

## **The Basque Language is a Third World Country**

Koldo Izagirre. Writer. October 10, 1997

The song of equality and of free trade is a falacy much more evident in linguistic relations. The "non-intervention" does not exist. States, with their coercive and repressive umbrellas, make policy, with regard to language, against multinationals of monolingualism, imposing only one vehicle of relation and sheltering Spanish and French under an utmost protectionism. The whole state apparatus has fallen on one unemployed euskaldun [Basque speaker] of Gasteiz. First, it refused to understand him and then, deprived him of the social benefits he is entitled to by law, and finally, agreed to jurisprudence against our language. *Neoliberalism makes miracles: it does impoverish the poor.*

The states do not recognize the euskaldunes [Basque-speaking people]. We have developed bilingual education; in BAC the competence over traffic has been transferred but the driving test is only given in Spanish. The states offer us the same policy applied to the Third World. They can't understand modernism outside the Spanish or the French languages. *Neoliberalism makes miracles: it believes that colonialism is the science of perfume.*

The efforts made in the Basque Autonomous Community and the Foral Community of Navarre these last few years favor only slightly the cultural wishes of this nation. Cheap humour or elitist art; it seem we have no other alternative. Culture, however, is based on the participation of the population; without that, it turns into mere consumption. Publicity cannot designate quality. *Neoliberalism makes miracles: it admires ugliness.*

Not only the Basque-speaking people. A recent study shows that the majority of the Spanish-speaking population wants a future in Euskera [Basque language]. We don't like this present. We can say that in 1996, with regard to culture as well as linguistic policy, the Basque-speaking community lives in a Third World. This is not an exaggeration; we do not pretend to make underdog publicity.

-In 1995-96, the general budget of the Basque government increased by 5.6%. But the budget allocated to the Linguistic Policy decreased by 1.17%.

-In 1995-96, the general budget of the Navarrese government increased by 5%. But the budget allocated to the Linguistic Policy decreased by 3.4%.

-If we add to this the rise in the Consumption Price Rate (IPC), it would show that the budget allocated to the Linguistic Policy has decreased by 23.3% in the Basque Autonomous Community, and by 25% in the Foral Community of Navarre.

*Neoliberalism makes miracles: it saves where there is less money.*

This is why we are saying that the rights of Euskera are repressed, as a society self-proclaimed free, expells the immigrants looking for work: when humanitarian organizations and the state's NGOs are campaigning and demanding that the 0.7% of the budget be allocated to the Third World, how much do you think the Basque Autonomous Community allocates to the Linguistic Policy? A 0.7% in 1991; a 0.4% in 1996.

*The internationalization of culture demands from us to be competitive.*

*Cultural poverty must be eradicated.*

*Linguistic inequality must be corrected.*

We think that government intervention is essential to a development policy. At the present time the political mechanism of normalization is based, to a great extent, in investment.

*For our language to be able to circulate freely.*

*For the products of our culture to enrich the world.*

Note: Translation into English from the original text in Euskera (Basque language) published in the Basque daily Egin on October 10, 1997. The text in Euskera was read by Koldo Izagirre in front of the Guggenheim-Bilbao museum on October 5, 1997 during a demonstration organized by the pro-Euskera grassroots group Euskal Kulturaren Batzarra (EKB, Congress for Basque Culture) under the slogan "Eman euskarari berea" (Justice for the Basque language).