



BASQUE CENTERS: LEADERS IN RECOVERING HISTORICAL

Eusko Jaurlaritzak euskal etxe zein munduan barrena bizi diren euskaldunen historia berreskuratzeko programa martxan jarri zuen aspaldi. Programa honek atal ezberdinak ditu. Lehenik kanpoan argitaratzen ziren euskal aldizkari eta euskal etxeen artxiboen digitalizazioari ekin zion. Gaur egun harrera herrialdeko egunkarietan euskaldunei buruzko artikuluak bilatzen eta digitalizatzen ari dira Amerikako unibertsitate batzuekin elkarlanean. Etorkizunean lan hau beste herrialde batzuetara hedatu nahi da, argazki zaharren digitalizazioari ekin eta ahozko testigantzak jaso.

In history books about the Basque Country the subject of Basque emigration and exile has never been regarded as a relevant factor. But no one would deny the important impact it has had on the country itself and the various places where for centuries the Basque people have settled.

Nowadays, information is much more than knowledge; never before has the slogan "if you don't inform you don't exist" been so true.

The Urazandi project has several aims: to compile the historical memory of the Basque presence on an international level, reducing the risk of losing highly relevant historical information; provide new generations of Basques from the *euskal etxeak* with the opportunity to learn more about the history of their ancestors; enable researchers and Basque society itself to gain a better understanding of an important part of our history as emigrants; and to use this knowledge

to encourage feelings and attitudes of support and cultural coexistence with immigrants who decide to make their homes in Euskadi. Urazandi is a marvelous project that helps shed light on our past; but at the same time it is an innovative project, a project with a future, both for the new generations of Basque center members and for Basque society itself. We live in a global and globalizing world, a world of major technological developments and significant migratory flows. In very few



MEMORY

years Euskadi will be a different country. Your collaboration in the development of this project is vital. You are part of this country, and as such we invite you to participate with your ideas and information about your families. This initiative promoted by the Basque Government Directorate for Relations with Basque Communities has an eight-year history. From 2000 to 2003 research projects were published on the history of the important Basque centers in Bahía Blanca, Boise, Buenos Aires, Madrid, Mar del Plata, Mexico, Montevideo, Paris, Rosario, and Tandil; along the same lines, relevant doctoral theses were published including dissertations presented by Gloria Toticaguena, Matteo Mafredi and F. Xabier Medina, and a collection of articles on Basque

«Urazandik gure
iraganaren ezagutza
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emigration by William Douglass. This first phase also saw the initiation of the process of digitizing archival material and publications. Two DVDs were made, one with documents from the Basque Office archive in Mexico, known as the "Archivo Azua," and another of the magazine "La Baskonia."

The most recent research publications were presented to the delegates of the Fourth World Congress of Basque Communities, as was the

project of digitizing all of the Basque publications in the Americas in the past 100 years. The countries involved in the project are Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, the United States, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Uruguay and Venezuela.

In addition to publications originating in the Americas, there have also been Basque publications in such places as Algeria (a magazine published entirely in Euskara), France and England. The latter two are examples of digitalization projects focusing on European sources.

This project would not have been possible without the generous help and expertise of our Uruguayan friends, Alberto Irigoyen and Adriana Patrón.

So far a total of 220,000 pages from American publications have been

digitized as part of the project. In recent months an additional 100,000 pages from European publications have also been digitized.

URAZANDI DIGITAL – PART TWO: "BASQUES IN THE AMERICAN PRESS".

This program, known as "Basques in the American press," is a continuation of Urazandi Digital. The first stage involved the digitalization of 134 Basque newspapers and magazines published outside of Euskadi, with the idea of seeing what Basques communities wrote about themselves. Now the focus is on compiling and digitizing information on what others had to say about the Basques.

The project was initially implemented as a pilot scheme. An agreement was signed between the Basque Government General Secretariat for Foreign Action, the Federation of Basque-Argentine Entities (FEVA), the University of the Basque Country, and the National University of the South in the city of Bahía Blanca, Argentina.

The results of the pilot project were presented at the Fourth World Congress of Basque Communities in Bilbao in July 2007 by professors Óscar Álvarez Gila and Alberto Angulo Morales from the University of the Basque Country, and José Marcilese from the National University of the South. The presentation resulted in the green light for the initial phase of the project, providing a basis for participation by Basque centers and universities from other countries.

DIGITALIZATION PROCESS. Each of the digitized documents comprises two parts. The first is a factsheet or index card with basic information on the publication: type of media, date, geographical names, people's names, etc. The second is a digital photograph of the document in question. The criteria followed in the selection of

«Egitasmo honen

gakoa agente

ezberdinen arteko

elkarlanean datza»

news items was based strictly on scientific principles to prevent elements of subjectivity from being introduced.

A BEACON TO THE FUTURE.

"Basques in the American press" is not the only program the Directorate for Relations with Basque Communities has in mind. Initiatives are also under way aimed at digitizing and compiling photographs from the Basque diaspora.

But the key to success for this fantastic project will be our capability to encourage the various stakeholders to work together and to create a far-reaching team. We can all do our small part to contribute photographs, printed material and other types of documents, by working with our Basque centers and families to preserve the history of Basque people abroad.

The aim over the next three years is to create a photograph archive with 50,000 pictures which bear witness to the presence of Basque people around the world. Also in the preparatory stages is an oral history archive and a major video library of audio-visual documents (films, video, etc.) pertaining to Basque-related events. In November the international federations of Basque centers, in collaboration with the Directorate for Relations with Basque Communities, will launch a website where interested parties can share and make use of the various documents. The website will be a powerful research tool for scholars of Basques around the world and will

provide an extensive archive of different types of documents.

THE REAL HEROES. There are some very special people involved in the process of reconstructing our historical memory. They are the young people of the Basque diaspora (some of whom are members of Basque clubs) who actually do the fieldwork and follow the orders of the "Basques in the American press" project coordinators.

Bárbara Azpiriz is one of them. Bárbara is from Tandil, Buenos Aires Province, Argentina, and is a member of the Gure Etxea Basque center. She explains that her work on the project is "to collect photographs from newspaper clippings that refer directly or indirectly to 'things Basque.' Then we complete an index card for each photograph with a brief description of the content of the article, including any places, people, companies or that sort of thing mentioned in the article."

The initiative sparked a good deal of interest in Bárbara. "It's also a great way of bringing the importance of Basque culture and history to people's attention," she said. "This work is going to be very important for researchers, and will enormously facilitate their search for information on Basque topics," she added.

Carolina Elisabet Iribarne is originally from Necochea but is currently a student living in Tandil. She is a member of the Necochea Eusko Etxea and teaches Basque dance to the youngest members of the Gure Etxea in Tandil. Her job, as she explains, is "to concentrate explicitly on newspapers, so that the information can then be categorized."

Her interest in 'things Basque' was what prompted her to take part in the project. But she also points out that "it's a great way for students to earn a bit of pocket money. It's pretty difficult here to be able to work and study at



the same time." Carolina is pleased with the work-study combination. "I'm thrilled to be involved in the project," she said.

Florencia Bossi is from La Plata, Buenos Aires Province, Argentina. Working with the Public Library of the National University of La Plata, her job is to coordinate the people carrying out the fieldwork in La Plata and Chascomús (Buenos Aires Province).

Florencia feels that the work being done is "important for recovering the historical memory of the Basque community." Although she is not a member of the Basque club, Florencia explained that she was very interested in the subject. "I feel proud to be taking part in the recuperation of historical memory, to help bring to the forefront the history and collective efforts of the Basque people, and to enhance research efforts on the diaspora," she added.

