



President Quim Torra Address: Our Moment

Barcelona, September 4th 2018

Dear friends

This conference is in no way a protest, but a proposal.

Because Catalonia finds itself at a crossroads. Because with political prisoners, exiles and thousands of Catalans being investigated and tried, the times are serious. Because freedom and justice are only valid in the truth. And because the truth demands our determination, resistance and hope.

For this reason this address is a proposal for us to stop at the crossroads, observe, think, and look again at what has happened so far and to analyse what traps and opportunities we could face from now on. Not only should we have no fear of doing this, but it is a requirement, a need and an obligation to move forward and once again look to the future. Towards our obstinate commitment to the just cause of the Independence of Catalonia.

To say it a little better, allow me a brief poetic incursion, from poet Zoraida Burgos, which I have read compulsively this summer, trapped in her world of words:

«Finally submerged the shadow of the old times
in the dark orb of the cellar,
we compress the cadence of the steps for the ignored paths
searching for the genuine roots of the
mythical words
of peace and freedom» (literal translation)

I believe this is exactly the point: we need to get out of the orb of the cellar and travel ignored paths to arrive at the genuine roots, the deep meaning of what we propose for ourselves as a country: peace and freedom.

And before continuing, I would like to point out some considerations which are the basis of all the reflections that I offer you today.



For example, although we are not where we want to be, we have not lost ground. In other words, it is true that in some aspects we have not moved forward in these recent months, but neither have we taken any steps back and we have renounced absolutely nothing.

Our starting point is the referendum of self-determination of October 1st, the mass mobilisation of October 3rd and the political declaration of independence of the 27th (of October). Before international public opinion, our cause is more solid and respected than ever.

I also wish to make clear my absolute confidence in the people of Catalonia:

I speak of a mature people who have not let themselves be frightened by the prisons, the exiles, the threats, the legal persecutions, the blackmail, and the prophecies of catastrophe coming from the Spanish state, from all the machinery of the Spanish state, beginning with the King and ending with the final magistrate of the Supreme Court.

I speak of a plural people, of languages and beliefs, of origins and militancies, cohered by the values of cohabitation, peace and fraternity. And a people who knows that if we lose respect for the values which have made us what we are, we lose everything.

I speak of a society that has been upturned, shaken, critical – fortunately critical – which has made resistance to injustice and oppression a mandate of life which has committed itself daily to defending to the hilt the republican values of liberty, equality and fraternity.

I speak of a mature people who have made truth a fortress and democratic commitment a virtue.

I speak of a society which has seen how the human rights of its citizens were violated in the name of authoritarian legalism and against which it was able to rise and safeguard its rights of origin, its sovereignty.

But I speak too of a solidaristic people which has understood that dignity is non-negotiable, that human rights are non-negotiable, and that it is not possible to suspend or curtail the social advances which lead to a fairer society with opportunities for all.

No; social rights are clearly non-negotiable too.

I speak of a society that, despite the inequality that we fight, has made cohesion, equality of opportunity, effort, the value of labour, and of diversity and welcoming into its flags of collective identity.



I speak of a people united against fascism and who will always fight, with all the arguments of democracy, humanism and decency, the serpent's egg of intolerance and totalitarianism.

I speak above all of a society in which the majority is committed to the just cause of the independence of Catalonia and which rises fraternally and in solidarity with all those who are persecuted and punished for having favoured, assisted, defended or organised that act of peaceful and democratic determination, deeply peaceful and democratic, which was the referendum of October the 1st.

I speak, definitively, as Zoraida Burgos wrote, of a people which persists, tenaciously, tirelessly, in search of the genuine roots of the mythical words of peace and freedom.

I invite you, then, to search for them together, this evening. Because this address is no way a protest, but a proposal.



How we arrived here

The country has changed a lot in the last ten years. We can say, to use an everyday expression, that it has turned inside-out, like a sock. It is extremely important to understand that the independence movement is not just today the central political current of the Catalan society; it has the social majority of the country behind it; the last two parliamentary elections have confirmed the republican democratic mandate and have given an absolute majority to the pro-independence forces.

The surveys certify this situation as do other important data: 80% of the population give support to a binding referendum of self-determination, and 80% are also against the repression exercised by the Spanish state during recent months and once again, 80% no longer see the monarchy as an institution they identify with.

These three great examples of consensus, namely referendum, anti-repression and republicanism as a form of government are fundamental.

It's a matter of an irreversible evolution, I have no doubt.

Can anyone be surprised? Who could not want to decide their own future? Who could be on the side of anyone who represses peaceful ideas and democratic mandates? Who could support a monarchy which goes along with violence against the citizens of its own people?

All this is the result of what we have lived through these years. All the masks and make-up of the transition have fallen away or melted away down the cheeks. I am not talking of any institution in particular, nor a political party, nor a powerful sector. I am talking about a system that has lived thanks to its holding on to the old Lampedusian principle that everything changes in order to stay the same.

The constitutional pact was broken with the sentence of the Statute. And the most intolerant and least democratic face of the state has blown up now that one of the fundamental pillars on which the status quo and the hegemonies of power of Madrid as the basis for the indivisible unity of Spain against the sovereignty of the peoples has been put in doubt.

The state committed a great mistake with that sentence, and now it may commit a second one with the sentence of the Supreme Court against the government and parliamentary committee of the Catalan parliament.



Before a radically democratic and peaceful independence process, and I will repeat it as often as necessary, radically democratic and peaceful, the violence of the Spanish state, of all the powers of the state from the first of October to the subsequent excesses inflicted on the Catalan politicians who complied with the mandate of our people – ministers, parliamentarians, mayors, councillors but also hundreds of anonymous citizens – has buried the civil rights and fundamental freedoms that theoretically the Spanish Constitution has to defend us with as citizens of a democracy.

Furthermore, as Felipe VI reminded us in his speech of October 3rd, it was that very same Constitution which justified the unjustifiable: prisons, exiles, persecution and violence.

Today everyone has put their cards on the table. After a very difficult, but revealing, autumn and winter, we now know how far the Spanish state is prepared to go when we take the peaceful and democratic road to self-determination.

And we know something better. Something that Pompeu Fabra foresaw more than 85 years ago: “We will only have what we know how to win.”

And yet, today, with the perspective of the past year, the referendum of October 1st emerges as an extraordinary outburst of citizen empowerment and an exercise in sovereignty, which I wish to revindicate here and now as a democratic and peaceful act. An act which was transcendent and constituent.

So, the police use of violence and force used on the first of October against a people who were voting, was added to by all the legal and judicial force and violence used against public representatives who were true to the mandate of the people.

The Parliament of Catalonia was dissolved; its Government dismissed, imprisoned or obliged to go into exile; and thousands of Catalans – the number is terrifying, thousands! – have been investigated, cautioned, processed or detained, I insist, only for having collaborated in a democratic vote.

The most elementary human rights have been and are being trampled underfoot; freedom of expression and thought, threatened and criminalised. And these last days we have even had to listen to how we are threatened with new extortions and applications of article 155 or how, even openly, we hear talk of how the final result of the trial of October 1st could be conditioned by whatever political attitudes we take.



Intolerable declarations that do nothing other than confirm that we are standing before a political trial, another tool used by the state to try to annul an idea, to use non-political means to combat what is a political question.

I take this opportunity to confirm what I said in my investiture speech: of all the political decisions that my government and I take, only we are and will be responsible for them.

It is about all of this that I wish to talk to you this evening:

I want to talk to you about the great general cause against civil and national rights that the Spanish state has instructed and maintained. Of the systematic suspension and annulment of social rights voted for by the Catalans and challenged by the Spanish courts.

I am talking to you of months in prison, months of exile, for having allowed a people to decide its own future.

I am talking to you about stolen lives, moments of love kidnapped, of staring through prison bars.

I am talking to you about too many tears spilt.

I am talking to you about so many sterile threats.

I am also talking to you about a deed that leaves the whole world incredulous, how in the 21st century the Spanish state does not want to respect the right of self-determination of the Catalans. A right recognised internationally and which many respected Spanish jurists recognise.

I contend that the Constitution itself recognises it, of how it tries to drown the democratic will of the people, how it is only capable of responding with violence to one of the most important, dynamic, persistent and peaceful European citizen movements of transformation and renovation of recent decades.

Let the Spanish state know that this democracy is our fortress, and our votes are our bastions. In other words, the free will of the people.

Because freedom has to be resolved in freedom.



Why are they so afraid of the ballot boxes? Maybe it is because, as former President Aznar said some days ago, the problem of independence is that “if we put the ballots boxes out, will we win”?

As our chronicler, Ramon Muntaner said “the rush bush has a force that, if all the bush is tied tightly with a rope, and you want to pull out together, I say to you that ten men, pull as they may, will not pull them out, even if more men take part; and if you remove the rope, an eight year-old lad will pull out the rushes one by one, and no rushes will remain.”

Well today the rope that binds us and makes us the rush bush are democracy, peace and liberty. And it is here, right here, where we have to become giants.

We have arrived further than ever on the road to Independence, overall for three reasons. Firstly, because we have not reacted, to anything, we have taken the initiative. Everything we have done has been done for the people and not against anyone.

Secondly, because in crucial moments we have known how to prioritise unity, which means generosity above particular or party interests.

And thirdly, because the independence project is inclusive and favours the population as a whole. Everyone will benefit from the existence of the Catalan Republic, whatever they think, wherever they come from, and however they feel. The proposal of the independence movement is a proposal of welfare, progress, cohesion, of the creation of opportunities and the sharing of the wealth.

It is because of all this that we are republicans. We are republicans because we want to found a society of rights and duties, of freedom and justice, of peace and opportunities.

A society open to the world, one which for years has interiorised the global challenges of the twentieth century, such as the digitalisation of the public administration, climate change, or the creation of efficient participatory tools in the management of government.

And these are the ideals of a better country which clashes with the Spanish state of old, unable now not just to understand, but also not even to listen to the voices of the nations which live here.



What now?

We have a clear objective. I insist: Catalonia as an independent state in the form of a Republic. We have a mandate and now it is necessary to overcome all the obstacles that they put in our way and to make it come true. These last weeks I have been explaining that it necessary to create a new moment. I have said that 'a new October the 1st is necessary'.

Clearly, the referendum has already taken place. We are not at all stuck on the same screen. I am not talking of repeating anything we've done. I propose that we are able to recuperate the dynamic of popular and democratic empowerment which led us to success on October 1st, and to join forces with all those who on the 3rd of October took to the street in defence of the civil and political rights and freedoms and against repression. Together we share the same republican values.

After months of resistance and the restoring of our institutions, we need to face the coming months, I would say the future weeks, with a clear determination, a willingness to sacrifice, to come together with a commitment to collective expectations in order to achieve our objective of a free and sovereign nation. It is the people who have given us the initiative to move this project forward.

It is true that this requires dialogue and, above all, negotiation. We will always persist in extending our hand to the Spanish state in order to find, together, bilaterally, a political solution to the serious political conflict between Spain and Catalonia.

It is a conflict that feeds from the very grave constitution crisis of the Spanish state and it will not be resolved until the Spanish people themselves empower themselves with their own sovereignty.

As the people of Catalonia has always done, we will once again listen to everyone, but we will never renounce our right to self-determination.

I would like to address all the people of the state, all those who share our fight for freedom, but also all those who do not share it.

To all of them we say that the people of Catalonia will never move away from the democratic, peaceful path, nor from the scrupulous respect for the right of people's self-determination, as well as the defence of civil rights for all citizens.



We are here and we will always be here, because, as President Kennedy said: “Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate”.

This address is also a proposal to all the citizens of Spain, whatever they think about the independence of Catalonia, but who when faced with violence, threats and injustices, wish to join us in a march for the defence of civil and social rights and the right of self-determination of the people.

To all those who are in solidarity with us, who share the same republican values, I offer my most fraternal embrace. I encourage you to get together in every town in Spain and to also join the march for our rights.

Thank you to all the citizens of Spain for showing your commitment to a political and non-repressive solution to the conflict between Catalonia and the institutions of the state.

This is why, friends, we need to do that which has been self-imposed by all societies that have fought for their freedom, based on the moral and ethical imperative of the scrupulous respect for the rights of persons and of peoples.

This proposal that I make to the people of Catalonia has a very simple motto: Freedom or freedom. And in line with the mandate of October 1st and with the great battles for freedom that we all have in our memory, like the example of Martin Luther King for civil rights, set out an action which every Catalan has made their own, if they wish to accept it: a march for the civil, social and national rights of Catalonia; a citizens' march for the free determination of the constituent people. This march is and has to be a wide, diverse and most importantly, a mass mobilisation.

Because it is not the Republic which will bring us the civil, social and national rights that we yearn for, but it is the struggle for these rights which will lead us to the Republic.

I am convinced that if the people of Catalonia want it, we can achieve it, and this road we can make together, and we have the historical opportunity to do it together.

Distanced or divided, with the seed of distrust, we cannot overcome a challenge like this one.

But if we march together, from exile, from the prisons, from the government, the parliament, the local administrations, the civil society, the social and economic agents, together, moving forward, always forward, we can achieve it.



A march, then, for civil and national rights which begins tomorrow and finishes the day of the sentences against the political prisoners; sentences that we can only conceive as being absolutory, because the crimes ascribed to our companions are non-existent.

We will not resign ourselves to unjust sentences which only bring more pain, more conflict, more repression. Nothing will ever be built on top of humiliation.

But why should we stop here? Because before the resolutions issued by the courts of Belgium and Germany, based on International Treaties of the Human Rights and of the People, any sentence that condemns any political prisoner or exiled Catalan is unimaginable.

From this perspective, personally I cannot accept nor will accept any sentence that is not free and full absolution.

If the result were otherwise and a sentence emerged which were not that of free absolution of the accused, I will study what decisions have to be taken and I will put myself at the disposition of the people of Catalonia, through their legitimate representatives in Parliament. Furthermore, this decision will be passed to the Catalan representatives in the Congress and the Senate in Spain and to those in the European Parliament so that they may act in good faith with the mandate of the people of Catalonia.

We have no alternative to our personal and collective conscience: because wanting to be a citizen who participates, wanting to be a people which decides in a democratic and peaceful way – can never be a crime. Voting is not a crime. A democratic idea cannot be threatened. And we must never allow the lie to win: freedom cannot be persecuted.

“It is not in resignation that we affirm ourselves, but in rebelling before injustices”, said Paolo Friere. Every day that our prisoners and exiles have spent – and spend – in prison or in exile, we attend an act of revenge against them and, also, against the people of Catalonia.

And in the denouncing of these injustices I propose to you this march and this commitment.

I do not fear this commitment that I offer, not the responsibility that it involves. I do not fear it because I believe in the right of having rights, and overall, in the obligation of any democratic leader to defend them too. I do not fear them because I believe in our country and in the obligation to defend it too.

But allow me to explain something else to you.



Our Opportunities

1. The internationalisation of the process:

It is undeniable that the Catalan cause has grown in the international sphere while we were suffering the most acute phase of repression here. In fact, the two go together. This is because, as I will talk about later, there is a tendency in the world to link acceptance of independence processes with the unjust treatment of the peoples involved.

The First of October changed everything, both in Catalonia and around the world.

Consider how the exiled politicians have been received in different European countries. As democratic leaders of a people. In Spain, on the other hand, they have been treated like criminals.

Let's look at facts. There is a range of reports from different international human rights organisations, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, that have questioned the repression against the independence movement. The same has been done by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Special Rapporteur for freedom of expression, also from the UN.

The UN Human Rights Committee has admitted the complaints made by President Puigdemont and by former presidential candidate Jordi Sánchez against the Spanish courts' impediment of their respective parliamentary investiture debates.

The Court Of Human Rights in Strasbourg has also accepted and is processing various complaints for breach of fundamental rights related to the independence referendum of the First of October. It will be a slow process, but there are many cases coming in which we may expect favourable results.



We have already seen how Belgium and Germany have refused to release members of the Catalan government into Spanish custody so that they may be arbitrarily imprisoned without chance of a fair trial. The German court has reiterated that the charges made against President Puigdemont and the rest of his government are not crimes in Germany, just as in the rest of Europe. European justice systems have shown up the political persecution against the Catalan government to the point where the Spanish Supreme Court has been forced to withdraw all of its related European arrest warrants, allowing those Catalan politicians freedom to move and live anywhere in the world.

And so, there isn't a more eloquent picture of the point we've arrived at than the image of the Government of Catalonia that organized the referendum of self-determination, some dispersed among Spanish State prisons, and others, those who opted to leave the country, at liberty in various European countries.

All of this tells us something else. It tells us that there is a fight for democracy going round the world, a democracy indispensably connected to civil and political rights for all human beings, and to the diversity of peoples and their right to exist. It's a fight for dignity, against violence, against exclusion.

We see it, for example, in the RIF (Northern Morocco), not far from home, and we see it on the other side of the Mediterranean in the fight against the restriction of freedoms of the Erdogan regime and the persecution of the Kurdish people. But also within the European Union, which must be a sanctuary for human rights, there is growing citizen concern over the policies of governments such as that of Hungary and Italy in relation to refugees and immigration, Poland in relation to lack of judicial independence, and Spain in the regression of rights and liberties. In the USA, in Russia and in China, a common concern unites in one cause various human beings, peoples and diverse cultures.

The aspiration of the Catalan people adds itself to the aspirations of other peoples of the world who want to live in peace, freedom and coexistence and who have found a way to live that way. Catalonia wants to form part of this chain of effort, wants to add its efforts to the uplifting of those peoples of the world who support human dignity and self-determination. This is why it



doesn't want to live in a system that uses violence and repression to impede a legitimate claim; we don't want to live in a system that uses fear and censorship to make up the environment in which its citizens must go about their lives.

One People, For Civil, Social and National Rights

This fight for democracy is an unstoppable movement. In this way, our successes abroad are not a coincidence, nor are they by chance. They are the result of hard work from a stable and mature society which has achieved important consensus on rights and liberties, and which isn't afraid of confrontation in the form of democratic and public debate.

Social cohesion, coexistence, welfare, equality, justice... none of these are threatened by peaceful democratic debate over self-determination, independence, federalism, or autonomy dissolution. We are an established people, not just a collective with the same ID or passport. This debate - and even this political struggle - doesn't threaten all of that. That hasn't happened anywhere where self-determination has been exercised. Has Quebec broken up? Has Scotland been broken? On the contrary. Carrying out these debates reinforces and empowers a society which doesn't allow itself to be ruled from outside, as if it were dysfunctional.

Today more than anything, we must take advantage of the moment to show how, in spite of certain interested parties' prophecies last autumn of economic disaster, our society continues to demonstrate its dynamism and capacity for growth for jobs and companies. The Catalan economy has resisted all of the bad omens and shows sustained growth, reinforced industry and new export records. We have a solid economic base which, with an independent state, can be put in the service of the reduction of existing inequalities and the guarantee of equal opportunities.

Cohesion and coexistence are not put at risk by the will of the majority to exercise a right which is universally-recognised, even by the Spanish constitution in the form of international treaties



to which it subscribes. Cohesion, coexistence and citizens' welfare depend on standards of living, equality of opportunities, and the care taken by those in power towards the disadvantaged and those most in need.

Catalonia is a country forged on consensus and the fight for social and civil rights and political freedom. That will not be changed by any Spanish government nor by an alliance under article 155. And it is this consensus that we call upon again. Linguistic immersion, social partnership, commitment to cohesion, dialogue and non-violence have been the great forces of consensus that make Catalans one people, diverse yet cohesive.

Because of this it's so important that social and progressive policies which the government of Catalonia want to introduce are converted into the driving force of the change to a republic. And also because of this it's so important to urgently recover the progressive and advanced laws suspended by the Constitutional Court at the behest of the PP.

And on this priority, one point: The General Policy Debate, where we will present the plan to carry out of all of the social measures suspended by the Constitutional Court and make them come into effect. To name a few, the Law For Emergency Housing and Energy Measures, Universal Healthcare, the Catalan Agency for Social Protection and many others. Up to 14 laws suspended. We will recover them all.

The Calendar

The challenge we face in the coming weeks is enormous. Our National Day is almost upon us. And on this new 11th of September, we need it to be a success again. So I'm calling for massive attendance, to fill up Diagonal Avenue in Barcelona to demonstrate or support for the Catalan Republic. And we will go on to remember, from the 20th of September onwards, those days when our normal day-to-day life was endangered, and our decision, under threat from the state, before the imminent holding of the referendum of self-determination. This coming First of October will be an emotional day for many. It shouldn't be a vision of nostalgia or



sadness. It needs to be a positive vision of hope. Everyone who participated will imagine ourselves once again in our polling stations, I'm sure, and we'll declare ourselves guilty of having participated in an act of democracy, as guilty as those who are now in prison or in exile. The memory of the stoppage of the country on October 3rd will also come to us – which showed us so much, which we must keep in mind – and that night the speech of Felipe VI, which we won't be able to forget. And to that we will add an October of light and hope. This is why we must be able to show to the world what happened that October, shine a light on the burst of liberty of that moment, and unmask those guilty of violence and repression who tried to put that light out.

And at the end of the year, arising from the general campaign against independence, the trials will begin against the government of Catalonia, the civic society leaders, the President of the Parliament, and the Members of Parliament Marta Rovira and Anna Gabriel.

How shall we face this calendar? How will we have the strength and determination we need?

I propose to you that we focus our efforts and our immense positive, democratic and constructive energy in converting every moment of every day, from tomorrow until the sentencing, in a march, a tireless fight of support for social, national and civil rights. A march which envisions a society that wants to live in peace and freedom.

Paths Towards A Republic

We must coordinate our efforts in three main areas of action.

On the one hand, we have a grassroots movement towards a republic which has shown enormous stability and strength, even in the most critical moments. This democratic movement, which has dazzled the world with its capacity of mobilization, must continue its path already followed, summarized so well by Llach in his line “and with a smile, a revolution”. But we need more and we need to maximize the number of people involved.



We need to initiate the first phase, which will enable us to reach a constitutional process from great social consensus. I call again on that 80% of the Catalan population who believe in a referendum as a solution, rejecting repression and the monarchy. It may have as its starting point the founding of a Civic, Social and Constitutional Forum which will have as its mission the promotion of a constitutional debate in Catalonia, and as its ambition the maximum participation of the people, where every citizen who takes part will see themselves as a part of its foundation. Just as the Congrés de Cultura Catalana did 40 years ago, drawing up the outline of how our culture should be, the Civic, Social and Constitutional Forum, this new tool, must be capable of beginning to think about, debate and explore the first basis and general principles of the Republic which we propose.

On another level, we have our institutions – a government, a parliament, hundreds of town halls, thousands of mayors and councilors, deputations, county councils – at the service liberty who must focus these coming months on setting up their program of government, based on the most ambitious plan of progressive and social measures, as I said before. After seven months of suspension and destruction, we have recovered the government of Catalonia and we have placed it again in the service of the welfare of seven and a half million citizens, their rights and their democratic freedom. Progressive and social plans, along with the suspended social policy laws, will be the most immediate priority.

This is because we don't believe in a separation between the national and the social. For us, they form part of the same straight line towards a Republic. Because of this, and it can't be any other way, we place the government at the service of the claim for civil and national rights, the only way to guarantee cohesion and the generation of equality and of equal opportunity for everyone.

And finally, outside of the frontiers of the state, we have the Council of the Republic, led by our own President Puigdemont, which became necessary once it was shown, as I said before, that we Catalans must seek justice abroad when our political and civil rights are in question.

No-one in this case has escaped from justice. On the contrary, we had to go looking for it abroad.



But now, as that situation has been resolved, the Council of the Republic must be the loudest voice in the world in the fight for the freedom of Catalonia, together with the international support of our institutions and our civil society.

Mobilization on the streets, institutions at the service of progressive and social policy towards a Republic and maximum international exposure are the three pillars on which we will act in the coming months.

And what's more, our strength will be the voice of those put on trial. Our friend Jordi Cuixart said as such a few days ago, in a letter on the 300th day of his imprisonment:

“This must be our attitude during the hearings we will be subjected to: not to defend ourselves, but to accuse the State in the flagrant disregard of our fundamental rights, and call upon public opinion in the light of the democratic reverse in which we are living.

The political prisoners and those exiled are a democratic lever: we need to get the international community to denounce our imprisonment. We mustn't give in to the attempt to silence in the judicial outrage of Spanish justice, with accusations that are exaggerated and without foundation.”

In this way therefore, if we can add to the voice of Council of the Republic, Catalan institutions and our citizens, the denouncing of the political prisoners situation, we can take all the steps available to a nation going through its foundation, and which is determined to be free.

And in the meantime, again, once more, as many times as necessary, I insist on dialogue and negotiation as a way for the Spanish government to take advantage of the opportunity to hold an agreed referendum of self-determination, one which all may commit to and respect, and to apply its result.



Just as the British and Canadian have done. I do not propose anything extraordinary, nothing that hasn't been done in the most advanced countries around us. But I won't accept anything less.

If we look at the sky, it's full of black clouds, but we have a duty to create clear skies. We're ready to do anything to achieve the opportunities that Catalonia deserves. But we are yet to know what project the Spanish government has for Catalonia. We want to look for scenarios of shared victory. Will the reception of President Sánchez be any different from that of President Rajoy?

Yesterday we heard an initial proposal from President Sánchez regarding a referendum on a new Statute of Autonomy. We can't say it's not interesting: our government recognizes the institutional crisis caused by the sentencing against the Statute, and we agree that the solution must be through a political and democratic path. But, President Sánchez, the debate in Catalan society is not about a statute.

The mandate from the First of October is in force, and we are working to make it effective. An agreed referendum that binds everyone to respect its result is the only proposal which could substitute the mandate of the First of October. That is to say, a referendum without threats, without violence, without fear, without dirty tricks. A referendum which would be the culmination of an open and sincere debate about the benefits and disadvantages of independence. May each defend what they think needs defending. Let's vote.

So, I make a solemn call on the government of the state to a negotiation in good faith. Let's sit down, let's listen to each other, let's talk and negotiate, always with peace and democracy as the core principles.

We have an opportunity to change from the path of repression, which only causes more pain to our society, to the path of dialogue and negotiation. That is what President Puigdemont proposed again and again in the past legislature, both before and after the First of October.



We propose it again, solemnly. It's in the hands of those newly in government in the state to avoid making the same mistakes as the government of Rajoy.

Just Cause

The people of Catalonia, through their Parliament, have for decades refused to renounce the full exercise of their right to self-determination. And the referendum of the First of October is precisely the moment when we collectively decided to exercise that right. That we are a nation, a people who have this inherent right, and that a democratic majority exercised this right is, for us, incontestable.

Look, there are three formulas to justify independence in an international context. Because we are a nation with our own history and culture, and so have the right to a state. Because there is a majority that wants it and this has been expressed in a democratic process. Or because we are living subjected to a regime of discrimination and disregard of rights which leaves us no other option. In Catalonia we have the justification to claim all three conditions, and we have been doing so for years.

We have, therefore, just cause. This is the formula with the most international consensus, which at the same time best describes the situation in Catalonia. Have no doubt about it.

Perhaps the Spanish state believed that impeding a referendum by force or making sure it wasn't internationally homologated would de-legitimise the cause for the independence of Catalonia. In reality, it had the opposite effect. It broadened the path of just cause. Denying democratic rights to a people can never uphold an existing state. On the contrary, it cancels the argument against independence, leaving no argument in defence of their territorial unity. We need to be very clear: events since last October have done nothing other than reinforce the legitimacy of the cause for independence and for the Republic.



Catalan identity has come of age, today it's an international reference for all those peoples who seek dignity and respect for human rights.

Today we represent civic values, European values and human rights.

And we want to create understanding in the world, who now see us as a political entity. We have earned it. The citizens of Catalonia have earned it.

So, before going into the last part of this address, I'd like to summarise the key ideas that I want to convey this autumn:

1. We are taking the political initiative through the paths towards a republic: Government, Parliament and Town Halls; Exile and the Council for the Republic, organized citizenry and civil societies.
2. A "March" for the social, national and civil rights of Catalonia until the sentencing. A massive, diverse and transverse mobilization for rights and freedom.
3. A shared Republic, also with those who aren't in favour of independence, but with whom we share the values of human rights, justice and the right to self-determination.
4. Policy of defence at trial, showing that democracy is not a crime.
5. Progressive and social policies, and a plan to realise the laws suspended by the Constitutional Court
6. Foundation of the Civic, Social and Constitutional Forum.
7. We can only accept absolution in the trials for the First of October, trials which should never be held. If that is not the case, I will put myself at the disposition of the people of Catalonia, through their legitimate representatives in the Parliament of Catalonia, to take the necessary decisions together.
8. And finally, to these proposals, we must add a willingness on all sides: the permanent offer of dialogue and negotiation with the government of the state to hold a binding and internationally-recognised referendum of self-determination, with a scrupulous respect for democracy and peaceful means, and the cancelation of the political trials.



“It’s heaven on earth to be released from fear. The most important thing in life is not to fear being human,” said Pau Casals from his exile of silence in Prada de Conflent. We cannot be spectators to injustice. Let us not be afraid of being human, let us not be afraid of being free.



How We Will Win

I'm coming to the end. And I would like to address every citizen right now.

We know can definitively see that the Republic isn't made in an office, nor in many offices; sovereignty belongs to the people, it doesn't come from above, it comes from all of you, from the people who come together and fight for the right to have rights and who feel as a sovereign and constituted people. I trust in your determination, help each other, coordinate, and believe in yourselves. Whatever organization you get involved in, give it strength, develop a plan, convert the great force of the independence movement in a reflection of the country we want, in debates, in the planning of the weeks to come. Think deeply on the course of action that needs to be taken, get involved in this march for national and civil rights through continuous action.

Keep in mind always that "we will only have what we know how to win". And the stronger you are, the better the chance of victory. Maintain a strict discipline of non-violence, stay faithful to our values as a people – peace, respect, tolerance, people's rights – and reject the provocation of those who are violent. Be capable of joining together, to generate consensus, get all involved. And above all that you must passionately defend democratic freedom and social, national and human rights. I urge you to join freely as free men and women.

We will have to overcome enormous obstacles, but history is full of moments when people joined together to fight, shoulder to shoulder, for freedom, human rights and justice. People who lost all fear except of one thing: fear of losing self-respect.

In fact, the only way to accept that the sacrifice made by our friends in prison and in exile is not in vain, is if every day they have spent in prison or exile is converted into the seeds of a Republic of rights and liberty.



But all of this requires that we dare to change, that we decide to do it correctly, always and against any threat, and that we commit to consciously take the necessary decisions for a new way forward. And if we are clear that we want this turn, we have to do it together, all of us.

I invite you, therefore, to do it, to believe that it's possible, to act, to be disposed to listen, to talk, to want to be a part of this great challenge.

I invite you to win against the impossible. Because the beautiful risk that is freedom is only won making the impossible possible.

The historian Howard Zinn, in a moving book entitled “You Can’t Be Neutral On Moving Train” tells us that “To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness.

What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places—and there are so many—where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction. And if we do act, in however small a way, we don’t have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.”

And if like Howard Zinn says, we look back, if we look at the last ten years, if we stop one second to remember the Diadas of September 11th, the Ninth of November, the First of October or the Third of October, the social advances and progress we have and that we propose, we will see that there are clear motives for hope, and to continue advancing forward, always forward, towards a Catalan Republic.

Over these last years we have seen a people embrace the cause of freedom, with a light in their eyes and strength in their arms, convinced of the construction of a country, their country, only possible through joining arms, with the only weapons being willingness, a vocation to be



modern and civilized, understood in European terms. Simply put, we've seen a normal people who want to be normal.

We exercised the right to self-determination; now we have the duty to make it reality. With hope. With courage. Tranquil and serene, decided, because we know we're on the right side of history.

In a letter from prison, Nelson Mandela wrote: "The honours are for those who never abandon truth, not even when all seems dark and dismal, they try again and again, they don't lose heart from insults, humiliations, not even in defeat"

Rooted in this truth, we begin our march.

It is our moment. We have discovered the profound truth in the legendary words of peace and freedom. We will win the Republic for everyone, and we will defend it.

For Social, National and Civil Rights, for life and for Catalonia.

Thank you and goodnight.

Quim Torra i Pla
President de la Generalitat de Catalunya