

JUSTICE

ALEX MONTERO / LAURA GÓMEZ RODRÍGUEZ
ANDORRA LA VELLA

Kick-off on the first day of the trial for the 'Costa case', through which the president of Andorra Endavant, Carine Montaner, is being tried for a crime of revealing secrets regarding the salary of the former Liberal councilor, Ferran Costa. And despite the withdrawal of the criminal complaint, the case continues and could end up costing the current General Counsel two years in prison and another two years of political disqualification.

«A human error revealed an injustice and a lack of transparency on the part of a member of the General Council, I only disclosed what was happening». This was the maxim that Montaner maintained during the first hours of the trial, once again ratifying her innocence in the affair. It should be remembered that the facts for which the councilor is accused date back to 2020, when she received some reports on Costa's salary, and which led her to sit on the bench in the Great Hall of the seat of Justice «It was a human error that these documents ended up in my hands, but like anyone, I looked at them,» said Montaner, emphasizing the fact that she realized that the Costa's salary «was almost 2,000 euros above the basic one of the counselors».

The president of the parliamentary group continued her speech by affirming that «I did not distribute the CASS quotation sheets of Ferran Costa to the press, otherwise this would have appeared in the foreground of the Andorran newspapers». However, the councilor pointed out that the attacks by political figures, as well as the pressure of a judicial process, began



The leader of Andorra Endavant, Carine Montaner, during a recess of the trial held at the headquarters of Justice.

Carine Montaner reaffirms her innocence in the 'Costa case'

The general counsel is on trial for a crime of revealing secrets

when the situation was discussed within the political environment of the General Council: «For four months nothing happened because we discussed it with my parliamentary group, but the moment we said it in the political sphere, the attacks began», stressing again that there was «no type of leak to the press».

Even so, and despite maintaining her certainty that she did not make any kind of statement

to the press, Carine Montaner pointed out that she mentioned this affair in an interview in this same medium, although emphasizing that only «I celebrated the transparency and the change of course of the parliamentary group». It was on June 17th, 2020 when the act was made public with the approval of the publication of the salaries, highlighting Montaner that this casuistry occurred after the unanimous approval in the Ge-

neral Council that the salaries of the directors who make up the chamber were public for all citizens. With these statements, the politician reaffirmed that the complaint filed by Costa came sometime after the approval to make public the salaries with the Transparency Law. Asked if she is still in possession of the files relating to Costa's salary, the general counsel stated that they had been deleted years ago. «It's true that I

sent the digitized documents by mail, and until I filed the complaint, I didn't remember to delete them,» she said. In addition, Montaner also wanted to point out that, at first, she did not look at the documents properly, as it was then the Andorran company STRATEGOS who alerted her to the information mentioned in them.

«Constant harassment» / Immediately after Montaner, it was Ferran Costa who proceeded to sit on the bench to testify in front of those present as a witness. The former liberal president defined the actions of the former as a «constant harassment», which has gone beyond the political sphere and turned towards a more personal one: «She crossed every red line because she entered in the personal sphere», he declared.

Costa, who was constantly avoiding the issue, justified the decision to start the criminal process because Montaner «has a fixation with me and my political role». And for the former councilor, the question we should ask ourselves is if this supplement for full-time dedication had been received by another councilor, the leader of Andorra Endavant would have reacted in the same way: «In the end they are public money that I collected because I had to

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Carine Montaner

PRESIDENT OF ANDORRA ENDAVANT

«A human error revealed an injustice and a lack of transparency on the part of a member of the Council»

«I didn't distribute the CASS quotation sheets to the press, otherwise it would have appeared on the front page of the newspapers»

collect it», while indicating the impossibility that no councilor knew that he was receiving this supplement. «At no time does the regulation expose an incompatibility for developing other jobs.»

THE TESTIMONY OF POLITICAL FIGURES //

The session continued with the testimony of different general councilors, both active and former members, starting with the current general trustee, Carles

Ensenyat, who stated that he found out about the case because it was commented on the parliamentary group. «We were very surprised by the lack of knowledge of the fact», he indicated, pointing out that it was who later pushed for this issue to be discussed in the Board of Presidents at the time and it was approved to be made public from then on the web of the General Council the salaries of the directors. In addition, from that same month of June it was agreed that Costa's salary could not be supplemented.

In line with this issue, the Prosecutor's Office focused the statements of the various witnesses on article 142 of the Parliament's Regulation, which establishes that the salaries of the councilors had to be public and that, despite having been approved in 2019, it was not applying. Still, the reactions to Costa's complement were really the epicenter of the entire session. The Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports, Mònica Bonell, mentioned that, although it might «seem ugly» to do so, it was the power of each parliamentary group to manage the allocation it received from the General Council as it believes to be opportune.

On the other hand, the former president of the Social Democratic parliamentary group,

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Ferran Costa

FORMER PRESIDENT OF LIBERALS

«It's constant harassment [...] Carine Montaner has a fixation with me and my political role»

«At no time does the regulation expose an incompatibility for developing other tasks»

Pere López, made very clear that no president of the different political formations had ever received this supplement, which is why the Social Democrats also received with surprise that in the case of Costa is true that it was being given. «It made us very uncomfortable and I am surprised that there is no discussion of where the money is», he said, stressing that «there is a use of public money that should be analyzed».●

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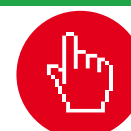
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DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

Prosegur and Menta constitute the first cybersecurity and AI center

The project will speed up the adoption of armor-plate measures

EL PERIÒDIC
ESCALDES-ENGORDANY

Cipher, the cyber security division of the Prosegur Group, has reached a strategic agreement with the local company in the security sector, Menta Grup, to jointly develop the first SOC (Security Operations Center) in Andorra, a project that will accelerate and scale the adoption of cyber security systems and measures throughout the territory of the Principality.

On the one hand, Cipher will

The two entities will jointly develop the first SOC (Security Operations Center)

be in charge of the integration and maintenance of new technologies, the implementation of the cyber surveillance and cyber intelligence services of the Operations Center, as well as the support of users with regulatory compliance.

For its part, Menta Grup will provide the services of the first level of response and interaction with users. All this will allow cyber threats to be monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week, guaranteeing constant protection and a quick response to any possible incident.

The inauguration of the technology center means the creation of dozens of jobs, with a highly qualified technical profile, specialized in the management



Image of Prosegur's facilities.

of the latest incidents related to cyber security and cyber intelligence, including technological support solutions based on intensive use of generative artificial intelligence.

This innovative service, which will operate under the brand 'Menta Ciberseguretat by Cipher a Prosegur Company' seeks to provide a safer digital environment for Andorran companies and institutions, in addition to armor-plate their security against the increase in cyber threats in an increasingly interconnected environment. «For companies and institutions that wish to continuous-

ly improve their cybersecurity posture and visibility; unlike competitors who offer static and commoditized services; we provide clients with cyber security solutions powered by artificial intelligence. Our xMDR platform allows them to take the lead in detection and response, allowing them to focus on their business,» said Cipher EMEA Director Jorge González de León.

Menta Grup's Director of Institutional Relations, Jordi Moreno, stated that «the alliance with Prosegur will allow us to bring our cyber security capabilities to the first level world-

wide and offer a comprehensive service to our client in Andorra. We are excited about the opportunities this agreement brings, in addition to the strength it will bring to our country's cyber resilience.»

This collaboration reaffirms Cipher's commitment to the development of new collaborations in the field of cybersecurity, the improvement of customized solutions adapted to the needs and risk profiles of each client, and the development of new services that provide expert guidance from cyber security in real time in those countries in which it is present. ●

DEBATE OF LA TAULA D'EL PERIÒDIC

A big NO to the agreement of association, the great opportunity for Andorra

LA TAULA D'EL PERIÒDIC
ESCALDES-ENGORDANY

A NO to the referendum will open a great opportunity for quality economic and social growth in Andorra. On the other hand, a YES in the referendum would open up quantitative growth, real estate speculation and destruction of our quality of life and natural environment at a faster pace than we have had since 2011.

The reason is very simple, the games of the old powers and the regulatory chaos that has resulted from the extreme bureaucracy that dominates the EU of 27, are tiring. The EU is out of fashion. Brussels has become a market of power where the powerful change their trading cards and control the population with a constant barrage of rules and paperwork that are impossible to comply with and that subjugate a population that can do no more. We have seen how, even farmers, express their gluttony even though they are the group most subsidized by the EU, with subsidies that represent a third of the European budget.

The European elections have shown that the EU population is fed up with Brussels. Brussels is no longer a dream. It has become a bureaucratic nightmare and a market for the power of economic, political and, above all, financial elites. The polls tell us that, apart from Belgium and Luxembourg where voting is compulsory, less than 50% of the total number of voters in the rest of the countries have gone to vote. The polls tell us that, among those who have voted, the Eurosceptic vote is growing and growing without stopping.

Xavier Espot's electoral tour of the seven parishes has also shown that Andorran citizens are tired of the YES propaganda that the Government imposes on us - spending millions of public resources - to get a YES in the Government's populist referendum.

-We say that citizens are tired because only a thousand people have come to these seven town meetings.

-We say it's propaganda because Xavier Espot has declared that this tour was to «propagate» the association agreement.

-We say that the Government has plans to spend millions of euros in the YES electoral campaign in the referendum through the means that the Government has deployed. In this sense, it would be clarifying if the Government confirmed in its parliamentary session how it contracted the services of Mr. Saint-Amans to obtain its report in favor of YES at a cost that would appear to be 200,000 euros and would it be clarifying if the Government explained whether it is true or not true that the Government has hired a Spanish communication company to carry out the YES campaign? How did you hire it? When will it be recorded? And which budget item will it be charged to?

-We say it is an electoral tour because Xavier Espot has concluded that «vote by vote we achieve the goal».

-We say it is a populist referendum because it is not a binding democratic referendum given that it does not comply with the guidelines of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe. Guidelines that make it possible to differentiate between a democratic referendum and a populist consultation such as the one carried out by the Government. A populist Government referendum where the only candidacy with millions of euros to make propaganda is that of the YES party, where the YES candidacy is the one that monopolizes the public media, where public media journalists mostly defend the YES party, where the only candidacy with public resources to make reports is that of YES, where the qualified law of the referendum does not establish the effects of the results of the binding referen-

dem and a long list of breaches of the basic rules of a binding democratic referendum.

This widespread fatigue with the current Brussels of the 27 points out that there is a great opportunity for quality growth for Andorra in the event that the result of the referendum is a resounding NO.

Let's be clear, Andorra does not have the capacity or physical, human or financial resources to attract industrial activities aimed at 450 million consumers as the Government dreams of with the Association Agreement. Let's be clear, Andorra can attract quality investors who want to be physically in Europe (not within the EU, but they want to be within the European continent), who are looking for differentiation and who want to break free from universal homogenization imposed by Brussels bureaucrats.

If Andorra's binding referendum receives a resounding NO, if it gets a result that makes any Andorran politician want to flirt with Brussels again, then many investors will see a great attraction in Andorra. We will be able to offer legislative independence and the security that a sovereign parliament, our General Council, will freely decide the legislative framework, without being an automaton commanded from Brussels.

Every day there are more investors who have quality projects that want to execute from a European country that has sovereignty over the border, with sovereignty over Customs control, with legislative sovereignty, with immigration sovereignty, with sovereignty on production processes. We see significant high added value investors who want differentiation, who flee from the homogenization imposed by Brussels bureaucrats. We see important quality investors who want to invest in an Andorra that, at the same time, can access the CE seal and techni-

cal certifications for products manufactured in Andorra under specific controls and certifications from regulatory companies and in an Andorra that is part of a customs union with the single market for the products of code 25 onwards which prevents tariff restrictions and a long et cetera of the advantages that Andorra already enjoys today. And let's be clear, if quality investors, those looking for differentiation and security, have not come to Andorra until now, it is because since 2011 our institutions have only said that they want an association agreement with the EU. Pro-Brussels message that has driven quality investors away. A message that we have all seen as it has attracted speculative investors who are looking to do the real estate «killing» that has occurred in almost all the countries that have approached the EU.

We have great proof of what we say: Since the day Monaco suspended negotiations with Brussels, contrary to the alleged fiasco predicted by our Government, Monaco is receiving more quality investors than ever and the forecast is that the GDP of 2023 again set a new high with a GDP forecast of 9.06 billion USD for 2023. Given that it represents an annual GDP growth of 3.2% in Monaco while in Andorra, despite continuing with the negotiation of the 'association agreement, the Government only foresees GDP growth of 0.8% for 2023)

It seems clear to us that if the NO wins, decisively, then Andorra would receive significant investment interest in quality, differentiation, high added value, good projects that do not want to be homogenized by Brussels. Finally, Andorra could establish a policy of quality investments instead of the disastrous policy of quantity, speculation and low added value that the Government has had since 2011 and that the Association Agreement would only accentuate. ●