

TONI COMIN

TRIBUNE
ORIOL MARTINEZ ALÒS-MONER

Economist and member of the Economy
Section of the Catalan National Assembly

This author was recently at the presentation of Toni Comin's new book "Cartes des del cor d'Europa" (Letters from the heart of Europe), which was attended online by this multi-layered politician. Along with his pals from the European Parliament, Carles Puigdemont and Clara Ponsatí, he may best reflect the Catalan independence drive. Rather than being "un Català de soca rel" (a Catalan with deep old roots), he possibly better represents a society as multidimensional as Catalonia's is, where more than half of its citizens have roots outside the land, from Spain, especially, and beyond.

Indeed, Comin's father, was raised in a traditionalist family in next-door Zaragoza, arguably one of the most conservative parts of Spain, and, for that matter, with a public opinion as anti-Catalan as you can find. Against all odds, Comín turned into one of the key figures of anti-fascism and Catalanism, settling here after graduating in engineering at the University of Barcelona. Having paid with prison and torture, today, telling of his leadership, stature, and particularly of his consensual figure, there is the "Plaça Alfonso Comin", a dedicated square in Barcelona.

Toni Comin has also experienced the cruel and vengeful nature of Madrid, pushing him into an exile of six years so far. Leuven is his current residence, where he lives with his male partner and their only daughter, born in exile. It is an exile mocked by some because it (supposedly) has no place in a (supposed) democracy. Yet it involves no minor sacrifices on the personal level, beyond those on the professional and political levels. For instance, he went through the early loss of his brother and, more recently, of his beloved mother (also a courageous fighter against oppressors); both of whom had moved to Leuven to spend the end of the lives together.

Comin's joining the pro-independence

movement comes out the aversion of Madrid to accommodate Catalonia's nationhood. For Catalonia was asking, back in the 2000s, something that Euskadi and Navarra were granted after the dictatorship formally ended, a "primus inter pares", including a fair fiscal balance with Madrid. The umpteenth of the state's murky games came during the failed negotiations of the Catalan "Estatut", or Constitution (2004-06), followed by for the Catalan Socialists, a federalist outlet of the more Jacobin Spanish version.

Having seen first-hand Spain's everlasting Catalanophobic political attitude, Comin joined Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (Catalonia's Republican Party), one of the two main political parties that, after

the mass rallies calling for independence from some 13 years ago, actively defended the need of statehood. He became Catalan health minister in 2016, proposing a progressive social agenda, promoting equality in access to health and stability for health staff. His tenure was cut short when Catalan institutions were suppressed by Madrid after the independence referendum on October 1, 2017, was held against all the odds.

Comin, and his colleagues from the Catalan government, knew what was ahead, beyond the constant bullying from Madrid's servile media; their choice was unambiguous, prison or exile. Yet he kept on, strongminded like his father, moved by firm democratic convictions. Furthermore, believing that political taboos have no place in a democracy; in fact, during the gloomy years of Basque and state terrorism, Madrid had the motto that "everything was on the table if projected peacefully". Obviously, that was just an illusion, pure rhetoric from a political mindset that sees the Catalan speaking regions as war booty rather than political subjects. Yet let's conclude with a happier and inspiring note from his exile: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2kP8HCp5to>



Toni Comin. / ACN