

Listen, Europe!

More than 300 years ago, Catalonia lost its national freedoms to become an oppressed minority within the Spanish state. After 40 years of Franco's dictatorship, with the Spanish Constitution of 1978, Catalonia regained some autonomy, which has, nevertheless, suffered constant attacks on the part of Spain from the beginning. In 2010, the Spanish Constitutional Court, in a partisan decision, decided to annul a substantial part of the Catalan Statute of Autonomy passed in a referendum by the people of Catalonia in 2006, which had already been considerably whittled down by the Spanish Congress of Deputies.

After this, the independence movement in Catalonia grew markedly. The demonstrations of more than one million people in favour of Catalonia's independence from 2012 to 2017 show this. The September 27, 2015 election in Catalonia, which led to an independentist parliamentary majority, also shows it. Finally, the referendum on Catalan self-determination on October 1, 2017, resulted in 90% of the vote clearly in favour of Catalonia becoming an independent state in the form of a republic. And the Catalan Republic was

proclaimed on October 27. The new Catalan state is fully economically viable, as shown by Nobel prizewinners, such as G. Becker, E. Kydland and J. Stiglitz.

The right to self-determination of peoples is stated in the Charter of the United Nations, which was signed by the Spanish state. Yet, the Spanish state refuses to recognise it. In fact, the Spanish state does not recognise Catalonia as a nation. The Spanish state was unable to win the self-determination referendum in a democratic way with arguments, despite its huge propaganda machine, which has not stopped telling outrageous 1984-style lies.

Ignoring just claims

Thus, faced with the just claims of the Catalan people, the Spanish state has not hesitated to violate fundamental rights, such as freedom of expression, closing down websites and preventing peaceful assembly. It has behaved like a dictatorship. It has incarcerated civil society leaders for supporting independence and the democratically elected ministers of the Catalan government who did not go into exile, threatening them with 30-year jail terms. It has also imposed exorbitant fines.

The Popular Party (PP), which only obtained 8% of the vote in the last Catalan parliament election in 2015, rules Catalonia from Madrid after the abolition of Catalonia's autonomy on October 27, treating it like a colony. All this in an environment of corruption: the ruling PP party is one of the most corrupt in Europe.

At the same time, the Spanish state is the one accumulating more sanctions for breaching European regulations. The point is: can the EU tolerate a member state like Spain improperly violating the fundamental rights of European citizens, citizens of a nation like Catalonia, which have for years peacefully claimed their national rights?

The democratic credibility of the European Union is at stake. Surveys show the disillusionment of a very significant part of European citizens regarding the functioning of democracy in the EU. If Europe allows the Spanish neo-Francoist dictatorship to crush the rights of the Catalan people and Catalan political prisoners, this will lead to the collapse of the European Union, as it will lose all of its democratic credibility. The EU should recognise the right of the Catalan Republic to exist for the sake of its own democratic future.

RANDOM THOUGHTS

TERRY PARRIS Writer

To the lighthouse

My first random thought is to wish for a fair election on the 21st of December, for a Happy Christmas for Carles Puigdemont, Oriol Junqueres, their Government, and the two Jordis, hopefully all back with their families, and also for a more peaceful 2018.

According to Google, a lighthouse keeper's job, in the past, was one of the hardest. They worked long, grinding

hours. They could not call in sick and rarely had a day off. It was not a job for the faint-hearted. In Virginia Woolf's novel 'To the Lighthouse', the promise of going to the Lighthouse took a whole life for the Ramsay family characters to get there. It remained, for some of the characters, a far off goal or dream before consummation. Are we guilty of waiting endlessly for something, some situation, or goal? If we

are, then aren't we wasting precious 'now' time? Our concentration on one single thing may be the very obstacle making it impossible to reach. Sometimes, even often, the goal we think is so right for us, may not be what is best for us. If we stopped wanting so hard, life might feel free to flow in the way that is best. I don't meditate for a specific end but rather, I meditate that the best outcome occurs.

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"Timid towards Catalonia? I have implemented [article] 155 and I dismissed the entire government; that has not been done since the Second World War" Mariano Rajoy, Spanish prime minister

Pride comes before a fall, Mr Rajoy? It will be interesting to look back in the future and see how history records your 'achievement' of removing a democratically elected government from office.