

# Foolishness is costly

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**The suspension of a European summit that was to take place in Barcelona alleging that public order could not be guaranteed in the event of possible violent actions by anti-system groups is very bad news for Barcelona and for all Catalonia.**

Many European cities have hosted summits in difficult circumstances but have never cancelled them. Such a decision is a grave submission in the face of violence and blackmail.

This editorial will not attempt to analyse the possible reasons behind the cancellation. There may be several: political and electoral reasons, a further manifestation of the central government's mistrust towards Barcelona, a lack of institutional coordination, etc. But what this editorial does wish to point out is that the origin of all this comes from long ago, and it is not solely of a political nature. The political dimension we will leave to one side here.

As we see it, this regrettable move is above all the result of an intellectual and moral attitude (and ultimately political, that is certain) that for years has been prevalent in important sectors of our society. An attitude that has rejected the rules, the respect for things and for people, the sense of responsibility and the common good. We have been denouncing this attitude for years. Many years. (This newsletter includes an article that appeared in *Avui* (15 May 2005) with the extremely clear title "The culture of respect").

The reply from many responsible politicians has merely been condescending smiles. Or even remarks such as "Barcelona has become the capital of transgression". Comments of this nature are supposed to be positive, and they are made with pride. With foolish vanity. And this is outrageous. Such utterances from high-ranking officials discredit them.

For some time now we have been aware of the existence of a belief among the anti-system movements throughout Europe – be they violent or not – that Barcelona, thanks to its permissiveness, to the complicity of certain classes, is the best city in Europe for a disturbance. Also for a violent disturbance. And for anti-civic activities.

In fact, although it is very late in the day, and having already paid a high price in prestige, civic coexistence and quality of citizen life, the institutions have begun to react with ordinances, police action and bans. But we have to get to the root of the problem, which is education, values, an unequivocal rejection of everything that goes against respect, that we are duty-bound to one another and that all of us are duty-bound to our environment and our society.

We must not continue to sweep it under the rug of progressivism that no longer is. Progressivism that has been

overcome, that is weary, that is an anachronism. That sometimes even turns reactionary. Such as in this case. To applaud systematically disobedience, to tolerate the lack of respect with an understanding smirk, to reject self-discipline, to say that anything goes is more consistent with failure than with progress. And if we fail to take note, others will come from outside and make us understand. They will come from anyplace where there is seriousness and a clear sense of the common good. And it is tough luck, in this case, that they come from Madrid, with our complicity.

For many years now too many influential intellectuals, journalists and politicians have been navel gazing, unaware of what is happening outside their well-meaning and jaded circles. Nostalgic for 1968, without realising that the good that came out of 1968 has already borne fruit, they continue down a path that is at loggerheads with progress, which has taken other routes.

If there is no way to grasp this from Catalonia itself, people who call themselves progressive should find out what is happening abroad. They should read more, or they should be more open-minded about what is really going on. They should learn from countries that are renowned for their progressive outlook. And they will see that they are out of touch.

This should be pressed home in schools, in the media, in debate, in politics, anywhere where influence can be exerted, especially on the young and families. Without forgetting that respect is achieved through persuasion and education, by creating environments and positive climates that integrate and facilitate positive outlooks. This especially. But respect can also be made compulsory, a right, and in certain cases, an obligation, to be exercised by the legitimate democratic establishment.