



Independent views in freedom

Spain: a jailed country, driven to bankruptcy

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The Netherlands and France have announced that they will open primary schools in a few days, Denmark has already done so, Germany is allowing the opening of some small shops and Austria will also extend it to shopping centers, bars and restaurants over the next two weeks. In Spain there are entire regions less affected by the virus than several of these countries, but the jailers Socialist Spanish PM Sánchez and Communist Deputy PM Iglesias, happy in their role as dictators of the state of emergency (with only 120 and 35 seats in a 350 seat Congress), and as stunned as they are delighted at the astonishing pusillanimity of the main non-opposition party, are keeping us in cages and extending house arrest with a slow drop-by-drop softening calendar of capricious measures underpinned by their discredited "experts", who have showed to having no clue throughout the whole epidemic.

The drastic and sometimes absurd rules imposed in the wake of the pandemic are not the result of planning and calm reflection, but are based on panic rather than on the sparse scientific evidence, which has been lacking reliable data. In fact, such an extended and inhumane confinement of the population is the subject of controversy in other countries freer than Spain, because of its violation of fundamental rights, its devastating economic effects - which can cause unprecedented depression and hardship -, and its silenced collateral damage to the physical and mental health of the population (cardiovascular risk due to inactivity, immune risk in the absence of sun exposure, anxiety, depression, etc.). It is also questioned for scientific reasons: the prestigious Stanford epidemiologist John Ioannidis says skeptically that "we don't know if these measures work". In Spain we have been partially or totally confined for 40 days by a virus whose average incubation period is only 5 days (maximum 14), and during this period we have gone from 288 deaths to perhaps 34,000 (according to regional data). Without a doubt, homes and hospitals, with their unprotected doctors and nurses, have continued to be sources of infection, but we need a cold reading of these data, which may arise some questions. On the other hand, confinement has a difficult exit (due to permanent fear of a rebound) and can cause a bounce effect of laxity in a logically desperate and exhausted people. In short: it is a measure as fragile as it is unsustainable. For all these reasons, perhaps the time has come to look for sustainable alternatives by identifying, through the 80/20 rule, the key factors that are most efficient in reducing transmission and that do not involve unbearable



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costs. This would mean moving to measures based on distancing, personal responsibility, common sense, the general interest and the rule of law; not on indiscriminate confinement, coercion, panic, political interest and a police state. They could include the use of gloves and masks in enclosed public spaces and would distinguish between sick, healthy and immunized people (where are these tests?), between enclosed and ventilated environments, among provinces with different prevalence and population density, between the countryside and the city, between a robotic factory and one where workers work side by side. There are countries (and states in the USA) that have taken this path and have surprisingly achieved infection curves similar to those of confined places. Correlation doesn't mean causation, but even Sweden, with its criticized model (which is still premature to judge), has only had 225 deaths per million population keeping schools, workplaces and restaurants open, compared to 720 deaths per million in Spain, the highest ratio in the world.

In order to fight panic, it is important to clarify the general confusion between the probable, the possible and the proven. It is wrong to equate the most probable scenario with every remote but theoretically possible scenario, or to discredit a priori everything that cannot be stated with absolute certainty: life is uncertainty. SARS-CoV-2 is a new disease of which we know very little; there are very few certainties. However, there are indications that we cannot ignore and that give rise to probable scenarios. For example, it is likely (but not certain) that it is seasonal and that in summer and early fall its prevalence will be low. Among other evidences, "enveloped viruses [such as SARS-CoV-2] have a very, very definite seasonality", according to several studies that point to environmental factors such as temperature and humidity (Science, 13-3-20 and others), and the coronavirus seems to be having a lower prevalence in warmer areas and in the southern autumn than in colder areas and in the northern spring. Moreover, the president of a Spanish hospital group stated that viral loads were clearly decreasing as the season advanced. Therefore, it is likely that in the northern hemisphere the coronavirus will have little activity in the next few months and we may be able to lead a fairly normal life. If another wave of contagion returns in winter, we should be prepared to carry out an early containment as in Taiwan or South Korea (already with masks, tests, ventilators and, if possible, capable "experts" at the helm), discarding further confinements. Therefore, contingency plans notwithstanding, if the government's true interest were to overcome this situation of exceptionality as soon as possible, it would work on this likely and encouraging scenario (especially for the tourism industry, 10% of GDP and 13% of employment), accelerating the return to normality instead of burdening it, transmitting self-confidence instead of hesitation and specifying goals, instead of zigzagging with vagueness.



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One obstacle is the government's excessive lust for power and its totalitarian ideology. In fact, it seems to want to take advantage of the state of emergency to make unconstrained executive power permanent and to transform our economy into a social-communist regime where the State controls everything. Thus, the same people responsible for the most oppressive confinement and the worst management of the epidemic in the world (who have proven incapable of buying a few masks) apply for the position of qualified economic planners under the slogan of "nothing will ever be the same again", which is not predictive but desiderative, that is to say, it does not predict an inexorable result, but formulates a wish.

French philosopher Jean-François Revel reminded us in his work *La Connaissance Inutile* that ideology "must defend itself relentlessly against the testimony of the senses and intelligence, against reality itself, which leads it to increase day by day the dose of lies required to face the evidence". Without a doubt, the greatest enemy of the communist ideology is reality: that is why it lies constantly, as we see in a government where, by default, everything, always, is deceitful. What do the senses and intelligence tell us about the communist management of the epidemic? That it has been a chaos, a complete disaster! That the private sector has been much more efficient than the public sector in securing medical supplies, that Kafkaesque interventionism and dumb price fixing have led, as always, to shortages, and that the altruism and lucidity of so many companies and individuals has contrasted with the deceit of politicians and their stunning ignorance of social and business realities. Faithful to its track-record without exceptions, Communism is an expert only in creating poverty and oppression.

Beyond the fact that its initial negligence and persistent incompetence have aggravated the huge tragedy of the epidemic in Spain, this government poses a growing threat to Spain. Our rule of law is being vandalized at plain sight and the only serious institutional reaction in a sea of amazing indifference has been the recourse to the Constitutional Court announced by the only real opposition so far, right-wing party Vox. At the same time, the extension of confinement threatens to reduce our economy to rubble and make us cross a line of no return. Our only hope is a prudent but agile return to social, economic and legal normality. However, this subversive government is suspiciously resisting this and continues to bomb with napalm our freedom, our economy and the rule of law. In Venezuela (which this government considers a friendly regime), poverty and oppression have been going on for two decades: is the state of emergency in Spain the Bolivarian antechamber of misery and tyranny?

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