after attacking Poland, the British and German dictator ignored an ultimatum Hitler had to be stopped. And when the East Prussia from the rest of Germany. Danzig and the corridor that separated threatened Poland, claiming the city of Czechoslovakia came next, and finally, pean governments which aimed to avoid Czechoslovakia, the Sudetenland, with France and Britain saw, too late, that ing authorities did not make to take away the Spanish racing federation, threatened the news for so long. Only this milton's familly – that has wigs and t-shirts sporting the out their faces and wore grey the nature of the protest – Ha- media were so puzzled over Perhaps it was the fact that the nently, bemused the foreign mtly – that has kept reports of the incident in the news for so long. Only this week, FIA, the international racing federation, threatened to take away the Spanish Grand Prix if the Spanish rac- ing authorities did not make suitable efforts to put their house in order. Whether the Spanish are racist is arguable but what cannot be doubted is that they are notoriously re- bellious. It will be a shame, though no surprise, if these threats and inter- national disappro- val act as a red rag to a bull and lead to more widespread racist abuse of Hamilton, if not out of any deeply-felt hatred for people of another colour but simply as an act of defiance. There is a lot more at stake here than the feelings of a rich sportsman, more at risk than the prestige and money to be lost by the withdrawal of the Spanish Grand Prix. What is hanging in the balance is the positive image of a whole people who, after the Aragonés-Henry incident and the monkey chants directed at England football players and Samuel Eto'o, are quickly gaining an international reputation for being racist. The Spanish sports authorities need to act decisively and quickly to nip this trend in the bud. Above all, it is down to Spanish sports fans themselves to turn their backs on the misguided souls who instigate such inci- dents. The statement that Lewis Hamilton should be dashing to the rescue is no doubt something the driver, and the people he represents, are proud of. The same cannot be said if the statement, the Spanish are racist, ever be comes received wisdom.

**Respectfully different**

How to deal with the cultural ambiguities of respect

Two things struck me about the publication of a recent poll which showed that some 56 percent of Spaniards believe that immigrants should be obliged “to respect Spanish customs.” The first was just how loaded the concept of respect is here, and the second was that I, an immigrant myself, didn’t have a clue what they were talking about. What customs was I meant to respect and what, exactly, did “re- spect” mean? If any Catalan or Spaniard wants me to respect their right to have dinner at 10 o’clock in the evening, they’ve got it. I’ve never suggested to any of them that they do otherwise, even if after several years of trying it myself I went back to my custom of dining a little earlier in the day. Real respect is one thing, but expecting me to go to bed with indigestion was something I considered beyond the call of civic duty.

Respect is something people in Spain generally tend to feel quite strongly about. It’s a concept that tends to get an emotional reaction. Couple that with the word “customs” and you’ve got everything-and-the-kitchen-sink concepts, and you get a lot of strong feeling without any clear idea as to what it’s all about.

By customs, do they mean law, language, re- ligion, what we eat, how we dress, what holidays we celebrate, all of that, most of that, or...well, what exactly? Why don’t they just come out and say it?

The usefulness of such vague language is that it allows sentiments of bigotry and xenophobia to hide behind the more defensible demand that mi- grants obey the laws and respect the culture. That newcomers need to learn the language to be able to function in society. All of us, of course, are obliged to respect the law. Knowing the language is a necessity for newcomers can avoid and an ob- vious handicap to anyone who does. If there are criminal elements among immigrants, then the means for dealing with them must be legal. To speak of cus-

**Lost for Words**

A black day for Spain

Lewis Hamilton is black. He is also English, 23-years old and the most exciting young ta- lent on the F1 cir- cuit. Hamilton has also become a hate-figure among Spanish racing fans due to his rivalry with former team mate, Spain’s Fernando Alonso. It is this rivalry that sparked a racist protest during testing at the Circuit de Cata- lunya in Montmeló earlier this month. The heckling of the British driver by a small group of spectators shocked and, perhaps more perti- nently, bemused the foreign press, particularly in the UK. Perhaps it was the fact that the media were so puzzled over the nature of the protest – Ham-ilton’s tormentors blacked out their faces and wore grey wigs and t-shirts sporting the (badly-spelt) message: Hamilton’s family – that has kept reports of the incident in the news for so long. Only this week, FIA, the international racing federation, threatened to take away the Spanish Grand Prix if the Spanish rac- ing authorities did not make suitable efforts to put their house in order.

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