

# Basquing in intrigue

**B**ARCELONA — The Carthaginian general Barca had a good eye for real estate. He founded this splendid port city on Spain's Mediterranean coast 3,000 years ago. Today, after being expanded by Greeks, Romans, Arabs and Catalans, Barcelona is a vibrant, noisy city of 4 million. Madrid may be the official capital of Spain, but any Catalan will tell you this is the real cultural, business and fun capital.

I was in Barcelona for the annual congress of the International Institute for Strategic Studies on security in the Mediterranean. The IISS brings together defence experts, scholars, political leaders and active and retired intelligence people from 75 nations. It's the most authoritative source for analysis of world security and balance of forces.

Barcelona, one of the three queen cities of turn-of-the-century European culture, was a grand setting for the weighty matters discussed. Only Paris and Vienna can rival its architectural glory.

It was also appropriate, while discussing Mediterranean security, that our meeting was blanketed in heavy security. Basque terrorists killed three paramilitary civil guard officers while we were in Barcelona and the meeting halls were routinely swept for bombs. Aside from muggings and purse-snatchings — common in the scenic but perilous port area — the IISS remained unscathed unless you count bruised egos.

And big egos there were aplenty here: Defence ministers, intelligence chiefs, senior mandarins, writers and a generous assortment of experts, many waiting to become the next Henry Kissinger in a post-Reagan administration.

Some noteworthy observations:

- Spain's youthful defence minister, Don Narcis Serra, minced no words in telling us that his socialist government was determined to kick out U.S. air force F-16 fighters from Spain. The U.S.-Spanish relationship, said Serra, was "unbalanced" and cuts in U.S. air and naval forces must be "substantial." The socialist government hates the 1953 pact between the U.S. and Franco.

Spain, which has sort of joined NATO — though not its integrated military command — wants NATO's political and economic benefits without cutting any military risks.

Serra's blunt speech was greeted by most IISS members with dismay. Spain is a vital rear staging area for the U.S. forces that will reinforce

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Turkey and Italy in wartime and a key point for reinforcements from North America.

Instead of evicting U.S. forces, Spain should be sending an armored division to northern Germany where NATO defences badly need shoring up.

- France, it was revealed for the first time by a senior intelligence officer, will intervene militarily in Tunisia if the death of its leader, Habib Bourguiba, produces an Islamic uprising.

- Professor Harkabi of Jerusalem's Hebrew University made a powerful and impassioned call for Israel to withdraw from the occupied West Bank and Gaza. His words were echoed, to a lesser degree, by retired general Aharon Yariv of Tel Aviv's Joffe Centre for Strategic Studies. Harkabi said that within 20 years, half of greater Israel's population would be Arab thanks to their high birth rate. "You can't defend a nation when 50% of its people support the enemy," said Harkabi.

What made the remarks of these two leading Israelis so important was that they are both former heads of military intelligence. Another Israeli professor who has been teaching in Toronto for this past year, Yossi Olmert, backed the generals. The warning is clear, only Israel's growing right wing is not listening.

- William Quandt, a leading U.S. Mideast expert, made the disturbing observation that if Iran won the war with Iraq, it would clearly emerge as the champion of the anti-Israeli struggle. This, predicted Quandt, would mean that the Israeli-Palestinian fight would soon turn into an Arab-Jewish conflict. I agree: Anti-Jewish sentiment is quickly spreading across the Muslim world while anti-Muslim feeling is being promoted by many Israel supporters in the West.

- The best bon mot of the meeting was made by Anthony Cordesman, a Mideast and military expert, and one of the smartest men there.

"Probably the most lasting achievement of the Reagan Administration," quipped Cordesman, "will have been building up Moammar Khadafi into a major figure."

There was, of course, much, much more. Everyone cited the urgent need for NATO unity while the French made snippy remarks about the Italians, the Greeks and Turks fumed and sputtered, everyone accused the Americans of being capricious, uninformed rurals, the Spaniards snubbed the Brits over Gibraltar and the ever-tasty French took umbrage at nearly everything.

All this disunity and petty bickering was, happily, more than compensated by the joie de vivre in Barcelona's superb seafood restaurants, late night cafes and exuberant atmosphere. I was ready to defend splendid Barcelona to the last giant prawn and glass of vino tinto.

**Punch**

