

Homage to Catalan

Timothy Garton Ash introduces a translation of our ten principles into Catalan and a reflection on having Catalan as your native language.



Every time I go to Barcelona, I make sure to visit the Plaça de George Orwell. George Orwell's Homage to Catalonia is my model for political writing about any bloody and complicated foreign conflict. But when I went back to Barcelona in autumn 2013, what struck me first was the extraordinary number of Catalan flags – far more than when I was last there, and many of them indicating support for independence. Or at least, support for a referendum on whether Catalonia should become independent.

Talking to my hosts, the publishers Montse Ingla and Antoni Munné, and to leading Catalan intellectuals such as Pere Vilanova, I discovered more of the story of the attempted suppression of Catalan language, literature and culture under the Franco dictatorship. In their youth, it was almost impossible to publish anything in Catalan. Catalan was not used officially at school and university.

We talked about Free Speech Debate, and the emphasis our project places on people being able to express themselves in their own language – as anyone can do on this site, in any language. Although our own translations are confined to the 13 languages - mainly those with the widest outreach on the web - we always welcome translations into new languages, such as we have had

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in Estonian and Polish. I therefore suggested to Antoni and Montse that they might like to do a Catalan version of our ten principles. They came up trumps, and have translated not only the ten principles, but also my personal introductions to them. These you can find [here](#).

The distinguished Catalan – but also Spanish and Andorran – intellectual Pere Vilanova contributed a fascinating, personal essay, on what it is like to have your ‘native’ language being actually your third language, due again to the oppression of the Franco dictatorship. You can read his essay [here](#).

Welcome to the debate, and do please add your comment – in any language.

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