

Towards collective freedom from individual freedom

Jordi Cuixart, President of Òmnium Cultural; Lledoners Prison, July 2020

It was said by Ferrater Mora describing Catalan people that “the true common sense it is not only limited to pursuing what is more accessible, the everyday and immediate reality. The ideal of the common sense is to pursue what is fair, convenient and right, even if this persecution is at times the most unwise action that anyone could imagine.

The process of national Catalan liberation belongs to the wish to achieve what is considered fair, to strengthen the group progress pursuing the hope of a better future for everybody. It started with the civil society as the main actor and, as all national liberation movements, has gone and will go through many phases.

But there is a point of no return that has made it irreversible, when citizens decide to follow the voice of their conscience; It is called by Ramin Jahanbegloo as the Gandhian moment of Catalonia.

It has been possible to reach this point because of individual liberation, inseparable from collective liberation, which has the 1st of October 2017 as its best. That day we put the body in front of the police brutality, unpunished today. After what became the most important act of civil disobedience in recent years in Europe, we understood that the prison and the repression could be no limit to make possible the legitimate national aspirations. Without the personal self-determination of every citizen to place democratic exercise before unfair prohibition, there would have been no collective self-determination.

In fact, we know that in 2010 nothing started, we came recently from the public consultations on independence, but it was a turning point, insomuch as Catalan society decided to place itself definitively in front of the politicians to take the reins of its own destiny. As Muriel Casals the then president of Òmnium Cultural said, we went “from protest to proposal”, and turn regional resignation into a sovereigntist proposal.

This explains the fact that for ten years streets and ballot boxes were filled, exceptionally at an European level but at the same time picking up a historical and

country tradition of non-violent mobilisation. We cannot forget that Barcelona hosted, for example, the largest pro-refugee demonstration in Europe, in the country of shared struggles.

The organized civil society is and will be an incentive for change. Today it prevents repression from normalizing and it is one of the best guarantees to keep social mobilization, to make every new step without leaving anyone along the way. As Professor Terricabras points out in his article, “a political process has a guaranteed success when it is in the hands of aware citizens and willing to exercise pacifically their civic responsibility.” It is lived as a democratic and justice responsibility with more than 2,500 people who suffered reprisals or one thousand people wounded in October 1st, but at the same time in memory for those who gave everything in worse circumstances, such as during the long night of the Franco regime- and of responsibility with the future generations which deserve a better country.

The fight for rights and freedoms strengthens cohesion. Activism is weaving a large net of citizens who do not question about their beliefs or place of birth, but interpellate themselves to build and decide where they want to arrive together. That builds a future shared with everyone, without asking anyone to give up.

And yes, it is clear that the exercise and rights achievement is synonymous with conflict, as Benet Salellas explains, but this fact should not make us be afraid of conflict. On the contrary, conflicts have enabled communities around the world to progress. What we need to worry about as a group, wherever we live, are the anti-democratic answers to conflicts. Regarding the case of Spain, the consensus of the main human rights organizations is clear: Spain ignores international justice, violates basic freedoms and pursues the right to protest.

The trial to democracy was intended to be an act of force of the regime of 78, as in fact the general cause against the entire independence movement as well as the gag law (ley mordaza), which remains in full swing. Those months of trial, when we were in the dock as humble representatives of civil society, we decided to accuse the Spanish state of violating human rights. To turn into a group exercise of emancipation and maturity a state trial that sought revenge and public ridicule, not only to deactivate the pro-independence movement but to condemn any social movement suspected of political dissent.

This is why, under the motto of We will do it again (Ho Tornarem a Fer), we also made a deep act of affection with all the people in the State and around the world

who mobilise to build fair, free and empowered societies, such as Catalan sovereignty. We told the judge that all we did in 2017 autumn was what we had to do, and that we will do it again whenever necessary, assuming totally the consequences, as many people do around the world from the Mediterranean coasts to Hong Kong squares disobeying unfair laws to protect collective rights.

And aware that the exercise of freedoms joins together all democrats, the state has not only repressed but has tried to dehumanize the process of national emancipation. It has hidden its social background and has emptied it of content, in the middle of an authoritarian strategy that has suffered widely from feminism to environmentalism on a global scale. Unsuccessfully, of course, because the strength of the people is uncontrollable and survives between generations even though the years of prison sentence imposed, as Alba Artés Beltrán and Júlia Berrido Aceña recall in their article.

Repression seeks to divide those who fight. We live in a present conditioned by the brutal and reactionary response of the State to democratic demands, and Tamara Carrasco expresses this with as much sincerity as courage, she has been doubly victim of a reprisal for being an activist woman. That's why it's so important to be aware of what we are learning. As she herself recalls, "the suffering of so many victims of reprisal throughout our struggle for freedom must make sense." Just the fact of persisting gives it all the meaning.

Just now, in the midst of this present we cannot afford to fall into desperation. Again, civil society will be responsible for transforming doubts into determination and encouragement to move forward. More than 1,000 days in prison later, we are more aware of our weaknesses and strengths, and we have tasted how far the regime is able to go to keep its privileges. At the same time, we have also learnt that maintaining coherence, asking to citizens to speak frankly and helping to strengthen country consensus will be the key to each new step. A good way to legitimise the decisions and actions of Catalan society as a whole.

We fight for self-determination of Catalonia because we do not want to renounce a Republic that guarantees the right to a dignified life for all citizens. But also because we have the right to live it. And because in the shared journey to get there, we have the lovely chance to fight for human rights around the world. The struggle gives hope as it advances.