

UNIVERSITIES

THIS EDITION OF CATALÒNIA'S DOSSIER TAKES A LOOK AT THE PRESENT STATE OF THE CATALAN UNIVERSITY WORLD, AND AT THE SAME TIME, PRESENTS A HISTORICAL SURVEY AND A REVIEW OF THE FUTURE OF THE VARIOUS EXISTING FACULTIES AND DISCIPLINES. AN ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF THE LANGUAGE COMPLETES THE STUDY THAT WE ARE OFFERING TODAY IN AN ATTEMPT TO GO FURTHER IN OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE DIVERSITY OF THE CATALAN-SPEAKING PEOPLES.

A COUNTRY WITH A UNIVERSITY VOCATION

CATALONIA HAS A LONG-STANDING UNIVERSITY VOCATION WHICH HAS SHOWN ITSELF IN CENTRES OF ALL KINDS AND, IN A COMPLEX FORM, IN THE OLD "ESTUDIS GENERALS", THE FIRST OF WHICH WAS FOUNDED IN LLEIDA IN THE YEAR 1300. THERE ONE COULD STUDY THEOLOGY, CANONS, CIVIL LAW, PHILOSOPHY AND MEDICINE.

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Only those cultures that are experienced in relations with other peoples, that are open to dealings with others, develop a need for knowledge over and above what we could call vegetative or everyday knowledge.

It is in the responsible or leading social groups—frequently coinciding with the wealthy or powerful—where this wish for greater knowledge shows itself. When these unitary vocations come about in large numbers, they permit the creation of

centres of further education. If they appear in different branches of knowledge, they justify complex centres of further education or universities.

Catalonia has a long-standing university vocation which has shown itself in centres of all kinds and, in a complex form, in the old *Estudis Generals*, the first of which was founded in Lleida in the year 1300. There one could study Theology, Canons, Civil Law, Philosophy and Medicine.

Later, there followed, mentioned according to their founding dates: Perpi-

nyà (1350), Girona (1446), Barcelona (1450), Gandia (1546), Oriola (1552), Tarragona (1574), Vic (1599) and Solsona (1620).

But Catalonia was repeatedly divided up, and some of the old institutions ceased to be Catalan in the strict sense of the word due to political dispositions from the Spanish government: Perpinyà, Oriola, Gandia,...

All the same, in the reduced area of the *Principat* (Girona, Barcelona, Lleida and Tarragona), there were enough *Estudis*

Generals established to vouch for the country's university vocation.

For reasons that are easy to understand, during the War of Succession, Catalonia sided mainly with the Archduke Charles of Austria against the Bourbon Philip V.

After Philip V's victory in 1714, the Catalans became the losers and enemy, and suffered an exhaustive repression. Apart from the loss of their traditional privileges and rights, the repression was aimed against any differentiating element of culture and particularly against the official use of the language in schools. The *Nueva Planta* decree of 1716 restructured the administration of the *Principat*, with co-rulers under the government of a viceroy, all named directly by the monarch, and the vast majority of them chosen beyond our political limits and devoid of any feeling for the country.

With the excuse that the *Estudis Generals* already mentioned were centres of anti-Philippic disturbances (to the extent, in the case of Barcelona, of forming special companies for the defence of the city), before the end of September 1714, they had all been closed. And, with the object of disguising this cultural genocide, some faculties were provisionally transferred to Cervera, which, apart from being a relatively small and unimportant city, had, on occasions, shown adherence to the victor's cause.

The provisional situation was definitively confirmed by a royal decree of 1717. Catalonia without its *Estudis Generals* could only express its university vocation in the recently created university of Cervera, situated in an unprepared, out-of-the-way town. The construction of the new building along monumental lines, and its running, were funded by the incomes and capital of the abolished *Estudis Generals*, confiscated for that purpose. From then on, only the University of Cervera could give valid titles (baccalaureate, degrees and doctorate).

Titles awarded by foreign universities were not recognized. The only exceptions were the courses in grammar undertaken in the Jesuit schools in Barcelona or those in Medicine that ran from 1401 next to the Santa Creu hospital, also in Barcelona.

Having officialized the country's university activity in this way, the centralism of Cervera was further reinforced by the concession to the only university of the ex-



clusive right to print all the text books, from the smallest syllabary up to the university treatises. This was a very important step in the Castilianization of the schools. Gradually, Castilian versions replaced the Catalan texts which had been used before.

It goes without saying that the privilege of the publishing exclusive and the unification of teaching in Cervera roused the feelings of resistance of the Catalans and of the whole country.

Publishing infringements, almost always shielded by the absence of any date of printing, gave rise to many requisitions and legal suits for "fraud".

Also, the desire for further education, before the difficulty or impossibility of attending Cervera, started to find illicit solutions.

There were those who went to foreign but nearby universities such as Tolosa, Perpinyà or Montpellier (especially people from Girona); there were reputable enough schools (especially of religious orders) that continued to confer qualifications. Of course, these qualifications lacked official recognition, but they did cater for the spontaneous desire for further education, the true university vocation. In Catalonia, what really counts is actual knowledge more than a title. But gradually, the real



needs of the country, deprived of its universities, found plenty of sectorial opportunities in specialized branches of further education and offered preparation for specific professional activities.

The government even had to increase the exceptions to the Cervera exclusive and allow certain courses in Theology, Grammar or Philosophy at some religious orders' centres and accept the many specialized schools which, without affecting the stable university faculties, speeded up professional practices that were a necessary part of the life of the country.

In particular, these were the schools set up by the *Real Junta de Comercio* of Catalo-

nia: that of Seamanship (and Cosmography), that of Drawing (later Fine Arts), that of Botany, that of Stenography, Chemistry, Mechanics, Commerce, ...

And one could also mention the research activities, of a complementary nature to the university studies, which sought refuge and entrenched themselves in the Academies which had brought together many of the ex-students of the University of Cervera itself (Humanities, Natural Sciences, the Arts, Medical Practice).

And paradoxically, this University of Cervera which no longer had such a monopoly, ended up being a hotbed of Catalanism, although the language used

was Castilian, as laid down by law. Bofarull, Balmes, Milà i Fontanals, Monturiol, Gimbernat are proof enough of this.

There were various attempts to restore university studies in Barcelona, but the centralist criterion, which persists today, is in one way or another always opposed to spontaneous local manifestations. The craze for controlling anything spontaneous is one way that governments have of justifying their function.

Finally, more liberal political circumstances allowed the establishment of a new university in Barcelona and the subsequent end of the artificial existence of Cervera. It was 1842. Nevertheless, we have continued paying the Philippic tax for many years, because, being kept in line with the other Spanish universities as regards structure, running, study-plans and teaching staff, the University of Barcelona has maintained the so-called "official" language as its means of communication and the conceptual limitations that have been imposed from afar with no thought for the natural differences.

In Catalonia, this deficient situation was considered and discussed without finding any solutions: the first Catalan *Congrés Universitari* was held in 1906; Catalan university studies were established and a second congress was held in 1919, which proposed university autonomy in a statute which was to act as a model at a later time when it was made possible with the support of the Republic (1931). In the same year, levels of effective autonomy were achieved by the faculties of Arts of Madrid and Barcelona (appointment of non-numerary teaching staff). The 1932 statute allowed the creation by decree of the republican government of an "autonomous" university which, although it was run by a joint organism with representatives of the government, gave enough academic freedom to revive the dreams of the autonomy which had been lost so long ago.

However, all its Catalan or autochthonous nature was lost after the 1939 defeat. Many years later, after the dictatorship, a new statute of autonomy, more joint negotiations and the spread of the autonomic feeling have guided the university reform towards a promising situation that can ensure satisfactory progress and future to the ever-present university vocations of Catalonia. ●