

A MANIFESTO

Freedom and Decolonisation

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CATALANS AND THE STATE

A mere hundred and fifty years ago, Catalans still had our own idea of Spain. Far from being peripheral to the State, we were challenging Castilians for hegemony over it. We held economic and industrial supremacy, and possessed a political and legal culture superior to that of Castile. We sought out a European dynasty to replace the Bourbons and turn the Kingdom of Spain into a civilised monarchy. We represented the intellectual avant-garde and set the ideological agenda. Most of the cultural creations that have endured and retained their vitality came from our artists, authors, architects and urban planners. We were the only consolidated nation in Spain.

A century and a half later, the balance has been reversed. Over the course of those hundred and fifty years — the age of the masses and materialism, of genocides and authoritarianism — Castilians have completed their appropriation of the State. Through assassinations and executions, dictatorships and military coups, constitutions and partisan jurisprudence, wars of extermination and laws of conquest, they have pushed us to the brink of exhaustion. Through demographic engineering, financial plunder and cultural appropriation, Castilians have usurped Catalonia's role within the State, just as they usurped it within the Hispanic Empire. Through this usurpation, they now seek to become the nation they never fully became, and to do so in the name of Spain.

Aware of this reality, but unable to articulate it, Catalans launched the independence process of the previous decade as a way of coming to terms with the loss of the State. Beneath the explicit language of independence lay an implicit logic: Catalans would relinquish their historical claim to the Spanish State and the benefits of sharing it, and in return Castilians

would accept Catalan political freedom. The process was framed positively — leaving the State, freeing ourselves from it — but in reality it constituted a historic renunciation, the greatest collective renunciation we have ever made.

It could be contemplated because Catalans value political freedom above any other interest. And therein lies an intimate difference between us and Castilians that explains the whole history of Spain. Castilians are a materialist people, formed during the rise of the nation-state; Catalans are a thousand-year-old nation, with a spiritual and historical depth that predates the existence of modern states.

Castilians need the Spanish State because they constituted themselves through it and through its usurpation. We do not. For us, the State is merely an instrument, one creation among the many we have produced throughout history. When Catalans made the decision to hand Spain over, a secret conviction was at work in our national unconscious: if we had been capable of creating a kingdom in the Middle Ages, an empire during the Renaissance and a state in the modern era, we would also be capable of creating a political structure suited to the new millennium.

Repeated democratic majorities and three million people exercising their vote for Catalan independence in the face of every threat were not enough for Castilians to accept the offer. Three million people relinquishing their historical rights over the State in exchange for political freedom: that is what 9 November and 1 October represented. The Castilian response — police batons and prisons — and the reaction of our own politicians — testifying before the State's courts in the language of the aggressors — have brought both the idea of Spain and the idea of Catalonia to a dead end.

THE THREE ERRORS

Cohabitation with Castilians within a single political structure has proved impossible. This was already apparent during the age of empire, and it has become clear again over the past hundred and fifty years, as Catalans were progressively excluded from the State we had helped to create in order to overcome the ancien régime.

In response to the impossibility of living under Castilian domination, our country's political tradition has committed three errors. They must be overcome if we are to transform our politics root and branch.

The error of Catalanism: seeking to reform the State from the outside or to build a miniature version of it in Catalonia, out of an inability to relinquish the institution and the benefits it provides.

The error of the independence movement: seeking to deny Catalans' role in the construction of the State and to regard it as something foreign, rejecting any relationship with power and defining ourselves against the State just as Castilians defined themselves through it.

The error of nationalism: seeking to define Catalans and Castilians in ethnic terms and to make segregation and isolation the solution, turning them into a barrier against the penetration of the State into Catalonia.

These are fatal errors because the problem is political in nature: it concerns the struggle for power. Neither the simulation of statehood orchestrated by Catalanism, nor the independence movement's disregard for the State, nor nationalism's advocacy of isolation from the State constitute genuine political responses. They are self-induced ideological traps born of fear of violent conflict, and they erase the historic role played by Catalans in the construction of Spain. All this renders the country incapable of exercising power and feeds the corruption of the court in Madrid and its puppets in Barcelona.

The political errors of the past century have spread the misconception that the problem is the State as an institution, when the real problem is Castilian colonialism and its political culture and conception of power. They have prevented us from understanding the Castilian colonial instinct, historically expressed in South America. This ancestral instinct, already one of the pillars of Francoist policy in Catalonia, is now being extended across the peninsula, with particular virulence in our country. The State is taking advantage of the fact that the West is bringing colonialism within its own borders, following the French model, in order to dissolve not only "the Catalan problem" but also the democratic values that Catalonia had promoted since Spain's democratic Transition.

Castilians intend to resolve their historic conflict with Catalans in the same way they have historically resolved colonial conflicts: by treating us as though we were an indigenous community. They do not merely want a State of their own — a State without us, which was the arrangement offered to them during the independence process. They believe that they can build their nation only by making ours disappear. That is their intention.

The Castilian nation needs to disintegrate Catalonia in order to complete itself, and it is using the international context and the usurped State to achieve this. We have fulfilled our part of the bargain and handed over the State. We have left it. A Catalan who participates in the State or contributes to it no longer does so politically as a Catalan. The Spanish State has become entirely an instrument of Castilians.

FREEDOM AND DECOLONISATION

Pedro Sánchez's mass regularisation of immigrants, carried out with the collaboration and connivance of Catalan parties, follows this same colonial logic. It is the most serious attack on Catalonia since 1939. It forms part of the historical project of the Castilian State and connects with the purpose of the migratory waves sent into Catalonia during the two dictatorships of the twentieth century. It is a project of the Left that the Right will continue when it comes to power if Catalans remain politically defenceless.

The aim is no longer to create an internal demographic and linguistic counterweight within Catalonia, as during the period of autonomy. The aim now is to suffocate Catalan life itself by attempting to dissolve Catalans into an amorphous mass stripped of identity.

Castilians settled in Catalonia have fulfilled two functions: to privatise the plunder by exploiting redistributive policies, and to serve as the civilian troops of the oligarchies established in 1939 and consolidated during the Transition. Today, in order to continue the

sociolinguistic and demographic assault, global immigration and State-sponsored immigration brought in from Spain's former colonies are being used and justified through economic arguments drawn from the logic of slavery.

The State is using demographic engineering to dissolve Catalans politically, a practice characteristic of totalitarian states. The objective is the degradation not only of the country but of citizenship itself. Pockets of impoverishment are created through increasing fiscal pressure, public plunder, the dispossession of property and industrial relocation. The aim is to create in Catalonia a society of uprooted and dispossessed individuals, turning Catalans into dependent and subsidised citizens — not only economically but politically — in keeping with the authoritarian social dynamics now spreading across the West.

The regularisation demonstrates that the State is now inside our own home and that the political instruments created by Catalans during the period of autonomy have been placed at the service of Castilians. It is not only the ballot boxes that have been confiscated: since the imposition of Article 155, democracy itself and the political system have also been taken from us.

Voting and institutional representation will not be sufficient to reverse this situation. During the independence process, Castilians rejected the vote as an instrument for resolving the conflict, with international acquiescence. Since then, democracy has been retreating throughout the West, while social and political degradation has continued to grow. One need only walk through Naples, Marseille and Perpignan to imagine the future that awaits us if we fail to act.

We Catalans are being attacked as a nation, and as a nation we must respond. We are being attacked demographically: 40 per cent of those regularised by Sánchez are in Catalonia and Valencia. We are being attacked socially: the Balearic Islands have become a gateway for illegal immigration and are being forced to bear the burden of the resulting humanitarian crisis. We are being attacked territorially through the colonial exploitation of Mallorca and the constant attacks on the Catalan language in Valencia.

Faced with this, we must enter politics as Catalans, and as Catalans we must respond. Our political response must make itself felt in the streets and in the institutions, in our legislatures and parliaments, at La Moncloa and in the chancelleries of Europe.

Today, the State is the principal instrument of Castilian colonialism. To prevent the disintegration of our society, we must rebuild our political system and change the hierarchies that structure our country, because both are products of colonial domination. Catalans must defend our territory and our political rights not only to prevent the completion of the Castilian colonial State, but also to defend our own idea of Europe and European citizenship.

Catalans must initiate Europe's internal decolonisation in Catalonia. And decolonisation must proceed from the top down. Those who bear the greatest responsibility must feel the greatest impact of our action. We must expel the colonial oligarchies, eliminate the parties that have betrayed us as political forces, and return as Catalans to the political arena from which we were excluded a hundred and fifty years ago.

Catalans must translate our national existence into deeds. We must act politically and defend our interests without fear of offending Castilians or of appearing "too Catalan". Catalans are the ultimate source of political power in Catalonia, and without us there can be neither politics nor nation.

Without the restoration of our political power, there will be no security in Spain, and Europe will suffer the growing instability of the State — just as it is already paying the price for having accepted the invalidation of the vote and of democracy, and the denial of our political freedom.

We must take a step of national affirmation, and we must take it in the streets, in full view of everyone, in order to begin restoring the power of Catalans and demonstrate our determination to protect, liberate and govern our country.

For this reason, we call upon everyone to join the demonstration for the freedom of Catalans and the decolonisation of Catalonia.
