

## Grupos de Resistencia Antifascista Primero de Octubre (GRAPO)

# GRAPO: The Resistance That Never Ends

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The Groups of Anti-Fascist Resistance, First of October (GRAPO) is not the first leftist organization that has taken up arms to confront the regime under which we live. We must remember that since the insurrection of Asturias in 1934, going into the civil war and the guerrilla war of the 1940's and 50's, as a practical matter, armed struggle has not ceased in Spain. Or, as the expert “informer” and vice president of Group 16, Alesandro Munoz Alonso says: “Francoism had to deal with terrorist manifestations from the first moment.” As this phenomenon is nothing new, GRAPO declares that they are “the inheritors of that anti-fascist armed struggle in the new economic, political, and social conditions in Spain”, and have become an enemy especially feared and persecuted by the powers that be.

GRAPO made its appearance in a crucial moment of Spanish political life: in 1975, when the fascist regime was going through one of the most serious crises of its history. Faced with the bankruptcy of its “opening” policy (which were the first steps to adapt the state apparatus to new conditions under which fascist methods were being shown to be inefficient), its social isolation, the boycott and the workers struggles breaking out everywhere, the oligarchy resorted to even more unrestrained state terrorism. Throughout the summer of that year, known as the “summer of terror”, the repression cost several lives, it produced numerous round-ups and detentions, the first “anti-terrorist” law was put into operation (which would be maintained and developed by the UCD and PSOE governments), and initiated a whole series of very summary processes. On September 27, in the middle of the wave of protest demonstrations running throughout Europe, 5 anti-fascist patriots were shot with the objective of stopping the mass movement as well as showing that the regime was invulnerable and that any resistance was futile. But four days later, on October 1st, when Franco and his followers were celebrating the shootings in Plaza De Oriente, four policemen were shot to death by various commandos in different parts of Madrid. The executors of these actions were the Groups of Anti-Fascist Resistance who took the name of that first of October and whose first militants had come from the ranks of the PCE(r) – Communist Party of Spain, Reconstituted.

The actions on that October 1st made the regime retreat, it was made to stop its terrorist escalation (more than 20, summary processes with death penalty petitions were suspended) and it changed the orientation of its “opening” process.

On July 3, 1976, Adolfo Suarez, is named president of government, assuring in a speech that “the feeling of the reform (initiated by Arias Navarro) will not change but the manner of putting it into practice will change.” But Suarez’s intentions would find that on July 18, which continued to be the regime’s official day of celebration, GRAPO detonated over 30 bombs in fascist monuments, places, and institutions all across the territorial state. A few days later after this wave of explosions, another attack against similar objectives was launched. In one of these attacks the first two deaths of GRAPO militants occurred when the bomb they were going to place in the Palace of Justice in Seville exploded prematurely. The militants of this organization would later say: “The resistance has not only not been liquidated by the new manoeuvres of the monopolies’ regime, but from this moment on, it will increase”.

And that is, in fact, what happened with the continual “disarticulations” which were GRAPO’s objectives. The regime found that with each step that it took in its political manoeuvres (or as its official spokesman would say, “progress on the path to democratization”), these would be dynamited once and again and “exposed in their significance of covering and strengthening fascism” by GRAPO. The kidnapping of the President of the Council of State Oriol y Urquiso, and of the President of the Supreme Council of Military Justice, Lt. General Villecusa, carried out in December 1976 and January 1977 respectively, had special importance. GRAPO gave these actions the name “Operation Chrome” and carried them out with the objective of “the liberation of political prisoners and the denunciation of the ‘reforms’ to institutionalize and legalize fascism”.

The noted fact that their actions always coincided with key political situations was thus explained by GRAPO: “A guerrilla organization which wants to win the heart and active support of its people cannot simply limit itself to striking, it should also know when, where, and how to strike. Because of that our military operations have responded in each moment to the political necessities of the mass movement: responding to fascist crimes, denouncing the electoral masquerade and the permanence of fascism, to encourage and support the masses in their resistance struggle against the monopolies’ exploitation and oppression...” Thus, for example, the action carried out in the last weeks of January 1977 against various policemen and civil guards was done “in response to the murders of pro-amnesty demonstrators Arturo Ruiz and Mari Luz Najera, and to the Atocha street massacre of labour lawyers in Madrid.”

In 1977 with “Operation Chrome” and later in the summer many important militants of the organization fell. Along with the relentless police repression, the media orchestrated an entire symphony of silence and incredible interpretations “to destroy the image of the terrorist’s organization and with that make very difficult its implantation among the working classes”, according to Juan Tomas De Salas, president of Group 16. But, despite all that, GRAPO continued to carry out all kinds of actions, among which can be mentioned for its repercussions, the action carried out in an armoury in which 500 kilos of explosives were expropriated on September 27 and which cost the life of police captain Florentino Herquedas, who had directed one of the execution platoons in the firing squads of September 27, 1975; or the bombing actions done in solidarity with the imprisoned Red Army Fraction militants of West Germany, or the imprisoned ETA militants in France.

#### A Tactic of Armed Struggle For An Anti-Fascist Strategy

In 1978, GRAPO analysed its experiences and published a booklet called “Experiences of Three Years of Struggle”, in which they cover their objectives as well as the tactical and strategic principles which orient and guide their activity.

For GRAPO, “The guerrilla war by itself, separated from the resistance movement, or above it, if it is not led by the working class would strike blindly and eventually be annihilated”. According to GRAPO, “The working class with its party in the vanguard is the leading and directing force of our revolution, it is the firmest and clearest sector and as such it is the one called on to lead and direct the revolution; the unity of the resistance includes the guerrilla”. For GRAPO, this is a strategic principle and on it they base their political relationship with the PCE(r), which helps them in their analysis and in their ideological orientation. On their part, the PCE(r), through the presence and political work of the communists who have integrated themselves into the armed organization – organically both organizations are totally independent – give it a class base and direction and ensure its proletarian political and ideological direction “for the correct development of the guerrilla’s activities”.

For GRAPO, “Because of the existence of fascism along with the consequent lack of real liberties and the super-exploitation that we have seen and still see the proletariat and the wide popular masses submitted to, the main contradiction operating in the Spanish state is that which confronts the people against fascism and the monopolies.” This contradiction determines GRAPO’s strategic program, which has an anti-fascist, anti-monopolist, and anti-imperialist character.

To achieve these objectives GRAPO has elaborated a strategy of prolonged people’s war “adapted to the economic, social and political conditions of Spain”. For GRAPO, given the characteristics of the Spanish state, in which they consider it to be impossible to organize and educate the masses within the bounds of legality, this accumulation of revolutionary forces can only be realized “through the popular resistance movement which combines the political struggle of the masses, strikes, demonstration, etc., with the armed guerrilla struggle practised by small groups”.

According to GRAPO, the popular forces now find themselves in a strategic defensive phase as the monopolist state can count on a strong centralized repressive apparatus with relatively powerful means and considerable imperialist support, while the popular forces are relatively weak. That is from where the resistance movement is speaking. This occurs on a general or strategic level. “OK now”, explains GRAPO, “on a tactical level it is the popular forces, in reality, the guerrilla, which have the initiative and hit the reactionaries where, when, and how it wants. That is how the popular forces transform their strategic disadvantage into a tactical advantage.”

### A Step Backwards

1978 marks the changing point of the “transition to democracy”. The ruling powers, sunken in uncertainty and in a profound weakness carry out the “transition” with the establishment of a constitution. That was the year the strike movement reached its highest point, producing very radicalized demonstrations in Galicia, Adalucia, and above all, in Euskadi; there was even an attempt to assault a barracks of the armed police in San Sebastian. The crisis which had been dragging the regime down since the last days of Franco was deepening. The “Suarista” policy was sinking, and taking with it the reformists.

Notwithstanding that situation, GRAPO foresaw a period of ebbing in the popular and workers movement which together with the fact that they had become the main objective of police (and journalistic) repression, would take them to analyse the new conditions in which they would have to continue the struggle. Thus in “Three Years of Experience of Struggle”, they said: “But the situation is not only changing for the better, aside from that we must take

into account a less favourable aspect for us; that the enemy has learned and has more knowledge about us than when we started. That makes it necessary to analyse that experience, but it can be said that for a long time we will have to move under conditions which will be favourable from a political viewpoint but which will be relatively unfavourable from the aspect of organizing our movement". These were the conditions which GRAPO foresaw characterizing the period between 1979 and 1984.

Before the situation of political weakness in which the regime found itself, and in the face of the first symptoms of ebbing in the workers movement, GRAPO and with the PCR(r) and other organizations proposed a program to rekindle the fire, known as the "Five Point Program, in which they picked out the democratic aspirations most felt by the popular masses. This program contained the following:

- 1) complete and general amnesty for all political prisoners and exiles. Repeal of anti-terrorist law and other repressive laws;
- 2) a purge of fascist elements from the repressive groups, judiciary and other state institutions;
- 3) political and union liberties with no restriction;
- 4) rejection of integration into NATO and dismantling of foreign military bases;
- 5) dissolution of the current parliament and the convening of truly free elections and liberty for all parties and social groups to campaign and freely defend, with no obstacles, their ideals and political programs.

This program was an apparent step backwards for GRAPO in relation to their strategic objectives, but it was a step back which in the future would allow them to take two steps forward. In the first place it would allow for the polarizing of positions (either with the regime or with the resistance) of a sector becoming more numerous in our society and which demands real changes in the state, and, secondly, it allowed for the possibility of achieving a series of political gains which would facilitate later advances by the popular resistance movement.

In GRAPO's conception, the 5 Point Program was not merely a propaganda program, but was first and foremost a flexible tactical program to be utilized at its basic level; in that while it did not modify the capitalist nature of the system, it did not abandon the resistance struggle and the other struggles firmly and decisively behind it. Because of this, all actions during 1979-1984 were directed towards the implementation of this program. In a communique announcing a wave of sabotage carried out in the early hours of September 29, 1982 they said: "All of these actions (...) are firmly fixed within the struggle for achieving the Five Point Program". And effectively starting at the end of 1978, GRAPO would have periods of maximum activity to impose this program, but would also receive heavy blows. 1979 would have both these extremes.

The first part of the year would be marked by a spate of guerrilla activity unknown since the civil war. Among the many actions of all kinds carried out by GRAPO were some as significant as the assassination attempt against General Agustia Munoz Vazques, the military leader who negotiated Spain's integration into NATO, the assassination of Rodrigues Roman, Director General of the DGS when in March 1976 the police in Vitoria machine-gunned a

worker's demonstration; the attack on the police commissar Beltan who was known in Seville as the torturer of anti-fascist workers; the blowing up of the Police Commissar for the central district of Madrid, or the failed attempt against the Director General of Penal Institutions, Garcia Valdes.

By contrast, in the second half of 1979, GRAPO received one of the heaviest setbacks of its history, with over 30 militants captured and the dismantling of laboratories and workshops for the manufacture of explosives and other tools needed by the organization. The government believed that with these captures it had finished GRAPO, but a little later, on December 17, five leaders of the organization escaped from Zamora prison. In a little more than 6 months GRAPO once again had its workshops operating and its commandos operating throughout the state territory.

In 1982, the government of Valvo Sotelo was obligated, because of GRAPO's activities which impeded its ability to rule, to give the first steps to a negotiated solution which would save the regime from the ruin threatening it. These steps lengthened until the summer of 1983 when the PSOE government closed any avenues of negotiation with its repressive policies and "repentance" policy. The regime believed that with 10 million votes behind it the regime could avoid having to make concessions and could so isolate and liquidate the armed popular organizations.

In 1984, the PSOE government made its pro-monopolist and imperialist policy very clear and it launched itself on a program of state terrorism aimed at the extermination of all resistance. Realizing that "the last reformist illusions of the masses have disappeared, that the sold out parties and unions are in total bankruptcy, that the worker and popular movements are ascending and applying truly radical and revolutionary means of struggle..., and that definitely the conditions that motivated and made possible the 5 Point Program have disappeared", GRAPO considered that era to be closed, feeling that continuing to insist on negotiation of the Program did not respond to real conditions and would only feed false illusions and objectively slow down the popular resistance movement.

15 dead casualties in the organization since 1976.80 militants in prison. 2,000 sympathizers, approximately, have been detained and released without charges in the last 10 years. 3,000 armed actions. Some 100 dead victims, more than a dozen kidnappings, 1,700 bombings, over 1,000 expropriations. 100 businessmen and industrialists paid the revolutionary tax in 1984, the year it was initiated.

## Two Steps

According to GRAPO, this resistance movement finds itself now able to continue combat on a higher level and for more elevated goals. That is why they no longer struggle "for some improvements (...) but for the overthrow of the state of monopolies of the fascist regime and for the installation of a regime of liberty in which power resides in the people and they are the ones who exercise it." Thus GRAPO again put their strategic program on the first level.

In relation to these objectives GRAPO renewed their activities with a view not focused on the short term, as in the last period, but with the goal of overcoming this prolonged defensive strategy phase. Thus, for example, one of the immediate tasks they set out on and began to put into practice is that of gaining a qualitative leap in their self-financing, and doing so by means of charging a revolutionary tax. Another significant task they set out to realize was that of consolidating and developing the guerrilla; not just maintaining it, but establishing it as a central activity in supporting, building, and developing the popular resistance movement; to make it grow and at the same time grow with it. They believe that to overthrow a modern

capitalist state, such as the Spanish regime, “a strong communist party, well rooted in the proletariat, a broad mass movement with a revolutionary character and a guerrilla army of the people are needed”.