



Basque Writing 15

EGUNA, AN EPIC ACCOMPLISHMENT IN THE HISTORY OF THE BASQUE JOURNALISM



This edition of Basque Writing is very special for us. It is a humble tribute to those who used the Basque language as work tool in the darkest of times and conditions. Also, in these texts, we will try to summarise all the events that have been carried out in this regard. 80 years ago, when Europe was heading toward devastation and Spain was immersed into a ferocious war, something that seemed impossible until then became true: A

group of people managed to found and publish a daily newspaper in Basque. It didn't last for very long, less than six months, and it was only distributed in the areas of the Basque Country that hadn't yet been defeated; even so, what happened between the first day of 1937 and the day when the fascists took Bilbao, could properly be described as an epic accomplishment.

Eight decades later, we want to remember the newspaper that became a milestone in Basque journalism. Five

years ago, on the 75th anniversary, we remembered Gernika: The Basque town was bombed by the Condor Legion and, thanks to a picture painted by Picasso, became known all over the world. It has a special meaning for us as it represents the beginning of the fascists' literary darkness

and the end of the Basque cultural renaissance. The execution of the Basque poet Estepan Urkiaga a.k.a. *Lauaxeta* was a clear example of that, and Lauaxeta was, in fact, one of the people who worked hard to make EGUNA possible. Naturally, they did war journalism, they wrote the daily news that needed to be read on the battlefield and wrote texts to encourage the Basque soldiers; but EGUNA was much more than that: social issues, stories, literature, international news... Our association, Basque PEN, considered it necessary to pay tribute to that newspaper and its workers, who marked such a milestone for Basque journalism. Together with other associations, we have organised several



Bilbao under the bombs, 1937, Robert Capa

events throughout this year to make people understand what EGUNA meant, to indicate where the offices were in Bilbao, to recover its texts and, finally, to compile EGUNA's heritage in a beautiful facsimile that is available for everyone who wants to read about it, either in the Basque Country, in other countries or in our diaspora. This edition of Basque Writing has been conceived with the same purpose in mind.



Urtzi Urrutikoetxea
Basque PEN



EGUNA, January-June 1937



EGUNA, 1937

THE IMPOSSIBLE COMES TRUE

The publication of the first Basque daily newspaper was a watershed moment in the narrative about the past of the Basque people and their history. In 1729, while teaching at the University of Salamanca, Manuel Larramendi published the first Basque grammar and as claimed by its title, *El imposible vencido*, the impossible had come true. As a consequence of having that work of normative grammar published, the Basque language was no longer considered a barbaric language and was included in the list of refined languages. Larramendi argued the case for the Basque language in Spanish, as he was addressing the authorities and academics of the Spanish composite Monarchy.

Throughout the 19th century oral literature (*coplas* and *bertsos*) was printed on paper to inform people of the events that happened around them. Almanacs or "newspapers": In 1848, in Bayonne, Agustin Chaho published two editions of *Uscal Herrico Gasetas* as supplements in *Ariel* magazine. Later on, bilingual magazines in Basque and French appeared: *Le Reveil Basque* (1886), which had left wing and republican tendencies, and *Escualduna* (1887), which supported rightwing ideas and Catholicism. The latter was the pioneer of "fast" journalism written in Basque and it adapted the language to modern communication. In 1888, the magazine called *Gure izarra* was created in Paris to cater for the Basque emigrants who lived in that city. Also in California (USA), some weekly magazines were published for the first time: *Escualdun Gazeta* (1885, and *Californiako Eskual Herria* (1893, The Basque Country of California)

In Bilbao between 1895 and 1899, magazines began to publish articles in Basque, mainly due to the influence of Sabino Arana and Basque Nationalism, but most of the news was still written in Spanish: *Bizkaitarra*, *Euskalduna*, *Baserritarra*, *El Correo Vasco*. However, during the same period, in 1896, R.M. Azkue began publishing the weekly magazine *Euskaltzale*, in which every article was written in Basque.

Consequently, in 1901, some Basquophiles got together in Hendaye to unify Basque orthography, since at that time magazines were being published in three dialects: the Labourdin-Lower Navarrese, the Biscayan and the Gipuzkoan.

When the Basque Nationalist newspaper *Euzkadi* was founded in Bilbao in 1913, its creators decided to include an article written in

Basque on its front page, so without any doubt, the Basque language was not a marginal language that was only employed by farmers and rural populations, but was also used by city dwellers and readers. E. Bustintza was in charge of the sections written in Basque, in the Biscayan dialect.



EGUNA first front page: Here we are!

1. 1919: Euskaltzaindia (The Academy of the Basque language) is created. The Argia magazine in Donostia-San Sebastián.

In 1918, the First Congress on Basque Studies was held in Oñati and, with help from the four Basque provincial governments or Deputations, a new institution was founded: Euskaltzaindia. Its main goal was to create a unified or standardized Basque, (*euskara batua*), that is to say, a common or regularized Basque literary language.

In Iruñea-Pamplona, the Capuchin monks started a magazine called *Zeruko argia* (The Heaven's Light) in 1919 and, very soon after, in 1921, another magazine was published in San Sebastian: *Argia*. (The Light). In *Argia*, B. Garitaonandia used a Gipuzkoan dialect but with contributions of the rest of dialects to carry out his work as a journalist. In 1929, they (including the poet Lizardi) tried to make *Argia* into a newspaper and they even published an initial issue. However, *Argia* continued to be a weekly magazine. Meanwhile in Bilbao, a new Basque magazine, written in the Biscayan Basque dialect and promoted by a media company called "Euzko Pizkundia", was created: *Euzko* (citizen of the Basque nation) (1931); Manuel Ziarsolo was its editor.

2. The foundation of Eusko Jaurlaritza (the Basque Government) in Bilbao during wartime

In 1936 (17-19 July), some military authorities of the Spanish army, together with some Carlists and Falangists, organized the coup d'état against the Second Republic and the democratic system but it failed and the civil war began. In the Basque Country, the city of Iruñea-Pamplona was the focal point of conspiracies and mutinies.

The Spanish Parliament approved the Statute of autonomy for the Basque Country (1936-9-25) and the 7th of October 1936, the Basque Government was formed in Gernika an official newspaper began to be published every day in both Basque and Spanish: *Euzkadiko agintaritzaren egunerokoa* (The Basque Authorities Daily, October 9th 1936). That publication was edited and published in Basque and Spanish by the Department of Governance of Telesforo Monzon. He had a group of Basque translators around him, mainly made up of journalists from Gipuzkoa who were seeking refuge in Bilbao and had previously worked in *Argia* and *El Día* newspaper.

3. On the 1st of January 1937 *Eguna* is born: "Emen gara (Here we are)".

In December 1936 there had been restrictions on the amount of paper that newspapers could use and, as a result, *Euzkadi* (the newspaper of the Basque National Party) had to publish fewer pages than usual. J. Ajuriagerra and the poet Lauxeta (E. Urkiaga) members of the



leadership of the Basque National Party (EAJ-PNV), ordered the creation of a new Basque newspaper and as a result the media company Euzko Pizkundera started publishing a new newspaper called *Eguna* (The Day) on New Year's Day 1937. These are the words that the journalists in *Euzkadi* used to describe *Eguna*: "*Eguna will fulfil two crucial missions: the mission to make the Basque Country Basque-speaking and the mission to Christianize it*" (January 1, 1937).

It had its own management and editorial office. It shared the same ideology as *Euzkadi*: they focused on the defense of the Basque Government and the promotion of Basque nationalism and Catholicism. In Bayonne, a weekly magazine called *Euskalduna* was also being published in Basque language and it shared the Catholic values of *Eguna*. Nonetheless, *Euskalduna* supported the Carlists, and consequently the rebel generals F. Franco and E. Mola.

Manuel Ziarsolo was the editor of *Eguna*, the same person who had previously edited the magazine *Euzko*; in fact, the influence of that magazine was very clear in the new newspaper *Eguna*.



Manuel Ziarsolo, director of EGUNA

The rest of the journalists, who were called up to serve the Basque Government as soldiers, were very young: Agustin Zubikarai, the deputy editor, came from Ondarroa and was 21 years old. He was in charge of the editorial and writing room department and the following were the journalists working with him: Eusebio Erkiaga (from Lekeitio), Jose Mari Arizmendiarreta (from Barinaga-Markina) and Alejandro Mendizabal (from Mutriku). All those young journalists were in favor of

the Basque language and had become

literate in Basque in the seminary of the diocese of Vitoria-Gasteiz, all except Eusebio Erkiaga. J.M. Arizmendiarreta, who had previously been a fervent participant in the Kardaberaz association in the seminary and later, as a priest, he was to be the main mentor and entrepreneur in the industrial cooperative movement in Mondragon.

Other journalists came from Gipuzkoa and they were the ones who had been in charge of the Basque section of the newspaper *El Día* and the magazine *Argia*. This is the list of men who worked for The Basque Authorities Daily, mainly as translators: Andres Arzelus, Txomin Arruti, J. Insausti, I. Eizmendi "Basarri", Fausto Leunda, Andoni Arozena. Some others were serving the Basque Government as soldiers and sent information from the front. As well as this, they used to publish texts written by women and men, that were in support of Basque-language. The task seemed an impossible one, but they achieved it.

Regarding the narrative structure of the newspaper, it was divided into different sections. It was not just a newspaper carrying propaganda, it also aimed to be a professional newspaper, and so it was for the first three months. However, after March 31, 1937, following the attack by the fascist general Mola, news about the war prevailed. Usually, the newspaper was composed by 4 pages long, although it sometimes had 6 pages. These were its sections:

- *Egunekoa* (the Daily): The editorial.
- Headlines: A very important part of *Eguna*, they were the responsibility of Eusebio Erkiaga.
- The structure of the news: They took news stories from agencies and translated or adapted them. Their journalism, of which pictures formed an extremely important part, was addressed to the population. Opinion articles had a leading role, but literature, writers and *bertsolaritza* (Basque oral literature) were also important in *Eguna*. Therefore, *Eguna* had a modern structure; it was similar to other contemporaneous papers.

- The news: News about the Basque Country, and local and international news.

- "*Guda oinetan eta Euzko zaingoetan*": News about the war.

- A summary of the news that had been published in other papers.

In addition to those, there were other special sections: *Jel Azija*, representative of the Basque Nationalist and Catholic doctrine. Basarri had his own section, *Nere Bordatxotik* (From My Little Shack), and so did J. Insausti "Uztur", whose section was called *Kaleko marmara* (Street Whispers).

- Drawings and pictures: photographs were widely used as part of the paper's journalism. Drawings by J.M. Urzelai and the Arrue brothers became widely known thanks to the paper. Caricatures were also included, and it was M. Ziarsolo, a.k.a. Abeletxe, the editor of the newspaper, who wrote the comments below the drawings. There was no advertising.

Regarding the Basque language, most of the editors came from the Biscay-Gipuzkoan border area and they used two linguistic criteria: On the one hand, there was Gipuzkoan dialect which prevailed in Euzkadi Agintaritza and, on the other hand, there was Biscayan dialect, which was employed by the Sabinists (Sabino Arana's followers).

The newspaper was sold in Bilbao and adjacent towns, but mainly it was distributed to the *gudaris* (the soldiers who were fighting for the Basque Government). One hundred and thirty-nine copies were published; the last one was printed on 13th June 1937.

4. *Eguna's* political discourse

It followed the ideology of the Basque National Party (EAJ-PNV), even though they did not want to make this too obvious.

- 1.- Antifascism and democratic freedom.
- 2.- They claimed freedom for the Basque people from a nationalist perspective.
- 3.- They asserted that the Basque language was the heart of nationalism.
- 4.- Catholic Christianity. As the higher echelons of the Church hierarchy had joined the fascists, they praised the stance taken by most local town priests.
- 5.- Fervent defense of the Basque Government. The paper had the support of the Secretary of Culture, J.M. Leizaola, and the members of the Government constantly appeared in the paper.
- 6.- They wrote articles to support farmers and fishermen. J.M. Arizmendiarreta and Txomin Arruti helped to publicize the concerns and difficulties that the farmers were experiencing. Class struggles were mentioned in some articles, but they did not allude to the workers of the industrial areas.

In summary

The editorial on the front page of the first copy of *Eguna* newspaper clearly stated that the seemingly impossible had been achieved: the publication of a newspaper fully in Basque-language. Therefore, their message was "Here we are". It was hard task successfully achieved thanks to the cooperative work of all pro-Basque speaking people, and it added a new meaning to the war: The fight against fascism had become a war for the freedom of Euzkadi.

When Franco's troops occupied Bilbao on the June 19, 1937, the journalists that worked in *Eguna* were targeted by the repression. Some managed to flee abroad. The rest were imprisoned.



Joseba Agirreazkuenaga

Full Professor at the University of the Basque Country



80th anniversary: activities

Eguna was the realisation of a colossal undertaking that had been desired for many years. It was born under complicated circumstances and didn't last for very long. After Eguna disappeared, there was no daily press written in Basque for too long a time. Because of that, we cannot say that we reaped some of what had previously been sowed; in fact, those who undertook the task in the 90s felt as though they were starting from scratch. However, this wasn't the case; even though many people didn't know about it, a huge effort had been made in 1937, under the toughest of conditions. Now, 80 years later, **Basque PEN and many other institutions** have given that precious heritage its deserved recognition.

One of the most modest events, and still a very noticeable one, is **the plaque that was unveiled in Postas Street** in Bilbao. It has been placed on the ground floor because that's where EGUNA's offices were. That plaque also aims to highlight the importance that the biggest city in Euskal Herria (Bilbao) has had in the linguistic history of the Basque language. An effort has also been made to build a bridge between the Basque presses in the 21st century and in 1937, in order to forge a link that had been broken for many decades: **every single day from the 1st of January 2017 to June of the same year, the newspaper BERRIA published an article taken from Eguna.** We have tried to respect the dialect and the style of the original texts; but, above all, our main objective was to bring the fears, the intentions, the hopes and the concerns of that time to the present day. On those pages, you can see the happiness they felt when they started the paper, the pain they experienced when Durango and Gernika were bombed or the distress they went through when their children had to leave for England and other places from the port of Bilbao as the fascists were advancing. We have also published a facsimile of the first issue with a short comment in four languages.

Amongst the many events that have been carried out to commemorate EGUNA, we can't forget **the conferences that took place in one of the most important places for Basque in Bilbao, in Euskaltzaindia** (the Academy of the Basque Language), in collaboration with the Sabino Arana Foundation and Bilbao City Council.

As for this edition of Basque Writing, we decided that we should also include some articles from that time, because we believe that that epic accomplishment needs to be recognised, naturally, in the Basque Country, but also all around the world.



Representatives of the Basque PEN, Basque Language Academy, City Council of Bilbao, Basque Government, Sabino Arana Foundation and Deia newspaper putting a plaque on the street.



Round tables in Bilbao: Alberto Aranberri 'Ama-tiño', Adolfo Arejita, Joan Mari Torrealdai, Joseba Agirreazkuenaga, Juan Carlos Ibarra, Xabier Altzibar, Iñaki Mendizabal, Odile Kruzeta, Urtzi Urrutikoetxea, Idurre Eskisabel and Javier Onaindia.



80th anniversary: Articles

HERE WE ARE! [01-01-1937]

We are brimming with joy and, whilst feeling such uncontrollable happiness, tears well up our eyes. We can't believe this. Overnight, we are fully determined to make that crazy and unachievable dream that all Basque-lovers and Basque people have dreamed of for so long come true. We have arrived full of dreams and hope; we intend to confront those who claim that Basque is hard to use, and are ready to write clear and accurate news in Basque catering for our compatriots' preferences.

Crying out in pain, we have been born staring into the eyes of a New Year that started out bloodstained in a cruel and dreadful war, with our sole intention being the revitalisation of Basque. We want to enjoy the occasion of our tattered birth to fondly commemorate the strong soldiers that are fighting for the freedom of our country with our rich Basque mountains at their backs. We also want to enthusiastically praise those knowledgeable and clever writers who were killed for loyally defending our language.

We are pervaded by the same dreams as Etxepare (a 16th Century Basque writer), and we, who carry EGUNA in our hearts, eyes and souls, take the passionate and fiery words of the old Basque writer and make them our own: Basque go outside! Basque go out into the squares! Basque go out into the world, on EGUNA's wings! We are feeling weak and not talkative, but we are full of hope.

Greetings to you, Basque people!
Here we are!

4.000 children left the country yesterday [22-05-1937]

Four thousand Basque children set off yesterday from Santurtzi towards England, to escape the fascists' atrocities. They left the Harbours of Bilbao yesterday morning at half past six in a ship called the "Habana". Another 350 people left in a ship called "Goizeko Izarra (Morning Star)" led by two tugboats. The Ciscar destroyer protected the back of "Goizeko Izarra" while in international waters, and from then on, two English warships, as usual.

Children started to arrive in Santurtzi in the afternoon accompanied by their keepers and teachers. It was not an easy mission to look after them and organise the embarkation, as there were a lot of children. However, because of the importance of the mission, they completed it with interest and on time. Each of the children had a number, which made it easier to organise them.

A lot of authorities came to say goodbye to the children and see the event with their own eyes. The President of the Basque Government, the Home Affairs Secretary and the authorities of the Department of Health were present. There were also some foreign journalists. Apart from our authorities, we also saw some English representatives such as Mr. Stevenson; but there is someone who deserves a special mention: Ms. Manning. She has worked ceaselessly to take our children to England and keep them safe from war. We will never forget her name, certainly not! Along with her, there was a group of clever doctors and laudable nurses.

After saying goodbye to our children, we talked to Ms. Manning and this is what she said: "I swear that all these children that have been put in my charge will be well received and taken care of, and while in England, they will feel as if they were at their own homes. We will have them there as long as it is necessary; and when the war is over, whose victory I hope will be this righteous Country's, I will come back to Bilbao with the four thousand children.

¡GERNIKA! [30-04-1937]

In the darkness of the night, our well-loved Gernika seemed akin to Hell itself. As long as we live, we will never forget that dreadful image! Tremendous flames rose from the ground to the sky. Those flames were telling the sad story of a town's death. The mountains around the town looked like huge monsters. They looked a million times bigger than they really are. Fire was the queen. From one end of the town to the other, only the dirge of the fire could be heard. Fire... fire... fire...

Children had nowhere to sleep. Their parents' eyes were full of tears. Where are our homes? Where is the warmth of our fireplaces?—cried elderly women in anguished voices. Where will we go? We were born here, we grew up here, we have always lived here... and now... Where are we going?

Everywhere, there were women, men, children and elderly people in the throes of madness. My son! Where are you my dear? Oh my lord! Have you seen my wife? Meanwhile, in the hospitals that hadn't been spotted by the planes' pilots, cries of pain pierced our ears. Gernika! A dreadful image that we will never ever forget!

If I could have done so, while Gernika was a huge bonfire, I would have brought each and every one of the Basque people to witness that scene, and I would have told them the following: This was Gernika, the town that symbolises our nation! Who set it on fire? Certainly not a Basque person. None of you would be able to do such a thing. Who was it.... Some of the planes might have arrived from other Basquelands, but those piloting them were not Basque, those who commanded to set Gernika on fire were not Basque. Or have Basque people completely degenerated? No way! May all Basque people be with their fists raised at these sad times! Those who have burnt Gernika are not Basque. They are German and Italian. German and Italian soldiers who were vilely attracted by the Spaniards... And now what, Basque people?



EGUNA and its workers

In February 1936, after the right wing parties lost the election, the right wing military authorities, the fascists and the Carlists rose up



Julene Azpeitia, writer

against the Republic. The uprising brought about a war and, later, a military dictatorship. The fascists immediately took Araba and Navarre, but in Gipuzkoa were met with resistance, which they were unable to subdue until September. The main goals of the coup d'état were to erode democratic freedoms, workers' rights and the autonomy and languages of Galicia, Catalonia and the Basque Country. After the Spanish Republic approved the Statute of Autonomy of the Basque Country in October 1936, The Basque Government and its army were founded. The Basque army consisted of Basque Nationalists (PNV-EAJ, ANV-Euzko Ekintza, Mendigoizaleak, STV-ELA), socialists (PSOE, UGT), communists and anarchists.

Aware of the fact that having a Basque press could be very useful as a tool of war, the Basque Nationalist Party (EAJ-PNV) converted the Basque section of the newspaper *Euzkadi* into an independent newspaper called *Eguna*. The first issue was released on New Year's Day 1937 and the last one on the 13th of June (when Bilbao was defeated); in all, it had 138 publications, which were 4 or 6 pages long. The publication's headquarters were in

Bilbao, and it is believed that 8.000-10.000 copies were distributed daily, mainly on the battlefronts.

Although the Basque Government supported *Eguna*, it was relatively autonomous. It was a wartime newspaper: the topics, the types of texts and the content were adapted to the situation on the frontlines during the winter, when the fronts were stabilised on the Biscayan borders, *Eguna* offered information and opinion pieces; however, from spring 1937 onwards, at the time of the fascists' attacks, editorials, propaganda and incitement articles became prevalent. It was the first Basque common newspaper, the first that was similar to the Spanish ones: it had a fixed infrastructure with paid news journalists and collaborators. There used to be plenty of images (pictures, scribbles, tables) that completed the information and gave the paper a attractive look.

In this article, we will talk about *Eguna's* main writers. The people who worked for *Eguna* were Nationalist and pro-Basque people, and during wartime, they took their commitments to their limits. The youngest writers volunteered to go to the front, and the older writers helped the soldiers morally or materially. In fact, many of them lost their lives on the battlefront (*Lauaxeta, Aberri, Bortane, Aitza...*), but not only those who fought on the front lines were killed, the fascists also killed many priests and writers whose only crime was being



E. Urkiaga Lauaxeta, writer

nationalist and pro-Basque (Aitzol, M. Lekuona, Markiegi, J. Otaño...). Some other writers were sentenced to death or imprisonment for many years, or were forced to work in labour camps. In this article, the word writer is employed to refer to a large group of people: literature writers, journalists, bertsolaris (Basque oral poets) who published their work on paper... In this article we will divide them into two groups, depending on

their role in *Eguna*: on the one hand, we have the news journalists and the collaborators and on the other, the reporters.

News journalists and collaborators

Paid news journalists and collaborators were the cornerstone of *Eguna*. Most of them were very young. The news editor was A. Zubikarai (1914). Other news journalists were E. Erkiaga (1912), A. Mendizabal (1915) and J. M. Arizmendiarieta (1915). The latter was the founder of the cooperatives in Mondragon and is on his way to being beatified. The director was M. Ziarsolo a.k.a. *Abeletxe* (1902) and his job consisted mainly in supervising, since he was someone who the Basque Nationalist Party knew and trusted.

The news journalists had to translate and adapt the information, shape the pieces of news very quickly and correct the texts that were received in the editorial office; besides that, they wrote many articles and several propaganda pieces. Most of the space was taken up by information, distributed in different unsigned sections. *Eguna* used to provide more information



Agustin Zubikarai, journalist

than any other paper at the time. When they reported the news of the war, they used to focus on the savageries committed by fascist troops (bombings, repression in towns, expulsions, exiled children...) and the heroism of *gudaris* (Basque Government's soldiers). The account of the last battles and the news that praised the heroic death of some leaders were especially thrilling, so were the reports of the soldier-journalists.

There were eight paid collaborators that were generally older than the news journalists. Two women wrote about education J. Azpeitia a.k.a. *Arritokieta* (1888) and J. Gabilondo a.k.a. *Maite* (1902). The Basque teachers M. Arruza a.k.a. *Arrugain* (1890) and T. Agirre a.k.a. *Barrenso* (1898) wrote about the pedagogic teaching of the Basque language, clear and simple writing, and linguistic and literary planning. I. Eizmendi a.k.a. *Basarri* (1913) and J. Insausti a.k.a. *Uzturre* (1912) talked about politics during wartime.

The businessman and pro-Basque activist Tx. Arruti a.k.a. *Mendi Lauta* (1897) addressed social matters, and in 1928-29, together with Lizardi, he designed the project of the first Basque newspaper. On top of that, he published a novel in the newspaper to show the mentality and trajectory of the nationalists in the Basque town of Zarautz.

Two of *Eguna's* collaborators were also journalists in *Euzkadi* (a newspaper that used to publish some articles in Basque): Imanol Enbeita (1884) and A. Ruiz de Azua a.k.a. *Ogoñope* (1904). *Ogoñope* was a radio journalist at Bilbao Irratia and was also the manager of the *Euzkadi's* subsidiary in Barcelona.

Reporters

We will divide them into two groups: the soldier-journalists and the local reporters. Many young nationalists who had been local reporters during the Republic sent reports and bertsos (Basque traditional poetry) from the fronts, the barracks and the batzokis (social clubs of the Basque Nationalist Party). In those reports, they talked about their course during wartime, so that their friends, family and neighbours could keep up to date about them through the newspapers. In some cases, they became the spokesmen of their battalion or company. The texts written by those spokesmen were a type of military communiqué that everyone could read, even though they were mainly addressed to their neighbours and friends, and as they constituted an

exchange between soldiers, they were usually shaped as dialogues.

We would like to mention some of them in this article: E. de la Hoz a.k.a. *Eguzki* from Getaria, I. Olaizola a.k.a. *Otarmi* from Azpeitia, A. Alberdi a.k.a. *Andoni* from Mutriku, another *Andoni*, from Errenteria, who fought in the Itxarkundia battalion, a so called *Euzkaldunako Gudari Bat* from Tolosa etc. Some soldier-journalists and chaplains published poems and bertsos; *Basarri*, E. Uriarte a.k.a. *Utarre*, *Zulo* and *Zorrotz* were mainly bertso writers, and S. Muniategi and S. Onaandia a.k.a. *Otarri* were poets.

The local reporters used to be a bit older than the soldier-journalists, and among them, there were several women, some of



'Basarri' takes a souvenir from the hands of Aitzol, 1935

which had fled Gipuzkoa, as it had fallen earlier. Mainly, they wrote about gudaris and the people in the town, since the gudaris were desperate to know what was happening at home. Here is a list of the most noteworthy reporters: G. Gorostiza a.k.a. *Aixerixa* and I. Azpiazu a.k.a. *Ixaka* from Elgoibar, G. Lizaso a.k.a. *Litargi* from Errenteria and J. Urkidi from Bermeo, *Errotari* and *Sorkunde* from Durango, J. Bareño a.k.a. *Belumendu* from Gernika, E. Bustinza a.k.a. *Mañariko* from Mañaria, E. Aginaga a.k.a. *Ete* from Markina, E. Enbeita a.k.a. *Txindor-Kumia* from Muxika and Tx. Manterola a.k.a. *Baserritar Bat* from Zeanuri.

The profile of the nationalist writers and how they supported each other

Journalists that belonged to different generations came together in *Eguna*: the oldest ones started in *Euzkadi* (1813-1928) under the guidance of Kirikiño (a very important Basque writer), the next generation, under the guidance of Lauaxeta (another impor-

tant writer) and the youngest ones started out there, in *Eguna*. Many of them were members of the Basque Nationalist Party and some others were very close to that ideology. Some of them were members of the Basque Workers Union (STV) and some others were part of the nationalist farmers union, who were in favour of a Basque Republic.

Culturally speaking, they knew about the renaissance that Basque culture had experienced in the previous years, and they wanted to carry on the tradition they had received in their homes and towns. They loved bertsos, theatre, music and literature. Many of the writers were keen on theatre; in fact, some had acted in plays; among those that were killed on the front and during the fascists' attacks in Gipuzkoa, there were several actors. Even though it

was wartime, the newspaper supported culture and carried on with some cultural projects that Euzkaltzaleak (a cultural organisation) had started in the era of cultural renaissance, for example, VIII. Olerki Eguna (the 8th Edition of the Basque Poetry Contest) and Euzkel Irakurle Batzaren Sariketa, an award that aimed to encourage new writers and soldier-journalists. There was great solidarity between Basque nationalist writers. Many of them already knew each other before the war broke out, but it wasn't until during the war that, due to the war itself, the murdered writers, the repression and the exile, they bound together in such a strong union.

A conclusion: *Eguna's* goals and peculiarities

Eguna's main goals were to report the war, to be the messenger of the Basque Nationalist Party and to facilitate the communication between writers, as well as between writers, citizens and Basque soldiers. It was a meeting point for many writers and more than 100 people who worked to make it possible. That cooperative work was the thing that made *Eguna* special, without a doubt.



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EGUNA: BEYOND NOSTALGIA AND ADMIRATION

Whenever we look back, we get charged up with nostalgia and admiration. Nostalgia belongs to those who have been there; whereas those have not, are immersed in admiration. They both are tempting chasms, dangerous cliffs. And, understandably, now that it's been 80 years since *Eguna* was closed (by force), not a lot of nostalgia remains, but the magnitude of the admiration is astounding.

Basque PEN promoted an initiative to take several editorials, opinion articles and pieces of news from *Eguna* and publish them in this newspaper (Berria). The publications were published from Tuesday to Saturday, from the 3rd of January up until the 17th of June of the same year. For six months, we have been going through the facsimiles stored in Armiarma (a Basque literature data-bank). We have dedicated each of every day to reading the 4 or 6 page newspapers, searching for news or opinion articles that would contain the pre-established number of characters. After selecting the texts, we would organise them and copy them respecting their original style.

At the beginning of the year, during the whirl of events to commemorate and honour *Eguna*, I myself, also succumbed to admiration. There is no denying that the paper was born in the toughest of times: in 1937, at the height of the Civil War, with limited resources and before *Batua* (unified Basque) was created. And to make matters worse, they also had to deal with internal issues, as some thought that rather than creating a whole new paper, it would be a better idea just to include a few articles written in Basque in *Euzkadi* and *El Día* (both newspapers were written in Spanish). However, Lauaxeta, Lizardi and other bascophiles were convinced that having a gazette written entirely written in Basque was absolutely necessary. Among others, Alejandro Mendizabal, Eusebio Urkiaga, Agustín Zubikarai and Jose Maria Arizmendiarieta worked at the paper as journalists. Apart from the regular workers, there were many collaborators: Inazio Eizmendi a.k.a. *Basarri*, Julene Azpeitia a.k.a. *Arritokieta*, Jesus Insausti a.k.a. *Uzturre*, Julia Gabilondo a.k.a. *Maite*, etc.

The newspaper was born with the New Year. Its first publications already contained the sections that would be permanent in the paper: *Euzkadi erjietako izparrak* (local news); *Atzerriko izparrak* (foreign news); *Naskaldia* (short opinion texts); *Eritxi-Miritxi* (opinion articles); *Bilbao'ko izparringajak diñuena* (news taken from Bilbao papers); *Euzko guda-oñetan* (News about the war in Euskadi); *Kaleko marmarra* (street whispers); *Euzko emakume maitia* (a section dedicated to women); *Españar gudea erbesteetan* (The Spanish war abroad); *Au, ori ta bestea* (This and that); *Nere bordatxotik* (From my little shack); *Eguneko jarduna* (daily information from the battlefield); *Zer-esanak* (columns about politics); *Loretxo eleberri-edestia* (a novel); *Eusko lugiñen alde* (supporting Basque trenches); *Argazki ingoskia* (picture of the day)... And a daily editorial.

In the editorial of the first publication on the 1st of January titled "*Emen gara!!*" (Here we are!!), they wanted to highlight the importance of what they had just achieved: "We can't believe this. Overnight, we are fully determined to make that crazy and unachievable dream that all Basque-lovers and Basque people have dreamed of for so long come true". Also, they highlighted their main goal: "We have arrived full of dreams and hope; we intend to confront those who claim that Basque is hard to use, and write clear and accurate news in Basque, catering for our compatriots' preferences".

Those wishes, needs, intentions and desires were mentioned very often, especially during the first weeks. They wrote countless editorials and opinion articles on the topic. The harshest one was perhaps the one published on the 3rd of January, immediately after the death of Miguel de

Unamuno: "Unamuno has died at a time when the newspaper that will use and spread Basque has been born. (...) In response to his awful words and predictions, *Eguna* faces up to him to show how strong and alive Basque is, to show him the usefulness of the Basque people's tongue. (...) We have got nothing but hateful words for a man who had predicted and desired our death. In the end, he has perished at the dawn of our existence".

However, also some concerns were raised. Txomin Arruti a.k.a. *Mendi Lauta* expressed his fears: "I don't know how many copies we're selling, but I'm afraid it's not enough. In the streets, I hear fewer comments than I would wish. Even in the Basque batzokis (Basque Nationalist party Club), I don't hear enough comments, and that is extremely sad. It really hurts me when in Basque batzokis.... In the Basque batzokis in Bilbao!—at least in some of them—I can't find the Basque Nationalist paper. If the Basque Nationalist paper is not available in a Basque batzoki, where on earth will it be? I think that every single nationalist should take *Eguna*'s distribution seriously. Writing articles in Basque cannot be considered a hobby any more; what's more, isn't it true that all of us, all the Basque Nationalist are claiming that Basque should be fostered in schools, university dorms etc.? Could you think of a better tool to do so than a Basque nationalist newspaper?"

In any case, *Eguna* was a newspaper. It recounted the events that occurred each day. Apart from the Basque language, the biggest topic was the Civil War, a subject which had many news and opinion articles dedicated to it. Despite the fact that everyone knew that Europe and especially England had abandoned them, those who wrote for the paper believed in victory until the very end. Apart from the main topics, many other secondary themes were addressed in reports and opinion articles. In those articles we can find out what was happening in villages, towns and cities, what information they had about other parts of the world (i.e. about the rise of fascism in Europe) or what female collaborators had to say on the situation of women.

In the remembrance ceremonies that were carried out to celebrate *Eguna*'s 80th anniversary, we heard words of commemoration, with the efforts of those men and women who worked in *Eguna* being described as exceptional. But, although recognition is essential, it should bring reading and reflection with it. On one hand, we need to read, and I'm referring to the actual act of reading the news and articles of the paper. I'm talking about searching through the facsimiles in Armiarma and immersing oneself in the little stories told in *Eguna*. On the other hand, we need to reflect on what we read, since, to this day, those fears and manners have held in the form of palimpsests, creating a sense of déjà vu: nationalist newspapers that are written in Spanish, the need of a strong Basque gazette... it couldn't be more familiar, could it?

Lutxo Egia

Writer

