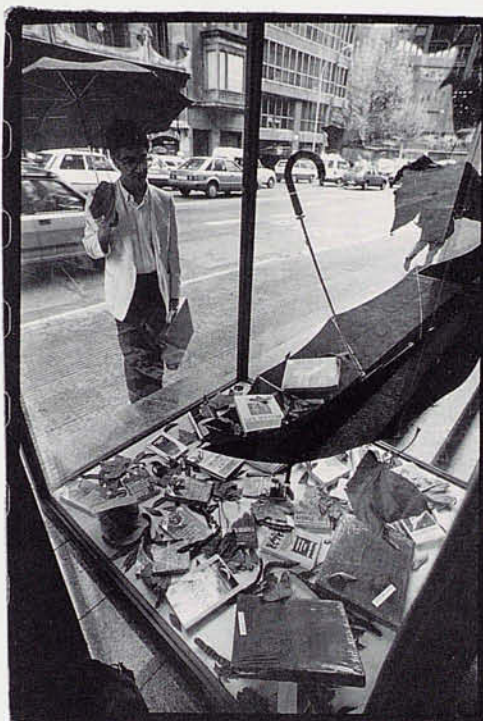


PUBLISHING IN CATALAN

FROM 872 BOOKS PUBLISHED IN 1976, WE HAVE GONE ON TO PUBLISH 2,140 IN 1981, 2,175 IN 1982, 2,375 IN 1983, 3,018 IN 1984, AND 3,471 IN 1985.

CARLES-JORDI GUARDIOLA EX-PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF PUBLISHERS IN CATALAN

The Catalan-speaking countries (Catalonia, Valencia, the Balearic Islands –Majorca, Minorca, Ibiza–, a strip of Aragon in the Spanish state, Northern Catalonia in France and Andorra) cover a small area. Out of 10,000,000 inhabitants, only approximately half speak Catalan, and at the same time, the strong presence of another language –Castilian– deeply impregnates the social fabric of the country: media, schools, administration and public authorities, commercial relations, etc. All of this means that the task of publishing in Catalan is not an easy one. However, year after year Catalan publishing has made steady and noteworthy progress. After the brutal rupture which Franco's victory of 1939 signified, General Franco's policy towards Catalan language, culture, literature and the country as a whole was, for more than forty years, that of continuous repression, a constant violation of Catalan liberties. During the Republic, the publication of Catalan books reached its peak; in 1936 865 books were published which were bought by a population of approximately 5,000,000 inhabitants. It must be said, however, that the books published in Catalan during this era covered the wide range of subjects of a normalized population. The collapse caused by Franco's victory meant that this number of editions was not reached again until 1976 (872 books), now in a population of more



than eight and a half million inhabitants, in a country strongly Castilianized from the top –the high levels of Catalan society which have adopted the language of power– as well as from the bottom where the working class had been essentially remodelled by an important Castilian-speaking immigration. Although publication in Catalan never ceased to exist altogether, 40 years were necessary to recover the lost ground. However, the situation now is very different from that of the Republican era. The linguistic diglotism of wide areas of the population has modified the scope of Catalan publication which has been pushed towards more resistant subjects. If it took forty years to recover the number of titles published, now only six

more were necessary in order to quadruplicate this number. In fact, from 872 books published in 1976, we have gone on to publish 2,140 in 1981, 2,175 in 1982, 2,375 in 1983, 3,018 in 1984, and 3,471 in 1985. This spectacular progression is certainly the best index of the health of Catalan publishing. Ever since the introduction of autonomous governments in Catalonia, Valencia and the Balearic Islands, as a sign of democracy in the Spanish state, things have certainly changed.

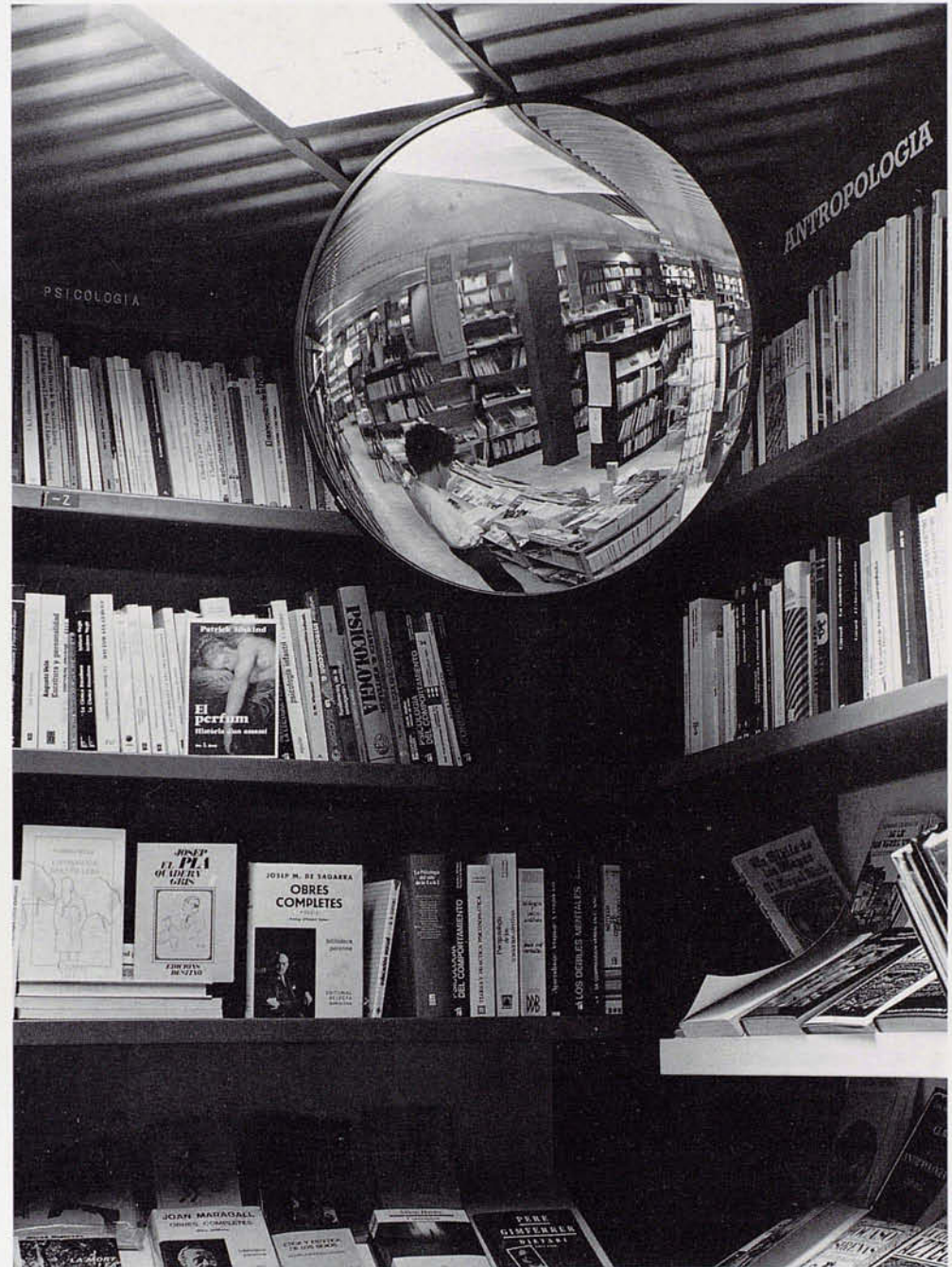
Apart from the increase in the number of works published during these last years, new publishing houses have been created, dedicated mainly to Catalan books. In addition, for the first time since 1939, Catalan is present in schools, and this is vital for the creation of a new reading public. Catalan books are also found in private houses, where important illustrated works created expressly for this purpose are sold by subscription and on credit, and the sale of which represents a sizeable part of the business.

On the other hand, the autonomous governments of Catalonia, Valencia and the Balearic Islands have supported Catalan publications as no central state administration has ever done. For the first time in history, the autonomous government of the *Generalitat* of Catalonia systematically buys between 200 and 300 copies of all new things published in Catalan. In the same way, in

Valencia and the Balearic Islands, similar initiatives are on the way to becoming reality. Likewise, other public institutions –deputations, town councils, etc.– are helping books published in Catalan. The autonomous governments have also begun a library policy which is to be the base on which to increase and consolidate the reading habits of wide sections of the population which are today extraordinarily underdeveloped in library endowments. Starting in 1982, Catalan editions are to be found in foreign countries. They can be seen in the fairs of Frankfurt, Bologna and Liber; Catalan publishers issue catalogues in several languages, translate the latest novelties into Catalan, and sell rights to other countries, especially of books for children and young people.

Finally, the cultural gap in Catalan is progressively closing, thanks to the media, especially in Catalonia with the creation of the autonomous channel TV 3 which broadcasts only in Catalan, and which has a steadily growing audience. Catalan is increasingly used on the radio and in the press as well, even though important written media are still reticent in the systematic use of Catalan, except for two newspapers which are published entirely in Catalan, and a third that is in the process of preparation.

Today then, the present state of Catalan publishing can be viewed with a



certain optimism, but not entirely without risk. The schools and the media, especially radio and TV, brought about an enormous progress in the use of Catalan and the buying of Catalan books. A new reading public is being prepared in this way, which should be consolidated in a few years. However, the social usage of the language has still not won completely. There exist strong resistances and habits which are too deeply rooted to allow Catalan to become a truly sovereign language, and to permit Catalans to have their own national lan-

guage without thinking any less of, or forgetting, any other.

This is the challenge of the future. All we need is a society educated in Catalan, with Catalan means of communication. A society which has the desire and the possibility to read anything from *Dallas* to Hegel or Foucault, and which is able to buy books and material of all kinds. The rest is up to the authors, the publishers and the booksellers. This is the great challenge which Catalan publishing faces today: to consolidate the present and prepare the future. ●