

FEVA and NABO set high standards

Argentinako Euskal Erakundeen Federazioak (FEVA) eta AEBetakoak (NABO, Ipar Ameriketako Euskal Erakundeak) datozen lau urteetarako plana aurkeztu zuten, bakoitzak berea, eta muga oso goian jarri zieten gainerako euskal etxeei. Izan ere, indar handiko eta lanerako gogo

handiko euskal etxe asko biltzen baitituzte biek. Gainera, Ameriketako Euskal Erakundeen Konfederazioa (CEVA) berriz eratzeko egitasmoa iragarri zuten. Ameriketako herrialde guztietako euskal giza taldeak batzea da egitasmo horren helburua.

There are 95 Euskal Etxeak associated with FEVA (Federation of Argentine Basque Organizations) in Argentina, with a total of 18,000 members. It is the country with the most Basque centers (47%) and despite the fact that Basque emigration to this country ceased two or three generations ago, 25 new centers have been established in the last eight years. Mari Luz Artetxe, president of the federation, who is committed to reconstituting the Confederation of Basque Entities of America (CEVA), speaks of future plans and the main problems which in many cases derive from the great distances that separate them all.

"For example, all the activities and training programs are done in Buenos Aires, because Argentina is so centralized in its capital, where all of the air and ground transportation come together. We've come accept this," says the president, who has occupied this position since April 1st 2006. Because the Board of Directors of the Federation is made up of members from different Euskal Etxeak scattered all over the territory, each of the members of the federation visits the Basque Centers closest to their place of residence. Rather than all of us trying to do everything, we divide up the task of visiting the Basque Centers according to the area in which we live."

Mari Luz Artetxe recognizes that what has permitted a greater union has been new technologies. "All the euskal etxeak are connected to Internet and the federation's web site is designed to give each of them a space. Those that have grown and have been able to create their own web site, do so through FEVA."

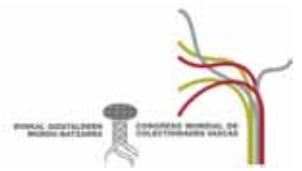
The "Basque Hour" radio program is also another bond between Basque Centers. "Every week we broadcast a 45-minute pre-recorded show unrelated to current events. Topics range from the aberri eguna, the ikurriña, conferences by people from Euskadi or Argentina who might be interesting, and so on. Music and gastronomy are also included. The other 15 minutes are open, so that each center may broadcast whatever activities and subjects they find interesting."

The new generations

One of her main worries is to find continuity in new generations. "Basque emigration to Argentina ended in approximately 1950-52. Therefore, there are few native Basques and we are elderly. Many members have been born there and are third, fourth and even fifth generation Basques. What is important to us is



MARI LUZ ARTEIXE
President of FEVA



that the Basque Centers continue to be centers that spread the culture of the Basque people. That's why we focus on educating young people both culturally and to become future leaders so that this feeling of identity won't be lost. That is our greatest concern."

Among the plans to strengthen the presence of youth is to promote channels of information to build communications within our clubs and abroad, and to develop a national and international exchange program for Basque Center youth.

"Intergenerational relations are not straightforward. We want young people to play an important role. We want the youngest member of the Board of Directors to become involved and be the voice of the decisions made in youth groups, youth workshops and from FEVA, whose youngest member is in charge of the youth project."

The four-year plan has been drawn up for the future, it was presented at the Congress and it sets the bar very high for communities abroad. "The plan is essentially based on strengthening identity, reinforcing the presence of new generations, helping the weaker euskal etxeak, and working in harmony. After all, our institution is political, created with bylaws. Therefore, we must work for the rights of Basque people, peace and political normalization in this historic moment that Euskal Herria is living.

Committed to Argentina's reality

One of the Argentinean Basque Center's characteristics is that they are very involved in each of the communities in which they are based. "We Basques in Argentina have traditionally been very well accepted, it is a very prestigious community. It seems like everyone wants to have Basque ancestry. We must have behaved ourselves, or at least our ancestors did. That is why it is easy to conduct activities with other institutions in society. And in times of Argentina's economic crises, the Basque centers get involved in helping."

There is a certain case of twinning between the Jose C. Paz, a poor Buenos Aires suburb, and the Gipuzkoan town of Oñati, which has involved itself in supporting the town originally founded by a man from Oñati. "This gentleman had a large company and would take Basques to work there, many of whose descendants still remain. With the help sent from Oñati, school dining halls and sewing workshops have been set up, and people have been shown how to farm the land. Help has been given to the disabled, and tools, seeds, footwear, blankets, food and books have been handed out. The material is channeled through the Euskal Etxea, which knows which institutions should receive the material. All of the places know that the aid comes from the Basque people.

MARY GAZTAMBIDE *President of NABO*



«To continue progressing we must attract youth»

She was born in Nevada, from parents from Vizcaya (Elantxobe) and is married to a Basque from Arnegi, Iparralde. They met each other in the Utah Euskal Etxea, where Mary studied, and they continue living there in a home which is also a meeting point for local Basques.

Their children have also gotten to know Euskal Herria from an early age. "They have as much interest in coming as I do, or more, so do their small children," says Mary Gaztambide.

After being vice-president of NABO (North American Basque Organizations) for four years, Mary Gaztambide has now served as president for three.

The position means a lot of work, a lot of Responsibility. How do you cope?

It depends on the time of year. There are times when there's a lot to do and I have to put a lot of hours in. But I also have people who help me.

One of the points that your federation has considered is that the congress will serve to reflect upon the role of Euskal Etxeak in the United States. What will your main job be in the future?

Our principal task is and will be to attract youth, something we consider very important. We have a lot of ideas, but we need people to carry through with them. Those people should be youth because they have a different energy level from those of us who are older. It is

clear that we have to attract young people if we want to continue moving forward.

Youth today are not as involved in traditions as previous generations. Therefore, as the paper states, the idea is also to “create basqueness.”

Of course, this is one of the objectives of educating youth. First, attract them and later, know how to maintain them. We already have the “udaleku” program, which has become very popular. They then have the chance to build on what they’ve learnt at the udalekus. Between the age of 16 and 25 young people now have the “gaztealde” program, which begins this summer. It will deal with culture, but will also teach how to organize the youngest age groups and to help people. The dance groups also attract a number of young people, and the game of mus is another one of the more popular activities. The game can be played anywhere and calls for others players, which brings people together. Among the sports, pelota is very popular but the lack of frontones to practice the sport is a major drawback. Furthermore, at the udalekus children meet people and make friends from other parts of the country. When a meeting or festival is organized, these young people go to other places and that way Basque youth get to know each other. Some of the delegates we have brought took part in Gaztemundu four years ago and now they have met with others who also participated. This helps a lot.

There is also an important link with various American universities.

Yes, and it is very important. In April, a meeting was held in Idaho attended by representatives from some of the universities that already offer Basque language and culture classes, in addition to others who were interested in offering them. Stanford University and another two from California have joined the universities of Boise and Reno.

When NABO was created one of its main objectives was to unite Basques of different origins. What is the situation now?

Indeed, one of NABO’s main objectives was to find the union between all Basques, whether they are from Iparralde, Gipuzkoa, Navarra or Bizkaia and we all work together. And I believe it should be this way anywhere in the world. There are many Basques in Nevada, Idaho and California. The majority of us are in the west but we want to show that we are moving towards the east, towards Washington DC and also New York, which is more remote and solitary. Let’s see how many we can draw into NABO.

Along the same line as the motto of this congress. Does NABO want to build bridges towards centers in other countries?

Last fall we invited two euskal etxeak from Canada - Montreal and Vancouver - and one from Mexico to a

**NABOk aurkeztutako lau urterako
planean, Ameriketako Estatu
Batuetako euskal jatorriko herritarren
interes historikoak, kulturalak eta
sozialak zaintzea, babestea eta
sustatzea jotzen dituzte
lehentasuntzat. Helburua ondoko
esaldiarekin laburbil daiteke:
«berregin+hezi=betikotu».**

meeting, and for three days we showed them what we were doing and shared ideas. It was very interesting. The next meeting was when we invited FEVA, held last February in San Francisco. But we saw that other countries such as Venezuela and Uruguay were left out and we concluded that we could form part of a single group, CEVA. Furthermore, new technologies ease contact between us all and it is not necessary to travel from one country to another taking into account the great geographical distances that separate us. We have also taken advantage of our stay in Bilbao to meet and lay down some cornerstones.

What feelings do you take away from this congress?

Compared with the previous one, I believe that people at this congress have been more united. It has been more interesting and participatory, with a desire to help one another. In the end, we are all working together towards the same goal, and as with CEVA, by putting our heads together we come up with more ideas.

Another of the aspects that was tackled in this congress was equality. It seems that by having you as president this problem has been solved. Is that true?

When referring to NABO, it must be said that women are participating on their own initiative. Two women delegates have come to represent our organization: the treasurer and myself. There are also younger women who can eventually take our place, working together with the older men and women and using their experience to their advantage.



Mari Luz Artetxe and Mary Gaztambide, presidents of FEVA and NABO, respectively.

A CONFEDERATION OF BASQUE AMERICAN ENTITIES

The presidents of FEVA and NABO presented the project of reconstructing the Confederation of Basque Entities of America, CEVA, with all the countries that want to become members. "The institution already existed and we believed it should be revitalized. We at FEVA are working in conjunction with Chile and Uruguay on the Basque language program. We have 900 Euskara students, 800 txikis and an important number of teachers who can give the "barnetegis." People from Uruguay and Chile, who are very close, participate in the teaching workshops and the barnetegis that are organized. We believe that this collaboration could also be applied to other actions. One fine day the little CEVA booklets appeared and I

thought to myself, 'now that you're going to San Francisco, why don't you speak with NABO, which was also a founding member.' So we began conversations in February 2006 and both of us were interested. We spoke by phone and by e-mail with other founding centers that had participated and told them: "The World Congress is right around the corner, so let's meet there and talk". That is what we did. We held a meeting and our idea is to create a confederation. Because not all countries have federations, we are not going to exclude anyone, just as before, and any Basque Center in the Americas can become a member. We left this first meeting with homework: update the statutes with new and enriching contributions and suggest the

first activities we want to develop. The idea is to begin doing small things in common. This will be the basis and by year's end we will know who of us are prepared to bring it back to life. We will collaborate with the Etxepare Institute with regards to the Basque language. We have also thought of creating a photograph archive, one part historical and the other current. We intend to collect the photos of the t-shirts that youth from all the Euskal Etxeak have designed for Basque Week. Another collection can be of the Basque Center facilities, with the families that have passed through them, first, second... generation emigrants. We can decide between all of us what subjects we want to photograph.