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Catalanism and the Popular Classes throughout History **Josep Termes**

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CATALANISM AND THE POPULAR CLASSES THROUGHOUT HISTORY

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Catalanism is a trend of opinions and actions dating from the 19th C., that participated intensively in the political life of the present century. It is not a monolithic, univocal movement but, on the contrary, one of its characteristics most pronounced is its variety of tendencies. It is not reducible to one social class, one ideology or one political program. We could compare it to a powerful river, in which its waters come from different fountains, or better yet to a rainbow, that forms one unity but having many different colors. Catalanism has, if no more, a defining element in common with the rest: the fight in defense of the personality of Catalonia, the love for the language and for its own culture, that in some way have to crystallize into a self-government. It is also a movement that demands or calls for the democratic reform of the Spanish state, because its vision of the different Spains is antagonistic with centralism (be it monarchist or republic) because in the broadest meaning, Catalanism is federalist (not only the one that proceeds from the traditionalist «foralisme», but also the one that has its origins in the populist republicanism). Catalanism, including the most radical, has always had in mind that the destruction of the Unitarian Spain could make a hispanic organization of the free people possible. So, in the essence of Catalanism lives the idea of the plurinationality of Spain. The participation in the construction of a Spanish state respectful to that plurinationality is, to my understanding, a necessary condition but not sufficient in defining Catalanism: the reform of the state is a subsidiary part; the defense of its own personality is an essential element.

At the present moment there coexists two great interpretations of the Catalanist phenomenon, that of Rovira i Virgili and

the other of J. Maurín. Both of them have had great diffusion among the cultured Catalan and Spanish opinions, although in different ways: the first systematization of Rovira appears summarized in the work of J. Pabón concerning Francesc Cambó, and starting from there it is collected by the Spanish historians; the second work, that of Maurín (in fact of little originality as it is not more than a synthesis of Lenin and Stalin), has been spread from Catalonia by constitutional law professors and political scientists. The two versions, complementary more than opposing, are remarkably old. They were coined more than 50 years ago, and thereby do not gather together the new and even more ambitious historiographical contributions made in the social, historical, political, cultural, economical fields, and from the mentalities, that, as we know, have grown especially in the last twenty years. This second interpretation has, in addition, the great defect, of not only being in the background a pure political strategical vision of Catalanism (therefore conjuntural and sensitive at being fictitiously adequate in the electoral circumstances), but, and most particularly, of basing itself in the doctrines and programs of the parties in the official documents, and not in social realities of the even more complex everyday life. It is based, then, on the doctrine and it vanishes and scatters the truth: analyzes constitutional texts and ignores the civil society. In spite of being by definition, Marxist, is much more formalistic than the historic neopositivism.

THE ORGANIZATION OF CATALANISM

In my opinion, this distinct reality that is the national Catalan event passes through four historical moments. In the first, from the end of the last third of the 18th C. and during the 19th C. until the failure of the federal populist intent of 1868-1873, Catalonia experiences a notable industrial transformation that economically and socially differentiates it from Spain at the same

time that its popular classes are defining an anticentralist Catalan particularism (Carlist or Federalist), which is not incompatible with a hispanic projection. Roughly speaking, romanticism and populism are two crystallizations of this particularism, one cultural, the other popular. The historical research appears, the discovery of the historical past, as a foundation for the Catalonian rights. In a second phase, between the Restoration of 1875 and the crisis of the Spanish state of 1898, the increase in the Catalan industrialization makes Barcelona the capital and motor of Catalonia, which becomes a rival to Madrid the political capital, and establishes a cultural peninsular dualism between Madrid and Barcelona (and a triangular Iberian, if we include Lisbon, capital of Portugal). Barcelona, on the other hand, connects with Paris, which is aside from and avoiding Madrid. The organic intellectuals of the nation create the doctrine and the doctrinal nationalism appears (Catalonia, as a nation, has the right to govern itself); the «apolitical politization» springs forth. It is necessary to group itself together socially but the institutional frame of the Restoration and the decadent and despotic reality of Spain don't make (a Parliamentary political corruption, electoralist and empty) possible. Their objective is to create centers and to agree to public institutions. Catalanism can penetrate the core of the cultural working aristocracy. Modernism is symbol of this change. In a third stage, born in the 1898 crisis and closed by the fall of the monarchy in 1931, it joins together the parties, from the right to the left, on the preceding doctrinal base of the former nationalism institutional doctrinaire. It is necessary, however, to have concrete politics (electoral and parliament ary) and for this reason these doctrines are adequate: thus appears the political regionalism. The Catalan parties are born, breaking away from the «19th C. Sucursalisme». From now on to be in politics in Catalonia, it is necessary to adapt oneself to his fact. Catalonia creates it political scene and chooses, besides Madrid, its own representatives. The collapse of the state of the Restoration drives a sector of the Catalan industrial and commercial bourgeoisie towards the electoral

and parliamentary political action. If in the previous stage the amateur set the tone, now is the moment of the lawyers. And the «noucentisme» (1900's) is a way of being in politics and organizing the country. A popular separatism appears embryonic, a minority around the European War. Wilson, Ireland and Czechoslovakia are the points of reference.

In a fourth phase, during the years of the Second Republic and the Civil War, the previous project culminates with the appearance of the working-class parties that have taken over the Catalan question. Lenin and the law of self-determination of the people become popular. Now, all the social groups, all the doctrines are present in the catalan political range «involved» in the national fight: from the Catholic Church sectors to the radical working class movement, from the learned scholars to the agitators in the local tavern. It is not only in high class politics: the sports, arts, entertainment, science, all of organized society oozes out the willpower of self-government, presence of particularism. The evolution beginning in the 18th C. culminates in the thirties of the 20th C. The Civil War unhinges everything, annulling in great part everything that has been done. It will be necessary to begin it again.

THE RENAISSANCE

We return now to the four great historical periods in which Catalanism gathers strength in order to expand in some aspects. In the first stage we could say that the key word is Renaissance. Seen, though not as a simple return to the use of the written language, but as a revolutionary profound transformation, of the Catalan society that since the manufacture of the printed calicos culminates in an industrialization that has textile as its foundation, and that it gives room to an improvement in the technical and scientific teachings, with the renovation of medicine, the navigational training, the appearance of technical professions. The

renovation of the guilds, the non-existence of the agrarians and the noble Economic Societies of Friends of the Country in Catalonia, the acts of the great erudites like Caresmar and Capmany, the development of a modern industrial economic thought would be a sign of this renaissance. The Catalan language survives not only as a colloquial instrument but also written in religious books, in romances, in the papers of the businesses, in the legal records; Catalan language (dictionaries). Within this framework, the Industrial Revolution and the appearance of the constitutional liberalism takes place in the beginnings of the 19th C. At that time flourishes a Catalan school of philosophy and a historical school of law that falls back on the German historical romantic ideas. The Catalan literary reappears together with Romanticism. History appears as a preoccupation of the erudites and the people: a research about the past is born, that mythifies but also rediscovers an old self-government. The people receive this romantic historicism through the historical newspaper serial. The new impulse of a troubadour poetry and of the «Jocs Florals» has its counterpoint in the appearance of a fighting theater, radical, liberal, and federal republic (Robreño and Pitarra, for example), of a populist, common sign, and «defender of the Catalan that is spoken nowadays». Contrary to the inevitable archaisms of the «joc-floralesca» school. The debate among these two trends will have its synthesis established at the end of this century. The press is Catalanized, but, only for the moment, in certain areas: calendars, almanacs, satirical and literary magazines. Since the thirties of the last century, protest movements take place, so much in the countryside, where the Carlist parties are stirring up, as in the city, where the lower classes cause uproars and brawls. Bot express, with different doctrinal contents — reactionary or progressive — a rebuff of the centralization of the Spanish state, that has been produced or intensified by the liberal «censitaria» middle-class revolution. In fact the transformation of the state noted during the reign of Ferran VII and realized during the Monarchy of Isabel II supposes centralization, the provincial quartering of Catalonia

(and naturally the other old Provinces) and the birth of the civil governors, the creation of the permanent obligatory army, the appearance of the Guardia Civil, the reiteration of the prohibition of the usage and teaching of the languages that are not Castilian. And in this modification of the Spanish state, the Catalan bourgeoisie played a very weak role (in spite of being the leader of the leader of the Industrial Revolution) and a very ambiguous one: If its protectionist economic politics search for the creation of a «national market» which is Spanish, not for this reason does it stop finding a hostile reaction in Spain that already describes a danger or a «Catalan egoism», that from a backlash obliges the Catalan bourgeoisie to reaffirm itself as Spanish, but also to look for the support of aggravated Catalonia by suspicion and the unjust ill will.

Carlism, strong in the Catalan mountains, is a reaction that has the support of the people in the countryside. The theme of returning to that which is old, supposes a mythification of the law codes, and that means Catalan particularism. If this is evident, in Carlism, in the War of the Matiners (1847-1849), with the restoration of the law codes made by the Carlist candidate, it is also already present in the First (1833-1840), like for example in the accusation that is made against some Carlist leaders exiled in France of being in favor of the «independence of Catalonia» or in the manifestations of the Carlist Ferrer in Friburg in 1841, demanding the «freedom of Catalonia». Along these lines, differences based in the history and the natural events. Federalists and Carlists are Catalan particularism open to a transformation not centralistic in Spain. But, both do it from a position rooted in what is distinctive. The political propaganda of these movements abundantly uses the Catalan: From the well known «La Campana», of Abdó Terrades (1842), and the songs of the «Jamància» and the «Paella»; both from 1843, it is necessary to add to this the romances of the blind (the oral tradition of narratives told or sung by blind men) of which I have collected, 21 in Catalan, and 4 in Castilian referring to the life of the worker and the peasant farmer, and 21 in Ca-

talan and 24 in Castilian of political propaganda which appeared in the years 1868-1873.

The six years from 1868-1873 consisted of a manifestation of the popular alternative against the centralist and bourgeois Spanish state. The failure of this project reveals the immaturity of the movement of the lower classes, as well as a distinct introduction into Spain: What here is the majority, dominant, there, is the weak minority.

MODERNISM

This second stage starts with the popular defeat of 1873 and finishes with the big crisis of the Spanish State in 1898, which also means the end of the official Hispanism and the moment of appearance of a critical, dying conscience, which wants to explain to itself the reasons for the historical defeat of Spain and the Spanish state. A central element of this period is the desintegration of the Spanish proposal of Catalan federalism: Valentí Almirall isolates himself in Catalan particularism, disillusioned by the possibility of a federal revolution in Spain. However, the disenchantment is widespread, and Almirall is only a sign of it. It is actually Catalan federalism as a whole which is desintegrating. The only thing that remains, as the party disappears, is the doctrinal substract, reduced to some minority circles.

The successive Carlist's defeats lead also to a growing part of the Catalan Church to look for a feasible way out. At that time, it gets nearer to the constitutional monarchy, in a pragmatic way, abandoning on one side reactionism, while the section most literate, influenced by what's called «The Circle of Vic», evolves from «foralisme» to regionalism. Montserrat, Mossèn Cinto Verdaguer, Torras i Bages, are symbolic names of a new trend which is also going to have a very important social projection in the vertebration of the Catholic Catalanism.

The greatest doctrinal creations (Almirall, Torras i Bages,

Mañé) made in the eighties and nineties, in a short lapse of time, must not hide from us the idea that trend is much larger than the format given by these few important names: poets, erudites, doctors, lawyers, country or well known clergymen, all of them write about the past and the present, and by doing this they all articulate the idea of Catalonia as a nation. There are plenty of people like Roca i Farreras and Sebastià Farners. Catalonia, only a simple country before, is now a country and a nation. Spain is the artificial state. Modernism as a pluridisciplinary trend abridges the vitalist «élan» of nationalism. It is here and now when the Catalan doctrinal nationalism is going to be created. In this construction enters Guimerà i Narcís Oller, as well as Rusiñol, Casas Carbó, Massó i Torrents, Pompeu Fabra, Font i Sagué, Duràn i Bas, Permanyer, Puig i Cadafalch, Domènech i Muntaner, Gaudí, Aulès-tia i Pijoan, Sempere i Miquel. There is also the young radical writers (Jaume Brossa and Pere Coromines) who connect with the world of the anarchist typographers (the Canivells, Llinas i Pujals, Cortiella) that write literature in Catalan and in their own Catalanist way. Modernism includes everyone.

It is the love of the erudites and writers (lletraferits) that creates the concept of a country, with a national ideality, that binds them together (despite religious and political differences) in a common task. And this is clearly shown in a number of Catalanist institutions or entities where they collaborate, in spite of the differences mentioned above. That is to say, a double level is established: the political one, where the differences are always present, and the patriotic, where all of them work together led by the idea of a country. One level does not interfere with the other, because they voluntarily keep them separated, making them compatible.

The literature, «excursionism», the new sport, the struggle against the new Civil Code or in favor of protectionism, the Scientific Academies, the «ateneus», are all fields of patriotic action and neutral ground of a collaboration of men with different political ideas. This change is reflected in the press: newspap-

ers, political pamphlets, informative and artistic magazines appear in Catalan, (and the Catholic newspapers are Catalanized, much faster in regions than the Republican ones). The great satirical Catalan press is brightly expanding. «L'Esquella», «La Campana» enjoy the support of the people of the taverns and the public barbershops. Catalan books are edited regularly, all of them done by specific and firmly established publishing houses.

Catalanism begins the project for the occupation of institutions, which starts in the Barcelona Ateneu in 1895, and never stops. Barcelona is the engine of the Catalanist awakening but the countryside regions provide abundant culture of the same sign. Barcelona is the center which radiates the other Catalan cities; they assimilate and create on their own, giving back activities to Barcelona. This is a balanced network in which Barcelona's intelligence is not excessive. Social groups are growing all over Catalonia, as for instance the Catalanist Union in 1892, in which there are more intellectual than bourgeoisie members. At the same time, the first projects of the rules of selfgovernment appear for Catalonia, which are more successful than the Federal projects of 1868-73, in which the Catalan government was just a part of the Spanish whole. The apolitical, the anti-parliamentary attitude of the Union, branded too elementary as socially conservative, is much more complex: first, it allowed the concept of country in spite of the several political differences among the Catalan minority (which was already, a majority among the writers), and second, because the Parliament that they faced in reality, not in the doctrine, is the unproductive ghostly and irrelevant Parliament of Restoration (the critics of the Spanish men of 1898 against it will not be more tolerant than those of the Catalanists, for their uselessness and lack of representativity). Before 1898 and the appearance in 1901 of the Regionalist League, many different Catalanists have created a corpus of nationalist doctrine, and have derived this from the literature to the Arts, to Science, Sports, to every field of social activity; they have recovered and idea of the past Catalan self-government and a project of the future, where it

must come back to its being itself and to its governing itself as it wishes. The struggle for sovereignty is already the main idea of the Catalanist discourse.

LA MANCOMUNITAT (MANCOMMUNITY)

The third stage begins with the big crisis of the Spanish state in 1898, and with the birth of the regionalist League in 1901, and finishes with the proclamation of the Republic in 1931. It is the most well-known period. But the relative hegemony of the League, as well as its burgeoise origins, have made it lose sight a little of the group of political forces, and they have also softened the weight of left wing alternatives to the League. Therefore we have seen, and I think that I am not mistaken, that neither Catalanism is born in 1901, nor Prat de la Riba invents nationalism in 1906, nor the «decimonònic» social movements are apolitical nor absent, nor far away from the national struggle.

The League, pragmatic and indefinite when discussing its governmental manners, imposes a regionalist policy in Catalonia, a type of arranged Catalanism, sustained by the Catalan bourgeoisie, but not by all Catalan bourgeoisie. Apart from the League, a Catalan left wing appears, which during all this period is trying anavailingly to express an alternative, one of the conditions of which is that it must be accepted by the workers. Rovira i Virgili, Alomar, Carner and Coromines are the men involved in this project. They are not only professional politicians (none of them would have accepted this label, all claiming themselves as being part of the literature, journalism or the arts), neither can they overcome the anarquist-sindicalist apoliticism, nor the radical republicanism, in order to carry away the working class masses capitalized by them.

The young lawyers who created the League, tired of criticizing and delighting from being in politics and being powerful (also, among other things, for organizing Catalonia), come from

the nationalistic trends of the end of the 19th century. The crisis of the State of Restoration had given them a waited favorable moment and at the same time one major receptability of the bourgeoisie giving them both a possibility and a platform for the action.

Facing them, the left wing Catalan men saw themselves incapable of organizing a new kind of party — as the League did — or a popular movement — a path that had been pushed forward by Lerroux. Their political proposals were adequate and reasonable enough and once and for all would be the same ones that would lead them or their heirs to succeed in 1931 with the republican left wing of Catalonia, mixing Catalanism, Republicanism and socialized politics; trying to work together with the Spanish left wing, but keeping their organic independence as a Catalan based party. It is not strange that often people say that the League and the left wing had the same theoretical basis in Catalonia, for both of them come from the «decimononic» nationalism and coincide with slight differences with the same political, pragmatism regionalism. What makes a difference between them is the call to a different public, that in the case of the Catalan republican left wing includes specifically the world of the laborers. However, to create this policy, there were a lack of programs, charts and technicians able to achieve the popular mobilization. But they do not differ from each other in the doctrinal aspect, in the idea of Catalonia as a nation. Both of them, as I have said, give more importance in subjecting it to regionalistic tactics.

The work of the «Mancomunitat» allows the League to feel sure about itself, and the cultural policy based on «noucentisme» — with all the implications of the hard work of the administration and the myth of the work well done — does not do anything more than help intellectuals and technicians work together under the direction of the project of the League. «Noucentisme», apart from Modernism, allows the securing and diversifying of the work of high culture, making it European, specialized and technical.

Under the impact of the European War, Catalonia changes. Catalan left-wing groups learn from the German Socialdemocracy and the British Laborism (specially from the Fabians), and at a lesser degree, from the Austro-marxism. Under this influence, the Catalanian-Socialist Union is born in 1923, but the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, established months later, prevents it from acting until the years of the Republic. The marxist left wing begins to establish some theoretical corpus about the nation through socialist Andreu Nin, Recasens i Mercadé, Campalans, Serra i Moret. Some anarchists, like Urales, are writing openly about the rights of Catalonia. Separatist cores are also appearing with greater force since 1914. They are the heirs of the Catalanist Union and of Martí i Julià, but their numbers are limited and disperse. They admire and follow the example of Cuban Patriots of 1895-1898, and of Ireland. They are young military boys, mainly students and workers. Its foundation, however, is the commerce clerks. These, joined by the thousands in the C.A.D.C.I.,¹ created in 1903, develop a great social and patriotic task: its autonomist Propaganda Section, Education Section and Sports Section, which help workers to get nearer to radical Catalanism.

THE REPUBLIC

In a fourth and last stage, that of the Republic and the war, during the years of 1931-1936, the Catalan left wing finally gets social hegemony. Beside this populism, about which I will not expand myself as it is widely known, appears a radical working class, minority but important; and also a moderate democratic socialism develops, the one of U.S.C.,² which is the heir of the struggle of the first third of the century, and which collaborates and go-

¹ «Centre Autonomista de Dependents del Comerç i de la Indústria» (Autonomist Center of Workers in Commerce and Industry).

² «Unió Socialista de Catalunya» (Socialist Union of Catalonia).

verns with the E.R.C.,³ in the Generalitat as well as in the Councils. The new thing of the period is, in my opinion, the incorporation of the working class into Catalanism, culminating with a game of social classes that have been progressively adapting to political particularism, after the literate minorities and the cultural avantgardes did the same. Since the dictatorship crisis, working-class literature about Catalanism is very abundant and varied. We shall also mention J. Arquer, J. Maurin, J. Comorera, P. Foix. Lenin and Stalin are translated and copied.

Radical and moderate workerism develop the doctrine of the right for self-government of the people; they create the word «nationalitarian» in order to prevent the use of «nationalism», which led to confusion after Mussolini and Hitler gained power; they also fight for Catalan normalization at every level of social life. The B.O.C.⁴ is for the Catalan Republic, and the U.S.C. stands by it. These two groups, as well as the Catalan Communist Party and the Catalan Proletarian Party, stand for a Catalonian Statute which is plebiscited by the Catalan people, and that must be accepted by Spanish Courts, to which they deny the right to alter it. All of these define Catalonia as a nationality and defend it, or a Catalan state which may become a federation or a federal republic (like U.S.C. and C.N.T.⁵ demand). They draw, finally, a working-class doctrine about the national question that is made — along with all the nuance that is possible — since then on a political class, an open project for the Catalan people, including necessarily a defense of the national rights, an improvement and an investigation of one's own identity.⁶

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³ «Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya» (Republican Left of Catalonia).

⁴ «Bloc Obrer i Camperol» (Union of Workers and Peasants)..

⁵ «Confederación Nacional del Trabajo» (National Confederation of Labor).

⁶ This article has been published before in Catalan, with some changes, in A. Bastardas & J. Solé, editors, *Sociolingüística i llengua catalana*, Barcelona: Editorial Empúries, 1988, 187-210.