

## EUSKAL ETXEAK AND BASQUE FOREIGN ACTION

**Euskal Etxeen eta Euskal Erakundeen arteko harremanak beti ere estuak izan dira. Eusko Jaurlaritzak loturok bultzatu egin nahi izan ditu laguntza bereziak eskeiniz. Baina, bestalde, bere kanpo harremanetarako egitarau garapena, besteak beste, Euskal Etxekin landutako jokabideetan oinarritzen du.**

*Euskal Etxeak* and Basque international influence

Historically the *Euskal Etxeak* have played a leading role among the Basque communities abroad. These Basque centers started to be founded in 19<sup>th</sup> century –the first were *Laurak Bat* in Montevideo (in 1876), *Laurak Bat* in Buenos Aires (1877), the Navarran-Basque Welfare Association in Havana (1878) and *Euskaldunak Orok Bat* in Rio de Janeiro (1881)- and their number has kept increasing throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The contributions of the *Euskal Etxeak* to the welfare of Basque emigrants all over the world are well known: assistance activities, safeguarding Basque national self-conscience, making Euskal Herria known in political, social, economic and cultural spheres, supporting the Basques who had to emigrate for social and economic reasons as well as the political exiles, etc. But they have also largely contributed to make the Basque people better known in the world. Therefore they have now become one of the most important axes of Basque

**Euskal Etxeak  
Euskal  
Herriaren  
erakusgarri dira.  
Beraiei esker,  
munduak gaur  
hobeto ezagutzen  
du, eta gero eta  
onartuagoa da  
nazioarteko alor  
askotan.**

foreign action.

The *Euskal Etxeak* have always kept together the parts that know they belong to a common group; since their early days, the Basque centers created larger organizations in order to act together. During the Basque World Congress celebrated in Paris in 1956, the Confederation of Basque Entities in America (CEVA) was founded. This confederation is formed by the Federation of Argentinean-Basque Entities (FEVA), the Federation of Basque Entities of Chile, the Caracas Basque Center and the Basque Center Euskal Erria of Montevideo. Later on, in 1973, the North American Basque Organization (NABO) was founded in the United States.

**The foreign action of the Basque Government and the Direction for Relations with the Diaspora**

The different cabinets of the Basque Government formed since 1980, have had among their leading concerns the promotion of foreign action. Exchanges with other political and institutional entities have taken place, travels and visits, agreements signed with regions, states and in-

ternational organizations have been organized. Trans frontier cooperation, cooperation for the development of southern countries, presence in inter-regional associations, offices open abroad, promotion activities and above all, attention to the Basque communities abroad and particularly to their centers and associations, prove the importance given to foreign action by the Basque Government since its earliest days.

The Basque Government created in 1986 the Service of Relations with Basque Centers, belonging at the time to the Culture and Tourism Department. Several programs were launched during the following years in order to broadcast Basque culture, promote Euskera, financially support the centers and publish «*Euskal Etxeak*» magazine.

Although exchanges weren't very well structured yet, two events brought about the reorganization of the relations of the Basque Government with the *Euskal Etxeak* during the eighties: the first Congress of Basques in America, celebrated in September 1982 in Donostia-San Sebastián, and the First World Congress of Basque Centers, which took place in November 1989 in Bahía Blanca (Ar-



Ajuria Enea Palace.

gentina). Both reunions showed clearly the need to institutionalize the relations between the Basque communities abroad and Euskal Herria.

In 1991 the Basque Government took a crucial step in the relations with the communities abroad with the creation of the General Secretary of Foreign Action, pertaining to the Presidency Department. The General Secretary of Foreign Action was organized in several sections, one of them being the Direction for Relations with the Dias-

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pora. Its function is to «promote and establish cooperation and supportive relations with the Basque communities and associations or foundations constituted by Basques outside the territory of the Autonomous Community».

### The Law of Relations with Basque Communities and Centers Abroad

During the nineties, as the foreign action of the Basque Government became more consolidated, the need to create a legal framework to organize the links between the Basque institutions and the communities abroad became obvious. Therefore, the Basque Parliament elaborated and passed in May 1994 the Law of Relations with Basque Communities and Centers Abroad.

The main purpose of the Law is to promote and intensify the relations of Euskadi, the Basque society and its institutions with the Basque communities and centers abroad. It determined, among other aspects, the requirements for the acknowledgement of the Basque centers and their federations and confederations; for the membership of the Basque communities; the engagements undertaken by the Basque public administrations; the creation of the Advisory Council for Relations with the Basque Communities; and the celebration every four years of a Congress of Basque Communities.

### The First and Second World Congresses of Basque Communities

In the most recent phase and according to the mentioned Law, two great reunions have taken place.

The First World Congress of Basque Communities took place from November 6 to November 9, 1995 in Vitoria-Gasteiz. The Advisory Council of Relations with Basque Communities presented a proposal which was very well received by the delegates of the Basque Centers, and the Four-year Institutional Action Plan was adopted.

The Second World Congress of Basque Communities was celebrated from 26 to 29 October 1999, also in Vitoria-Gasteiz. 74 delegates represented 125 *Euskal Etxeak* from 18 countries in Europe, America and Australia, as well as several foundations and institutes. A new action Plan was approved for the following years.

The Plan has the following work orientations:

- ◆ diffusion of our language and culture
- ◆ maintenance of the structures and infrastructures of the centers
- ◆ creation of a permanent information and communication network, and
- ◆ promotion of the active participation of the younger generations in the centers and of their links with Euskal Herria.

In order to reach these goals several projects have materialized in order to

financially support the centers (direct aids from the Basque Government announced in the yearly subsidies, and backing for bank loans), culture, youth («Gaztemundu» program), sports, communication (broadcasting by satellite a television channel, and two radio stations programmed by Euskal Irrati Telebista), education, economy, foreign trade, tourism and gastronomy, social assistance and health care.

### Conclusions

Although this is only a brief summary of the subject, we must point out that the Basque centers have historically had a leading role in the international projection of

Euskal Herria. This role has recently been updated and strengthened from a political and institutional point of view with the Law of Relations with Basque Communities and Centers, with the celebration every four years of the World Congress of Basque Communities, with the Four-year Institutional Action Plans and with the efforts made by the General Secretary of Foreign Action of the Basque Government.

Therefore, the links between the Basque society and institutions with the Basque communities and centers have become one of the main lines of development of Basque present foreign action.

**Gizaldietan  
 Euskal Herriari Euskal  
 Etxeek nazioartean  
 izateko eman dioten  
 aukera gaurkotu eta  
 sendotu egin du Euskal  
 Autonomi Elkarteaz  
 Kanpoko Euskal  
 Gizatalde eta Etxeekiko  
 Harremanetarako  
 Maiatzaren 27ko 8/1994  
 Legeak.**