

NORTH AMERICAN BIOREGIONAL CONGRESS III - NABC III

21 - 26 August 1988

**BIOREGIONALISM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN BASIN:
THE CATALONIA BIOREGION**

**Josep PUIG
Alternativa Verda - Green Alternative
Catalonian Bioregion**

1.- The political division of Mediterranean Basin and the ancient cultures.

The present division of Mediterranean Basin (South-Europe and North-Africa) in Nation-States is a result of the civilisation developed by industrialism.

The Industrial Revolution - which started in England in the 18th. Century A.C. - resulted in deteriorations on the Natural and Social systems to extremes never before seen.

The consequences of this deteriorations has been almost total extinction of Mediterranean Cultures.

The Mediterranean Basin is characterized by common geographic, climatic, ecological variables.

From the 30th. to 15th. Centuries B.C. the differences between the "developped" cultures of the East Mediterranean Basin and the "ancient" cultures of the West were very outstanding.

In the 30th. Century B.C. appeared the first known civilization in the Aegean Sea.

In the 20th. Century B.C. emerged the Minoic Culture on the Island of Crete.

From this date we have evidence of migrations of indo-european peoples into the mediterranean peninsulas: Greek, Italian and Iberian.

From the 16th. to 12th. Centuries B.C. emerged the Micenic Culture on the Greek Peninsula.

In the first years of the 10th. Century B.C. there was a second wave of indo-european peoples into the Mediterranean Peninsulas.

In the 8th. Century B.C. emerged the Hellenic Civilisation: after having repealed the persian invaders in the 5th. Century B.C. the City-States were consolidated.

From this time we know the Phoenician and Greek sailboats traveling in the West Mediterranean Basin. In this way these civilisations expanded their cultures.

The results of this cultural expansion resulted in a domination of one civilisation over another from which emerged Etruscan, Tartessic and Iberian Cultures.

The Iberian Culture resulted from combination of indo-european invasions and Phoenician and Greek influences over the west part of Mediterranean Basin.

2.- Catalonia: A Nation without State.

Catalonia is the more vast, northern and ancient country of all the Catalonian Countries.

- It has a surface of 41,000 km²:

It has been divided between two States (Spain and France) and into the Spanish State, Catalonia is divided between two regions: Catalonia and Aragon.

The Catalonian Region in the Spanish State has 32,000 km².

- Its borders on the South is the Valencian Country and on the East the Balearic Islands:

Valencia Country and Balearic Islands are the two others Catalonian Countries.

- It was in the 9th. Century A.C. when the Catalonian Counties were made independent from Frank-Counties. But in the 18th. Century A.C. a Spanish King - Philip V - abolished the Catalonian political and civil institutions.

Please, let me made a brief historical presentation of my Country: Catalonia.

Century	Main Events	Comments
50 B.C.	Neolithic Revolution	agricultural and pastoral economy
35 B.C.	Megalithic Culture	use of metals: copper, economy of cattle raising, prehistoric remains: dolmens, cistes, menhirs.
10 B.C.	Indo-European infiltrations	great cultural & demographic transformations, use of metal: iron, intensification of farming and ranching, incineration of deads.
6 B.C.	Greek sailboats traveling on the	Catalonian coast,
5 B.C.	Greeks establish factories at Emporium and Rhode.	Catalonia enters in the Greek urban area. Beginning of monetary economy (Emporium and Rhode coin money.
5-1 B.C.	Iberian Culture. Iberian people extends	from the South of Lenguvadoc (southeast France) to North of Andalusie (southeast Spain) in the coastal area. Iberian Tribes occupied what are now known as "Comarcas" the basic terri- torial organisation.
3-1 B.C.	Romanisation of Catalonia: War Rome-Cartago,	Romans disembarked at Emporium (218 B.C.), Native revolts against Romans, Romans dominated native tribes (195 B.C.), Romans set up a new territorial organisation based on "provincias": Hispania Citerior in the East

Hispania Ulterior in the Sud-West.

- 1 B.C.-2 A.C. Generalisation of Roman Culture:
Decline of native culture,
Imposition of Roman way of life:
Latin language,
Roman laws,
money coined by Rome,
economy based on rural "villae" (farm houses)
monoculture of cereals, olivegrove and vineyard
construction of new cities,
transformation of old cities,
construction of road network,
- 2-4 A.C. Invasions from Center-Europe:
Economic crisis because of the fall of Roman Empire,
Internal social convulsions,
Destruction of cities and "villae",
- 7 A.C. Islamic penetration to Catalonia.
- 8 A.C. Consolidation of Frank domination of Old Catalonia (the
most northern part of Catalonia where the Islamic
influence was less important).
New territorial organisation based on Counties.
Count assumes military-political-judicial functions.
- 9 A.C. Catalanian Counties made independent from Franks.
- 12 A.C. Birth of Catalanian-Aragon Confederation (1137 A.C.)
It will exist until Eighteenth Century.
- 12-13 A.C. Muslims lose control upon the New Catalonia
(the most southern part of Catalonia where
the Islam influence was more important).
- 14-16 A.C. In the Iberian Peninsula there were 5 kingdoms:
Portugal,
Lion,
Castillia,
Navarra,
Catalonia-Aragon.
- 17 A.C. Conflict between Castillian & France kingdoms resolved
by Pyrenees Peace Pact (1660 A.C.):
France annexed the Northern Catalanian territories
and abolished Catalanian institutions.
- 18 A.C. Spain's King - Philip V - dictated the "Nova Planta" Act
(1707-1716 A.C.)
This Act are laws that abolished the old
institutional Catalanian organisation &
imposed the Castillian organisation.

An example of this Act is the following paragraph:

"All members of the Spanish Kingdoms conform the same
laws, customs, courts, that the Castillian ones,
which are exalted in all the world"

19 A.C. Beginning of Industrial Era.

20 A.C. Generalisation of Industrialist Culture.

Civil War (1936-1939): Industrialist Armies
(Rightist-Franco & Socialist-Stalinist)
destroyed anarchist collectivised economy (rural & industrial) in Catalonia
and Aragon.
General deterioration of natural systems.
Ecological collapse (?).

3.- Catalonia as a Bio-Region.

Despite all the aggressions that Catalonia has suffered throughout the time, the Catalonian people learned to maintain its culture based on a different language from other people into the Iberian peninsula.

But in the last 40 years, under the name of progress (Pax-Economica), Catalonia has suffered an unprecedented aggression over its natural systems.

The industrialist model of development resulted in the fact that 68.5 % of all the Catalonia's habitants were concentrated on the 4 "comarcas" surrounding Barcelona's Metropolitan Area, in other words occupying 7.6 % of all the Catalonia surface.

In the last 40 years Catalonia has seen:

- how the country become the most nuclearized country in the world (four nuclear reactors in a 32,000 km² of surface). A small area of south Catalonia (with only the 5 % of all Catalonia's habitants) supply 75 % of all Catalonian generated electricity (nuclear electricity). The same thing happened in the beginning of the Electricity Era when a Pyrenees Mountain Area supplied all the hydroelectricity to the Barcelona's industrialised area,
- how the rivers lost the capacity of supporting life,
- how the better soils for agricultural purposes vanished under the concrete and the asphalt (industrial areas, highways and motorways, urban developments, etc.),
- how the summer fires damaged a great part of the Catalonian forests because of the introduction of easily burn species that grows rapidly,
- how the domestic and industrial wastes were dumped in the rivers, in the Mediterranean sea, in the air, on the land, ... polluting water, air and soil,
- how the surface affected by soil erosion increased alarmingly.

Now, let me shortly explain which are the natural bases that supports the life in Catalonia:

- map of geomorphological units of Catalonian Countries,

- map of height over the Mediterranean sea level of Catalonia,
- map of Catalonia's soils,
- map of Catalonia's solar radiation,
- map of Catalonia's winds,
- map of Catalonia's rainfall and watersheds,
- map of Catalonia's climates and phisiographic regions,
- map of Catalonia's vegetation, trees and agricultural areas.

3.1.- The Natural "comarca".

This is the proposal of Catalonians bio-regionalists.

The natural, biologic or ecologic "comarca" are the redefinition of old "comarca" that now play only administrative founctions.

This is a long term project: transform the present "comarques" into a new ones that would be a integrated political units that:

- will organize the political life in accordance with the natural resources,
- will organize the internal and external commercial structure,
- will organize their needs as a community,
- will organize their long term biological subsistence systems.

4.- Bio-regionalism and Greens in Europe.

Traditionally the State (in all its historical forms) has been in constant conflict with all the organisation forms that the local communities had been developping over the years.

In Europe the final step of this process is now happening with the idea of the United States of Europe, the last result of the European Common Market.

As bio-regionalists we must learn from past history. The Mediteranean Cultures have suffered so many invasions (not only phisical invasions but cultural invasions) throughout the time. The last one resulted on the industrialist Nation-States in all the Mediterranean Basin and their ecological deterioration.

In front of the industrialist aggressions over the natural web of life, the Green Movement has emerged all over Europe.

The Green Culture must not follow the same way of diffusion that the Industrialist Culture has followed. In other words, the European Greens must not diffuse the Green Culture by means of Nation-State.

The European Greens face up to a great challenge to reharmonize the relations between the humans and the nature:

- is it valid that the Greens themselves organize on the same bases of industrialist States ?

or,

- is it necessary to create new bases of Green territorial organisation ?

The Catalonia's Green Alternative, as a bio-regional organisation, has chosen the second way of organisation.

This is the reason why Catalonia's Green Alternative has requested to be admitted into the European Greens as a eco-regional organisation, in other words as a Catalonian organisation and not as Spanish organisation.

Thank you for your attention. This is a small contribution from the Mediterranean Sea (and as Mediterranean Greens) to the Green Debate in Europe.

Josep Puig, "Alternativa Verda - Moviment Ecologista de Catalunya"