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Ball in your court: Britain, EU clash over next Brexit move: See Inside

Business boss pleads for Catalonia "sanity"

Barcelona.—Antonio Garamendi, the president of the Spanish Confederation of Business Organisations (CEOE), appealed yesterday for "sanity" in not boycotting Catalonia products. Were there to be a boycott by consumers committed to Spanish unity, this would be "bad news" for Catalonia and for Spain.

His words echo those of José Luis Bonet, the president of the Spanish Chamber of Commerce and also president of one of the most famous producers of cava, the Barcelona-based Freixe-

net. He has acknowledged that there are reactions which are harming the sale of cava and of Catalanian wines, products that are "emblematic".

Bonet is to propose to the Freixenet board that the company moves its registered office out of Catalonia. He says that he took "great personal satisfaction" in the massive rally in favour of Spanish unity that took place in Barcelona on Sunday. To Bonet it is logical that companies will want to leave Catalonia. In the event that independence is de-



Unionist protest all over Spain against Catalan independence.

clared, "leaving the European Union would be a catastrophe". Asked yesterday if he thought that there will be a declaration of independence, he said that he couldn't rule out "any kind of stupidity".

The CEOE notes that smaller companies are likely to follow the lead of larger businesses.

They will move from Catalonia out of responsibility but with "great sadness". "Once the big companies pave the way, the small ones will follow."

Garamendi explains that an independ-

ent Catalonia would fall outside European rules, would incur tariffs and have major market problems. Bilateral relations, he believes, would be "almost impossible". Catalonia, the CEOE president stresses, currently has sales worth 46 billion euros in Spain, 37 billion in Europe and 22 billion in the rest of the world. "Catalonia sells much more to Aragon than to France, more to Murcia than to China and a similar amount or more to Cantabria than the United States."

● CATALAN LEADER UNDER PRESSURE TO DROP INDEPENDENCE: SEE FULL REPORT ON PAGE THREE INSIDE TODAY

The end of the line for airline

London.—Flights operated by insolvent German carrier Air Berlin will end by 28 October at the latest, it said yesterday, urging staff to seek jobs elsewhere while it works towards a carve-up of its assets.

Air Berlin filed for insolvency in August and a government loan is keeping its planes in the air to give it time to negotiate with in-

vestors for parts of the business. Talks with Lufthansa and easyJet are due to run until Thursday and once a deal for parts of its business has been agreed Air Berlin will have to wind down the rest of the operation.

German deputy economy minister Matthias Machnig said he is confident a deal will be reached on Thursday. *see page 5.*

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