

PLATFORM

MANUEL MILIÁN MESTRE

Does Islam need positive discrimination?

“If you can't beat them, join them,” runs the popular saying. Is this about to happen to us? What surprises me is the recent manoeuvring of justice minister, López Aguilar in referring to certain concessions to islamists, such as the advisability of teaching Islam in schools. His words reveal an unusual liberality when contrasted with the typical attitudes to the teaching of religion (Catholic in other words) in schools. Zapatero, meanwhile, called for, “more gym and less religion.” Can they feel so uncomfortable with what Catholics in Spain may think, believe or say? I have never thought it correct to deny anyone their rights to worship but heaven forbid Christians openly preaching in Arabia. In the Islamic world these rights are denied. Resorting to legislation is unnecessary; one merely has to observe the pronouncements of the Koran in relation to the “infidel”.

Nevertheless, our traditional democratic sense of individual freedom has opened up the door to a process of Islamicisation. Salvador Puig, director general of production, innovation and agri-food Industries of the Catalan government appeals to private initiative in facing the challenge from a European market of, “almost 35 million Muslims,” being provided with food produced according to the codes of the Halal Institute in Andalusia. In Catalonia, the Catalan Government appears well-disposed to doing whatever is called for in encouraging the integration of the Muslim community among us. There is little doubt



that our respect for other cultures will keep us from subjecting a mosque to such disagreeable action as that seen in the cathedral of Barcelona some weeks back, where the lack of respect in a sacred place was remarkable. It is something not to be forgotten when the imams reassert their rights to raise mosques here. This controversy has already been seen in the Maresme last summer and is being repeated in Seville, where the city council have provided

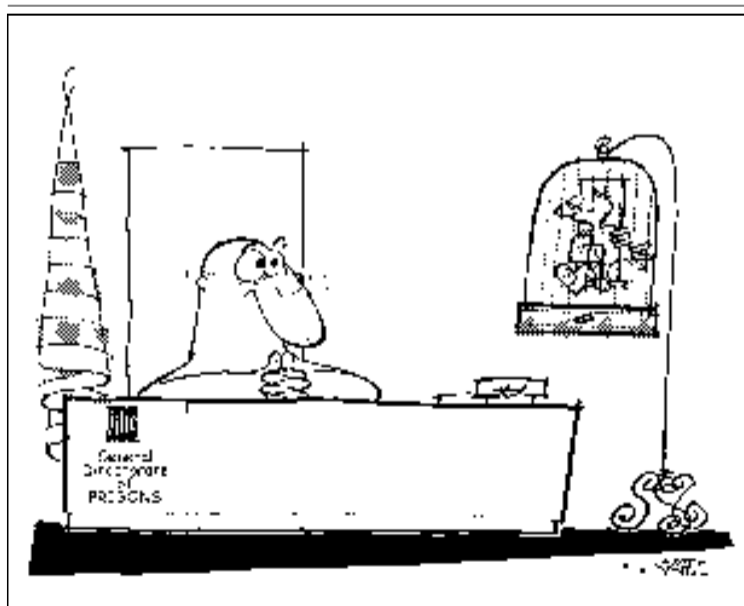
prime land of 6,000 square metres to build a mosque and cultural centre, and possibly a school of international Islamic studies. Why are Christians not allowed to do the same in Islamic lands?

Nobody seems to have realised what is really happening in Europe, Spain and Catalonia. A recent study by the academic Victor Pérez Díaz - *Muslim Immigration in Europe* warns of the negative experiences in Germa-

ny, France and other countries. The experts are surprised that it is the second generation of immigrants who show the strongest rejection of the adopted culture. It is in fact logical: they have less to be grateful for in having been born *in situ* and they suffer the impositions placed on them by their social group when adapting to the new culture. Just look at the crisis of the headscarves in French schools, for example. A recent police report published in *Le Monde* warns of signs of “community withdrawal” in 300 neighbourhoods, revealing an increasing problem of integration. The solution provided by the new law for religious teaching has provoked a group of imams in Lyon to look into the possibility of them providing teaching for Muslim girls in Catholic schools. The problem is deeper than a simple conflict with secularisation - these groups question the very values of modern Western society. In Paris, for example, I was told by Edgar Pisani, president of the Islamic Centre of Paris when we were at a Nato meeting: “It is you and your dubious morality that creates the rejection of the West by Muslim youth.”

Female teachers in our schools are beginning to experience a lack of respect from certain Muslim boys. According to Pérez Díaz's study, many Moroccan adolescents, “feel superior to them (female teachers) and they question their authority with acts of defiance.” It would not be a bad idea if Catalonia, which is so open to other cultures that settle here, began to seriously decide on either integration or positive discrimination.

THE STING BY JAP



PRESS REVIEW



Is Catalonia a region or a country? Racing car driver, Oriol Servià, makes no secret of what he thinks. On Sunday when 18 cars line up to start the Molson Indy race in Canada, Servià will be sporting his helmet emblazoned with the red and yellow stripes of the Catalan flag. Servià was 30 this week and it's not unusual for the younger generation of Catalans to wear their nationalist sympathies on their sleeves. Servià, who is sponsored by Catalan companies, has taken the debate a step further by registering

THE CHARACTER



- Name:**
▶ Oriol Servià
Team:
▶ Dale Coyne Racing
Residence:
▶ Miami, Florida
Birthday:
▶ July 13, 1974
Birthplace:
▶ Pals, Catalonia

in the Champs Car Nation's Cup as representing Catalonia.

“I never say I'm not Spanish. I'm just saying I'm Catalan. And nobody can deny that,” says Servià. In common with many of his generation the driver from Pals grew up listening to horror stories of Franco's 37 year regime and its banning of the Catalan language. But Servià claims that his opinions do not make him a fanatic: “I'm not one of those super radical guys. I just say I speak Catalan at home with my friends and that's how I feel. Nobody from Catalonia would have any problem being Spanish too, if some Spanish people wouldn't try to deny that we have a different language; that we are Spanish, but different.”



CATALONIATODAY

Published by Catalonia Today SL, Tàpies, 2, Barcelona 08001. Tel +34 932 276 620 / Fax +34 932 276 621. email: contact@cataloniatoday.info.
Diposit Number GI-322-2004

ADVERTISING: +34 932 276 620. advertising@cataloniatoday.info SUBSCRIPTION: +34 932 276 620. subscription@cataloniatoday.info
Managing Editor: Carles Puigdemont. Editor: Stephen Burgen. Sub Editor: Rebecca Warden. Editorial Staff: Alex Leff, Richard McCrann, Robert Kimpleton, Marcela Topor. Editorial Consultant: Miquel Berga. Printed by IMPRINTSA

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: Letters to the editor must not be longer than 30 lines long and must include your name and telephone number. We can only accept letters written in English and delivered by email. Catalonia Today reserves the right to publish and edit readers' letters. Catalonia Today, C/Tàpies, 2, 08001 Barcelona.
Email: letters@cataloniatoday.info