

CONSCIOUSNESS

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As far as I can see, people in El Salvador have an idyllic vision of Europe, the ancient Europe, the society of equality, where the welfare state makes it possible for everyone to live well. But the problem is the treatment that the people receive when they come here from third world countries, because Europe is Europe and there is a corporate spirit that protects it from all sides (Valentín).

The concept of European citizenship is currently being debated in Europe, and although several proposals date back to classical Greece — including slavery — the citizens who are committed to the defence of civil rights propose a civil European citizenship for all residents based on a consensus catalogue of rights and obligations. In the European representation of immigration there is a wide loss of memory between European history of emigration and the emergent discourse of closing frontiers: between 1820 and 1920, approximately 60 million Europeans emigrated to the so-called 'New World'.

What does it mean to be Latin American in twenty-first century Europe, and particularly in Spain? How do they view themselves and the society that surrounds them, and the changes made in the recent years? What is their opinion about their position in Europe and the position of Europeans in the world? How has their vision of Spain and Europe changed before and after living here?

How do they bear in mind their native countries so far away?

In the first part of the work, it is my voice as Spanish researcher and lawyer that speaks. In the second part are the Latin American voices that tell to me 'stop talking on my behalf', as Peter Read suggests in the prologue of *Belonging*.¹ Luzmar, Rita, Valentín and Walter will answer to our request. Valentín was a member of the Education Department in El Salvador, came to Spain with a grant in 1995 and married here. Walter, a sociologist, came to Spain in 1978 after watching many of his friends die or go into exile during the dictatorship when he felt that there was no longer anything left for him in Argentina. Luzmar is a Colombian refugee. She has travelled a long way since she arrived in Spain in 1981 until her present job as an intercultural mediator in a social services centre. Rita, from Brazil, is an actress who has lived in Spain for ten years. She has been playing, for the last two years, the monologue *The Bogus Woman* by Kay

Ahead, the story of an asylum seeker in Europe.

Through their voices is constructed the voice of consciousness.

FOREIGNER, IMMIGRANT, CITIZEN

Europe is becoming a fortress. In an economically globalised world, the political systems that arose from nineteenth-century philosophy and society are being used by the elite to provide a veneer of democracy for the decisions that are made by power groups. An economist beyond reproach, such as Nobel prize-winner Joseph Stiglitz, senior vice-president of the World Bank, argues that the gap between the haves and the have-nots is wider than thirty years ago, and that decisions taken by the International Monetary Fund or G-7 favour the interests of oligarchies.² The arguments of fear and terror are being used to justify the setbacks in democracy and respect for human rights. As John Pilger observes, 'the attacks of September 11, 2001 did not "change everything" but accelerated the continuity of events, providing an extraordinary pretext of destroying social democracy'.³

Many citizens who are aware of this situation feel powerless to react from inside or outside the system. There are many elements that uphold this situation: for example, loss of prestige of many traditional representative institutions like political parties or trade unions, the system's ability to incorporate any critical approach promoted by NGOs (non-government organisations) or social movements, the fragmentation of reaction groups (ecologists, women, Sahara inhabitants etc.), the fear of Muslims or Arabs. The superimposition of these facts recalls the popular aphorism 'Then they

came for me, and by that time there was no one left to speak up for me'.⁴ The most persecuted group in Europe today, the 'other' that they come to look for, is the immigrant.

Migration is a contemporary issue, although it has probably been one of the essential questions in mankind's history. The Johannesburg Summit of August 2002 showed that 80 per cent of the world's population suffers from hunger and that a billion people lack water. Rita's voice is very clear.

We will discuss other things, but as long as there is poverty, if my neighbour has nothing and I show off my wealth, man, what can I expect my neighbour to do to me, if he has nothing, not even bread to feed his child, and I have everything? It is necessary to distribute, and if some countries possess a lot and others don't have anything, then people will go where there is something because they refuse to die of hunger. I am reminded of a phrase that I heard in Brazil, some time ago, in the north-east. Why there is hunger? 'There is hunger because of drought, because of nature, and because people shouldn't live there.' And a seven-year-old boy who watched his five-year-old brother die of hunger and malnutrition, asked his mother who was also in bad shape: 'Mummy, will there be bread in heaven?'

Migratory movements respond to economic imbalance between regions or countries, sociological factors or ethnic, political or religious conflicts. It is evident that movement must inevitably exist nowadays, especially in a globalised world where it seems that distances have dissolved and images are consumed simultaneously everywhere. But contemporary globalisation contains the contradiction that free trade in capital,

goods, services and information does not mean free trade in people.

THE LEGAL APPROACH

Migrants are people that left their country to live or work temporarily in another one, therefore, out of the country from which they are *national*. We are passing from the concept of 'migrant' to the concept of 'foreigner': national from a country in opposition to the natives of another.

In a first view, the concept of foreigner refers to geography, science that studies habitat. The concept of foreigner is perceived as the difference between groups that live in or out of an imaginary border, frontier between 'us' and the 'other'. But in fact when we use '*foreigner*' we use no geographic concept, we are not referring to the river or mountain that sets up the legal border. We are defining a legal limit.⁵

In defining 'foreigner', and we do it according to the law, we limit legally, for a group of our neighbours, the rights that according to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights are established for all human beings. 'The new nation-state finds here its new enemy: the foreign residents who request their own parcel of sovereign power, and who want to share the benefits of the national inheritance.'⁶

The 'civil citizenship' concept, recognised in Notification 757 of the European Commission of 22-11-2000, identifies the nature of citizen with that of resident surpassing the limited concept of 'national'. The Notification also refers to integration as a two-way process that involves adaptation on the parts of both

the immigrant and the adopting society. The 'civil citizenship' is the hope in the fight between the culture of the civil rights and that of economic rationalism.

What's clear is that Europe represents Human Rights, which is its identity. It's what is sold in the world. When they go to South America to do business, when they travel to other places, Europeans say: 'We are respectful, we are not like the United States that subjugate others, we do not meddle with your political affairs, we have a model welfare state, we are not so neo-liberal', etc. But in practice, in the Argentinian crisis, Spanish banks are no better or worse than English or American banks, they aren't any different. European capital is founded on the progress of economic accumulation, and this is the axis of everything (Walter).

SPAIN, A COUNTRY OF EMIGRANTS

There are no official figures for the flow of emigrants from Spain in the colonial times, but it is clear that the flow to South America decreased in the eighteenth Century, because of the restrictive laws passed by independent republics hindering emigration and the legal restrictions to emigration. In 1853 the restrictions to emigration were lifted for residents in the Canary Islands and in 1865 for the rest of Spain; simultaneously, Latin American new nations began their policies of recruiting immigrants. In 1898, the year of the independence of the Republic of Cuba, Spain lost its last territory in America. The Spanish government, motivated by the 'Fourth Centennial of the discovery of America', initiated an 'Approximation policy' to reopen the doors of Latin American countries to Spanish emigration. Between

Table 1 Spanish emigration 1850–1930

	population (thousand of inhabit.)	total migration	% migrants (by 1.000 inhabit.)
1857	15.455		
1860	15.645		
1877	16.622		
1887	17.550	287.399	16,3
1897	18.109	882.822	48,7
1900	18.618	163.778	8,7
1910	19.995	1.183.264	59,1
1920	21.390	1.272.387	59,4
1930	23.677	860.447	36,3
Total		4.650.097	

Source: INE, Geographical Institute, Department of Employment and Social Affairs (MTAS).
Elaborated by the Dirección General de Ordenación de las Migraciones.

1885 and 1930 over 4.5 million Spanish citizens migrated to America, of a home population of 23.5 million.

In the 1930s, the Spanish Civil War caused the exile of the defenders of the 2nd Republic whose legitimate government was thrown out by a military coup-d'état. In the months prior to the end of the war in April 1939, over 400,000 Spaniards crossed the French border. If we add those that departed from different maritime ports, the total number of exiles amounted to 500,000.⁷

Until the revocation of the Decree of

1941, which prohibited the departure of workers abroad, these figures were modest. However between 1946 and 1976, 2,600,000 economic migrants left the country whose population then numbered 30 million inhabitants. Now Europe substituted the traditional American destination.

Only after 1987 the migratory flow becomes negative. In 1995, nearly 800,000 Spaniards were still living and working in Europe and over 1,400,000 in America.

Spain is a country that traditionally has expelled emigrants. More than

Table 2 Spanish emigration 1940–2000

	population (thousand of inhab.)	total migration	% migrants (by 1.000)
1940	26.015	245.753	9,4
1950	28.118	257.318	9,1
1960	30.583	649.039	21,2
1970	33.823	919.606	27
1981	37.616	513.112	13,5
1991	39.434	74.406	1,9
Total		2.659.234	

Source: INE, Geographical Institute, Department of Labour and Social Affairs (MTAS). Elaborated by the Dirección General de Ordenación de las Migraciones.

Table 3 Foreigners in Spain by continents of origin 1975–2000

	EU	Europe (non-EU)	America	Africa	Asia	Oceania	total (non-EU)	overall total
1975	92.917	9.785	48.142	3.232	9.393	440	70.992	165.289
1980	106.738	11.634	46.701	4.067	11.419	518	74.339	182.045
1985	142.346	15.780	54.067	8.529	19.451	748	98.575	241.971
1991	158.243	22.492	83.558	63.054	29.116	1.103	199.323	360.655
1995	235.858	19.844	108.932	95.718	38.352	733	263.579	499.773
2000	449.881						659.179	1.109.060

Source: INE, Geographical Institute, Department of Labour and Social Affairs (MTAS). Elaborated by the Dirección General de Ordenación de las Migraciones.

7,300,000 Spaniards became migrants in the last century. The memory of Spanish people is the memory of migrations.

ALIENS IN SPAIN: FROM NO POLICY TO THE POLICY OF FEAR

In fact, no law regulated the residence of aliens in Spain until 1985. The Organic Law 7/1985 of 1 July in 1985, on the Rights and Liberties of Foreigners in Spain, 'basically followed three factors. The entry in the European Union obliged Spanish laws to adopt community patrimony. The different regulations had to be systematised. And it was necessary to face the new situation: the presence of foreigners in Spain.'⁸ This meant the presence of 98,575 non-community foreigners among the population of 40 million. Fifteen years later, in 2000, the number has increased (659,179 among the same 40 million) but the relative figure continues to be extremely low in relation to the foreign populations of other European nations.

In recent years, and especially since the elections in 2001 when the conservative Popular Party (PP) obtained an absolute majority, both the Spanish Government and the mass media have used terms such as 'problem',

'criminality', and 'avalanche' to refer to immigrants. This situation is even more serious if we consider that, until that point, it had been accepted that the migration issue was too important and complex to be used as a barbed political weapon. During the entire year in 2000, a Parliamentary Commission in the Lower House prepared a reform of the 1985 law, based on the consensus that it was necessary to arrange an actual immigration policy. In this parliamentary commission, the political parties with parliamentary representation, the social organisations, and the associations of immigrants expressed their opinions. The discussion centred on all the basic points: border control, integration of regular immigrants and regularisation of status for people who entered as tourists or without a visa.

In this pre-electoral time a new political force emerged: the 'GIL' Party. The racist speech of the president, a very well known figure, president of a popular football team, frightened the PP leaders with the possibility of losing votes on the right. Then, the Popular Party infringed the pact (which included a member of his own group) and in the middle of the electoral campaign, the Minister of Home Office Mayor Oreja promised to change

the law of consensus in which the Parliamentary Commission had been working on for eight months. The episode concluded with some scandalous racist actions taking place in the town of El Ejido. The Popular Party's Minister of Labour and Social Affairs resigned and abandoned politics. The revised 2000 law never became operational, and the new 2001 law turned back to the previous law of 1985. It was a situation which paralleled the rise of the Australian One Nation party.

The political temptation to mobilise xenophobia is incompatible with a rational immigration program. Such a program also requires a more human approach to issues like family reunion, settlement services and refugees. A cost-free program sounds very attractive, but immigrants are not simply factors of production. To paraphrase a German saying: 'We sought only workers but we got people'. Future governments may need to be less rigid, less obsessive, less directed by public prejudice and more human than they had become by the 1990s.⁹

The GIL party almost disappeared, but its populist demands have been incorporated to the discourse not only in the PP, but also in the PSOE (Socialist Party): zero net migration, strict selection for the family reunion categories, detention and expulsion for undocumented or illegal arrivals.

The political discourse has not created this situation. But it has promoted, established, and helped to formulate it. Furthermore, we have the argument that we will bring the ultra right to a stop, and the political message firmly insists that immigration is one of the greatest challenges of Western

democracies. The Right has been preaching this political message, and generally the European establishment has sustained this idea over several years ago. During the Socialist Party era (PSOE, 1982–1996) some Home Office Ministers repeated this goal but it wasn't accepted. They went to the Home Office Coordination Meetings and came back with this policy that migrations were one of the greatest challenges, even for NATO. Do not forget that NATO no longer has an enemy, because the Eastern Bloc era has ended, and one of the elements that NATO constructed as a potential enemy have been the immigrants. It is an ideological, political, and discursive construction which is also a daily fact being built for many years in Europe, and which has really just now started to be applied in Spain. Because until recently, it was politically incorrect and people could not say 'I am fed up that there are so many blacks and sudacas [Latin Americans] and I don't know what all'. Now, they can. There are still people who are reluctant to express this, but there are those who do that (Walter).

Commissioned by a collective of associations supporting immigrants to Spain, I asked the leader of the PSOE about their party's immigration policy. I was really worried when he answered me with a populist anecdote: the limit of his policy was a 50-year-old woman, a voter for his party, who told him that she was to be dismissed because an illegal immigrant was going to work in her place. As Jupp writes, referring to the impact of One Nation in Australia:

Displaced resentment is a very common phenomenon. People cannot explain the unseen economic and social forces, which are changing their lives, often for the worse. They tend to blame observable agents, especially ethnic or religious minorities. Globalisation and economic

rationalism disturbed many lives, but could be neither understood nor challenged.¹⁰

FEAR OF WORDS

Montserrat Ribas, in her thesis, *The Representation of Immigration Arising from the Questions of a Parliamentary Study Commission*, highlights how the dominant ideologies have introduced models, scripts, stereotypes etc. — through public speeches and staged events, which intervene in the construction of the representations that individuals use to describe the world. She writes.

We learn to perceive the world by means of beliefs and thus by prejudices which surround us and which generally form part of the dominant discourse. To liberate oneself from the social prejudices that are channeled in this discourse means becoming aware of how inadequate these representations are, and as a result, adopting a critical attitude.¹¹

Walter continues:

Furthermore, the PP President Aznar said [in 2002] that 'immigrants are delinquents'. People say this to me in many debates: 'the President of the Government said it', or 'It says in the press that ...' which is giving coverage to this view. Now they are providing coverage to some existing social occurrences; the politicians did not create them. Obviously, they feed back into themselves. With a different type of discourse and other practices, we could be in another situation.

For eight years, I have worked with the applicants for asylum and immigration. I have witnessed these

setbacks, and the ideological deployment that has occurred in giant leaps in Spain in the ways of perceiving 'us' and the 'other'. At present, there are more Spanish emigrants than immigrants in Spain— Spain is a nation of emigrants — but the official version proposes a changed perspective of the national identity, which promotes the idea that Spaniards are being threatened by a flood of poor people. This fallacy is especially serious in a country that has inadequate coverage of social services and where the economy is still fragile, since only its geographical proximity in Europe makes it possible to put out this message. Hence, it is necessary to struggle for the construction of a European Union which protects the equality of political, economic, social, and cultural rights. Spain is a country of the newly rich with a fragile welfare state structure:

As it has been repeatedly denounced, the so-called 'immigration problem' is usually formulated in the political discourse above all as a problem-hindrance, a created problem, or better still, a problem blown out of proportion in order to exploit it. And for this reason, there is no real political willingness to act in a serious way ... It appears that we have still failed to learn that fear is power's only resource when it is not willing to be democratic or socially responsible, and thus immigration has become a goldmine for these fear-traffickers'.¹²

Walter's comment:

The political systems are the way they are supposed to be, right? And the stability of the insider politicians is also maintained with the minimum degree of legitimacy. And today they are finding this legitimisation. Because they were legitimated before: 'We will create

a welfare state so that the Communists won't win', now 'let's defend this society and our achievements against the danger that the starving masses of the Third World represent (Walter).

THEORETICAL-METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Bertaux observes:

The choice of a particular method to study this or that sociological object, is not a nonsense issue. It commits the researcher to a specific field relationship, to several existential practices; it contains as a watermark some ways of thinking and it excludes others. In short, some years of the life of a researcher are at stake. As long as he/she controls the election of method, the choice will be made more related to deep preferences than rational considerations.¹³

I have been involved in immigration and asylum policy in the last eight years. At present asylum and migration research requires a high level of activism, commitment, and personal involvement, as well as distance, professionalism, analysis, and permanent self-criticism. The opinions I express are based on discussions with a wide range of people in the course of conferences, committees, seminars and interviews. Thus methods which involve the use of oral sources are almost therapeutic. And as Jupp notes, 'As the whole area is contentious and politicised, it will be clear that I prefer some view-points to others.'¹⁴

So I have selected four 'ideal spokespersons' as Bertaux would put it, referring to Oscar Lewis's *Los Hijos de Sánchez*: the four stories have the intensity

of autobiographies. Of course, in this text I can show only a little part of their discourse. My approach to all of them, like Bertaux, has covered the changes of attitude of the researcher who works with life stories along the research:

in the beginning his attitude is as an explorer. Later he seeks contrasting his interpretations, makes them be refuted, differentiates them, details them, consolidates them, in short, if he wants to restore the voices of human experience in their whole expressive power, he must again change his attitude: he must establish a relationship of interchange and friendship. He must take time to enter the other's universe.¹⁵

During the last ten years I have combined exploratory, analytic and synthetic stages, adopting the approach of a political scientist and a participant. We have been colleagues, students, friends, spectators; we have met each other in different working or political situations. As a result of this process, different products have been made (masters theses, dossiers, applications for asylum, projects, conferences, a theatre play etc.) that are transformed into written sources, and others (video recordings) that we analyse as oral sources. And along this process there have been personal and professional relationships, of friendship and collaboration, of interest and mistrust, which have been superimposed.

Here they are. Valentín, Walter, Luzmar and Rita. They express their opinions because they have the option to do so. They are not obsessed with day-to-day concerns. They have the opportunity to analyse their reality and they do so with a critical, political, and

conscious vision. Referring to multiculturalism in Australia, Jupp says, 'I accept that politicians must work within the limits set by public opinion. But I do not accept that majority opinion is always right. Changing public opinion is a necessary feature of democracy and, in this area, often essential.' This is also my belief and the reason of the title, 'Consciousness'.

FOREIGNER, IMMIGRANT, TOURIST

Walter:

An image of foreigners is being built little by little: which is that they are poor people from the Third World who could represent a reason for uneasiness or a problem that did not exist before. Furthermore, when I came to Spain, 'foreigner' was not a synonym for 'immigrant'. It was a synonym for 'tourist'. And a tourist was a synonym for more open customs, more money, open-minded attitudes, from Europe and the North, for all the things that people desired which did not exist in Spain. And now 'foreigner' has become split. It still means 'tourist', but on the other hand, immigration is a problem, a source of unease and potential conflict. And in this respect, this immigration includes the Moroccan stereotype, that appears to be the strangest, the most different, and the least likely to assimilate here — as some people say. Today this is applied to the Moroccans but it could be applied to a person from Uruguay or Chile tomorrow, it makes no difference.

This did not exist here before. But it was because no one had constructed this image. There were immigrants, there were foreigners, people from the Philippines, but this was not structured within the image of someone who could be dangerous, or the

origin of conflicts. There were Filipino domestic servants whom the Spanish ladies did not treat on an equal basis, but it was a group that was here. Granted, there were Argentinians and Chileans, who were a bit more rebellious, and formed organisations, but they are there. They were not something that could constitute a risk or a source of problems. And this is exactly what is being constructed now (Walter).

SPAIN, A COUNTRY OF IMMIGRANTS

Valentín:

Here, people toy with the old image of the mother country, especially after the 500th Anniversary of the Conquest, the 'legacy of the language', and so on. It appears that many who believe in this idea think that Spain will adopt them, and will do so in a way that makes them feel different. But I feel the contrary. When they talk about 'sudacas' (slang for South Americans), we are all in the same boat. And the most painful thing for me is to witness how the Moroccans are treated, which is just too much, too much to bear. The African people are the ones who are mistreated. As an immigrant, it is tragic to see how someone who arrives at the Barajas airport is immediately sent back to his country on the same plane, who is then expelled again upon his return, something that almost no one sees. But here, the people that cross the Strait, I have watched die on the beaches, which is extremely hard and tragic. And witnessed the contempt that exists in Spain and the watchdog role that it performs for the European Union which is to block the entry of people from Africa. This is where I notice the clearest difference. Despite the fact that Latin Americans are not at all well treated, there are many others who are treated worse than us. I believe that here we are more

or less accepted because we speak the language. And we are not completely black either, they call us dark-skinned, morenazos as they say here, but this is not good or bad, there are people out there who really get carried away. But as for black people, this is where the most embedded racism exists and their contempt for poverty, this is the daily reality (Valentin).

Luzmar:

The social conditions for the people that arrive here are far from ideal. Beginning with the framework of the law governing aliens. The 1985 law was very restrictive; later there was the law 4/2000, which was a bit more extensive but it was no panacea; and we have gone back light years in the restriction of rights. This means that people face much greater obstacles to obtain a work permit, an essential item. To me, I cannot imagine why a human being needs to have a permit to work and to make a living for himself and his family. This is something that I have learned here. In Colombia, everyone has the right to work. In Africa, everyone has the right to work and to make a decent living. Here, it is necessary to have a work and residency permit to be able to live and work. This conditions people's lives, restricts their rights, and coerces their freedom (Luzmar).

Rita:

A girl that I met in Guinea, in her innocence she said: 'Is it true that there is a little hole in the door in Spain, and that people look through it to see who is on the other side? And if they are hungry or cold, if you don't know them, then you don't let them in?' She just couldn't understand! A person that is hungry or cold: you don't let him in when he knocks on your door because you look to see who it is. Obviously, she does not understand.

This is very important, because it is a metaphor that describes what happens in developed countries. There is a peephole. Europe is looking at the colour of your skin, where you come from, and whether you have enough money to enter or not (Rita).

ENDNOTES

- 1 Peter Read, *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership*, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2000) p. 5.
- 2 J.E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and Discontents*, (Madrid:Taurus, 2002) pp. 29–48.
- 3 John Pilger, *The New Rulers of the World*, (London: Verso 2002), p. 1.
- 4 Rev. Martin Niemöller, 1945, generally attributed to Bertolt Brecht: 'First they came for the Communists, and I didn't speak up, because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up, because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up, because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time there was no one left to speak up for me.'
- 5 F. Olivan López, *Extranjero, Terminología Científico-social*, (Madrid: Román Reyes 1999), p. 1.
- 6 Olivan López, *Extranjero*, p. 7.
- 7 V. Llorens, *La Emigración Republicana*, (Taurus: 1976) p. 100.
- 8 MTAS, Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales, *Anuario de Migraciones* (Madrid: 1998), p. 223.
- 9 Jim Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera: The story of Australian immigration*, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press 2002) p. 217.

- 10 Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera*, p. 123.
- 11 M. Ribas, 'Migraciones y Lenguaje: la representación de la inmigración que emerge de las preguntas de una Comisión de Estudio Parlamentaria', *Jornadas sobre Migraciones Ibéricas Contemporáneas 30-60-90*, (Valencia: 23-11-2001) p. 27.
- 12 J. de Lucas, 'Condiciones de una Política Europea de Inmigración', *Jornadas sobre Migraciones Ibéricas Contemporáneas 30-60-90*, (Valencia: 23-11-2001) pp. 39-40.
- 13 D. Bertaux, 'Los relatos de vida en el análisis social', (*Historia y Fuente Oral*, nº 1, 1989), p. 87.
- 14 Jupp. *From White Australia to Woomera*, p. 4.
- 15 Bertaux, 'Los relatos de vida en el análisis social', p. 88.