



## CULTURE

### THE CULTURAL EXCEPTION: ANTI-DEMOCRATIC AND DETRIMENTAL TO CULTURE IN SPANISH

**Miguel Ángel Cortés. Joint Spokesman for Grupo Popular in the Spanish Congress**

*There is no sense in a vigorous language and culture entrenching itself in defensive positions. Neither is there any sense in curtailing people's freedom to choose. It is precisely within a framework of freedom - both in terms of choice and creation - and openness that our culture can obtain the greatest benefits.*

#### Spanish: An International Language of Communication

*Culture in Spanish*, the result of the fusion of all the cultural manifestations of those who use **Spanish** as a **language of communication** and **vehicle for expression and creation**, is today shared by over **400 million people around the world**, encompassing a community of nations on two continents, in which the European contribution accounts for barely 10%. The importance of Spanish is related to the **importance of Spain and the Latin American Community** within an international context. *Culture in Spanish* thus acquires a **strategic value at both a political and an economic level**, one that, if used profitably, can contribute considerably to enhancing the image, vitality and potential of the Latin Community of Nations.

Language and culture in Spanish constitute one of the most valuable economic resources at our disposal. Thus, the **cultural sector accounts for 6% of Spanish GDP** and, if we take into account the wealth generated by "Spanish", this figure rises to 15% of GDP. **The cultural sector employs 2% of the working population in Spain**, which in numerical terms comes to a total of **340,000 individuals**.

**"Language and culture in Spanish constitute one of the most valuable resources at our disposal. Spanish generates 15 % of our GDP"**

The **unity of the Spanish language**, a decisive factor in enabling it to become an international language, is not an issue: Spanish is a **highly homogeneous language** due to its considerable capacity to assimilate outside contributions and the fact that **any speaker of Spanish can understand any other**. Scholars have also indicated that **Spanish is prepared for the new language technologies and industries**, both in terms of its normative-grammatical make-up and in terms of its socio-cultural dimension, since due to the sheer number of speakers and its literary tradition, Spanish constitutes one of the great linguistic communities throughout the world. However, these experts draw attention to the fact that the **economic potential of Spanish is not being sufficiently exploited** by Spanish speakers.

#### "Culture in Spanish" Can Be Protected Within a Framework of Freedom

Jiménez Lozano has pointed out that the great cultural achievements in human history have been achieved through the relationship between culture and political power. The **defence and promotion of culture in Spanish** cannot be ensured by establishing barriers and quotas, but by favouring a **free culture**: free access of members of society to cultural goods, as well as a climate of freedom for the creators and artists who offer their works to society. It is essential to foster the idea of **patronage** in order to encourage a greater sense of commitment on the part of social bodies when it comes to promoting culture, as well as the appropriate **intellectual property legislation** in accordance with the new technological outlook and international trade, in order to reap economic benefits. This legislation must be effective in combating "piracy" within these sectors. **The lack of an adequate system for protecting intellectual property rights is conditioning the development of Spanish as a generator of resources**. According to figures furnished by one of the main industrial and intellectual property agents (Clarke, Modet & Co), if "piracy" were reduced by 10% throughout the world, some 1.5 million jobs would be created, States would earn 64 billion dollars in taxes and economic growth would increase by 400 million dollars.

**Subsidy schemes** create non-commercial and, therefore, **unviable** industries. A good **policy of fiscal incentives** combined with **investment in training and development** are the **solutions**

for industries that need a certain level of support. For example, the Eurimages (European Union) and Ibermedia (Latin American Summits) Programmes have provided decisive support for the film industry, increasing production in recent years and enabling the Spanish film market share to leap into double figures from 1997 onwards. Up until that time, it had hardly achieved a figure of 10%, and now stands at around 15%, peaking on occasion at 20%.

*Culture in Spanish* is not only created in Spain. The whole of Latin America and, increasingly, the Hispanic community in the United States, are producing literature, music, film, sculpture and paintings of outstanding quality. This different perspective, full of possibilities, raises the question as to whether building a **protectionist wall against foreign culture and in favour of European culture** will actually benefit us, given that **products originating from European countries will take precedence, in detriment to those that originate from the Latin American countries.**

### The Cultural Exception is Detrimental to Us

In this respect, **the cultural exception is detrimental to Spain and to the countries of Latin America**, because it **closes the door on Latin American creation**, along with any reciprocal influence between the two continents, **limiting the opportunities that may exist between Spanish and Latin American artists**. Spain has nothing to gain and much to lose with the European cultural exception, because **it impedes the intense links that exists between the two sides of the Atlantic**, as well as **creating difficulties when it comes to taking advantage of the enormous opportunities offered by the new technologies and the growing importance of Spanish throughout the world.**

**“Spain has much to lose with the European cultural exception. As Vargas Llosa has stated, the cultural exception represents a profoundly anti-democratic point of view that depreciates the value of Man and freedom”**

The **European cultural exception is based on an ideological approach** that states that globalization contains the risk of planetary cultural uniformity, going against the artistic values of the “Old World”, against the values of culture itself. However, **a culture does not preserve its value throughout isolation; on the contrary, it is contact with other cultures and openness that enable the culture of each society to persist over time**; what keeps cultures alive is the tension that originates in ongoing exchange with other cultures. Furthermore, as Vargas Llosa has stated, the idea of the **cultural exception represents a profoundly anti-democratic point of view, since it depreciates the value of Man and his freedom**, presupposing that the free man does not know what is good in culture and that if freedom should reign within this field, then culture will be lost.

### The Market Reflects the Cultural Reality

**The culture/commerce disjunction is false**, given that **freedom within the field of commerce is quite compatible with the promotion of cultural identity**. Supporting one’s own cultural production can be justified as long as it does not distort free trade and its rules, because otherwise no profit and no economic development is achieved. **Stating that culture is unconnected to the market is detrimental to the cultural industries**, since no commercial or business objective would exist and this would lead to their demise. **Defending the market also means defending a legal framework** and, with it, **intellectual property rights**. In this respect, if one is in favour of copyright, one must also be in favour of market rules. **Culture and market are not incompatible**; the market does not **destroy culture, but simply reveals the real state of a society’s culture; it reflects a reality, but does not create it.**