

Xenophobia, the concept that explains everything

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"Xenophobia is the concept that explains everything, because behind xenophobia is insult, lies, humiliation and discrimination."

The Catalan issue is front-page news around the world and many diverse opinions flood page after page. However, in all these pages, there is an undercurrent of incomprehension, not of hostility, which gives rise to a feeling that something is missing to justify the actions and options of one to the other. The word that opens the door to understanding the problem is called xenophobia. The Catalans of prudent nature («seny», we call it here) have avoided putting this name to their difficulties, just as they have avoided referring to the boycott that their products receive from the Spaniards. With this attitude, one avoids adding fuel to the fire, something that it already does not lack. But in this case, this prudence makes it difficult to understand the causes, attitudes and possible outcomes.

We consider xenophobia the negative characterization, without an objective justification, of a particular social group. As Rene Girard explains; there are few societies that do not discriminate against poorly integrated or simply odd groups. With this affirmation, we are already pointing out the characteristics of the victims: being an identifiable group, dealing with a minority and having some peculiar characteristics that generate suspicion, in the case of the Catalans, their own language and some characteristics that can infuse jealousy.

The xenophobic relationship of Spain towards the Catalan people comes from afar, but in the last twenty-five years the Spanish right has found an effective tool of political power to foster this feeling. But how can one foster hatred against a serene, integrating, charitable people, having a style of non-violent dialogue, a lover of peace and with a mentality open to the world? The answer is simple: lying, lying without scruples, dominating a media insensitive to its reality, to the point that they have managed to make that the lie in Spain deserves no censuring. The hatred against the Catalans has been systematically incited: Aznar's speeches seemed like military pep talks, the campaign to collect four million signatures "against the Catalans" on the occasion of the Catalan Statute (2006), among many others. This generalized contemptuous and demeaning treatment is not reciprocal despite the lies to blame the Catalans. In this respect, the reality is stubborn and defamation does not resist the proof of the facts.

I will focus on a few examples. First, the campaign for signatures against the Statute deserves a place of honour as a campaign to foster hatred against the Catalans. Secondly, the continued insults from rulers, from the media, insults of such brutality that in any democratic country would deserve a response of

public indignation. These days, the former Vice-President of the Government Alfonso Guerra has compared the Hitler youth with the youth that peacefully protested against police repression with people who simply wanted to vote. Third is the boycott of Catalan products, especially food. Specifically, from 2007 to 2016, food production has stagnated due to the crisis, but instead exports have doubled with an increase in the trade balance of some three billion euros, a fact that has no other explanation than the deviation of trade that the boycott has produced. It should be noted that the generic boycott against a collective is an individual and private response where each person puts a small amount of hate to consciously move their purchase without any other objective criteria. Fourth, the feelings of sympathy expressed by some groups towards others. Professor Jose Luis Sangrador carried out a survey asking the degree of sympathy that the inhabitants of other communities deserved; the result is that only Catalonia obtained scores inferior to 5 whereas Catalonia only put positive scores. For example, the respondents of Andalusia rated Catalonia with a 4.5, while from Catalonia, Andalusia was rated with a 7.44. This asymmetry is the result of years of lies and the inciting of hatred but also indicates non-reciprocity from Catalonia. Fifth, the bloody response to defamation and the search for guilty people in the most tragic moment after the Barcelona terrorist attack, while the Catalonia police, health services and population provided exemplary solidarity and efficiency, while from Madrid (for simplicity), Catalonia received insults and allegations cheered on by the media. To all this suffering in Barcelona, we could add the anguish of hatred. On March 12, 2004, after the terrible Atocha attack, a street march in Barcelona was held in solidarity with Madrid where, according to the SER, a million and a half people attended. The 26 of August of 2017 in Madrid in solidarity with Barcelona after the attacks of the Rambla, according to the newspaper "El Mundo", one hundred people demonstrated, I repeat, one hundred people. And finally, as a final example, the "Go get them!!!" enthusiastically cheering the Spanish military police from different points of Spain when they were directed to repress peaceful people who simply wanted to vote. With the silent complicity of people who define themselves democrats, against brutal repression of the right to opinion, assembly and vote, rights that can not be hidden behind a constitution that proclaims itself democratic.

Offending Catalans or being insensitive to the harassment they receive is assumed as normal in Spain. Fortunately, there are growing movements in different parts of Spain that oppose this apparent "normality". We are hearing new voices that speak the language of respect, democracy and solidarity among peoples. These are the voices of hope.

The strategy to incite xenophobia has brought about satisfactory results to those who encourage it. On the one hand, it allows them to win elections at the comfortable price of insulting and mistreating the Catalans (the newspaper

archives are full of examples). On the other hand, it annuls their opponents since if they leave the Catalanophobic discourse, they lose election options. In turn, with this implicit anti-Catalan consensus, it is easy to design programs that add complicities at the price of favouring investment or economic support in a discriminatory manner with respect to Catalonia.

Xenophobia contaminates a society to the point that those who by active or passive form part of it do not recognize it. In this sense, keeping one's distance, the defamatory mechanisms are like those of anti-Semitism experienced in Europe. Going against the Catalans and blaming the Catalans for everything is part of normality, a fact that brings together many self-interested people and groups but also many people simply contaminated by chronic and immoral misinformation. Like the child that bullies or that worker that has suffered mobbing, the only way to overcome harassment is to separate from that contaminated environment. From a new non-dependent situation, relationships can be restored in a positive way.

Xenophobia is the concept that explains everything, because behind xenophobia is insult, lies, humiliation and discrimination. The escape of the Catalans towards independence has many reasons but the most important is the search for dignity. Only this explains why millions of people mobilize year after year, as no one in the world has done before. But it also explains the need for foreign help, the only way out of a state where it is a minority, and which has clearly demonstrated that it has no moral or democratic restraint. That is why this article is also a demand for help to Europe and the world so that the Catalan people can flee Spanish nationalism.

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