



Speech by Joseph Borrell

Chair of the FEPS Scientific Council, former President of the European Parliament

8th October 2017

"Citizens of Catalonia,

We are here because we have summoned ourselves to defend coexistence, pluralism and solidarity. And we must defend them. Because coexistence has been ruptured in this country. And we need to rebuild it. Political pluralism must be defended because it is not being recognised. When a president of Parliament dares to say that those who vote for certain parties are not Catalan, they have shattered all our values. Mrs Forcadell, did you not think that before saying something like this you should have resigned as President of Parliament?

How could a president of a European Parliament, how could the president of an institution that represents all citizens, possibly say that someone who votes for other political parties is not Catalan? Of course they are. They are as Catalan any other. How could the councillor say that those who do not agree with the referendum on independence do not agree because they are not citizens, but subjects. You are not subjects, and if you are here today it is precisely to tell the world that those of us who do not think like nationalists are as much citizens of Catalonia as they are.

I have a friend who lives on the moon. And when he looks at us from afar through his telescope, he says: "Josep, I can only see people who want independence in Catalonia". "That isn't certain" I reply. But he can only see us from far away and only sees people who want independence. And he asks me where everyone else is, because he can't see them. And here you all are! My friend on the Moon, I know you can see us now.

But we have neither been seen nor heard until now. We have to ensure that every Catalan voice is heard, equally. And for that you have to democratically control the public media, which are currently a democratic shame. It seems that you agree with me...

People must express themselves with the utmost respect. I don't want to exaggerate, but we are witnessing dramatic times in this country, so we must ask for respect and wisdom, for ourselves and for others. We have to be very careful. Because if a unilateral declaration of independence is declared, this country will fall off a cliff.

Don't push us off the cliff, Mr. Puigdemont!

No, no, no... Don't scream like mobs at a Roman circus. The only people who go to jail are those sentenced by judges. I ask you, please, to respect and love each other, we must rebuild our family. Every time I argue with my friends who want independence and explain to them what they have done, expose the lies they have been told to stir-up people's emotions... When they no longer know what to say, they say: "They don't love us." But we do! We do love you! I want to ask you to do something for me. On your way back home, buy a bottle of Catalan cava. Go buy a bottle of cava, because sales have gone down 15%. Which



means that there is now more unemployment in Catalonia. No boycotts, don't be indignant; we have to work together to recover our common sense.

I want to speak directly to the business community in Catalonia. To all of you who are quickly deciding to run away from Catalonia... Could you not have said something first? You discussed it privately, why did not you state it in public? When I said two years ago that companies and banks would leave Catalonia, Mr Junqueras and Mr Mas, two great prophets, said that no-one would leave. All those leaving should have said they were going to beforehand. They should have stated that if what is happening was to happen, they were going to do, what they are doing. If they had done, we could have avoided what is happening now. We are all a little guilty of being too quiet.

Those of us who feel Catalan need to make an appeal to common sense, respect, plurality, coexistence... These are the emblems of the European stars. But we have to work for them. And this will not be settled by unilateral decisions. It is not only a matter of public order. It is not a problem that is resolved by saying that we do it better and that the EU will welcome us with open arms. Mr. Junqueras, stop deceiving the Catalan people. You believe your own lies. But if you continue with this, I warn you that it will have very negative consequences in the EU. You are doing the opposite of what the European ideal is. And do you think that the EU will welcome you with open arms with a business card such as this? No. They'll tell you to come back another day. In the meantime, we will all suffer the consequences. There are people who will suffer, good people who are afraid of what can happen, of how their pensions will be affected, of whether they will have to leave... They ask politicians to do something about it. Yes, we must do something and quickly, because we are in the approaching a line separating us from a citizen confrontation and as politicians we cannot let that happen.

To finish off, I want to say two things. When president Kennedy sent the national guard to remove the laws that wanted to revoke racial segregation, he said that no man, no matter how powerful, no crowd, no matter how much noise they make, is above the law. Because on the day they are above the law, judges will no longer be able to do their job, no-one will be safe from the arbitrariness of the government and no-one will feel safe from their neighbours. And we want to be certain that our neighbours can be controlled.

Things have happened here that should not have happened. We are hurting ourselves. Let us regain our common sense. We have the right to live in peace, we must enjoy our progressive and democratic country: Spain.

We have problems, of course. What country does not have problems? But do you think really that Catalonia is like Lithuania, Kosovo or Algeria? No. Catalonia is not a colony, nor a state that is occupied militarily. Catalonia is not a state like Kosovo where there was violence and human rights were violated. And that is why Catalonia must work based on respect for the law and cannot believe those who say that international law is on its side, because it is not true, it is not on its side. The Secretary-General of the UN has come to say it.

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Friends, no more borders. The EU flag represents the removal of borders. Borders are the scars which history has left in the skin of the earth, made with blood and fire. Let's not build any more, because we have already endured enough pain to build the ones we have."