

Legitimize a new starting point

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Independence is not the end; it is the instrument. Independence is not the ultimate goal; it is the method and the way to achieve it. Independence is not the point of arrival; it is the starting point. Independence is the availability of a base camp, a lever for change, a launching pad. It seems that we shouldn't have to insist. That this has already been said many times. But the repetition of disqualifying commonplaces by opponents forces us to insist, and often so in the case of some arguments. The independence of Catalonia is above all the pursuit of a starting point. That's why we want it; to start a new phase. We want this because it is normal to want it. Because the exceptional, what would have to be justified, would be to renounce it. Because all free peoples clamor for what is theirs. That is why so many people are working to build a majority for independence. It is the result of a long process of democratic struggle. To be able to make policy with all its attributes. To be able to assume all the social challenges with maximum guarantees.

Independence is also, clearly, a point of arrival. This is so because the desire to be independent and to be on equal footing with the emancipated peoples of the world has not yet been achieved. After such a long road --centuries-- of political inanity, some of our fellow citizens have become accustomed to dependence. National dependence has become so assimilated into their normality, their consciousness, their mental routines, even their identity, that the prospect of having to revise all that frightens them. It's hard to say whether they are more afraid of collective freedom or of their own. They don't think that the state that currently exists must be justified; those who have it, have it. C'est la vie. Immutable history. On the other hand, they never seem to be able to justify a Catalan state with its own political power --it makes them dizzy just to imagine it. If forced to choose, they prefer the master they've always had. It's okay for them, they say, that Catalans can't decide much of importance about their own future. They see risks. They don't trust it. They prefer to continue at the side of those who have been in charge up to now. Maybe they think that the quality of the Spanish governments that we have had up to now is beyond our reach?

History shows us that, in general, once a people has a state, they don't give it up. And the loss of a state can only be the consequence of their subordination-- social, political, military, cultural, economic-- to some other, stronger, state that gobbles it up. From this perspective, clearly, the construction of the Catalan state constitutes an immediate goal. And the Catalans who oppose it do so because they consider that Spain is their state-- with all that it represents.

There have been many peoples in the contemporary era, with more or less effort, who have been able to provide themselves with effective instruments of self-government and who have institutionalized them in some way. Catalonia, however, during the long period of bourgeois dominance, could not, did not want to, or didn't know how to do this. In fact, we have never had a pro-independence middle class that posed the construction of a Catalan state as a strategy. Only now, long after the periodic attempts by Republicans eighty years ago, with a different social driver, the popular initiative, has the cause of Catalan independence become

broad-based enough and consistent enough to be able to achieve political victory. The elections of S-27 will provide a good measure.

The arguments to be used when asking people with doubts to vote in favor of independence are many and of all kinds. The most important, undoubtedly, is to be able to have the same capacity as other people to deal with our problems and challenges. But there are additional arguments, of generosity and convenience, which could overcome their resistance. I suggest two. First: Although many people do not feel the "need for a Catalan state," why should they deprive their children and friends of the opportunity to have the same freedoms and political powers that Danish, Czech, Swedish or Irish people have? Will depriving them of the resources that others have guaranteed by their respective states be their political inheritance? Second: Many democrats would like a federal or confederate relationship with the people of Spain. Don't they think that the best way to negotiate a pact or agreement is by having the maximum freedom to adopt or reject it? Why is it that negotiations with Spain, of whatever kind, must be based on inequality between the parties? Is not independence, given the experience of history, the optimal starting point for any negotiation to be conducted on equal terms?

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