

THE REAL NATIONALISM

TRIBUNE

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It is not uncommon to blame the Catalan independence process on supposed nationalism, a backward step in a world of open borders, regional integration, and so on. Given that standard nationalist and/or ethnicist rhetoric is still to be heard at any of the myriad of pro-independence's mass peaceful rallies – which exactly mirror the racial, social, gender and age composition of Catalonia – this must be due to mere rhetoric, to escape from a topic that is neither simple nor trivial. In fact, Catalan leaders, from left to right, are always adamant in pro-

claiming that independence plays against no one and is now the way to solve a relationship that has been tainted after Madrid's multiple violations of common agreements with Catalonia and its people.

Paradoxically, unionist demonstrations – few in number and attendance (at least in Catalonia) – show the worst of Spanish nationalism: fascist-style salutes, burning of Catalan flags, cursing and blaming Catalan institutions and figures, threats to journalists, and so on. Needless to say, the huge majority of unionist supporters are not straightforwardly violent, yet they hardly show any unease when surrounded by fascists and their emblems, nor do they manifest an explicit rejection of them. This alone epitomises one of the Spain's ills: it has never come to terms with its past, fas-

cism, and its many manifestations – e.g. bullying of political rivals, media censorship, judicialisation of politics, violent attitudes – permeate the country's society and institutions, one way or another.

In fact, the so-called “model transition” provoked up to 591 deaths and left the Civil War and the 40 years of General Franco's rule unaccounted for. This latter fact situates Spain just below Cambodia in its number of unidentified mass graves. Hence, tagging the past as taboo was impli-

right-wing nationalist parties, PP and Ciudadanos, have tried to conceal. For its part, Spain's left-wing, evidently toothless to set a different agenda to the one dictated by Franco's inheritors, has instead blamed, somewhat cynically, the pro-independence camp for having awakened the “fascist monster” within Spanish society and politics.

All in all, even considering a handicapped Catalan leadership (their main leaders jailed or exiled), the number of



cit in the settlement between left (including the communists) and right (including the fascists).

Yet, crucially, ignoring the past also meant that key Francoist institutions were left unaccounted for (i.e. the monarchy, judiciary, police, military, and so on). All with the risk of ultimately undermining the country's weak democracy, which is shown for what it is in today's context. A State in which innocent people are persecuted for their political thoughts, Spain bringing shame to Europe, with its political prisoners and exiles.

The last twist of the screw in Spain's nationalism has been its new political star, Vox, a party that is not shy in calling itself heir of the dictator and his ideology – this, at least, is something that the two other

people in Catalonia who abhor Spanish nationalism is slowly rising, especially faced with the shameless ferocity, injustice and vengefulness with which Madrid deals with the Catalans. Added to this is potential trouble ahead for Madrid, as its room for manoeuvre has been significantly tightened: to start with, it cannot risk again being exposed to the world with more police brutality; furthermore, it is not convincing the international establishment that it is lowering tensions in Catalonia; and, finally, on the economic front, its budget deficit, always the largest in the EU, is a burden for its already high public debt, placing Spain on a razor's edge, should events turn even grimmer (e.g. more political unrest, lower growth, re-infringement of Brussel's deficit limits, etc).