



BARCELONA CONFERENCE

15 May 2010

**EUROPEAN BUREAU FOR CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION
BUREAU EUROPEEN DE L'OBJECTION DE CONSCIENCE
EUROPÄISCHES BÜRO FÜR KRIEGSDIENSTVERWEIGERUNG**



10 years without military service, 25 years of Moviment per la Pau: a popular and democratic conquest.

2010 is the tenth anniversary of the end of compulsory military service in the State of Spain. Its suppression, celebrated by all the social and political forces and welcomed with enthusiasm by the youth, has been the result of a long struggle in which the conscientious objectors played a leading role in the seventies, and which has been further developed during the democracy by the peace movement, with the active support of social and youth organizations. ([read more](#))

A process that resulted in the addition of wills and that culminated in what is known as the Majestic Pacts, in 1994. This anniversary coincides with the 25th anniversary of the Association of Conscientious Objectors (AOC), the present Moviment per la Pau which was a key actor in the process.

The ten years that passed since the end of military service offer a perspective which is sufficiently spread over time to try to make an analysis of the dynamics that made it possible in the way it happened as well as of the obtained results.

Some of the most interesting aspects are the transversality of the movement, the model of political participation that it established, characterized by the combination of grassroots work and political work, and the civic-political alliance.

Its abolition had been a genuine democratic conquest that changed the life of the youth and that had a strong influence on the social representation of defense, armies, and the newly introduced defense model.

We would like to commemorate the abolition of military service as the popular and democratic conquest that it has been, as a result of social and civic participation, and we would like to study how it was made possible, how it was strategically organized, as well as which model of political participation resulted from it.

We also have to ascertain if we can extract good practices from the results obtained with the abolition of military service for other dynamics, analyze the role Catalonia played in its abolition and serve as platform to set out the current peace agenda.

GOALS

1. CELEBRATE THE SUCCESS / The end of military service is one of the most relevant social conquests of democracy. A model of good practice in political action.

Celebrate the democratic victory obtained ten years ago with its main actors as one of the principal popular conquests of the last 25 years.

2. STUDY THE PHENOMENON AS A MODEL OF DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION / How was it made possible?

Study how it was made possible to obtain it and study it as a model of good practice in political participation (strategy of combination of work by the basis with institutional work, role of the associations, political parties, judicial and political front)

3. ASSESS ITS SOCIAL IMPACT / What did it build?

Analyze the social impact of the fight against military service, the conscientious objection and the civic service (biographic impact, disappearance of civilian service, rights and obligations in a democratic state)

4. PRESENT AGENDA FOR PEACE/ What are the challenges?

Debate the challenges of the new agenda for peace and the role that can play social organizations.

ACTIVITIES

International congress “10 years without military service - 25 years of moviment per la pau”

Organized by Moviment per la Pau and EBCO and with support of Fundació CATDEM and the Open University of Catalonia (UOC), the academic encounter will study the origins, evolution and results of the movement that made possible the end of military service and the constructed civic and political alliance.

Meeting of EBCO-BEOC in Catalonia

International meeting of this entity, consultant to the European Parliament and the European Council, which will gather the leader of the present conscientious objection, from the Atlantic to the Ural and the Caucasus.

Commemorative Actions

Activities at the Catalan Parliament and the Congress of Deputies.

Popular and civic actions

Commemorative ceremony with popular participation for the 15th of May, international conscientious objection day.

Anniversary Dinner for Peace

Will gather all the principal actors of the process: volunteers, objectors, activists, civil service officials, politicians, observers, press.

Last year it had been 10 years since the Spanish Parliament approved the law that put an end to military service. It occurred in May 1999. Since then, not a single Catalan youth has been forced to lose a more or less long period of its life doing military service. At the end of 2001 there was no conscripted soldier left. More than one million youth over the whole of the Spanish State waiting to do military service were freed of that legal obligation.

Slowly military service disappeared. Slowly it has been erased from our consciousness. Some only knows anecdotes and experiences of those who did it.

For the youth of today this whole thing sounds very far away. Even something strange, maybe. But, back then, years of vindication and struggle by the countries' social and youth movements, and especially entities linked to conscientious objection. The volunteer work of those entities, combined with institutional political action from the government of the Generalitat, from the city councils and members of parliament would be highly efficient.

The strategy of the most lucid sectors of pacifism had chosen to spread conscientious objection like an oil stain. The social dynamic already had delegitimized obligatory military service. But the path had to be eased for the greatest number of youth to declare themselves objectors. Military service could be stopped by a lack of effectives. The numbers of objectors were spectacular. Since 1985, more than one million youth from all around the State had declared themselves objectors. At the end of 2001, more than 90.000 youth were realizing the Social Replacement Service (PSS). On the other hand, the movement of persons refusing to do military service had converted itself in a political problem which had become difficult to deal with for a democratic state. The social foundation which supported more or less military service disappeared rapidly.

The new context resulting from the end of the Cold War, with the fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of the Warschau Pact facilitated the process of abolition of conscription. The necessities in the fields of defense and security had changed. An army based on conscription – with thousands of unmotivated and unprepared soldiers – did not make sense anymore and had little utility. Therefore, it was necessary to evolve to more flexible, reduced and integrated armed forces. A corps was needed which was able to assume responsibilities in the context of international peacekeeping operations. Military service ceased to be meaningful also from that point of view.