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Self-management: utopia and disillusionment

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Three authors talk about the self-management period of the “Diario de Barcelona” after 1980, when the “Brusi”’s economic situation reached an agonic state.

A handful of young idealists were working for the “Diari” at that time who could hardly accept being led by a management team leaning towards the far right. Santacreu, the owner, wanted to rid himself of a company which had failed to bring him the benefits he had been expecting. The company’s debts reached the 500 million peseta mark. In June 1980 Santacreu declared stoppage of payments. Four months later, the legal administrator responded to the demands of the workers, who had been offered the newspaper’s patrimony, and they were allowed to begin publishing the “Brusi” once more. So began the so-called self-management stage. The newspaper was out on the street again on October 21, 1980. Its philosophy was one of informative independence.

At the end of 1980, however, circulation fell as financial problems grew. New newspapers began to appear, championing democracy, “El Periódico”, “El País” or the “Avui”. The new organisation faced internal and external difficulties. Circulation, which at the beginning of that phase had stood at 10,000 issues daily, was down to 5,000 by the middle of 1982. Santiago Vilanova, the last self-management director elected by the workers, attempted an aesthetic and ideological change of direction with subjects which might catch the attention of young left-wingers. During this period, Barcelonesa de Publicacions S.A. sold part of its property to the workers for 800,000 pesetas. The workers distributed the shares equally, but things were going from bad to worse. Vilanova tried to contact impresarios with a view to injecting new life into the paper. A short time later, the Barcelona City Council bought the heading and the archives for 30 million pesetas.