



EDITORIAL

In the space of a few years there has been a spectacular growth in the universities of the countries of Catalan culture. If we look at the case of Catalonia, we have gone from three universities in 1990 to eight universities in 1993. In Valencia and the Balearics we can also see a process of growth and renewal. Noteworthy works of university architecture appear, and, especially, remarkably dynamic administrative teams. The Catalan Government has set up a special ministry for universities and research and is directing considerable funds to plans for university expansion. Catalan society has traditionally been characterized by its faith in the educational system as a driving force for economic and political development. A country without great natural resources has to put its trust in workmanship as a fundamental element of progress. Nowadays it is the universities that are responsible for ensuring a high-quality professional training. In the European and Mediterranean context we feel that a good professional is not just a good technician; we expect him also to be educated, interested in public affairs, rooted in tradition and open to international challenges.

This is why we are concerned over some of the prevailing trends in the educational systems of technologically advanced societies, when they only attend to the technical side of training and put too little emphasis on overall education. We would like to see education in the twenty-first century place scientific and technical training in a framework of values allowing the construction of freer and more solidary societies. Young people are aware of the nihilism of technocratic civilization: They are also horrified by the perversions of an economic order in which everything seems to be decided first and foremost with an eye on profit. Democracies will be weak if they make a pact with nihilism or trade with values. The Catalan universities, like all universities, need to work towards an expertise that is compatible with responsibility, that favours peace, that is open to an understanding of other cultures, clear-sighted before ecological problems and that generates new forms of democratic participation in the context of today's powerful systems of domination. This can avoid the rise of the totalitarian or neo-Fascist trends that are threatening several European countries. In the case of the Catalan nation the universities must contribute to the defense of the Catalan culture and language, over and above purely utilitarian considerations. Obviously, the use of Catalan in the universities complicates the integration of students who only speak Spanish. But the Catalan universities cannot renounce their service to the culture of a nation that claims its right to self-determination and to its fair share of responsibility for European construction and universal solidarity.

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