

THE VI INTERNATIONAL CATALONIA PRIZE

THE PANEL OF JUDGES OF THE INTERNATIONAL CATALONIA PRIZE, MADE UP OF THE MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL OF THE CATALAN INSTITUTE FOR MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES, MEETING AT THE PALAU DE LA GENERALITAT IN BARCELONA, AGREED BY ABSOLUTE MAJORITY TO AWARD THE VI INTERNATIONAL CATALONIA PRIZE TO

EDGAR MORIN FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

FIRST: FOR HIS INCOMPARABLE WORK IN SOCIOLOGY, CONCEIVED AROUND THE HUMAN BEING'S ANTHROPOSOCIAL RICHNESS, IN WHICH HE BRINGS TOGETHER

EVERYTHING FROM BIOLOGY TO IMAGINATION, THROUGH SCIENTIFIC ARGUMENTS IN DEFENCE OF THE DIVERSITY OF MAN WITHIN THE UNITY OF THE SPECIES, ARRIVING AT AN ESSENTIAL ECOLOGICAL UNITY THROUGH A PROCESS AND A METHOD AT ALL TIMES RIGOROUS AND OPEN.



SECOND: BECAUSE HIS WORK AND HIS PERSONAL BACKGROUND, STRONGLY IMPREGNATED WITH THE VALUES OF FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE, HAVE BEEN A DECISIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE FORMATION OF EUROPEAN AWARENESS FROM THE POST-WAR PERIOD UNTIL TODAY.

THIRD: FOR THE CONSTANT ATTENTION

EDGAR MORIN HAS PAID TO THE MEDITERRANEAN AND TO ITS COMMUNICATIONAL NATURE, AND THE INTEREST WITH WHICH HE HAS STUDIED TWENTIETH CENTURY CATALONIA,

WHICH HE HAS DESCRIBED AS A PARADIGM OF CULTURAL AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION IN THE EUROPE OF DIVERSITY.

CATALONIA OFFERS THE TEXT OF THE SPEECH MADE BY EDGAR MORIN WHEN HE RECEIVED THE PRIZE ON 19 MAY 1994.



BIZERTA, TUNISIA, 1989

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Your majesties, Mr. President, members of the jury, ladies and gentlemen, I cordially say thank you.

Like the word love, the word thank is a term that has been trivialized, that only recovers its full intensity when it comes from the bottom of the heart. I thank everyone who has conceded me their vote: I thank the Catalan Institute of Mediterranean studies to whom I owe a great honour I hope to be worthy of; I thank the friends, known and unknown, present here; I thank President Pujol, who has known and knows how to express and fulfill Catalonia's will to be and who already knows the friendship and admiration I feel for him, and finally, I thank His Majesty the King, to whom Spain owes the restoration of democracy and the recognition of her diversity, and I am profoundly aware of the distinction his presence here today represents.

This prize awarded to me by the Generalitat de Catalunya through the Catalan Institute of Mediterranean Studies

goes to a Mediterranean, whose identity is in this way ennobled.

If my genes and my chromosomes could speak, they would tell you of a Mediterranean odyssey starting more or less like Ulysses's, but a little farther south, in the Asian Mediterranean, today's Middle East. They would speak to you of their travels through the Roman Empire, their arrival in the Iberian Peninsula and Provence; they would describe roots put out over more than a thousand years and seven centuries in a plural Spain made up of several kingdoms and three religions which some say lasts until 1492 and others until the seventeenth century. My genes and my chromosomes would describe to you how my convert ancestors were for two centuries subjected to the baptism of the Catholic Church; and then they would tell of their "re-Judaized" stay in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, in Leghorn, until the end of the eighteenth century, when, driven by the powerful currents of Western economic expansion, they reached the great city of Thessaloniki,

in the Ottoman Empire, peopled largely by Sephardim who spoke the ancient Castilian from before the "j"; they would go on to describe the return to the West at the beginning of this century until they finally settled down in France.

My genes would tell you that all these successive Mediterranean identities are symbiotically united in me, and that during this millenarian odyssey, the Mediterranean has become a deeply felt motherland. My taste buds are Mediterranean and cry out for olive oil, revel in grilled aubergines and pimentos, and crave for tapas or *mezés*. My ears adore flamenco and Oriental chants. And in my soul there is something that puts me in filial resonance with its sky, its sea, its islands, its coasts, its arid wastes and its fertility...

My genes would also reveal to you the typically Iberian experience of the "marrà". Contrary to what many people believe, the "marrà" was not just a Jew hiding behind a Christian mask, but someone who experienced, in a single



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spirit and a single soul, the reunion of two antagonistic religions. This antagonism either produces the dissolution of the formal side that both religions have to them and thereby triggers off a prodigious mystical combustion, as in the case of Teresa de Avila; or it dilutes both religions and opens the way to doubt and general questioning, as in the case of Montaigne, also a descendent of converts. Or else the transcendent God disintegrates and it is nature that becomes divine in becoming self-creating, as in the case of Spinoza. And in my case as well, because I am a mystic in my own way, of course, I am rational, I am sceptical, and I would not have been so without Sepharad, that is without the Spains in their plurality.

My genes have not spoken to me of Barcelona, but my character is marked by this city. I was eighteen years old in January 1939, when I was shocked to hear of the fall of Barcelona. In my book *Autocritique*, I wrote: "I cried as I looked at the enormous headlines of *Paris Soir*, and hid my face behind the

newspaper in the room where my parents listened to the accordions of Radio Ile de France, not knowing that at the same moment my classmate Jacques Francis Rolland and hundreds like him were leaving their childhood behind them and entering adolescence mourning, all together and alone, the end of hope, and that all the other hopes that were later to arise would be built on those ruins" (p.21).

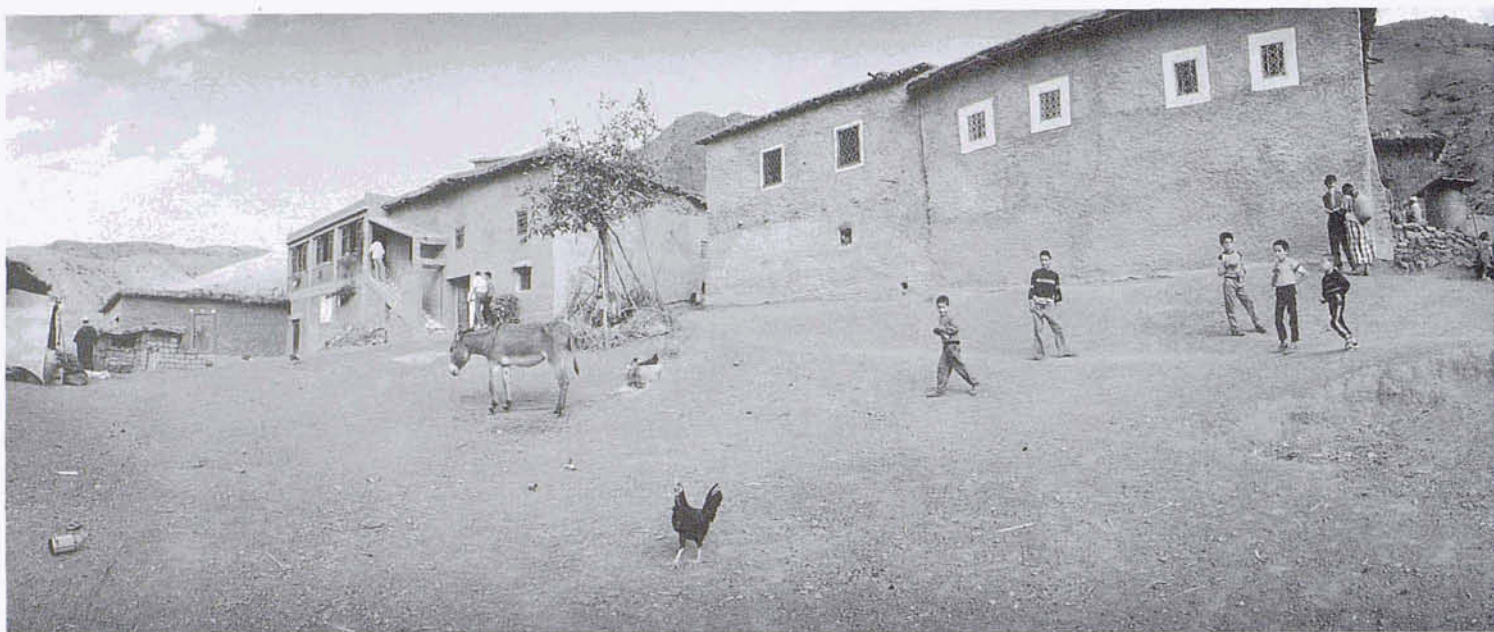
I had not idealized Republican Spain, because I knew of its internal conflicts, the devastation of Barcelona by the sporadic civil war within the larger Civil War, causing, especially, the assassination of Andreu Nin at the hands of the Soviet secret services of General Orlov. But I had a vague feeling that this disaster was the start of an even more terrible historic disaster, and I sensed, like so many others, that the fall of Barcelona was the prelude to other falls: for one, the fall of France just a few years later, and subsequently the fall of Europe...

When I discovered Barcelona, after the

war, I felt what a German writer, writing about Barcelona, called an amorous intoxication. And I love the Barcelona of today more than ever, a city of hope, a city of peace, an open city, rich in Catalan culture, rich in Spanish culture and in the cultures of the Iberian immigrants who have become Catalanized here. It's a city which, at the same time as it feeds off its past, looks forward to a future of Iberian, European and Mediterranean partnership.

But in the same way that in 1939 I saw the fall of Barcelona as the most sinister of warnings for Europe, in the past year I have been equally violently shocked and seen the same ominous messages in the breakup of the multiethnic wealth of Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the siege of Sarajevo.

Wasn't Bosnia and Herzegovina itself the forerunner of the Europe we wished for? Wasn't it at once laic and multireligious? This assassination of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a serious blow to the idea of Europe and the possibility of Europe.



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We are seeing the return of an evil we thought we had banished in creating the European Community. It is true that the national state has fulfilled a fertile civilizing role in European history, but it has carried within it an all-too-often realised potential for cleansing.

National cleansing was at first religious. There is Spain in 1492, then the triumph of the principle of *cuius regio eius religio*, the expulsion of the Catholics from England, the expulsion of the Protestants from France following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes and everywhere a little bit the expulsion or ghettoization of the Jews.

In the twentieth century, cleansing has become racial and ethnic. The wars between Greece and Turkey led to the mass displacement of Greeks from Asia Minor to Macedonia, of Turks from Macedonia to Turkey, and a few years later Hitler wanted to cleanse Germany of Jews, gypsies and the mentally ill. The end of the war meant the expulsion of the Germans from Silesia and the Sudetenland and of the Poles from Ukraine.

Today, in former Yugoslavia, in Europe, in the Mediterranean, conflicts everywhere take on an atrocious aspect of ethnic and religious segregation.

The only cure for closed concepts of race and nation is the partnership principle. The fate of Europe lies in a choice between partnership and barbarism. And it is not only the fate of Europe, it is that of the Mediterranean.

The Mediterranean! A notion too evident not to be mysterious!

A sea that carries so many diversities and so much unity!

The sea of extreme fertilities and extreme aridities!

A sea whose centre is formed by its circumference!

A sea at once of antagonism and complementarity: especially the conflictive complementarity of moderation and immoderation!

The cradle of all cultures of progress, exchange and openness.

The womb of the most sacred spirit and of the most profane!

The womb of polytheist religions and of monotheist religions!

The womb of the cults of mystery that promise resurrection after death and of the wisdom that demands acceptance of the nothingness of death!

The womb of philosophy, of theosophy, of gastrosophy and of enosophy!

The womb of rationality, of laicality and of humanist culture!

The womb of the rebirth and the modernity of the European spirit!

A sea for the communication of ideas and the convergence of the knowledge Aristotle managed to take from Baghdad to Fez before bringing it to the Sorbonne in Paris!

A tri-continental sea of fertile encounters and of tragic breaks between East and West, South and North.

The sea that was the World and which for we Mediterraneans lives on as *our* world.

Our Mediterranean has shrunk and has become a lake of the planetary age, bathing the southern shores of a Europe reduced to the size of Switzerland beside the enormous continental masses bordering the Pacific, the new centre of gravity of the world. This Mediterra-



ALEXANDRIA

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nean which ought, then, to enjoy the peace of a lake, the sweetness of a lake, is once more becoming a place of storms. This margined Mediterranean is once more one of the planet's most important seismic zones.

A Warning

I make this warning because Europe tends to leave the Mediterranean to one side at the very moment when the problems and dangers are on the increase. The processes of dislocation, degradation and isolation that are taking place on a world scale particularly affect the Mediterranean. What is more, the sea of communication becomes the sea of segregation, the sea of crossbreeding becomes the sea of religious, ethnic and national cleansing.

The great cosmopolitan cities, true "world cities", the melting-pots of Mediterranean culture, have one by one faded into monochromy: Thessaloniki, Istanbul, Alexandria, Beirut. Sarajevo is in its death throes.

After 1989, Western Europe, turning to

the newly opened East, left to one side the fundamental problems of the Mediterranean which are of such vital concern to it. The European economy has turned to the potential markets of the East, glimpsing in the distance the enormous Chinese market. And the Mediterranean has been gradually forgotten. The European powers have proved impotent in the face of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in the face of the tragedy of the former Yugoslavia, and look on in bewilderment at the tragedy of Algeria.

The countries of Southern Europe, especially the Latin Arc, have failed to draw up a common conception for a Mediterranean policy. Open-minded Europe is drifting back into being the Europe of rejection: just as the process of integration of Islam in Europe had begun --a posthumous process in Spain, reintegrating its Muslim past into its identity, modern processes in France and Germany, with the North African and Turkish immigrants--, suddenly the old European devil reappears: refuse, exclude Islam. The Serbian offensive in

Bosnia is no accident, it is the continuation of a reconquest.

We have allowed Bosnia and Herzegovina's varied, multiethnic nature to be destroyed, and now that the country is crippled and no more than a Muslim outpost, the fear arises of an Islamic state. Everywhere, the necessary interlocutor is increasingly seen as a potential adversary and this is repeated in the four corners of the Mediterranean (North-South and East-West). The Mediterranean is fading as a common denominator.

What is more, the great seismic line starting in the Caucasus, in Armenia/Azerbaijan, and which over the last fifty years has devastated the Middle East, has extended West towards the Mediterranean, has ravaged Bosnia and Herzegovina and is destroying Algeria. Along this line the antagonisms between East/West, North/South, Rich/Poor, Age/Youth, Laicality/Religion, Islam/Christianity/Judaism are stirred up and become lethal. Today we can hope, without any certainty, for a gradual pacification of the Middle East, especially



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thanks to Palestine's accession to national independence, but the geohistoric black hole is still there and now two more have been created in Bosnia and Algeria.

In Algeria we are witnessing the disastrous consequences not only of the FIS vote, but also of the negation of this vote, and everything points towards an implosion. What will happen in Algeria? What formidable geopolitical upheaval is going to take place? Are we heading towards a new closure of the Mediterranean? Towards chaos?

In these tragic conditions, the worst enemies are the only ones that are helping each other: in the same way that in Italy black terrorism and red terrorism used the same methods for the common objective of destroying democracy, in Israel/Palestine it is the Israeli and Arab fanatics who are the most ardent partners in sabotaging peace, and in the same way, the horrors of assassinations and the horrors of repression are working together to prevent any kind of democratic entente. All over the world, rival hatreds have a common

enemy: concord, reconciliation, compassion, forgiveness.

Can we save the Mediterranean? Can we restore, or rather, develop its communicative function? Can we return to that sea of exchanges and encounters, that melting-pot and brew of cultures, that machine for manufacturing civilization?

There are economic solutions, but exclusively economic solutions are never enough and sometimes create problems. The IMF obliges states to obey its demands so as to obtain credits, but also to disobey them so as to avoid political and social confrontations.

Development is essential, but so is a thorough reconsideration and transformation of our concept of development, which is underdeveloped. So it is not just a question of implanting an industrial economy, but also of reinventing an economy of coexistence.

Today, the countless retired people who travel to the Mediterranean coasts are looking for more than just sunshine and good weather; they are looking for the joys of life, for the pleasures and the art

of living. The Mediterranean art of living is extroverted, with its town square, its stroll, its *corso*, which is also an art of communication. There is our gastronomy which holds out the olive and the olive branch to everyone. The continentals who come on holiday or for longer periods in the still unspoiled spots are looking for an antidote to mechanization, timekeeping, alienation, haste. In our cultures we have resources for resisting standardization and uniformity. Our countryside, our towns, our monuments and our architecture of the past are not just things of beauty, they give off waves that penetrate us, distilling juices that make us convivial and instilling intangible truths that become our truths. And isn't it our mission to propagate this art of living following in the wake of our pizzas, our cous-cous, our tarama, our *tapas* and our wines?

But the defence and the illustration of a quality of life call for resistance to the barbarous side of uncontrolled technological development, to the greed that damages relations of mutual aid, to the proliferation of concrete and as-



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phalt that has already disfigured so much of our coastline...

They also call for a policy of regeneration of the Mediterranean which obviously involves decontaminating and repopulating the water. Sporadic steps have been taken in this direction, but it is something which should be systematic and common. The policy we need is one which as far as possible and wherever possible would mean a return to farming activities and the development of quality agriculture, something which can already be seen in the viticulture of many countries thanks to progress in the selection of vines, in wine-making processes, in the use of organic ferments. Finally, it seems that thanks to genetic engineering we shall soon find a way of growing plants that will absorb nitrogen from the air and reintroduce it into the earth, thereby making infertile soils fertile.

In short, it is not just the defence of the quality of life, but the defence of life itself which calls for an emigration policy, which will only be possible if we are capable of replacing demographic

fear and ethnic fear --today, unfortunately, too closely tied--with the resurrection of the noble spirit of hospitality, feelings of neighbourliness, respect for others, a love of diversity.

But before anything else, we must mobilize against the great seismic rift that has invaded the Mediterranean. We must stop looking on Islam and Arabism as monoliths or as an aggression. We must take into account all the vexations, the refusals, all the unfair double-dealing, all the deceptions...

We must be partners, we must unite, we must once more give priority to everything we have in common, restore the common identity in and under diversity, and find the identity of the citizen of the Mediterranean within our many identities, because all of us have many identities and our different identities must be interwoven in a spiral rather than rejecting each other.

There is no profound fraternity without maternity: we must revitalize our mother sea.

There is a simplistic, exaggeratedly euphoric myth concerning the Mediter-

ranean, which ignores the fact that so many dislocations, destructions and intolerances come from the Mediterranean itself. But we need a rich myth to express our aspiration to the fulfillment of our greatest possibilities.

Ah! We need to be understanding, very understanding. What is understanding? What is it that makes it different from and complementary to explanation? It is what allows us, human subjects, to see others as subjects in their own image, as *alter egos*, and understand their feelings and their reactions from within. Understanding others is an essential requirement of our time.

But this also involves a profound moral regeneration, a profound moral change: we must with all our heart desire concord, reconciliation, compassion, forgiveness.

And I shall end my words with every Mediterranean's opening greeting: peace be with you.

Peace be with us.

Que la pau sigui amb vosaltres.

Que la pau sigui amb nosaltres. ■