

8th September 1977

Dear Professor Price,

Thanks for your letter of September 7th. I reply post haste, but with some doubts about how helpful I can be to you. I was last in Barcelona back in March of this year: things were very much on the boil then, but, as you say, the situation has been developing so rapidly -especially since the General Election- and the excitement and expectations are so contagious that it is difficult to have a clear and objective view of things. And September 11th will probably see the promulgation of a provisional Estatut d'Autonomia...

I cannot refer you to any printed sources that will give you the kind of synthesis that I imagine you require. The local press since 1975 has talked about little else but the Catalan Question. The enclosed article by Porcel (which I should be glad to have back when you have finished with it), which is very moderate and realistic in comparison with the general level, might give you some idea of the temperature. I have a reference to a book by R. Ninyoles, Cuatro idiomas para un Estado (Madrid Cambio 16, 1976) which I have not read but which sounds interesting (if polemical). I hope that the following observations and comments will be of some help in bringing your own picture up to date.

The Catalan language has recently been 'conceded' some official or co-official status. I'm afraid I'm not very clear on the details though. It is certainly in force in the universities of Barcelona (where there was a long build-up of pressure) and I understand that Catalan is now the norm in all faculties for lectures, official ceremonies, theses, etc. I am not sure how far this status extends or is applied in other educational spheres or in local government. There will be obvious problems of human and material resources for the teaching of and in Catalan at primary and secondary levels. Great efforts are being made in these areas by organizations like Omium Cultural (Palau Dalmaes, Montcada 20, Barcelona) and Rosa Sensat (Còrsega 271, Barcelona 8) who would supply information. One hears constantly about municipal councils, etc. officially adopting Catalan and practising what they preach by 'catalanizing' street signs, etc. It is not just a process of translation, but rather in many cases of restoring traditional names which were suppressed in 1939. Thus, for example, a Plaza de España will become Plaça de Catalunya, de la Generalitat or whatever, and Calle del General X will become Carrer de whatever it was before '39. The Congrés de Cultura Catalana has a very active section campaigning for El català al carrer -closely involved in the above-mentioned street name operation- which has been

responsible for over a million of the red-and-yellow En català si us plau stickers ubiquitously seen on Castilian signs, hoardings, shop fronts, lift controls, paper work, etc. etc. The campaign has clearly had the effect of sharpening the linguistic consciousness and strengthening the political will which were already there. More information from the Congrès (Mallorca 283, 6è, Barcelona): leaflet enclosed. Certainly one is much more aware now of Catalan being used as a normal (and un-self-conscious) means of private and public communication than was the case a few years ago, even in an essentially (alas!) bilingual place like Barcelona.

Mass Media. The local radio now has much more air-time in Catalan. I think there is one station that uses it exclusively, but am not sure. Television likewise: sorry no details (information available from J/ Planes i Pahissa, Omnium Cultural). There is now an all-Catalan daily paper -Avui, launched in April 1976- and the Castilian ones have been getting on the band wagon with more articles in Catalan, regular features, etc. There have been several new journals at all levels since the old censorship was swept away, some of them like L'Avenc and Arreu of very good quality. There is a boom in Catalan records of all kinds (there are five or six versions now available of Els Segadors, the national anthem, the singing of which would have got you shot a couple of years ago) and the theatre, professional and amateur, has sprung vigorously out of its (enforced) suspended animation. All the Catalan publishers seem to be doing well, both from the boost to normal trade and from extras resulting from the ferment, posters, publicity, etc. The Nova Cançó drones on and an embryonic film industry is whirring (Antoni Ribas's La Ciutat Cremada was shown over here at the NFT this Spring).

I fear that these notes are becoming too impressionistic and vague, so I shall not pursue. The Valencian situation, though, must be mentioned since the language question there is much complicated by the conflict between 'pan-catalanists' and the more reactionary 'valencianists' who abhor Barcelona more than Madrid.

I hope that you can squeeze some juice out of all this. No doubt Max Wheeler will be more scientific and informative. Please don't hesitate to contact me again if you require clarification or enlargement of any point. A telephone conversation might be the best way of checking things once you have got your remarks on Catalan into shape and focus.

I am interested indeed to hear about The Future of Cultural Minorities.... and wish you well in the compilation of your contribution. (Naturally I sympathise with you in facing a dead-line even more severe than YWML!) Any chance of an off-print or xerox of the relevant pages when the book appears? If not I'd very much appreciate notice of publication.

All best wishes,

Yours,