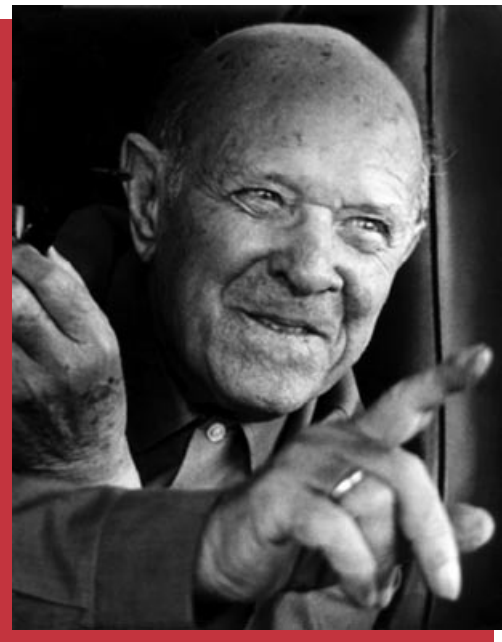


BESLLUM* (* A Catalan word with no literal translation meaning 'imperfect, uncertain understanding of something')

by Francesc de Dalmaes

On the 24th of October 1971 Pau Casals received the Peace Medal before the United Nations General Assembly. He graciously accepted the award with the following words:



'This is the greatest honour of my life.

Peace has always been my greatest concern. I learnt to love it when I was but a child. When I was a boy, my mother, an exceptional, marvellous woman, would talk to me about peace, because at that time there were also many wars.

What is more, I am a Catalan. Today, Catalunya is a province of Spain. But what has Catalunya been? It has been the greatest nation in the world. I will tell you why. Catalunya had the first parliament, long before England. Catalunya had the first United Nations. In the eleventh century all the governing bodies of Catalunya met in a city in France which at the time formed part of Catalunya. They spoke about peace in the eleventh century. Peace in the world and against war, the inhumanity of war. So I am so happy, so happy, to be with you today. That is why the United Nations, which works solely towards the ideal of peace, is in my heart, because anything to do with peace goes straight to my heart.

I have not played the cello in public for many years, but I feel that the time has come to play again. I am going to play a melody from Catalan folklore: El cant dels ocells ['birdsong']. When birds are in the sky, they sing: "peace, peace, peace", and it is a melody that Bach, Beethoven and all the greats would have admired and loved. What is more, it is born in the soul of my country, Catalunya.'

We have used the words of the maestro Pau Casals because in some way they well define the reasons why you have this publication in your hands. The Catalan nation's desire for understanding and dialogue is a characteristic that has permeated all of our history, as too is our desire to participate in first person with all nations.

The 21st century has seen a world deliberating between hope and convulsion. We choose hope based on justice, peace, liberty along with the other individual and collective human rights. These are the foundations of our hope. On this solid base we believe we are able to build the ideals of living together, and mutual understanding and acknowledgement, rather than the walls of incomprehension, fear, hate and repression that have played a large part in contemporary world history.

IN AN INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE THAT DANGEROUSLY SWINGS BETWEEN BLACK AND WHITE, CATALAN INTERNATIONAL VIEW WILL BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR THE SHADES OF GREY

In an international climate that dangerously swings between black and white, Catalan International View will move from the North to the South and from the East to the West on the lookout for the shades of grey. We will be looking for the keys that will help us to better understand the planet on which we live. We shall do so from Catalunya, a European nation bordering the Mediterranean, half way between the East and the West: half way between Shanghai and Los Angeles and half way between Kinshasa and Saint Petersburg. Our goal shall be that outlined by the ex-Secretary General of the UN Kofi Anan when he referred to the necessity to know how to love what we are without hating what we are not.

In the views that are held in the following pages and the editions to follow you will rarely find articles or information about what is happening in Catalunya. Catalan International View will not be a means to get to know and understand Catalunya. We do, however, offer an international analysis from a Catalan perspective and sensibility. It represents our own characteristic, determined concerns which, as you will also see, are rich in their diversity.

Interpreting the world is an enormous and exaggerated proposition which is beyond our reach, and indeed beyond the reach of any individual or institution with any degree of knowledge and humility. Our objective is more achievable: to offer a new eyepiece through which to view the global, interconnected world in which we live with a new perspective.

The widespread local and global effects produced by the great political, economic and environmental questions of our day make these three the key axes around which the magazine will revolve.

The readers will not be required to struggle to identify us with one particular doctrine or a specific school of thought. Our intention, to look for the shades of grey far from dogmatic truths and fundamentalisms, means we seek reason and truth from all sides, so long as they are based on the common concepts of democracy, liberty and respect for human rights.

Finally I should like to say that we will value equally the answers that we may find as much as the questions that may arise from the dialogue found in Catalan International View. To paraphrase the poet Kavafis, I can say that we do not know, nor have the intention to discover, where our Ithaca is to be found, but we begin the journey which starts right now with enthusiasm, hope and determination. Thank you for accompanying us.