

Urazandi Digital #1: A century of periodicals from Basque communities

On the occasion of commemorating the fifth anniversary of the *Euskal Erria* magazine being founded in Montevideo, Padre Andrés de Mendigorria said that “... *it is the chronicle, whose pages register the triumphs obtained and the difficulties which it had to confront in order to achieve them: this wonderful store of news, where the historian can go and look for the data they need to weave a memory which is an eloquent teaching for those to come.*”¹

His words can be applied to the publications included in this collection: working through almost 180,000 digitalised pages, it is possible to reconstruct the experiences of several generations of Basques, who were obliged to temporarily or permanently abandon their natural home due to political persecutions, military mandates, religious obedience or simply to find a better future.

Offering incalculable historical value, these pages cover a century which almost exactly coincides with the period in which Bizkaia, Alava and Gipuzkoa were obliged to live without their General Councils. At the very least it reflects the pain of a nation which felt culturally and politically usurped. However, there is no end to this feeling and it stretches into a lasting effort to recover former laws and maintain their language, their customs and their ancestral traditions as part of an intangible inheritance which they leave to descendents who also feel part of the eighth province of Euskal Herria.

The choice of the start date for this Project was no coincidence or even a whim, as it marks the publication of the first Basque newspaper on American soil. This paper, which was called *Laurac Bat*, first appeared in Montevideo in December 1877.

From then on and over a whole century, almost one hundred and fifty others were added to the inventory of Basque periodicals published outside Euskal Herria.

Of these we have located and digitalised 134 different magazines or newspapers, published in 13 countries over three continents, which we have classified into 9 categories:

1. SOCIAL.
2. CULTURAL.
3. JOURNALISM
4. SPORTS
5. BUSINESS
6. BASQUE GOVERNMENT
7. POLITICS
8. TRADE UNIONS
9. MILITARY

1. SOCIAL

The first classification includes the aforementioned *Laurac Bat* from Montevideo and its homonym from Buenos Aires which along with *Centro Vascongado* from

¹ *Euskal Erria*, Year VI, no. 228, Montevideo, 4th August 1917. Page 301.

Montevideo and *Memorias de la Asociación Vasco Navarra de Beneficencia* from La Havana, are the only ones of their kind published in the 19th century.

Already in the 20th century, we had to wait until 1912 for an euskal etxea to start up another publication.

This was the newspaper *Euskal Erria*, which emerged within the heart of the Montevideo society bearing the same name. Published until 1960, its 1003 issues over 48 years made it the most extensive and long lasting publication in its category.

Later there was the magazine *Zazpirak Bat* from Rosario (1922) *Euskaro Español* from Montevideo (1924); *Argía –Luz* from Mexico (1934); *Euzkadi* (1942 and 1948), *Eusko Gastedi* (1948) *La Pulga* (1969) and *Notimes* (1974) from Caracas; *Denak Bat* (1943) from Mar del Plata; *Denak Bat* (1945) from Lomas de Zamora; *Eusko Etxea* (1959) from Santiago de Chile; *Eusko Etxea Deya* (1962) from Bogota; *Irrintzi* (1968) from Bahía Blanca; the magazine from the *Federación de Entidades Vasco Argentinas* (1969); *Zazpiak Bat* (1970) from Reno; *Euzkorria* (1971) from Elko; *Irrintzi* (1972) from General Acha; *Eusko Etxea* (1972) from La Plata; the magazine from the *Confederación de Entidades Vasco Americanas* (1973) from Buenos Aires and *Alkarte'ko Berriak* (1974) from Boise.

Finally, within this category we should also mention *Gure Sustraiak*, published in 1977 by the Bogotá Basque centre ikastola.

As we can see, many of the magazines which we have just listed could also rightly appear in the political category, particularly those published by the Basque centre in Venezuela. This institution tends to blur cultural and political issues making it impossible to separate them. However, as they are publications from euskal etxeak we have included them here.

2. JOURNALISM

Of course all the categories which we have used to distribute the material in our project are journalistic, meaning that they involve activities related to selecting, drawing up and transmitting information through the media. However, this category comprises commercial undertakings which were exclusively aimed at maintaining an informative company.

These emerged in the twilight years of the 19th century when, although it was still possible to count the number of Basque centres on one hand, there were tens of thousands of Basque immigrants in America.

The first of these was *Eskualdun Gazeta*, created in Los Angeles, California, in 1885 led by Martín Biscailuz. This was followed by *Laurac Bat* in La Havana, led by the Portuguese poet Faustino Diez Gaviño (1886); *La Vasconia* (1893) from Buenos Aires, by José Rufo de Uriarte; the *California'ko Eskual Herria* (1893) from Los Angeles by Jean Pierre Goytino; and a few years later *Haritza* (1896), *Eskual Herria* (1898), and *La Euskaria* (1906) in Buenos Aires.

In 1917 the magazine entitled *Navarra* was published in the Argentinean capital. It was an ephemeral undertaking which targeted Navarre communities in Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay but got no further than its first issue. In 1921 and in this same city, the newspaper entitled *Eskualduna* was created to be published weekly all over South America.

The last and most modern of Basque-American newspapers was the *Voice of the Basques*, published in Boise between 1974 and 1977.

This section can also include the newspaper for the French community *Le Californien* published in San Francisco between 1963 and 1979. Although it was not a Basque publication, we consider that the large amount of information which it included regarding continental Basques means that it is worth including in this collection.

3. CULTURAL

In the CULTURAL category we are including the only issue of the *Periódico Vasco* which have managed to get hold of: *Basque Children's Home*, edited in 1938 by the “niños de la Guerra,” Basque children who had took refuge in the Kingston Camp, England during the war.

This section has also incorporated all the issues of *Boletín del Instituto Americano de Estudios Vascos*, a magnificent undertaking started in the Argentinean capital in 1950 with directors such as Gabino Garriga, Bonifacio de Ataun and Andrés de Irujo; the *Gernika* notebooks (1945), created in Donibane Lohizune and continued in Buenos Aires; the newspaper *Euskalzaleak*, which emerged in 1954 at the hand of the monk Iñaki de Azpiazu to promote the Basque language; *Ambos Mundos* (1946) from New York; the legendary *Euzko Gogoa* (1950) by Jokin Zaitegi, first exile magazine edited exclusively in Basque and the *Basque Studies Program Newsletter*, started in 1968 by William Douglass.

4. BUSINESS

We can find only one example within the BUSINESS category.

Published for the first time in 1939, the magazine entitled *Gordejuela* from Cárdenas, in Cuba, responded to the interests of the powerful distillery José Arechavala Sociedad Anónima, which produced the internationally famous Ron Havana Club.

Created with the name “La Vizcaya”, the company had been founded by José Arechavala Aldama, from Gordejuela, in 1878.

This magazine appeared on a weekly basis and displayed rare quality for the time, full of photographs emphasising the company's modern installations and the social life of its owners and employees. Distributed among its workers, it aimed to promote the family company encouraging good relations between the company, its workers and the town of Cárdenas.

5. SPORTS

At the start of the 19th century, the monumental Frontón Jai Alai was inaugurated in la Havana, popularly known as “el Palacio de los Gritos” or the Shouting Palace. This project had been designed by the well known bull fighter from Eibar, Luis Mazzantini, in 1898 but he had to wait until the end of the war leading to independence in Cuba for his dream to come true.

Inaugurated on 3rd March 1901 to the sound of the Gernikako Arbola and in the presence of numerous journalists and representatives of the Basque colony, the new company led to the creation of several specialised publications dedicated to promoting the game and concerning the gambling surrounding this sport.

The oldest of these is the *Beti Jai, Semanario de Literatura y Sport* magazine, founded the same year, followed by *La Cancha Habanera* which appeared three years later.

In the 1940s, there were also the Cuban *Cancha Nacional* (1947) and *Cancha y Ring* (1947); Mexican *Cancha* (1945), *Chic Chac* (1951) and *Jai Alai* (1936) and North American *Chula* (1975), all promoting companies which made Basque 'pelota' a prosperous business.

With more modest ambitions and in a non profit making capacity, the sports magazine *Grupo Pelota Zale* was edited in 1972 in Caracas.

6. BASQUE GOVERNMENT

The earliest of the BASQUE GOVERNMENT publications edited outside mainland Spain was *Euzko Deya* from England, a fortnightly publication which was produced in London in 1938. It did not last long and only managed 6 issues.

Publishing its first issue on 10th May 1939, the *Euzko Deya* newspaper from Buenos Aires was the Basque Government's first publishing experience on American soil. Run by delegate Ramón María de Aldasoro, this publication quickly became the spokesperson for the Argentinean, Chilean and Uruguayan Basque community.

Its long and fruitful life lasted until 1975 under the management of **Francisco** de Basterretxea and then Pedro de Basaldua.

In 1941 in Santiago de Chile, the Basque Delegation edited the magazine *Batasuna*, led by Bernardo Estornés Lasa. Due to financial problems, they only managed to publish 5 issues.

Mexico City also had a Delegation publication from 1943. Entitled *Euzko Deya*, this newspaper lasted as long as its Argentinean counterpart, as was published until 1975.

Iñaki Azua Mendia, son of the last Director and Basque Government Delegate in the Republic, should be thanked for providing the last issues of *Euzko Deya* which we have added to this collection.

From 1943, the United States also had an exiled Basque Government official publication. It was called *Basques* and written entirely in English, although only 6 issues ever appeared.

In Panama, the responsibility fell to Juan González de Mendoza Garayalde, Basque Delegate in this country, who published two issues of *Gernika* magazine in 1943.

7. POLITICS

With a total of 49 different publications, the POLITICAL publications category wins the prize for quantity. Listing them one by one would take us too long today so we will limit ourselves to highlighting those which, in our opinion, deserve greater interest.

As a pioneer within its type, we must mention the magazine *Irrintzi* published in Maipú from 1902 to 1923. Edited by Nemesio de Olariaga, early defender of the Sabino's ideal in America, it was sent free of charge to anyone who requested it; it did not accept contributions or advertising and its director and owner set a cash prize for anyone who managed to demonstrate reliably that the Basques were actually Spanish.

As far as we know, nobody ever won the money.

In 1907 the PNV magazine *Euzkotarra* was published in Mexico. Hounded by the Spanish embassy, it had to move to New Orleans where it was published under the name of *Azkatasuna* until 1909.

There was also a newspaper called *Euzkotarra* in the Argentinean capital. Founded in 1913, it was edited by Felipe de Zabala and presented as the Basque Youth Body, which is an entity depending on the PNV.

In 1915, the fortnightly magazine *Aitor* emerged in Rosario de Santa Fe, defending Nationalist opinions. It barely lasted a year and managed to produce 33 issues.

In 1917 the nationalist magazine *Aurrera* emerged in Santiago de Chile. Almost unknown among historians, we must thank Pedro Oyangueren for adding it to this project.

As far as emblematic publications go, we must mention the nationalist newspaper *Nación Vasca*, Basque Nationalist Action Body, which was published in Buenos Aires between 1924 and 1937, lasting through several periods until 1998.

Researchers into Basque-American communities are also unaware of the newspaper *Gure Herria* from Buenos Aires which we have added to this collection. Published in 1928 by Miguel de Zarate, no issues of this newspaper remain in its country of origin.

This is also the case for the publications *Euskal Ordua* and *Solidaridad Eusko Americana*, published in the Uruguayan capital in 1934 and 1936 respectively. Both magazines, defending the doctrine of Sabino Arana, were unknown in Uruguay until they were “rediscovered” and added to this project. There are no issues left in its home country either.

Of course not all of them correspond to nationalist initiatives, although there can be no doubt that the vast majority did. Among other ideologies, we can find the newspaper *Alkartu*, Monthly Newsletter for the Euzkadi Communist Party Delegation in Mexico.

Published under the management of the Secundino Esnaola in 1942, it changed its name to *Boletín de Euzkadi Roja* five years later.

It also includes the newspaper *Euzkadi Socialista*, edited in Toulouse between 1947 and 1949. This was the spokesperson for the Euzkadi Socialist Central Committee, belonging to the PSOE.

Of course the collection also includes *Tierra Vasca* published in Buenos Aires by Tellagorri and Pedro María de Irujo from 1956 to 1975. We have been able to find all the copies of this production which responds ideologically to the Acción Nacionalista Vasca.

Finally, and reaching the end of this category, we must mention that we have included numerous publications in this project from left wing political movements whose members had to take exile in American countries, preferably Mexico and Venezuela, although some Argentinean publications have also been found.

Among those published in Mexico we can mention *Boletín del Consejo de Contribución a la Resistencia Vasca* (1959); *Euskal Elkargoa* (1971), from the Basque Refugee Aid Association; *Euzkadi Azkatuta* (1956) and *Zutik* (1962?).

Among publications from Caracas we can highlight the *Berriak* (1970); *Cuadernos Zutik* (1963); *Goazen* (1965); *Irrintzi* (1979) magazines published by the Committee to support Basque prisoners and exiles and *Zutik en tierras americanas* (1960).

Tximistak (1961) and *Zutik* were published in Buenos Aires.

8. TRADE UNIONS

It was inevitable that the exile should also affect numerous Basque trade unionists who started their own publishing projects in an attempt to reorganise.

This was the case of Solidaridad de los Trabajadores Vascos, which set up the *Euzko Languillen Alkartasuna* magazine in Mexico in 1948; whilst in Caracas between 1971 and 1974 they edited the leaflet for *Lan Deya*, official body for ELA/STV.

In France the *U.G.T.* newspaper, Boletín del Comité Central de Unión General de Trabajadores de Euzkadi was also published jointly with the aforementioned *Euzkadi Socialista*. This publication, although dated in Bordeaux, seems to have been published in Toulouse as an annexe of the socialist body.

Euzko Izketa was also published in Mexico.

9. MILITARY

The only publication included in this category is the '*Eskual Herria*' magazine, founded by the politician Mixel Itzaina in February 1958 in the city of Algiers, where he had been posted as a soldier for the Basque battalion of the French occupation army.

According to Xipri Alberbide, who we must thank for contributing digital copies to this collection, this magazine is so important because it was written by young 20 year olds from Iparralde in Basque. In barely three years of publishing, we can find 275 co-writers who, by inserting fragments of letters, joke and verses, informed people back home about their lives in Africa.

But this publication, which although modest in production managed to produce 450 issues, suffered the consequences of what we see now as its main merit: its language. Precisely because it was written in Basque, it was banned in the French army as they could not control or censor its content.

However, publication did not stop, but was continued by the Christian workers association '*Euskaldun Gazteria*', led by heletarra Janpierre Kurutzet.

As well as being the only publication included in this category, it is also the only one published in Africa.

After five years' work and despite the pride with which we are presenting our results today, we are conscious that we have not managed to achieve the initial proposal of completing all the collections we have presented.

The actual situation, which put the brakes on our expectations, has shown us just how difficult it would be to conclude our project, as many issues of these publications seem to have been definitively lost.

The publications generated within the Basque centres barely represent a brief segment of the annals. In most cases, the substance of their histories remains hidden among

the pages of their archives. In others, which have not been so fortunate, they have been lost forever or they are in imminent danger, as we saw on our recent visit to La Havana. Thousands of pages of minutes, letters, reports, lists of members and an infinite number of documents guarded the histories of the Asociación Vasco Navarra de Beneficencia and the Centro Euskaro in this city.

Despite having undertaken a meticulous inventory, and catalogued and conditioned these documents for conservation in 1999, in 2006 these magnificent archives were affected by one of the recurring cyclones which hit the island and we now know that a great quantity of the documentation from the Asociación Vasco Navarra de Beneficencia has been destroyed along with almost everything from the Centro Euskaro, which was still damp when we managed to access it.

Despite this unfortunate incident, we are pleased to have digitally rescued 32,000 pages of documents from this voluminous archive in an undertaking which set us a precedent: the essential need to recover documents generated by Basque communities, both in the heart of its institutions and in specific archives.

Going back to the reflection by Padre Andrés de Mendigorria, we should remember that this documentation *is a wonderful store of news, where historians can go and find the data they need to weave a memory which is an eloquent teaching for those to come* because basically and as the name of this Congress states, the Urazandi Project is a bridge between the past projecting into the future.

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