

# LYING FOR UNITY

## TRIBUNE

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**A**re you surprised by the title of the article? That's the title of a recently published book in English. In fact, the full title is 'Lying for Unity: How Spain uses fake news and disinformation to block Catalonia's independence'. The author is Miquel Strubell, grandson of the illustrious doctor Josep Trueta, who went into exile in the United Kingdom following the 1936-39 Civil War, requested by the British to help them with the method he had developed to heal wounds. This book is irrefutable proof that Spain has spent a lot of money on a global diplomatic and media campaign to try to impose its version of the Spanish state's conflict with Catalonia. The book is a compilation of contrasting facts. In the present article there is only an initial reference for those who are interested in finding out the truth in more depth.

Anyway, who doesn't remember the images of Spanish police violence against voters trying to prevent Catalonia's independence referendum on October 1, 2017, which went around the world? Perhaps not so many remember how shortly afterwards the then Spanish foreign minister Alfonso Dastis told the BBC that many of those images, which had been witnessed by hundreds of foreign journalists and international observers, were fake pictures.

Another issue is the alleged support of Russia for the independence of Catalonia since before the 2017 referendum, rumours that had many complications. Among others, it was

the subject of a campaign by the newspaper El País. Nevertheless, as early as April 2018 a report by the British parliament clarified that the supposed interference of Russia in Catalonia's independence process was a blatant case of fake news. Well, it has recently become known that even the Audiencia Nacional, the de facto successor court of the Francoist Public Order Court, had to recognise that there were no indications of crime and in July 2020 filed the lawsuit on the presence of Russian spies in Catalonia before the 2017 referendum, but

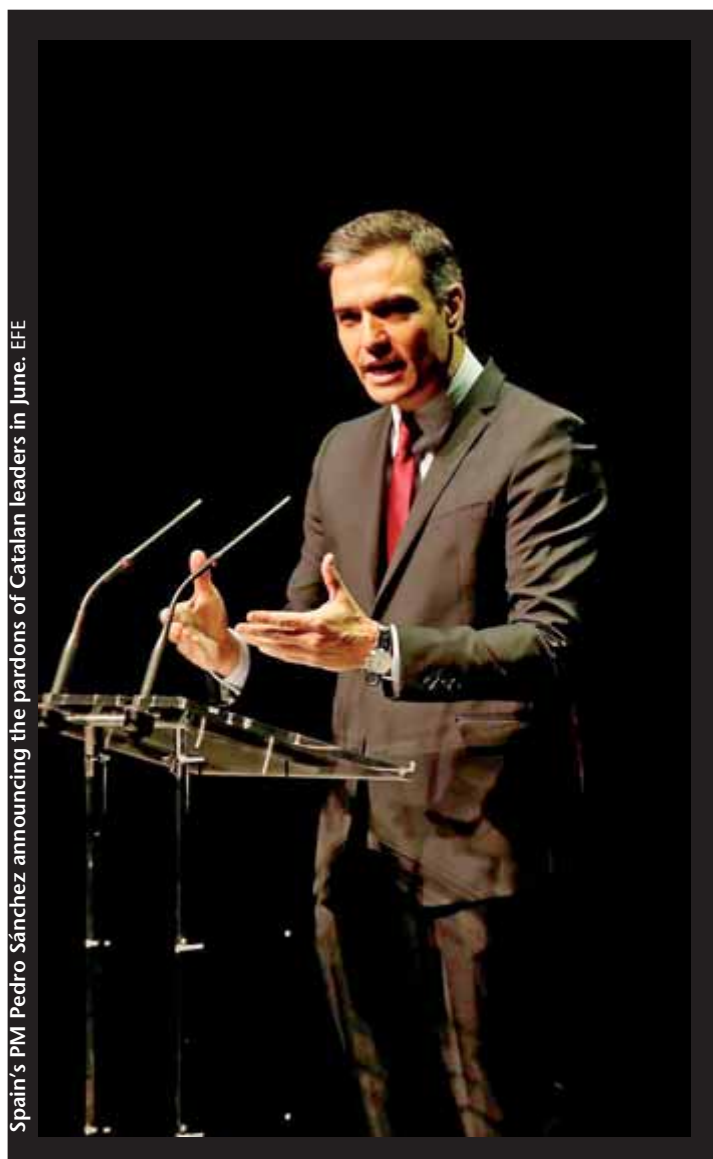
it did not report it. However, this has hardly been mentioned in the media, as opposed to the relevance given at the time to the campaign.

At the time of writing at the beginning of June there is a lot of talk about the Spanish government granting pardons to Catalan political prisoners. So far, it has ignored requests from various international organisations, such as the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, calling for the release of the Catalan political prisoners, after over three years in jail.

With the gesture of pardons, the Spanish government intends to shape international public opinion by pretending to have resolved the conflict between Spain and Catalonia with generosity.

Nonetheless, the reality is very different. Indeed, Spain continues to refuse to recognise the right of the Catalan people to self-determination despite it being enshrined in various United Nations covenants ratified by Spain. And the Catalan people have already clearly expressed their will in the referendum of October 1, 2017 in which the option of independence won with 90% of the vote, and which led to the proclamation of the Catalan Republic on October 27, 2017, although it has not yet become effective due to Spain's repression.

The repression, far from diminishing, is actually intensifying, with more than 3,000 people of the Catalan independence movement affected, for example, for the organisation of the referendum on October 1, 2017. Despite all this, it seems that in the European Union Spain is being treated differently from the likes of Poland or Turkey for similar events.



Spain's PM Pedro Sánchez announcing the pardons of Catalan leaders in June. EFE