

'In Spain, they like the EEC, provided there is no change of lifestyle' from Le Soir (12 June 1985)

Caption: On 12 June 1985, commenting on the signing that day in Madrid of Spain's Treaty of Accession to the European Communities, the Belgian newspaper Le Soir describes the Spanish people's attitude towards their country's entry into a united Europe.

Source: Le Soir. 12.06.1985, n° 135, 99e année. Bruxelles. "En Espagne, on aime la C.E.E. si le style de vie demeure", auteur:Alves, Jose , p. 20.

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In Spain, they like the EEC, provided there is no change of lifestyle

From our own correspondent

Madrid, 11 June.

The opinion polls leave no room for doubt: the overwhelming majority of Spaniards are optimistic about Spain's accession to the EEC, but they refuse point blank to see their lifestyle and some of their traditions affected by European integration. They are categorical about this. 'There is no question of our losing or jeopardising our national identity within the EEC.'

In other words, 'Spain is different' (as the advertising slogan for tourism under Franco went), and it intends to remain that way. Only the other day, Manuel Marin, the Spanish Junior Minister for European Affairs, was telling us that: 'Our way of life will not be tampered with, for the simple reason that it is so much more pleasant and less boring than that of our northern neighbours.'

Just ask the man in the street. He does not care, for example, that work habits and office hours in the 'developed' part of Europe might cause problems for Spain. He will continue to 'have a bite' around 11 a.m., lunch at 2 p.m., try to fit in a short siesta before resuming work at 5 p.m., finishing at 8 p.m. and having dinner at 10 p.m.

'The Spaniard does not have the work ethic but the quality of life ethic,' says Professor José Luis Aranguren. 'Even now, with a 22 % unemployment rate, people are attached to a particular job but not to the work itself.' Another sociologist, José Castillo Castillo, says that: 'The work ethic found in northern Europe has no deep roots in Spain, which is still at an early stage of development.'

In a word, the belief that Spanish society is still archaic is not far from many people's minds. This is the case particularly of Manuel Vicent who believes that this explains the new popular frenzy for the *national fiesta* (bullfighting). Despite the international campaign, launched by the British Conservative Member of the European Parliament, Richard Cottrell, and which is calling for the European Parliament to ban the 'massacre', the *national fiesta* will still be around in Spain for some time yet.

A historic *faena*

This has been proven again with the 'San Isidro Fair' in Madrid. *Las Ventas*, with 24 bullfights on the bill, was watched by more than half a million people (an all-time record), who witnessed the 'noble death' of 194 bulls. The event was covered by TVE (sometimes live), and all the newspapers dedicated several pages to it every day, to such an extent that unemployment and terrorism seemed to take second place in the news.

There was even group hysteria last Sunday with the black and white or colour photograph of the 'matador' Antonete splashed over the front pages of *El País*, *Diario 16*, *Ya*, *ABC* and other newspapers. On Saturday, the hero of the day left the bullring through the 'grand entrance' carried aloft in triumph by his fans after having put two bulls to death and having been awarded three of their ears as proof of a *faena* (exploit) that was being called 'historic' and 'unforgettable'.

Professor Castillo explains that: 'With the arrival of European integration, which might seem to be somewhat of a threat to our national identity, Spaniards are clinging with renewed passion to their most significant traditions. 'It is a return to our roots, which might seem anachronistic but is, in fact, very selective in the context of the "post-modernism" that marks cultural life in Madrid today.'

Hence also the new fashion for cultural *tertulias* which were dying out. This involves groups of friends who meet regularly in a bar to discuss specific themes. Nightlife is taking on a new dynamism (especially in summer on the terraces of the Café Gijón or the Teide) and there is the all-out campaign to save the sacrosanct and cosy *tapas* bars, which leave a lot to be desired in terms of hygiene with their piles of dirty paper on the floor along the bar.

Fresh ideas

However, we see that more and more Spaniards are rejecting these aspects of their 'lifestyle' that set them apart. Aranguren, for example, believes that the anti-bullfighting campaign has 'history on its side'.

According to him, 'Spain took shape amidst intolerance and cruelty because of the all-out defence of religious and ethical purity (against Jews and Protestants during the Inquisition and against Communists and Freemasons under Franco). There is no place for this today.'

Furthermore, the same sociologist asserts that today's young Spaniards can bring 'fresh ideas' to their European friends. Young Spaniards now have a very healthy scepticism with respect to traditional political parties and high-sounding rhetoric such as, 'die for your country'. They are more interested in pacifism and the environment, as was seen in the mass demonstrations organised during US President Reagan's visit to Spain.

In the same way, everyone emphasises how much behaviour has changed in Spain over recent years. 23 % of Spaniards already believe that marriage is 'out-dated', and 27 % favour total sexual freedom, to the extent that Spanish television is already broadcasting films such as 'The Last Tango in Paris' and 'Night Porter'. But 'machismo' has not gone away. The gypsy bullfighter, Rafael de Paula, has enjoyed greatly increased popularity since he was accused of seeking to 'avenge his honour' by masterminding the failed attempt to murder his wife's lover.

'Irrelevant!' says Professor Castillo, for whom Spain really is not any different. 'Europe just needs to learn to view Spain without the preconceived and quaint notions that are reflected in *Carmen*, which is back in fashion. This is a modern and developed industrial nation (despite the flamenco, the bulls and the cheap holidays) with a very European consumer society, since all homes have a TV and a refrigerator, 83 % have bathrooms, 52 % have cars and 51 % telephones.'

It is, at all events, clear that, for the overwhelming majority of Spaniards, EEC accession is very positive, 'even if it has come a little late'. Thus, according to a poll in *El País*, Spaniards are looking forward in particular to more relaxed relations with European countries (starting with France and Portugal), a more efficient public administration and even progress in combating the scourges of terrorism and unemployment, without forgetting, of course, the consolidation of the democratic form of government.

At the end of the day, there is only one major exception to this widespread optimism, and that is that Spaniards expect a major consumer price hike after accession to the EEC. A fellow journalist with *El País* noted, in all seriousness, that, 'This is where our little habits and our lifestyle could be seriously affected. It will clearly be much more difficult for us to go pub-crawling till two or three in the morning with the price of beer and wine at European levels.'

José Alves