

Threatening crackdown in Catalonia, Madrid whips up nationalism at military parade

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The Spanish army and ruling elite used Spain's National Day and the Day of the Armed Forces yesterday to whip up nationalism and reaffirm their plans to intervene militarily in Catalonia in response to the October 1 Catalan independence referendum.

Last year, the online daily *Público* noted that the annual military parade had “no institutional support, no prime minister, no leader of the opposition, no public...the military parade of this 12-O is one of the dullest ones that can be remembered.”

This year, however, the state plunged massive funding into the parade, and politicians of all stripes in the ruling establishment flocked to the parade. It was designed to signal the broad agreement in the ruling elite on the need to implement article 155, which would suspend regional self-government in Catalonia and seize control of the region's finances, administration and police forces through the deployment of the army to the region.

The Ministry of Defence invested €800,000 and mobilised 3,900 troops to march in Madrid's Paseo de la Castellana, including soldiers of the navy, air force and army, civil guards, the Royal Guard and 78 fighter jets. After years during which they did not appear due to budget cuts, 84 tanks were deployed. In addition to the parade, the Ministry of Defence organised more than 120 events throughout Spain.

The main campaign slogan was “Proud of being Spaniards,” the slogan used by the far-right Vox party in its protests in recent weeks against Catalan nationalism.

For the first time in 30 years, the national police were invited to march alongside the military. This was the ruling class's endorsement of the violent crackdown on the October 1 referendum, which left over 800 injured.

King Felipe VI also attended. He was greeted with

applause and shouts of “Long live Spain” and “Long live the Crown,” as well as “Puigdemont to prison,” referring to Catalan Premier Carles Puigdemont. This is the first public appearance of the king since an ominous address after the October 1 secessionist referendum in Catalonia, when he branded Catalonia an outlaw region of Spain and demanded that the Spanish state retake control.

In a clear sign of the broad support for a crackdown in the ruling class, there was not a single notable absence among the main political leaders of the Popular Party, the Socialist Party (PSOE), or of the Citizens party and Spain's regional parties. The PSOE sent a high-level delegation to the military parade: 20 former PSOE ministers attended, in addition to former prime ministers Felipe González and José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero.

Podemos sent its deputy speaker in Congress, Ione Belarra, and Gloria Elizo, a member of the parliamentary bureau—signaling its tacit support for Madrid's preparations to send in the army to carry out a bloody crackdown in Catalonia.

Podemos sources, trying to preserve their party's tattered “left” credentials while backing the military-police operations in Catalonia, cynically told *El Confidencial* that both Belarra and Elizo would only “attend the parade, but not the reception afterwards.”

The National Day parade comes amid a massive incitement of Spanish nationalism aimed at dividing the working class and overcoming the massive opposition to the return to authoritarian rule, associated with the fascist dictatorship of General Francisco Franco.

Fascist groups and views that a few months ago would have been viewed in official society as completely unacceptable are being cultivated and made “respectable.” Madrid-based media now call fascists

“Spanish nationalists” or “anti-secessionists.” PP leaders have threatened Puigdemont with “ending up like Companys,” the former regional premier under the Second Republic (1931-1939) who was shot in 1940 on Franco’s orders.

In Barcelona, the right-wing anti-secessionist Catalan Civil Society organisation, backed by Citizens and the Popular Party, rallied 65,000 people with Spanish flags, chanting slogans like “We will not be deceived, Catalonia is Spain,” “Puigdemont to prison,” and “Long live the police and the Civil Guards.” During the march, protesters booed the Catalan regional police, the Mossos, shouting: “Dogs! Traitors! Long live the Civil Guard!” At the end of the march, groups of fascists from the demonstration went into a rampage in the centre of Barcelona.

The Federal Union of Police posted yesterday its response to Puigdemont’s speech calling for dialogue with Madrid in its official Twitter account. With a photo of a group of heavily armed officers and the question: “*¿Hablamos?*” (let’s talk?). The tweet was headed with the following statement: “Against the coup-plotters...should we speak?”

The fascistic atmosphere and the preparations for a military crackdown have the seal of approval of the European Union (EU). Since the October 1 referendum, the EU’s official position has been to support Prime Minister Rajoy while calling for dialogue. Rajoy reacted to this on Wednesday by making a brief public statement demanding that Puigdemont clarify whether Catalan independence had in fact been declared, in order to prepare the invocation of Article 155 while showing to the EU that he was allowing space for “negotiations” until October 19.

The EU has now officially abandoned its mild calls for dialogue, in a further signal that it supports Rajoy’s planned crackdown.

European Commission spokesperson Alexander Winterstein omitted any call for dialogue yesterday, saying: “I will not go beyond what was said yesterday by the vice president [Valdis Dombrovskis]. I think one of the key messages he gave was that division and fragmentation must now be overcome and that unity and respect for the Spanish Constitution must be secured.”

On Wednesday, Dombrovskis had stated that the Catalan crisis was discussed “briefly” and that Rajoy

and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker are in constant contact.

The re-emergence of the threat of a military dictatorship in Spain and its endorsement by the EU deals a shattering blow to the claims—made after the fall of the military and fascist regimes in Greece, Portugal and Spain in the 1970s, and especially after the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy in 1991—that the European Union was the land of enlightened, democratic capitalism.

Instead, Spain and other EU member states have responded to the crisis of capitalism and the growing social tensions with militarism and increased repression. Workers and youth should be warned that this danger cannot be prevented by appeals to the EU, but only in a relentless struggle against it and the capitalist system upon which it is based.

The EU’s position has completely exposed the bankruptcy of the Catalan separatists. Their appeals to the EU to intervene to get them a better deal with Madrid and protect them from a Spanish army crackdown have fallen on deaf ears.



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