



Remarks in Parliament by the President of the Catalan Government on the 9N Trial

Barcelona, 8 February 2017

Today, there is a Member of Parliament who is not able to attend this plenary session, and it is not due to an illness nor has she taken leave. In these moments, our companion, Irene Rigau, is being tried together with our former colleagues who held the highest positions of governmental responsibility in our country: President Artur Mas and Vice President Joana Ortega. They are being tried, accused of the crime of being faithful to the instructions of this Parliament, which was also faithful to the instructions given by the citizens.

Therefore this Parliament, in its first plenary session called and held since the trial of November 9th of 2014, cannot proceed as though nothing has happened. It cannot look the other way or remain indifferent about the fact that, at this moment, there are political leaders being prosecuted for allowing 2.3 million citizens to take part in that event, and who conveyed a loud and clear message of wanting to solve a political problem by voting, through the ballot.

I have requested the floor so that this exceptional situation is put on record in the Chamber that represents the people of Catalonia, and also to convey some considerations that go beyond this moment in time as I express the growing concerns that are at the centre of Catalan society as a whole. An immense majority of Catalan society, whatever their thoughts are on what the relationship between Catalonia and Spain should be like, has visibly shown an exemplary democratic attitude. We have also made evident our will to protect fundamental rights and we have done so on every occasion, like no one other: In the rejection of terrorism, opposing the war in Iraq, rebelling against the government's lies about the 11-M attacks, and, in these last five years, in a manner that has no precedent in Europe, in the demand for the right to vote.

This recentralising drift, accelerated and worsened by the ruling against the Statute of Catalonia, and the previous campaign eleven years ago that collected signatures against it, confirm the structural problem deteriorating Spain's democracy. A democracy that sends to the courtroom the people responsible for such an edifying and healthy event like the 9-N, a day which created such deep and noble sense of citizenship, is a democracy that has fallen ill.

And this goes far back.

It did not come out unscathed during the transition and now it is losing credibility at the hands of forces that we know have always been there, despite that for many years we thought they had left or had been reconverted. Today, Spain's democracy has allowed itself a political trial against the former president of Catalonia and two members of his government without blushing or asking itself what the global public opinion is asking. Yesterday, an article of a leading media outlet assured that the trial "is not something one would expect to see in Europe". A few hours later, the influential *Internacional Liberal* expressed, yesterday



afternoon, in very blunt terms: this trial is a “farce” and a “spectacle”. MEPs from different countries have also expressed enormous concern about the path the Spanish state is following.

Yet, as you can see, the Spanish political system is not in distress. There is nothing that worries it. It has the main opposing party completely submitted to the governing party. It has another party that already acts at its behest, yesterday liberal, today social democrat, and tomorrow, whatever is necessary to guarantee the placidity of the government. It has the support of the media, public and private, who, if necessary, take care of wedging its position with a wall of disinformation and, at times, actual manipulations and lies to make it difficult for Spanish society to contrast the propaganda they are being served.

President Mas, Vice President Ortega and Minister Rigau are guilty of having trusted in Parliament, and believing in the idea that in democracy the first thing is to serve and listen to the citizens that make it possible. Without them, there may be government, there may be legality, there may be tribunals, but there is no democracy or liberty. A democracy that doesn't care what its citizens think or want is incomplete, it is lacking, it is confined to limits that are out of the people's hands. Looking back at the events prior to November 9th one can see that for many years now there has been a majority in the polls and in Parliament that wants to decide its own future. It also confirms that there is an appeal for dialogue in order to resolve this conflict permanently as well as a willingness to reach agreement.

To all of this, there is neither dialogue, nor proposals. Instead, trials and threats. And a democracy of a variable intensity, regulated at the convenience of the ruling majority.

Consequently, the State can cynically disobey court rulings, including the Constitutional Court's, without even the slightest of injunctions. It violates up to 34 rulings, some very sensitive such the ones relating to school grants or the 0.7% in personal income tax ruling, yet nothing happens: When the State breaches these rulings, it seems the rule of law is strengthened.

In 2016, the European Parliament issued a report that denounces Spain as the third Member State with the most open cases of European Law infringements. But nothing happens.

The citizens of Catalonia that exhibit their support for the former president are considered coercers of justice and seem to have fewer rights than a former talk-show guest and former senior official of the State who recommends a good execution by firing squad for President Mas, or than a newspaper director, who first accuses and then sets a verdict the courts should give despite the trial not being over. Needless to say, recommending execution by firing squad for the President of Catalonia isn't even condemned, and putting pressure on the courts with a front page of a newspaper is seen with absolute normality.

The normality of impunity. Because in Spain the President of the Catalan Government can go on trial for providing the ballots boxes, but the minister responsible for the Yak-42 is relocated to State Council. Because one can alter election results with false reports produced and paid for with reserve funds to destroy the reputation of President Mas or Mayor Trias, and yet no one gets even a miserable fine. How is it that a conspiracy from the Minister of



Interior and the existence of political police are revealed but everything gets dismissed in court? How come there are heads of police with foreign bank accounts to their name with assets and money that you would need thirty lifetimes of police wages to justify them, and yet no prosecutor or police unit bursts into anyone's house with the media warned of it beforehand?

How can you fall into indecency by associating the conference in Brussels with the death of a child while the same party prevents anyone from knowing exactly what personal expenses have been paid for with the former Head of State's reserve fund? This is money that comes from the pockets of modest families, the unemployed, the self-employed, business owners, civil servants... Public funds that we don't even know if they have been used properly, or how much has been used on suspicious expenses that have nothing to do with "what the people concerned about" or "the people's issues".

How is it that you can sponsor the Francisco Franco Foundation and pay tribute to the Blue Division, while you accuse the President of the Catalan Government of being a Nazi for providing the ballots?

Why can you console and accompany a convict of State terrorism, but will not tolerate the accompaniment of those accused of allowing a pacific and exemplary participative process?

They say all of this is legal. And because it is legal it is democratic. However, the 9-N, because they believe it wasn't legal, then it is not democratic? With these standards, being a conscientious objector would be antidemocratic, so would defending the rights of homosexuals to adopt, and to oppose the, perfectly legal, evictions of families with children but no means would be considered an inadmissible act to pressure the courts.

It is for this reason that Spain's democracy has fallen ill. Maybe they think they will cure it through threats and intransigencies. I think this makes it worse.

This trial will be judged by history, just as the ruling against the Statute was and just as this obtuse rejection to discuss about what is happening between Catalonia and Spain will be, because things are happening. To not want to talk about it is a mistake and an irresponsible decision, because it is this that we need to talk about. Dialogue requires willingness. If one can be an interlocutor between Donald Trump and everything Latin America, North Africa and the Middle East represents, one should be even more capable of be an active interlocutor with Catalonia.

Members of Parliament, let us talk. Now that that we can and want to. Will you?

Carles Puigdemont Casamajó
President of the Government of Catalonia