



EDITORIAL

The Barcelona Olympic Games have contributed to the diffusion of images and symbols of the Catalan reality. Catalonia's complex linguistic, cultural and political reality came across as a set of expressive forms that was not easy to interpret. Many observers had the chance to learn that Spanish is not the language of Catalonia. The Catalan language was frequently used as the first language in the information on the sporting and cultural events during the games, alongside Spanish, English and French. Other signs were more difficult to interpret. The King of Spain was received in the stadium with an anthem, "Els Segadors", which preceded the official anthem of the Spanish state. "Els Segadors" is the national anthem of Catalonia and was played in recognition, on the part of the Spanish monarchy, of Catalonia's special political status. Visitors were able to see that it was not the Spanish flag that filled the streets of Barcelona or that the public waved spontaneously at the sporting events. The flag that was most enthusiastically exhibited was the Catalan flag, the symbol of Catalan patriotism and not of Spanish patriotism. Although the Catalan Olympic Committee has not yet been recognized and the Catalan athletes took part in the Spanish delegation, many of them were distinguishable thanks to the discreet Catalan flag they wore. The opening and closing ceremonies of the Games were not Spanish cultural manifestations but a skilful combination of perfectly differentiated Catalan and Spanish elements in proportions corresponding to the multiculturalism of Catalonia today.



The images of the Barcelona Olympic Games can be considered a series of very accurate political photographs of the situation in Catalonia in 1992. The complex Catalan institutional architecture is faithfully expressed in them. Outside observers should understand that the vitality of Catalan society will modify the outline of the political institutions and that the photographs of 1992 may not apply in future, in the sense that the Catalan identity could have different relations with the Spanish state within the European context. Possible developments exclude any political prospect that fails to respect the rules of democracy. No-one wants to move in a direction that might generate violence like that deployed by Serbia against neighbouring nations. It is perfectly easy to imagine a future scenario that is different from the one that has characterized developments in Yugoslavia. The case of Catalonia, in Europe, is demonstrating that the political affirmation of the Catalan nation contributes to stability and governability. The reason is obvious. Democracy can not be reduced to the human rights of individuals. Democracy must guarantee the rights of peoples and the creation of political structures that encourage the growth of cultural identities. The consolidation of the Catalan political personality, with different structures to the present ones, will be a step towards stability and peace in Southern Europe.

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