

THE CASE OF THE CATALAN NATION

A HISTORICAL SUMMARY

THE MANAGEMENT OF THE NATION

Catalonia is one of the oldest countries in Europe. It was formed during the post-Roman era, when the arrival of the Germanic people ushered in the ending of the Western-Roman Empire. The Catalan nation is composed of a mixture of Iberians, Romanized and Goths. The Visigoths installed the capital of their domains in Barcelona in 415 A.D. with an alliance with Rome that was annulled half a century later with the fall of the imperial capital (476).

This strengthened the dominion covered an area of the Iberian peninsula as well as the northern part of the Pyrenees to the Septimania (Aquitaine and Narbonense), which is the Southern part of present day France.

In 534 the Eastern-Roman Empire (Byzantium) incorporated the Mallorcan islands into their dominions, thereby expelling the Vandals.

The subsequent invasion of Europe by the Arabs began in 711.

This invasion was stopped at Poitiers, then city of the Frankish Kingdom (732), by Charles, father of Charlemagne.

As of that moment the withdrawal of the Saracen Islamic invaders and the liberation of the Septimania began. Narbonne was released in 759, Girona in 785 by Charlemagne and Barcelona in 801 by Lluís, the son of Charlemagne.

The Catalan counties of Pallars, Ribagorça, Urgell, Rosselló, Cerdanya, Besalú, Girona, Empúries and Barcelona were formed.

The latter was to be under the main command of the Count Guifré, who died in combat against the Saracens in 897. This established the Barcelona dynasty.

The Count was a vassal to the King of the Franks. Their coat of arms were four red sticks on yellow field.

This visual representation was used by all the Catalan kings and subsequently adopted by the Catalan people as their national flag, which it is until today.

The Catalan flag is one of the oldest in the world.

FORMING OF THE INDEPENDENT MEDIEVAL STATE

Count Borrell II, grandson of Count Guifré, would detach from vassalage in 986 and the Principality of Catalonia would thereafter act with complete independence.

The liberation of Lleida, Tarragona and Tortosa from the Muslims, would give the Principality of Catalonia its definitive form.

The area of influence would thereafter be extended. To the North based on alliances and marriages with the counties of Rasés, Bigorra, Carcassonne, Foix, Tolosa, Comenge, Bearn, Beziers, Millau, Gavaldà, Provença and Nice.

Which would establish the domain of Occitania, ancient Septimania. And to the West with the heiress of Aragon by the marriage of Count Ramon Berenguer IV of Barcelona with Peronella (in 1137), which marked the beginning of the federation of Catalan kingdoms.

The expansion to the North would be crushed by the defeat and death of Peter I at the Battle of Muret (1213) where he confronted the Catalan king with the defense of his subjects and allies of Occitania.

This was before the crusade by the Pope against the Christians Cathars and it was used by the Franks to occupy these territories.

His son James I changed his mind, signing his resignation to the Northern territories (he will only preserve part of Provence) by the Treaty of Corbeil (1258) and headed towards the islands

and the south by undertaking the final conquest against the Muslims of the Kingdoms of Mallorca (1229), Valencia (1238) and Murcia (1266). The latter will be transferred later to the King of Castile in accordance with previous agreements.

This set of the Principality of Catalonia and the Kingdoms of Mallorca and Valencia are those that give shape and nature to the Catalan Nation, then and now.

The successive counts and kings will undertake the conquest of Sicily and Malta (1282), Greece (1311), Sardinia (1323) and finally Naples (1432), assuring a predominance in the Mediterranean.

Finally, King Ferdinand II will conclude the reconquest of the Muslim kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula with the capture of Granada (1492) jointly with Castilian troops for marriage to Queen Isabel of Castile.

That same year, the Catalan navigator, the admiral Joan Cristòfor Colom i Beltran with an expedition of three ships, that goes out of the port of Pals (Girona) arrives at the coasts of the "New World", the West Indies, later called the Americas.

The successive expeditionary will incorporate new lands into the dominions of the Catalan king, undoing the local empires Maia, Inca and Aztec.

THE UNITED UNION OF THE HISPANIC CROWNS

The grandson of King Ferdinand II and his successor Charles of Habsburg, son of Phillip of Habsburg and Johanna of Aragonia, will be King (1516) of Catalonia, Castile, Navarra, Granada, the possessions of the Americas and other European territories, such as The Netherlands, Burgundy and the Franc County.

In 1519 he inherited Austria and the German counties and he was appointed Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.

Later, he will resign to the Germanic possessions in favor of his brother Ferdinand (1555).

The son of Charles of Habsburg named Philip II will install the capital in Madrid (1556) and will begin the centralization process.

During the following two centuries, the Catalan and Castilian kingdoms continued to be two independent States and for about a century there were three, with the incorporation of Portugal under a single crown that appropriated the wealth from the colonies of Overseas for their own benefit and their political interests.

In the middle of the 17th century the revolt of Catalans and Portuguese took place towards Castile and the King of The Spains, within the framework of the 30-year War. Portugal manages to restore the monarchy itself.

Catalonia gets to proclaim the Republic, with the leadership of Pau Claris, but finally it can only save its Constitutions, it must be kept within the Hispanic crown and loses the territories of the north of the Pyrenees (Roussillon, Conflent and half of the Cerdanya) that are annexed to the Kingdom of France, for the Pyrenees deals signed by Philip IV and Louis XIV (1659).

THE DEFINITIVE ESCALATION OF THE NATIONAL CONFLICT

At the end of the 17th century Charles II died the last king of the house of Austria without descendants and, the French house of Bourbon, adulterating the testament by the hand of the conspirators by Louis XIV they manages to enthrone Philip of Anjou as Philip V(1701).

This causes a European war, the War of Succession, in which the Catalan kingdoms are added to the cause allied with Austria, England, Holland, Savoy and Portugal.

In the battlefields of Europe, the Bourbons are losers and accept signing the treaty of Utrecht (1713) by which the Catalan States are incorporated into Castile.

The Bourbon of France must make concessions in Central Europe and that of Spain, which has seized the kingdoms of Valencia and Aragon, but also releases the trade with America to other European States and the allocation of Catalan possessions of the Mediterranean. Also transfer by perpetual Gibraltar Rock.

There is the commitment to respect the national rights of Catalonia (The Constitutions), but few weeks later the Castilian armies attack Catalonia and put siege to Barcelona.

The representatives of the Catalan institutions declare the war to an end, seeing the national freedoms in danger.

Philip V is unable to win the war and must request help from his grandfather (Luis XIV) who sends him an army with which he can finally force Barcelona to capitulate after more than a year of siege. It's September 11, 1714.

In 1715. the islands of the Kingdom of Mallorca are invaded and occupied.

Philip V decreed the annexation of Catalonia to the laws of Castile by "right of conquest" and the annulment of its Constitutions and institutions.

A long period of fierce repression begins in which many Catalans are forced to exile themselves, are imprisoned or executed. The town is engraved with serious tax burdens and the Catalan language is prohibited.

During the Napoleonic wars Napoleon Bonaparte invaded the Kingdom of Spain, he added the Principality of Catalonia to the French Empire (1812) granting him a federal status, to the point of re-installment of the old currency.

During the 19th century, the emancipation of the colonies of Central and South America occurred while the Kingdom was immersed in long civil wars between two Bourbon factions (liberals and traditionalists) with the ephemeral proclamation of a Spanish Republic (1873) of liberal, centralist and uniform character.

It is in this period that the current flag of Spain is defined and the king becomes Spain. Before it was in the name of each kingdom of the Peninsula (except Portugal).

By the end of the century (1898) the last of overseas colonies (Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines) became independent, in the face of the Spanish intransigence to make an autonomous type of concession.

CATALONIA IN THE 20TH CENTURY

During the First World War, Spain remained neutral, but the Catalans, as they did in favor of Cuban independence, presented volunteers to fight with the allies against Germany.

The King of Bourbon (Alfonso XIII), immersed in serious cases of corruption, supports the dictatorship (1923/1930) of General Primo de Rivera, who defends the privileges of the backwards Spanish aristocracy. The Commonwealth of Catalonia, an autonomous project (1914), based on the provincial organization of Catalonia, is annulled.

In Catalonia, a military man who has abandoned the army, Colonel Francesc Macià, has been established as leader of the independence movement and projects (1926) an armed invasion from Catalonia annexed to France, with volunteers.

They will be betrayed at the last minute and detained.

The trial of Macià in Paris, from which he will be acquitted, gets great media coverage.

In the council elections of 1931 the republican candidates obtained a wide victory over the monarchists.

In Catalonia, Francesc Macià and Lluís Companys lead a coalition of different nationalist parties that obtains an absolute victory.

Macià proclaims the Catalan Republic (April 14, 1931) in an alleged Federation of Iberian Republics.

After that, negotiations with the representatives of the Second Spanish Republic, proclaimed in Madrid, declares that Catalunya will remain in an autonomy: the Generalitat of Catalonia.

This Generalitat will be consolidated with a Statute drawn up by the new Parliament of Catalonia.

While this Statute is considerably cut by the Spanish Parliament, it still passes the vote of most of the Catalan people (1932).

In December of 1933 the President of the Generalitat Francesc Macià dies and the Catalan people show their honors with a massive burial.

He gets replaced by Lluís Companys who, in the face of the involution of the Spanish Republic, proclaims the Catalan State on October 6, 1934.

The Spanish army bombs the Palau de la Generalitat, the President and his Government are imprisoned. They will not be released until February 1936 when they win the elections again.

On July 18 of the same year, a group of Spanish military made a coup against the government of the Spanish Republic and began the Spanish War (1936/1939) which, led by General Franco and with the help of the nazis of Hitler and the fascists of Mussolini, will manage to impose itself and restore a dictatorship of almost 40 years.

The Catalan leaders and hundreds of thousands of Catalans and Spaniards are exiled, first to France and then to the rest of the world, mainly in Latin America.

The President Companys were captured by the Nazis after the German conquest of France and handed over to Franco's regime where they were executed in Barcelona (1940). Postwar repression is comparable to that of the years after 1714 and up to 1952 there are extremely high convictions and executions of opponents to Franco.

The defeat of the Nazis in Europe prevents the project of a "final solution" for Catalans, such as the one carried out by Hitler with the Jews.

Franchists have to change their strategy and practice cultural genocide.

They want to extinguish the Catalan roots, prohibit the language and introduce Spanish population until doubling the number of inhabitants of Catalonia.

The dictatorship continues until 1975, when the dictator dies, who in that same year still has six more opponents killed.

AFTER THE DICTATORSHIP

The successor named by the dictator, John Charles of Bourbon, is proclaimed king by the Franchist Cortes and a transition to democracy begins to wash the face of the regime.

The granting of autonomy for Catalonia becomes indispensable because, despite the dictatorship, the Catalans have managed to survive once again and integrate a large part of the newcomers.

The Basques also claim the autonomy they had achieved in 1936, when the war had already started.

During the years of the dictatorship, a President in exile has been named (1954) by the surviving Catalan deputies who were meeting in Mexico: Josep Tarradellas.

It is a member and councilor of the Governments of Macià and Companys.

The Generalitat has been living in exile in France and now wants to be recognized by the Spanish Government as a legitimate representative of the Catalan people.

Political and negotiating skillful, despite the relative support of the Catalan parties, he achieved his purpose and returned to Barcelona in October of 1977 in a smell of crowds, relieving the institution of the time of the republic with the current period, prior to the writing of the new Spanish Constitution (1978) and the new Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia (1979).

The Statute of Autonomy, drafted by the deputies of the reconstituted Parliament of Catalonia, is taken to the Spanish Parliament that cut it, as they did in the 30s. However, it is accepted by the Catalans who vote it massively.

Finally, to avoid that these autonomies, called historical, represent a differential fact too obvious, the Spanish leaders choose to grant autonomy to all regions of Spain, creating the State of the autonomies.

The successive governments of the liberal Jordi Pujol (1980/2003) mark a period of autonomous collaborator of the Spanish Government.

THE CURRENT SITUATION: THE POLITICAL LEADERS CHEATING THE PEOPLE

Under the presidency of the Socialist and ex-mayor of Barcelona, Pasqual Maragall and the leftist parties, the need for a new Statute is raised, which expands the powers of Catalonia.

It will be drafted, sent to Madrid and cut widely by the Spanish Parliament (2006).

However, the Catalan people approves it in a referendum.

But the Spanish right does not consider it sufficient, undertakes a campaign against Catalonia throughout Spain.

They bring the Statute to the Constitutional Court that cut 14 articles out of it (2010).

This procedure by this highly politicized court causes a rejection movement by the Catalan people and there is a first mass protest in Barcelona (2010).

On September 11, 2012, National Day of Catalonia (which reminds us of the occupation of 1714), nearly two million Catalans manifest themselves in Barcelona demanding independence.

It is the largest civilian event ever seen in Europe and will be repeated with the same intensity during the following years.

The autonomous parties, dressed as independentists try to redirect the situation and keep the favor of the voters.

President Liberal Mas proposes to make a referendum agreed with the State but, in the face of Spanish intransigence, Mas ends up doing a "non-binding inquiry" (9N 2014) that obtains a favor for independence greater than 80%.

In view of the situation, it invokes elections to the Parliament of Catalonia, with the commitment to go to independence in 18 months if favorable parties obtain majority and considering a plebiscite between "Yes" and "No" to independence.

On September the 27th 2015 the independentist parties obtain the absolute majority.

The votes in favor of Yes add up to 55% of the votes.

However all the votes against the opposites, the ones discounted and the votes of those that were indifferent all add to the side on No.

The independentists accept, however, the theory that they have not reached half plus one of the suffrages and, almost a year later, they propose to make a new referendum. This time a referendum that will be binding.

On October 1, 2017 despite the difficulties posed by the State, the referendum is celebrated. The participation exceeds 50% and the affirmative vote 90% despite the aggressions and kidnappings of ballot boxes by the Spanish police forces, that aggressively and indiscriminately abuse voters as well.

Despite the brutality of the police, the Catalan people remain peaceful and resolute.

President Puigdemont commitment is to declare independence within 48 hours, but he delays it for reasons of formality.

On October 10, in the front of the spectating world press, he announces an Institutional Declaration of Independence from which he discontinues immediately, leaving the world in confusion.

On October 27th the Parliament of Catalonia meets in a solemn session. The President of Parliament reads a Declaration of Independence, but casts a complimentary document from voted.

That has been passed in secret (and two blank votes) in order to content the people (who do not realize this change) and not violating Spanish laws, taking precautions against a reaction from the judiciary.

The deputies and the Government in full, accept the dismissal immediately coming to them by the Government of the State by vote of the Spanish Senate.

They accept the application of article 155 of the Spanish Constitution (intervention of the autonomy) and relieve the Catalan autonomies of their functions.

The next day, the President and a few advisers from his Government fled abroad, to Belgium. The rest are presented before the Spanish Courts convinced that they have not infringed any law, but nonetheless they are imprisoned in a preventive manner.

The Government of Spain calls for autonomous elections in Catalonia in an illegal manner, since it is not defined in the article 155. Meanwhile the Spanish Government is taking control of the Catalan autonomy.

Catalan parties agree to take part in the autonomous elections and the results are similar to previous elections, because they revalidate the majority in favor of independence (December 21, 2017).

The construction of a government became difficult.

The Catalan Parliament was still committed to the same President, now refugee in Belgium. The Spanish Government refuses to allow this and the Catalan representatives did not tend to contradict it.

In order to avoid the repetition of elections, the liberal Torra was appointed in May 2018. In June, the Spanish Government with drew Article 155 but kept the Catalan autonomy under surveillance.

The European courts, in the countries where the exiles reside, declare the exiles to be innocent of sedition.

Which is in contradicting to the Spanish judges who keep the other politicians in preventive custody.

THE CULTURAL AND POLITICAL CHARACTER OF THE CATALAN NATION

ARCHITECTURE

From the beginnings of the recovery of the territories from the Saracens, the construction of Romanesque churches, hermitages and monasteries begun.

This replaces the former Visigoth style, a style that will be spread throughout all the Catalan lands and many countries of Europe of the time.

There are many monasteries and churches of this style.

The oldest ones are those of Sant Miquel de Cuixà dedicated in the year 879 and that of Sant Joan de les Abadesses of the year 887.

Sant Pere de Roda begins construction in the year 878, similar to Santa Maria de Ripoll in 880. Santa Cecília de Montserrat (945), Sant Benet de Bages (960), Sant Cugat del Vallès (986) and Sant Martí del Canigó (997) are declared holy.

Already of clear Gothic style we have the monastery of Santes Creus finished in the year 1341 and the cathedrals of Barcelona, built on Romanesque churches: the one of Santa Maria del Mar, built by the town between 1329 and 1383 and the one dedicated to Santa Eulàlia, patroness of the city, which began to be built in 1298 and it was not finished until 1408, with the addition of a façade of neoclassical style in 1900.

The architectural creativity of Catalans is not only a thing of the past. In the nineteenth century the architect Antoni Gaudí started a new architectural style: modernism, of which the city of Barcelona and other towns keep large works, the most spectacular of which is the Temple of La Sagrada Família which began to be built in 1882 and to this day is still not finished.

THE LANGUAGE AND THE LITERATURE

Catalan language and culture begins to be forged in the Middle Ages and can be considered a language of Oc shared with Occitania. Documents written in the 9th century Catalan language have been found.

Today, despite the distance that the political frontier gave since the thirteenth century and the process of annihilation suffered, Occitan has not disappeared at all and maintains a resemblance to Catalan that allows us to understand it.

Catalan literature has had authors like Ramon Muntaner, chronicler of the Catalan Company (the Almogàvers), the troops that conquered the Mediterranean.

Among those considered by experts as more European figures of their time: Ramon Llull and Ausiàs March. They also stand out in the medieval period Joanot Martorell, Ramon de Penyafort, Arnau de Vilanova, Francesc Eiximenis, Vicenç Ferrer and Lluís Vives.

They treated all kinds of topics: poetry, prose, medicine, theology, philosophy, jurisprudence or astronomy.

The Catalan cartographers, especially Mallorca, were the best of their time: Cresques, Vilaseca, Macià and Viladestes.

When entering the modern age (16th century) and with the appearance of the Holy Inquisition, which was very important to maintain control of thought and from what was published in Spain, it was forced to make all editions exclusively in Spanish.

This explains the sudden disappearance of Catalan literature and the appearance, at the same time, of Castilian literature.

Since the first editions disappeared (probably written in Catalan) and only the later ones (in a Spanish full of Catalanisms) are conserved, it is necessary to think of a forced translation that several authors denounced it within their possibilities.

There are well-founded reasons to deduce that Miguel de Cervantes was actually Miquel Servent and the same with regard to the majority of authors of the Spanish "Golden Age".

When the Inquisition disappeared (1833) returns Catalan literature, opening the period known as: the rebirth.

It has been shown that during these three centuries the history was also manipulated to make pass through Castilian a whole series of Catalan facts and exploits, including the main protagonists, beginning with the discovery and conquest of the lands of the New World. These historical forgeries keep their inertia today.

THE POLITICAL AND LEGAL ORGANIZATION

From the beginning, in the Middle Ages, the Catalans showed its support of the law, the pact and the negotiation as a method of coexistence.

The assemblies of Peace and Truce instituted for the first time in the county of Rosselló by Abbot Oliva (1027) with the consensus of the Counts, constituted an unprecedented civilizing precedent until then.

The Catalan Counts promoted jurisprudence with the Usatges, the first feudal code that has knowledge of it and which included part of the Roman Code and the Visigoth Law.

It was promulgated by Ramon Berenguer I in 1064 at a time when Catalan society was composed of three classes: the nobles, the peoples and the servants.

From the Assemblies of Peace and Truce and the Usatges, a very democratic system was derived for the time: The Corts (Parliament) where the three arms were represented, Military

(the nobility), Ecclesiastic (the clergy) and Popular (the representatives of cities and towns). The king had to agree to the laws with the Corts from which the right that was gathered in the Constitutions of Catalonia emanated.

In an embryonic way they began to gather in assembly since 1214.

The first Catalan Parliament (Corts) date from 1283 and were held in Barcelona.

They were a very advanced parliamentary system at an era dominated by absolutism.

The monarch had to swear the Constitutions in order to be accepted as such, and recognized being "one among peer".

The Corts were constituted (1359) in permanent organism through the Deputation of the General (common) or "Generalitat" where the three arms were represented and they had administrative, political, military and judicial functions. It was composed of three deputies (one for each Arm) that were renewed every three years and a President, who was chosen every two years by insaculation (draw) among the members of the Ecclesiastical Arm. Throughout the centuries the Catalan Constitutions were improved and adapted to the new times.

The Catalan Constitutions and the Generalitat were abolished by Philip V of Bourbon who imposed their absolute power and absolutism as of 1714.

The Catalan Empire that was built in the Mediterranean was of federal character, each territory had its Viceroy and sometimes King who was related to the house of Barcelona.

This same arrangement in viceroyship was exported to the possessions of the Americas that initially were Catalan dominions.

The Catalans were the first to legislate on nautical issues: the Consulate of the Sea (founded in 1262), which regulated trade in the Mediterranean and later in the Atlantic, from which the current nautical laws are derived.

The Catalans were expert navigators and shipbuilders, for centuries they had the dominion of the Mediterranean staying unbeatable in battle.

The expedition of (supposed) Portuguese settled in Catalonia Ferran de Magallanes, with five ships, was in fact Catalan.

He sailed from Catalan territory in 1519 and was the first expedition to get around the world. Magallanes died in duel with a Tagalo leader in the Pacific Islands and was Joan Canós who managed to complete the trip (1522) with the only surviving ship and only 17 crewmembers left.

The last great victory of the Catalan navy went to Lepanto (1571) against the Turks, in alliance with the other great naval and commercial power of the time: Venice.

The wealth was based on agriculture (cereals, orchard, fruit, vineyards and olive groves), livestock, fishing and the forge industry, textile, milling, groceries, construction (mural and naval) and internal and external trade.

From the 18th century Catalans were added, adapted and integrated into the new times of the industrial revolution and the new ideas of contemporary society.

They have continued to give illustrious names to science and the arts like Josep Trueta, Pau Casals, Salvador Dalí and Joan Miró, among others.

Pablo Picasso himself, despite not being born in Catalonia, it was there where he formed.

Today they, Catalonia continue to constitute the first industrial and commercial power of Spain despite the fiscal plundering that they have suffered uninterruptedly during the last three centuries by the occupying State.