

ABERRI EGUNA 2003



BECAUSE WE ARE BASQUES

Today, on the 20th of April, the day of Aberri Eguna (Patriotism Day), we, the municipally-elected councillors of the seven Basque herrialdes (territories) grouped together in UDALBILTZA®, are peacefully celebrating the day of our nation, with the aim of proclaiming and reaffirming our identity and of showing our will to continue being a People.

We find ourselves in Hendaia, beside the plaque which commemorates the birth in 1901 of Euskaltzaleen Biltzarra (Pro-Basque Assembly). With this act, we should like to pay a simple homage to all those people, euskaltzales (Bascophiles) and men of Basque culture, who in that year met in this house, anxious to provide Euskera - our thousand-year-old language, the heritage of all Basques and a cultural treasure belonging to the whole of Europe - with the suitable linguistic foundations to ensure its future. They were people with a vision, a solid foundation and cultural wisdom; lovers of their People and of the latter's personality; good people; people such as the canon Adema, Arturo Kanpion, Sabino Arana Goiri, Resurrección Maria de Azkue, Guerra, Broussain, Guilbeau and Abelbide, among others. People from Iparralde and from Hegoalde (the North and South Basque Country) who founded an institution which, for the first time, constituted a reflection of the territoriality of Euskal Herria. A reflection of and testimony to the territoriality of Euskal Herria which UDALBILTZA® itself is, with its aim of creating a common sociology which is complementary to the People itself.

We are living in times of war and invasion, times in which the desires and demands for peace constitute a claim, with states and world leaders who, guided exclusively by geo-strategic and economic interests, attempt to impose their particular brand of international order.

We are also immersed in a Europe which is being built by combining impulse, hesitation and backward steps, with actions of political sabotage at its core. In this scheme of things, it proves necessary to ask oneself where and in what state the rights of individuals and of a People as a whole are.

Since the 11th of September 2001, since the terrorist attack against the Twin Towers in New York, US and some European leaders such as Blair and Aznar have agreed to ignore legality in order to resolve conflicts, imposing their codes of brute force, military force.

We are Basque. We constitute a People on both sides of the Pyrenees, a People denied their existence, extension and scope by the French and Spanish states, which do not admit any reality different from their own.

On this day on which the Aberri Eguna is held, on the eve of elections

which are to take place in four of the seven Basque territories, we can only condemn as vigorously as possible the fact that the effective representation of a significant part of our People in said elections has been politically and judicially banned. A Spanish state which, by action agreed upon by all its institutions, insists on projecting in time a political conflict which it needs in order for it to seek political and democratic solutions. They ban and restrict basic political ideas and rights, toughen their stance on Basque prisoners and their relatives and attack Euskera or any other project which may focus on the standpoint of Euskal Herria as a whole. And there are others who threaten and put such basic rights in jeopardy as those of the life and freedom of hundreds of people because the latter do not think or have the same points of view as them.

The so-called *izquierda abertzale* (Basque nationalist left), far from dealing with and adopting political, strategic and definitive decisions, insists on "desiring and demanding" instead of "risking in order to have."

The political plan of extrapolating the projection of votes among municipally-elected councillors which, for strictly legal purposes are going to be considered null and void by trying to recreate an authentic political fiction constitutes, in our opinion, a deliberate attempt to avoid the main issue that grips them.

If getting to grips with the debate and the consequent stance regarding the use of violent means proves so alien to them, if the question is actually to seek real solutions, one would do well to ask, assess and reply as to whether even for merely practical purposes, what are the political effects of ETA violence? Who does the violent strategy of ETA objectively favour? The Basque people? Basque nationalism? The *izquierda abertzale*? Political solutions?

We are celebrating the *Aberri Eguna* because we are nationalists, but above all because we are Basque. We feel part of a People, we proclaim its existence, the right to full sovereignty, the obligation to safeguard and strengthen the language and the attaining of its territorial unity.

Yet beyond expressing our objectives which constitute, in addition to the redressing of a historic justice, a pure democratic expression. We feel the duty right here now to propose the foundations for and keys to working in the near future:

- In times of war, violence and demand, a definitive commitment through exclusively peaceful and democratic means. Peace and respect for the basic rights of all people.
- The right of self-determination of the Basque People.
- Basque national conscience and construction.
- Basque associative territoriality.
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Our appeal is directed to all those who feel Basque. Without false hopes but without any complex. We are going to concentrate our efforts on turning what belongs to us into reality. Because we are Basques, simply Basques.

GORA EUSKADI ASKATUTA!

LONG LIVE A FREE BASQUE COUNTRY!

Euskal Herria, on the 20th of April 2003