

EDITORIAL

Not lost in translation

Catalonia, and in particular Barcelona, is the place to be, the place to visit and for a growing number, the place to live. The influx of new residents, both from the developing world and from advanced countries, is changing the face of Catalonia. It is a big change in a country which, in common with the rest of the Iberian peninsula, has for centuries been a place of emigration and farewell. Ever since Columbus pointed the way to America, many of the best and brightest have tended to leave, a process accelerated by Franco's victory in 1939. There has been little significant immigration anywhere in Spain or Catalonia since the Moors landed in 711.

Northern Europeans, and people from Britain in particular, discovered Barcelona in the boom years of the late Eighties, and soon formed a sizeable resident community. There are now 26,000 registered foreign residents from so-called advanced countries living in the city, 5,000 of whom have settled here in the past two years, and 75,000 in Catalunya as a whole. On the whole these new residents do not want to live in a foreign bubble and wish to integrate into the local community.

Some have done so successfully, typically by marrying in. However, many complain that the welcome they get from Catalans is at best lukewarm and feel that Catalan society is a club that is not interested in admitting new members. For their part, local people point out that it would help if their new neighbours bothered to learn Catalan, which few do, rather than relying on the fact that, in Barcelona at least, one can get by speaking Spanish. One of the roles of *Catalonia Today* will be to foster a greater understanding between these two groups. Barcelona's successful marketing of itself as the cool capital of the Mediterranean brings in millions of tourists who in general, these tourists defy the traditional sun, sea and sangria profile. They are more discerning and are as likely to want to walk in the hills as lie on the beach. Many of these visitors are aware that they have come to a place apart and would like to know more about Catalan culture and tradition. To this end, as well as offering all the information they require to make the most of their stay here, *Catalonia Today* will seek to educate and inform them on the ways of the country. However, the paper does not have a political agenda, nor do its backers. We are here to provide information, not propaganda.

In addition to residents and tourists there are two other groups who either come on a regular basis or stay for periods of several months or even years business people and foreign students. It is estimated that up to 15,000 foreign students will enroll in Catalan universities in the coming year, many of them under Europe's Erasmus scheme. In addition, tens of thousands of people come here to do business every year and *Catalonia Today* will offer Catalan-oriented business news. To all of them the paper will offer ways of reading the world we live in and insights about the ways of the world as seen from a Catalan perspective.

Above all, *Catalonia Today* is a newspaper, not a travel. Like other Catalan dailies there will be an emphasis on local news but it will not be parochial or inward looking. Catalonia is different but it is not an isolated island. It is a small country in a big world that is dominated by the English language. With *Catalonia Today* it has found a new voice.

Tourists to Catalonia defy the typical Costa Brava sun, sea and sangria profile

PLATFORM

XAVIER DIEZ

War is a great way to make a killing

War is peace. This disturbing slogan of the Unity party, that omnipresent force in Orwell's horrific novel 1984, which he wrote as a fierce critique of totalitarianism, is once again sadly relevant to events on the world stage. And in fact it expresses an idea that has been repeated throughout history: there is nothing better than an armed conflict - with its appeals for security against a supposed threat and calls for patriotism (which is, according to Oscar Wilde, "the virtue of the vicious") - for hijacking public opinion, ignoring society's real problems and perpetrating the worst crimes with the best of alibis.

Mankind has known this from the days of Thucydides right up to the recent storm in a teacup over the tiny isle of Perejil. However, the war in Iraq is much more than just a large-scale manipulation carried out to conceal their country's real problems from the citizens of the United States (problems such as the economic slump and the dismantling of what is left of their welfare system); this conflict has become the logical sequence of a form of capitalism that is characterised by globalisation, privatisation, de-location, speculation, neo-colonialism and hostility toward social cohesion.

The invasion of Iraq has clearly been a disaster: no weapons of mass destruction have been found, neither democracy or security have been achieved and the country has not stabilised - quite the contrary. And therefore, none of the coalition's official aims have been achieved. In a conventional war, such an outcome would have led to the dismissal of the military and political heads of the operation, for their sheer incompetence.

However, the fact that they are persisting with the same strategy that has produced such appalling results leads us to a worrying hypothesis. What if Bush, Cheney and Rumsfeld had actually expected the prolongation of the war? And what if the latter two gentlemen have been reading up on their Orwell? "War is peace" - that is to say, in a permanent state of war, freedoms can be eroded and power seized without opposition.

In fact, the ruling classes of the United States have taken careful note of the addiction to this kind of situation which the Cold War brought about. If we look at some of

the information that has been coming to light recently, such as the claims by Paul O'Neill and Richard Clarke, ex-members of the Bush administration, that the decision to invade Iraq was made prior to September 11 - as well as the curious tactical decision, for the 2003 war, to use a third of the number of the number of troops that were deployed for the war in Kuwait in 1991 - if we analyse what is actually happening in occupied Iraq, a terrible conclusion can be drawn. It may be (to paraphrase Clausewitz) that the war is the con-

times higher than normal.

In addition, as well as the 130,000 soldiers who belong to the coalition, there are over 20,000 mercenaries in companies called Private Military Corporations, comprised of ex-soldiers (in contravention of article 47 of the Geneva convention) who act outside the reach of international law, carrying out "dirty war" missions, for which they are paid over 2,000 euros a month. In the light of this, war has clearly become a business in which the blood of both Iraqi civilians and US soldiers is reduced to the category of a raw material, a kind of red gold. The perpetuation of the war becomes, in the language of neo-liberal economic theory, an "opportunity".

In the same way, the occupation of Iraq has also been used to impose the economic logic of globalisation in a sweeping, unbridled manner. Everything, absolutely everything has been privatised, from petrol to the administration of the sewers (a concession to British companies) as well as services such as health, education and the water supply.

There were two other slogans which the main character in 1984 read on entering the sinister Ministry of Truth: the first, "Freedom is slavery", sums up perfectly the aim of totalitarianism - be it Communist or neo-liberal - to prevent any attempt at creating an alternative world with greater justice. Meanwhile, the second slogan - which reveals a great deal about the level of public opinion in the USA - reads "Ignorance is strength".

The continuation of the war becomes just another business opportunity

tinuation of global capitalism by other means.

Two Argentine journalists, Carlos Fresneda and Pablo Pardo, have recently warned of the growing privatisation of the US Army, a trend that was established by Dick Cheney when he was Defence Secretary for Bush Sr. And so, in the midst of war, several companies from the current Vice President's milieu have been subcontracted, ensuring that the soldiers' mail arrives late, or to supply food of the poorest quality and petrol at a price two-and-a-half



Were Bush and Rumsfeld banking on a long war?/CHRIS KLEPONIS.EFE

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