

Revenge of the Basques

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6jyySJQJR8>

Transcript: <https://dontveter.com/ec/Basques.pdf>

Anyone who's taken a class on world politics or human geography will certainly be familiar with this particular group, as their reputation precedes them all around the world, as the textbook definition of separatist, nationalist, secessionist, but just who are these little guys?

Well, you wouldn't want to refer to them as little guys, not only due to the extreme inaccuracy of that term, but definitely because you really don't want to incur the wrath of the Basques, also called bosks, but that's just the way I learned to say it.

Believe it or not, the people group of the Basques are actually one of the oldest groups in Europe still around today, as I discussed in a video on the pre-Indo-Europeans, and although seemingly low in numbers, they have had an incalculable influence on not only the history of Europe, but the entire world.

In today's video, let's briefly have a look at the genesis and evolution of the Basques as a nation over the millennia, their struggles in Europe, as well as their contributions to world history, but particularly that of Latin America.

The Basques are known to predate literally every single known European group in the continent, other than that of the Sami and Finno-Ugric groups and Phenoskandia.

Linguists are still unsure of what language family Basques belong to, with the Basque language, or Yuskara, clearly having very little to nothing in common with the surrounding Indo-European languages.

Those in Latin America, and especially Spain, can easily recognize a Basque surname when compared to that of Castilian, Catalan, or Galician individuals.

And, although Basque has certainly influenced, and slowly crept into the vernacular of modern Spanish names included, there are many easy ways to tell them apart.

Although the Basques do have an entirely different linguistic origin they also share a considerable amount of genetics with the neighboring Italic people such as the Spanish and French, including belonging almost exclusively to the western haplogroup r1b, which may or may not be the result of intermixing.

Although, it is clear that Basques can be distinguished from other Europeans by certain genetic strains that predate the Indo-European migration from the Eurasian steppes.

Modern Basque history as an autonomous ethnic nation probably starts sometime after the fall of the western Roman Empire when the Basques found themselves to be independent for the first time in 600 years, and various Basque tribes were able to repel the Visigoths and other Germanic invaders from the north, as well as repelling the Islamic Moorish armies 100 years later, even after the entirety of the Iberian peninsula had been conquered.

The Basques, who by this time, had already converted to Christianity en mass, like most other former Romans at this point, allied themselves with the crown of Castillo, Aragon, and Portugal in order to drive off the more dire threat of the Moors in the south.

Although, in the following few hundred years, the southern Basques were absorbed into Castillo, which would later evolve into the Spanish empire as we know it today, while the smaller northern half would eventually be annexed by the French a few centuries later.

Unlike most conquered peoples, the Basques did not simply drop their previous culture and language and assimilate into the dominant population, that being the Castellians, and they stubbornly held on to their culture until the monumental discovery of the New World launched Spain into its position as the world's dominant power for the first time in history.

Although the Basques already had a reputation as troublemakers, they still had the same rights as any other ethnic group in the empire and many of the first explorers, navigators, sailors, traders, soldiers and conquistadors employed by the Spanish Armada that made the trek to the New World were of Basque ancestry.

As a matter of fact, many of the first Europeans to be independently contracted were Basques, and Basques were even hired as whalers in the northern Atlantic Ocean, which is how the Icelandic Basque and Algonquin Basque pidgins were formed, two unique creole-like languages that are no longer around to this day.

A **pidgin**^{[1][2][3]} [/ˈpɪdʒɪn/](#), or **pidgin language**, is a grammatically simplified form of [contact language](#) that develops between two or more groups of people that do not have a [language](#) in common: typically, its [vocabulary](#) and [grammar](#) are limited and often drawn from several languages. It is most commonly employed in situations such as [trade](#), or where both groups speak languages different from the language of the country in which they reside (but where there is no common language between the groups).

The Basques even found themselves to be heavily involved in the colonial endeavors of the French, despite making up a much smaller fraction of their population, and many Quebecois may have Basque ancestry.

And, up to 30 percent of the small French territory of Saint Pierre and Miquelon is Basque, with Miquelon being the Basque transliteration of the name Michael.

In areas such as Argentina and Uruguay, a large proportion of the Basque community has roots in the French Basque country, as opposed to the Spanish, which makes sense, considering there's already a huge French population in this , although this doesn't make too much of a difference in the Basque sphere as they mostly prioritize ethnic affiliation over nationality.

In nearly every Spanish or French colony, wherever you would find European settlers or explorers, you would find the Basques, not always leading the charge but never too far behind, to say the least.

The Basques had a relatively mundane life in Europe during this time, although over the years, the Spanish and French governments became increasingly insistent on the assimilation of the Basque people.

After the French revolution, the French government became obsessed with absorbing all ethnic minorities in the country and erasing or absorbing their cultures entirely.

And this was the case with many groups such as the Occitanians in the south or the Normans in the north.

And the Basques, although losing a considerable amount of autonomy, did fight to retain their language and identity with limited success.

However, in the Americas, the Basques were thriving in New Spain, and in places like Chile, Mexico and Colombia, the Basques were essentially living as kings, with Basques disproportionately represented in the upper class.

Groups such as the Irurak de Bat de la Real Sociedad Bascongada Amigos de los Pais, or simply the Basque society, were extremely influential among politicians and other citizens in New Spain of Basque ancestry.

As dissent against the crown was growing overseas, the desire for independence in Spanish colonies in the Americas was primarily supported by Creoles or American-born Spaniards, a large chunk of whom had full or partial Basque ancestry.

And, literally, the most vital revolutionary in all of Spanish America, Simone Bolivar, was of Basque ancestry on his father's side, while his mother was of Canarian origin.

Think of Bolivar as the George Washington of Latin America, leading the charge for independence across Hispanic America, becoming the first successful leader of a Latin American country, with the countries of Bolivia and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela being named after Simone Bolivar, making them the only countries in the world with a name of Basque etymological origin.

Others of the Basque ethnicity who were instrumental in various rebellions against the crown include Augustine Iturbide of Mexico, the man responsible for rallying the Mexican independence movement, and briefly declaring himself as the first Emperor of Mexico, as well as Rafael Urdeneta, president of Grand Columbia and close ally to Simone Bolivar.

Although these revolutions were long after his time, the famed Marxist revolutionary, Ernesto, better known as Che Guevara, also had a partial Basque ancestry.

Following the array of independence movements in Latin America, the previous ethnic divisions that divided the Basques, Castilians, and others began to dissolve and the Basques were indeed assimilated into every level of the Latino societies.

Although many families acknowledged their Basque heritage, to this day, judging by official government statistics in Latin American countries, and unofficial estimates by third parties, there are approximately 21 million people with a Basque surname throughout the region.

And, when expanding to include those with any significant amount, one great grandparent or more of Basque ancestry, this number goes up to a gargantuan 70 million people.

And this number also includes self-identified Mestizos, Castizos and Mulattos of partial Amerindian or African ancestry as well.

This is the highest rate of diaspora of any group on the planet in all of history period.

And even when considering that all 70 million people are not entirely of Basque heritage, the only other group that even comes close to a ratio this high is the Irish.

And, as a matter of fact, the Basques are in many ways, analogous to the Irish and other Celtic peoples in terms of their early role in colonial society, with many early American freedom fighters of full or partial Irish, Scottish and Welsh descent.

And Celtic blood is extremely widespread throughout all ethnic groups in America and Canada today, despite there being only a handful of pure bloods remaining in small pockets.

And the overseas Basque and Irish communities has far surpassed the community in their homeland in terms of international visibility.

Another remarkable similarity is the fact that many back in the homeland are beginning to learn the language of their ancestors, after being suppressed for generations.

And their nations are both divided between two countries, the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom for the Irish, and Spain and France for the Basques.

Back in Europe, the fierce desire for Basque independence has seemingly died down in recent years.

And admittedly, polling shows that less than one-fifth of individuals in the Basque country are in favor of independence, although their pride and their heritage is still strong, as evidenced by the resurgence in the Basque language.

So, although the Basques were indeed never successful in the sovereignty at their own homeland, it would appear that they did indeed get the satisfaction of toppling the Spanish Empire, a feat that seemed to be near impossible for any other power at the time.

In all honesty, the myriad of independence movements springing up in Latin American wasn't some coordinated conspiracy or attack on the Spanish crown by those of Basque descent in the diaspora, but rather more of an interesting coincidence.

And there's no doubt that even without the efforts of certain individuals of Basque heritage, these revolutions would have happened regardless, but it is quite ironic how the Basques who were under the thumb of the Spanish for so many centuries, would be so heavily involved in the colonization and eventual decolonization of Spain's colonies.

So, to sum it up, in one of my favorite mediums, essentially the Basques help Spain kick out the Muslims and take over Iberia, the Basques become a part of Spain yet hate it.

Spain takes over a huge chunk of the world with the help of the Basques.

Basques end up becoming a major chunk of the colonial population of New Spain, even a majority in some areas.

Many of the Basque's descendants end up leading the population to rebel against Spain and gain their independence, so now it would appear that the Basques have been amassing their numbers overseas for the past 500 years, in order to invade the mainland of Spain and free Basque country once and for all.

Che Guevara's father once stated that the reason for his son's rebellious attitude was the fact that he had Irish blood in him, although the Irish could have easily been replaced with Basque in this statement, and it would have been just as true.

I sure hope you guys enjoyed today's video.

Go ahead and let me know your thoughts on the Basques as a people, their history, and ancient and unique culture, and whether you think their disproportionate involvement in the Latin American independence movements were simply a coincidence or maybe something more.

For today's poll, let me know which Basque community or diaspora piques your interest the most, and as always, this has been mason.

Thanks for watching everyone, and I'll see you next time