

# Spain's Popular Party threatens repression if Catalan authorities declare independence

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The Popular Party (PP) government has stepped up its threats of carrying out brutal repression in Catalonia on the eve of today's potential unilateral declaration on independence by the Catalan parliament.

Yesterday, PP Secretary of Communication Pablo Casado compared the future fate of Catalan Premier Carles Puigdemont with that of Lluís Companys, president of the regional government of 1934 that declared independence. Exiled after the war, he was captured by the Gestapo in Paris and handed over to the fascist regime of Francisco Franco, who had him executed by firing squad in 1940.

"We will prevent independence, we will take whatever measures are necessary, everything will be done without giving up any instrument of the Constitution or the Penal Code," said Casado. The Spanish government is promising "a firm hand against secessionism. We shouldn't repeat the story because [Puigdemont] might just end up like Companys!"

Journalist Anabel Díez from *El País* reacted immediately and asked Casado to confirm whether he was referring to 1934, when Companys was jailed for proclaiming the Catalan State within the Spanish Federal Republic, or when he was executed in 1940.

The answer was ambiguous: "I mean what for them [the separatists] is an epic date—the declaration of independence—had a response. I am neither a historian nor a futurist."

After the press conference, the PP was obliged to specify the answer and confirm that Casado was referring to the imprisonment of Companys.

This threat should be taken as a warning. In October 6, 1934, Companys proclaimed the Catalan State within the Spanish Federal Republic amid a revolutionary struggle of workers and peasants throughout Spain, especially in Asturias, where workers fought the army

for two weeks. It was sparked by the entry of fascist ministers into a conservative government, in the context of fascism's takeover of Germany, Italy and Austria.

The Catalan Republic lasted just 10 hours before it was violently repressed. The result was 46 dead, 3,000 imprisoned, the criminal conviction of Companys, Catalan self-government suspended indefinitely and the region put under military rule. Having crushed the Catalan secessionists and the Asturias commune, the government imposed savage repression throughout Spain, closing down newspapers and detaining thousands of workers and left-wing political leaders.

With these statements, Casado was making clear that the PP will not even accept a "symbolic" unilateral declaration on independence today, as some sources in Puigdemont's Democratic Party of Catalonia (PDdeCat) are suggesting.

Throughout yesterday, PP members continued their threats. The government delegate in Catalonia, Enric Millo, said that national police and civil guards deployed in Catalonia are ready to halt a unilateral declaration of independence.

In an interview on radio station COPE, Deputy Prime Minister Soraya Sáenz de Santamaría warned that the government will take "all necessary measures", without ruling out Article 155 of the constitution if a unilateral declaration of independence is passed today—with the objective of "restoring law and democracy." Invoking Article 155 would suspend the Catalan government and impose direct rule from Madrid. Such a measure cannot be implemented without some sort of military deployment to back up the 12,000 to 16,000 police and civil guards in Catalonia.

Other options include invoking Article 116, which would impose a state of emergency in Catalonia and

herald the deployment of the army and the suspension of basic democratic rights—including freedom of thought and expression, the right to strike, elections and the imposition of press censorship.

The Socialist Party (PSOE) also intervened yesterday. General Secretary Pedro Sánchez made clear he would support any measures taken by the PP. Sánchez said the PSOE “will support the response of the government before the unilateral bankruptcy which threatens the coexistence between the Spaniards.”

The fascistic atmosphere promoted by these political forces and the media, which is denigrating the Catalan separatists with every possible insult, has emboldened the far right.

A group of fascists in Valencia attacked a demonstration organised by the pseudo-left Catalan separatist group Candidatures of Popular Unity (CUP) and its youth wing Arran under the slogan “independence is the only way.” The protest was attacked by an unauthorised counter-demonstration led by the group Yomus that was allowed to go ahead. A number of people were injured, including a woman, a couple and a photojournalist from *El País*, after fascists armed with sticks and iron bars attacked.

Online videos show the studied indifference of the national police, glorified these days by the press for their repression in the referendum, to flagrant violence on the part of the fascists. The attack was recorded live on LaSexta.

Under conditions in which the ruling class, backed by the media, is preparing a massive crackdown in Catalonia, the pseudo-left has demonstrated its political bankruptcy. No tendency is seeking to mobilise workers in both Catalonia and Spain against the ruling class drive towards dictatorship. Not one is making an international appeal to the European working class, under conditions where the major imperialist powers have endorsed the PP’s crackdown on the referendum.

Instead, the pseudo-left groups in their majority line up behind support for a unilateral declaration of independence, which is supported by just 42 percent of the Catalan population, and especially in support of the CUP. Yesterday, Benet Salellas of the CUP declared, “We have won the referendum and this Tuesday we have to apply the results.”

“It would not be right to postpone the proclamation of the Catalan Republic,” he added, in a message directed

solely to the CUP’s right-wing allies in PDeCAT, who have expressed their doubts about an immediate declaration of independence.

The umbrella Catalan National Assembly has called for a demonstration in front of the regional parliament. In a message to its followers under the title, “Let’s stand next to our institutions. Hello Republic”, the ANC wrote, “The people have spoken and said yes to independence now.”

Podemos continues its role in disarming working-class opposition, despite rising worries that another civil war is on the horizon. Pablo Echenique, the party’s secretary of organisation, said, “We regret that the PSOE is joining the block [with the PP] these days. ... If after what happens tomorrow we must mourn the injured, [PSOE] leader Pedro Sanchez must take responsibility for being the leader of a [political] force that supports a government that does not hesitate to use force against the civilian population.”

Echenique added, in a remark worthy of Pontius Pilate, “Hopefully tomorrow there is no unilateral declaration on independence and the PP does not apply 155 or 116.”



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