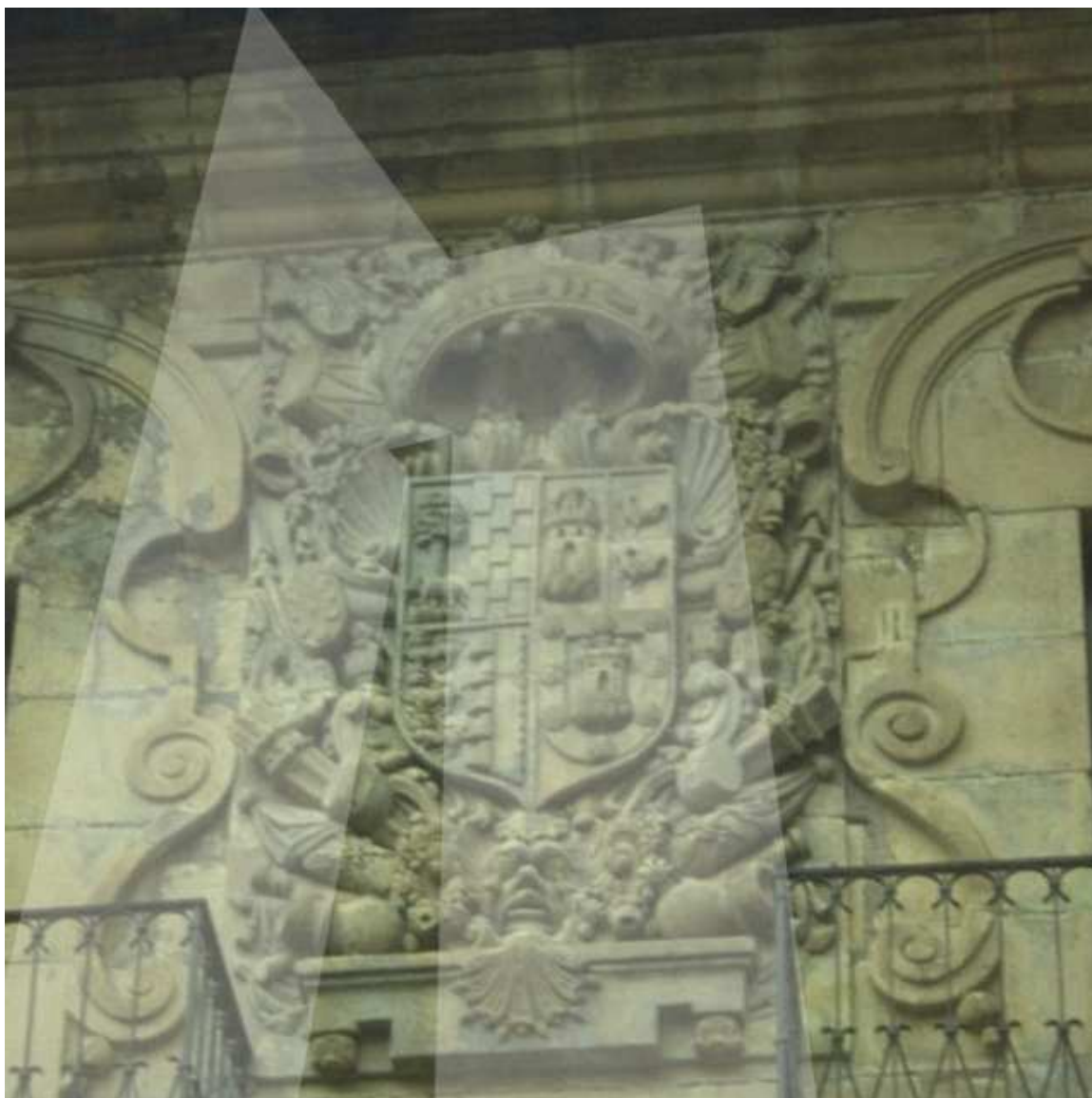


ABERRI EGUNA 2004



1004 – 2004 Antso IIIa. Handia



UDALBILTZA[®]
EUSKAL HERRIKO UDAL ETA HAUTETSIEEN BILTZARRA

BECAUSE WE BELIEVE IN EUSKAL HERRIA

Just as we have done every year since the time our institution came into being, UDALBILTZA[®] is celebrating the Aberri Eguna with hope, excitement and commitment – a day on which to fully reassert our belief in and adherence to the Basque Nation via the respect and defence of all rights of all people and being fully aware that a Nation is not free if the people comprising it are not, albeit also with the conviction that some citizens are neither free if their “collective being” - if their Nation - is not, and is denied its own existence.

This year 2004, we are commemorating the thousandth anniversary of the coronation of Sancho III the Great of Pamplona, known at the time as the “Lord of the Basques.” At this same spot where we find ourselves today, we shall be unveiling a monument in his honor in a few weeks’ time - because he left clear traces of his reign here and because from here we can make out the territories we call Euskal Herria.

The millennium commemoration of Sancho III the Great will be marked by various intellectual and cultural activities. The aim is to enrich and strengthen the historic memory and collective conscience of the Basque People based on one of its most important figures and periods of history – by way of a reminder and to highlight the symbolic value of the Kingdom of Navarre as a place for all Basques, which was a reality in the past and remains an aspiration of the present.

This commemoration gives we Basques the chance to feel identified with that historic moment when we were a free people, organized according to our own customs and laws, a people that made it itself understood in Euskera and treated everyone equally without subjugation or imperialism over neighboring Peoples, who respected it and considered it to be a “father figure.” We Basques have existed since the dawn of history and Euskal Herria is a historic reality, with both a present and a future.

We are living in historic times in which conflicts and wars are becoming palpable that on many occasions had been covered up by the cold war and the “block policies” of the second half of the 20th century.

The world is enduring the blows of brutal, blind and unjustified violence, such as on this very day a month ago was witnessed in Madrid. And in view of all this we must once again proclaim that non-violence, dialogue, détente, the freedom of Peoples and their fair and balanced development constitute the only recipes that can lead us towards coexistence in peace and justice.

Ten new countries will also be joining the European Union in a few days and we greet them with affection. Yet we should add that the European Union should also welcome to its bosom Peoples such as the Basque race which, being both modern and open-minded, yearns to develop its own personality by attaining its democratic right to decide its own future in freedom, in solidarity and in cooperation with the rest of the Peoples of Europe.

In Euskadi we are experiencing key moments of hope and excitement about our future. We think we are developing debates of paramount importance, the results of which are going to cement the foundations of our future coexistence and development. We wish to reassert a respect for human rights (the right to live, not to be persecuted or threatened because of the ideas we profess, the right to non-violence, recognition and redress for the families of victims on different levels and the rights of prisoners and their families), dialogue and, ultimately, the Right to Self-determination of the Basque People which it should be able to exercise freely and democratically in peace. All this constitutes the basis of peaceful coexistence in freedom and in solidarity with the rest of the Peoples and realities around us.

Because in a system of freedoms, the legal system should reflect the legitimate expression of the will of the Basque people, as laws are at the service of citizens and conditioned to the will of the latter, not the other way round. That is why we demand that the will of the majority of Basque citizens be expressed as a basic democratic principle through peaceful channels and democratic processes, and that it be recognized and respected by the Spanish and French states.

On many occasions, we have stated that violence and the national construction of Euskal Herria are radically incompatible, that means and ends are joined by a single axis: exclusively democratic political action.

Our People demand a definitive end to all expressions of violence.

Euskal Herria is in pressing need of a way to open up a democratic and peaceful process of a strategic and definitive nature that may enable it to overcome the historic conflict of a political nature that has hitherto dogged it.

We municipally-elected councillors that make up UDALBILTZA[®] assume our responsibility – responsibility with regard to our People. ETA must assume its own responsibility – may it be brave and take a good look at itself. Its traditional practice of transferring blame and responsibilities ended long ago. Today, more than ever before, political intelligence and determination must prevail.

As municipally-elected councillors and as Basques, we believe in the existence of a People that is well-established on both sides of the Pyrenees and which we can clearly make out from this outstanding spot.

UDALBILTZA[®] is going to continue offering proof of the territoriality of Euskal Herria by promoting and studying the national and social construction of this People in depth, with its own personality on the stage of the Peoples of Europe.

We want the Basque ancestral home to be truly and fully Basque. At the same time we are aware that the processes we are promoting in the seven territories demand different measures in developing the national conscience, the pace at which decisions are taken and respect for and voluntary adherence to these concepts.

Our hand is stretched out to contribute towards the whole pacification and normalization process of this People, sustained on the basis of respect for human rights, democracy and freedom.

Because we are Basques, because we believe in Euskal Herria.

GORA EUSKADI ASKATUTA!

Fuenterrabia, 11th April 2004