

# WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SURRENDER? WE DON'T KNOW, WE ARE WOMEN

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This question and answer was the title of the preface of the Catalan edition of this book. The sentiment links our fight in Catalonia to the resistance struggle of women against the condition of gender inequality. I am keeping it for the current edition, despite the fact that many things have happened since those months leading up to the holding of the referendum on October 1st. And I'm keeping it, because I guess that not giving up is, sometimes, winning.

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The booklet you have in your hands is a compilation of the main arguments and the main visions of the Popular Unity Candidacy (CUP) –with a number of added contributions from people who are not part of the organization– regarding the referendum and the opportunities we believed it opened up. In the book you will find tools, arguments and thoughts on the referendum, the “constituent process” and the Catalan Countries, their people, their struggles, their diversity and their mixed ancestry, their memory and their margins. An earlier version of this book was published by CUP before the referendum in Catalonia, under the title ‘The Key that Opens the Lock.’ The book is now fully updated and adds a wide range of voices from other people that complement us and allow us to explore new angles of analysis.

There can be little doubt that holding a self-determination referendum in Catalonia was the right thing to do.

And we held it after seeing that the Attorney General's Office was bringing to trial the political leaders in charge of convening the consultation vote of 9th November 2014. They were brought to trial, despite having complied with the suspension ordered by the Constitutional Court and having allowed it to become a participatory process finally organised by volunteers, rather than a "referendum".

In taking this course of action, the State denied the possibility of ever reaching an agreement on holding a referendum, despite it having the backing of a very large political and social majority in the country, organised around the National Pact for the Referendum.<sup>1</sup>

18 We didn't give up after seeing that the response of the State would only come through police and judicial means.

And so, that was how the referendum of 1 October was presented to the world: as the will of a government, of a parliamentary majority, of a large part of the country's local councils, but above all, of hundreds of thousands of people, to find a political and democratic solution to the existing conflict within the Spanish State. On the first of October, the right to self-determination was exercised, referring precisely to the only essence that this right can have: the people's will to exercise it.

And this will, the democratic will, the will that accepts the result that may come out of the polls, contrasts with an executive

1. The National Pact for the Referendum is an organization that includes political parties, NGOs and other civil society organizations that share a commitment to a self-determination vote but not necessarily to independence. In February 2017, the National Pact for the Referendum produced a Manifesto for a referendum that was signed by 400,000 people.

and a judicial power that twist the prerogatives of the use of force and the interpretation of positive law, not only to deny the possibility of holding a referendum, but also to react with violence and repression to the fact that hundreds of thousands of people refused to tolerate the State offensive in terms of searches, arrests, seizure of material or prohibition of political events. The violence and repression of October 1 and the actions of the Public Prosecutor's Office and the high courts, with very serious imprisonments and charges, was the response of the Spanish State to a massive popular will not to surrender.

The images of the referendum have gone around the world. And the denunciation of the now systematic violation of civil and political rights is echoed in some international tribunals, in statements by United Nations rapporteurs and experts and by the High Commissioner for Human Rights himself.

Even so, and it goes without saying, Catalonia not only continues to be part of the Spanish State, but has also seen its parliament and government dissolved and has been directly governed by the central government of Madrid. Therefore, yes, we won the referendum, and we showed the Spanish State and the entire international community that we had –and we have– the will and determination to exercise sovereignty, even against all the brute force of the Spanish State, but no, we did not fully win. And we did win because the referendum on self-determination is only the first step towards achieving the goals of economic, social and cultural rights.

The referendum sought to determine which political subject would subsequently undertake a process of transformation and radical change with regard to the foundation stones of the

Spanish State, outside any frameworks of colonial or imperial domination, being aware of the inequalities and oppressions of the economic system imposed by the Troika and open to new international relations. Winning therefore means recovering lost sovereignties and control over resources and strategic sectors, building an international order based on peace, solidarity, justice, socialism, feminism, environmentalism and anti-militarism. Winning means establishing alliances and sharing strategies with all the peoples of the world who, like us, are also struggling –either with a state in favour or with a state against– for the recovery and construction of full popular sovereignties, which necessarily interconnect with each other. And winning must one day mean the guarantee of the exercise of popular sovereignty by all the peoples of the world.

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We did not win, in short, because victory is not simply about territorial boundaries. Victory is about demonstrating that within the EU, within the so-called first world, within the brain of the beast, there are still options to revolutionise consciousnesses for the benefit of life, of the working classes and of the basic material needs of the social majorities. And that this can only be done by fighting against identity-based, racist and ethnocentric approaches; by opening the borders to people seeking refuge; by accepting to live with less, so that everyone can live with more. Nothing for us, everything for everyone. And despite this, on October 1st we won many things. We have gained in awareness, in a critical sense and in mobilization. We have not taken power, and we are not in power. But we have also won because we know now, more than before, how it is to be done.