

BARCELONA - TOULOUSE - MONTPELLIER

OBVIOUSLY, THE INCORPORATION OF CATALONIA IN THE EUROPEAN REGIONAL CONGLOMERATE GREATLY REINFORCES ONE OF THE MOST DEVELOPED CORNERS OF THE SO-CALLED EUROPE OF THE SOUTH. IT CONTRIBUTES TO THE FORMATION OF A VERY IMPORTANT ECONOMIC TRIANGLE, ALONG WITH THE FRENCH REGIONS WHOSE CAPITALS ARE TOULOUSE AND MONTPELLIER.

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On 29 March 1985, the agreement was signed by which Spain and Portugal would start to integrate themselves in the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1986. In this way, then, the Europe of the "Ten" is on its way to becoming the Europe of the "Twelve". This fact will not only mean changes in the agriculture, industry and services of the European Community, but will also increase the inequalities that already exist within the EEC. From its foundation in 1959, regional differences have constituted an important problem for the project of the communi-

ty. The cause is not difficult to imagine: the differences between the incomes of the richest and the poorest regions are absolutely horrifying. For example, the most prosperous region of the German Federal Republic has a *per capita* gross national product six times that of the south of Italy. In this context, the entry of Spain and Portugal has only made the situation worse.

The division of Europe into regions is a complex and problematical question. This makes the construction of the so-called "Europe of the regions" even more difficult. At present, there are two

kinds of territorial unit in the EEC. On the one hand there are 63 European community regions (ECR) and 165 basic administration units (BAU). But for statistical effects these delimitations are reduced to 54 and 120 respectively.

In this context, Catalonia can be considered as playing a modest role. Incomes are below the community average. As for its position in the 54 European regions mentioned, Catalonia is in 41st place regarding GNP, ahead of a few under-developed Italian regions, all the Greek regions, the Irish ones and Northern Ireland. Its area (31,930 sq.kms.) is just over the



average for the EEC regions and its population (some 6 million inhabitants) is also above the community average. With regard to Catalonia's participation in the community GNP, in 1980, the last year for which there are complete figures, it would have been 1.3 %. This would have put Catalonia in 27th or 28th place amongst the regions of Europe, and is the equivalent of a production similar to that of the German region of Hamburg, the French region of Nord-Pas de Calais, the English one of Yorkshire or the region of central Italy.

Due to its production structure, Catalonia can be described as a predominantly industrial region within the Common Market, since the participation of the secondary structure in the total production is far higher than the European average, while its contribution to agriculture and the service sector is slightly below that of the European Economic

Community. All in all, the Catalan production structure is very similar to that of Germany or the United Kingdom.

Obviously, therefore, the incorporation of Catalonia in the European regional conglomerate greatly reinforces one of the most developed corners of the so-called Europe of the south. In fact, it contributes to the formation of a very important economic triangle, along with the French regions whose capitals are Toulouse and Montpellier. This is so because of the future construction of the tunnel of Puymorens, the network of motorways that links Barcelona to Montpellier and Toulouse (through the tunnel mentioned) and the extension of the French TGV (high-speed train) as far as the city of Barcelona, through the construction of a length of European-gauge line.

The complementary character of these three cities is obvious, as is their economic development. Catalonia represents

25 % of the industry of the state and almost 42 % in the regional ensemble with regard to the structure of the GNP in the EEC. Its participation in the service sector amounts to 55 %, while in agriculture it is 3.2 %.

For their part, Montpellier and Toulouse represent 6 and 8.3 % respectively of the agricultural sector of the community, while their industry, in both cases, exceeds 30 %. With regard to the situation of their service sector, it is as developed as in Catalonia, with a proportion that in the case of Toulouse reaches 56 % and in that of Montpellier is above 60 %. This fact means that the possibilities of complementing each other are very high.

On the other hand, Catalonia's more industrial character also means that its unemployment figures are higher than the other two vertices of the triangle it forms with the regions of Languedoc-Rosselló and Midi-Pirineus. ■