

## **A FIRST STEP FOR THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS: PRINCIPLES AND WILL OF THE ABERTZALE LEFT**

We are pro-independence men and women from different generations that have been working and continue to work in the construction and development of a project for national liberation. Our objective is the construction of our own state, since we believe it is the only way of fully guaranteeing the survival and full development of the Basque Country, in harmony and solidarity with the rest of people in Europe and the World. This is our legitimate political project which we are planning to achieve with the support of the majority support of Basque Society.

The current legal and political framework, which divides our territory and limits the rights of its citizens, has been proven to perpetuate political and armed conflict. It does not allow Basque citizens to decide their own future without constraints. In this context, the situation of violence and armed confrontation has lasted much longer than anybody would have wished, with the associated human and political costs that everybody knows. Our priority is to overcome this scenario.

The last three decades of conflict have led us to another conclusion: We are a political movement which has been proven correct by the course of time. This is demonstrated by events such as the initial demand of a democratic break with Franco's regime, the rejection by the Basque People of the Spanish Constitution, NATO and the nuclear power station of Lemoiz. It is demonstrated by our efforts to avoid the consolidation of the trap implicit in statute of autonomy. It is also demonstrated by our opposition to rogue capitalism.

It is not only in the fields of opposition and protest where the pro-independence movement has won political and ideological battles. The proposals for the future and for solutions recommended by the Abertzale Left have been accepted by significant social sectors, on occasion by the majority. The initiatives for a negotiated solution, the plans to achieve a new democratic framework and the dynamics of national construction, have allowed for unquestionable advances in the Basque political process.

In the last few years we have made progress in some questions which have made not only desirable but also possible the materialisation of a change of cycle for the whole citizenship; in the political debate of the last decade, which has clearly identified difficult problems which require a solution; In the tireless work and struggle of thousands of persons and social sectors that have permitted us to arrive at the door of the desired real political change; as well as to leave behind the undesirable consequences of this conflict. A change of cycle that will replace the armed confrontation, blockade and lack of prospects with dialogue, agreement and a just, stable and lasting solution for our country.

With correct decisions and with errors we have brought the liberation process to the phase of political change. Now, the issue is to make this change irreversible. Materialising this change also requires changes in ourselves. There was a need for a profound reflexion and selfcriticism, and we are doing it.

The Abertzale Left understands that the issue is not so much knowing and waiting to see what the other actors are ready to do, but to what we need to do. This new phase needs

new strategies, new political alliances and new tools.

Acknowledging that the objectives to reach in this new phase are the national recognition of Euskal Herria and the recognition of the right to Self-Determination, it is necessary to increase the accumulation of forces and to move the confrontation with the states to the field in which they are weaker. That is the political field. This is why mass, institutional and ideological struggle, the change in existing balance of forces, as well as seeking international support have to be the fundamental pillars of the new strategy.

The basic instrument for the new political phase is the Democratic Process. Its activation is a unilateral decision of the Abertzale Left. Its activation will require us to look for bilateral or multilateral agreements; with Basque political actors, with the international community and with both states for the resolution of the conflict. Definitively, the Democratic Process is the strategic objective of the Abertzale Left in order to reach political and social change.

All these considerations are commonly shared in the Abertzale Left within the debate that is being held with responsibility. At the same time, though this debate, we are trying to reinforce and internalise in all of our social and activist base the following principles, which now we want to share with Basque citizens, political, trade unions and social actors of the country as well as with the international community:

1. The popular will expressed through peaceful and democratic means is the only reference for the process of arriving at a democratic solution. This will increase confidence in its set up and optimal development as well as in the achievement of agreements that will have to be backed by the citizens. The Abertzale Left, as should also be done by the other agents, make the solemn commitment to respect in each phase of the process the decisions that could be freely and peacefully made by the Basque citizens.
2. The legal and political framework resulting at each moment shall be the consequence of the will of the people, and shall guarantee the rights of the whole of the Basque citizenship. The legal framework prevailing at any time cannot be an obstacle or impediment to the popular will, freely and democratically expressed, but a guarantee of its implementation.
3. The agreements to be obtained in the development of the democratic process shall respect and regulate the rights recognised by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It must also recognise other international human rights treaties that may concern individual or collective rights.
4. Inclusive political dialogue and equal conditions should be the main tools to reach agreement between the different political sensitivities in the country. The Abertzale Left expresses a complete willingness to take part in this dialogue.
5. In the framework of the democratic process, dialogue between political forces should aim for a solution based on political agreement which will be subject to referendum. The resulting agreement should guarantee that all political projects could not only be defended with equal opportunities and without any pressure or external interference but they could also be implemented if that was the desire of the majority of the Basque citizenship, expressed through the available legal procedures.
6. The democratic process must be developed in a complete absence of violence and without interference, by the use of exclusively political and democratic means.

We are convinced that this political strategy will make advances in the democratic process. South Africa and Ireland are good examples.

7. We reiterate our commitment to the Anoeta Proposal. According to this, there should be a process of multi-party dialogue, where all the forces in this country would participate under equal conditions. This process will take on board the achievement of a democratic framework through which the citizenship will be able to decide its future freely and democratically, without any other limit than the will of the people. We understand that this process has to be conducted in accordance with the Mitchell principles.

On the other hand, a process of negotiation has to be established between ETA and the Spanish government on questions regarding the demilitarisation of our country, the release of Basque political prisoners, the return of those exiled and a just and fair treatment for all the victims of the conflict.

For all this, we declare without reservations our support for a peaceful, political and democratic process in order to achieve an inclusive democracy, where the Basque people freely and without any intimidation of any kind will be able to decide their future.

***Euskal Herria, November 14th 2009***