hand in hand! We are at war, a total war: we all have to hold on, each one in his field" (15-9-1939). He warned his readers about the enemy's war propaganda: "If you spread the lies dreamed by the enemy, you are benefiting the enemy. (...) Do not believe the news anywhere, in any way!" (22-9-1939). *Eskualduna's* editor proudly claimed that his paper was being sent to the Basque soldiers at the frontline, that the paper had become a link between the soldiers and their home towns. Thus, he asked his readers for news from their villages that could be interesting for the soldiers in the aim of keeping the connection with home (27-10-1939).

The religious and moralist stance of Arotçarena mostly emerged when he addressed the causes of the tragedy of war, as he understood that it was a consequence of the moral and spiritual degradation of modern society. "If we are where we are, is it not because of the bad French, at least to an extent? Is it not something that has happened again and again: the children [the soldiers] paying for their parents' mistakes? We have to humbly recognize: we have sinned against life in France" (29-9-1939). Arotçarena made the same point a month later, when he affirmed that "little faith" was the cause of all their pain and suffering, "because the countries are behaving as if there was no God" (24-11-1939).

5.2. After German occupation and the establishment of the Vichy regime

The first article signed by S.A. among the issues available after German Occupation is from August 30, more than two months after the beginning of the Occupation and the establishment of Pétain's Government. In the editorial articles published from then on, the most recurring idea is the support of Pétain or even the worship of him. The absence of any mention of German Occupation is also very significant. In contrast with the hard words about Nazism and Germany in the early period of the war, after the German Occupation *Eskualduna's* editor avoided any direct reference to Germans. Of course, it must be taken into account that German rules would not allow any direct criticism.

In the first issue available since the beginning of the Occupation, Arotçarena referred to Pétain as "our wise Marshal", and he expressed great satisfaction because things had started to be fixed "with no more massacres". Referring to Pétain's *Revolutions Nationale*, he proudly affirmed that "it seems that it is the first time that the world is witnessing a revolution with no bloodshed" (30-8-1940). Published three weeks later, the next article was devoted to responding to the "poisonous gossip" against Pétain, who this time is called "our great leader". Arotçarena argued that this criticism about Pétain came from "the Freemasonry" and asked his readers to take no notice of this gossip: "If you hear someone talking bad about Pétain, ask yourself: 'Where does this gossip come from?'" (20-9-1940). According to Arotçarena, some French newspapers had criticized Pétain arguing that he was too old to be head of state. *Eskualduna's* editor dedicated an editorial to criticizing the critics. Playing with two words that in Basque sound alike, he replied that Pétain was old (*zahar*) but wise (*zuhur*): "These little newspapers will forgive me if I doubtlessly tell them: 'The old Pétain is wiser than you! (...)' Let the blind newspapers do their blind work, and let us follow our old and wise leader" (4-10-1940).

A month later Arotçarena went back to attacking criticisms of Pétain, which in his words were "the honking of geese" (meaning shouting nonsense), and to praise the Marshal: "He is doing wisely, with no noise, working on day to day issues, and getting ready for the issues of tomorrow" (8-11-1940).

In addition to constant praise of Pétain's abilities and policies, Arotçarena very significantly claimed that *Eskualduna* felt very comfortable with the new regime, to the extent that it was expressing ideas that he did not think could be expressed before the

establishment of Vichy's Regime. In this telling editorial Arotçarena explained why and for what they decided to continue publishing the weekly paper after the Occupation:

We are asked: Why has *Eskualduna* not closed down? After the outsiders came here, why did it not fold its wings? Why does it not retire and wait for a better time? (...) We are here to repeat the great truths, to remind [our readers] several truths which are the foundation and the guarantee of all truths. And, in this field, we are freer than several months ago, much freer: we are sure that one year ago we would not have expressed what we expressed these last weeks (18-10-1940).

When Arotçarena talked about the truths which are the base of "all truths" he was referring, of course, to religion. Therefore, the reason *Eskualduna* kept on publishing in those difficult times was that it was necessary to remind its readers that "only religion" would save them: "Family, People, Work are great things, but what are Family, People and Work if they are not based on the God of Religion?" (18-10-1940). A week before, *Eskualduna's* editor reached the same conclusion after having reflected about the division between religion and government established since the French Revolution in 1789: "Our ancestors knew and did not forget that God is the only foundation of governments, the required foundation" (11-10-1940).

5.3. After the occupation of Vichy France

After the Allies landed in North Africa in November 1942, Hitler broke the armistice signed in 1940 and German troops marched into Vichy France. In the articles written in this new period, *Eskualduna's* editor kept fundamentally the same stance, as the main idea in his writings was again praise of Marshal Pétain. The new element in this period was the sharp criticism toward the Allies, especially Americans. In the editorial published immediately after the landing of the Allies in North Africa, Arotçarena denounced that Americans shed French blood to take over North Africa. He took this opportunity to attack those who criticized *Eskualduna* for being pro-German. He did not argue that *Eskualduna* was in fact pro-German, but he did not deny it. Instead, Arotçarena argued that those criticizing *Eskualduna* for being pro-German were relying on the Americans, and now the Americans had attacked the French: "Many said that we were supporting the Germans, and that we accepted everything done by the Germans. They said that we had to rely on the Americans. Here we have them!"

In the same article, Arotçarena insisted on the need to follow the guidance of the Marshal: "Our duty is crystal clear: like yesterday, today and tomorrow standing next to Pétain!" At this point, he suggested that the Germans were now friends, and Americans enemies: it is necessary to be hand in hand with Pétain, "even though the friends of yesterday become enemies, and the enemies of yesterday are now friends" (13-11-1942). *Eskualduna's* editor took the argument on the virtues of Pétain's guidance to the extreme, when he argued in another editorial that the Marshal should be obeyed as children obey their father: "Unlike us, he can see what and where is the good of France. He is a servant of France. Let us trust him, just as the child innocently trusts his father" (27-11-1942). The same idea of the need of blind trust arose in an editorial two months later, this time referring to the authorities in general, not only to Pétain: "Our leaders have clues that we do not have in order to properly judge events. [...] In any case, their perspective will be more correct and more secure than ours" (22-1-1943).

This philosophy of blind trust in Pétain is precisely the idea on which Arotçarena suggested that collaboration with Germans could be justified. Among the pieces examined in this article, the following is the only paragraph in which *Eskualduna* expressly justified collaboration:

How many French are mad at our Guide, because he had to accept the rule of the foreigner on a whole side of the country? An old Indian sentence says: who is about to drown grabs even the snake, hoping that it will take him out of the water. How many of us want to hold the hand that the Germans are offering us, since our Guide told us that we can hold on to this hand without dishonoring our Country? (27-11-1942)

There is another editorial in which Arotçarena praises the “renewal” brought by the Vichy Regime. He welcomed the restrictions imposed on political parties and trade unions, and argued that there was a “great need” of these new rules (8-1-1943). In another editorial, *Eskualduna*'s editor links the reliance on Pétain with the total mistrust in Americans: “The patient [France] is in Pétain's good hands. Given that he is a wise doctor, let us trust him, and let us not trust the barbarian American doctor to cure France, who is offering us the same poison as yesterday” (4-12-1942).

5.4. After the Normandy landings

The most significant novelty in the editorials of the last eight issues of *Eskualduna* is the strong stand taken by Arotçarena against the Resistance. Four of his editorials in the last two months were devoted to this topic. In his first editorial after the Normandy landings on June 6, 1944 and after the events of Ospitaleku later the same month, *Eskualduna*'s editor harshly criticized the Maquis, who he considered responsible for the latter. On June 27, German soldiers carried out a violent raid against the Resistance, killing one man and arresting nineteen people, nine of whom were deported to German concentration camps (Ott, 2008). Arotçarena's logic was that Resistance actions provoked the German's reaction:

I would like to ask this question to the Basques who joined the Maquis and to the great chief of the Maquis in Ospitaleku-Miserikordia, man to man, with good intention: ‘My friends, if sooner or later you have to face the outsiders here, what are you going to do?’ ‘There is no doubt! We will shoot and try to kill them!’ But do you have any right to kill them? Regardless of this question, I ask you this: if the outsiders burn Sohuta to revenge their dead, or provoke a slaughter in Mithikile, or take prisoners in Maule? Who will be the most damaged because of your actions: outsiders or insiders? (30-6-1944)

Arotçarena expressed great concern because the “malignant disease” of the Resistance had already entered into the Basque Country. He was afraid of its consequences: “Look at the events in Ospitaleku-Miserikordia last week!! In the Basque Country! Who can ensure that the disease will not spread and what happened yesterday in Ospitaleku-Miserikordia will not happen tomorrow in Donaixti, or Mehain, or somewhere else?” If something similar happened, in Arotçarena's view, the responsibility would not lie with the occupiers: “The source of the Maquis is wrongfulness, their way is the lie, and their only result is crime through violence. Although they think their hands are clean, they have them already soiled with their fellow's blood!” (30-6-1944).

A week later, Arotçarena strongly condemned the killing of the Minister of Information and Propaganda in Pétain's government, Philippe Henriot, shot dead by the Resistance in Paris on June 28. In his view, the bullet which killed Henriot “struck France in the middle of its heart”. He stated that the killing of the prominent right-wing member of the Spanish Parliament José Calvo Sotelo on 13 July 1936, five days before the beginning of the Civil War, was “the last call” for war, and warned that the assassination of the French minister could be the starting point of a French civil war: “Civil war... rivers of blood and tears are not far from us, and some among us are adding fuel to the fire” (7-7-1944). In another editorial Arotçarena attacked the Resistance movement again, playing with the words used in the headline: “Loving the country”. He accused members of the Resistance of showing their love

for their country by “giving our lands to Anglo-American claws”, by derailing “our trains”, by killing “their fellows”, by challenging “our Government’s orders”, by putting great obstacles to “our Chief”, and by spoiling “our farmhouses” with blood (21-7-1944). In the last editorial about the Resistance, Arotçarena went even further. He criticized the people who were helping the movement and, in addition, he suggested that they deserved the punishments they got if they were caught: “Those who are with the Maquis and those who help the Maquis are accepting war. Both are in favor of those at war. If they find war, will it be surprising? If those who they see as their enemies treat them as enemies, can they complain?” As a final and desperate call in the same editorial, Arotçarena appealed to his Basqueness and his readers’ Basqueness to ask everyone not to take action:

I am Basque and I am talking to Basques: not because I want to justify Germans, but because I do not want you to give the Germans any reason to react by sinking their sharp claws more deeply into your entrails. Therefore, not loving Germany but loving France, I tell you: ‘Please! Dear Basques, be quiet! Do not take any steps which can lead to the shedding of your fellow’s blood and your siblings’ tears and which can bring misfortune for France (27-7-1944).

Arotçarena ends his plea by appealing to his recurrent idea of obedience to Pétain: “Our Marshal asks this of us” (28-7-1944). These were the very last words of Arotçarena's last editorial about events directly related to the war and the Occupation. He published three more articles signed by “S.A.”. In the first two August issues he devoted his editorials to contending that the diversity of opinions and advice given by priests did not mean that there were different religions. He tried to respond to the question which he chose as the headline for both articles: “[Are there] As many religions as priests?” (4-8-1944 and 11-8-1944). The piece signed by Arotçarena in the last issue of *Eskualduna* on August 18, 1944 was not an editorial but merely an introduction to the letter by the Chairman of the Agricultural Corporation to the Basque farmers. The introduction has a telling headline, “Outcry of sorrow”, and includes a telling sentence: “Regardless of the continuation or the end of the war, this year will be tough, perhaps the darkest year of our lifetime” (18-8-1944).

5. Conclusions

The attitude of the newspaper *Eskualduna* in the period of German occupation must be studied within the context outlined above: that of a very conservative society in which priests and right-wing politicians had great influence, and Marshal Pétain was respected and admired by many. However, just as French society as a whole, Basque society gradually evolved as Occupation went on, and eventually became mostly belligerent towards German occupation. *Eskualduna*, founded by a right-wing politician and ruled by churchmen, was a product of its society and was totally in tune with the conservative sector of Basque society that initially supported Pétain and was not belligerent towards Germans.

Eskualduna's editorial stance evolved very significantly throughout the Occupation. In other words, it accommodated its stance to the changing war situation, from a very hostile attitude towards Germans when France was at war with Hitler, to a position in which it encouraged its readers to follow and obey all the directions of Marshal Pétain's government, which asked the French population to collaborate with German occupiers. This evolution logically affected its position toward the Allies too: after the Occupation and the establishment of the Vichy government and especially after the Allies' landing in North Africa, *Eskualduna* treated Americans and British as enemies.

Regardless of its evolution, *Eskualduna*'s editorial line had some constants. One was religion. *Eskualduna* saw itself as a guardian of the catholic faith, which it considered the basis of all its positions. Arotçarena promoted again and again the sense of guilt based on the loss of religious faith in modern society. In his view, all the pain and difficulties that the

French were suffering in wartime were a consequence of the lack of religiosity and moral degradation. Moreover, he blamed the secular Republic for this degradation and, for the same reason, welcomed the new authoritarian regime. He went on to say that *Eskualduna* felt much freer than previously under Vichy France.

Another unchanged principle of *Eskualduna* is French patriotism. France is the country which must be loved and defended. *Eskualduna* considered Germans its enemies when they were France's enemy, and turned its hostility towards Americans when America became the enemy of Vichy France. Arotçarena ironically despised the Resistance's love of France and in contrast, he asked the Maquis to desist, based on his love of France and arguing that they were shedding the blood of his fellow countrymen.

Nevertheless, France is not the only community reference of *Eskualduna*. The Basque Country is considered home. Regardless of its French patriotism, *Eskualduna* undoubtedly addressed Basques as a distinct people, and recognized Basqueness as a distinct identity. Arotçarena's concern about the Resistance turned into alarm when he noted that the Maquis were acting in Basque territory. In this regard, the fact that *Eskualduna* was published in Basque was a decisive factor: it necessarily addressed Basque speakers, and treated the events from the perspective of its community of readers, the Basque speakers. When the editor made a dramatic plea to members of the Resistance to stop fighting the Germans, he remarked that he was a Basque addressing his fellow Basques.

Since the establishment of the Vichy regime, *Eskualduna* was always loyal to the French Government. Yet there is a significant gradation to this loyalty. Firstly, *Eskualduna* was loyal to the authorities because, according to Arotçarena's argument, obedience is a virtue which must be followed, and, in addition, because the authorities knew how to face the difficult circumstances better than common citizens. Secondly, *Eskualduna* was loyal to the Vichy Government because it supported its very conservative principles and policies, based on religion, family, tradition and the defense of rural society. Finally, *Eskualduna* was, above all, loyal to Marshal Pétain, to the extent that it developed a cult of personality based on a blind trust of the war hero. Loyalty to Pétain was by far the strongest of the loyalties expressed by *Eskualduna* during the Occupation.

The extreme hostility toward the Resistance showed by *Eskualduna* in its last weeks is a natural consequence of its loyalty to Pétain and the Vichy Government. Arotçarena expressly argued that he asked the Maquis to stop, among other reasons, because Pétain requested it. Religious values and French patriotism are also arguments used by *Eskualduna* to criticize the actions of the Resistance: the editor argued that members had no right to kill Germans on moral grounds, and also argued that they were damaging France and shedding French blood.

In summary, the position of *Eskualduna* during the Occupation was a kind of accommodation in open harmony with collaborators. However, it did not accommodate as the majority of the French did, in that vast grey and ambiguous area between collaboration and Resistance. Following its foundational political and religious principles, *Eskualduna* blindly followed and obeyed the authorities that asked the French to collaborate with the Germans and be hostile to those who resisted. Therefore, *Eskualduna* committed itself to a very specific and unambiguous position, side by side with the French who collaborated with the occupiers.

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