

THE NEW MAYOR OF PERPINYÀ, AGAINST CATALAN SYMBOLS

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Argazkia: Amics de la Bressola

The Catalan nationalists of Northern Catalonia did not expect anything good when the candidate of Marine Le-Pen and the far-right Rassemblement National party, Louis Aliot, won the municipal elections of Perpinyà in 2020. Perpinyà was one of the few cities in all of France that the French ultra-nationalists won, and Aliot soon showed that his idea of France is a very different one from that of the Catalan nationalist forces. (Perpignan is the capital of Northern Catalonia, a region within the French state - *Trans.*)

In his short tenure, the new Mayor has made three decisions that have outraged Catalan nationalists:

1.- The city logo changed (the logo that appears on all official documents of the city council). He removed the previous Catalan logo (“Perpignan la catalane” (“the Catalan city” – *Translator*)) and replaced it with a new one (“Perpignan la rayonnante” (“the radiant” – *Trans.*)). Catalan groups strongly criticised that decision.

2.- He began to remove the bilingual signs from the city, especially those located at its entrance, leaving only the signs in French. He did so discreetly and without publicity, maliciously acting against the bilingualism of the city.

3.- The third decision has undoubtedly been the one provoking the most intense reaction: he destroyed the plan of the “Bressola” of Northern Catalonia (Bressola is the network of schools that teaches entirely through Catalan, similar to the “Seaska” network of *ikastolas* in the Northern Basque Country) to build a secondary education school and a lyceum in Perpinyà, although earlier he had claimed to be in favour. The one in Perpinyà should have been the second secondary education school in the “Bressola” (currently this network of schools only has one secondary school in Northern Catalonia), and those responsible had communicated to the City Council their intention to purchase an old abandoned convent for that end(*). Although the City Council initially gave its approval, at the last moment it bought the aforementioned convent, leaving Bressola without a building. A true demonstration of foul play against the Catalan language.

This manoeuvre by the Mayor has deeply disturbed the institutions working for the Catalan language. A large protest demonstration took place on October 23rd on the streets of Perpinyà. At the time of publishing this article, more than 12,000 signatures had been collected in Northern Catalonia against the Mayor’s decision and in favour of Bressola.

“Mayor Aliot always links any initiative or organization that has a Catalan character with the independence movement of Southern Catalonia” (i.e in the Spanish state – *Trans.*), Ramón Faura, an activist from Northern Catalonia who is President of the “Angelets de la Terra” cultural association, told NAZIOGINTZA. “Aliot wants to be France’s battering ram against Catalan

independence, and for that reason he takes a negative stance against the language and culture here,” added Faura.

French Jacobinism has despised and marginalised the non-French languages and cultures of the state for the past 200 years. Now the extreme Right wants to take this historical marginalisation even further, and Perpinyà is witness to it.

(*) the “Bressola” of Northern Catalonia has 1,100 students, in eight Primary Education schools. It has only one college (Secondary Education), with 80 students. Two per cent of Primary Education students in Northern Catalonia study in a Catalan immersion system.(Total population of Northern Catalonia: 457,238 inhabitants).