

## **REVIEW: ESCOCIA, NACIÓN Y RAZÓN**

*Sarah Gore*

Luis Moreno (1995) **Escocia, Nación y Razón (Dos milenios de política y sociedad)**, Madrid: CSIC pb, 2000 pesetas, ISBN 84-00-07565-X, 284pp.

Anyone who has travelled between Scotland and Spain will find the publication of this book a relief. Often, when returning to Madrid from Scotland, I am asked '*Que tal Inglaterra?*' ('How was England?'). My reply: '*Escocia - bien*' ('Scotland ... fine') instantly brands me as either pedantic or a raving nationalist. Luis Moreno's book is obligatory reading to fight these unfounded accusations; not only will they discover that Scotland should not be equated with England but that there is more to this nation than the images of 'bagpipes, kilts and whisky' (p.xvii).

In **Escocia, Nación y Razón**, Luis Moreno declares his aim twofold: in the first place to analyse Scotland's national reality through history (from a sociological and political viewpoint), and, second, to reflect upon Scotland's role in the British State. In order to do so he draws on sociological, historical and political literature.

Moreno's stance on ethnicity and related concepts such as race, collective identity and nationalism is worth highlighting. Moreno states that:

One of the main obstacles in understanding ethnicity - and specifically in the case of multinational states like the United Kingdom - have been the attempts made (insufficient in every way) by social scientists, to form a general explanatory theory covering every aspect of ethnonational concurrence within a wider state framework. Such a task is not possible unless it is linked to the development of a general theory of social, cultural and psychological systems.  
(p.230)

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Moreno does not take a reductionist approach to nationalism; rather he pays equal attention to the role of culture, modernisation, the intelligentsia, civil society and the political situation of Scotland within the British state - he considers all of these to be of equal importance in understanding Scotland. He argues that presenting concepts, such as 'ethnie', as 'natural and unpolluted', is a political manipulation that decontextualises their origins and transformations through time. It is due to this potential decontextualisation that careful, detailed study is needed on each case through thorough historical analysis. Luis Moreno successfully does this for the Scottish case.

The book is divided into four sections, arranged chronologically, from the Roman times to the present day discussions of Scotland's future in the European Union. The first section deals with the time period up to 1900. By providing a historical background against which later events can be understood, it does not intend to be comprehensive but rather highlight the factors that have contributed to making Scotland a distinctive nation.

It is perhaps in this first section where Moreno's aim to provide a balanced view of 'history' faces its greatest challenge. The historical veracity of 'national' events is often a controversial point. Debates over what 'really happened' versus what national myths recount have attempted to show the unfounded nature of nationalistic claims; after all - the argument goes - if it can be 'proved' to be an 'invented tradition', the whole idea of a distinctive national identity tumbles with it. Moreno's view of 'history' in the formation of the Scottish nation is much more balanced. He does not wish to uncover what is 'real' and what is 'invented tradition' but rather to analyse how the interpretations of events, symbols, myths and traditions have become part of a collective representation, at different stages and by different people, of the nation's history.

The second section deals with the main bulk of the twentieth century (1900-1970). This highlights the impact that the decline of the British Empire had in Scotland, the decline of industries and the appearance of political nationalism. The creation of the Scottish Party and the National Party of Scotland, which were to become the Scottish National Party in 1934, is discussed within the wider social, economic and political conditions of the time. Politically, it is argued, the lack of action for Scotland from the main political parties, and the repeated feelings of frustration especially after the 1949 Scottish Covenant, led to an increase in nationalist votes in the decade to come. Although the emphasis is placed on political processes at this stage, attention is also paid to the role of the cultural renaissance in the nationalist revival. Moreno highlights the aims of the Scottish Renaissance movement in wanting to go beyond the romantic ideas of the kailyard and tartanry to a

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more 'cosmopolitan' and original idea of Scotland's distinctive culture. Nevertheless, Moreno argues, it is ironic that the Highlands and its symbols - the kilt, the heather, the bagpipes - have become the main Scottish referents (p.127).

The third section deals with the seventies, eighties and up to the mid-nineties. For the seventies, Moreno looks at the options that were put forward for Scotland's future through the three main political positions held during this period - unionist, secessionist and devolutionist. These are represented by following the lives and ideas of three influential figures of the time: Tam Dalyell, Stephen Maxwell and John Mackintosh. Moreno pays special attention to the innovative nature of Maxwell's ideas: he argued for a new definition of Scottish identity, not based on mythological characters such as Robert Bruce and William Wallace, but on an active civil society (p.187). The discussion then moves onto the disappointment following the 1979 Referendum and the devastating effects of Thatcherism for Scotland. The historical analysis ends with a section exploring the crisis of the British state and the future of Scotland in the European Union. Having highlighted the crucial role played by civil society in Scotland's history, Moreno concludes that the institutional future of Scotland is not yet clear; it is in a process of negotiation, but whatever the turnout, the centralist option is now obsolete.

The final section includes a more theoretical discussion of concepts. In this final section Moreno returns to what he has claimed is a problematic issue, the definition of an *ethnie*. He claims that there are six main components to an *ethnie*: a collective feeling of solidarity, a subjective belief in certain historical events, a defined territory, shared cultural elements, a feeling of belonging and a 'recognition of difference' from others (p.236). It is with reference to this last component that Moreno's analysis often focuses on the relationship between Scotland and England, and Scotland's role in the British state. To emphasise this point, Moreno presents results from a 1992 survey regarding double nationality, or what has come to be known as 'the Moreno question' (since he was the first person to use it, in the survey he conducted in 1986). These show that 37% of those surveyed defined themselves as 'Scottish, not British' (p.239).

Luis Moreno's book is an important contribution to the study of Scotland, and to the literature available on the subject in Spanish. It provides a well balanced, even if at times dense, account of the nation's history, leaving no doubt in the reader's mind of its distinction from England. However the book also discusses a range of issues that are both important and relevant beyond the Scottish case: issues of globalisation versus locality, tradition versus modernity and linked to these the role of ethnoterritorial movements as a

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new politics of identity. All of these issues are of crucial importance in understanding the nature of nationalist movements, both within the Spanish state today and for the future of the European Union.

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