

THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF EQUATORIAL GUINEA:



REASONS BEHIND THE SILENCE OF THE SPANISH PRESS AROUND MACÍAS NGUEMA'S REGIME (1968-1979)

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**CASE STUDY: THE SILENCE OF THE SPANISH PRESS AROUND
MACÍAS NGUEMA'S REGIME IN EQUATORIAL GUINEA (1968-1979)**

Master Thesis

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Introduction

On the 12th of October 1968, Equatorial Guinea gained its independence from Spain. In the elections held months earlier in the colony, the only ones celebrated in a Spanish territory under Franco's regime, the Guinean population elected Francisco Macías Nguema as president. He was the only candidate not *trained* by the Spanish government. However, the international pressure together with the enthusiasm shown by the Guineans towards this new charismatic leader forced the Spanish delegation to legitimize him.

In the following months, Spanish media informed regularly about the situation of the expatriate community and the political events with a hard criticism towards the new Government. On the opposite side, Guinean media became a propaganda tool of the new State, broadcasting about the only political party allowed, the PUNT (Partido Único Nacional de Trabajadores) and its propagandistic proclamations against the historical domination of the Spaniards. Few years later Macías declared himself President for Life censuring any exaltation of colonial times and restricting all type of social and political relationship with Spain. Among these symbols of the colony was the practice of Catholicism, seen with suspicion and prosecuted. On the 14th of February 1972, Franco's government declared classified material any information related to the former colony.

During those years of silence, Equatorial Guinea suffered under a cruel dictatorship with constant violations of human rights unknown both inside and outside the country. No foreign journalist was allowed to enter the country and the only information published on Equatorial Guinea came from Spanish sources, they themselves banned by their own Government. Newspapers like The Times barely informed about the Sub-Saharan country (less than a hundred articles in a decade), and when they did so, it was through their correspondent in Madrid¹.

Macías Nguema's obsession to control, manipulate and censor all articles published in his country blocked the access to the sources of information. International journalists only knew about the country's situation through the diaspora, and as the Guinean journalist and writer Donato Ndongo declared to me, "the information we could get from Guinea was very scarce and often arrived too late"². During these years, in 1973, all priests and missionaries, Catholics or Protestants, were arrested and their movements restricted. Arguing that priests supported the revolts against him, Macías expelled almost all of them. Once in Spain, they hardly talked to media. In an interview to ABC in July 1978, the last remaining Claretian missionaries expelled by Macías's government declared that "Macías goal is to destroy everything" and told the journalist that they did not want to get into too much detail in order to protect the last Spanish Claretian priest who still lived in the country³.

While the silence reigned outside, inside its borders, René Pélissier described the situation as "Cambodia minus ideology"⁴. Up to half of the population was killed or went into exile⁵. Out of the

1 <http://archive.timesonline.co.uk/tol/searchByKeyword.arc?dateSearchType=range> 91 articles found on Equatorial Guinea between 01/01/1969 and 12/12/1979.

2 Interview to Donato Ndongo held in Murcia, on the 27th of July, 2011.

3 *Blanco y Negro* (12/07/1978). "Los misioneros españoles expulsados de Guinea. El fin de Macías: destruirlo todo". p.27.

4 Sundiata, I.K., (1988). "The roots of African despotism: the question of political culture". *African Studies Review*.

population that fled, around 5.000 Guineans arrived to Spain, not so large in size but a highly qualified minority. Most of them were students in the universities of Madrid and Barcelona, holding their Spanish citizenship granted during the times when Guinea was declared the equatorial province of Spain (1959-1968). Others were politicians that opposed Macías regime since the beginning and came to Spain as asylum seekers. Losing their Guinean nationality and neglected by the Spanish government, they became a stateless community of African intellectuals and activists.

In 1976, when the official silence was lifted in Spain, both the national and international press began to receive information about the political and social situation in Equatorial Guinea. However, even if the blockade finished in Spain, it still remained in Equatorial Guinea, so again, they had to rely on information that came from the diaspora and from the Spaniards who lived in the country after its independence. No information came out from the Guinean media and borders remained closed. However, the Guinean diaspora had developed a more serious and well organised activism against Macías through a movement called ANRD (Alianza Nacional de Restauración Democrática) based in Geneva, from where they denounced to the international community the terror that had overtaken their country. Their intense lobbying reached institutions such as the UN Human Rights Commission and their research reports were highly valuable information used by NGO's like Amnesty International. Thanks to them, the European press started to be aware of the violation of human rights in Equatorial Guinea and field reports were finally available. With the support of the ANRD, two reports were carried out in 1978 in the country by European researchers, who witnessed the tortures and repression that the Guineans suffered under Macías rule. However, in Spain, only few mentions on these reports were made in the press and the under coverage of Macías issues remained.

Research question and problem statement

There is a general consensus both in Academia and outside on the fact that Equatorial Guinea disappeared from the Spanish public opinion discourse right after it gained its independence. The foundation *España Guinea Ecuatorial*, located in Madrid, states in its declaration of principles:

“Spain has a moral duty towards Equatorial Guinea. [...] When in 1977, Equatorial Guinea was no longer under the official secrecy law, Bioko and Malabo, which substituted the former colonial denominations, were distant places in the map of Africa for the great majority of the Spaniards”⁶.

As mentioned before, this informative silence was practised by other European countries for different reasons. One of them might be the fact that Spain was the gatekeeper of the information that arrived in Europe. Because of the lack of access to the sources of information in the country itself, foreign correspondents relied in the Guinean diaspora and the Spanish community expelled by Macías, whose majority were living in Spain. Therefore, newspaper received news on Equatorial Guinea biased by a context of censorship first, and later on, by the lack of attention paid from the Spanish public opinion.

There is no doubt that the five-years ban of all information concerning Equato-Guinean politics had an impact in the Spanish public opinion awareness of Guinea's reality. However, after the lifting of the ban in 1976, the Spanish written press did not change much its apathetic attitude towards

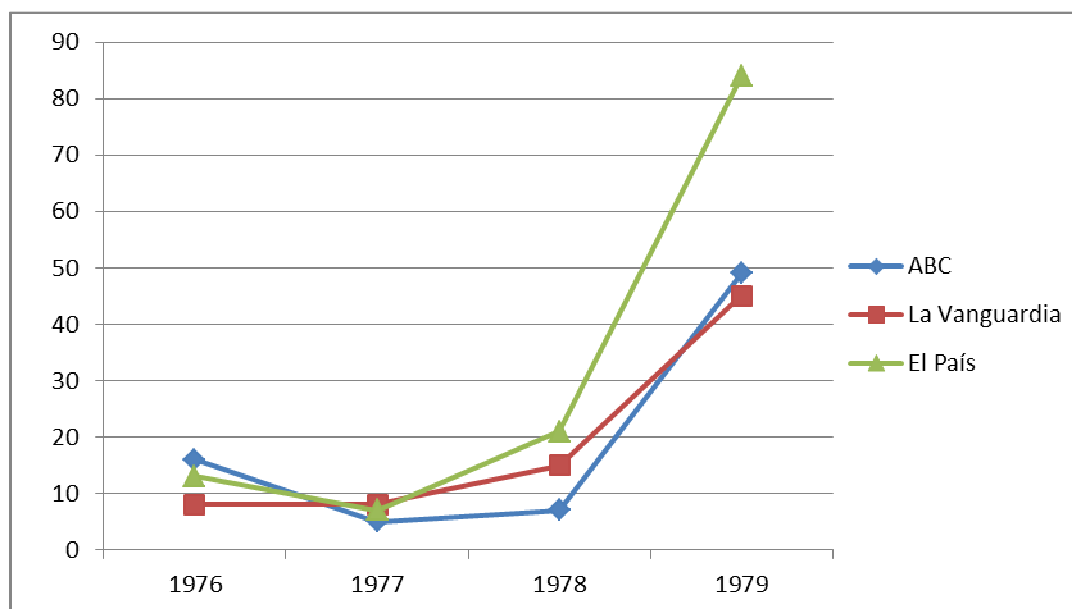
Vol.31. No.1. p.9. African Studies Association.

⁵ Sundiata, I.K.(1988) *ibid*.

⁶ http://www.fundegue.es/declaracion_int.html, (searched on 11/05/2012).

Macías Nguema. The issue became a national affair, journalists being more interested in the economic implications of Spanish politicians than in the current affairs of Equatorial Guinea. As shown in the graph below, except for the second half of 1979, when Teodoro Obiang took over, the news published on Equato-Guinean politics hardly increased between 1976 and 1978, counting less than thirty per year.

Articles on Equatorial Guinea published in three Spanish newspapers



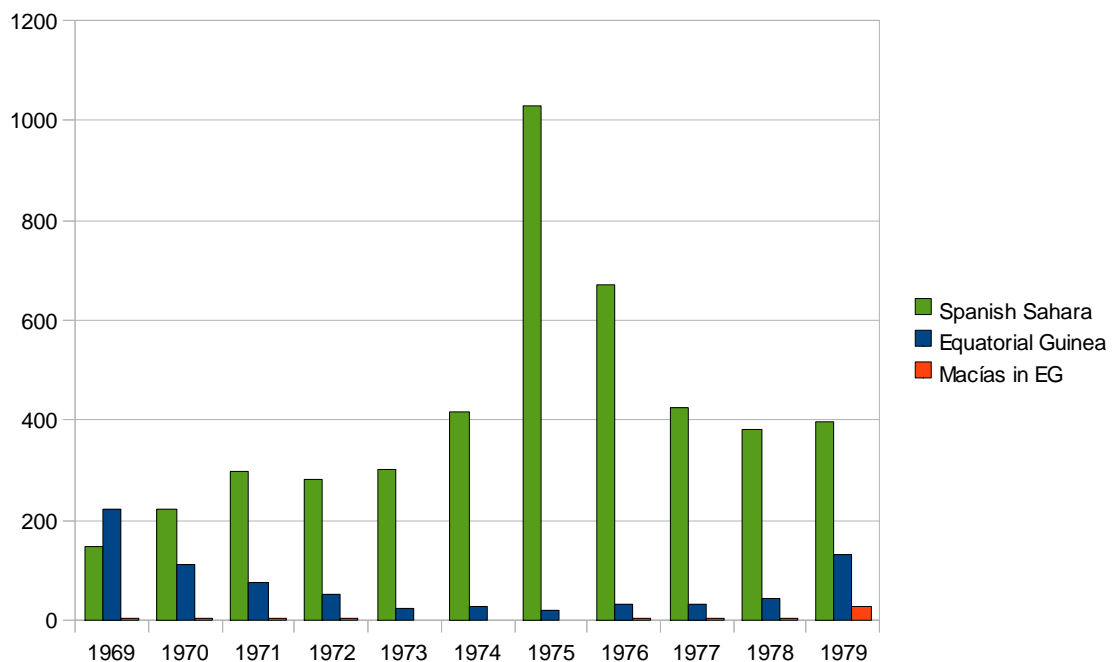
Furthermore, when looking into the selection of the articles published, it surprises how ABC, for instance, dedicates four pages of its weekly magazine to denounce the economic interests of the Spanish politician García Trevijano in the African country while when it comes to address Amnesty International first report on the violation of human rights under Macías, barely a half page article is published⁷. According to the American researcher expert in Equatorial Guinea, Randall Fegley, despite the fact that several organisations became very active in denouncing the situation in Equatorial Guinea, “their hard work for many years appeared in vain. No campaign was ever started in the emotive and laudable way that movements on behalf of Palestinians, South African blacks, Soviet Jews and Cambodian refugees were. Quite simply, the case of Equatorial Guinea was not clear-cut enough for the world opinion”⁸.

If we compare the number of articles published on Equatorial Guinea with the ones on the other remaining African colony, the Spanish Sahara, during the same period of time, in the same newspaper, the difference is astonishing. Even though the events around the Green March of 1975 deserved all the attention, the table below shows how the order of magnitude differs from hundreds in relation to the Spanish Sahara to tens when referring to Equatorial Guinea. Furthermore, the information containing the words Macías Nguema is almost negligible, being zero between 1973 and 1975.

⁷ *Blanco y Negro* (30/10/1976). “Guinea: Tirón de la manta”. pp.19-25. & *ABC* (11/10/1978). “Una década sangrienta: Llamamiento de Amnistía Internacional sobre Guinea Ecuatorial” p.16.

⁸ Fegley, R. (1989). *Equatorial Guinea, an African tragedy*. American University Studies. Peter Lang Editions. New York. p.123

Number of articles published in La Vanguardia containing Macías Nguema, Equatorial Guinea and Spanish Sahara



This data validates the hypothesis of this research based on the link between the lack of identification of both identities (Spanish and Guinean) and the absence of Equatorial Guinea in the national written press despite the fact that Spain and Equatorial Guinea shared language (Spanish), religion (90% of the Guineans were converted to Catholicism) and a greater recent history than with the Spanish Sahara. This leads to the main research question on *how (in which terms) did the Spanish written press inform about Macías Nguema's regime in Equatorial Guinea between 1969 and 1979 and why was it a secondary issue in their agenda-setting?*. Inherent to this question there is a second one related to the role external agents such as the Spanish Government and the Spanish community with interests in the former colony played as gatekeepers of the information published. Moreover, a third sub question can be addressed on whether the articles published in the Spanish press reflected or not the activism of the Guinean diaspora, the Spanish missionaries and other international organisations aiming to denounce Macías regime of terror.

Main findings on the reasons behind the silence

This research is about a silence, about something that did not happen, and that is the coverage of Macías repressive regime in the Spanish press. As explained before, the first years of the Equatorial Guinean president are a blank page in history due to the unlucky coincidence that another dictator was still ruling the ex-metropolis. Censorship was in the core of the system so it surprised nobody that Equatorial Guinea became a banned issue from one day to another. But the question still remains: why this silence around Macías? Was there anything to hide? And once the ban was lifted years later, why didn't the Spanish press denounce the abuses the international community was being aware of?.

There are different opinions on the reasons why this silence was imposed. To some authors, it was

due to the fact that Spain actively intervened in a failed conspiracy organised by some Guinean politicians in 1969. To others, it was a strategy to protect the economic interests of Spanish politicians who had for years invested and earned large sums from the cocoa, coffee and timber exploitations. Lastly, the third trend considered that the banning came after the reprisals carried out by Macías against the Spanish community in response to the criticisms received from the press⁹. In the first part of this thesis I will demonstrate that there is not a single argument to explain the official ban but a combination of the three. It was above all the State's feeling of shame for having failed in the post-independence process what led to the lack of understanding with the new leader. As a result, plots against Macías were supported from Madrid while in Malabo, Macías made life harder to the remaining Spaniards. Although I cannot confirm that members of the Spanish political elite still held important private businesses in Guinea after independence, what seems clear is that this misunderstanding had a negative effect on the Spanish State investments in the former colony, who rapidly lost its hegemony vis-à-vis other countries like France or the former USSR. This feeling of guilt and shame is shared by the American researcher Randall Fegley, who considered this silence a result of multiple factors:

“The most shocking feature of the Macías era was not so much the atrocities themselves as the lack of concern by which the terror was obscured. The Spanish and the OAU were both comforted by the bureaucratic inertia which settled over the case. Nigera, Cameroon and Gabon all feared reprisals. The Chinese felt that they couldn't let the Russians steal a march on them when the USSR, Cuba and other Soviet Bloc countries were getting strategic and ideological gains. [...] But these were not the only reasons for covering up the repressive and brutal methods of the Macías regime. There was a large element of guilt involved on the parts of both Spain and the various African governments concerned”¹⁰.

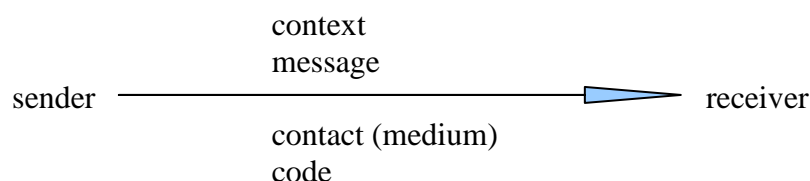
Regarding the second part of the thesis, the question on the remaining silence of the Spanish press differs. No longer can we talk about an imposed censorship, but the Spanish press still did not show the expected interest for an issue under covered for almost five years. Why? After looking at the treatment three very different newspapers made of the issue, I conclude that the fact that Equatorial Guinea was a secondary matter for all is closely related to their fear for reprisals. After forty years of censorship, democratic and free journalism cannot arrive all of the sudden. Time is needed for journalists to dare to inform against the Government's will and for the government to accept that they can no longer impose their control over the media. Being *El País* the first left-wing newspaper, opposite to the government, their lack of access to reliable sources made it hard for them to inform with an alternative voice.

Operationalisation and methodology

As mentioned before, this research has both a diachronic and a synchronic approach as it will compare the Spanish news on Equatorial Guinea in a historical timeline (diachronic) and between the publication in four different newspapers. In order to do so, Jakobson's model of the process of mass communication is used as the basic methodological framework:

9 See Liniger Goumaz, M. (1982) *Guinée Equatoriale, de la dictature de colons à la dictature de colonels*. Les Editions du Temps. Genève. p. 64; Ndongo Bidyogo D., (1977) *Historia y Tragedia de Guinea Ecuatorial*, Editorial Cambio 16. Madrid. pp.196-197; García Domínguez, R.(1977). *Guinea: Macías, la ley del silencio*. Editorial Plaza y Janés, Madrid. pp.219-227.

¹⁰ Fegley, R.(1989). *Equatorial Guinea, an African tragedy*. American University Studies. Peter Lang Editions. New York. p.123



According to this model, this research is mainly focused on the sender, the context of the news, its message, and the contact or type of media. There is no semiotic analysis on the language and neither the receiver nor public opinion are analysed (media effects).

The timeline of this research is differentiated into two parts: the first part goes from the date of independence of Equatorial Guinea from Spain, 12 October 1968, to the 30th December 1975, a month later the death of Francisco Franco and the end of his regime; the second part is from the 1st of January 1976, year of the lifting of the press ban concerning Equatorial Guinea, until the 30th of December 1979, year of the Coup d'État in Equatorial Guinea and Macías execution.

With regard to the message, both a qualitative and quantitative methodology are implemented for the content analysis. The thesis focuses its research in four newspapers: ABC and La Vanguardia for the whole period; The Guardian for the first half of the decade (1969-1975) and El País for the second half (1976-1979). All of them have a national coverage and were the top three most read newspapers in Spain in that decade. Moreover, each of them represent a different line of thinking: while ABC showed a right-wing, pro-government conservative leaning, La Vanguardia, the most popular and oldest newspaper edited in Barcelona, gave an alternative point of view to that of Madrid's perspective on external affairs, less tied to Government pressures. El País represented the first opposition media attempt of the new born democracy in Spain, founded by journalists opposed to Franco's regime. Lastly, I wanted to include a foreign newspaper in the analysis to reflect how journalists not affected by the censorship published their work in Spain. I chose The Guardian because his correspondent, Bill Cerny-Jones was a reputed and veteran journalist working already for many years in the Peninsula so it was plausible that he had the same access to the information sources than his Spanish colleagues. And although the same information was published in the three newspapers, The Guardian used a much more aggressive language than the other two, as if the provocative terms concerning Macías were simply wiped out of the Spanish articles.

A first selection of the articles was done according to the following parameters (mapping):

1. Keywords – Equatorial Guinea and/ or Spanish Sahara, Macías Nguema.
2. Time frame – From 12/10/1968 to 31/12/1979
3. News section – Spain/ World/ Opinion.
4. Length and relevant position in the page

Once the selection, a qualitative methodology was developed for the content analysis following Lasswell's model of communication research¹¹:

1. Who?

¹¹ Asa Berger, A. (2000). *Media and communication research methods: an introduction to quantitative and qualitative approaches*. Sage Publications. California. United States. P.58.

2. Says what?
3. In which channel?
4. To whom?
5. With what (desired) effect?

Lastly, I studied not only the information within the news but also the reports and documents provided to the journalists by different sources of information such as NGO's, the ANRD and associations of returning Spaniards from Equatorial Guinea. Thus, I could come out with the effect that the censorship had in the articles published through the information offered to the journalists and that did not pass the filters.

Together with the documents research, I also carried out a number of qualitative interviews with a selected groups of journalists, missionaries, Spanish politicians involved in the post-independence process, members of the Guinean diaspora living in Spain and Guinean activists in other parts of Europe such as Geneva.

The data collected in these interviews brings light into the reasons why certain media informed less than others about Equatorial Guinea and why the political resistance of the Guinean diaspora and other European activists could not easily reach the national media channels, not even when democracy was established in Spain.

Theoretical framework

Throughout this thesis I will refer to the Spanish press as a Stated controlled media, thus, as a propaganda model, implemented by Franco but later maintained unofficially for years. The research goes beyond the dictatorship period and questions why years later, when democracy was installed in Spain, a sort of covered propaganda still prevailed. This control of the State and the private powers over the press is what the philosopher and linguist Noam Chomsky analyses in his theory of *Manufacturing Consent*, published in the United States in 1988. According to his research, American media “serve to mobilize support for the special interests that dominate the State and private activity, and their choices, emphases and omissions can often be understood best, and sometimes with striking clarity and insight, by analyzing them in such terms”¹².

The analysis of the news publishing show that all the media selected followed the same five filters when approving, rejecting or prioritising one article over the other: the size and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms; the influence of the advertising firms; the reliance of media on information provided by government and experts; “flak” meaning the negative responses to media statements and the anticommunism as a control mechanism. Even though the Spanish background of the seventies differed from the American one researched by Chomsky, his filters could still be applied to the attitude of the Spanish press towards Equatorial Guinea.

1. The influence of the dominant media

Chomsky refers to the most dominant media as the wealthiest ones, those who have the largest means, the highest circulation and therefore the biggest investment. They are the most popular, and

¹² Chomsky N. & Herman E.S (1994). *Manufacturing consent: the political economy of the mass media*. Vintage. Great Britain. p. 11.

the more readers they get, the larger their influence in the political elite. They dominate not only their message but also the local media's which take them as reference of reliable information.

In the context of this research, ABC and La Vanguardia were the first and second most read newspapers between 1970 and 1979. Under Franco's regime, the whole system was organised for these conservative, State-driven newspapers to be among the top three. After the dictatorship, new alternative newspapers like El País could not compete against the historical influence of these two, ABC nation-wide and La Vanguardia in Catalonia. Even though the 1976 press law allowed all types of media to exist, the market was still taken by those which the dictatorship protected for decades. As a result, their colonialist attitude towards Equatorial Guinea and their lack of interest on Macías Nguema were the dominant messages launched to the Spanish public opinion.

2. The advertising business

According to Chomsky, this second filter puts in serious disadvantage the radical newspapers with working-class readers. These journals that have "poor readers" are "poor vehicles" because their public will not purchase their products.

In my opinion, this is a weak idea because it does not take into account the difference in costs between the types of media. Whereas for a TV station or a newspaper, large investments need to be made, this is not the case for radio broadcasting. Alternative radio broadcasting is possible with much less investment that can come from other sources like public corporations. In any case, what this filter means to the present research is the fact that interested groups on Equatorial Guinea were never strong enough to implement a communication strategy through advertising campaigns in the researched media. Under Franco's period these organisations were forbidden in Spain and years later, they were already based abroad. One example that could fit into this filter is the one about the advertisements on the books about Equatorial Guinea that appeared after the lifting of the ban in 1977. The fact that Ramon García's book got more advertising than the other two ("Guinea: Materia reservada" and "Historia y tragedia de Guinea Ecuatorial") is certainly due to the relevance of the publishing house. Plaza y Janés was and is still today one of the largest book publishers in Spain.

3. Reliance on Government and experts sources

More significant news occurs where more press conferences are held. Chomsky considers that economic and time restrictions make media rely frequently on official sources. Public press agencies and government press cabinets tend to be the first sources of information because of their easy access and their proven "accuracy". Looking for new sources whose truthfulness need proof is time consuming that most of the press do not spend.

When looking at the information around Equatorial Guinea, this appears to be the most relevant and effective filter of all. Public sources like EFE determine the primary news of the newspapers researched. Before and after the state censorship, the huge gap between the accuracy guaranteed to the official sources and the always questioned secondary sources of information is what makes the Spanish treatment of news on Equatorial Guinea so homogenous. Moreover, it is important to consider that in a background where there was no room for alternative voices before 1975, gaining that space later was not only a matter of effort but also of time. On one hand, Guinean opposition groups took years to convince the Spanish journalists of their reliability and on the other, Spanish media took ten years (until 1979) to start sending their own staff to Malabo and producing their own information.

4. "Flak" and the enforcers

Questioning what a newspaper publishes is another form of control or filter. What Chomsky calls “flak” is related to the power of lobbying against a certain current issue. Negative responses to the newspapers position can lead to punitive action. And this threat is very powerful.

In the case of State-dominated press, this scenario does not take place simply because the system protects the power elite in which the newspapers are embedded. Because freedom of speech was forbidden, there was no fear at all for a popular protest. Instead, editors only fear was for the State reprisals if the newspapers exceeded the established limits. Seizing a journal was a common practice even in the first years of democracy.

5. Anticommunism

If we understand anticommunism as a State ideology that affected politics at all levels in the United States, the Spanish example could be the so called principles of the Francoist movement rooted in the Catholic ideology. Nonetheless, anticommunism also played a role as a way to shorten ties with the Western powers. To this regard, Macías rejection to all Catholic symbols and his proximity to the Soviet Block was seen as a provocation and criticised by the Spanish government. Therefore, even though anticommunism itself could not be considered a filter for the Spanish press, any provocation against the Franco’s regime and later also against the Catholic morality would catch the attention of the press editors. As an example, I will talk later of the few editorials about Macías Nguema and how they all referred to his regime with pity as if taking distance from the Catholic inheritance meant losing its hegemony.

All these filters were applied by the press researched by Chomsky and Herman in order to define which stories were newsworthy and which not. This comes along the theories on gatekeeping and agenda-setting of mass communication studies, another approach of my theoretical framework.

The gatekeeping theory

This research is about Africa within Europe, and more precisely, about how Spanish media saw Equatorial Guinea right after its independence. Its scope of analysis is not only on the message or published article but also on the communication process that led to it. Thus, the most relevant aspect of this research is the process of media framing, how this information was first gathered, then constructed and finally published. Theorists on agenda-setting and news gatekeeping consider that “elements prominent in the media’s picture become prominent in the audience’s pictures” (M. McCombs & Salma I.Ghanem in S.D.Reese, O.H.Gandy, Jr., A.E.Grant, 2008: 67). In this sense, the gatekeeping theory becomes the perfect framework as it emphasises the crucial role of the journalists and other external agents in the process of the news creation, considering that “audiences not only learn about public issues and other matters from the media, they also learn how much importance to attach to an issue or topic from the emphasis the media put on it” (McCombs & Shaw, 1976:176).

Published in 2009, the American communication researchers Pamela J.Shoemaker and Tim P. Vos developed a theory that aimed to connect gatekeeping studies to the so-called media sociology, or the study of factors that influence how media messages turn out the way they do¹³. This close relationship with behavioural science makes this theory complex, as it can be applied to every step of the decision making process. From the moment in which a reporter records one and not other

¹³ J.Shoemaker, P. & P.Vos,T. (2009) *Gatekeeping theory*. Routledge. New York. p.5

statement, to the writing of the article and the final selection made at the newsroom, all these steps serve as filters of the information and all these gatekeepers have an influence in the process. Some news make it to the front page, other somewhere in the middle of the newspaper and others end up in the reporters desk and are never published. For the present study, the news produced and not published cannot be quantified. However, the study of the ones that did pass the filter and how they are placed in the newspaper is core to this research. In contrast to what Noam Chomsky states, newsworthiness¹⁴ is not the only judgement that gatekeepers make about events: vivid information grabs hold in our imagination and they are usually “emotionally interesting, concrete and imagery-provoking and proximate in a sensory, temporal or spatial way”¹⁵. This statement helps to understand why news on Equatorial Guinea lacked interest for the press editors after years of silence. They add the aspect of remote location as a negative force that may also act against the publishing of an article.

In order to better define the gates or filters and the forces that intervene in the decision making, Shoemaker and Vos structure the process of gatekeeping into five levels of analysis:

1st level – corresponds to the actions taken by the individual, in this case, the journalist. Their personal values, their life and work experiences are formed through different mechanisms of thoughts. Associationism for instance is one of the approaches to determine how events or ideas can become associated with one another in our mind. They conclude that “aspects of the decision process may include the gatekeeper’s overall impression of how useful the information is. [...] Information that is linked with valued attributes is more likely to enter the gate”¹⁶. However, as it happens in the case of the Spanish press censorship, when external rules are explicit and exhaustive, variability in the individual action is very limited.

2nd level – This level refers to the communication routines. “The picture of events that correspondents present is constantly questioned, modified and shaped by technicians, new editors, producers and executives with quite disparate values and objectives”¹⁷. To this regard, the fixed routines established in such a controlled media scenario like the Spanish led to a uniformity in the news published, something that still prevailed for a certain time after censorship was suppressed. Routines are also a relevant feature of the news producing as it saves time and money. Efficiency-wise, “familiar paths minimize risky behaviours, therein avoiding everything from flak, which might require response time from management”¹⁸. Therefore, why should a newspaper spend money and effort sending a correspondent to Malabo if they have never done it even when this was a Spanish colony?. Editors tend to typify the audience in order to justify their decisions which are in reality more linked to a communication routine. In an interview to the former director of one of the newspapers analysed, he argued that because their readers were simply no longer interested in Equatorial Guinea, they would not spend a single cent on an issue that was not worth communicating about¹⁹.

3rd level – This upper layer is formed by the other subject that, together with the individual or

¹⁴ Shoemaker and Vos define newsworthiness as those which include: “timeliness; proximity; importance; impact or consequence; interest; conflict or controversy; sensationalism; prominence; and novelty, oddity or the unusual”. *Ibid.* p.25.

¹⁵ J. Shoemaker, P. & P. Vos, T. (2009). *Supra.* p.26

¹⁶ J. Shoemaker, P. & P. Vos, T. (2009) *Gatekeeping theory*. Routledge. New York. p.39

¹⁷ J. Shoemaker, P. & P. Vos, T. (2009). *Ibid.* p.51

¹⁸ J. Shoemaker, P. & P. Vos, T. (2009). *Supra.* p.60

¹⁹ Interview to Luis María Ansón held in Madrid on the 25th October, 2011.

journalist, defines the communication routines: the media organization. From the newsroom to publishers and managers, they all have a say in the communication process. Policy directives and ideology may for instance have an influence in the relevance of the visual information. An article with striking photos will pass the filter for the weekly magazine whereas the highly informative report may stay in the pages of the newspaper if there is no photos that goes with it. A sensationalist newspaper will always select news with a provocative content, a directive established at management level which affects all areas like the human resources team who would only hire the journalists that meet this profile.

4th level – As we move into a broader level we find here the social institutions that affect the gatekeeping process. The first one would be the “market”. For profit-making organizations, markets would dictate the media content. If the market demands a particular interpretation of the event, that is what it gets. As a reward, more money is invested through advertising and more powerful the media becomes. Audiences are therefore the second group that directly affects media framing. Other influential groups are the advertisers and the financial markets where the stock dividends are sold in the case of larger media companies. Governments and other media are some of the other groups intervening in the agenda-setting. Except for official sources like the governmental ones, most of these groups are determinant only for private communication companies. In the case of the public media, working under the State umbrella protect them from the audience or the market influence although there is a higher risk of ending up producing propagandistic information. Noam Chomsky *manufacturing consent* theory falls directly into this level as he suggests that the dependence of the private media in these influential groups set another type of propaganda model which is far from the informative independence they should practice.

5th level – In this last group Shoemaker and Vos include the social and cultural context in which the media institution works. Media are part of a larger public sphere and they reflect the relations between the state and the civil society, the political interests and the historical roots of certain news. This is especially interesting for this research due to the large influence of the State in the general perception of Equatorial Guinea not only after its independence but most importantly during the Spanish colonisation.

Summing up, when theorizing about gatekeeping, the communication process becomes much more relevant than the final product or published article. I have explained how American theorists relate the work of journalists to many other influential groups and how editors are themselves embedded in the society they reflect through their newspapers. They are actors of change within the system. But these processes get even more complex when it comes to historical research. When looking at the framing of the news about Macías Nguema in the press forty years ago, it is impossible to discover how the communication process was exactly carried out. Therefore, I have worked in the opposite way: through the analysis of the published article I have tried to step back and define what was the journalist’s profile, which sources did he use and how much influence did external groups have on him. Individual interviews with actors involved have contributed to shape my conclusion on the reasons behind the gatekeeping of the news on Macías Nguema and Equatorial Guinea. I hope to have succeeded in the task.

CHAPTER 1

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

1968-1975

Little is known of Francisco Macías regime. Journalists, scholars and other interested groups paid large attention to Equatorial Guinea's independence from Spain in October 1968 but a few months later, news on the tiny African country became very scarce. It is therefore difficult to draw a detailed picture of the first half of Macías regime, from 1968 until 1975. Latter publications on the country and statements of people who lived there help to bring light into the birth of this new State and its relationship with its former metropolis, Spain. The following lines focus on the main historical events that occurred in that period of time and concerned both countries, from the Constitutional Conference held in Madrid prior to independence to the diplomatic crisis that aroused months later which led to the Spanish silence over all Guinean matters.

1.1. Santa Cruz Palace: A long journey destination

On the 30th October 1967, the Guinean delegation finally crossed the door into the Santa Cruz Palace, seat of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Madrid. Four years earlier, Spain had declared the territories of its last colony in Africa as a new region of the State, distributed into two provinces, Fernando Po and Río Muni, whose citizens had the same rights and obligations as any other Spanish citizen, with equal representation in the national Parliament²⁰. As a response to the international pressure, Francisco Franco's government decided to undertake the process of independence, which arrived a few years later through the so-called "Constitutional Conference", aimed to provide the colony with a constitutional framework that would end up with the announcement of presidential elections and the declaration of independence.

Among the 47 members of the Guinean delegation, there were the three that would later run in the elections: Bonifacio Ondó Edú, president of the Autonomous Government Council; Francisco Macías Nguema, vice-president, and Atanasio Ndongo, member of the political party MONALIGE (Movimiento Nacional de Liberación de Guinea Ecuatorial). Even though this was the major opposition party, mostly organised by Guineans in exile, in Cameroon and Gabon, other parties were also represented in the Conference: IPGE (Idea Popular de Guinea Ecuatorial), MUNGE (Movimiento de Unión Nacional de Guinea Ecuatorial), Unión Bubi and Unión Democrática. Here relies already the paradox dominating the Constitutional process: Guinean representatives divided in political parties while in the metropolis, Spain, these were forbidden under Franco's regime.

20 Ley de Autonomía de Guinea Ecuatorial, approved on the 9th November 1963. Its BASE II, article II, states that "los nacionales naturales de Fernando Po y Río Muni tienen los mismos derechos y deberes reconocidos a los demás españoles por las Leyes Fundamentales".

http://es.wikisource.org/wiki/Ley_de_autonom%C3%ADa_de_Guinea_Ecuatorial_de_1963, (searched 03/03/2012).

The two blocks

By 1967, almost all former African colonies had gained their independence from their ex metropolis. As with the Portuguese territories, the Spanish Equatorial Guinea was one of the last remaining colonial spots that was kept under control through a pseudo status of autonomy. This *nationalisation* formula worked out for five years, a period in which the United Nations became the perfect arena for the Guinean nationalists groups to call for total independence, as the international community was very sensitive to the current trend of self-determination. When Franco's government finally submitted to the UN pressure, two different positions appeared within it. On one side, the Presidency minister, Luis Carrero Blanco, to whom all colonial issues depended, supported the foundation of two new States, one in Fernando Po and its Bubi population and another in the continental region and the Fang population. He wanted to protect the Bubi people of the island who feared the installation of a new State dominated by the Fang, larger in number and very much supported by the neighbouring countries. On the other side, the minister of Foreign Affairs, José M^a Castiella believed in the unification of the colony in a unified State with two main regions. As explained by the Guinean writer and journalist Donato Ndongo, to Carrero Blanco Equatorial Guinea had always been a personal matter, and he would protect the island as a territory of his own while to Castiella, the colony represented a State matter²¹.

This division within the Spanish government dominated the first part of the Constitutional Conference. The members of the Guinean delegation rapidly split into two blocks generating a debate that ended up in the Conference suspension due to the differences on the future of the new State. The strongest argument shared by the *separatist block* was that the two regions did not share any geographical, cultural, historical or linguistic common feature but the Spanish influence exerted in both territories. Once Spain withdrew, the differences would arise and the regions would naturally divide into two. To the other group, separatism would weaken the two States, exposing them to the control of external powers, mainly of Fernando Po to Spain. This block was formed by the nationalist leaders of MUNGE, MONALIGE and IPGE who asked for a self-determination and a complete breaking-off with Spain. On the contrary, the *separatist block* believed on the maintenance of close relations with the ex-metropolis after independence. By the end of the first phase, Castiella's vision of a unified Equatorial Guinea succeeded as he convinced Franco of the diplomatic prestige a well driven process of independence would mean to Spain's international image. It is important to note that by 1968 Franco's dictatorship represented one of the last non-democratic regime of western Europe, something seen with suspicion for the main international actors and organisations. It was, therefore, crucial for Spain to offer an example of good governance and diplomacy through its colony's independence.

Nonetheless, the division remained among the pro-colonialists and the anti-colonialists both within the Guinean delegation. As a result, while the minister of Presidency decided to support the candidacy of Bonifacio Ondó Edú (MUNGE), a catechist, conservative politician, head of the autonomous government, the minister of External Affairs saw in Atanasio Ndongo (MONALIGE), a moderate politician educated in exile, the perfect candidate for the presidency of a unified Equatorial Guinea. However, there was still a large group of the Guinean delegation who did not identify themselves in any of these two blocks, as they thought both were following the interests of the Spanish government. This group decided to look for an expert who could assist them in the second phase of the Conference, someone not related to the Spanish State apparatus. This man was Antonio García Trevijano, a well-known Spanish lawyer, democrat and opposed to Franco. Even

21 Ndongo Bidyogo, D. (1977) *Historia y tragedia de Guinea Ecuatorial*. Editorial Cambio 16. Madrid. p.112.

though he never had any interests or relationship with the colony, he agreed to assist them as he believed a truly independence of Equatorial Guinea could never occur if promoted by members of the dictatorial government²².

Again, the paradox arises when the UN National Assembly approved the 2.355 Resolution in which Spain had to fix the bases for the last part of the process: transferring of powers, elaboration of an electoral law and a new Constitution for Equatorial Guinea. For the past thirty years, the metropolis itself did not have any separation of the State power, no electoral law and no democratic Constitution²³. However, both delegations managed to draw a Constitution inspired very much in the French model which was finally accepted in June 1968. A few months later, in August, it was submitted to the Guinean people through referendum and approved by 64 per cent of the voters²⁴.

This Constitutional process, its debates, its formation, was unknown for the Spanish public opinion. The Constitutional Conference was declared classified material according to the law on State Secret²⁵. This became the first press ban on Guinean matters, which lasted until the summer of 1968. Once the Constitution was adopted, the electoral campaign began.

Less educated, less experienced and less popular than his opponents, Macías managed to run a magnificent campaign. With the support of García Trevijano, who financed his campaign and wrote his speeches, he convinced the population he was the true nationalist, the only one who could bring Equatorial Guinea the national pride that a new born State needed. He concentrated on the rural areas, appealing to tradition while Atanasio Ndongo (MONALIGE), Bonifacio Ondo Edu (MUNGE) and Edmundo Bosio (Unión Bubi) called for progress and colonial inheritance. On September 22nd 1968, Macías won the first round for 36,716 votes, over Ondo Edu (31,941) and the other two candidates (24,299)²⁶. The second round gave him the majority. He rapidly got the protection of the Spanish representation who, although surprised with the results, believed on his good will towards Spain as he repeated all over again in his speeches. Pedro Ekong, minister of Health in Macías first government and later imprisoned and tortured like other members of the cabinet, explains how Macías managed to play a double game, convincing the Guineans of his national pride and transmitting the Spaniards a pro-colonial sentiment, the result of years as a worker of the colonial administration in the mainland region:

“In my opinion, the history of the independence of Guinea is the one of the shrewdness, cold blood and political vision, with no scruples, of Francisco Macías Nguema. Born in the jungle of Rio Muni, he was distrustful, suspicious, opportunistic, a meticulous and astute politician who knew how to be in the right place at every moment: between the opposition to Spain and the fervour to his people; condemning in public his political opponent (Ondo Edú) and building coalitions with his other rivals; with a foot in Madrid and another in the United Nations”²⁷.

22 Interview to Antonio García Trevijano held in Madrid, Spain, on November 2nd, 2011.

23 In 1942, the Cortes Generales or Parliament was founded according to an Organic Law. However, the law stipulated the government to be ultimately responsible for all legislation of the country, while defining the Cortes of Spain as a purely advisory body elected not through direct or universal suffrage. As all ministers were appointed on the grace of Franco as the head of State and government, he was monopolized as the one source of legislation. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francoist_Spain#cite_note-countrystudies.us-15 (visited 12/03/2012).

24 Liniger-Goumaz, M. (2000) *Historical dictionary of Equatorial Guinea*. Third Edition. The Scarecrow Press, Inc. Lanham, Maryland and London. pp. 95-96.

25 Law 9/1968, April 5th on State Secret. Published in the Official State Bulletin, BOE, no. 84 of 6/4/1968, pp.5197-5198.

26 Fegley, R. (1989). *Equatorial Guinea: an African tragedy*. American University Studies. Peter Lang. New York. p.57

27 Ekong Endeme, P. (2010). *El proceso de descolonización de Guinea Ecuatorial*. Star Ibérica, S.M. Madrid. p.435

Pedro Ekong, Guinean politician and former minister of Health in Macías' government, believes that Macías was indeed the only candidate with the sufficient strength to build up a new nation:

"I believe, forty years later, that the Joint Secretariat and the Guinean people were not mistaken with Macías. At that moment of independence, he was the only one who had the character, the strength, the energy and the pride to keep Guinea unified against the ambitions of the neighbouring countries"²⁸.

According to many scholars, although Macías victory did not satisfy the Spanish government, they were proud of the work done throughout the independence process. The United Nations observers in the Guinean elections congratulated Spain for the well organised and transparent elections. The independence of this tiny territory brought a better international image to Spain, that of a modern State who understands what democracy is about. Moreover, the fact that it well accepted the only candidate they did not support helped to gain the trust of other powers with the message that Spain is not only capable of implementing the most valuable democratic tools but also respects its outcome even if it goes against its expectations.

1.2. The first diplomatic crisis

The Guineans made their choice. Their new State started full of national pride and hope for the future. And Francisco Macías Nguema stood as the perfect representative of this nationalism that accepted its Spanish roots but looked with African eyes into the years to come. He even knew how to get closer to the Bubi population of the island (he was a Fang of the mainland) by appointing Edmundo Bosío, head of the Unión Bubi, as his vice-president. Furthermore, he also thought on those who voted his opponent Atanasio Ndonga and made him minister of Foreign Affairs. His new government began with almost the total support of his citizens.

Although for the first months the relationship with the Spanish community were close and cordial, they soon got torn when Macías started to use them as an argument for his anti-colonial discourse. The Spaniards started to leave in large numbers at the time as other political disagreements with the Spanish ambassador led to the breaking-off of diplomatic relations by March 1969. This situation coincided with the visit to the United Nations of the minister of Foreign Affairs, Atanasio Ndonga. On his way back, he stopped in Madrid where, together with Saturnino Ibongo, representative of Equatorial Guinea in the UN, held several meetings with members of the political diaspora and with the Spanish minister of Foreign Affairs, José M^a Castiella, with whom he still maintained a close relationship. All interviewees agree that these meetings went over the organisation of a new Guinean government and a conspiracy led by Atanasio Ndonga.

With the support of the Spanish government, the Guinean minister attempted a coup d'État against Macías on the 5th of March 1969. After occupying the Presidential palace in Bata he was surprised by Macías who was supposed to be out of the city. Minutes later, Atanasio Ndonga was thrown out of a window and captured by Macías guards when still alive. According to official sources, he was taken to the hospital where he died of the wounds. Newspapers like *The Guardian* reported that he was brutally assassinated in prison days later, together with Saturnino Ibongo and other politicians involved in the conspiracy²⁹. Although it was not officially proven, the collaboration of the Spanish

436.

28 Ekong Endeme, P.(2010). *Ibid.* p.439.

29 Cemlyn Jones, B. (02/04/1969) "A president's rivals die off". *The Guardian*, p. 2.

minister of Foreign Affairs became certain when the day after, a telegram signed by him arrived to the Guinean police office congratulating Atanasio for the successful coup³⁰.

As a consequence, Macías denounced that the coup d'état was carried out by the Spanish capitalists living in the country and announced the prosecution and arrest of all the collaborators on the conspiracy. This reaction could be seen as one of the many attacks the president made against the Spanish community in order to reinforce his power over his opponents. However, in a press conference in Bata, he also accused the Spanish government whose reaction was swift to react. A few days later, on the 22nd of March, the minister of Presidency, Luis Carrero Blanco, ordered the evacuation of all Spaniards living in Equatorial Guinea. Against Macías' will, who knew well the consequences of this exodus, around 1,500 people left the country, most of them highly qualified professionals such as doctors, teachers, and of course businessmen. They were among the last ones remaining in the country from the 7,000 counting before independence³¹. This drastic action led to a new crisis, this time economic, which forced the new government to seek for help in other countries. The relationship with the ex-metropolis broke up and new actors came into place. Countries such as Cuba, USSR, the United States and France answered to his call.

1.3.A communist country rich in minerals

After 1970, Macías began to establish good relations with the Soviet Union through a preferential trade and shipping treaty. Even though trade never became a relevant issue, USSR interest increased as Malabo turned into a strategic fishing base for the soviets and later on, as the perfect place for military training and intelligence gathering facilities during the war with Angola. Russians were given unlimited access to Guinean waters where fish was still of high quality and in return, Moscow granted Macías with scholarships for Guinean students in the USSR and Russian technicians helped to maintain the scarce infrastructures of the country such as the airport. But what made these relations relevant for Macías was the other partners he got thanks to his ties with the Soviet Bloc. First, Cuba's involvement in Equatorial Guinea became core to the development of the country in those years of isolation. Cuban doctors, teachers and other qualified personnel filled the gap the Spaniards had left a year earlier. Although Guineans believe they were not kind enough with their people, Cubans shared language and culture with them, and more importantly, they did not dare to keep silence on the oppression and the atrocities they saw. And Equatorial Guinea became a crucial partner for Fidel Castro during their intervention in the war in Angola. As Fegley explains, Fernando Po was used as an acclimatization center for Cuban soldiers before heading to Angola. He also stresses the personal interest of Macías to keep the Cubans (almost all his bodyguards were Cubans), protecting him and keeping him in power³².

Moreover, perhaps the most important aid the new government received came from China. By the end of 1970, Equatorial Guinea voted for China's admission in the United Nations and a few months later, they were providing arms to the Guinean national police and trainers for the Youth Militia Movement founded by Macías. Almost 400 Chinese workers arrived in Equatorial Guinea to work mainly in Rio Muni, improving the roads and telecommunication network, providing medical assistance in hospitals and training in the growing of rice and cotton. In addition to this workforce,

30 Interview with Antonio García Trevijano held in Madrid, on November 2nd, 2011 & Ndongo Bidyogo, D. (1977), *Supra*. p.161.

31 Ndongo Bidyogo, D. (1977). *Historia y tragedia de Guinea Ecuatorial*. Editorial Cambio 16. Madrid. p.163.

32 Fegley, R. (1989). *Equatorial Guinea: an African tragedy*. American University Studies. Peter Lang. New York. p.114.

new products from China started to be available in the state-owned stores. And all this assistance was made with no criticism towards Macías politics. Chinese doctors where the ones who worked in the hospitals near Blabich prison in Malabo and therefore, assisted the tortured victims of the prison, knowing better than anyone else the violence they suffered³³.

On the other hand, Western countries such as France and United States did not mind to negotiate with a country friend of the soviets in exchange of a precious good: uranium. French companies had found oil and uranium in neighbouring Gabon and Nigeria so the possibility of important deposits of this mineral in Rio Muni was of huge interest for both countries and their nuclear programmes. Offshore exploration for oil was being carried out by two American companies, Continental Oil and Standard Oil, with no positive results. As Cronjé points out, in a report made in 1976, years before oil was found in the country, by mid-seventies about 15 million dollars were invested in oil exploration before the Guinean government refused to accept the new offer made by the Americans to continue with the drillings considering it too low³⁴. When several French publications began to talk about the existence of uranium, the United States renewed its interest in the region. France had a larger involvement in Guinean economy also through the exploitation of timber by the company Dragages. According to Guineans in exile, the French government saw in the tight relations between Equatorial Guinea and Spain a new opportunity to accomplish a total influence in the region of the Guinean Gulf³⁵.

It is important to recall that in the Berlin Conference in 1884, Spain lost 422.000 kilometers of the Continental Region of Equatorial Guinea, more than half of the territory they requested according to the historical concession made by the Portuguese to the Spaniards in 1777. This large amount of land went to the French who argued that according to colonial law, sovereignty could only be exerted on the territories effectively occupied which, indeed, it was not the case of this Guinean region. A Spanish-French conference was held in Paris in 1900 and again, Spain lost even more land not only in Rio Muni but also in the Sahara. The failure of these negotiations were such that it is said that the Spanish general governor who attended the Conference committed suicide on his way back to Spain because of his feeling of shame. Anyhow, the land around the river Muni had always been a matter of dispute between the two countries, and this new scenario was leaving the door open for the French government to annex the last remaining piece of its sphere of influence in the region.

Summing up, either because of the strategic location of Bioko island or the minerals and timber exploited in Rio Muni, the continental region, it is surprising how such a tiny country could awaken so much interest among the different world powers. Scholars agree that these are the main reasons behind the international silence around Macías regime, an argument that still prevails today around Obiang Nguema's impunity.

1.4. An absolutist king in a reign of terror

By 1972, Macías distrusted not only his opponents but every educated man in the country, even the members of his own Government. After the attempt of coup d'État he began to accumulate power on himself, implementing the same type of absolutist power he learnt from Franco. As Suzanne

33 Fegley, R. (1989), *ibid.* p.114.

34 Cronjé, S. (1976), "Equatorial Guinea: the forgotten dictatorship". *Anti-Slavery Society*, Research Report No.2, London. p.36.

35 Interview with Eugenio Nkogo held in León, Spain on the 29th October, 2011.

Cronjé points out:

“Violence and repression have a long history in Equatorial Guinea, owing much to the nature of Spanish colonial rule. But since independence in 1968 and especially since President Macías’ assumption of increasing personal power since 1970, legalised oppression and political murder have become commonplace instruments of government policy”³⁶.

As in the ex-metropolis, he banned all political parties except for one, the P.U.N.T. (Partido Único Nacional de los Trabajadores) to which all Guineans had to belong from the age of six until death. Women or men, all were obliged to enrol the Organization of the Youth Movement for Macías, a military communist based organisation but rooted in the Spanish falangist movement. He also reformed the Constitution, suppressed the division of powers and founded a National Assembly where all members were appointed by him; death penalty was declared to anyone who attempted against him and he called himself *lifetime president*. Individual freedoms such as the freedom of expression or movement were banned. For instance, everyone had to ask for a permit to go from one region to another, explaining why and for how long they planned to travel.

As part of his propaganda campaign, by 1970 Macías had closed down most of the media except for the ones he controlled (Radio Santa Isabel and Diario Ebano) and prohibited the entrance to all foreign journalists. Again, his actions were an imitation of what he saw in Franco and Hitler, two figures he profoundly admired, according to Guinean informants. In this sense, the same information blockade was imposed in Spain a year later when the Government declared classified all information related to Equatorial Guinea. Therefore, two bans were implemented at the same time, one forbidding the information on Equatorial Guinea from coming out and the other one prohibiting its publication in Spain. As explained before, this was the second declaration of classified material on Equatorial Guinea since 1968 but in this case it lasted for five years, until October 1976, becoming the longest ban imposed on a former colony under Franco’s rule. The foreign silence took place at the same time as Macías dictatorship turned into a bloody regime, later defined as the “Dachau of Africa”, “Cambodia minus ideology” or “one of the bloodiest dictatorships in the world”.

According to the American scholar, expert on Africa Affairs, Randall Fegley:

“Of the nine Africans who had sat in the Cortes from 1960 to 1968, six were murdered. Madrid did not seem to care. Equatorial Guinea was closed to the world and those few who knew of the tiny’s nations existence closed their eyes and hoped that somehow Francisco Macías Nguema would disappear into the mysterious jungle from whence he had come. But instead, he was taking a whole country into the jungle”³⁷.

Political prosecution was in everyday life. The first public execution occurred in 1972, on the Pentecost day. Donato Ndong explained that all politicians who held an important position before independence were tortured and executed. Witnesses told him that the death of a man in the most unimaginable forms became something usual. Nobody could ask for the fate of his relative. If he did not appear in two or three days he had died and they were not allowed to cry for him³⁸.

36 Cronjé, S. (1976), “Equatorial Guinea: the forgotten dictatorship”. *Anti-Slavery Society*, Research Report No.2, London. p.15.

37 Fegley, R. (1989) *Equatorial Guinea: an African tragedy*. American University Studies. Peter Lang. New York. p.72.

38 Ndong Bidyogo, D. (1977). *Historia y tragedia de Guinea Ecuatorial*. Editorial Cambio 16. Madrid. p. 220

Because most of the interviewees for this research belong to the political diaspora, the information gathered does not relate so much to the prosecution of common citizens but to those who meant a threat for Macías. To this regard, the most relevant events occurred around June 1974, before and after the so called *Dance of the accursed*. Distributed for the first time in 1976 by the activist movement in exile, the ANRD, the document was written by the Guinean minister of Information Daniel Oyono and published in the weekly pamphlet *La Libertad*, on the 10th June 1974. It describes how 102 political prisoners were executed in Bata's prison after having declared their collaboration in a conspiracy against the President³⁹. What surprises is that, despite the fact that it was a public document, accessible to everyone living in the country, no one reported about this massacre but two years later, when the press ban in Spain was lifted. Among the victims there were the minister of Labour, Boricho Toichoa and the UNDP worker, Beaka Belope. Months later, in February 1975, the former vice-president Edmundo Bosio was tortured and shot to death apparently because Macías picture hanging in his office was torn. When I asked about all these killings to Antonio García Trevijano, Macías closest assistant, he did not deny them but said he never knew about them. The only time he asked about one of the ministers missing, he got no answer and since then, he said he preferred not to get involved in issues that were not of his concern⁴⁰.

Possibly one of the best documents to understand the fear Guinean citizens lived in these years are the memories published by a Claretian missionary who prefers to remain anonymous and who lived in the country for more than forty years, from 1954 until 1999. Among the many stories he recalls, there is one that portraits all the rest, about the arrest and arbitrary execution of a young man:

"In the annual festivity of the village Basacato del Este, one of the policemen who was drunk started to bother a group of young men. They started to fight and the policeman shot to himself and died. The village suffered a terrible repression. Many of them were arrested and taken to Malabo prison while others hid themselves in the bush. The young man who attacked the policeman confessed. He declared he did not want to harm him but he was arrested and condemned to death. I was asked to go to the prison and assist him in his last confession. I tried to distract him in those last moments. He had worked as a tailor in one of our missions, he was a good man. They took him to the stadium. In the stands, a large crowd watching, in front of him, a squad of tall strong men armed with their rifles. On the opposite side, him, a young man, blindfold, short in height and defenceless. In the moment of the execution, after giving him absolution, I closed my eyes. I could not see that brother of mine, so helpless. After all this time, I still preserve the bitterness of those moments".

From the interviews and the documents researched it seems that fear was the tool Macías used to control his people. Either you were with him or against him, there was no place in between. From the most common man to the powerful minister, everyone was seen under suspicion. As a witness recalls, "we were asked to accuse each other, to kill each other".

The report on forced labour published by the Anti-Slavery Society described how the Labour Act in 1972 ordered that between 2,000 and 2,500 people of the mainland had to be used as unpaid forced labour on the plantations in the island. These years of repression led to the flight of thousands of Guineans: by 1975, from a total population of less than half a million, 60,000 had fled to Gabon, 30,000 to Cameroun and 5,000 to Spain and the rest of Europe⁴¹. Macías had

39 <http://www.asodegue.org/hdmbm.htm> (visited in 08/04/2012).

40 Interview with Antonio García Trevijano held in Madrid, Spain, on the 2nd November 2011.

41 Cronjé, S. (1976), "Equatorial Guinea: the forgotten dictatorship". *Anti-Slavery Society*, Research Report No.2, London. p.25

made a clean sweep of almost all Equatorial Guinea's educated class and more than two thirds of the 1968 Assembly had disappeared⁴². In the second half of Macías regime, between 1975 and 1979, other reports denounced this constant violation of human rights. However, it is still not clear why the public opinion in Europe and mostly in Spain were not aware of it before.

While this terror happened miles away, in Spain, Franco's regime was about to expire. On the 20th December 1973, the Presidency minister, Luis Carrero Blanco, was assassinated with a bomb in his car in Madrid. The terrorist group ETA carried out this attack in order to end up with Francisco Franco's successor. In charge of the General Office for Morocco and the colonies, he always paid special attention to Equatorial Guinea, a colony he visited at least three times before its independence⁴³. With his death, the dictatorship lost its major leader in a crucial moment, when Franco had fell seriously sick. He died on the 20th of November, 1975, and right after, a non military temporary government was established and monarchy reinstalled. Juan Carlos I was proclaimed king of Spain on the 22nd November 1975. The following months, the *status quo* remained in the main aspects of national politics, including its relationship with Equatorial Guinea and the official silence imposed around it.

42 Cronjé, S. (1976), *Ibid.* pp.18 & 21. .

43 Suárez Blanco, S. (1997). "Las colonias españolas en Africa durante el primer franquismo (1939-1959). Algunas reflexiones". *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma*. Serie V. Hª Contemporánea, t. 10, 1997.p.5

CHAPTER 2

ANALYSIS: EQUATORIAL GUINEA IN THE SPANISH PRESS

The new Equatorial Guinea suffered its first political crisis just a few months after its independence. Although the population still trusted Macías Nguema, his reprisals on the perpetrators of the failed coup d'État forced many opponents to flee and the citizens saw a new face of their leader, that of a suspicious and vindictive man. After his first actions to accumulate all powers in 1970, his regime soon turned into a cruel and violent dictatorship until its end in 1979. But, did the Spanish society know about the fate of Equatorial Guinea? Was the middle class Spaniard aware of the oppressive situation the Guineans lived in? The answer is no. Spanish people could only know about these stories through witnesses who had lived them, and this was done in the private sphere. While the press did talk about economic and political affairs between the two countries, almost nothing was published on Macías accumulation of power, the forced labour or the massive flights of Guineans, issues that years later caught the attention of the international community. This chapter analyses the articles published in ABC, La Vanguardia and The Guardian on Equatorial Guinea between its independence until the end of 1975, trying to understand the reasons behind such silence. While after 1972 it is clear that the silence was a consequence of the specific press ban imposed by the Spanish government, the question still remains for the years before. Although the State censorship on the press was one of the main reasons, there are other arguments to be considered: on one hand, the forbidden access to Equatorial Guinea since 1970 and on the other, the lack of organisation of the Guinean diaspora in Spain due, mostly, to the banning of all type of group association.

2.1 A subversive and imperialist foreign press

“BBC reporter Graham Mytton: Would you allow the BBC and other media to send reporters to Equatorial Guinea?

Macías: Any time you want to come to Equatorial Guinea to do your job, you can do this, although we know very well, as I said before, that you will never tell the truth about our country. But you can come at any time and do your job...What has happened is this: We are the only Spanish-speaking country in the African continent, but Spain does not help us, [...] instead of assisting us, is trying to create a campaign against our country to spread false information against us.[...] The journalists who side with Spain – well, that is their own business, let them side with Spain”⁴⁴.

After the failed coup d'État in March 1969, media censorship was enforced and the foreign press stopped at the border. The radio no longer broadcasted bulletins and all correspondence was controlled by the Guardia Nacional (National Guard). Even the school books were strictly censored and Spanish scientific books on Guinea were burnt in public⁴⁵. The BBC reporter asked Macías about his propaganda policy in one of the few interviews held with a foreign journalist during his attendance to the OAU summit in Kampala in 1975. According to the Spanish press, Macías

44 Mytton Graham, BBC interview on 30.7.1975 in Cronjé, S. (1976), “Equatorial Guinea, the forgotten dictatorship”. *Anti-Slavery Society*. Research Report No.2, London. p.28

45 Liniger-Goumaz, M. (2000) *Historical dictionary of Equatorial Guinea*. Third Edition. The Scarecrow Press, Inc. Lanham, Maryland and London. p. 80

imposed this censorship after the publication in ABC of a series on the history and independence of Equatorial Guinea⁴⁶. He declared all Spanish newspapers to be subversive and against the legitimate Guinean government: anyone who dared to get in the country with one of its issues would be fined with 250,000 peseta (€1,500)⁴⁷. The series counted six articles written by the Guinean journalist Donato Ndonga and signed with the pseudonym of José Vicente Mba. In the last issue, he addressed the situation lived under Macías government and criticised it strongly:

“I am not accusing the president but denouncing his politics. Macías is aware of everything; he personally orders every single action taken in Guinea. He cannot ignore then the dramatic fate of all those important politicians of Guinea. Nobody has tried ever to discover the author of such atrocities”⁴⁸.

It was the first and only direct criticism made in ABC against Macías regime and it arrived just a year after independence. Interesting is to note the extreme care with which ABC dealt with the series: the lead reads “Guinea, as seen by a Guinean” together with an introduction clarifying that the newspaper is not responsible for the accusations made by the author⁴⁹. Despite all the caution, Macías vented his anger on the four main Spanish newspapers of the time, which led to the expulsion of the correspondent of La Vanguardia, José M^a Vila, who had to leave the country against his will in April.

Until then, José M^a Vila had worked from Malabo as correspondent for the Catalan newspaper. Before his colleague published these articles in ABC, he had already written a serial of seven detailing the tense atmosphere lived before and after the failed coup d'état. Entitled, *what happened in Guinea? Retrospective analysis of those days of anguish and worry*⁵⁰, he quotes several Spaniards who had to leave all of the sudden and questions the official version of the perpetrators' terrible fate. Therefore, Macías decision to ban the Spanish newspapers was not only related to ABC's publishing but to the treatment he had received from them throughout the whole year 1969. The analysis of the publishing policy right after independence shows a clear turn in how Macías is portrayed by the three newspapers: whereas before the diplomatic crisis, he is seen as a decent leader, his decisions start to be questioned as the Spanish government takes distance from him. It seems clear then that all media followed the official version of the Spanish State in the message to inform about. After the failed intervention of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the attempt of overthrow, the diplomatic crisis had to be seen as a consequence of Macías delusions of grandeur and lack of trust in his cabinet. This message came through, strongly and clearly in all the articles published that year. Nonetheless, the three newspapers did differ in another crucial aspect of the communication process: the channel through which this information would be sent.

As shown in the graph below, whereas La Vanguardia used his own staff (correspondents and collaborators) to publish about Guinea, ABC relied more than half of the times in the information offered by the State press agency, EFE, which, to be more precise, did not count with a delegation in Malabo to report from. This choice had also a direct effect on the number of articles published on

46 *La Vanguardia*. (15/02/1970) “Guinea Ecuatorial prohíbe la entrada de periódicos españoles”. p.6.

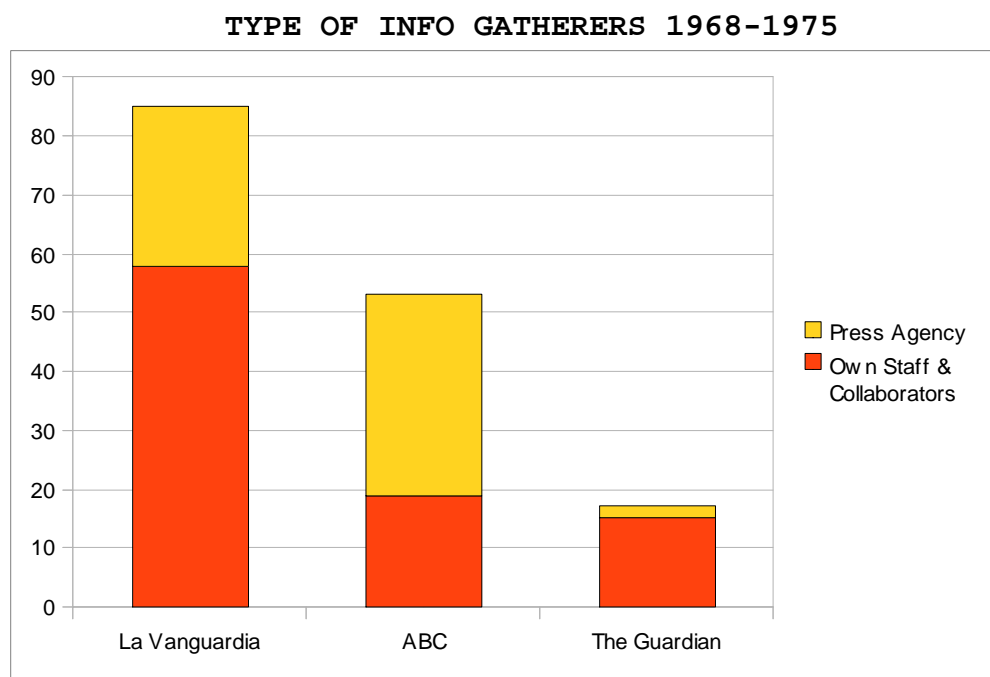
47 Vila, José M^a, (08/04/1970) “Al regreso de Guinea, escala en Gran Canaria”. *La Vanguardia*.

48 Vicente Mba, J. (18/02/1970). “El desconocido drama que rodeo la independencia. Represalias políticas y centralización de todos los poderes en la figura de Macías”. ABC. p.21

49 “Besides all its insufficiencies, these passionate notes will contribute to explain the process of decolonisation. In theirs the reader will find as much information as opinions. [...] We publish the following articles knowing that they do not analyse the current reality through our perspective, but through that of a Guinean citizen”. In ABC. (26/12/1969). “1960: El despertar de las conciencias”. pp.31.

50 Vila, José M^a. (17/06/1969). “¿Qué sucedió en Guinea? Retrospectivo examen de unas jornadas de inquietud y angustia”. *La Vanguardia*, p.53.

Equatorial Guinea, being those of *La Vanguardia* up to a third more than *ABC*'s, and more importantly, much longer and extensive. With regard to *The Guardian*, the journalist responsible for the Guinean issues is their correspondent in Madrid, Bill Cerny-Jones. This was a common practice in the years of post-independence of the African countries: the ex-metropolis was a location as relevant as the former colony to gather information about the African country and therefore, if the European power remained silent, there was almost no other way journalists could report about the new born State. In the case of Cerny-Jones, he was a veteran journalist living in Spain for over a decade when the Guinean independence occurred. Thus, instead of relying on EFE as a source of information, he preferred to cover most of the news himself, like the attempt of coup d'état, during which he reported from Malabo first and Cameroon after.



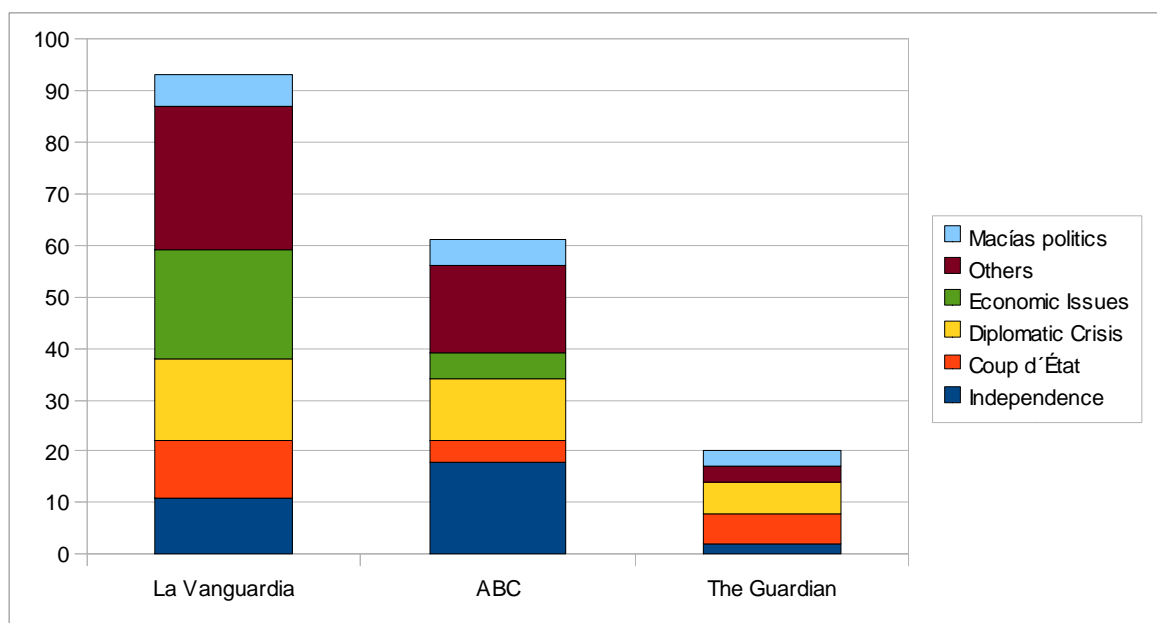
This graph suggests two possible conclusions: firstly, *ABC*'s conservative ideology was almost always in tune with the State press agency's, and therefore, with the government's official version, while for *La Vanguardia* and *The Guardian* this was not the case; secondly, by employing the newspaper's own staff to inform about Guinea, *La Vanguardia*'s editor showed more interest in the Guinean matters and Guinean news played a more important role in the agenda-setting of the newspaper. Even though there was a tight control of the State through censorship, the information given by *La Vanguardia* is more detailed and extensive than *ABC*'s as it includes interviews with sources in Guinea and more information about the news context. In his first articles, Jose M^a Vila even went a step further including paragraphs that questioned Macías legitimacy:

“The honeymoon after independence ended surprisingly fast. Three months after he was elected, President Macías said in a discourse in San Carlos of Fernando Po: “There is a small group of politicians unsatisfied because they did not achieve the power. If I know that any white or African gets in contact with them, he will be automatically eliminated. Remember that the President of the Republic owns all authority, even that of executing”⁵¹.

51 Vila, José M^a. (21/06/1969) “Surge una utopía: el petróleo. Tened en cuenta que el presidente de la república tiene todas las facultades, incluso la de fusilar”. *La Vanguardia*, p.63.

However, none of the three media went further in the causes and responsibilities of the executions. The criticism of Macías politics is in line with the Spanish State's opinion, deceived by the attitude of the African ruler against the colonial inheritance. After 1970, when the foreign press had the access banned in the country, the treatment of the information became even more State aligned. As shown in the graph below, although the newspapers showed a slight difference in their interest, almost all the information published is related to economic affairs between the two countries (commercial agreements, aid budget, Spanish companies in Guinea, etc.) and political issues (independence anniversary, official visits, etc.). Others refer to matters such as the external relations of Guinea regarding the Biafran war, the exodus of the Nigerian workers from the country or the conflict with Gabon. The Guardian shows a more equal treatment in the number of articles published on each matter. However, none of them publish a single article on Macías oppressive. When it is denounced, it is always in a few lines in an article on a different issue and no more than four or five times in six years.

TYPE OF INFORMATION PUBLISHED 1968-1975



Lastly, when looking at the total number of articles, La Vanguardia publishes a third more on Guinea than ABC. This is very much related to the fact that the newspaper had one person exclusively reporting from Guinea. It proves that even with Macías' ban in place, if a newspaper had a special interest on the former colony, there was a way to do it: through a Guinean journalist. Whereas Macías prohibited the entrance of foreign journalists and foreign press, he did not say anything about the Guinean journalists working within the country as long as their articles were not subversive. Jesús Bimbile signed all the news on Guinea published in La Vanguardia from 1970 until the Spanish press ban in 1972. Although I do not have any confirmation, it is presumable that this was a pseudonym used by a Guinean journalist for several reasons: besides these ones on Guinea, there is no other article in La Vanguardia signed by him and no reference to further works written by him later; Bimbile also stands for a Guinean town, Valladolid de los Bimbiles, and it does not refer at all to a Spanish surname. During those years of censorship it was a common practice to use pseudonyms for articles dealing with sensitive matters. And in this case it was a Guinean citizen writing for a banned newspaper, so it is understandable that he wanted to protect himself behind a pseudonym. However, besides this caution, there is not a single line criticising

Macías. On the contrary, he adopted a very supportive attitude with opinions such as:

“Why should it surprise us that Equatorial Guinea fluctuates between the authoritarianism and the quite fair application of the human rights if it only counts with one year and a half of independence? History cannot be told in months or years but in periods of time”⁵².

The paragraph above appears in an article about the borders closure and the lack of information coming from outside. While, on one hand, he talked about a state of emergency referring to the extreme control of the documents taken out of the country, he later entitled “the path towards maturity” to justify it. The following one is in an article about the constant destitutions of ministers and the proclamation of the single party:

“The regular citizen still trusts Macías. He knows that as a human, he might have faults, but he sees in him the strength and will needed to rule the country.[...] Countries like Cameroon, Gabon, Congo, Algeria, Libya, Sudan, Egypt, etc., they all have a single political party.[...] The Guinean citizen knows there is still a lot to do but he prefers to see one man taking the lead rather than many groups or parties ruining Guinea”⁵³.

Whereas the Spanish official version was against these constant changes in the Guinean government, no criticism was made when Macías changed the Constitution and declared himself president for life.

Summing up, although there are large differences in the quantitative and qualitative aspect of the news published on the newspapers analysed, it seems clear that both censorships, in Spain and Guinea, did have a direct effect in the message transmitted. Even though The Guardian made a better effort to look for reliable informants in Guinea neighbouring countries and La Vanguardia counted on permanent correspondents in the former colony, they both align with ABC in the main ideas of their message: diplomatic crisis, country’s decadence and the precarious situation of the Spanish community are the main topics to inform about. Macías remained untouchable. Equatorial Guinea is still not mature enough, therefore mistakes are seen as part of the process of independence. No mention is made on the prison and the assassinations of the political elite. Therefore, once confirmed there were foreign journalists and foreign press reporting from Guinea during these years, the fact that they did not say a word on these issues that surely they knew about is a statement in itself: Macías censorship worked very well.

2.2.A dispersed Guinean diaspora

“My generation, that of 1968, who is already living abroad when independence arrives, appears to be, from one day to another, disconnected orphans at the age of 20; suffering to survive, trying to keep proud of a Nation that has abandoned us while Spain, our motherland, rejects us and considers us stateless, classified material. Little by little we become a dream, lost in the Western world who did not accept us but did not have the moral strength enough to really reject us”⁵⁴.

The Guinean diaspora were among the most reliable sources of information regarding Equatorial Guinea. If those living in the country were not allowed to talk, what about the ones who fled?

52 Bimbile, J. (22/04/1970) “Guinea Ecuatorial: Crisis de crecimiento”. *La Vanguardia*, p.23.

53 Bimbile, J. (15/09/1970). “Guinea Ecuatorial: Destitución del presidente del Consejo de la República”. *La Vanguardia*, p.20

54 Davies Eiso, J.M. (2009). “Guinea Ecuatorial, la generación del 68: sueño perdido, realidad recuperable”. International Conference *Between Three Continents: Rethinking Equatorial Guinea on the Fortieth Anniversary of its independence from Spain*. Hofstra University, New York.

Surprisingly, there is not a single statement from the Guinean diaspora throughout the articles analysed between 1968 and 1975. Why? Were they not willing to talk, were they not asked or may be what they said did not pass the editor's approval? When asking ourselves why the Spanish press did not inform about Macías oppression, there is an inherent question about the role of these key actors that might reveal the type of gatekeeping existing on the issue. It might happen that they were so scarce and so dispersed in the Spanish peninsula that it was simply not easy to reach them. It might also be that the lack of freedom of association made it impossible for them to stand as an activist group and attract the media attention. Or simply the journalists did not see the interest in asking them because the issue was among the last ones of the agenda-setting. In order to understand the gatekeeping that an article went through before its publication, it is crucial to look into the alternative and unofficial sources of information. Let us pay attention to the way Guineans lived in Spain between 1968 and 1975, their constraints and interests.

Donato Ndongo recalls that in the sixties and seventies there were just a few thousands Guineans living in Spain⁵⁵. Spaniards were not yet racist but rather naïve towards a black man. Children would touch their hair with astonishment and adults would somehow accept them because, although Africans, they had been raised under the Catholic and Spanish moral virtues. The general feeling towards the Guinean diaspora was that of apathy:

“The Africans of my generation found Spain closed to the outside, where many more Spaniards than I thought at first did not know that a black man existed in reality. [...] A grey and decadent Spain in which black men could only be sportsmen or bolero singers”⁵⁶.

Although there is not reliable data on the exact number of Guineans living in Spain in this period, several authors rely on the ANRD estimations of 5,000-6,000, quite a scarce number considering the hundreds of thousands that flew to Cameroon and Gabon⁵⁷. According to the World Bank, by 1974 the Guinean population was estimated at 301,000, to which to add 102,000 refugees living abroad⁵⁸. Therefore, out of the fourth of the population who flew, barely 5 per cent sought asylum in Spain. Regarding its composition, while in 1968 most of the Guineans living in Spain came as students with scholarships from the Spanish government, throughout the years the group became more heterogeneous: 54 per cent were young people; 28 per cent were of school age; 42 per cent could be described as established or integrated and 100 per cent claimed to be Christians⁵⁹. Nonetheless, the majority of them belonged to the Guinean intellectual elite⁶⁰, either because they were enrolled in the university or because they were part to the political opposition who flew after independence. Therefore, political activism against

55 There is no accurate data on the exact number. In this period of time they were first Spanish citizens (until 1968) and later stateless, so the National Institute of Statistics does not count with a specific record of the Guinean population living in the country.

56 Ndongo-Bidyogo, D. “Una nueva realidad: Los Afro Españoles”. E-Journal. *Journal of AfroEuropean Studies* (JAS). Vol.1. No.1.

57 Cronjé (1976), pp.25.; Ndongo Bidyogo, (1977), p.221;

58 Liniger-Goumaz, M. (2000) *Historical dictionary of Equatorial Guinea*. Third Edition. The Scarecrow Press, Inc. Lanham, Maryland and London. p. 117.

59 ASODEGUE, “Situación social y promoción de los guineanos en Madrid” (Madrid, 1978), quoted in Fegley, R. (1989). *Equatorial Guinea, an African tragedy*. Peter Lang publishing, New York. p.127.

60 “It was even reported that Equatoguineans refugees arriving in Spain during the 1970's spoke better Spanish than many provincial Spaniards (Klinteberg 78:68)” in Cusack, I. (1999). “Hispanic and Bantu inheritance, trauma, dispersal and return: some contributions to a sense of national identity in Equatorial Guinea”. *Nations and Nationalisms* 5 (2), p.214.

Macías could only develop in the ex-metropolis through the small group mentioned.

However, things did not turn out the way they expected. Once Equatorial Guinea became independent, the Guinean students who were living in Spain for years suddenly lost their Spanish citizenship, becoming immigrants in a place they felt their home land. With scholarships no longer granted, many of them had to quit university and their situation became critical. When Macías reformed the Constitution, he forced all Guinean students to come back threatening them with their passports withdrawal if they refused. Most of them became stateless and prosecuted.

Whereas the newspapers did address the drama of the Spaniards who came back, no information came out on the Guineans who remained in Spain. The Guinean diaspora believes that while the Spanish indifference towards the Guineans was naïve and harmless at first, it soon turned into a conscious attitude of washing their hands towards their situation. Indeed, the State did not take any measure to solve their stateless situation until 1977, under the first democratic government. The legal text states that due to their exceptional situation, all Guineans who were living in Spain before 1968 could be granted the Spanish nationality, a privilege awarded because of their Spanish citizenship status before independence⁶¹. To some of them like Donato Ndong, this measure arrived too late: “We went through such precarious situation during those years that I lost all my feeling of Spanish pride. After more than forty years in this country, I am still a black immigrant with a Guinean passport in a very racist society⁶²”.

The co-founder of the activist movement ANRD, Cruz Melchor Eya Nchama, fled to Geneva after finishing his studies in Toledo. When his Guinean passport was denied, he got an explanatory letter from the embassy that served him to receive asylum in Switzerland, a country that years later granted him the Swiss nationality⁶³.

Thus, together with the lack of recognition from their homeland and from Spain, there was also the constraint that they were not allowed to speak out loud and claim for their rights. Until 1975, there was no freedom of association in Spain. According to the Article 16 of the *Fuero de los Españoles*, Franco's regulations on civil rights (1945), association was allowed as long as its means were legal and according to the State principles. These meant that, for example, any non-Catholic religious gathering was forbidden. No labour strikes were allowed and associations with political interests were seen as subversive and against the State. Therefore, every time a group of Guineans met in the student residence Colegio Mayor Africa, they were arrested for practising illegal meetings. Cruz Melchor recalled how they were being doubly spied, both by the Spanish and the Guinean government. University was seen as a threat, as the place where the May 68 claims rooted and its students were daily repressed by the so called *the grey police*, the militarised body of Franco's police in charge of the control and prosecution of illegal activities⁶⁴. This climate also affected the Guinean students who saw their future threatened if they dared to protest too loud. I asked Cruz Melchor about the clandestine meetings held in the students residences, if any time the violation of human rights in Guinea came out. His answer was no, for

61 Royal Decree 2987/1977, October 22nd on the granting of the Spanish nationality to certain Guineans. Published in the Official State Bulletin, BOE, no. 282 of 25/11/1977, p. 25874.

62 Interview with Donato Ndong Bydiogo held in Murcia, Spain, on the 27th July, 2011.

63 Interview with Cruz Melchor Eya Nchama held in Geneva, Switzerland, on the 26th September, 2011.

64 [http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuerpo_de_Polic%C3%ADa_Armada_y_de_Tr%C3%A1fico_\(Espa%C3%B1a\)](http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuerpo_de_Polic%C3%ADa_Armada_y_de_Tr%C3%A1fico_(Espa%C3%B1a)) (visited in 22/04/2012).

a very clear reason: the Spanish students were not willing to lobby for the respect of other countries rights but for their own. Their underground fight was focused on the violation of human rights in Spain, where death penalty through *garrote vil*⁶⁵ was still a common procedure. Even though some were interested in its independence and the new born African countries, to Cruz Melchor and other Guinean students of that time, Equatorial Guinea only worried the Guineans. This is also revealed through the fact that the only series of articles published in ABC on the former colony was written by a Guinean journalist, and, as seen before, with a foreword from the editor avoiding all kind of responsibility.

One could think that as Guinean, Donato Ndongo was able to have access to the Guinean diaspora so difficult to reach for other journalists. However, he said he had to hear every day several times that Africa was not interesting, that Equatoguinean issues were not relevant enough to get into the daily agenda-setting of the newsroom⁶⁶. Thus, although it is possible to confirm that the primary sources of information on Equatorial Guinea were not easy to reach because of their dispersed and precarious situation, it is impossible to know whether any journalist attempted to do so or not, as the result remains the same: nothing was published quoting them. To this regard, the articles published in The Guardian are quite revealing, as it is the only newspaper from the ones analysed not directly controlled by the State censorship. Its correspondent, Bill Cernlyn-Jones does not mention a single Equatoguinean source when reporting about Guinea, which let us think that he might not have reached them or that they did not want to be quoted.

As Cruz Melchor Eya detailed, the Guineans who wanted to do political opposition had to leave Spain at some point. They first fled their home land and later Spain losing all feeling of patriotism in the way. This new flux of migrants took years and the first activist movement against Macías regime was founded in Geneva in 1974, when Spain was already under the official press ban on Equatorial Guinea. Unfortunately, once the Guinean diaspora was ready to denounce, no media in Spain was allowed to listen. By the end of 1974, the ANRD launched its first report, which included a list with the names of 300 Guineans executed under Macías regime since 1968⁶⁷. Despite the organisation of a press conference and the many actions taken to lobby about it, not a single word appeared in the Spanish press.

When the press ban was imposed between 1971 and 1972, no more room was available in the Spanish press for Equatorial Guinea and the diaspora felt even more silenced. Emilio Cassinello, head of the Subsaharan Africa division in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs between 1973 and 1977

65 The garrote was the principal device used for capital punishment in Spain for hundreds of years. [...] A strangulation device, the condemned was tied to a wooden stake and a fixed metal blade or spike was directed at the spinal cord to hasten the breaking of the neck. One of the last convicted to die in the Garrote Vil was Salvador Puig Antich, in March 1974, a Catalanian anarchist killed at the age of 26. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garrote_vil (visited in 22/04/2012) .

66 Interview with Donato Ndongo Bydiogo held in Murcia, Spain, on the 27th July, 2011.

67 "The first to be arrested were 11 members of the autonomous government which had ruled the country before independence, between 1964 and 1968. Subsequent purges involved 22 members or high officials of Macías's own government; nine members of the National Assembly's elected deputies; five members of the State's two provincial Councils; two of the six members of the Council of the Republic [...]; 67 civil servants; at least two dozen army and police officers and NGO's, as well as an indeterminate number of businessmen, students, farmers and traditional chiefs. Among the more prominent victims were Jesús Oworo Ndongo, minister of Justice (killed in May 1971); Expedito Momo Bocara, Ndongo's successor at the Justice ministry (killed in May 1974); and Roman Toichoa, minister of Labour, killed with Bocara in May 1974". In Baynham, S. (1980) "Equatorial Guinea: the terror and the coup". *World Today*. February 1980. Royal Institute of International Affairs. p.68

alleged that:

“It was very difficult to deal with such a political diaspora like the Guinean, because if we helped them our government could be seen in Equatorial Guinea as a supporter of the opposition in exile. We haven’t been generous with them, we could have covered them up in secret⁶⁸”.

2.3. Censorship over censorship: new press ban declared

There is no consensus on the date the press ban on Equatorial Guinea was imposed. According to Ramón García Domínguez, Spanish journalist and author of the first book published on Macías in 1977, the ban was declared on the 14th February 1972⁶⁹. He remembers it well because he was already in Malabo working as a teacher and gathering information secretly. However, the Guinean journalist Donato Ndong, in the other book published that same year on Equatorial Guinea in Spain said that the press ban was declared on the 30th January 1971, right after the large coverage the European media gave to an affair of a German woman arrested in Malabo⁷⁰. As this declaration was not made in the form of a law or decree, there is no official publication in the Spanish National Bulletin. Moreover, newspapers only refer to it when this is lifted but not when it is imposed. In the interview held with Luis María Ansón, director of ABC during the period of the research, he explained that this type of impositions arrived from one day to another through a phone call from the Ministry of Information to the chief editor. No further explanations were made just the threat of seizing the newspaper was enough to stop writing about a certain issue⁷¹. Looking at the frequency of news published on the former colony in 1971 and 1972, even though it does decrease drastically in both cases (see graph below), there are still a few articles in La Vanguardia, while in 1973 the number drops down to zero.

Although the reasons behind this decision of the Spanish government will be addressed in the following chapters, it is important to point out that imposing specific press bans on certain issues was a common feature of Franco’s regime. The other African colony, Morocco, was also subject to a two years press ban, in order to keep silence about the diplomatic crisis around the last remaining territory under Spanish rule, the so called Spanish Sahara⁷². However, the press ban on Equatorial Guinea became the longest one, lasting until October 1977 and renewed every six months. In order to better understand how the press was controlled, Emilio Cassinello recalled that, “under Franco’s regime decisions were taken like this. It was in the heart of the system. Drastic action, out, nobody talks about Guinea, we don’t want to have any more problems with Macías⁷³”.

Journalists were used to follow the directives of the State, to work under a propaganda model that turned them into mere information senders. Miguel Angel Aguilar, well known Spanish journalist who was at that time working for the Diario Madrid, the most progressive newspaper under Franco, whose offices were closed down and demolished in an act of demonstration of State power, described it as follows:

68 Interview with Emilio Cassinello held in Madrid, Spain, on the 26th October, 2011.

69 García Domínguez, R. (1977) *Guinea: Macías, la ley del silencio*. Plaza y Janés. Madrid. p.11

70 Ndong Bidyogo, D. (1977) *Historia y tragedia de Guinea Ecuatorial*. Ed.Cambio 16. Madrid. p.196.

71 Interview with Luis María Ansón held in Madrid, Spain on the 26th October, 2011.

72 The ban was imposed on the 20th July, 1972 and lasted until the 14th October 1974. Algueró Cuervo, J.I. (2006) *El Sahara y España: Claves de una descolonización pendiente*. Ediciones Idea. Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. pp. 138 & 147.

73 Interview with Emilio Cassinello held in Madrid, Spain, on the 26th October, 2011.

“Most of the journalists were professionals educated in slave methods. The question was not how to inform about a certain matter but what and how the Ministry wanted us to do it. We were used to do “anti-journalism”: when we wanted an issue to be published we would give it in a short article so it could pass the censorship. If it was still seen as a threat to the regime, we would ask our colleagues from foreign newspapers to publish it. But they also had to deal with the consequences of censorship. If *Le Monde*, the most influential foreign newspaper here, published any subversive article, the State prohibited its selling in Spain for a certain time. But sometimes it was worth for them to take the risk. Seizing a newspaper, like the case of the Spanish press, was another matter”⁷⁴.

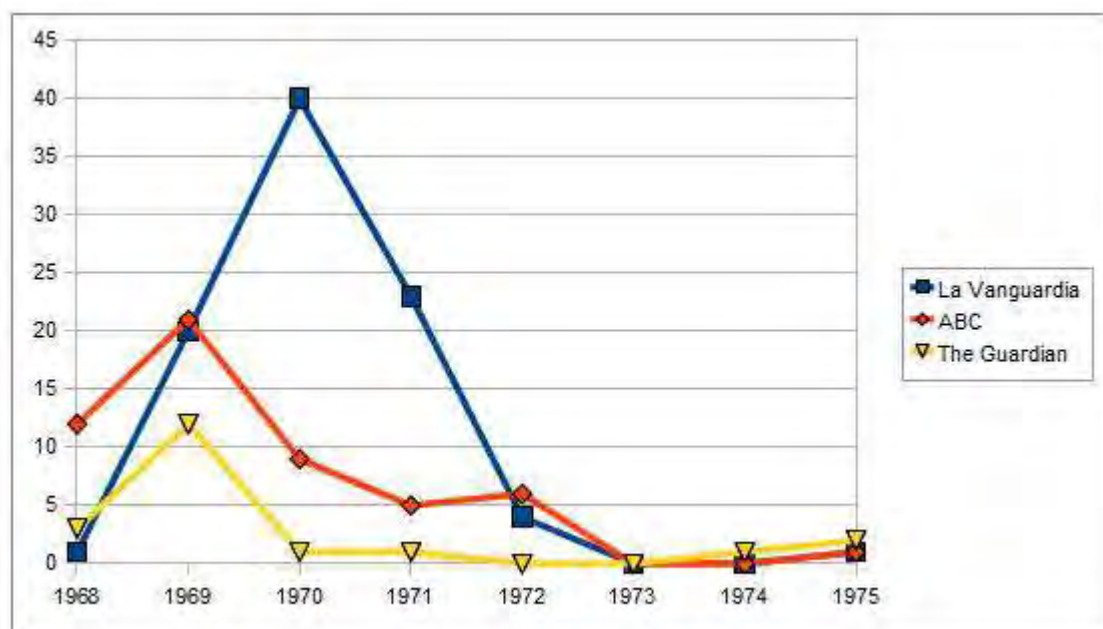
Their work was regulated according to the 1966 press law⁷⁵. Although it suppressed the previous censorship of the State, it ended up executing a much harder control over the information ready to be published. If before 1966 the news editor had to consult the Ministry of Information for its approval before writing anything for the next issue, after this date they were obliged to send first copies of the next day’s newspaper to the Ministry and wait for their approval before printing the whole run. Therefore, it was the same type of control but imposed in a different way.

In such a difficult scenario, we can affirm that whereas the State censorship could somehow be skipped through an alternative way of treating the information, a specific press ban like Equatorial Guinea’s was a direct attack impossible to avoid. As a consequence, the graph below shows how ABC and The Guardian follow the same descending trend on the frequency of articles published year by year. The two or three articles registered in 1974 and 1975 for each of them are however different: while The Guardian started to inform from Geneva about the first denouncing reports of the ANRD, the ones from ABC refer to brief notes on commercial and educational agreements between the two governments. *La Vanguardia*’s coverage is by all means the one that best shows the effect of the ban. If by 1970, this newspaper paid a large interest on Guinean issues, in 1971, the trend is already negative and by 1972 it drops down drastically to almost zero.

74 Interview with Miguel Angel Aguilar held in Madrid on the 28th October 2012.

75 According to article no. 12, “Newspapers and magazines have to deposit ten copies of the publication half an hour prior to its circulation, signed by the Director or the person in charge”. Ley 14/1966, B.O.E. Jefatura del Estado, no.67, March 19th 1966, pp. 3310-3315

FREQUENCY OF ARTICLES PUBLISHED ON EQUATORIAL GUINEA
12/10/1968 - 12/12/1975



Looking at these results, a question easily turns out: if by 1971 the Spanish press was already informing less and less on Equatorial Guinea, why the need of a specific press ban?. As pointed out before in the BBC interview with Macías, even in 1975, when absolutely nothing appeared on his country in the Spanish press, the president still criticised the Spanish government for implementing a media campaign against him. It seems that no matter what Franco's regime did to calm Macías anger, his reaction would still be the same, that of an anti-colonialist attitude towards anything that symbolized the ex-metropolis power. Therefore, the following chapters focus on the three main arguments to explain the reason behind the press ban declaration, a sub question directly linked to the impossibility of the Spanish media to address Macías violent regime.

2.4. Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to figure out why the Spanish press informed less than expected about the former colony and its dictator Macías Nguema in the first half of the seventies. It is less than expected if we compare it with the other Spanish colony in Africa, Morocco, whose articles counted in thousands in ABC and La Vanguardia in the same period in which those of Equatorial Guinea barely got to a hundred in the peak year. It is also less than expected according to the reports published on Macías regime years later, denouncing the responsibility of the Spanish media on the legitimization of Macías crimes. This assumption is, in all cases, directly linked to the Spanish government declaration of the press ban, alleging that the Spanish State was the ultimate actor to be blamed for this international silence. However, there are three years between Equatorial Guinea's independence and the ban in which the Spanish media does not denounce Macías's arbitrary executions or the large number of Guineans starting to flee the country. Why? The question

remains.

As explained before, on one hand, censorship in Guinea avoided foreign journalists to seek for informants in the country itself. Exceptions like that of La Vanguardia prove that this ban was avoidable if the journalist did not criticise Macías at all. The newspaper did made an extraordinary effort others did not which shows a clear interest in the former colony. However, for the purpose of this research, the question gains even more relevance when we see that despite the monthly article published on Equatorial Guinea, not a single line refers to Macías violation of human rights. On the contrary, it does defend him most of the times. Secondly, another major reason for this attitude of the press could be related to the stateless situation of the Guinean diaspora in Spain. Indeed it was very difficult for any journalist to seek for reliable sources if they were hidden and feared reprisals if they talked. But again, an exception arises if we take into account that among these Guineans there were also journalists working in Spanish newspapers, like Donato Ndongo in ABC. As pointed out before, there is no doubt he knew where to find his compatriots, and that he was involved in the political movements against Macías. Therefore, the fact that he did not mention them let us think of a lack of interest from the chief editor, not from himself. In this sense, the analysis of The Guardian as a foreign newspaper not directly affected by the Spanish State censorship reveals that even though information could be found through non official sources, this was not used and their informants not quoted.

In conclusion, behind these reasons, all of them valid in terms of how information is gathered and transmitted, there is a last and most important argument related to the media's decision on what is interesting for their public. Referring to Noam Chomsky's propaganda model, media always tend to rely first on official sources even if they have the chance not to do so. These official sources are the ones to determine whose victims are worth informing about and who are not, in a highly political dichotomization dependant on domestic power interests⁷⁶. According to his theory of media's *manufacturing consent*:

News from primary establishment sources meets one major filter requirement and is readily accommodated by the mass media. Messages from and about dissidents and weak, unorganized individuals and groups, domestic and foreign, are at initial disadvantage in sourcing costs and credibility, and they often do not comport with the ideology or interests of the gatekeepers and other powerful parties that influence the filtering process⁷⁷.

Being the Spanish media of the seventies much more accommodated to official sources because of the State censorship, it is presumable there was no intention at all to invest time and money in searching for alternative voices. Journalists like Miguel Angel Aguilar did specify this very clearly when talking about the slave way of doing journalism in Spain.

76 Chomsky N. & S.Herman, E. (1994). *Manufacturing consent. The political economy of the mass media*. Vintage. p.35

77 Chomsky N. & S.Herman, E. (1994). *Ibid*. p.31.

CHAPTER 3

REASONS BEHIND THE PRESS BAN

There is no official statement on why the Spanish government declared the press ban on Equatorial Guinea. The information I could gather came from interviewees who suffered it, mainly the Spanish journalists and the Guinean diaspora, through their opinions and speculations on a measure they all considered excessive. Scholars as well as these informants tend to agree on three main arguments to explain this authoritarian reaction of Franco's regime: the first one, promoted by the ANRD in Geneva, argued that the ban was imposed to silence and protect the economic investments of politicians and businessmen related to Franco such as his minister of Presidency, Luis Carrero Blanco; the second one, in line with the diplomatic version given by members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in private, established that the measure was taken to protect the Spanish community living in the former colony from the anti-colonial actions implemented by Macías; and lastly, there is a third reason related to the feeling of shame the Spanish government had by failing twice in its attempt to place a faithful and friendly leader in the new Equatoguinean State. On one hand, the elections did not turn out as expected and none of the leaders supported by the metropolis won. On the other, the coup d'état led by the the Guinean minister of Foreign Affairs and supported from Madrid did not succeed. The following chapters aim to dig into these three arguments offering new findings that will hopefully bring light into an issue that, still today, after four decades, remains uncertain.

3.1 Guinea, the Spanish fief we ought to preserve

3.1.1 A tiny but profitable colony

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the four thousand kilometers between Madrid and Malabo were not an obstacle for the export of timber, cocoa and coffee from the African colony to Spain. Being the metropolis the major consignee of this production, its exploitation experienced a huge increase since Franco took over after the civil war in 1939. The forbidden colony of Equatorial Guinea suddenly became highly valuable for an impoverished Spain who could not count on the rest of Europe for the imports of basic goods. In the forties, most of the coffee consumed was Guinean, as well as palm oil and manioc, and the new State encouraged the permanence of Spanish settlers in the colony so to promote the production and export of timber and cocoa at a larger scale. A decree approved on the 17th July 1948 granted up to 30 hectares to all the Spaniards working for the colonial Administration for more than ten years and in December of that same year, a new law established the free concession of 20 hectares to all Spanish families living in the colony for more than fifteen years⁷⁸. In 12 years, from 1936 to 1948, coffee production multiplied by six up to 6.000.000 tons, most of it absorbed by the Spanish market. Regarding the manioc, its production went from barely 8.000 tons in 1948 up to 20.000 tons in just one year, again, most of it for Spanish consumption⁷⁹. Moreover, Equatorial Guinea became the world third largest per capita cocoa producer, and in the fifties, the country accounted for 2,4% of the world production⁸⁰.

78 Ndongso Bidyogo, D.(1977) *Historia y tragedia de Guinea Ecuatorial*. Editorial Cambio 16. Madrid. pp.61-62.

79 Ndongso Bidyogo, D. (1977), *ibid*, p.62.

80 Liniger-Goumaz, M. (2000) *Historical dictionary of Equatorial Guinea*. Third Edition. The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

However, the industry that developed the most was timber, whose production multiplied by four over thirty years (1936-1967). These positive results led to the settlement of more Spanish businessmen in the colony which in the period mentioned founded 275 new companies⁸¹. Among them, there was the most important timber company since the 19th century, ALENA, connected with the *Banco Exterior de España* and of which the main stockholder was said to be the Spanish minister of Presidency, Luis Carrero Blanco⁸².

In 1968, by the time of independence, Guinean exports, although never crucial for the Spanish economy, were still highly profitable. Timber, cocoa and coffee production had all reached its peak during the previous years, when the colony was declared a province of Spain. In order to maintain this favourable relationship, the Constitutional Conference included commercial agreements that: on one hand, committed the Spanish State to buy most of the Guinean production; and on the other, the Guinean State to sell it almost exclusively to Spain. Under this assistance treaty, the former metropolis was to purchase at least 6,000 tons of coffee per year and only the surplus could be sold elsewhere. The same happened for cocoa, to which Spain agreed to buy 20,000 tons and for timber, with a commitment of 215,000 tons per year. The extra stock usually went to the United Kingdom, West Germany, The Netherlands or the United States⁸³. Both the Guineans and the Spaniards attending the Conference were interested in keeping protected the prices of these three products, as it has been done since decades before. The main difference relied on the beneficiaries of these privileged policies. Until 1968, most of the landowners and businessmen were white Spaniards living in the colony. Although there were important Guinean producers like the so called *Fernandinos*⁸⁴, most of the profit ended in white hands, as in the rest of the African colonies. Already in his election campaign, Macías called for the empowerment of the local cooperatives, thus, transferring these commercial advantages onto the Guineans. After the 1969 diplomatic crisis, the withdrawal of most of the Spanish businessmen led to a drastic reduction of the financial aid received from the Spanish government. It could be said that the truly independence arrived then, when the new leader had to look for investors elsewhere.

3.1.2 Equatorial Guinea's economic independence

As mentioned before, by 1968 the Spanish balance of trade was not at all dependent on Guinean imports. Although cocoa was only imported from the former colony, Guinean coffee represented 27% of the total imports, being the South American countries the largest importers⁸⁵. And despite the establishment of the quotas explained before, some production like timber did never again reach

Lanham, Maryland and London. pp. 85-86.

81 Carnero Lorenzo, F. & Díaz de la Paz, A. (2009) "Guinea Ecuatorial en la estrategia autárquica del franquismo", *Between three continents. Rethinking Equatorial Guinea in the fortieth anniversary of its independence from Spain*. Hofstra University Conference. New York. pp.5-8.

82 Liniger-Goumaz, M. (2000). *Supra*. p.26.

83 Liniger-Goumaz, M.(2000). *Historical dictionary of Equatorial Guinea*. Third Edition. The Scarecrow Press, Inc. Lanham, Maryland and London. pp. 85-86.

84 The indigenous group of Fernandinos or *Los Fernandinos*, were mixed race descendants of the pre-existing indigenous population of Spanish Guinea originating from the island of Fernando Po (modern day Bioko Island). This group consisted of mulattos of female Bubi and white male Spaniard parentage, and were part of the Emancipados social class. The other Fernandinos of Equatorial Guinea descended from English speaking freed slaves of Sierra Leone and Liberia. Members of these communities were responsible for building and expanding the cocoa farming industry on Fernando Po during the 1880s and 1890s. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fernandino_peoples (visited in 10/05/2012)

85 Ekong Andeme, P. (2010). *El proceso de descolonización de Guinea Ecuatorial*. Ed.Star Ibérica. Madrid. p.319.

the results of the sixties. When independence arrived and most of the Spaniards left, the production started to fail due to the lack of technicians. After March 1969, much of the land was abandoned because their owners did not want to or did not get the visa to come back to Guinea. A year later, when the diplomatic tensions calmed down, Macías had already distributed most of the Spanish exploitations to Fang officials and large firms like ALENA had gone bankrupted. He started to implement measures towards the fully economic independence of Guinea such as a new worker's statute which proclaimed that at least 70% of any private company's personnel had to be Guinean⁸⁶. The relationships between the two countries were no longer as smooth as before and the feeling of distrust was present in every agreement.

The General Archives of Franco's administration still preserve some examples of these tense relationship: for instance, in January 1972, Fernando Morán, General Director of Foreign Affairs in the Spanish Ministry sent a letter to the president of the Spanish Delegation for the Guinean Coffee in which he denounced that in one of the memo sent to the Spanish coffee producers in Guinea there were, written by hand, rude and unfriendly comments against Equatorial Guinea. He called for caution saying that this is not the way to solve the problems between the two countries and the representative of this office agrees on the relevance of maintaining a good relation (see annex 1). In the same issue, there is vast correspondence between 1971 and 1976 from the Coffee Delegation in Madrid to the National Bank of Deposit and Development of Guinea complaining about pending debts or the poor and fermented condition in which the coffee arrived to the Peninsula. These letters show, on one hand, that commercial transactions still existed after independence and on the other, that the misunderstandings happened quite often. According to Emilio Cassinello:

"Eighty per cent of my time was devoted to Equatorial Guinea, sending weekly notes to the Spanish ambassador with all kind of instructions but most importantly, as a psychological support in the difficult moments we were going through with the former colony"⁸⁷.

These hard moments both Cassinello and Morán mention are related to the fact that after Macías declared himself president for life and accumulated all power in 1971, he began to implement a communist ideology whose extremism was very much in line with Franco's but in the opposite side, as a way to break off with Spain.

As pointed out in the historical background, Macías began to establish commercial agreements with the Soviet Union, China, the United States and Cuba. The agreements arrived in different forms of assistance and all of them aimed to achieve total independence from the former colony. For instance, the Spanish teachers and priests who left in 1969 were replaced by Cubans and the technicians by Chinese ones. Regarding the three main sources of production, the exploitation of cocoa and coffee was in its majority controlled by the Guinean State, which in order to get enough workforce after the exodus of the Nigerians⁸⁸, approved a plan in 1973 to recruit 60,000 national workers from Rio Muni and Fernando Po as free labour for its nationalised plantations⁸⁹. For the

86 Bimbile, J. (13/11/1970). "Nuevo Estatuto de los trabajadores: el setenta por ciento de los empleados ha de ser guineo". *La Vanguardia*. p.44.

87 Interview with Emilio Cassinello held in Madrid on October 24th, 2011.

88 Much of the labour on Fernando Po's coffee, cocoa and timber plantations were Nigerian by birth. Under the Spanish colonisation and due to the lack of workforce in the island, the Spanish administration recruited hundreds of thousands of Nigerians. Of the island's population between 1958 and 1966 of 64,000, approximately 40,000 were Nigerians. Most were recruited contract labourers but some have settled permanently in the island. Akinyemi, B. (1970), "Nigeria and Fernando Po: 1958-1966, The politics of irridentism". *African Affairs*, Vol. 69, No. 276, p.236. Oxford University Press. UK.

89 Cronjé, S. (1976), "Equatorial Guinea: the forgotten dictatorship". *Anti-Slavery Society*, Research Report No.2,

exploitation of timber in Río Muni, French companies such as S.F. Des Dragages or the Société Forestière Río Muni obtained a 150,000 hectare concession for ten years in 1971⁹⁰. Several scholars agree that behind these companies was a highly appreciated man for Macías, Antonio García-Trevijano. Together with Luis Carrero Blanco, they appear as the two Spanish men with largest interests in the former colony after independence. Although the Spanish government reduced much of its economic influence in Guinea, there were particular investors that did not and their relationship with the Spanish political elite might have been crucial for the press ban imposition.

3.1.3 The private interests of Spanish businessmen

Franco's *alter ego*, the minister of Presidency and later Vice-president Luis Carrero Blanco, was for decades Head of the General Directorate for Morocco and the colonies. He visited Equatorial Guinea for the first time in 1927, and since then, he always showed a personal attachment to the African colony until his assassination by the Basque terrorist group ETA on the 20th December 1973. Whereas there is no doubt of his influence in the political sphere, there is no clear evidence about his economic interests in Equatorial Guinea. In order to keep the colony under control, he was the driving force behind the declaration of Guinea as a Spanish autonomy in 1962. Years later, when it was clear that the country would become independent, he trained and supported one of the candidates for the Guinean elections, the conservative and faithful Bonifacio Ondó Edú, killed by Macías months after his victory. After independence, he still dominated the Spanish politics towards Guinea, most of the times in confrontation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fernando Maria Castiella. For instance, Carrero Blanco was supposed to have taken some actions against Macías in the months after his election, through the reduction of the Spanish aid budget previously agreed in the Constitutional Conference⁹¹. Moreover, after the failed coup d'état supported by Castiella, he could have been responsible for the forced evacuation of the thousands of Spaniards living in the ex-colony in 1969.

However, in terms of economic profit, there are different opinions among the interviewees consulted. According to Luis María Ansón, former director of ABC, who knew him personally, he was the most faithful person to Franco and he would not dare to risk the regime's stability with his personal ambitions:

"I don't think Carrero had economic interests in Guinea. He got involved in the colony because Franco asked him to. He was absolutely faithful to Franco, he never acted on his own. Most probably he supported the Guinean independence because Franco was at the end of his life and did not want to have any problems internationally⁹²".

This same opinion is shared by Antonio García Trevijano, Macías lawyer and closest assistant. In his defence against those who denounced his doubtful businesses, he accused the regime and the interests of many people related to Carrero Blanco. He believed that although Carrero had a huge influence in the economy of the colony, his strong Catholic faith kept him away from illegal investments and large benefits:

"Under the colonisation, Fernando Po became a domain of Carrero Blanco and other friends of Franco's

London. p.19.

90 Liniger-Goumaz, M. (2000) *Historical dictionary of Equatorial Guinea*. Third Edition. The Scarecrow Press, Inc. Lanham, Maryland and London. p. 460

91 Interview with Cruz Melchor Eya Nchama, Geneva, 26th September, 2011.

92 Interview with Luis María Ansón held in Madrid on the 24th October, 2011.

regime. These ones had huge interests on timber and cocoa during the colonisation. The classified material declared on Guinea was decided by the Government after several reports of corruption by former colonisers and military men. It was declared in order to hide this type of businesses. They were all running and gaining profit from their exploitations also after the independence. Macías did not touch anybody and their campaigns against Macías were disgusting⁹³.

Surprisingly, the same opinion was shared by the former Spanish minister of Foreign Affairs, Fernando M^a Castiella, who despite the bad relationship he had with Carrero Blanco, in an interview held with the journalist Ramón García Domínguez in 1976, he assured that he never had any dirty businesses in Guinea⁹⁴.

On the contrary, according to the Guinean diaspora and several international scholars like Max Liniger-Goumaz, Carrero Blanco owned the majority of the capital from the Casas Fuertes, as main companies like ALENA or INASA were called, and controlled the Spanish Cocoa and Coffee Trade Union (*Sindicato del Cacao y del Café*), through which he received five pesetas per kilo⁹⁵. Whereas according to Antonio García Trevijano, all these companies continued their activities during the press ban and thanks to it, to Liniger and Ndongo, most of them interrupted its activities because of the lack of workforce and the lack of control⁹⁶.

After the independence, all businessmen and investors were willing to continue its commercial activities in Equatorial Guinea. However, almost all of them encountered many difficulties due to the political instability and the tensions between the two countries. Most of them left the country in 1969 and only the most powerful ones were capable run their businesses from Spain. Several import records consulted show coffee consignments registered in July 1975 under the names of Spanish companies like CEGUI⁹⁷, Casa Mallo and Elvira García Sanchez. There is no further information available whether these companies were partly owned by the Spanish State. The small investors did not survive and had to renounce to their possessions without receiving any compensation from the government.

By 1968 there were around 500 Spanish companies that ran 32,000 hectares of cocoa, 9,300 of coffee, 6,200 of palm trees, 1,500 of banana trees, 12,000 hectares of timber and hundreds of farms, pasture and other sort of farming. They possessed 1,400,000 square meter of plots and 320,000 square meters in buildings. All these accounted a total sum of around 11,000 million pesetas (66 million Euros)⁹⁸. These figures were provided by the CEIA, Comunidad de Españoles con Intereses en África, a society or club (associations were forbidden) founded in 1969 by the hundreds of small businessmen who came back hoping for compensations that never arrived. They developed a successful lobby and their complaints were widely covered by the media as a way to denounce Macías oppression against them. ABC wrote a full report about the Spaniards who came back from

93 Interview with Antonio García Trevijano held in Madrid on November 2nd, 2011.

94 "I am one of those who might have many reasons to go against Carrero, because he was a man that stamped on me whenever he could. However, I do not believe in the accusations against him about dirty businesses in Guinea", in García Domínguez, (1977) *Guinea: Macías, la ley del silencio*. Plaza & Janés, Barcelona. p.223.

95 Liniger-Goumaz, M. (2000) *Historical dictionary of Equatorial Guinea*. Third Edition. The Scarecrow Press, Inc. Lanham, Maryland and London. p.75.

96 Liniger-Goumaz, M. (2000). *Ibid*. p.26

97 "Compañía Española del Golfo de Guinea. Spanish company, financed by the Banco Español de Crédito, owner of an oil palm plantation in Mangola, near Concepción, with 322 hectares producing 3,600 ton-clusters a year. Besides coffee plantations, it also owned a small cattle ranch near San Carlos, in Bioko island". Liniger-Goumaz, M. (2000). *Supra*, p.80

98 <http://www.asodegue.org/hdojmc61.htm> (visited in 08/05/2011).

Equatorial Guinea, explaining in a nostalgic way, how all of them lost their possessions when the independence arrived:

“A hundred and ninety years of sovereignty ended all of the sudden leaving the Spanish settlers with a terrible feeling of loneliness. [...] Everything is abandoned. Out of the 200 large and medium-sized businesses, barely a few of the latter are still running⁹⁹”.

According to this group, if the government “sold” Guinea to the Guineans they should also mediate in the sale of the Spanish properties protecting the businesses and compensating the families that had to come back. Instead, they still owned land they could not work on, which did not produce anything and no one in Guinea cared about. Despite Macías constant threats, almost none of these properties were expropriated. This goes in line with García Trevijano’s opinion that Macías never wanted the Spanish businessmen to leave the country, as he feared the lack of workforce and know-how their departure would lead to. And he was right. As pointed out before, cocoa, coffee and timber production drastically dropped down when the Spaniards left. The new investors coming in where no longer interested in these products because the benefit of its production, scarce and of medium quality, did not compensate the costs of bringing in cheap labour, always the major problem of this tiny country.

According to the controversial lawyer, the Spanish politicians and wealthy businessmen were not so interested in the profit from this traditional production but in the control of the financial structure to be built after independence. An example of this quest for an advantageous position in the new born State is the foundation of the Guinean National Bank. Through a society called “Finguinea”, the Spanish agronomist Francisco Paesa Sanchez together with two other partners created a whole machinery to run the project which turned out to be a swindle supported by Macías who wanted a bank to issue Guinean currency and gain independence from the Spanish peseta. In the report distributed by the Guinean diaspora years later, Antonio García Trevijano was accused of being involved in this economic issue as in many others by which apparently he gained large sums of money. Published in its full length by the magazine *Gaceta Ilustrada*, owned by the same editorial group as *La Vanguardia* (Grupo Godó), the report lists 52 projects, decrees, laws, agreements, societies and commercial transactions made by García Trevijano for the government of Guinea. It said that he was the one to draw the statutes of the National Bank of Deposit and Development of which he was the major stakeholder; also responsible of the minting of commemorative Guinean coins through which he received a large commission; and lastly, very much involved in the private commercial activities of several shops and businesses under the name of “Simonet”, his French sister-in-law¹⁰⁰.

In his defence, García Trevijano assumed all responsibility in the foundation of the Guinean legal system: its Constitution (only the first one), a general development plan for the country and the statutes and decree to approve a National Bank, etc. He denied having received any money back and declared that all was done for the purpose of providing Equatorial Guinea with a complete independence from Spain. In a confidential report of January 15th, 1969 sent to José Nsue, Guinean minister of Education, he offered Macías an alternative solution to Paesa’s project for the foundation of the National Bank:

“I want to inform Macías of the fabulous price the cocoa is getting on the free markets at the London, New York and Chicago exchanges. The Biafran war, which has destroyed the crops of Nigeria, the second producer

99 Gómez Figueroa, J. (14/10/1971) “Españoles de Guinea”. *ABC*. p.116.

100 *La Gaceta Ilustrada*. (24/10/1976) “Guinea, texto íntegro del Dossier Trevijano”. pp.74-81.

in the world, and the floods in Ghana and Brazil, first and third world producers, had provoked a rise in cocoa prices similar to that of 1954, more than double the normal market price. This means that the price the Spanish Cocoa Union pays you will be less than half of what you can obtain in the international market. This confirms that the solution or advice I gave the President was right. Today you can, using intelligence and agility, obtain foreign exchange and gold by selling your cocoa on credit at the New York exchange [...]. If this operation is well executed, negotiating beforehand with the Spanish government for freedom of commerce with regard to cocoa, and given the figures that you have sent me respecting your production of cocoa, I believe that this year the State of Guinea would be able to accumulate gold or foreign exchange reserves approximately equivalent to seven million pesetas. With this reserve, your national bank could begin operations and could issue your own money, beginning the process of your economic emancipation”¹⁰¹.

Truthful or not, what seems plausible is that García Trevijano’s involvement in Equatorial Guinea pursued a different objective than that of the other Spaniards. As a republican, this was part of his personal fight against Franco, a way to weaken the power of a dictatorship he was an activist against. Therefore, there is no possible link between the State press ban and his actions in Guinea as to the Spanish government he was seen as a Macías supporter and his activities were not at all legitimised. It is interesting to add that one of García Trevijano’s major features is the high sense he has of himself. Some of the interviewees defined him as a mad man “too much in love of himself”. In the interview I held with him, this feature of him came out rapidly as he described how the Guineans still see him as a God, as a divinity. Whether or not this strong personality dominated Macías decisions is not clear enough. However it is understandable that, to the Guinean opposition, his charisma could have had an extraordinary effect in the Guinean leader, allowing him to do whatever he wanted at whichever the price.

3.2. Mouths shut: we have to protect our people

When the press ban was declared between 1971 and 1972, the Government alleged it was done to protect the Spaniards and the Spanish interests in Equatorial Guinea¹⁰². Apparently, the news published in Spain since the independence of the former colony led to reprisals on the Spanish community in Equatorial Guinea. In the six months following independence, 90 per cent of the Spaniards left the country. By the time of the ban, barely 500 Spaniards lived in Equatorial Guinea. Although this low sum weakens the official argument for a total silence on Macías regime of terror, Spaniards who lived in the former colony during these years assured that indeed, Macías reacted with extreme force to every article published abroad against him. This chapter aims to provide an insight into the validity of this hypothesis looking at the Spanish community living in Equatorial Guinea between 1969 and 1976.

3.2.2 The situation of the Spaniards in the former colony

According to all the information gathered, the reprisals towards the Spanish community were always in the form of expulsions, threats and limitations to their daily life, but never through violence as it occurred against the Guineans. Donato Ndonga considered that there was not a single incident against the white community because Macías knew that any attack against them would lead to an international rejection¹⁰³. Nonetheless, as the journalist from La Vanguardia explained, the

101 Gard, R.C. (1974) “Equatorial Guinea: Machinations in founding a National Bank”. *Munger Africana Library Notes*. October. Issue 27, pp.34. California Institute of Technology.

102 Ndonga Bidyogo, D. (1977) . *Historia y tragedia de Guinea Ecuatorial*. Editorial Cambio 16. Madrid. p.196.; García Domínguez, Ramón.(1977) *Guinea: Macías, la ley del silencio*. Plaza & Janés, Barcelona. p.219.

103 Ndonga Bidyogo, D. (1977) *Historia y tragedia de Guinea Ecuatorial*. Editorial Cambio 16. Madrid. p.160.

prosecution against the Spaniards was a constant feature:

“This is how we are living for one year already: with press, radio and TV censored, no freedom of expression, constant control on the correspondence, isolated from the world, our luggage, wallets, pockets and clothes checked on every move by boat or plane¹⁰⁴.”

Target of his discourses against colonialism, the Spaniards in Equatorial Guinea had to stand words like “these men with traitorous hands hired by imperialist forces¹⁰⁵,” and non-stop rumours around future expulsions.

The most prosecuted communities by Macías regime were the Catholic priests and the Spanish businessmen. Amador Martín del Molino, one of the Claretian missionaries who lived in Bioko island from 1951 until 1973, explained that the Spaniards, as in America, tend to mix themselves with the Africans, something that radically changed after independence when they were arrested for any rumour going around against the head of State. He confirmed that there was a harsh repression against the Spaniards for any article published abroad. However, he wanted to point out the difference between the citizens which whom they worked and the men in power. As 90 per cent of the population was Catholic by the time of the independence, people protected the Spanish priests, mostly the Bubi in the island, as they feared the excessive power the Fang from the mainland could exert over them if the church left¹⁰⁶.

According to the mentioned memories of the other Claretian, Catholic priests, Spanish or Guineans, were prosecuted for any slight matter, not only after the criticisms thrown in the Spanish press. Macías saw in the Catholic church the latent presence of Franco’s colonialism, a subversive force that threatened his power. In his memories, he gave a detailed description of the most important events related to the Catholic church before and after independence. He described that, while before 1968 the Claretian mission was the largest and most important of all, ten years later only six fathers remained in the whole country. Expulsions were ordered for many different reasons such as not singing the national hymn in the mess, baptising under Spanish names instead of Bubi or Fang ones or denouncing polygamy in a sermon. As he related:

“The situation in Guinea went worse after 1970. A real prosecution started. Like a slow but constant dripping, it ended up with the expulsion of almost all the foreign Claretians. And they all left for reasons not related to health or change of destination”¹⁰⁷.

The prosecution was much more violent against the Guinean Claretians than the ones from Spain. Although many of them were put in jail, they were released few days later after another Spaniard had paid the fine.

This was not the case for the Claretians in Rio Muni, who were all Guineans and had been imprisoned at some point. Anacleto Sima, who later became bishop in Bata, had to be treated several times in Spain for the tortures he suffered in prison. But the one who suffered the most was a father who had studied journalism in Spain and who was often accused of the information published in the Spanish press. He was put in jail in the last days of Macías regime and received

104 Bimbile, J. (19/10/1970) “La incómoda situación de los españoles: Gobierno y país sufren complejo de golpe de Estado”. *La Vanguardia*. p.19

105 Bimbile, J. *La Vanguardia*, *ibid*.

106 Interview with Amador Martín del Molino held in January 2012.

107 This transcript belongs to a confidential document to which the researcher had access to. Following the will of the author, no further references are provided on it.

such a harsh beating that for long time people thought he was dead. This is one of the two examples the document gives about the reprisals due to information in the press. The other one is about an article published in the magazine of the World Council of Churches in 1975. Although it had nothing to do with the Spanish press (under the ban in that time), all Catholic priests were asked to meet Macías in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He threatened them of immediate expulsion if they continued giving “false information about the violation of human rights in his country”. This organisation had its headquarters in Geneva, where the Guinean activist movement ANRD against Macías was founded. By 1975, its presence in the European media was increasing and reports were published denouncing massive killings in Equatorial Guinea. These two cases give an idea of Macías’ obsession with the image given by international media about him. However, it also shows the Spanish government ban’s ineffectiveness as Spanish priests continued to be threatened anyhow because Macías did not make the difference between Spanish or European press.

Regarding the second group, the businessmen, its majority where colonials who lived in Equatorial Guinea for decades. According to the Claretian father, Macías developed a campaign against them as a way to reinforce his anti-colonial discourse, an opinion shared by Emilio Cassinello. He recalled how the Spanish business elite had to satisfy Macías’ eccentricities, “even obliged to bring fresh fruit to the presidential palace every day¹⁰⁸”. On the contrary, Antonio García Trevijano, believes he did not want the Spanish community to leave the country. According to him, the Spanish businessmen with interests in Equatorial Guinea developed a very nasty campaign against him within an out of the African country¹⁰⁹. What is clear is that 1969’s coup d’état left the former colony with almost no Spanish professionals or entrepreneurs. An article in *La Vanguardia* explains that up to 3.000 visa requests were denied to many of these businessmen who wanted to come back and that by 1971 barely 15 businessmen still resided in Guinea. The attacks of the government to this group usually came in the form of verbal accusations or through measures that hardened their working conditions such as an increase in the tax pressure¹¹⁰, but, as the missionaries, they did not suffer the violent regime Guineans did.

In his book, Ramón García Domínguez gives another explanation to the sudden evacuation of the Spanish community. He describes how they were forced by the Spanish embassy to leave the country at the same time as the Guardia Civil (Spanish Police force) and that behind this action was Carrero Blanco, minister of Presidency, who saw in the coup d’état the opportunity to asphyxiate the Guinean economy by repatriating as much professionals and businessmen as possible. He also shares García Trevijano’s opinion that Macías did not want the Spaniards to leave as he was aware of the impact this evacuation could have in the economy. As detailed before, in the following years, cocoa, coffee and timber production drastically dropped down and the lack of doctors, teachers and other professionals left the country in complete paralysis. Although Carrero Blanco never accepted Macías victory in the elections prior to independence, it is hard to believe he worked out such a plan. Parallel to the damage caused to the Guinean economy, it also harmed the Spanish imports, leading to the close down of important Spanish export companies like ALENA, who’s timber production failed so rapidly that in 1971 announced its suspension with a total loss of 127 million peseta (762,000€).

Taking into account that by the time of the press ban, the Spanish government had already forced

108 Transcript of the interview with Emilio Cassinello held in Madrid, on October 24th, 2011.

109 Interview with Antonio García Trevijano held in Madrid, on November 2nd, 2011.

110 Bimbile, J. (05/08/1970) “¿Matarán la gallina de los huevos de oro? Es posible que el coste de este impuesto supere largamente el valor de las fincas afectadas”. *La Vanguardia*. p.14.

almost all the Spaniards to leave Equatorial Guinea, the argument of their protection gets weaker. It also reflects an interesting paradox between the State's will to care about them while they lived in the former colony and the lack of attention they received when they came back to Spain. Many articles published in 1972 show their outrage to the State who, in their opinion, did not compensate them for the loss they suffered when they left Guinea.

Overall, it seems as if there were stronger reasons for the Government to declare the silence on Guinea than the protection of the small remaining community. History shows that, while personal relationships between Spaniards and Guineans deteriorated rapidly, the economic interest of both Governments remained. To Spain, losing its leadership in the timber and cocoa exports was much more a matter of hegemony in the region than a question of money. It was the last piece of the former colony that lasted under its control. To Equatorial Guinea, maintaining a certain dependence on the ex-metropolis was crucial because of the lack of workforce and professionals the country always suffered from. This dependence forced both dictators to tolerate each other: Franco had to avoid all dialectic conflict against his Guinean counterpart and Macías never overpassed the limits in his reprisals against the Spanish community.

3.2.3. Ramón García Domínguez, two years reporting from the regime of terror

From October 1970 until the end of 1972, the Spanish journalist Ramón García lived and worked as a teacher in Malabo. He gathered documents, interviews and personal experiences of the victims of Macías regime, valuable information that he published in a book in January 1977, when the press ban was lifted. He was the first writer to dedicate a full book on Macías violation of human rights, with the added fact that he lived in first person everything he wrote about. Nonetheless, it is still surprising how, despite the large coverage he got in the Spanish press, none of the book reviews reflect its content in detail, none of them include more than a few sentences on the attack of García Domínguez against Macías and his regime¹¹¹. This caution could be explained through the argument that despite the lifting of the ban in October 1976, journalists were asked to remain quiet on Macías, an unofficial censorship the second part of this study will focus on.

In an interview held with him in Valladolid (Spain) in October 2011, he wanted to make very clear that denouncing the situation in Equatorial Guinea was not the first reason that took him there. As the rest of the Spanish public opinion, he was not aware of the drama the Guinean population was suffering because, as mentioned before, all information published on the press was related to Macías unpredictable management of his political and economic affairs. His idea was to work as a teacher in a Catholic school, together with his wife, filling the gap of those who left a year before. However, once there, he felt the need to communicate about something considered taboo for the Spanish media, a hard work he developed in parallel to his official one:

"I could not understand why the Spanish public opinion completely ignored the cruelty of the tyrant who was ruling the country, a cynic and brutal man that had been assassinating his people in cold blood for years, at all costs, absorbed by a crazy self-defence obsession¹¹²".

Among the best informants he had was Macías' son, Teonesto, one of his pupils at school, who, ignoring his teacher's secret, used to tell him stories from the presidential palace such as how the

111 Half a column review in ABC, Tuesday 5th April, 1977. p.48

112 García Domínguez, R. (1977) *Guinea: Macías, la ley del silencio*. Plaza & Janés, Barcelona. p.16.

Chinese were training the National Police in the use of new weapons. When he left the country in 1972, he managed to hide all this great material inside a loudspeaker, avoiding the police from seizing it as it happened daily with almost every document of minor relevance.

However, he recalls that he had to avoid including much of these stories whose sources were still living in the country. He feared reprisals on his informants, something that indeed happened even if he did not mention their names. As an example, he told me that the police arrested one of the Guinean women that appears in the book telling the story of how he saw the corpse of her husband absolutely smashed by the tortures he received in jail¹¹³. This is why the book is full of testimonies from other expatriates who had left Equatorial Guinea by the time it was published, also highly valuable ones to understand the magnitude of the drama. Among them, there is one of a French nurse from the World Health Organization who used to work in the hospital in Bata, in the mainland. The horrors she went through in the last months of her stay made her leave the country in May 1972. In her stopover in Malabo, she told Ramón that they used to have a daily average of ten deaths: “They take the prisoners to work in the countryside and once there, they kill them with machetes. It is terrible how their bodies arrive to the hospital, all mutilated, a deformed and bloody mass of flesh and bones”¹¹⁴.

Although no Spaniard was involved, it is still surprising how the Spanish press did not echo these stories when freedom of expression was installed. His book did have a direct consequence in the Spanish community of 1977: the Claretian father explains in his memories that after its publication, the Escolapios order to which the school belonged were all expelled.

By 1977, together with Ramón García's book, other reports from international organisations started to appear with similar testimonies. However, what makes the difference between him and these other authors is his personal experience as a white, Spanish teacher who lived in Guinea in a time in which the Spanish presence was already very scarce. The school where he worked was one of the best-known in the capital and much of its pupils were sons of Guinean politicians and ministers. He explains that it became part of the routine that all of the sudden, one day, some of these children stopped attending school because they were taken to their home town for no specific reason. “As it happened to the sons of Enrique Gori, minister and representative of the Bubi political party, when they were taken out of the school we knew that something horrible had happened to their fathers”, he recalls. He had to react as if nothing happened. It was very difficult for him to meet their families and not be able to give them his condolences as everything around the killings of the intellectual elite had to be kept in secret.

One of the most dangerous days he remembers is one Friday of January 1972. The teachers were obliged to bring their pupils to the football stadium to attend a Government demonstration against Spain. Once they left the children there, both he and his wife went home to wait and take refuge. A group of demonstrators started hitting their door and windows, shouting them to come out until one said to leave them alone because they were the teachers of their children. Another episode relates how teachers had to cope with constant changes in their subjects like the one about *History and*

113 “That day, when I went early in the morning to bring him food, the police gave me a bag with his trousers, belt, shirt, and hat. It was the sign that he was dead. [...] Immediately I went to the morgue, [...] when I came in I thought I was about to die. He had his head broken, with a huge wound, as if hit by a pick. They had taken out all his brains, he did not stop bleeding until I buried him. He also had his hands smashed and as black as coal. A boy that saw the torture told me that they did such thing in his hands because he liked to write”. García Domínguez, R. (1977) *Ibid.* p.238.

114 García Domínguez, R. (1977), *Supra.* p.237.

Geography of Equatorial Guinea, replaced by *Anti-Colonialist Politics*. Even though he admits he was not frightened at any moment, he had a constant feeling of insecurity. His story is an example of how Spaniards were on one hand welcomed by the new State, and on the other, repudiated and threatened. The main reason for this contradiction relied on the Spanish as mother tongue. Equatorial Guinea did not count with enough native teachers, and they could not be recruited anywhere else in the neighbouring countries because of the language, a feature that isolated Guinea from its region and inevitably linked it to Spain.

Interesting is also the fact that the Spanish embassy in Guinea prioritised the maintenance of good relations with Macías over the security of its compatriots in the country. Ramón García, as other Spaniards consulted, believes that the embassy did not act properly towards the few Spaniards living there. When an abuse was reported, they tried to make light in order to keep Macías calmed.

Summing up, few months after the independence of Equatorial Guinea and, more precisely, with the failure of the coup d'État in March 1969, Macías began a prosecution against all kind of colonialist symbol, such as the Church, the education or the large private plantations of cocoa and coffee. However, in contrast to the cruel ending of the Guinean intellectuals, Spaniards in the former colony suffered his reprisals most of the times in verbal form, through threats of immediate expulsion.

3.3. Spain could have done it better

Almost all the interviewees, Spanish and Guineans intellectuals, politicians and journalists gave me this answer at some point when asked about the Guinean process of independence. All except Antonio García Trevijano, who believes the Guinean population chose the only candidate that could lead their country to a truly independence from the ex-metropolis. As history shows with many other African countries and their decolonization process, a well driven independence for both the metropolis and the colony meant precisely the contrary, a continued dependence economically and politically that would benefit both parts. Preferential commercial agreements, loyal leaders and blind support in foreign policy were carefully established behind a nationalist image full of African pride. What Nkrumah and Fanon would denounce through their neocolonialist theories is exactly what did not happen in Equatorial Guinea. The following lines focus on this breaking-off between Equatorial Guinea and Spain as a reason behind the imposition of the press ban, as a way to hide Franco's feeling of shame for having lost all influence in the African colony, assuming that *we could have done it better*.

3.3.1. Dealing with an unexpected leader

As explained before, the Spanish government counted on two candidates for the Equatoguinean elections in 1968, Bonifacio Ondó and Atanasio Ndongu, while the third one, Francisco Macías represented the nationalist and anti-colonialist wing. His lack of political experience and the fact that most of the voters did not know him (he lived and worked only in the Mongomo area if the mainland), made him a weak opponent. The Spanish government did not see him as a threat to their plans. They were sure one of their two options would win the elections, because, on one hand, Ondó had already been Head of the autonomous government, a well-known politician for the Guineans, and on the other, Ndongu represented the most influential Guinean elite from both Fang and Bubi ethnic groups. As outlined before, Macías surprisingly ran an outstanding campaign that gave him the victory in a well driven electoral process. Since elections were forbidden in the

metropolis, there are perhaps two reasons to explain this unpredictable result: on one hand, the organisers might have lacked the sufficient experience to implement lobbying strategies that could help them achieve the expected results; on the other, too much confidence in a favourable outcome made them dismiss the real threat Macías represented.

Thus, facing the new scenario meant building a positive image of the new leader. The proclamation of independence was planned to take place on the same day of the national Hispanic festivity, the 12th October, and among the Spanish representation sent to Equatorial Guinea for the festivities was a group of journalists paid by the government to give large and favourable coverage to it. A day later, ABC quoted:

“Guineans sing and dance in large groups in the streets of Santa Isabel,. The façades are still covered with posters of the last general elections. It is a great festivity for Guinea and Spain in the unanimous celebration of the Hispanic world¹¹⁵”.

The celebration was carried out under the most congenial atmosphere, with words of brotherhood between Macías and Fraga Iribarne, Spanish minister of Information. And in the international sphere, it gave Spain a great impulse in its aim to be portrayed as a democratic State. “This independence will provide Spain with the satisfaction and praises of the international community” declared the Cameronian representative of the African group in the UN General Assembly¹¹⁶. This image of success and hope for the future was given by all the Spanish media with no exception. However, behind it there was a feeling of worry and uncertainty that, according to the Guinean activist Eya Nchama, it soon turned into distrust of Spain towards Macías. According to him, since the moment the new leader took over, Carrero Blanco started to reduce the aid budget previously agreed in the Constitutional Conference¹¹⁷. He is not the only one to confirm that Spain broke the agreements achieved months before in Madrid. Although there is no clear evidence of this, the events that followed independence show a radical deterioration in the relationship of both countries.

The most relevant issue is the coup d'état organised by Macías minister of Foreign Affairs, Atanasio Ndongo. Whereas for most of the Guineans interviewed, he got the support of his Spanish equivalent Fernando María Castiella, an assumption that Emilio Cassinello denied.

García Trevijano also explained how days after the failed coup, the minister gave himself away when he sent a telegram congratulating Atanasio for the success, ignorant of the fatal ending. This is the argument used by the Guinean government years later to denounce the press ban declared in Spain, alleging that this was done to cover the Spanish implication in the plot. According to the General Secretary of Equatorial Guinea, Oyono Ayingono, in a visit to the Canary Islands in October 1976:

“Five months after the independence, a coup d'état was planned against the supreme responsible of our revolution, a plot in which Spanish cocoa and timber capitalists were involved together with important political figures.[...] The ban was imposed in order to hide to the Spanish public opinion the crimes committed since then in our country” (understanding that those crimes were executed by Spain)¹¹⁸.

115 ABC (13/10/1968) “Solemne proclamación de la independencia de Guinea Ecuatorial”. p.23.

116 ABC (13/10/1968) “Eco internacional en la ONU: La Asamblea General acepta el consenso por el que se aprueba la independencia de Guinea Ecuatorial”. p.27.

117 Interview held with Cruz Melchor Eya Nchama in Geneva, Switzerland, on the 26th of September, 2011.

118 ABC (21/10/1969) “Personalidades del gobierno colonial, implicadas en el Golpe de Estado contra Macías”. p.19.

To this regard, the Spanish minister of Foreign Affairs in 1976, Marcelino Oreja, answered that “Spain accomplished his objective of bringing the independence to Equatorial Guinea with no fight, no blood. If this occurred years later, Spain had absolutely nothing to do with it”¹¹⁹.

In any case, Macías belief that Spain had intervened in the plot brought the diplomatic relationship into a crisis that led to the immediate departure of thousands of Spaniards from Guinea, as pointed out before. Writers like Ramón García Domínguez considered that behind this radical action taken by the Spanish government was Carrero Blanco, who wanted to asphyxiate Macías government and its economy with the withdrawal of the Spanish community¹²⁰. Max Liniger-Goumaz adds the fact that in 1969 Carrero Blanco decided to discharge Castiella, apparently because of his close relationship with Atanasio Ndongo and the problems this was bringing with Macías¹²¹.

Therefore, although it is clear that both Castiella and Carrero Blanco disliked Macías since the beginning, it seems that their actions against him were taken informally, rather than as a State plan with Franco’s consent. As explained before, a good performance in the Guinean independence was crucial for Spain, in need for a good reputation internationally. Thus, the public opinion had to believe that exemplary and transparent elections did result, as expected, in the victory of the best and honest leader. The ebb and flow of these first months did not appear in the press at all, until the spring of 1969, when Macías reacted against Spain and his attitude became so openly hostile that a new and more solid strategy had to be planned.

3.3.2. A press campaign to discredit Macías

It is very plausible that the Spanish government organised a press campaign to clean their image after failing in his commitments towards the colony. With the massive arrival of the Spaniards living in Guinea, journalists had the opportunity to interview eyewitnesses of Macías regime. They themselves were also willing to tell their stories of how they lost everything from one day to another and how the Guinea they knew did no longer exist. “We left in Guinea the best of our lives” told a Spaniard to the journalist of *La Vanguardia*, José M^a Vila, on the trip back to Spain during the diplomatic crisis. “There was a general feeling of anxiety and nostalgia in the ship. Almost the majority of the Spaniards coming back looked down on the Guineans”, explained José M^a Vila¹²².

The discourse of a new nation guided by Spain and proud of its colonial inheritance quickly turned into a hard criticism against the new leader and his politics. The instability lived around the failed coup d’état stood as the perfect argument for the departure of thousands of Spaniards. And later, Macías’ anger towards this sudden abandonment was used to justify this decision. The Spanish government stood in the press as the victim who suffered the accusations of a dishonest leader who destroyed the inherited welfare in a few months. ABC’s director in 1969, Torcuato Luca de Tena, wrote in an editorial:

“Opposite to these unfriendly gestures, we – understanding, liberal and tolerant – answer to them holding out our hand, full of serenity and wisdom. [...] Macías should respond with nobility and political intelligence to

119 *La Vanguardia* (23/10/1969) “Asuntos Exteriores niega la participación de cualquier gobernante español en el golpe de Estado de Guinea”. p.6.

120 García Domínguez, R. (1977) *Guinea: Macías, la ley del silencio*. Plaza & Janés, Barcelona. pp. 187.

121 Liniger-Goumaz, M. (2000). *Historical dictionary of Equatorial Guinea*. Third Edition. The Scarecrow Press, Inc. Lanham, Maryland and London. p.74

122 Vila, J.M. (17/06/1969). “Qué sucedió en Guinea. Retrospectivo examen de unas jornadas de inquietud y angustia”. *La Vanguardia*. p.53.

this help Spain generously offers him”¹²³.

Thus, the Spanish government succeeded in transmitting through the media the message that “we have done everything to help the new State, it is his president who closes us the door”. Although, as it happens with the other two arguments, there is no evidence of this communication strategy, it does hold true the fact that the three newspapers analysed show the same shift in their discourse, with such a consensus that allows to think about a strong State censorship on the news about Guinea, passing the filter only those which matched the governmental discourse.

3.4. Conclusion

Having not confirmed the large investments that influential politicians like Carrero Blanco were said to have in the new State, to my opinion, this general assumption to justify the press ban does not hold true. Nonetheless, it is certain that after independence there were still a few hundreds of Spaniards who ran profitable businesses and had spent much of their lives there. It makes sense that the Spanish government wished to protect them and their companies from the new wave of distrust and anti-colonialism that arouse. Therefore, it is this new scenario which led to the imposition of a press ban. There are no mysterious businesses behind, no murders hidden. As it more often happens in historical research, the answer does not rely in one event but in a series of incidents and facts that occur throughout a period of time. And in this case, we are talking about a three year period of time, from October 1968 until 1972, when a combination of economic and political disagreements took place between Spain and Equatorial Guinea.

From the political side, the fact that the elections gave a totally unexpected victory to Macías and the Spanish government simply did not know how to deal with it, marked the beginning of a continuous political crisis. With peaks like the failed coup d'état and the withdrawal of the Spanish community, the relationship between Macías and Franco had never been cordial. We must not forget that Franco's regime was military-like and its elite were more used to organise plots and coups than democratic elections. Thus, the starting point from which the bilateral relations were built was a complete failure. In this sense, García Trevijano was the only true democrat of all the advisors the candidates had, who saw in Macías the only politician who could really break with the country's colonial past. And he was right. However, the economic consequences of such a break were not taken into account, which together with the feeling of abandonment from the ex-metropolis led Macías lose his way.

From the economic side, the diplomatic relations depended completely from this aspect. The smoother the agreements were, the better the situation of the Spaniards and the image of Macías in the Spanish press. When they got strained, reactions of Macías in the Spanish community and criticism in the press did not await.

As a result, the most plausible conclusion would be that the feeling of shame from the Spanish government, accepting the mistakes made in the independence's process, forced them to take distance from the former colony silencing the press and leaving the Guineans aside. These mistakes are related to the other two arguments: the lack of a well ran diplomacy led on one hand, to neglecting the Spaniards in Guinea and, on the other, to the failure in the commercial agreements and the loss of its colonial hegemony.

123 ABC, *ibid*.

CHAPTER 4

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

1976-1979

In 1975 relevant events took place both in Equatorial Guinea and in Spain leading to a new political period. Whereas in Spain, Franco's death ended forty years of dictatorship, in Equatorial Guinea, the Unique Miracle, as he wanted to be called, left Malabo and retired to his home town in the mainland. Both Macías and Franco left the path free. However, in the case of Equatorial Guinea, his number two who took over, his nephew Teodoro Obiang Nguema, was just the same dog with different collar. From a social perspective, democracy in Spain helped to ameliorate the poor conditions of the Guinean expatriates while in Equatorial Guinea, the number of Spaniards had grown by a hundred since the events of 1969¹²⁴. However, distrust still dominated all type of relations, from the highest level to the local encounters: between the Spanish Catholic priests and the Guinean local authorities or among the Guinean associations in Spain.

4.1. Macías' last years

The reasons behind Macías' decision to move his residence to Rio Muni are not clear. Different scholars and experts consider it a flight of a leader defeated by its own fears and phantoms, who sought protection in the only place of the country where he felt safe. As if the wall he built around the presidential palace in Malabo was not enough to keep the real and the imaginary threats away, he preferred to move away. Although he believed his power would not be weakened, the five hundred kilometers of Atlantic Ocean between Bioko Island and the continental region were too many to keep a close eye on the daily life of the central government. His nephew, Teodoro Obiang Nguema was the new person in charge of the government. As Fegley describes in his book on Equatorial Guinea:

“With the economy in ruins and a third of the population in exile, the Unique Miracle continued to manifest his inferiority complex and increased his consumption of drugs. Living in his bunker in Nsangayong, Macías had become almost totally deaf and his eyesight was beginning to fail him. In one incident shortly after the arrest of the senior officials in 1976, Macías fell off the rostrum while delivering a speech at Ebebiyín. No one from the audience made a move to assist him. In the end his Cuban bodyguards had to help him to his feet again. He was alone, truly alone”¹²⁵.

He continued concentrating all powers in himself and headed the ministries of Defense, National Security and Trade. At this point he only trusted the members of his clan and appointed them for the rest of the ministries. This not only favored all kind of fraud and corrupted activities among the Mongomo elite but also put even more distance between the government and its people, being the rest of the ethnic groups like the Bubis of Bioko Island or the Annobonese completely neglected. The new face of the regime was that of a very young man, not yet thirty years old, known for his coldness and cruelty as Head of the prisons. The politician and journalist in exile, Severo Moto, recalled how the same executioner that tortured him in Blabich prison in 1976 was the leader who

¹²⁴ Fegley, R. (1989) *Equatorial Guinea: an African tragedy*. American University Studies. Peter Lang. New York. p.154

¹²⁵ Fegley, R. (1989). *Ibid*, p.159.

years later welcomed him to manage the communication affairs of the new government¹²⁶. There is no doubt that to him, as to many other politicians imprisoned under Macías, Teodoro Obiang did not represent the change at all. On the contrary, he represented the victory of Macías most radical elite.

4.2. Silenced and hidden poverty

In just a few years since independence, the living conditions of the Guineans got dramatically worse. In his report issued in 1978, the Swedish sociologist Robert af Klinteberg gives a detailed overview of the country's situation, being the only foreigner to do a field research in the Equatorial Guinea after 1968. With the help of the ANRD, he got in the country as a businessman and was able to gather highly valuable data during the four months he spent in the region.

According to his research, the most worrying scarcity was in healthcare like first aid medicines and hygiene products such as soap, which required a written permission for its purchase. If under the Spanish colonization there was a hospital bed for every 193 people (in Spain itself, this proportion was of one for every 171 people) and sickness like Malaria were under control, the situation in 1978 was frightening. In his campaign for "Authenticity", Macías attacked modern medicine and encouraged the people to go back to traditional healing methods (although he and his family did have access to medicines). As a result, "the pharmacies were kept open but the shelves were completely empty apart from collections of headache pills and the like", explained Klinteberg¹²⁷. In this quest for national pride, Macías also banned the consumption of milk, bread, sugar and tomatoes which he considered products of the western colonization. Shortage was also felt in salt and other basic products not produced in the country like meat or eggs because of the rapid deterioration of a very scarce livestock.

In terms of infrastructure and civil services, it seemed as if the country had gone back to medieval times. Klinteberg wrote how rare was to see a car in Malabo and that no buses, taxis or public transport existed in the capital. Repair shops and filling stations were closed. Only the four flights per week between Malabo and Bata still operated. Most of the shops were closed and food and other stuff could only be bought in the market-place stalls. Electricity worked more or less daily but water was available only for one hour per day. The national bank remained closed since the public execution of its director and the central post-office was permanently closed, which "cannot have made much difference in view of the rigidity of the censorship"¹²⁸ added Klinteberg. He was the only guest of one of the two hotels of the capital and he described Malabo as "a strikingly depopulated city that gives a general impression of a place hit by war or the plague"¹²⁹.

This war-like situation provoked that most of the Guineans sought refuge in neighboring countries, becoming the largest proportion of any nation ever to have gone in exile¹³⁰. However, a difference has to be made between the ethnic groups, because the Fang, those who were in power and lived in the mainland, had it much easier to leave the country by land, whereas for the Bubis of Bioko or those in Corisco or Annobon, escaping was almost impossible, only by sea and after a very long and

¹²⁶ Interview to Severo Moto held in Madrid on the 22nd of December, 2011.

¹²⁷ Robert af Klinteberg (1978), "Equatorial Guinea-Macías country, the forgotten refugees". *International University Exchange Fund* (IUEF). Geneva. p.22

¹²⁸ Robert af Klinteberg (1978). *Ibid*, p.27

¹²⁹ *Supra*, p.27.

¹³⁰ Robert af Klinteberg (1978), "Equatorial Guinea-Macías country, the forgotten refugees". *International University Exchange Fund* (IUEF). Geneva. p.55

dangerous journey.

Regarding the foreign community that lived in the country, they were just a few hundreds from embassies and international organisations such as UNHCR as well as some Spanish missionaries, Cubans and Chinese workers. For the missionaries, this second half of the regime really became hard times. Catholic churches closed and after years of prosecution for any minor thing, Roman Catholic Church was banned in 1978. Not only the religious activities were affected but also the educational aspect of the missions, since all the schools and seminars were closed. The clergy was often imprisoned and higher fines were imposed to the priests who gave Christian names to the children. In his memories, the Claretian father remembers the twelve days he passed in Blabich prison for having baptized with Christian names:

“On the 13th of June 1977 at 7 p.m. we were imprisoned. We had to cope with no food and no drink for more than thirty hours!. Each of us were then put in individual cells, which they would open twice a day, the rest of the time we remained in the cell, almost in the dark, sometimes sleeping, sometimes meditating or even walking, three steps forward and three steps back. The second day they finally brought us a recipient for our toilet needs”.

4.3. The democratic transition: the most relevant period in Spain's recent history

It unfortunately happened all at the same time. Macías was asphyxiating his people when in the ex-metropolis, a historical turn was finishing with decades of repression and civil rights and freedom were finally regained. There was simply no time and no interest on any other matter besides the national affairs. Cruz Melchor Eya understands this lack of interest. He remembers how his university colleagues were too focused on defending human rights within Spain, “they were living their own page of history, and I understand that their fight was a different one and they did not bother about ours”. He was one of the few Guineans living and studying in Madrid when his country became independent in 1968. By 1975, he was already living in Geneva, like many other stateless Guineans who decided to leave Spain after the indifference they received from the “mother land”. This indifference grew as national politics became more and more relevant.

In 1977, as a measure to conciliate both countries, Prime Minister Adolfo Suárez approved a law that provided the Spanish nationality to all Guineans who were residing in Spain by the time of independence in 1968¹³¹. However, just a few hundreds were still living in the Spain (most of them had left to other countries in Europe) and not all requested it. It is the case of Donato Ndong Bidyogo who preferred to maintain his Guinean nationality. Still today, he does not hold a Spanish passport arguing that “requesting the Spanish nationality would have meant forgiving the Spanish government for the bad treatment we had received after the Guinean independence, and I did not want to let them forget about it”¹³².

As I have already mentioned, the lack of support to the Guinean community was even more obvious when it had to do with the politicians in exile. As Emilio Cassinello confirmed, the government wanted to have the least relationship possible with the political diaspora which in the last half of the seventies became stronger. Most of them lived in Barcelona, the only city in Spain where cultural activities were organized to inform the Spanish public about the situation in Equatorial Guinea.

¹³¹ Royal Decree 2987/1977, October 22nd on the granting of the Spanish nationality to certain Guineans. Published in the Official State Bulletin, BOE, no. 282 of 25/11/1977, pp.25874.

¹³² Interview with Donato Ndong Bidyogo held in Murcia, on the 27th of July, 2011.

Very little of these exhibitions were published in the local media, as it will be explained in the next chapter on the press analysis.

Together with the law on the Spanish nationality for the Guineans, many others concerning new freedoms for the Spaniards were approved in the first years of the democratic transition. One of them was the new law on freedom of expression which finally suppressed all type of state censorship in the media¹³³. Approved in April 1977, the law made an allusion to “the limits that discretionary the Administration has imposed to the freedom of expression through the media” calling for a total freedom of information “as long as it does not attack the public morality or the State institutions”. This is the press law that still rules today in Spain which according to many journalists, it continues leaving a door open for the State to intervene in certain cases, seizing a newspaper or imposing a fine when alleging one of the two assumptions. As I will show later, although freedom of expression was officially guaranteed, the reality proved how slowly certain practices change. In the years that followed, the State institutions still felt the right to impose certain limits to the information and the majority of the journalists still published with great caution news that could go against the Government’s position.

4.4. Obiang’s coup d’état: the awaited moment

According to Emilio Cassinello, Head of the Subsaharan Africa division in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs between 1973 and 1977, Spain did not intervene in Teodoro Obiang’s coup d’état¹³⁴. However, the American researcher Randall Fegley claimed that the Spanish intelligence was behind the plot to finish with Macías as Spain was for years awaiting for a chance to eliminate him¹³⁵. What is clearly certain is the fact that right after the coup in August 1979, and for the first time in a decade, Spain regained its presence in the former colony through the arrival of State representatives together with dozens of Spanish journalists. The Guinean political transition represented the meeting point of the three groups researched in this thesis, the Spanish press and the Guinean and Spanish political elite. With the borders opened to the international media, journalists were able to see with their own eyes the Guinean reality. No more State filters or second sources; journalists were finally reporting from the field. One of them was the well-known journalist Manuel Leguineche, who wrote about his experience in a book entitled “The Tribe”, referring to the group of journalists who, as an African tribe, arrived all of the sudden in a place almost virgin in terms of mass media exploitation. In a self-criticism tone, he wrote about how the groups of Spanish journalists, apparently brave professionals, would stick together and not dare to go beyond the official story. In some pages he did include interviews with former prisoners, who described the tortures they suffered for years in the exact same way Robert of Klinteberg had written years before. However, none of this was later published in the newspaper. Perhaps this is the reason why he decided to write a book about his experience in Equatorial Guinea. Interesting are some of his stories like the one about the first encounter between Guineans and the international press:

“They all followed the same impulse: taking from us the magazines or newspapers, everything that had a printed paper appearance. They began to read with wild pleasure. They were readers in their most pure state, the perfect clients, a revenge against the indifference of the Spanish market. [...] They cared more about the

¹³³ Law/ Royal Decree 24/1977, 1st of April, on freedom of expression. Published in the Official State Bulletin, B.O.E., num.87 of 12/04/1977, pp. 7928-7929.

¹³⁴ Interview with Emilio Cassinello held in Madrid, on the 24th of October, 2011.

¹³⁵ Fegley, R. (1989) *Equatorial Guinea: an African tragedy*. American University Studies. Peter Lang. New York. p.155

first page of the newspaper than about a piece of bread”¹³⁶.

Or the description he makes of his own group, the foreign correspondents:

“We cannot be just a prolongation of the State Public Relations office, as it happened under the unmentionable (Franco). We are victims of the politicians, their Christmas presents, their slap in our back, of our sense of gregariousness and our own beliefs. We don’t even read the newspapers. There is no other professional more distant from the public than the journalist”¹³⁷.

By the end of Macías regime, Spain was still financing part of its education budget and some commercial agreements were signed. However, its hegemony in the ex-colony was practically lost with French and American oil companies having taken the lead. The takeover of Obiang represented a perfect moment for Spain to proclaim its historical link with the only Spanish speaking country of Africa. It was the perfect occasion to regain the lost leadership and all efforts were made, including a first visit of the king and queen of Spain to Equatorial Guinea in December of that year.

¹³⁶ Leguineche, M. (1980). *La Tribu*. Ed. Argos Vergara, Barcelona. p.26.

¹³⁷ Leguineche, M. (1980). *Ibid.* p.37.

CHAPTER 5

ACTIVISM AGAINST MACÍAS: EQUATORIAL GUINEA REAPPEARS ON SCENE

During the second half of the seventies, the accusations on Macías repressive regime gained relevance as they began to appear in reports, books and other sources. The political diaspora that first fled Equatorial Guinea and later Spain was organized in different activist groups and their complaints reached institutions such as the United Nations and the Council of Europe. Journalists who lived in the African country after its independence from Spain published their experiences in several books and readers all over Europe started to know a bit more about Macías despite the silence that still remained in the Spanish media. This chapter describes these other sources, their authors, their aims and what they said about Macías in a period in which he was slowly losing power within his government and followers. I will also address the impact of these publications in some of the Spanish newspapers showing how little was said about them, despite the details given on Macías violations of human rights.

5.1. Journalistic literature on Equatorial Guinea: the boom

In less than a year, between the autumn of 1976 and the summer of 1977, three books on the post-colonial Equatorial Guinea were published in Spain. The three of them are written by journalists living in Spain, one Guinean and the other two Spaniards. “Guinea, materia reservada” by Rafael Fernandez was published in November 1976¹³⁸, followed by “Guinea: Macías, la ley del silencio” by Ramón García Domínguez (January 1977)¹³⁹ and “Historia y tragedia de Guinea Ecuatorial” by Donato Ndongo Bidyogo¹⁴⁰ (July 1977). Whereas the first two are strictly related to Macías period, the last one reviews the relationship between Spain and his mother country since the colonial times until 1977. Although their experiences differ, they are all written in a journalistic style and they all denounce Macías politics and the Spanish attitude towards it, imposing a press ban that helped to legitimize his dictatorship.

5.1.1. “Guinea, Materia Reservada”

This is the first book on Equatorial Guinea that came out in Spain after its independence. Its author, Rafael Fernandez, worked as Head of the Spanish Television in Equatorial Guinea in 1970, until he was expelled in September of that year. He was 22 year old when he wrote this book, which pretends to be a work of research journalism on the silence around the Guinean issue. Fernandez addressed the topic from different perspectives, including that of the Guinean diaspora, so absent in the Spanish press. Taking his experience in the country as the point of departure for his research, he focused in the economic interests of García Trevijano and other Spanish politicians. Newspaper articles were his main sources followed by ANRD notices and NGO reports (Amnesty International). Although the main argument was purely economic, he talked about Macías

¹³⁸ Fernandez R. (1976). *Guinea: Materia Reservada*. Sedmay Ediciones, Madrid.

¹³⁹ García Domínguez, R. (1977) *Guinea: Macías, la ley del silencio*. Plaza y Janés Edición Ilustrada. Barcelona.

¹⁴⁰ Ndongo Bidyogo, D. (1977). *Historia y tragedia de Guinea Ecuatorial*. Editorial Cambio 16, Madrid.

repression and reproduced some of the telegrams sent by the ANRD in Madrid to international organisations and embassies calling for their support on stopping future executions in their country (see annex 2). He also reproduced the copy of the Amnesty International news release denouncing Macías atrocities in April 1975, when Spanish media was still under the State press ban.

Supported by the many documents the book is made of, Fernández gave his argument on the State silence: according to him, Equatorial Guinea remained under blanket to protect the economic interests of Spanish businessmen and politicians such as García Trevijano. As a result, the atrocities committed by Macías, although denounced by many activist groups, were unknown for the public opinion. Chapter 13 entitled “Los únicos 490 asesinados?”¹⁴¹ is a complete transcription of the list made by the ANRD of the politicians assassinated under Macías regime between 1969 and 1975. In a previous chapter, he introduced the activist movement based in Geneva and later in the book he reproduced several articles published in other European countries on their complaints against Macías. In an interview to *El País* when his book came out, he mentioned this in a sort of premonitory way:

“Guinea is a clear example of genocide, despite the declarations made by Trevijano. In my book there is even a report from the Swiss magazine *Review* where some Guineans in exile tell atrocious stories about this. The silence is not only to protect individual interests in the cocoa, coffee or timber business but it also responds to a military strategy and huge investments in uranium and oil. [...] Soon this country will become the “Kuwait of Africa” where a lot of people will suffer the greed of the most powerful. The future of Equatorial Guinea is still unresolved, [...] and the only opinion I share with García Trevijano is that the truth about this country will only be revealed in the next century”¹⁴².

To sum up, the work of Rafael Fernández, even though it cannot be considered a rigorous research and may lack some structure and argumentation, it is a fair attempt to answer the question of the classified material. Against his premonition, still today, his conclusion on the economic interests remains uncertain but the information he provided on the Guinean activism and its impact in the press is highly valid and very useful. Three decades later, this book remains as one of the rare compilations of this data and a further research on it could lead to a deeper understanding on the events that occurred in Equatorial Guinea under Macías.

5.1.2. “Guinea: Macías, la ley del silencio”

In previous chapters I have already addressed Ramón García Domínguez’s experience in Equatorial Guinea. He shared his story with me in a personal interview decades later the publication of his book. Written in first person, it recalls the years he lived and worked as a teacher in Malabo, between 1971 and 1973, right when the ex- colony was declared classified material in Spain. The book is an autobiographical work that, as he explained, took him much more effort to publish than to write. It was only after the press ban was lifted that it saw the light. It is interesting to note that García Domínguez started the interview by saying that he does not have anything to do with Equatorial Guinea anymore, “the research was so exhausting and its consequences so overwhelming that I did not feel like following up the case on Equatorial Guinea. I have had enough”¹⁴³.

Although he remembers that the book had a large impact in the national and local press, through

¹⁴¹ “The only 490 assassinated?” in Fernández, R. (1976) *Guinea: Materia Reservada*. Sedmay Ediciones, Madrid. p.268.

¹⁴² S.Harguindey, A. (25/11/1976) “Guinea ha sido, para unos cuantos, una finca particular”, *El País*.

¹⁴³ Interview held with Ramón García Domínguez in Valladolid, Spain, on the 4th of November 2011.

many press conferences crowded with journalists, the articles published about it in ABC, La Vanguardia and El País are brief and scarce. As I will show later, their references to it are mostly book reviews with hardly any comment on its main topic: Macías. However, other news published months later do relate to it as one of the main reasons why both countries broke diplomatic relations in 1977. As he recalled in the interview, after the publication he was declared *persona non grata* by Macías government and the relations with Spain became very tense. He also knew about the reprisals that Macías took against one of the witnesses he mentioned in the book. The Claretian missionary who was living in the African country by then also recalls in his memories the prosecution they suffered after the book came out:

“They put all of them (the Escolapios priests) in jail for not singing the national hymn in the mass. Or maybe it was a reprisal for the book a teacher from his school published in Spain. It seems as if someone blamed them for having written it. When they denied it, the police answered: “it does not matter, you are all the same”.

As well as Rafael Fernández, he also talked about the massive killings quoting the ANRD and included references to the Amnesty International report and other documents published by different international organisations¹⁴⁴. Although his main argument was the repression suffered in Equatorial Guinea, he also addressed the silence imposed in Spain arguing, as the other author, in the economic interests of powerful politicians and Spanish businessmen like García Trevijano:

“It is very likely that the Guinean opposition is exaggerating the numbers. But what is certain is that the list of people killed under Macías regime is long and contradicts García Trevijano’s opinion when he told me that in Guinea there had been less assassinations than in Spain in the last two years. [...] Macías has decimated the country’s population and has eliminated all the intellectuals. Consciously, one by one, until not a single one is left”.

Because this autobiographical book is the only one which directly dealt with Macías repression, the newspapers did not dedicate as much attention to it as they did to the other book. In my opinion, this could be due to the request from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to keep a low coverage on Macías issues. On the other hand, Macías’ reaction to it was stronger than with any other publication made in Spain, threatening the Spaniards living in the country and leading to a diplomatic crisis.

In relation to the my research, the book is an interesting source of information considering that foreign press was forbidden in the years Ramón García was living in Malabo, so his experience is one of the few, if not the only one, of a foreign journalist witnessing what happened there.

5.1.3. “Historia y tragedia de Guinea Ecuatorial”

This is the first book written by the Guinean journalist Donato Ndongo Bidyogo, who still lives and works in Spain. He was a reporter at the Spanish newspaper Diario 16 when his book came out, the first attempt to review the common history between Spain and Equatorial Guinea from a Guinean perspective. He is introduced by the book editor as “one of the eight thousand stateless Guineans living in Spain” and the first opposition leader to write a book about the history of his country. As we mentioned in previous chapters, several years before he had written a series on his country’s independence in the newspapers ABC, with the pseudonym of José Vicente Mba.

As representative of Macías’s opposition movement in Spain, he wrote about the organization and

¹⁴⁴ García Domínguez, R. (1977) *Guinea: Macías, la ley del silencio*. Plaza y Janés, Madrid. p.240.

functioning of the politicians in exile, and gave a first insight to the Guinean diaspora in Europe. Moreover, as a Guinean living in difficult conditions in Spain, he was critical with the Spanish government's response to Macías. For instance, Donato Ndongo went against the paternalist and patriotic message both Rafael Fernández and Ramón García shared when arguing that the Spaniards in Equatorial Guinea did not deserve the reprisals of such a mad man like Macías:

Far from being objective and from trying to understand a country that was going through a difficult identity crisis, the Spanish ex-settlers blamed the Guinean government and particularly Macías for all the mistakes that only they were responsible of. The landowners, who left in 1969 fearing that their possessions would be nationalized, saw the occasion to build up a communication campaign in the Congolese style. They tried to discredit a president that, up to that date, was still responding to its people's request of freedom and truly nationalism¹⁴⁵.

Controversial opinions like this one did not appear in its press' coverage. The reviews on the book mostly talked about its historical approach. As he explained to me in an interview, when the book came out, the Spanish press was finally paying attention to Equatorial Guinea but unfortunately still in a very colonialist way, "After six years since its independence, news on Equatorial Guinea were still part of the National Affairs section"¹⁴⁶. Throughout the whole interview, when talking about events of the past as well as about his situation today in Spain, the author continues to fight in his quest for the Spanish recognition of the Guinean rights. As the editor pointed out, Donato Ndongo was studying in Spain and held the Spanish nationality when his country became independent. Right after, he became a stateless immigrant with no chances to return safely to his homeland and who received no protection from the ex-metropolis. His disappointment, his deception can be perceived in his book. This might be the reason why neither the Spanish press nor the Guinean showed the deserved interest on it. However, the fact that he was part of the Guinean opposition movement in Europe did have an effect in the press coverage abroad who paid more attention to this book than to the other two previously mentioned. Today, Donato Ndongo has become one of the most well-known authors of Equatoguinean literature and his books are studied and referenced by scholars worldwide¹⁴⁷.

5.1.4. Press coverage of the literature on Macías

Even though the three books addressed the issue of Macías violation of human rights, even describing some of the atrocities committed during the period of silence, none of the three newspapers, *El País*, *La Vanguardia* and *ABC*, took profit of it to develop some kind of research journalism on the issue. Indeed, those were events of the past, which might be a reason for the news editor not to talk about it, but Macías was still in power when this information came out, and its social relevance could have deserved a deeper analysis from the Spanish media. Unfortunately, this literary boom had no effect in Macías politics and despite the criticism made from the three authors, he remained in power.

Launched by a larger publisher, the book of Ramón García Domínguez, "Guinea: Macías, la ley del silencio" received more attention than the other two. Both *La Vanguardia* and *ABC* published a

¹⁴⁵ Ndongo Bidyogo, D. (1977) *Historia y tragedia de Guinea Ecuatorial*. Editorial Cambio 16, Madrid. p.184.

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Donato Ndongo Bidyogo held in Murcia, Spain, on the 27th of July 2011.

¹⁴⁷ See Ugarte, M. (2010). *Africans in Europe.: the culture of exile and emigration from Equatorial Guinea to Spain*. University of Illinois, USA & Epps, B. (2010), "Learning from the beginning: education, translation, and intercultural transmission in Donato Ndongo's *Shadows of Your Black Memory* (1987)", *An International Review*, Oct, 2010, Issue 103, p.144 (24).

column on the book where they did mention Macías politics and repression¹⁴⁸. However, they did so in the same paternalistic style than for the rest of the news about the African country. As an example:

“The author said that his book represented the history of Equatorial Guinea but also of Macías and the disintegration process the country had fallen into since its independence. [...] He remembered how this paradise is now sadly and inevitably lost for everyone”¹⁴⁹.

The other book written by the Spanish journalist Rafael Fernández did not get any coverage in *La Vanguardia* but it did have a larger impact in *El País* and *ABC* (in its weekend supplement *Blanco y Negro*). Both of them dedicated a page to interview him on his hypothesis about the Spanish economic interests in the post-colonial Guinea¹⁵⁰. The fact that his topic was much more Spain-oriented led to a larger coverage in the press.

Lastly, Donato Ndongó's book received the least of the media attention. Two facts could explain it: on one hand, in terms of media agenda-setting, the book came out ten months after the lifting of the press ban so the informative hook this represented was already lost. There is no doubt that if the book would have been published coinciding with the Ministry's announcement, its coverage would have been larger, as it happened with “Guinea, materia reservada”. On the other hand, the hard criticism towards the Spanish government and the Spanish community in Equatorial Guinea made it an uncomfortable essay to talk about. These newspapers might have feared a negative response if they gave him voice so they simply decided not to take the risk. Only *ABC*, the conservative newspaper where Donato had worked years before, published a brief notice on its publishing.

5.2. The ANRD and the three main reports on Macías repression

The lifting of the ban in October 1977 in Spain opened the door to the publication of reports against Macías in other European countries. The Guinean diaspora in Geneva knew that while the official secret prevailed in Spain, it was useless to try to address the Spanish public opinion, including the Guineans living in Spain. The ex-metropolis was left out of all lobby concerning Equatorial Guinea. Therefore, as the co-founder of the ANRD movement Cruz Melchor Eya explained to me in an interview, they waited for the press ban to be lifted before they launched any report on Macías regime. In the meantime, they organized their structure at European level and created a network of informants in Cameroon and Gabon which provided them with the testimonies and data needed for future reports. Between 1976 and 1979 they financially supported the work of the two independent researchers Suzanne Cronjé and Robert af Klinteberg and acted as mediators with Amnesty International. As a result, three reports were published in the last years of Macías dictatorship which had a large impact in the European public opinion and a less than expected one in the Spanish. In the previous part of this thesis I have already addressed the content of these documents, so now my aim is to look at the publication of the publications, to develop a meta-analysis on how journalists dealt with these highly valuable sources of information on Macías and Equatorial Guinea.

¹⁴⁸ *La Vanguardia* (14/06/1977). “Guinea Ecuatorial, la ley del silencio y mucho más”. *La Vanguardia*. pp.29 & *ABC* (05/04/1977) “García Domínguez, Ramón: Guinea, Macías la ley del silencio”. p. 48.

¹⁴⁹ “Presentación en Valladolid de Guinea. Macías la ley del silencio”. (03/02/1977) *ABC*. p. 51.

¹⁵⁰ *Blanco y Negro* (04/12/1976) “Guinea, materia reservada”. Pp. 39. & *El País* (25/11/1976) “Guinea ha sido para unos cuantos, una finca particular. Entrevista con Rafael Fernández, autor de Guinea: Materia Reservada”.

5.2.1. Reporting from London: The anti-slavery report (1976)

“Normalization of Equatorial Guinean internal affairs would require the withdrawal of all external assistance to the regime to enable the people in the country to act effectively against the dictatorship.[...] And if economic cooperation and international aid have helped to keep Macías in power, the most important factor in his ascendancy has been the protective wall of silence around his bloody regime”¹⁵¹.

This is part of the conclusion of the report published in November 1976 by the British Anti-Slavery Society. Throughout its three sections on history, repression and foreign silence, its author argued how its dictatorial colonial past established the pillars in which Macías regime was later installed and how the foreign silence contributed to the repression suffered by its people. And the Spanish government appears as the main responsible for both. Perhaps the most added value of this report is its chapter on the foreign silence. Not only does its author mention the Spanish press ban, but also the French, American, Chinese, Cuban, Russian and Swiss complicity in order to keep its interests in the country. It is surprising how such a tiny country could rouse the attention of so many foreign powers. The answer is indeed related to its richness in minerals, mostly uranium. This report is therefore very interesting as it not only denounces the violation of human rights in Equatorial Guinea but it goes further trying to give an answer to why this happened, daring to point out some Western countries as the main accomplices.

This is the first report published after the lifting of the Spanish ban. Although it was carried out by a British sociologist and published by an NGO, the idea came from the Guinean activists of the ANRD. As Cruz Melchor Eya recalled in his interview, he was the one who proposed Suzanne Cronjé to go on fieldwork to Equatorial Guinea:

“When we had some money, we always sent a blond-haired researcher to Equatorial Guinea, preferably not a Spanish one, to collect information on the murders and repression, so we could later use their research to lobby here in Geneva, in the United Nations”¹⁵².

Even if it was not the objective in the first place, the ANRD also saw in it the perfect tool to attract the media attention. A brief report, straight forward, made by a researcher who risked her life to get the information: all of it made it a perfect scoop for any European newspaper. And as it was expected, her work had a major impact in the British press. The Guardian, for instance, published a full page article entitled “The cocoa slaves of Fernando Po” which included much of the information on tortures and slavery conditions in the Guinean prisons that Cronjé described¹⁵³.

This was in November 1976, right after the ban was lifted in Spain and the press was concentrated on the national affairs. This might be the reason why, despite the effort made by the ANRD, this report hardly got to the Spanish public opinion. From the newspapers researched, only ABC reported it through its correspondent in London. Entitled like the report, “Equatorial Guinea, the forgotten dictatorship”, in its two columns it does mention the political assassinations but there is not a single word on the foreign silence. It is interesting to note that the article appears under a section entitled “Africa”, something rare for ABC which kept including the articles on Equatorial Guinea under the National Affairs section. Perhaps Cruz Melchor Eya was right when saying that the only way to take the Equatoguineans seriously was to send a white researcher to do the work.

¹⁵¹ Cronjé, S. (1976), “Equatorial Guinea: the forgotten dictatorship”. *Anti-Slavery Society*, Research Report No.2, London. p.43.

¹⁵² Interview to Cruz Melchor Eya Nchama held in Geneva, Switzerland, on the 26th of September 2011.

¹⁵³ *The Guardian Extra* (12/11/1976) “The Cocoa slaves of Fernando Po”. p.14.

5.2.2. Reporting from Geneva: Field study on Equatorial Guinea's refugees (1978)

"I made it a standard procedure to ask my informants if he or she was willing to go ahead, in spite of the obvious risk of Macías' fury and his long arm. An overwhelming number reacted in a way which perhaps says as much about President Macías' regime as the rest of this report. "I am aware of the dangers and I have much fear, especially for those of my family who are still inside my country. But they could easily be killed even if I keep silent. The situation is so bad that it cannot get much worse if I tell you what I have seen. The truth about our country must be told so that the world will understand and no longer give Macías the protection of silence"¹⁵⁴.

Almost a decade had gone by since Macías took power and the international organizations in Geneva were receiving reports from Guinean activists denouncing the massive flight of Equatoguineans to neighboring countries and the poor conditions in which they were living after escaping the repressive regime. Motivated by this denounces, the International University Exchange Fund (IUEF) based in Geneva sent the Swedish anthropologist Robert af Klinteberg to Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Cameroon, Nigeria and Spain to research on the refugees' situation. With the support of the ANRD, he got in the country with a visa for field research in ornithology and once there, he managed to escape the State's control and collect data for almost four months¹⁵⁵. As he explained in his report, he wanted to carry out a deep analysis on the Guinean exiles in order to clarify the contradictory versions about them:

"There were discrepancies between the somber picture of Equatorial Guinea painted by the exiles and the rather more sympathetic descriptions given in certain Spanish and French media. And the apparent ambivalence of the United Nations and the European Economic Community, both giving assistance while providing minimal information about their programs, an unusual policy for donor agencies. There were also the conflicting appraisals of the reliability of the information about the country"¹⁵⁶.

This is by far the best fact-based and empirical work on Macías' Equatorial Guinea. Its 85 pages are full of detail when talking about the State apparatus, the politics at local level, the relations with foreign powers, etc.. all supported with clear data and many in-depth interviews. He also gave a full description of the capital's prison, Blabich, and the daily executions, in such a précised way only someone who was there could describe¹⁵⁷.

Despite the complete information it offered, its impact in the Spanish press was inexistent. The only reference to it came from a journalist of *El País*, who talked about the tortures described by Klinteberg in an opinion article published in August 1979, a year later the report was issued¹⁵⁸. As it will be explained later, the well-known Spanish writer Juan Goytisolo wrote a series on Macías

¹⁵⁴ Robert af Klinteberg (1978), "Equatorial Guinea-Macías country, the forgotten refugees". *International University Exchange Fund* (IUEF). Geneva. p.81.

¹⁵⁵ Interview to Cruz Melchor Eya Nchama held in Geneva, Switzerland, on the 26th of September 2011.

¹⁵⁶ Robert af Klinteberg (1978) "Equatorial Guinea-Macías country, the forgotten refugees". *International University Exchange Fund* (IUEF). Geneva. Switzerland.

¹⁵⁷ "On the other side of the open court is a somewhat smaller building. Its far end is a *nave* reserved for female prisoners. At the other end of the building is the prison office and the room where executions are carried out. In between are sixteen cells of solitary confinement. Each cell is 160 cms long and 60 cms wide, making it impossible to lie down in a straight position. There are no windows and no light and scant ventilation through holes below the roof. In the daytime the heat is stifling. There is no water and no latrine. Urine and excreta go on the floor. Cell prisoners are kept naked or sometimes allowed a pair of underpants". Robert af Klinteberg (1978). *Ibid.* p.35.

¹⁵⁸ Goytisolo, J. "Macías justificaba los asesinatos por apaleamientos como suicidios" in *El País* (09/08/1979) *Tribuna: Once años de terror y miserias en Guinea Ecuatorial*.

repression coinciding with its overthrow, several articles which included, for the first time, references to non-Spanish sources.

In this case, it seems as if the report stayed within the activism's network in Geneva, and its impact in the press came only after Amnesty International made use of it in its first condemnation of Macías regime in 1978. In less than a year his nephew Teodoro Obiang took over and although I have no confirmation on the relationship between both events, it is clear this report weakened Macías image abroad, paving the way towards a successful coup d'état of his closest assistant.

5.2.3. Amnesty International takes part

In October 1978, right after the publishing of the IUEF report, Amnesty International (AI) sent an appeal to the African Unity Organisation to take action and prevent further violations of human rights in Equatorial Guinea¹⁵⁹. It is the first action of the NGO against the Guinean dictator after the lifting of the press ban in Spain. Before, they had sent a press release in 1975 condemning for the first time the atrocities under Macías Nguema's regime but got no press coverage. Once the issue was no longer silenced in the ex-metropolis, media in Europe paid more attention, as seen in the article published by The Guardian in 1978, in which the word "condemnation" appears, for the first time, along with "Equatorial Guinea"¹⁶⁰. This appeal coincided with the tenth anniversary of the Guinean independence from Spain, a perfect informative hook for the NGO to spread the message strongly.

After all the efforts to get the AI report, I have not been able to find it and the NGO headquarters in London together with the libraries consulted assured me that the organization never issued a specific document on Equatorial Guinea. The condemnation came in the form of a background paper on the country published along with the Annual Report in which some more information was available.

Although it was a brief note and not as detailed as the other two mentioned, AI's pressure outreached the European media achieving a large impact also in the Spanish press. In the case of El País, ABC and La Vanguardia, they all published an article on it, signed by their correspondent in London. La Vanguardia gave two columns to the condemnation in which it slightly mentioned the tortures and Macías' repression¹⁶¹. ABC, surprisingly against its conservative attitude, published half of a page article from its correspondent in a very accusative tone against Macías, with transcriptions of the tortures described by Klinteberg. One could think that the newspaper made a turn in its strategy towards Macías but the reason behind this appears in the last paragraph. Together with the accusations to Macías, the journalist blamed his reign of terror on the Spanish political opposition, "which with its so called democratic support has helped consolidating one of the most brutal tyrannies in the world"¹⁶². Lastly, El País only published half of a column but also with an aggressive and radical tone against the Equatoguinean leader using terms such as "purge" or "brutal methods" when talking about the assassinations and tortures¹⁶³. It is also El País is the only one out

¹⁵⁹ "Amnesty International appeals to OAU to help end human rights violations in Equatorial Guinea", in Robert af Klinteberg (1978) "Equatorial Guinea-Macías country, the forgotten refugees". *International University Exchange Fund (IUEF)*. Geneva. Appendix 3.p 87.

¹⁶⁰ *The Guardian* (11/10/1978) "Regime of terror is condemned". p.7

¹⁶¹ *La Vanguardia* (11/10/1978) "Amnistía Internacional acusa a Guinea Ecuatorial de violación de los derechos humanos". p.19

¹⁶² *ABC* (11/10/1978). "Una década sangrienta: llamamiento de Amnistía Internacional sobre Guinea Ecuatorial". Pp.16.

¹⁶³ *El País* (11/10/1978). "Amnistía Internacional pide a la OUA que presione a Macías: Denuncia la ola de asesinatos y

of the three that gives a larger coverage to Equatorial Guinea in 1978, a year in which ABC and La Vanguardia barely published anything concerning the former colony.

5.3. Conclusion

Although the lifting of the ban allowed some authors to finally publish their research on Macías, its media coverage was much scarcer than expected. This was also the case for the ANRD's reports despite the pressure made by its representatives in Spain. As Donato Ndongo recalled, they were organizing press conferences as soon as they got this type of data, but journalist would not publish a word after attending them. This is the indeed the case for the two reports which got a larger impact: they were covered from their correspondents in London, as if the fact that they were informing from abroad protected the newspaper from a Government's reprisal.

Together with this assumption, there is the proof that criticisms against Macías in the Spanish press did have indeed negative consequences in the people living in Equatorial Guinea, as it happened with the publishing of Ramón García Domínguez book, "Guinea: Macías, la ley del silencio". It is plausible that the non-coverage of Donato Ndongo's book had more to do with the diplomatic crisis originated from the articles on the previous book than from a lack of interest. Therefore, the fact that none of the newspapers analyzed referred to the detailed information given on Macías repression confirms that their silence was not due to a lack of access to the data. The information was there, the books, the reports, they were available, and press conferences were organized. But media was simply following the request of the government of avoiding any comments on Macías. And for those journalists more skeptical, the reprisals after the comments on Macías' book legitimized the State argument and made it even stronger. As they were used to for decades, Spanish news editors preferred to keep things calm.

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS: NEWS ON MACÍAS AFTER THE LIFTING OF THE PRESS BAN

The study of Equatorial Guinea's news in the Spanish press requires a division into two parts: one between 1969 and 1976, when Spain was under Franco's regime and the former colony was declared classified material; and the other between 1976 and 1979, when the new freedom of press in Spain led to the suppression of all media bans and in Equatorial Guinea, Teodoro Obiang's coup d'état ended with Macías' ten year's regime. The two scenarios are so different that new sub questions need to be formulated. Whereas for the first part, I looked at why the Spanish State declared Equatorial Guinea classified material, in this new period, the main sub question is, once the censorship is over, how did the Spanish press inform about Macías regime?. Overall, the main research question on why the Spanish media kept silence on Macías violation of human rights still remains. As I will show later, the comparative analysis with other issues related to former colonies (Morocco) and genocide (Cambodia) show that indeed Equatorial Guinea was a secondary issue for the Spanish press editors.

In this second part, the subject of research also differs from the first one. Because the new democratic government allowed media to inform freely, I am not looking at foreign press as I did in the first part, because I believe the Spanish press had at this point the same freedom of expression than the foreign correspondents. However, democracy favoured the foundation of the new media opposite to the government which had been forbidden for years before. These new voices offered a different perspective within the Spanish media sphere that need to be reflected in my analysis. Therefore, for this second part of the decade I have looked at the three leading newspapers of this time. As for the first period, the conservative and State aligned newspaper ABC was still leading the ranking of the national press, followed by La Vanguardia, the leading right-wing newspaper edited in Barcelona. They were the only two with a daily print run of more than 200.000 issues¹⁶⁴. The third one, El País, was founded in May 1976, and since its beginning it became the most read left-wing newspaper.

The first part of this chapter focuses on the moment in which the press ban on Equatorial Guinea is lifted. Because it occurred in the same year in which El País was founded and the Spanish democratic transition began, I believe the attitude of the media is very much influenced by this background and therefore it deserves a specific analysis.

Right after, I will zoom out and give an overall comparison of these articles in relation to a larger timeline: the whole twentieth century. I will also compare the Equatorial Guinea's issue with other international news that got major attention worldwide.

6.1. The new free press

In September of 1976, Adolfo Suárez's government ended with decades of censorship for the

¹⁶⁴ http://madripedia.es/wiki/Prensa_madrile%C3%B1a_de_la_transici%C3%B3n (visited in 25/03/2013).

Spanish media. National and international media congratulated the decision although there were still two issues that remained under blanket: the violation of human rights by the Spanish security forces and Equatorial Guinea¹⁶⁵. The lifting of the specific ban on the former colony was finally announced almost two months later, on the 20th October of that year. The tiny African country was the only issue concerning the former colonies which was still censored when democracy arrived. Why did not the new government lift it together with the other press bans? And moreover, why did they renew it in February of 1976? According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the lifting was indeed decided months before but they wanted to inform Macías first and this took longer than expected¹⁶⁶. However, Antonio García Trevijano, the lawyer of the Guinean president argues that the decision responded to a whole conspiracy against him from the Socialist party and its leader, Felipe González. If this last argument held true it could mean, once again, that Equatorial Guinea was seen as a national matter for the Spanish State, only relevant as long as it affected its national politics.

On the 21st October 1976, ABC's leading article congratulated the Spanish government for the lifting of the press ban on Equatorial Guinea. In the absence of an official statement, articles like this one are the only proof available of the lifting. The conditions and arguments in which this decision was taken remain unknown. In the case of ABC's director, he did not mention the tense relations between the two countries, although it did call for a better understanding in the future years¹⁶⁷. Meanwhile, one of Macías ministers took advantage of the lifting to tell the press in Las Palmas (Canary Islands) that the censorship was imposed by Spain to silence its intervention in the failed coup d'état of 1969 and other conspiracies against the Guinean president. Replies did not await and a few days later the Guinean embassy published a communiqué asking the Spanish press for self-control, the Spanish government to rethink on their attitude towards Guinea and the colonialists to assume the new reality of an independent and powerful Guinea¹⁶⁸. Clearly the representatives of Macías in Madrid were stressing the message that neo colonialism is not for Guinea. The Spanish authorities responded with another prohibition, but this time to the Guineans living in Spain: they were reminded to avoid making judgments on Guinean politics and possible conspiracies in order not to affect the diplomatic relations¹⁶⁹. While this request to the Guinean refugees was made publicly, according to Emilio Cassinello, the same request for self-censorship was made to journalists in private. He explained how they were told to freely speak about Equatorial Guinea except for Macías, because "he was such an unpredictable and mad man that any criticism from the press could lead to all kind of reprisals"¹⁷⁰. This sort of undercover censorship on Macías was also confirmed by the director of *Diario 16* in those years, Miguel Angel Aguilar.

In his interview, Emilio Cassinello explained how he and another Spanish diplomat were sent to Bata, in Equatorial Guinea, to inform Macías about the lifting of the ban:

"It was a very short meeting. Macías screeched his teeth making a horrible noise, he looked very tense. I think he did not know what we were going to tell him. We explained him that since the dictatorship was over and the press was free to inform, the government had decided to lift the ban imposed on him and Equatorial Guinea. He suddenly stood up and said: "the meeting is over". My colleague answered: "Mister President, the African society is known for its courtesy to its guests, you cannot kick us out like this". We were very worried about

¹⁶⁵ *The Guardian* (18/09/1976) 'Spanish reporting ban ends', p.3.

¹⁶⁶ Interview to Emilio Cassinello held in Madrid on the 20th October, 2011.

¹⁶⁷ *ABC* (Editorial. 21/10/1976). "Sobre Guinea". p.3

¹⁶⁸ *ABC* (30/10/1976). "La verdad sobre Guinea no se sabrá hasta el siglo que viene". p.21

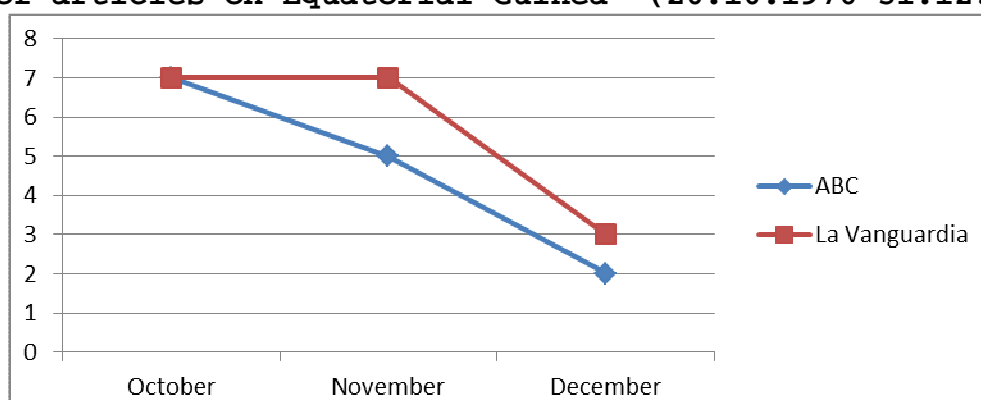
¹⁶⁹ *ABC* (30/10/1976). "Recordatorio a los Guineanos refugiados para que no perjudiquen las relaciones entre ambos países" p.21.

¹⁷⁰ Interview to Emilio Cassinello held in Madrid on the 20th October, 2011.

the Spanish citizens still living there and at that time our main concern was to work on a smooth and peaceful political transition to democracy in our own country”¹⁷¹.

This caution that the government took suggests that indeed it was difficult to maintain a balanced and stable relationship with Macías and it seemed they feared any harmless comment in the press leading to another diplomatic crisis. Therefore, the majority of the media did not denounce the violation of human rights and the executions, avoiding as well all type of information concerning the social, political or economic situation of the country and its people. The self-censorship worked so well that after five years of silence the two most important newspapers in Spain barely published a dozen of articles on Equatorial Guinea in the months that followed the lifting of the ban (see graph below). However, the new leftist press founded that same year showed an opposite attitude towards Guinea, an exceptionality that will be explained later.

Number of articles on Equatorial Guinea (20.10.1976-31.12.1976)



According to Cruz Melchor Eya, from the ANRD in Geneva, once the ban was lifted, the opposition movement tried its best to communicate about this and other reports to the Spanish media, but the coverage was always very low. At this point it is important to clarify that only a few months had passed after the press was declared free in Spain and therefore the media scenario was still dominated by traditional, pro-government newspapers, they themselves developing a sort of gate keeping to protect the Government's caution, acting as official State sources:

“To be honest, it has been the Guineans, and not the Spanish media, the ones who have made larger use of this new freedom of information. So much have they taken advantage of it that the Spanish authorities have had to impose some necessary restrictions. The Guinean citizens in exile can give their opinions but they cannot show their discrepancies towards Macías regime in such a conspiratorial way”¹⁷².

Even though this type of media held the largest audience, the first newspapers of the opposition were born soon after the freedom of expression was installed. It is the case of El País, which was founded with an ambitious print run of 128.805 exemplars, similar to that of ABC but still far below La Vanguardia's¹⁷³.

Although it published a total of 13 articles on Equatorial Guinea in 1976, less in number than La Vanguardia and ABC, the content relates more to the social, economic and political consequences of the lifting of the ban, referring to Macías despotism and to the stateless situation of the Guineans living in Spain. As an example, while ABC supported the call for discretion made by the

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² Javaloyes, (30/10/1976). “Meridiano mundial: Guinea”. ABC. p.21.

¹⁷³ http://madripedia.es/wiki/Prensa_madrile%C3%B1a_de_la_transici%C3%B3n (visited in the 08/02/2013)

Government to the Guinean opposition, *El País* published a letter to the editor from a Guinean citizen using a pseudonym regretting Spain's abandonment and the humanitarian consequences the ban had for the Guinean people¹⁷⁴.

The day the ban was lifted, this newspaper published a full report on the recent history of Equatorial Guinea, entitled "Free information about a forgotten country", and gave a transcript of the official notice received from the Ministry of Information¹⁷⁵. In the days that followed, it informed about the one-party type of government of Macías and offered interviews with some Spaniards that arrived to Madrid from Malabo who expressed that: "We didn't know about the lifting of the ban until we read the press in the flight. If the Spanish media talks about this issue they will put in high risk the lives of the Spaniards remaining there"¹⁷⁶.

In accordance to its role of progressive, modern and democratic newspaper, it seems as if *El País* actively ignored the instructions coming from the Ministry of Information. It was not surprising, taking into account that months before, in August 1976, its editor denounced the government's decision of renewing the press ban on Equatorial Guinea arguing that "neither the Spanish State's security nor the national stability can be put in danger because the Spaniards can read the news that other newspapers publish on Equatorial Guinea worldwide, all except the Spanish ones"¹⁷⁷.

Thus, if Equatorial Guinea was for new born newspapers like *El País* the perfect issue to challenge the effectiveness of the acclaimed freedom of expression, for the rest it was indeed an uncomfortable matter to inform about for two reasons: on one hand, talking about the Guineans in exile or the Spanish ex settlers would compromise the Spanish State because of their lack of action regarding their social and economic status since independence; on the other, talking about the country itself would mean referring to Macías and therefore overstep the limits imposed by the Spanish State. There was little room left for the Spanish press to inform on it without getting in trouble with the new State. Moreover, most of their editors argued that after five years of silence their readers were no longer interested on the issue. At this point, the perfect scoop arose: the García Trevijano dossier.

6.1.2 Macías and his controversial Spanish lawyer

Right after the ban on Equatorial Guinea is lifted, both *La Vanguardia* and *ABC* published a full report on the former colony. Entitled "Guinea: Full report of the Trevijano dossier" and "Guinea uncovered", the weekend supplements of both newspapers published six to eight pages about Guinea. However, although these titles lead to think of a report on the former colony, they basically deal with the accusations of fraud and corruption made by the Guinean opposition movement ANRD to Antonio García Trevijano. Although I did not have access to the original copy of it, it is confirmed by both Trevijano and the representative of the ANRD in Spain, Donato Ndongo Bidyogo, that the report published in *Gaceta Ilustrada*, *La Vanguardia*'s supplement, is its complete version (see Annex 3). This dossier contained the following parts: two pages on the political and economic power of García Trevijano in Equatorial Guinea; two letters of the ANRD to the King of Spain and United Nations denouncing the repression in their country; one page of historical review

¹⁷⁴ *El País* (Letters to the Editor. 19/10/1976) "Guinea".

¹⁷⁵ *El País* (20/10/1976) "Libre información sobre un país olvidado".

¹⁷⁶ *El País* (22/10/1976) "Los españoles viven en Guinea con dificultades".

¹⁷⁷ *El País* (15/08/1976) "Secretos oficiales".

of the post-independence years and two pages of García Trevijano's reply sent to *Le Monde*. Throughout these pages, the ANRD did denounce the violation of human rights suffered in Guinea and how 40 per cent of the population, thus 150,000, fled the country since 1969. It also addressed the precarious situation of the 8,500 Guineans living stateless in Spain and called for an intervention on behalf of the Guinean population. However, these were a few references in a whole story about fraud and corruption of members of the Spanish political elite. The ANRD avoided getting into details on Macías' regime, although they counted on this information thanks to several reports they had financially funded. As the first lines read:

"We are convinced that the new freedom Spain is living cannot be fulfilled if some issues are not clarified, issues such as the one concerning our country. Certain interventions and dark activities from members of the State and the opposition never explained before must now be justified to the Spanish and the Guinean people"¹⁷⁸.

In their attempt to attract the media attention, both Donato Ndongo and Cruz Melchor Eya admitted that they had to leave aside the information concerning the crimes because the risk of not publishing the whole report was too high. They wanted Guinea to be in the press right after the ban was lifted and saw in García Trevijano's story the perfect hook for it. With their decision they were turning Equatorial Guinea into a national issue for Spain. Not surprisingly then, newspapers like *The Guardian* did not publish a word of it.

In different interviews they both explained in detail the events around the date of the lifting of the ban. After Franco's death in 1975, the Guinean activists both in Spain and Geneva hoped for a change in the official secret around their country and began to mobilize. Since the six months period of the ban was about to expire, they expected that the new Spanish government would announce its end in January 1976. This did not happen, and against all their predictions the ban was renewed once again for another six months. As a result, on the 5th of March, the new official festivity of Equatorial Guinean, around fifty Equatoguinean students protested in front of their embassy in Madrid against the ban's renewal. Obviously, nobody published their action. Neither had they published the first meeting of the Guinean opposition groups held a few months later in Barcelona. On the 7th of July, after members of the ANRD took over some checkpoints in the border with Gabon, almost a hundred Guineans were executed in Bata's prison accused of supporting them. Again, not a single word appeared in the Spanish press despite the mobilization of the international public opinion.

Donato Ndongo, as journalist and only representative of the ANRD in Spain, prepared a dossier denouncing Macías regime but concentrated it in the accusation on García Trevijano, arguing that he knew better than no one that the only way to get the journalist's attention was to turn Guinea into a national issue. And he also confirmed to me that Emilio Cassinello informed him a few days before about the lifting of the ban, a privilege he took advantage of when he decided to give the dossier to the socialists Enrique Múgica and Felipe González. The two politicians saw in it the perfect argument to end with the career of the controversial socialist Antonio García Trevijano, who aimed to install the third republic in Spain. As Donato Ndongo recalls:

"We did the Trevijano dossier with the only purpose of denouncing what was going on in Guinea. But it had a huge effect in the consolidation of the democracy in Spain because thanks to us this man was left out of the Spanish politics. We played an important role changing the the history of democracy in Spain while nothing

¹⁷⁸ *Gaceta Ilustrada*.(24/10/1976) "Guinea, texto íntegro del Dossier Trevijano". pp.74-81.

occurred in our own country”¹⁷⁹.

6.1.3 An ideological matter

Against the leading trend of most of the media which largely published the dossier, *El País* did not do it. Even though Donato Ndongo told me that the evening before the lifting of the ban he gave the dossier to the journalist of *El País* Jesús de las Heras, nothing came out about it on the 20th of October and just a few articles (less than half a page each) on it appeared a month later¹⁸⁰.

The fact that this leftist newspaper did not accuse Trevijano and did not mention the scandal confirms that the dossier had much more to do with Spanish politics than with the Guinean issue. *El País*' ideology was in line with that of García Trevijano's and as a major politician of the national sphere, it is most likely that the newspaper preferred to leave the ex-colony aside for some time in order to protect him. It is revealing the letter sent to the editor by García Trevijano years later, when Macías was overthrown by his nephew Obiang, in which he accused its editor of supporting then the scandal against him that for years *El País* had refused to talk about¹⁸¹.

In an interview García Trevijano insisted that the press ban on Equatorial Guinea was lifted with the only purpose of destroying his political career. He explained that in March of 1976 he was put in jail for his activities against Franco, a moment that the president Adolfo Suárez took advantage of to negotiate with Felipe González, the future leader of the Socialist Party, the ending of García Trevijano. According to him, his own political party betrayed him when they accepted the agreement offered by Adolfo Suárez: they had to allow the reinstallation of the monarchy in Spain in exchange of political power and a leading role in the Spanish democratic transition. Since Trevijano was against the monarchy, they had to finish with him in order to arrive to a consensus. The dossier on Guinea fitted perfectly. This is García Trevijano's opinion and so far I have no proven evidence of this political conspiracy against him.

About the dossier itself, as he did in the press years before, he denied all accusations about businesses and economic profit whereas he confirmed that he did assist Macías in the first years of his government on most of the issues concerning legal and constitutional affairs. When Macías declared himself president for life and renewed the constitution in 1973, García Trevijano rejected his absolutist regime and stopped assisting him. Regarding the murders and violation of human rights, he concluded that:

“I really don't know about them and I do not know if that is true of pure conspiracy prior to Macías' execution. I don't know if in this case, the rumors come before the real story or if this is a consequence of the rumors. I have tried to figure it out and it has always been impossible also because Macías was already dead. If he would have been alive he would have told me, for sure. He respected me so much that for him I was not only a wise man but a seer, he adored me like if I was a divinity to him. And today, years later I haven't got the confirmation of a single murder ordered by Macías. I know there had been some executions tolerated by him but not directly ordered by him. I can believe and suspect things but that is not the same as confirming. I have too much sense of the human responsibility to make such a declaration”¹⁸².

This quote is not only interesting for its content but also for the way it is expressed, which confirms

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Donato Ndongo Bidyogo, held in Murcia, on the 27th of July 2011.

¹⁸⁰ *El País* (17/11/1976) “García Trevijano no recibió ni solicitó ninguna retribución” & *El País* (24/11/1976) “Nunca me he lucrado de mis relaciones con Guinea”.

¹⁸¹ García Trevijano Forte, A. (01/09/1979) “Espejo de demócratas” *El País*.

¹⁸² Interview with Antonio García Trevijano held in Madrid on the 2nd November, 2011.

what the others interviewers had told me, unanimously, about the narcissist and highly ambitious personality of Antonio García Trevijano.

6.1.4 Main findings

After five years of imposed silence on Equatorial Guinea, the awaited moment arrived on the 20th October 1976. Unfortunately, the consequences on the press were not as expected: from the quantitative point of view, the lifting of the ban did not lead to a massive publication of articles on the former colony and from the qualitative side, most of them referred to the national part of it about García Trevijano. Whereas in the quantitative issue the three newspapers followed the same pattern, when it comes to its content, *El País* did publish information regarding the social repression and the dictatorial regime of Macías. However, as it will be shown in the next chapter, the information published this last months of 1976 in *El País* is much scarce than in 1979, with a difference of dozens of articles in 1976 to hundreds in 1979.

Two main arguments could explain this impact on the Spanish press: on one hand, the lifting of the ban occurred a few months later the democratic government was reinstalled in Spain and after forty years of dictatorship. Thus, I believe that the so called free press was merely a declaration of principles. As Shoemaker and Vos explained when addressing the communication routines as part of the gatekeeping process, the press was too used to obey and the Government was too used to control the media. This is clearly proven in the request made by the minister of Foreign Affairs to the Spanish journalists of avoiding all references to Macías in order to protect their compatriots still living in the country. This action would not be respected by any other media elsewhere in Europe. As a result, the status quo remained in 1976 and the two most read newspapers, *ABC* and *La Vanguardia*, still followed the State as they did under the Francoist regime.

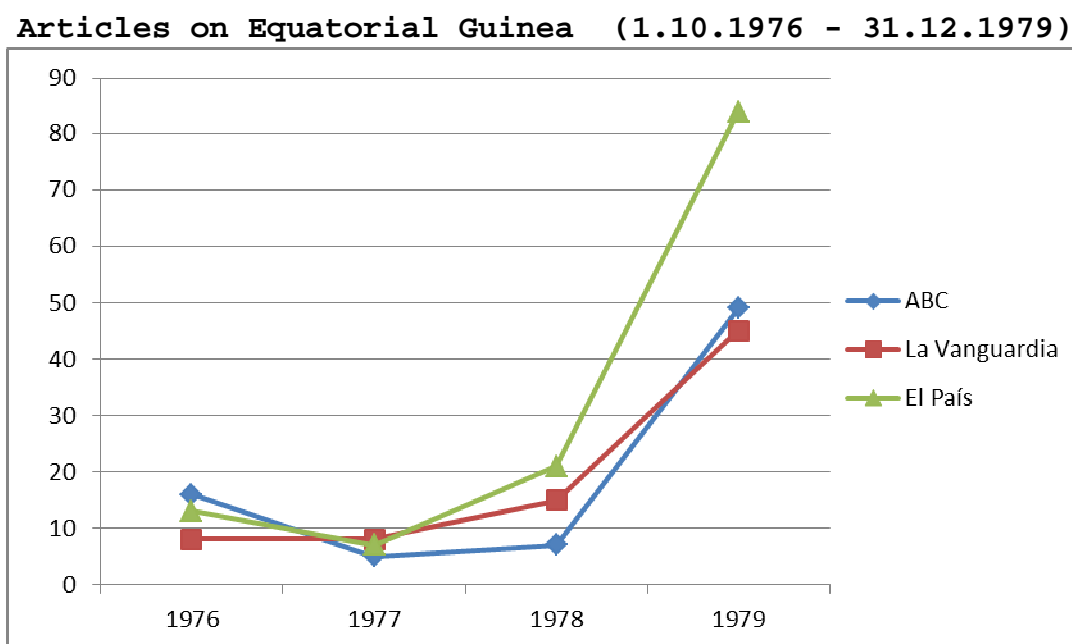
Secondly, the new press law and the new born freedom of expression was without any doubt a great opportunity for the journalist opposed to the State to start communicating freely. Most of them had been silenced for years, suffering continuous seizing and threats from Franco's regime while others went on exile. These journalists were indeed willing to go against the common practices of the propaganda model. But when the first alternative media were launched in 1976, it was still too soon for them to have the tools, the infrastructure and the power to get to a large audience. Thus, while they did make an effort to inform on the lifting of the ban, they were still too young and too few to be massively heard. This is the case of *El País*, today one of the three most read newspapers in Spain. Born in May 1976, by the time the ban on Equatorial Guinea was lifted, its board was still in the process of definition of the newspapers' position and informative trend. Their first objective was to fight for the implementation of universal freedoms and civil rights in Spain, and in this sense, Equatorial Guinea represented one of the last State controls on media publishing. As other classified materials, this ban had to be lifted in order to achieve a real freedom of expression. The effects the ban had in the maintenance of Macías' regime was indeed relevant, but nevertheless it represented a secondary matter for the new progressive press.

Lastly, the strongest argument for this media apathy on Equatorial Guinea is that of the priority of national politics. The Spanish society, in which media must be included, were going through the historical moment of a democratic transition, and every event taking place within the country deserved more attention than the news coming from the outside. And here is where the silence on Equatorial Guinea can be justified. Against the rest of the European countries, relations between Spain and Equatorial Guinea were distant and tense in these post-colonial years. Macías did its best

to break with the metropolis and Spain took profit of it trying to evade all responsibilities towards the former colony. The press ban did the rest, allowing the Spanish society to forget about the two hundred years of colonization in the African country. Therefore, if we think of “proximity” as a major feature for media editors to select some news and reject others, in the case of Equatorial Guinea, the lack of proximity in 1976 made it an issue from the outside, with no relation to the big information boom the national sphere was offering. Equatorial Guinea was no longer part of Spain and only a few hundred Spaniards remained there.

6.2 The Spanish press in the last years of Macías

As I have explained before, the lifting of the ban on Equatorial Guinea did not have a major effect in the number of articles published on the former colony. Moreover, most of the articles referred to the Trevijano’s affair and little was still said about the situation in the country. However, the dozen of articles published in the last quarter of 1976 are surprisingly more than the number registered for the whole year 1977. All of the three showed a decrease in their frequency despite the publishing of different books on Macías and the new freedom to inform on it. With less than ten articles for the whole year, the three newspapers record a very similar and scarce frequency. In the following years, they also show a similar increasing trend although there is a large difference in the type of increase. Whereas in 1978 ABC remains in the same line as in 1977 and far below 1976, La Vanguardia doubles its number of articles while El País triplicates it. Both of them pay attention to the human rights reports issued in 1978 on Macías regime. In 1979, the coup d’état of Teodoro Obiang and Macías’ execution led to a peak in the articles published. But again, there is a large difference in the sort of increase. La Vanguardia and ABC show a similar increase of up to 49 articles while El País almost doubles it (80 articles). All of them show this huge increase only after August 1979, when the two events took place and the Spanish journalists were sent to Equatorial Guinea to cover them.

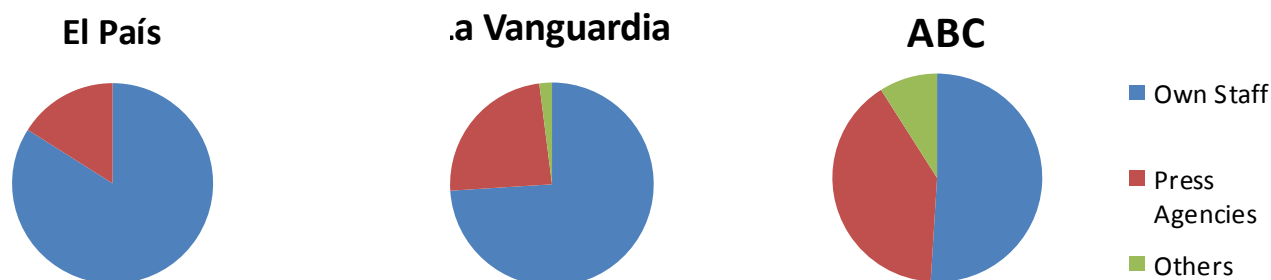


In this sense, we can also look at the type of producers of these articles, whether they were written by the newspaper own staff or by a press agency. Other sources such as State ones (diplomatic offices, Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and foreign press (European or Cameroonian and Gabonese media) can bring light into the relevance the press editors gave to the information on Equatorial Guinea.

As shown in the graphs below, in all cases most of the information is covered by own staff, being El País the one that registers the highest number of articles produced by their own journalists. This can be explained by the fact that, in the peak period of 1979's second half, this newspaper sent a correspondent to Malabo for more than three months, perhaps as a way to gain a dominant position in the new media scenario. La Vanguardia dedicates much of its information to the Guinean diaspora living in Catalonia, articles most of them written by members of their own staff. The fact that all of them relied on their journalists first let us think of a certain interest from the news editor on Equatorial Guinea and it could also mean that there was an open access to the sources of information. The press agency seems to be the second option in all cases which let us conclude that they were no longer the *gatekeepers* of this issue. In this sense, ABC is the one that relied more on press agencies, mostly EFE, the State aligned one. El País and La Vanguardia published news from other agencies, Spanish such as Cifra or Europa Press and international, such as France Presse. Lastly, by other sources in the case of ABC I mean press communications from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Guinean Embassy in Madrid while for La Vanguardia it refers to news coming from other newspapers, mostly Cameroonian and Gabonese.

In terms of media framing, these results confirm three arguments: first, that El País, since its foundation, invested in the production of its own articles as a way to cover an informative gap in Spain; that ABC continued informing as always, prioritizing State sources over others; and La Vanguardia positioned itself somewhere in the middle, between its conservative past and the new Catalanian pride that arouse after Franco's repression.

Sources of the news on Equatorial Guinea

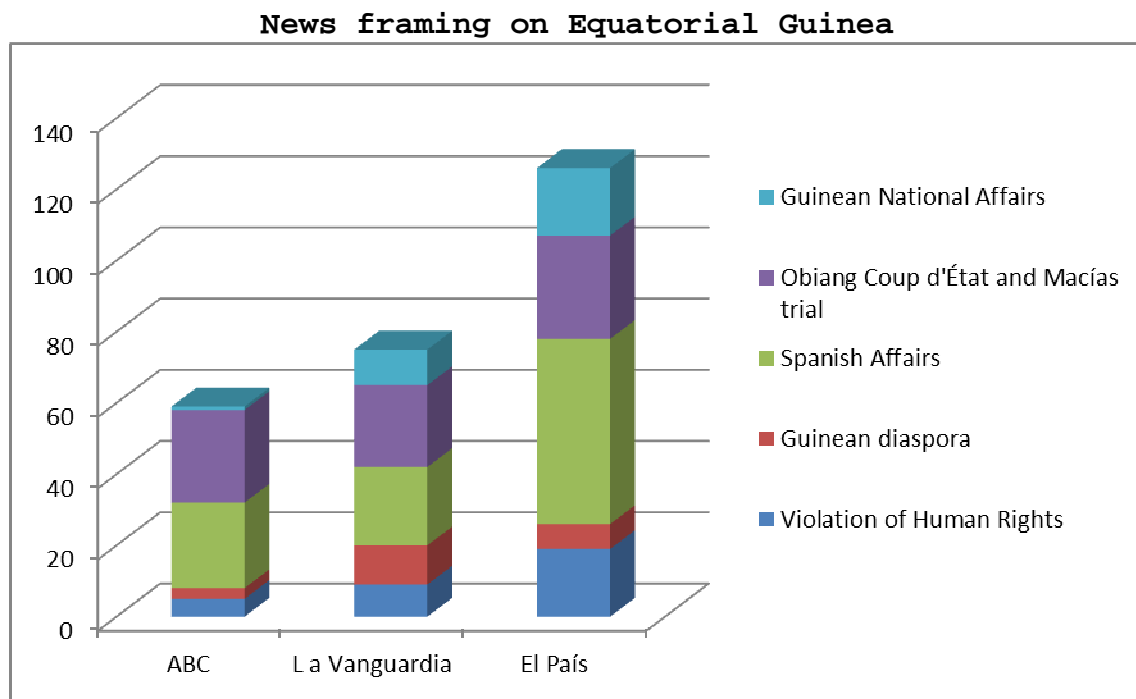


6.2.1 News framing of the most influential messages

For the period between 1976 and 1979, I have identified five main issues that the three newspapers covered concerning Equatorial Guinea. Within Spain, the two main topics were about the relations between Spain and Equatorial Guinea (economic and political) and the political Guinean diaspora organized in activist groups. Within the former colony, the two main issues would be the coup d'état and Macías' trial together with the Guinean affairs covered by the Spanish correspondents. Lastly but most importantly, I am looking at how the violation of human rights under Macías is reflected in the Spanish press.

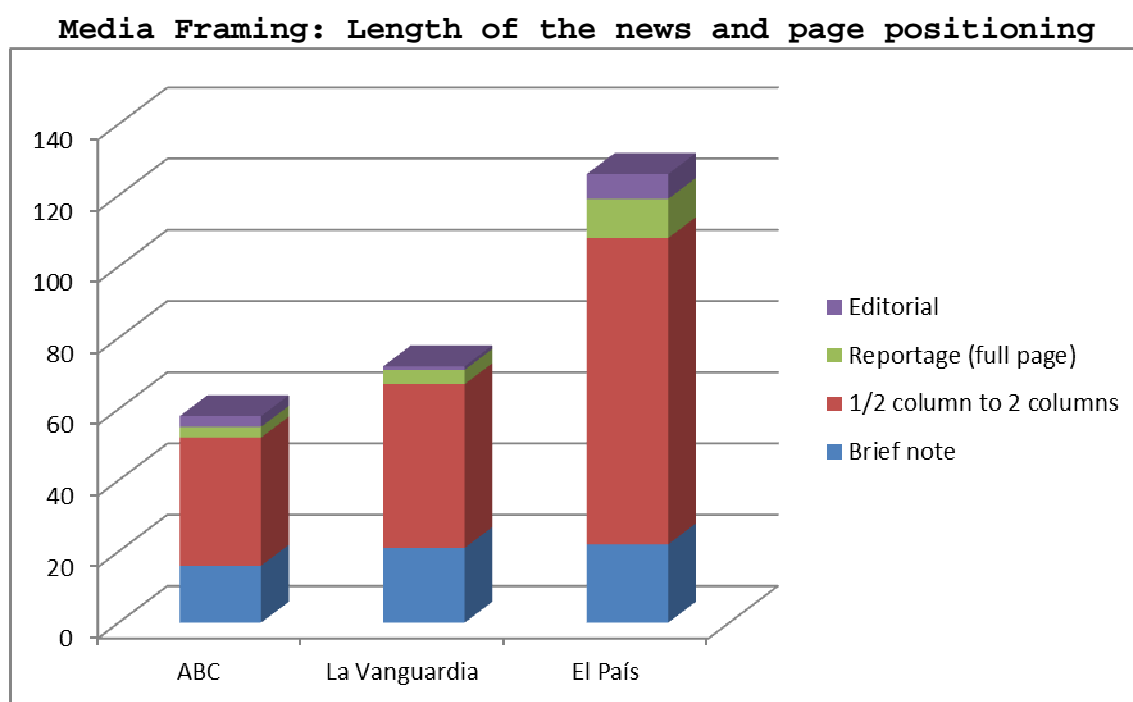
The conclusion is very interesting because it seems as if each newspaper decided to fill the gap of the other two in certain topics. For instance ABC paid more attention to the colonial aspect of Equatorial Guinea: everything that had to deal with Spanish affairs. La Vanguardia was more interested in the Guinean diaspora, giving them voice against Macías through their actions held mainly in Barcelona. And El País informed largely on the reports published abroad about the violation of human rights¹⁸³. Overall, La Vanguardia is the one out of the three that gave a more equal coverage of the five issues. This is interesting because while the other two do consider the Spanish affairs to be determinant in the news selection, for La Vanguardia this is almost as relevant as the change in the Guinean government. This let us think of a clear intention to put distance with Madrid and the national affairs perhaps as a way to emphasize its Catalanian identity. It makes all sense for the other two that their first choice are for those news closely related to their readers, responding to the proximity factor which plays a crucial role in all agenda-setting media worldwide.

¹⁸³ Goytisoló, J. (25/08/1979). "Política y rentabilidad: la lección de Guinea" *El País*.



Whereas the graph above shows the quantitative analysis of the different topics on Equatorial Guinea, the following gives an idea of how relevant these according to their position in the page. The fact that in all cases the most common choice is a medium size article, between a half and two columns, confirms that although Equatorial Guinea was almost never a crucial issue to inform largely about, it was nonetheless a matter that deserved permanent attention. However, if we look closely to the other type of articles, being the editorial the leading sort in terms of relevance in the page and the brief note the least, there are several differences among the three. El País leads the ranking with more than double the number of editorials on Equatorial Guinea, followed by ABC. Whereas El País shared the Guinean accusations against the Spanish government for legitimating Macías, ABC took the opposite side and blamed the Guinean government for its constant confrontations with Spain.

When looking at the reportages, both ABC and La Vanguardia barely published 3 to 4 full pages articles in the four year period, a very scarce number compared to El País which almost triplicates it. In all cases, the reportages were published in the second half of 1979, when the Spanish correspondents were in Malabo covering Teodoro Obiang's coup d'état and Macías' trial. Again, El País paid more attention to the social aspects of the Guinean reality, while the other two concentrated more in the political issues. Regarding the brief notes, those are in most of the cases teletypes from press agencies concerning economical agreements or cultural exhibitions related to Equatorial Guinea. The fact that these brief notes are not related to political matters and do not have a direct effect in the diplomatic relations explain the homogeneity among them in all the three newspapers.



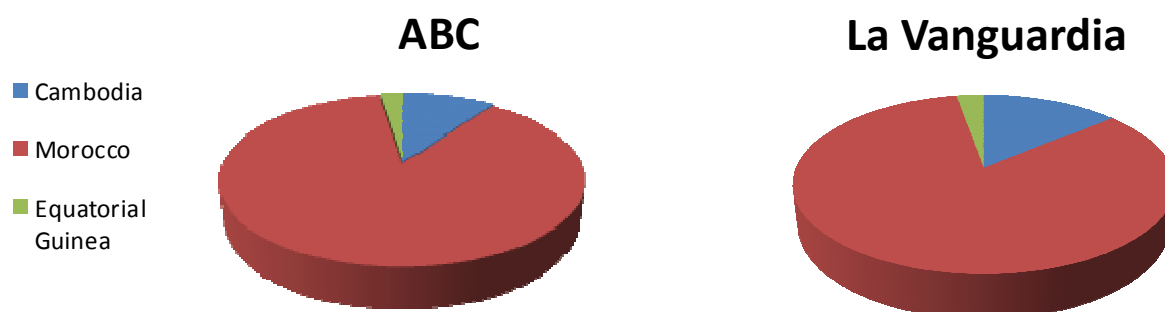
6.2.2 Comparative study with other international news

According to Shoemaker and Vos gatekeeping theory of mass media, journalists define the newsworthiness depending on the following factors: timeliness, proximity, impact, conflict, sensationalism, prominence, novelty or oddity¹⁸⁴. To this regard, the five year's censorship on Macías violent regime played a crucial role in the timeliness factor. Although the atrocities committed could have been newsworthy in terms of impact and sensationalism, readers were no longer interested in events that had occurred years before. And as I have described in the historical background, by the time the ban was lifted, Macías' power had drastically decreased and his regime was no longer as repressive as before. On the other hand, as a former colony of Spain, we might think on proximity as a factor of major interest for the editor that set the news-agenda. As it happened with the Spanish Sahara, the two colonies of Spain in Africa gained their independence much later than the rest and, in the meantime, a considerable number of Guineans and Moroccans came to live to the metropolis. However, its presence in the Spanish press is astonishingly different, being the Moroccan region hugely covered compared to Equatorial Guinea. And this is the case despite the fact that Equatorial Guinea had been a colony of Spain for almost two centuries (the Spanish Sahara officially for 90 years) and the economic interests were still higher in the black African country. As shown in the graph below, thousands of articles were published on Morocco compared to dozens on Equatorial Guinea between the beginning of 1976 and the end of 1979 in both ABC and La Vanguardia. The average number of articles is almost the same for the two newspapers: 2400 for Morocco and 70 for Equatorial Guinea.

In another perspective and in order to argue the lack of attention the Guinean issue received despite its humanitarian interest, I have looked at the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia and compared its impact in the news with Equatorial Guinea's. I chose this topic because Chomsky's *Manufacturing*

¹⁸⁴ Shoemaker, P.J. & Vos T.P., (2009) *Gatekeeping theory*. Routledge. New York. p.25

Consent theory selects the Khmer Rouge genocide as an example of an issue newsworthy because of the US government's intention of portraying the communists in general and the Vietnamese in particular as the enemies of the Western world¹⁸⁵. The result is again surprising as both newspapers, only in 1979, published more than three times the number of articles on Cambodia than on Equatorial Guinea for four years. This large attention from the Spanish press does not hold any relation to the relevance Cambodia had for the Spanish external and diplomatic relations. Not only then, but still today, Spain does not have any diplomatic representative in the South-East Asian country. This confirms Chomsky's argument of the influence of large media corporations in other newspapers. In this case, the external influence of the American media in ABC and La Vanguardia's agenda-setting is clear. On the contrary, the lack of attention to Macías and Equatorial Guinea from the Spanish media also had an effect abroad. We will never know what would have happened in the former colony if the most influential newspapers of Spain would have lobbied against Macías as the Americans did against the Khmer Rouge.



6.2.3. A timeline perspective: Equatorial Guinea in the Spanish press throughout the 20th century

The understanding of the Spanish media approach on Equatorial Guinea and its post-independence period gets much clearer when looking into the whole twentieth century period. ABC and La Vanguardia are the two oldest newspapers still running today in Spain and their news archive are a highly valuable treasure that allows us to dig into the Spanish most recent history. It is also an extremely helpful tool to draw a broader picture of the relevance Spanish Guinea had for the public opinion, since the first years of the 20th century when a few hundred Spaniards, mostly missionaries, lived in the colony.

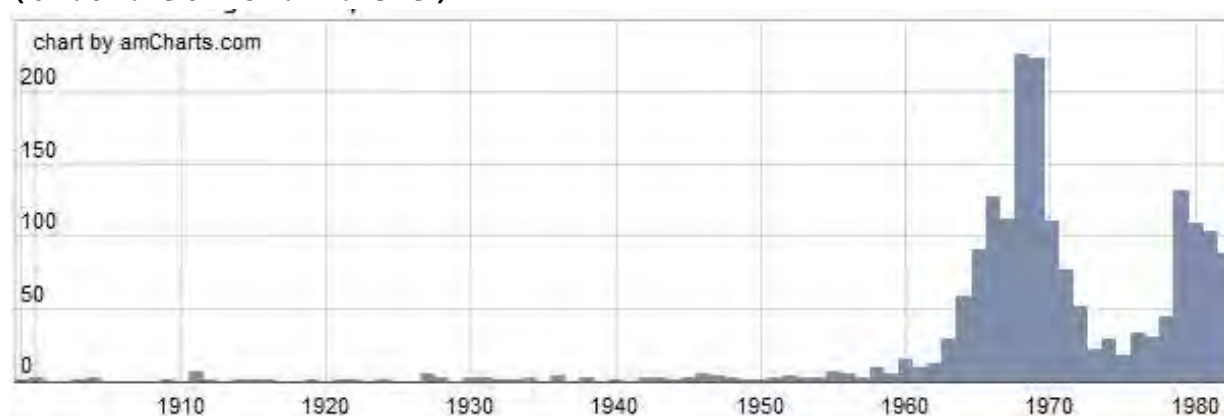
As shown in the graphs below, the century timeline shows very low activity for decades, with both newspapers publishing less than 15 articles per year between 1900 and 1940. After the Spanish civil war and under Franco's regime, the colony seems to get larger attention although the numbers remain low. It is in the 1960's, when the colony is declared a province of Spain, that journalists in the Peninsula become more interested. This could be related to the fact that many more Guineans came to Spain to continue their studies, as Cruz Melchor recalled when talking about his experience

¹⁸⁵ Chomsky N. & Herman E.S (1994). *Manufacturing consent: the political economy of the mass media*. Vintage. Great Britain. p.260.

as a university student¹⁸⁶. The new economic and social agreements signed between Madrid and Malabo shortened distances between the two capitals. Together with the declaration of independence and the first years of Macías, news in this period (1960-1971) are multiplied by ten, being the most relevant decade in terms of media impact on Equatorial Guinea.

Interesting is to note that despite the press ban, the following years still register a larger number of articles compared to that of the first half of the century. Although communications with the colony were ameliorated in the second half of the 20th century, the difference in news publishing is big enough to think of other reasons. In my opinion, the strongest argument is related to the Spanish community increase in Equatorial Guinea. As an example, the mainland city of Bata counted 37 Europeans in 1901 (out of 237 inhabitants) while in 1960, it became a major port with up to 1,426 whites, almost a third of its total inhabitants (3,548)¹⁸⁷. New infrastructures, large private exploitations of cocoa, timber and coffee provided Spain with up to 87.543.000 dollars benefit by the time of the independence¹⁸⁸. Better relations with the new province of Spain and a much larger community of expatriates deserved the attention of the Spanish newspapers.

La Vanguardia - Frequency of articles on Equatorial Guinea (01.01.1901-31.12.1979)

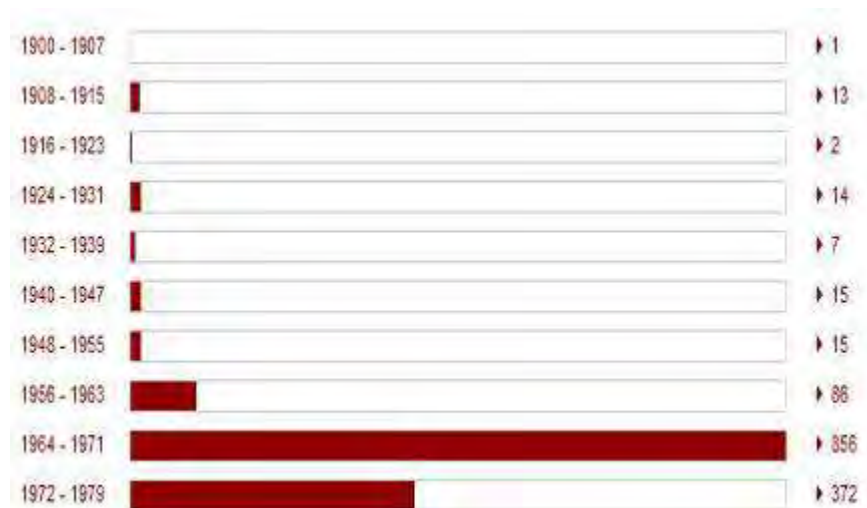


¹⁸⁶ Interview with Cruz Melchor Eya Nchama held in Geneva on the 26th of September, 2011.

¹⁸⁷ Fegley, R. (1989) *Equatorial Guinea: an African tragedy*. Peter Lang Publishing, New York. p.60.

¹⁸⁸ Ndongso Bidyogo, D. (1977) *Historia y tragedia de Guinea Ecuatorial*, Ed. Cambio 16. Madrid. p.155.

ABC - Frequency of articles on Equatorial Guinea (01.01.1901-31.12.1979)



6.3. Conclusion

Throughout the previous pages, I have analysed quantitative and qualitative aspects of the news about Macías that three very different newspapers published in Spain. Their approaches differ in type and number but nonetheless, the broader picture follows the general pattern of indifference towards Macías. Let us focus first on the particular features of the analysis, the basis to understand the more general conclusions.

With regard to the quantitative analysis of the news published in the second half of Macías regime, between 1976 and 1979, the results suggest that although lifted in October 1976, the press ban on Equatorial Guinea still had an effect a year later. The very few articles published in 1977 in the three newspapers let us think of a certain caution towards the issue. As I have previously explained, covert censorship around Macías still prevailed, imposed by Ministry of Foreign Affairs when lifting the press ban. It is then plausible that the editors feared their newspaper to be seized if they did not follow the State instructions, as it had happened for decades before. Moreover, the Spanish political transition was at its peak in 1977, one year later the new government was formed. Thus, there is an added reason to the imposed silence and that is the agenda-setting of the media, which in this period obviously prioritized the national sphere.

As we move into 1978, we see a slight increase of the articles published in all the three newspapers. Firstly, this could be related to a more stable period in the national politics and therefore more room was available for news coming from abroad. Secondly, two years had gone by since the State censorship was suppressed in Spain and media had gained more independence and credibility. This turned out into a better access to international news thanks, in most cases, to a new network of correspondents worldwide. As a result, many of the articles published in 1978 are written by Spanish journalists reporting from Washington, Geneva or London. Although there was still no media presence in Equatorial Guinea, it was possible to read, for the first time, articles about the Guineans in exile, their social situation and the political activism against Macías. Reports

denouncing Macías crimes which were issued in London and Geneva finally had a chance to be reported in the Spanish press. However, I had the opportunity to see the press impact of these reports in my interview with Cruz Melchor Eya and the presence in the Spanish press was still much less compared to the rest of the European media.

Lastly, 1979 stands undoubtedly as the most active year in terms of the press impact on the former colony. On one hand, Teodoro Obiang's coup d'état awoke the interest for the politics of this tiny country and tens of journalists were sent to cover it together with Macías' trial. This led to an increase in the number of articles which were for the first time produced in the field. In terms of freedom of expression, this was the first opportunity for foreign media to get in Equatorial Guinea after a decade, and this was a chance that could not to be missed. On the other hand, the fact that it was the tenth anniversary of the independence from Spain made this year already newsworthy for all the three newspapers. No matter what could happen, the anniversary was the chance to inform about Macías regime and draw a review of the whole decade. News-wise anniversaries are the perfect hook to rescue issues that are usually forgotten in the daily news agenda and the Guinean activists and other international organisations were aware of it. Therefore, the celebration of the anniversary in October 1979 favored the production of reports from NGO like Amnesty International and media activity consequently increased. To this regard, it is interesting to see the large difference between *El País* and the other two, *ABC* and *La Vanguardia* in the frequency of articles. The fact that the new left-wing newspaper published almost double the number suggests a clear intention to position itself as a progressive media giving voice to the minorities. Most importantly, they paid attention to the Guineans living in Spain who organized most of their activities in Barcelona.

From the qualitative perspective, the new democracy in Spain clearly helped to ameliorate journalistic routines and a more heterogeneous news production took place. Little by little media editors began to work freely and more independently and articles on Equatorial Guinea were no longer so dependent on State sources. As official sources such as the national press agency EFE lost its hegemony, other minor voices gained power and more importantly, journalists were willing to listen to them. Therefore, the fact that most of the news were self-produced means that there was a better access to the information and to different sources in Spain. This new freedom of expression also led to a large coverage of the government change in Equatorial Guinea. Sending their own staff shows that newspapers wanted to gain more credibility and to have a major influence in the message they gave to their audience. If this is indeed a positive sign, unfortunately it did not have an influence in denouncing the violation of human rights. In all the three cases, this issue still remains at the back out of the five defined. This is surprising for *El País* and *La Vanguardia* because they do prioritize topics related to Guinean national affairs and Guinean diaspora. Still, when it comes to provide in-depth available information of Macías crimes, the silence is the norm.

In terms of media framing (length and page positioning), editorials and full page reportage only represent ten per cent of the total number of articles. And they all focus in the Spanish-Guinean affairs with not a single mention to the reports launched in Europe about the crimes committed. This attitude of not willing to get involved is unfortunately not new for news on Equatorial Guinea. The general picture shows us that the only black African colony had never been a topic of interest for the Spanish media. And because these were under control of the State for forty years, we can then presume that it was neither a priority for Franco's government. Despite its economic interest and the common bonds given by the same language, religion and even State when the colony became a province of Spain, it seems as if Spain never identified itself with Equatorial Guinea and its people

never shared a common identity. Why was the Spanish Sahara more relevant to the Spanish press than Equatorial Guinea? Its proximity is a clear reason, being the distance to the Gulf of Guinea a handicap for the first travelers. Another reason might rely in the not so openly expressed Arab identity of Spain, mostly of the southern region. Under its domination for four centuries, this could also explain why Franco's regime felt closer to the neighboring country despite its cultural difference in the 20th century. In any case, this is not the subject of this thesis, although a deeper research on the identity features of the Spaniards with regard to Equatorial Guinea would be highly interesting.

Once concluding that it was not only Macías, but Equatorial Guinea a subject absolutely forgotten by the Spanish press, there is a second question related to the media responsibility on informing about genocide and crimes against humanity. As far as I have gone with the personal interviews and the archival analysis, genocide did happen in Equatorial Guinea under Macías rule. Only his closest assistant, Antonio García Trevijano did not confirm this and disagrees with what he considered a conspiracy to discredit Macías worldwide. Whether he ordered or not those crimes is not relevant in this case, but the fact that thousands of citizens were tortured and killed and the majority of the intellectual elite eliminated situates his regime as one of the most violent of its time. Censorship both in Equatorial Guinea and in Spain clearly silenced it but when the Guinean opposition in exile started denouncing it, the Spanish newspapers apathy is no longer a matter to access to the information. As Donato Ndongo recalled, press conferences from the ANRD were held both in Madrid and Barcelona between 1976 and 1979. This leads us to the conclusion that, as Chomsky explains, some conflicts are worth informing about and some others are just forgotten. It all depends on the State diplomacy and the political interest of denouncing it or not. And in this case, the mistakes committed in the post-colonial years and the lack of understanding between the two governments made it a very sensitive matter to talk about, an issue that could worsen even more their diplomatic relations. And Spanish media were still immature and not independent enough. They preferred to avoid problems with the State.

Final conclusion

The genocide, repression and violence suffered in Equatorial Guinea under Macías regime met all the conditions to become a hot issue in the Western media. The constant violation of human rights provided it with elements of conflict, sensationalism, oddity and general interest that, in any other case, would have been enough to define it as a newsworthy story. Proximity was another added feature for the Spanish press as it occurred in the former African colony. Unfortunately, for some reasons the drama did not make it to the first page of any of the Spanish media and the Spanish audience barely knew about it. Throughout this research I have tried to discover these reasons and I have found out that they could be applied to the whole period of Macías rule despite the large difference in the Spanish press historical background. With or without State censorship, with or without a specific press ban on Equatorial Guinea, media reacted in a similar way. Therefore, my main conclusion states that there were two main reasons behind this silence: on one hand, the Spanish historical indifference towards the African colony and on the other, the self-censorship of each journalist and press editor. For both arguments is the Spanish government the main responsible, being its intervention determinant for the perception that the public opinion had of Equatorial Guinea and Macías. Let us look closely into these two conclusions:

1. Colonialist strategy towards Equatorial Guinea

Spanish Guinea had always been considered by the metropolis as a profit-driven colony defined by Donato Ndongo as the “Spanish private estate”. For over two centuries, there was a lack of social interaction with the Guineans not only due to the type of colonization (for example, through the *Patronato de Indígenas*’ social classification) but also to the hard living conditions and the geographical situation of the country. Located in the middle of the Gulf of Guinea, the island of Bioko and the region of Rio Muni are far away from each other and their wild nature makes it the perfect home for malaria, typhoid fever and other diseases. The first Spaniards who lived there suffered constant infections and were isolated from the other Guinean region and from Spain. Therefore, investors and businessmen were the only Spanish people who took the risk of settling down in the tiny African colony. This small community of Spaniards did not make a difference in the image that the Spanish society had of the colony. They were too few and too far away. Although they were closer to the metropolis than Cuba, for instance, the feeling of distance played a crucial role in the information that arrived to the Peninsula. At the same time, there were very few Guineans who made it to the metropolis. Donato Ndongo recalled how the people reacted with surprise when they met him as many Spaniards had never seen a black man.

The colonialist strategy of the Spanish government was also present in their State propaganda which emphasized the economic aspects of the colony and left aside the social ones. It was also in their strategy to treat it as a secondary issue, always behind the other colonies. As a result, for many decades, scarce information was produced compared to Spanish Sahara or Cuba, a practice that certainly had an effect in the communication routines of the Spanish journalists. Because they were not used to receiving information about Guinea in the official bulletins, they would not seek it elsewhere, thus, other sources did not exist and readers could not claim some news they never received. It was a vicious cycle only broken when independence arrived. Then, the State’s strategy changed and informing about the new born State was allowed. However, censorship was imposed again in the severe form of a press ban when the government feared that media was going too far in

its interpretations about Macías. Once again the issue fell into the total silence for almost five years. This is the perfect example of how, according to Chomsky's *manufacturing consent* theory, a powerful elite can dominate and define the newsworthiness of a story. In this case, it is the most influential of all social institutions, the State, the gatekeeper who decided what its people deserved to know, as Shoemaker and Vos argue in their broadest level of analysis.

2. Self-censorship

In a working environment such as the one described, journalists were used to do "anti-journalism", as the Spanish journalist Miguel Angel Aguilar explained. If anyone dared to challenge censorship with an article against the Government's principles, they had to do so as discrete as possible, placing the news in a hidden corner of the least read page of the newspaper. His description shows clearly how the State censorship influenced all the steps of the media-framing process. When democracy arrived to Spain, the four decades of State propaganda led to communication routines difficult to destroy.

Therefore, press editors imposed a sort of self-censorship based on the fear for the State's reprisals. As in Plato cavern's allegory, journalists reacted to this new reality with the same patterns as before, believing that nothing had changed. They relied on the general assumption that Equatorial Guinea had never been interesting for the public opinion, therefore, typifying the audiences' will according to their own beliefs about the issue. This media-framing, this perception of reality, in this case of Equatorial Guinea, is absolutely associated with the lack of experiences, stories and emotions about the African colony. Their lack of interest was the same as the one of their readers, why would they become all of the sudden avid communicators of it? To this lack of experiences there is to add the lack of professional journalism. In the search for rigorous information, a reporter has to look for different sources, has to question the rumor and challenge the limits. When this has not been the case for years and years of work, time must pass by for professionals to slowly change their routines.

In the case of this research and according to Shoemaker and Vos model of gatekeeping analysis, it is the first level, that of the individual gatekeeping, the one that affects the most the news framing. Features like the journalist's background, the social order or the national leadership shaped the way the communicators informed about Macías. They were biased by the same type of social restrictions, which led to a homogenous flow of information about the Guinean reality that no one questioned.

The two arguments explained above are closely related to each other and proof the devastating effects of a severe control over the media. The social relevance of such practices can lead to the legitimization of criminal regimes like Macías' and the stigmatization of a certain group like the Guinean diaspora. Despite the fact that the intimate features of a journalist's personality will always have an influence in the news production, it is still the duty of the States and public institutions to preserve the media's role as watchdogs through which civil rights and democratic values are guaranteed.

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N.B.: The translation of extracts from press articles and literature was done by the thesis’ author.

List of main informants

Amador Martín del Molino – Claretian father, he lived in Bioko island from 1954 until 1974.

His work on prehistory of the island is very well known. He was not a teacher but a priest and researcher so he had very close contact with the different ethnic groups of the island and talked Bubi. He was one of the last Claretians remaining in the country after the independence and was expelled by Macías in 1974. He used to give the Sunday mass in the presidential palace.

Antonio García-Trevijano – Spanish lawyer, known in the 70's for his activism against Franco and the monarchy. He supported Macías' candidacy for the Guinean elections during the Constitutional Conference in Spain. He had never been in Equatorial Guinea before its independence. Once Macías won the elections, he became his closest assistant, neglected by the Spanish politicians but very much respected by the Ecuatoguinean ones. He is the person who better knew Macías. When the Spanish government put him in jail and took off his Spanish passport, Macías granted him a Guinean passport. He was accused of corruption and violation of human rights in the "Dossier Trevijano" elaborated by the Guinean activist movement ANRD. He was seen as the socialist alternative in Spain so according to other sources, Felipe González used this dossier to end with his political career. He is today and intellectual known for his Republican ideas and his essays and articles against the monarchy. He still receives the visits of some of the former collaborators of Macías.

Cruz Melchor Eya Nchama – Former founder and leader of the Ecuatoguinean activist movement ANRD, with its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. He lives and works there since 1975 when he left Spain after finishing his studies. He has not come back to Equatorial Guinea since 1970.

Donato Ndongo – Ecuatoguinean journalist and novelist, author of "History and tragedy of Equatorial Guinea". Lives in Murcia, Spain, since 1967. He resigned to have the Spanish nationality when granted to all Ecuatoguineans by the first democratic government in 1976. He went back to Equatorial Guinea in the 80's where he worked as director of EFE news Agency in Malabo.

Eugenio Nkogo – Ecuatoguinean philosopher, lives and works in León, Spain. Together with his large professional experience in Madrid, París and the United States, he is author of several books on contemporary philosophy such as *La encerrona* (1993), *Le Confinement* (1997) and *L'Humanité en face de l'Impérialisme* (1998). In 2005 he founded a new theory on the origins of the classical philosophy called "La Pensée Radicale".

Emilio Casinnello – Spanish diplomat, former Head of the Sub-Saharan African division in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with Franco and later Suarez government (1974-1977). Most of his time was dedicated to Equatorial Guinea. He was the one to inform Macías about the lifting of the press ban in 1976.

Luis María Ansón – Journalist, member of the Royal Spanish Academy and former director of ABC and EFE News Agency. Founder of the right wing newspaper La Razón, his work has always been marked by a conservative ideology and a blind support to the monarchy. During the period of the research, he was director of the ABC magazine, Blanco y Negro, and had a direct contact with members of Franco's government like Carrero Blanco.

Miguel Angel Aguilar – Journalist, founder and director of the Spanish delegation of the European Journalists Association, he started his career in the Diario Madrid, the only newspaper slightly opposed to Franco's regime in the 60's . When the diary was closed and his offices burnt out, he worked at Diario 16, first as director of its magazine, Cambio 16, later as correspondent in Brussels and finally as director of the newspaper between 1977 and 1979. He has a very leftist ideology and has since then worked for El País.

Severo Moto – Former minister of Information and Tourism during Macías regime (1971-1976) and for the past 11 years he has led the opposition government in exile with its headquarters in Madrid.

- ANNEXES -

ANNEX 1

limo. Señor:

Ha tenido entrada en esta Delegación el escrito de esa Dirección General núm. 110, en el que se nos da cuenta de la Nota Verbal formulada por la Embajada de Guinea en Madrid, en relación a unas frases groseras, --descorteses e inamistosas escritas a mano y sin firma-- que han aparecido sobre una copia de la circular que, en fecha 15 de diciembre último dirigimos a los interesados en la agricultura de café en Guinea.

Esta Delegación es ajena por completo a cualquier frase que haya podido escribirse sobre una copia de nuestra circular y lamentamos sinceramente que este hecho se haya producido, creyendo además no es atribuible a ninguno de nuestros asociados con intereses todavía en Guinea.

No obstante, en el día de hoy, nos dirigimos nuevamente a todos ellos explicándoles el incidente ocurrido y en petición de que traten de evitar que cualquier persona incontrolada pueda perjudicar las gestiones que, tan celosamente se llevan por nuestro Gobierno para solucionar los asuntos que, más que a nadie, interesa a ellos lleguen a una feliz solución.

De todo el proceso de este desagradable asunto se dará cuenta a todos los miembros del Consejo Directivo en la próxima reunión que se celebrará D.M. en la mañana del próximo día 26.

Dios guarde a V.I. muchos años.
Madrid, 18 de Enero de 1.972.

limo. Sr. Director Gral. de Política Exterior del M2 de Asuntos Exteriores
Madrid

ANNEX 2

TELEGRAMAS POR TELEFONO			
O.P.:	Clave:	Expedidor:	Teléfono: 4637882
		jose mbomio nsue aizabuto 5 3 ^{er} cent.	
Ins.:	Srl.:	Línea Piloto:	
N.º 199006	Pal.: 448	Día: 5	Hora: 01.20
Indicaciones:	=LT=		
Destinatario:	excmo sr presidente conferencia internacional		
Señas:	sobre el derecho de los pueblos		
Destino:	argel argelia		
TEXTO:			
los movimientos oposicion ecuatoguineanos manifestamos total apoyo por derechos y libertades pueblos del mundo stop ante proximas ejecuciones guinea ecuatorial rogamos intercesion vidas humanas y pedimos solidaridad con pueblo guineano urge molifuge anrd			

TELEGRAMAS POR TELEFONO
Servicio de Revisión
Tasa: 525
Sobretasa: 525
TOTAL: 1050

TELEGRAMAS POR TELEFONO
CAJA
MADRID
5 JUL 73

TELEGRAMAS POR TELEFONO			
O.P.:	Clave:	Expedidor:	Teléfono: 4637882
		jose mbomio nsue aizabuto 5 3 ^{er} cent.	
Ins.:	Srl.:	Línea Piloto:	
N.º 199002	Pal.: 26	Día: 5	Hora: 01.20
Indicaciones:	=LT=		
Destinatario:	excmo sr presidente conferencia jefes estado		
Señas:	oua		
Destino:	port louis maurice isla mauricio		
TEXTO:			
movimientos oposicion guineana rogamos intercedan clemencia ante presidente masias por proximas ejecuciones guinea ecuatorial molifuge urge anrd			

TELEGRAMAS POR TELEFONO
Servicio de Revisión
Tasa: 635
Sobretasa: 635
TOTAL: 1270

TELEGRAMAS POR TELEFONO
CAJA
MADRID
5 JUL 73

Source: Fernandez R. "Guinea: Materia Reservada", 1976. Sedmay Ediciones, Madrid. Pp. 240-241

ANNEX 3



GUINEA YA ES MENOS SECRETO

Texto íntegro del "Dossier Trevijano"

La Alianza Nacional de Restauración Democrática, en la que se encuadran los sectores democráticos, liberales, democristianos y socialistas de la oposición al tiránico régimen impuesto por el presidente Macías, ha venido intentando, desde su fundación, hacerse oír en los sectores homólogos de la oposición española. No se nos ocultan las dificultades que a tal diálogo se ha puesto, a nuestro juicio, debidas a la influencia que un hombre, Antonio García-Trevijano Fortes, tiene en esos medios de la oposición española.

Estamos convencidos de que la libertad hacia la que camina España no podrá lograrse plenamente si antes no se aclaran algunos temas, como el de nuestro país, y se justifican ante los pueblos español y guineano algunas actuaciones oscuras, o al menos nunca explicadas, sobre determinados comportamientos con relación a ese tema. Esto corresponde por igual a personalidades del estamento oficial y a miembros de la oposición.

La Alianza Nacional de Restauración Democrática, como Movimiento de Liberación que ofrece una alternativa democrática al actualmente oprimido pueblo de Guinea Ecuatorial, desea mantener un entendimiento fraternal, en igualdad de condiciones, basada en el mutuo respeto y en la solidaridad, con los partidos político integrados en el estamento unitario de la oposición española. Para llegar a esa mutua ayuda y a esa confianza bilateral es preciso destruir todos los obstáculos que pudieran enturbiar dicha relación. Deseamos, como objetivo político, una igualdad para todas las personas humanas, y para conseguirla es necesario armonizar las contradicciones que hoy se oponen a nuestro propio proceso hacia la libertad y el progreso.

Asesoramiento político del señor García-Trevijano

El abogado y notario don Antonio García-Trevijano Fortes fue presentado a los partidos políticos y delegaciones presentes en la Conferencia Constitucional de Guinea Ecuatorial en Madrid en el año 1967. Venía arropado de una aureola de gran progresista y opositor al régimen dic-

Guinea Ecuatorial ya no es «materia reservada» y esta circunstancia coincide con un tema de gran actualidad en las últimas semanas: la agria polémica que enfrenta al PSOE con Antonio García Trevijano a causa del «dossier» sobre la antigua colonia española que, elaborado por la oposición al presidente Francisco Macías Nguema, distribuyeron los socialistas entre los partidos que componen la Plataforma. Publicamos a continuación los documentos que componen dicho «dossier» y de los que el PSOE, por boca de Felipe González, ha dicho asumir todas las consecuencias que se deriven. Asimismo, «G. L.» se ha puesto en contacto con Antonio García Trevijano que niega la veracidad de los documentos y a ellos contraponen la carta que dirigió al periódico «Le Monde» y la lista de trabajos realizados para la República de Guinea y de los que se hace responsable. Ni añadimos ni quitamos nada



Presidente Macías
Sobrevive la masquete, el puerto de Bata

tatorial del general Franco, y pronto se ganó la confianza de las fuerzas políticas proindependentistas guineanas, y en la base de esa confianza, fue nombrado abogado constitucional. Asesoró a los principales líderes guineanos, muy especialmente al entonces vicepresidente del Consejo de Gobierno Autónomo, Francisco Macías Nguema, cuya candidatura presidencial impulsó y financió con alrededor de cincuenta millones de pesetas, según los cálculos más fidedignos.

Este apoyo a Francisco Macías le granjeó la confianza del Gobierno guineano, y fue nom-

brado en 1968 asesor del Gobierno Ecuatorial y condecorado en el I Aniversario de la Independencia (octubre de 1969) como «Caballero de la Orden de la Independencia».

Como asesor del Gobierno, el señor García-Trevijano se encargó de la contratación de cuadros y de expertos españoles en diferentes materias, que deberían contribuir al desarrollo del país, pero los acontecimientos de marzo de 1969, que revelaron la inestabilidad del Gobierno y originaron una amplia purga en todo el país, restaron confianza a los técnicos contratados sobre las condiciones po-

líticas del país al que se deberían incorporar.

A raíz de esos acontecimientos, el señor García-Trevijano aconsejó al presidente Macías que la única forma de conservar el poder era eliminar a toda la oposición y desconfiar de España y de los estudiantes guineanos que estaban estudiando allí, a los que frecuentemente suele dirigirse en términos despectivos. Macías, asesorado por el señor García-Trevijano, derogó aquellos de la Constitución que limitaban los poderes presidenciales, disolvió la Asamblea Nacional, se atribuyó todos los poderes y se proclamó presidente vitalicio.

Sabemos a ciencia cierta que la ley sobre las penas de muerte a los considerados por el régimen como «subversivos» fue redactada en el despacho madrileño del señor García-Trevijano, así como la nueva Constitución y los Estatutos del Partido Único Nacional de Trabajadores (PUNT).

Se acompañan, en los anexos, documentos.

Poder económico de García-Trevijano en Guinea Ecuatorial

Por indicación del señor García-Trevijano al presidente de la República y al ministro de Agricultura, se creó el Instituto de Fomento de Guinea Ecuatorial, INFOGE, encargado de las importaciones y exportaciones realizadas en el país. El señor García-Trevijano era su representante único en el exterior, y la sede de dicha representación estaba en el madrileño Paseo de la Castellana, número 106. Cuando dicho organismo fue suprimido en Guinea Ecuatorial, el señor García-Trevijano se hizo cargo de todas sus actividades, tanto en el interior como en el exterior, con un sueldo anual de noventa millones de pesetas. Actualmente, el señor García-Trevijano tiene el monopolio de la exportación y colocación en los mercados internacionales del café y cacao guineanos, operaciones que se desarrollan principalmente en Belgrado, Zurich y Ginebra.

Fue el señor García-Trevijano, según documento anexo, quien confeccionó los estatutos de los Bancos Central y de Comercio de Guinea Ecuatorial, de los

cuales es el mayor accionista. Asimismo, el señor García-Trevijano contactó con la sociedad italiana «Italcambio» para la acuñación de la peseta guineana en billetes y monedas, con una comisión sustanciosa. Es de destacar que en 1973 fueron suprimidas las actividades comerciales privadas en Guinea Ecuatorial, siendo estatificadas, pero no por ello cambió el «status» del señor García-Trevijano, que es el único comerciante privado que tiene abiertos comercios en ciudades guineanas (Empresa Simonet) a nombre de su cuñada Simona.

El señor García-Trevijano es el mayor accionista de nuestro pueblo y su derecho a la libertad y a la independencia. El señor García-Trevijano también

tiene que ver, con sus consejos, en el desarrollo del tema de la «materia reservada».

En beneficio de nuestros dos países, apelamos a las fuerzas integrantes de la oposición española a que no sigan siendo cómplices del asesinato —verdadero genocidio— de más de 90.000 guineanos en siete años, del exilio de 130.000 y del deterioro que en todos los órdenes es víctima hoy la República de Guinea Ecuatorial. Es un deber histórico, un deber humano y un deber político que esperamos asumirá con responsabilidad Coordinación Democrática de España.

Por la A.N.R.D.

El secretario de Información,

A. Oló

Trabajos que le han sido encomendados a Trevijano

Navidad 1969 y Año Nuevo 1970

1. Mensaje presidencial de fin de año.
2. Discurso presidencial en el aeropuerto de Yaoundé.
3. Contestación de S. E. al brindis del presidente Ahidjo.
4. Discurso presidencial en la cena ofrecida a S. E. el presidente Ahidjo.
5. Agenda presidencial para entrevista privada con S. E. el presidente Ahidjo.
6. Informe al presidente de la conversación mantenida por los ministros del Interior y de Educación con el embajador del Camerún.
7. Proyecto de decreto ley para creación de INFOGE.
8. Proyecto de Decreto-Ley para regulación del Comercio Exterior.
9. Esquema preliminar para la elaboración del Plan de Desarrollo de Guinea Ecuatorial.
10. Expedición científica del doctor Montoya.
11. Endoso a favor del señor García-Trevijano del contrato de «Italcambio» para la financiación de los trabajos emprendidos respecto a un estudio económico de Guinea Ecuatorial y de la región africana circundante.
12. Fotografías de la cabeza del Presidente para «Italcambio».
13. Aprobación de los diseños enviados por «Italcambio».
14. Aprobación y publicación del Decreto-Ley sobre la emisión de monedas de oro y plata.
15. Crítica técnica al informe del Fondo Monetario Internacional sobre el Banco Central de Guinea Ecuatorial.

16. Contestación a la nota publicada en el periódico «ABC» por el ministro de Asuntos Exteriores español.
17. Contestación al mensaje de S.S. al Papa.
18. Informe sobre los mercados internacionales de café y de cacao, con especial referencia al problema de las cuotas marginales.
19. Creación de la Empresa Nacional de Obras Públicas, en colaboración con el ingeniero señor Ventura.
20. Creación de la Empresa Nacional de Transportes Interurbanos, en colaboración con el ingeniero señor Ventura.
21. Creación de una empresa de tráfico aéreo interafricana en régimen de economía mixta.
22. Adquisición de un avión presidencial.
23. Estudio para la implantación de una planta industrial de elaboración y envase de arroz, en régimen de economía mixta.
24. Estudio para la implantación de una planta industrial embotelladora de bebidas carbonícas, aguas minerales y de bebidas alcohólicas (whisky, coñac, ginebra), en régimen de economía mixta.
25. Estudio para la implantación de una o varias centrales eléctricas.
26. Contratación de un director para la Banca Nacional de Depósito y de Desarrollo.
27. Contratación de un experto en burocracia de comercio exterior y aduanas.
28. Control técnico de los embarques de madera.
29. Contratación de un catedrático de Contabilidad para la organización del Tribunal

de Cuentas del Estado, y de la contabilidad de las empresas nacionales, especialmente de INFOGE.

30. Contratación de un técnico en Estadística.
31. Establecimiento de correspondencias del Banco Central en países extranjeros.
32. Informe sobre una nueva emisión de billetes guineanos.
33. Creación de una Empresa Nacional de Artes Gráficas.
34. Estatutos del Partido único.
35. Redacción de una nueva Constitución.
36. Preparación de un Reglamento Laboral.
37. Inscripción en el Registro Mercantil de la empresa Transcacao.
38. Informe al ministro del Interior sobre la empresa SACOMES, sobre los delitos cometidos en el reciente embarque de cacao realizado por esta empresa.
39. Contratación por INFOGE de los servicios técnicos necesarios para el desarrollo de su comercio exte-

rio histórico de la independencia de Guinea Ecuatorial.

40. Reglamento Orgánico del Ministerio del Interior.
41. Consejo y asesoramiento sobre la organización de la Administración Local.
42. Adquisición e instalación de un servicio de telex para el Ministerio del Interior y para INFOGE.
43. Continuar la conversación para la contratación de técnicos asesores para los ministerios.
44. Certificados de depósito en dólares USA para el Banco Central.
45. Preparación de una zona franca de libre comercio.
46. Nombramiento del señor García-Trevijano como abogado y asesor económico del Gobierno.
47. Informe del señor García-Trevijano sobre la entrevista que ha mantenido con el embajador de España a petición de éste.
48. Revisión del programa de



García Trevijano
Fabricó la constitución guineana

40. trabajo establecido en la primera visita del señor García-Trevijano durante el mes de octubre pasado.
41. Ley Básica de Educación.
42. Reglamento Orgánico del Ministerio de Educación.

Carta de la Oposición guineana al Rey Juan Carlos

Majestad:
La República de Guinea Ecuatorial, país colonizado por España desde 1778 —año en que

el rey don Carlos III dispuso la toma de posesión de los territorios que Portugal había cedido a la Corona española median-

te los tratados de San Ildefonso —de primero de octubre de 1777 y de 24 de marzo de 1778—, accedió a la independencia el 12 de octubre de 1968. Un mes antes, el pueblo, en uso de su soberanía, había aprobado una Constitución presidencialista y elegido democráticamente a Francisco Macías Nguema como primer Presidente de la nación. El país se disponía a afrontar con responsabilidad los problemas de todo tipo que aquejan a todo Estado moderno, en el orden interno e internacional, cuando, en marzo de 1969 —apenas cinco meses después de la independencia—, un «complot» descubrió contra el presidente Macías desencadenó las iras de éste y sumió al país entero en una durísima represión. Abolió la Constitución en 1969; disolvió la Asamblea Nacional en el mismo año; por un decreto presidencial suprimió el ejercicio de las libertades políticas de los ciudadanos e impuso a la fuerza el Partido Único Nacional de Trabajadores «P.U.N.T.»; en consecuencia, todos los partidos políticos tradicionales pasaron a la ilegalidad y muchos de sus militantes fueron perseguidos por el cuerpo gubernamental represivo tipo fascista «La Juventud en marcha con Macías»; se proclamó presidente vitalicio y asumió todos los poderes de la nación en 1971.

Como resultado de la escalada represiva, el país empezó a despoblarse —en estos ocho años ha asesinado a no menos de treinta mil personas— hasta llegar a la situación actual.



Otros tiempos en Guinea
Preocupantes dudas sobre el futuro

en que el 40 por ciento de la población (150.000 personas) está refugiada en los países vecinos y algunos en Europa, América, etcétera. En España hay unos 8.500 ecuatorianos en calidad de «apátridas». Paralelamente a esta emigración forzosa y masiva se ha ido deteriorando la situación económica, sanitaria, laboral y educativa, dándose la paradoja de que un pequeño país potencialmente rico, carezca de productos de primera necesidad tales como jabón, sal, medicamentos, ropa e incluso, en algunas regiones, alimentos.

La isla de Annobón está hoy totalmente deshabitada a causa del abandono en que el régimen de Macías mantuvo a sus moradores, que desde 1970 no reciben ninguna clase de asistencia.

En 1973 se declaró en la mencionada isla de Annobón una epidemia, y el Gobierno de Macías prohibió el atraque en puerto guineano a los barcos con medicamentos y alimentos que tanto la Organización Mundial de la Salud como la F.A.O. proyectaban enviar en socorro de la población annobonesa.

Todos estos hechos, señor, constituyen no sólo un atentado a la dignidad humana, reconocido en la Declaración Universal de los Derechos del Hombre y en el Derecho Internacional, sino que representan un auténtico genocidio cometido por un tirano contra un pueblo indefenso. A pesar de los lazos históricos y culturales que desde hace doscientos años unen a los pueblos español y guineano, España se viene manteniendo indiferente —en una postura que raya la complicidad— ante el drama guineano. En 1970 el Gobierno español prohibió la difusión de todo tipo de información referente a nuestro país. Desde entonces no sólo el pueblo español, sino la opinión pública internacional, se han visto privados de conocer a una de las mayores y más nefastas dictaduras de este siglo en el mundo. Amparado en la impunidad que garantiza toda desinformación, Macías ha venido cometiendo todo tipo de tropiezos contra súbditos de todas las nacionalidades, incluidos españoles.

Desconocemos la óptica desde la cual, año tras año, se viene prorrogando una ley a todas luces impopular, que no sólo atenta contra el pueblo gui-

neano, sino también contra una de las libertades más elementales del pueblo español —la de información—, aunque tanto la A.N.R.D. como la opinión pública internacional, no pueden dejar de sospechar los intereses ocultos tras el secreto oficial férreamente mantenido sobre nuestro país. Desgraciadamente, Majestad, dichos intereses, que comprometen por igual a un amplio abanico de fuerzas políticas españolas, de derecha y de izquierda, no coinciden con los del pueblo de Guinea Ecuatorial ni, suponemos, con los postulados de la Monarquía española expuestos en los discursos pronunciados por Vuestra Majestad ante las Cortes Españolas y ante el Congreso norteamericano.

Fieles a nuestra raíz histórica hispana y conscientes con los lazos que deben unir a todos los pueblos modernos en su afán de construir y consolidar la concordia internacional, apelamos a Vuestra Majestad para que, en vista de la próxima expiración del plazo, no vuelva a prorrogarse la calificación de «materia reservada» que pesa sobre la información relacionada con la República de Guinea Ecuatorial.

Pensamos, señor, que tal gesto afianzaría más concretamente vuestra política nacional e internacional.

La Alianza Nacional de Restauración Democrática, auténtica representación del oprimido pueblo de Guinea Ecuatorial, acogiera con beneplácito tal solución, que evidenciara, también, el auténtico talante de la

ALGUNOS DATOS HISTÓRICOS

12 de octubre, fiesta de la Hispanidad, de 1968. Fraga irribarne, entonces ministro de Información y Turismo, asiste a los actos de celebración de la independencia guineana. Pocos días antes se han finalizado las obras y puesta a punto de la televisión del nuevo Estado. A España la emisora guineana le ha costado doscientos millones de pesetas. El presidente de Guinea Ecuatorial, Francisco Macías, sonríe. Fraga sonríe. Unas «flamencas» comparten los espacios televisivos con los «búls». Ciertos sectores españoles confían en que su maniobra neocolonialista tenga éxito. Fraga dejaría de sonreír unos meses después. Su sucesor, Sánchez Balla, declararía el tema de Guinea «materia reservada». Hoy los españoles podemos intentar saber qué ha ocurrido en Guinea durante estos seis largos años de silencio. Pero hagamos marcha atrás, vayamos al año 1778.

Fue en aquel año cuando me-

dianje el tratado de «El Pardo». Portugal nos cedía las islas de Fernando Poo, Annobón, Corisco, Elobey Grande y Elobey Chico. Casi un siglo más tarde llegaba Chacón, primer gobernador español, a la mayor de las islas, y, unos años después, traidier puso pie español en el territorio continental de lo que hoy es Estado de Guinea Ecuatorial.

La vida de la colonia española fue tranquila y no sintió en su piel las turbulencias del final del siglo XIX ni las de la primera mitad del actual. En julio de 1958, cuando África se encuentra en plena lucha descolonizadora, un decreto ley convierte a la hasta entonces colonia española en provincia. Sin embargo, esta maniobra, que también ha alcanzado al Sahara español, no es suficiente para alejar los vientos independentistas guineos.

En cualquier caso, el Gobierno español no está dispuesto a ceder y sí a conceder ciertas apa-

riencias de libertad. Por este camino se llega, en 1963, a un régimen autónomo administrativo que, bajo la batuta de Bonifacio Ondó Edu, no hará peligrar, por el momento, ni la hegemonía política española ni los intereses económicos colonialistas.

Macías gana la partida

Pero unos años después, en 1967, la independencia de Guinea Ecuatorial es ya un hecho irreversible. Madrid se convierte en centro de negociaciones y es en la capital española donde la oposición independentista guineesa conecta con el notario Antonio García-Travijano, quien redacta la nueva Constitución de la nación aún nonnata. Pocos meses después, a pesar del interés de ciertos grupos madereros, dicha Constitución será aprobada con un 61 por ciento de votos favorables.

Y llega el turno de las elecciones para la presidencia de la República. A ellas se presentan los diversos partidos que han participado en la Asamblea Constitu-

cional —IPGE, Monalige, Munge, Unión Democrática Fernandina y Unión Bubi—. Los candidatos con mayores probabilidades de éxito son Francisco Macías Nguema, Bonifacio Ondó Edu y Atanasio Dongo. El Gobierno español y los grupos madereros ven con simpatía la candidatura de Ondó, pero, por una diferencia de cinco mil votos, es Macías quien gana las elecciones. Guinea tiene Constitución y Presidente. La independencia ha llegado.

Sangre en Guinea

Para el nuevo Estado, los primeros meses de 1968 están marcados por el signo de la conspiración. Un margen de votos tan mínimo en las elecciones presidenciales hacen suponer a los derrotados que sus aspiraciones de poder no encontrarán una dura oposición. Además, y este es un dato fundamental, cuentan con el apoyo de las élites mestizas, de los grupos económicos españoles y, lo que es

nueva postura española y ayudar a calibrar y a restituir nuestra confianza en la nación española.

L. A.N.R.D., haciendo votos por la gran misión que corresponde a S. M. en esta nueva etapa de la reconstrucción democrática y la reconciliación nacional, le reitera el testimo-

nio de su consideración más respetuosa.

Ginebra, primero de julio de 1976.

Por la A.N.R.D.
El secretario general,
Fdo.: Esteban Ngué Ngomo.
C. P. 181
1211 Ginebra-4
(SUISSE)

Carta de la Oposición a Naciones Unidas

AL O. COMISARIADO
DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS
PARA LOS REFUGIADOS
Palais des Nations
1211 GENEVE-10 (Suissse)

Respetable señor:

La República de Guinea Ecuatorial, país situado en el golfo de Guinea, compuesto por las islas de Fernando Poo, Annobón, Corisco, Elobey Chico, Elobey Grande y demás islotas adyacentes, y por un rectángulo continental (Río Muni), accedió a la independencia el día 12 de octubre de 1968. Antes había sido colonia —luego provincia— de España. Después de unas elecciones libres, se le confió, para desempeñar durante los cinco años siguientes, la dirección del país a don Francisco Macías Nguema. Apenas cinco meses después de la fecha de independencia, el presidente Macías empezó a ordenar enclaustramientos arbitrarios e ile-

gales en las candidaturas a la Presidencia de la República, siguió con los nacionalistas más destacados, antiguos luchadores por la independencia y, con una excusa o con otra, inventando «complots» dirigidos contra su persona o su Gobierno, fue eliminando toda oposición a su política y todo vestigio de libertad en el país. Las esperanzas de una convivencia nacional y de un desarrollo económico se frustraron definitivamente cuando, en el año 1971, se proclamó Presidente vitalicio del país y abolió la Constitución.

Esta situación de inestabilidad, de continuas amenazas, violaciones de los más elementales derechos del hombre comprendido en las resoluciones internacionales y en la Constitución legítima aprobada por el pueblo, originó un éxodo masivo de ecuatoguineanos a los países vecinos. Desde 1969 hasta la fecha han emigrado a Gabón aproximadamente, 75.000 personas; a Camerún, unos 40.000; a Ni-

gería, alrededor de 30.000; a Europa, 11.000, 8.000 de los cuales se hallan en España. Poblaciones enteras, dentro de Guinea Ecuatorial, han quedado vacías. La isla de Annobón quedó totalmente despoblada en 1973 a consecuencia de una epidemia y al negar el presidente Macías el atraque en nuestro territorio de los barcos con medicamentos y alimentos que la Organización Mundial de la Salud y la FAO habían proyectado enviar en socorro de la población indefensa, según acuerdos suscritos por dichos organismos.

La mayoría de los ecuatoguineanos residentes en España vinieron por motivos de estudios antes de la independencia o en los primeros meses después de ésta. Macías, mediante sucesivos comunicados a la Embajada de Guinea Ecuatorial en Madrid, exigió la repatriación de todos los estudiantes y de todos los residentes guineanos en España. Los pocos que atendieron la llamada fueron encarcelados, torturados, maltratados y asesinados. Alguno de ellos ha logrado escapar. Ante estos hechos, la mayoría optó por no atender la demanda del Gobierno y, en represalia, se les desprovino de la documentación a que, como ciudadanos guineanos, tienen legítimo derecho, así como de las becas de las que venían disfrutando los más de ellos. Sin becas, sin trabajo, sin terminar los estudios, la situación se hizo insostenible y comenzó un drama callado para la colonia guineana en España. Las empresas no po-

dían colocarles, aun en los trabajos menos cualificados, por indocumentados; muchos, por la misma razón, no pudieron matricularse en la Universidad. Algunos se entregaron a la vida de los bajos fondos de las grandes ciudades, donde no pocos han encontrado la muerte en reyertas, por drogas, por alcoholismo o por prostitución.

Faltos de recursos, sin posibilidades de hacerse oír —el tema de Guinea Ecuatorial es «materia reservada» en todo el territorio español—, los supervivientes lo son prácticamente por la caridad de amigos o de algunas instituciones. Pero ello no es suficiente ni es continuo.

La Alianza Nacional de Restauración Democrática (A.N.R.D.), voz legítima del pueblo oprimido de Guinea Ecuatorial, ha solicitado de diversos organismos internacionales ayudas para todos los refugiados guineanos. Por nuestra mediación, los organismos internacionales están empezando a tomar en consideración la situación de nuestros refugiados en los países africanos; lo que no hemos logrado hasta ahora ha sido la comprensión ni por parte de España ni de los organismos internacionales para que se intentara la solución de los múltiples problemas de todo orden que aquejan a nuestros refugiados en territorio español. Los problemas más destacados son los siguientes:

1. Indocumentación: Aunque algunos ecuatoguineanos tengan hoy documentación española, no constituye una norma ge-

más importante, del mismo Gobierno español.

Corre el mes de febrero cuando los planes de derrocar a Francisco Macías parecen ultimados. Se produce una situación confusa en la que, por unos días, se desconoce de qué lado va a caer la balanza. Castiella, ministro de Asuntos Exteriores español, se precipita y envía un telegrama a Bonifacio Ondó en el que le felicita por el éxito de su golpe de Estado. Sin embargo, es Macías quien finalmente gana la partida. Los oponentes Ondó y Donga mueren violentamente, lo mismo que algunos de sus seguidores.

Macías, que conoce la postura del Gobierno español, desata sus iras y las transmite al pueblo guineano que reacciona violentamente contra «los blancos». El mes de marzo transcurre tenso. Se habla de que España va a enviar tropas a su antigua colonia y Francisco Macías contesta pidiendo la intervención de los «cascos azules» de la ONU. Fi-

nalmente se llega a un acuerdo y «los blancos», los españoles, que han sufrido vejaciones, son repatriados.

Poder absoluto de Macías

A partir de este momento Francisco Macías controlará de forma absoluta el poder y eliminará a sus opositores, al tiempo que acentuará su aislamiento con respecto a los países vecinos. Su vía hacia la independencia será un ejemplo único en el mundo gracias a los coquetos con las diversas superpotencias.

Ya en 1971, el Presidente guineano, que anteriormente había suspendido parte de la Constitución, se autoproclama «presidente vitalicio». La oposición a Macías debe abandonar el territorio y se establece en Ginebra y Madrid. Nace, así, la ANRD —Alianza Nacional de Restauración Democrática— que el verano pasado intentó el primer golpe armado contra Guinea; el resultado fue el de ocho fusilamientos. Macías sigue en el poder.

Tercer aniversario de la independencia. Los poblados, con pañuelos, escuchan a Macías.



neral, sino que se restringe a aquellos casados con españoles. Situación similar incurre en la consecución de los llamados «Cédulas de inscripción» y «Títulos de viaje». La cantidad de requisitos a cubrir por el solicitante de estos documentos, su corta periodicidad de vigencia y su carácter selectivo y no general son factores negativos.

2. **Situación laboral:** Al no ser considerados españoles a todos los efectos, aun cuando se obtuviera la llamada «Cédula de inscripción», resulta prácticamente imposible trabajar, al prohibir expresamente dicho documento que su titular no está autorizado a trabajar en España. Para trabajar hay que solicitar un permiso de trabajo, cuya tramitación es no sólo onerosa sino larga. Además existe un circuito vicioso, difícil de romper, que consiste en que para la obtención del permiso de trabajo es necesario tener ya trabajo, y para tener trabajo es necesario tener ya permiso de trabajo. En cualquier caso, el permiso de trabajo obtenido de esta forma sólo es válido por un año, al cabo del cual es preciso iniciar todo el proceso. Como es obvio, algunos empresarios se aprovechan de esta situación de inferioridad legal pagando sueldos más bajos y amenazando continuamente a los trabajadores con privarles del trabajo y, con él, de su salario.

3. **Situación de los estudiantes:** Muchos que vinieron a estudiar han tenido que dejar de hacerlo ante su grave situación económica. Los que, por una razón u otra, han podido seguir, lo hacen con la falta de ayuda en forma de becas o bolsas de estudio. En el año 1970 se otorgaron pocas (unas veinte o treinta) becas, cuya cuantía oscilaba entre las 15.000 y las 20.000 anuales, cantidad a todas luces insuficiente para el mantenimiento de una persona. Desafortunadamente, la situación ha ido empeorando, de tal forma que sólo disminuyó la cuantía económica de las becas, sino el número de beneficiarios de las mismas. Además, año tras año ha ido complicándose el mecanismo de su obtención hasta llegar a la situación actual, en la que es prácticamente nula.

4. **Situación sociopolítica:** Al guineano que hace ocho años no se sentía extranjero en España, se le ha ido marginando progresivamente hasta colocarlo en un estado indefinido entre el emigrante y el refugiado. Esta marginación social se complementa con la marginación política, pues al ser el tema de su país «materia reser-

vada» y no recibir información de su familia de Guinea Ecuatorial (se ha prohibido toda correspondencia al exterior), no puede explicar fehacientemente la razón de su situación. Como comprende bien que todo ello es producto de una manipulación política, todos se han lanzado en los últimos tres años a «hacer política», con la esperanza no sólo de liberar a su país sino de liberarse a sí mismo, mientras, de su frustración interior.

Para aliviar en lo posible la situación de estos 8.000 guineanos residentes en España, la A.N.R.D. solicita de esa alta organización:

a) Asistencia social.

- Asistencia económica para los más necesitados.
- Asistencia sanitaria y farmacéutica.
- Seguros sociales.

b) Asistencia cultural.

- Becas de estudios superiores.
- Becas de estudios medios.
- Becas para guarderías infantiles.
- Becas para posgraduados.

c) Asistencia jurídica.

- Documentación personal.
- Documentación laboral.
- Protección legal.
- Dirección de asociación.

Madrid, a 29 de julio de 1976.

Por la A.N.R.D.
El secretario general,
(Firma)

NOTA: Este escrito ha sido entregado en mano al representante en España del Alto Comisariado de las Naciones Unidas para los Refugiados.

Comunicado de la Oposición

REPÚBLICA DE GUINEA ECUATORIAL. — A principios del mes de junio pasado, un comando formado por cincuenta militantes de la A.N.R.D. ocupó un puesto militar fronterizo. En la acción murió un miembro de la Guardia Nacional lealista —pragubernamental— y otros siete resultaron gravemente heridos. Nuestros militantes, después de apoderarse del armamento de la guarnición, pudieron replegarse a su base de origen sin mayores contratiempos.

A resultados de esa acción armada —primera desde que el

pueblo de Guinea Ecuatorial decidió oponerse a la dictadura Urúnica reinante en el país—, Macías hizo apresar a un número indeterminado de hombres, mujeres y niños en calidad de sospechosos de complicidad, ocho de los cuales han sido ya asesinados en la cárcel de Bata. Lo que hacemos público para conocimiento de la opinión pública internacional.

Por la Junta Ejecutiva,
EL DEPARTAMENTO
DE INFORMACIÓN A.N.R.D.
En el exilio, a 10 de julio 1976

GUINEA EN CIFRAS

Antiguo Río Muni y las Islas de Fernando Poo, Annobon, Corisco, Elobey Grande y Elobey Chico. 28.051 km².
Población estimada en 1967: 300.000 habitantes.
Densidad de población: 10 habitantes por km², con un crecimiento anual del 1,8 por ciento.
Renta por habitante: 240 dólares anuales (1973).
Lengua oficial: castellano.
Dos periódicos diarios con una tirada global de 1.100 ejemplares (1969).
Sesenta y cuatro cines.
Capital: Malabo, antigua Santa Isabel de Fernando Poo (hoy, Macías Nguema); 40.000 habitantes.
Moneda: la peseta guineana.
Forma del Estado: República presidencialista.
El 80 por ciento de la población es católica.
Razas: Bubi, de origen Bantú, y Fangs, de origen continental, «fernandinos», mestizos e ibos nigerianos.
Recursos económicos: explotaciones forestales en el continente y cacao en Fernando Poo; cultivos de banana, cacaohuete, aceite de palma, café, etcétera. Pequeña industria artesanal ligada a la producción agraria y se están haciendo prospecciones petrolíferas en el área de Corisco.
Miembro de la ONU desde 1968. Perteneció a la OUA.

RESPONDE TREVJANO Carta a «Le Monde»

M. Jacques Fauvel
Director de «Le Monde»
5, rue des Italiens
PARIS

Madrid, 13 de octubre de 1976.

Señor director:
No puedo menos de expresarle mi sorpresa y mi indignación ante la infame injuria de que he sido objeto en la crónica de José Antonio Novais que su periódico publica en la página 6 del número correspondiente al 9 de octubre.

Hace ya años que tanto M. André Fontaine como M. Marcel Niedergang conocen la enemistad personal con la que me distingue al correspondiente de «Le Monde» en España y el uso que hace de esta motivación inamistosa cada vez que silencio o utilizo mi nombre en sus crónicas. En esta ocasión su osadía rebasa los límites de lo que hasta ahora yo he podido tolerar. Mientras el señor Novais fue perseguido por el señor Fraga y sufría las consecuencias de la represión contra la libertad de expresión, me abstuve de proporcionar a «Le Monde» las pruebas documentales que acreditan el origen de su odio personal hacia mí. Hoy que el señor Novais goza de toda libertad de expresión en España, como redactor jefe de la revista «Gaceta», libertad de la que yo carezco para expresar mis ideas políticas y para defenderme de las groseras difamaciones que el mismo señor Novais me hace en España, y de las que se hacen eco mis adversarios políticos, tanto del Gobierno como de la oposición, me veo obligado a comunicarle lo siguiente:

1.º. El señor Novais, junto con los señores Paesa (el aventurero que haciéndose pasar por banquero pretendió casarse con la viuda de Sukarno), Armijo un pequeño funcionario expulsado de su cuerpo, que en Guinea realizó pequeños negocios antes de la independencia, y que luego tuvo que huir precipitadamente al Camerún por un presunto desfalco de 15 millones de pesetas), el abogado Mariano Robles (fallecido, por lo que me abstengo de todo comentario), fundaron en 1968 una compañía de financiación al desarrollo de Guinea, con un capital de 100.000 pesetas. La escritura pública de fundación de

esta compañía se hizo ante el notario de Madrid señor Gómez Trevijano, que ningún parentesco ni relación tiene conmigo. Con la copia notarial de esta escritura, el señor Paesa, el señor Novais y el señor Armijo se trasladaron a Guinea a finales de 1968, y haciendo creer al recientemente elegido presidente de la República, señor Macías, por la coincidencia de las iniciales G. Trevijano y también porque soy notario, que yo estaba de algún modo interesado en la operación, obtienen del Gobierno la concesión para la fundación del Banco Nacional de Guinea, sin condición o contrapartida alguna (le envío fotocopia de esta concesión).

2.º. Con este documento el señor Paesa se traslada a Ginebra, toma contactos con distintos círculos financieros interesados en el desarrollo africano, y comienza a vender acciones del Banco Nacional de Guinea. Un financiero londinense que conocía mi intervención como asesor constitucional para la independencia de Guinea tuvo la precaución de pedirme informes antes de comprar las acciones que Paesa le ofrecía. Y es en este preciso momento en los primeros meses de 1969 cuando yo me entero del «affaire». Escribo inmediatamente al presi-

DE LO QUE TREVIJANO SE HACE RESPONSABLE

1. Constitución de Guinea Ecuatorial.
2. Proyecto de Decreto-Ley sobre Régimen jurídico del Banco Central de la República de Guinea Ecuatorial.
3. Proyecto de Decreto-Ley sobre la creación del Banco Nacional de Depósito y Desarrollo.
4. Proyecto de Decreto-Ley sobre Inversiones de Capital Extranjero.
5. Proyecto de Decreto-Ley sobre Régimen jurídico para la Exploración y Explotación de Hidrocarburos.
6. Informe al Consejo de Seguridad de la ONU sobre ocupación de la Isla Bioko, de Guinea Ecuatorial, por Gabón.
7. Modelo de Convenio Bilateral sobre transporte aéreo.

dente Macías denunciando la estafa de que estaba siendo objeto Guinea y la imposibilidad de que el Banco Nacional pueda ser propiedad privada. Para no cansarme con otros pormenores me limito a decirle cuál fue el final del asunto. La concesión a favor de «Financiera Guineana de Desarrollo, S. A. (FINGUINEA)» fue anulada y yo mismo redacté el proyecto de ley que creó el Banco Popular y el Banco de Desarrollo de Guinea Ecuatorial, de carácter exclusivamente estatal.

3.º. No puedo enviarle ahora mismo la escritura notarial en la que el señor Novais aparece como socio de esta financiera. La he solicitado al Gobierno de Guinea Ecuatorial, ya que sólo los interesados pueden pedirla al notario autorizante, señor Gómez Trevijano. Tan pronto como la consiga se la enviaré.

4.º. Jamás he recibido retribución del Gobierno de Guinea por los trabajos exclusivamente jurídicos que me ha pedido, ni he realizado, o intentado rea-

lizar, negocio alguno, ni «ouche» ni «claro».

5.º. El Partido Socialista Obrero Español no ha utilizado hasta ahora la expresión «alfarres touchés», ni la Izquierda Democrática pone reparo alguno a mi presencia en la Comisión Ejecutiva de Coordinación Democrática. Tampoco conozco el comunicado del Partido Socialista Popular mencionado por el señor Novais, aunque es cierto que ese partido no desea enfrentarse con el Partido Socialista Obrero Español por mi causa (le envío fotocopia de la carta que me dirige el señor Fernando Galván).

6.º. El P.S.O.E. es el único partido que ha expresado públicamente su incompatibilidad moral conmigo en base al «dossier» que tiene en su poder sobre mi actuación en Guinea Ecuatorial («dossier» que también le envío), utilizando la expresión siguiente: «El señor Trevijano no tiene catadura moral ni política para enjuiciar la conducta del P.S.O.E.».

7.º. Esta grosera expresión del P.S.O.E. fue motivada por una frase mía reproducida en el periódico «ABC», en la que decía que era urgente «poner de acuerdo la conciencia con la

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