

The Catalan Countries Project (1931-1939)

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Introduction

Throughout the second half of the 20th century, Catalan politics and public opinion ascribed the origin of the concept of the Catalan Countries to the Valencian thinker Joan Fuster. Works such as *Nosaltres els valencians* (We, the Valencians) (1962) or his booklet *Qüestió de noms* (A Question of Names) (1964), establish the Sueca-born essayist as the foremost advocate of cultural and national unity amongst all the regions in which the Catalan language is spoken. Thus, the impact of his proposals, collected in *Contra el nacionalisme espanyol* (Against Spanish Nationalism) (1994), spread the idea of unification through Catalonia, the Valencian Country, the Balearic Islands, Andorra, Northern Catalonia (within the French State), Franja de Ponent (Eastern Fringe of Aragon) and Alghero (on the Italian island of Sardinia). However, this significant spread, begun during the 1960s and 70s, and involving phenomena such as that known as the “Battle of Valencia”, did not include an analysis of the original historical stages of the Catalan Countries idea. To date, the historiography has not carried out conclusive work on either the bases of this national conception, or the projects put forward before the second half of the 20th century. Clearly, Fuster’s conceptions did not appear out of the blue, but rather found their initial origins in the influential publication *Quaderns de l’exili* (Accounts from Exile) published in Mexico by a group of exiled Catalan republicans. At the same time, the position of these writers was based on their political and cultural experience gained during Spain’s Second Republic, in which for the first time since the 18th century, Catalonia had enjoyed a system of autonomy that allowed it to encourage projects fostering greater links with the other Catalan speaking regions. This decade, the period between 1931 and the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939, saw the flourishing of Pan-Catalanism (an imitation of Pan-Germanism or Pan-Hellenism), the name by which the will to unify the Catalan Countries was known at those times. This key, and to a large extent foundation period in the Pan-Catalan project has been superficially analysed by authors such as Josep Ll. Carod Rovira (1987: 49-62) (1988:

27-46) or F. Pérez Moragón (1983: 57-82). Likewise, no published historiographic study has exclusively examined this question of major importance. The present article therefore aims to provide a general view of Pan-Catalan projects and thought in the 1931-1939 period¹.

Definition and historical foundations of the Catalan Countries

In 1932, the prestigious Catalan historian, Ferran Soldevila (formerly lector at the University of Liverpool) published the following definition of Catalonia in a school textbook:

The Catalan territory is made up of the regions known as Catalonia, Roussillon, Valencia and the Balearic Islands. All of these conform the Catalan nationality. They are all of the Catalan race and Catalan is spoken throughout their lands. For this reason, all of them can be comprehended under the generic name of the Catalan Countries².

In these terms, Soldevila simply published an historical conception that had become widespread during the end of the Primo de Rivera Dictatorship (1923-1930) and the first years of the Second Republic. From a vision based on the linguistic and historical link, intellectuals from a wide range of disciplines, cultural associations and Catalan nationalist political parties began to take the first steps in introducing the proposals for unification that had emerged from the 19th century Catalan literary Renaissance. Contemporaneous with the Romantic and Nationalist movements that appeared in Europe during the second half of the 19th century, the Catalan language and culture experienced a recovery of cultural prestige and of the cultural and literary use of a language sidelined by the imposition of Spanish and a long period of decline. This phenomenon, known as the Renaissance, spread with varying intensity throughout the Catalan speaking regions. Over a period of seventy years, authors including the Valencian Teodor Llorente, the Mallorcan M. Costa i Llobera or the Catalan Víctor Balaguer, fused the idea of linguistic and cultural unity across all these regions. But above all else, the language became firmly established as the bastion of the cultural community. At the same time, as with its

German or Italian contemporaries, the Renaissance sought out historical references that would endow a centuries-old coherence to the unifying links between these lands. The figure of King James I (1213-1275), who reclaimed the kingdom of Valencia in 1238 and Mallorca in 1229 from the Moors, and brought Catalan language and repopulation, became the most obvious testimony to the proximity between Catalonia and the rest of these lands.

However, the concept of cultural unity was also to become increasingly linked with that of political unity, in a time such as the final decades of the 19th century when a nascent Catalan nationalism questioned the situation of Catalonia within Spain. Particularly following the loss of the colonies in the Spanish Disaster of 1898, Catalanism, which prior to then had been exclusively cultural, moved into the political arena. With this political evolution, the potential existence of Catalan nationalist projects aiming to extend Catalanism to Valencia or Mallorca aroused opposition both from Spain and certain sectors of the Valencian and Mallorcan political classes. The growing force of Catalan nationalism, particularly amongst the conservative industrialists of the *Lliga Regionalista* (Regionalist League) led by E. Prat de la Riba and F. Cambó, resulted in the creation of Spanish nationalist counter-images. Thus, for example, in Valencia the concept of Catalonia as an industrial economy as opposed to agricultural Valencia was fostered; a linguistic theory was invented that segregated the Catalan spoken in Valencia from that used in Catalonia; or the notion of Catalan imperialism, arising from the Barcelona industrialists' proclivity to dominate their extensive hinterland as a market for their products and to exploit the population in their factories³. In this context, from 1907 onwards, the year Prat de la Riba published his article *La Greater Catalonia*⁴ calling for a project to unify the Catalan Countries along the lines of Great Britain, Pan-Catalanism advanced no further than a certain theorisation. Not until the introduction of the Second Spanish Republic on 14 April 1931, and the constitution of the first autonomy in Catalonia since the loss of the War of Succession in 1714, did wide-ranging political and cultural projects emerge within the framework of the Catalan

Lands. The establishment of an autonomous Catalan government (later confirmed in the Statute of Autonomy passed by the Spanish parliament in 1932), would provide the nationalist political class, then dominated by *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (Republican Left of Catalonia, hereafter ERC) and Catalan intellectual circles with a framework within which for the first time political power was enjoyed, the Catalan language was granted official status and the administrative structure was in place from which nationalist projects could be developed. Between 1931 and 1939, prominent historians such as the medieval specialist Martí de Riquer, writers such as J. V. Foix or politicians like Francesc Macià or Francesc Cambó, defended a growing relation between all the lands in which Catalan was spoken.

Great or small Catalonia?

In March 1932, the founder of the cultural and nationalist organisation Palestra Josep M. Batista i Roca, who after 1939 was to become professor in the London School of Economics, said:

We happily accept a Statute that defines Catalonia as a region, and we welcome it as a region, and we welcome, as a basic code of a system of freedom, a Constitution that contains the anti-democratic order to never consent to the federation of autonomous "regions", a legal precept that, naturally, has no other purpose than to oppose a political formula that would sanctify the national unity of Valencia, Mallorca, Catalonia and the Catalan area of Aragon. Nonetheless, before arriving to political unity we must draw together sincerely and cordially our fraternal lands, and we still have a long way to go before that point can be reached. The first stage is a question of giving a truly national scope to Catalan patriotism. It is a question of making our people understand (...) that the Catalan's homeland is not only the Principality of Catalonia, but rather the greater unit consisting of all the lands that historically yesterday, linguistically today and by popular will tomorrow, make up the Catalan Nation⁵.

In the 1930s the main debate on nationalism in the various lands of the Catalan Countries centred on the national affiliation that should be considered. As in the period prior to the creation of Germany in 1870, the debate lay in whether to create a state that would incorporate all German

speaking areas, in line with the Pan-Germanic movement, thus including Austria (*Great Germany*); or whether on the other hand, to designate the new state within the frontiers of the Holy German Empire to create a *Small Germany*. In the same way, Catalonia and the theorists of its nationalism had to determine whether a fully national sentiment was felt beyond the boundaries of the four Spanish provinces of Barcelona, Girona, Tarragona or Lleida, or whether they should look further afield towards Perpignan, Valencia or Mahon (Minorca) to come up with a satisfactory definition of nationality and identity. At the same time, nascent Valencian and Mallorcan nationalism would also have to define its geographical bases: either as part of the Pan-Catalan nationalist movement claiming unification of the Catalan Countries as an independent, federal or autonomous system within Spain, or by directing their efforts towards a strictly Valencian or Mallorcan nationalism. The root of the matter was to discover whether the identity of the Valencian Country, for example, formed part of the Catalan nationality, or whether it would become a nationality on its own, with all the elements that entailed. For Pan-Catalanists like the Catalan historian A. Rovira i Virgili, Catalonia had to become the centre of this new national conception:

Hegemony is fertile and legitimate when it is exerted by a leading section of a nation over other less advanced sections on the road to national recovery and popular awakening, such as the case of Piedmont in Italy and Bohemia in Czechoslovakia. Thus, Catalonia defined in the administrative sense may be and has to be the Piedmont of Great Catalonia, made up of all the Catalan speaking lands⁶.

In this vein, practically all Catalanism advocated contact with organisations in the rest of the lands, while mainly in Valencia and Mallorca, a three-way division arose around this issue. First, the nationalists who, from the Valencian and Mallorcan nationalist position regarded themselves as Catalans in favour of union with Catalonia; second, those nationalists whose only wish was to defend the rights of their own strictly defined territory, such as the Valencian writer Josep M. Bayarri, who, in his consequential work entitled *El perill català* (The Catalan Peril) stated:

Despite all the unions that have been proclaimed, however much our lands continue to be included amongst the Catalan lands, we truly believe that alone we will bring our people alive, redeeming them from current meekness by speaking of: Valencian lands, Valencian language, Valencian lineage. These are problems of a sentimental nature that the Catalans should understand, by renouncing the imperialism that their splendid contemporary renaissance leads one to forgive, but that can never be pleasing to Valencia; even though here there is no lack of intellectuals lured by the political superiority of Catalonia and predisposed to these tendencies⁷.

This second group, amongst whom a linguistic conceptualisation designed to break down the unity of the Catalan language was beginning to spread, was to a large extent linked to the reactions in Spanish nationalist circles to Pan-Catalanism. These circles constituted the third group, and saw Pan-Catalanism as a threat to the unity of Spain in its aspiration to extend Catalan nationalism throughout a broad area of the state. In their defence of Spanish national and cultural unity, certain journalists and politicians argued for the need to eschew the Catalan language, as an “element of backwardness” in order to move towards the exclusive use of Spanish, a “more universal” language. The political dispute was played out between the first and the third of these three groups, between Catalan Pan-nationalism and Spanish nationalism. The former was bolstered by the actions and prestige of Catalan autonomy and the Catalan civic-cultural movement that emerged at the end of the 19th century, the model followed by Catalanists in Valencia or Mallorca; while the latter was grounded in the political and legislative power of the republican state.

Pan-Catalanist activity and Spanish opposition

The *de facto* introduction of autonomous government for Catalonia in April 1931 enabled, through the network of Catalanist political and cultural entities, the initiation of a series of moves designed to support the growing Pan-Catalanist movement that had gradually been taking shape. The recently established Spanish Republic accepted the possibility of approving Statutes of Autonomy for territories that requested them, following approval

in the Spanish Cortes. However, only Catalonia took up this option during the 1931-1936 period, followed by the Basque Country and Galicia in the months preceding and following the outbreak of Civil War. In this context, Catalan autonomy became an exceptional circumstance, thus enjoying yet greater prestige in the eyes of other nationalist nuclei in other parts of the Spanish State. Although the Spanish Constitution recognised the right to *regional* autonomy within an integrated state, Article 13 prohibited the federation of autonomous regions, clearly designed to prevent a possible union between Catalonia and the future autonomous regions of Valencia and the Balearic Islands. This was the motive behind the speech given by the president of the provisional republican government, N. Alcalá Zamora, to the Constituent Cortes in the debate on the republican Constitution:

I said the following to Catalonia, as I repeat now to you, and it has been perhaps the hardest, and therefore the most noble and valuable of all the transactions, with regard to the comprehensible attempt to expand the territories of the Catalan region: Catalonia – recognition must be given to its political genius- has not been an elusive, inward-looking region, imbued with selfish spirit, but rather an expansive, creative region, fountain of glories and initiatives, that in the Middle Ages journeyed and dominated the world known at that time, (...). In a country that has been a creator, that has been great, in a country with a profound imagination, the allure of past glory cannot be extinguished; and in the country, bounded by mountains to the North and even to the West, by river to the South and by sea to the East, was able to overcome these four obstacles and spread its genius in all four directions, it is natural that, without going as far as attempting to relive the feats of the Almogavares, nor dreaming of Roussillon nor of Sardinia, nor remembering the enduring linguistic spirit left in Sardinia, it will still have, within the Spanish territory, and precisely because of its clean, healthy conscience that far from seeking to exploit the greatness of the Spanish State, rather seeks to contribute to its splendour, the generous dream of now peacefully continuing in the footsteps of James the Great; and on one side it sees the Balearic Islands; on the other it dreams of Valencia; on yet another, it remembers how its prevailing spirit catalanised part of the provinces of Huesca and Teruel; and so I said to them, understanding all of this in a country of great creativity and imaginative dreams: You are also men of reality; live in reality and draw a veil over your pretensions to

expansion, because now is the time for communion and brotherhood amongst the Spanish regions⁸.

For their part, the representatives of the Catalan Parliamentary Minority⁹, chiefly made up of left-wing nationalists, defended a federal state model for the construction of Spain. And this is because, for the Spanish politicians who reluctantly passed the Catalan Statute of Autonomy on 15 September 1932, any spread of “anti-Spanish” Catalanism that may lead to a change in hegemonies in the Spanish political arena could not be allowed. Commenting on this speech, A. Rovira i Virgili wrote:

Mr Alcalá Zamora ended his objective and analytical speech last Wednesday with certain considerations regarding the relation between Aragon, Valencia and the Balearic Islands and the Catalan question. The noble friend of Catalonia demonstrated to the Catalan people the danger that he sees in Pan-Catalanism applied to those lands (...). Alcalá Zamora’s historical-political disquisition offers us an excellent opportunity to specify and determine the scope of the Pan-Catalanist ideal. As it is understood by Catalans today, this ideal cannot give cause for any alarm, nor can it justify any reproach of imperialism. (...) Whenever Catalanists speak of the possible and desirable territorial union of the Catalan speaking countries to form a political entity, the first condition that we impose is the will to do so of those countries. We do not ask for nor seek a Constitution or law that will declare the Ribagorçana lands, the Valencian lands, the islands, annexes of Catalonia. We only ask that the door be left open to union, in case tomorrow the inhabitants of these lands, (...) freely wish to once again form part of their historic, linguistic centre¹⁰.

For their part, certain analysts such as the Valencian journalist F. Carreras Calatayud said on the view held in Madrid:

When, on occasions in a discussion on Catalanism, I have mentioned the issue of a possible federation between the Valencian Country and Mallorca with Catalonia, fear has raised its head. They realise that if the three of us were united, we would hold the destinies of Spain in our hands, and that is the hidden reason behind their attempts to divide us¹¹.

The unification of all the Catalan Lands comprising the Catalan and Valencian industrial centres and the Balearic Islands’ strategic bases was feared, since it may have disturbed Castilian domination across the Iberian

Peninsula. The granting of autonomy to Catalonia was not the result of any Spanish spirit of autonomy, but rather of the indispensable role played by Catalonia in collaborating to consolidate the Second Spanish Republic. The left-wing republican Catalan nationalists who came to power in the elections on 12 April 1931, taking over from the conservative nationalists, had jointly signed the Agreement of San Sebastian with the Spanish republicans in August 1930. The main forces and personalities, PSOE, ORGA, etc., that stood against the monarchy of Alfonso XIII and the Dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera, had agreed to accept a political autonomy decided by popular vote in Catalonia, once the republican Constituent Cortes had debated and approved the move. However, on 14 April 1931 the ERC leader, F. Macià proclaimed the Catalan Republic, thus separating itself from the Spanish republican project. Only after negotiations with three ministers of the Spanish republic's provisional government did Macià withdraw his declaration and accept the establishment of the autonomy within Spain. The Spanish republicans were therefore not in favour of conceding autonomy to any part of the territory, and even less of allowing a member for the *Partido Radical* (Radical Party) to thus define:

(...) article 13 of the Constitution expressly and specifically prohibits no more than the federation of autonomous regions; undoubtedly, the purpose of this prohibition is to prevent the constitution of large political-administrative nuclei that may break up the organic equilibrium of the State¹²;

In this way, the Catalan model for autonomy would provide a pattern that those seeking autonomy in the Valencian Country and the Balearic Islands would attempt to imitate. However, the weakness of the movements for autonomy in these areas was such that the creation of *autonomous regions*, according to its followers the basic foundation for the achievement of the Pan-Catalanist objectives, proved to be impossible. To continue in the same vein, during the events held in Barcelona to celebrate the approval of the Statute of Catalonia, the representative of the Council of Palma de Mallorca, Francesc de Sales Aguiló, gave a speech on the fraternity between the various Catalan Countries in which he said:

Catalans, brothers of Catalonia, it is a cause for great joy to be able to speak to you on behalf of your sister Mallorca, about us, your brothers, and to express our gratitude for the welcome with which you have honoured us. He then stated that the Mallorcans, in joining together with the Catalans, felt a patriotic resonance that strengthened the bonds (...) that joined them. He asked the Catalans for assistance, on the threshold of this present victory, to defend the freedoms of Mallorca, the Statute the Mallorcans were to draw up, and once the autonomy were achieved, to go forward with all the peoples of Iberia to revoke the spirit and the letter of Article 13 of the Constitution (...)"¹³.

On the same day, the newspaper of the Catalan governing party defined the events with this headline: "Barcelona, head and ancestral home of Catalonia. Catalans from the administrative region of Catalonia and Catalans from the Islands, from Valencia and from Roussillon, today declare their faith in the Second Republic"¹⁴.

Territorial extension with Catalonia as its centre

With Catalonia representing the hub from which the main Pan-Catalanist initiatives radiated, the autonomous government, the nationalist parties and various cultural associations began to build up a wide network of connections. Government action acted as a reference and provided the main umbrella under which the Catalan executive carried out significant activities within the context of the Catalan Countries, going far beyond their official functions. The measures introduced included economic support and political defence of Catalan education in the co-principality of Andorra (a sovereign state with two heads of state, the President of the French Republic and the Catalan bishop of Seu d'Urgell, where Catalan was the only official language). The case of Andorra reached the point where it was debated in the Catalan autonomous Parliament.

Even more politically controversial and complicated was the Catalan government's attempt to carry out Catalanist activities in the Pyrenean regions of what is known as Northern Catalonia, which came under French sovereignty with the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659. Frontier territory contact and the presence of thousands of southern Catalans working and

living on the French side led to reactions such as that of Charles Maurras who, in an article reproduced for the *Revista de Catalunya*, entitled

A French Aspect of the Catalan Problem”, stated: “the problem has other aspects, especially a French aspect that it would be folly to ignore. It must not be forgotten that in effect the lands of Joffre, profoundly French, are home to a very diverse population. In Perpignan live 25,000 Spanish people, of whom at least 20,000 are Catalans. Every village has a Spanish Catalan colony of 50, (...). Fortunately, a great deal of mixing has occurred through marriage and many have become naturalised. But nevertheless, events have taken a new unprecedented turn: just the mention of the name Catalan Republic awakens a groundswell of unfathomable sympathy that nobody suspected was there. Amongst the people? Especially amongst the people. The smallest thing will be enough for the latent idea to determine and cause the emergence of unsuspected centrifugal forces. Yes, a leader. Circumstances. War? Revolution? (...). This leader, if he existed, would have an easy task¹⁵.

The Catalan government also effected a policy of symbolic presence in Mallorca and Valencia with visits such as that of President Macià in 1933 to the Valencian capital, or of the Councillor for Culture Ventura Gassol to the largest of the Balearic Islands in 1934.

The cultural market and language

As Enric Ucelay da Cal (2003: 740) points out, It was obvious that Catalonia, to survive as a linguistic and cultural space with a high level of genuine culture, needed to safeguard an intellectual and linguistic market, separate from the immense space of the language of Cervantes¹⁶. The Catalan language needed a linguistic space or *Lebensraum* to survive against the pressure from Spanish or French to which it had been subject for over three centuries. This need, in part solved by political autonomy and recognition of Catalan as an official language from 1931 onwards, was not sufficient. The democratic structure of the Second Spanish Republic had to be exploited in order to create a common cultural framework for all the Catalan Countries in which publishers could work towards increasing the number of potential readers. The three million potential readers of Catalan

in Catalonia would necessarily have to rise to six million, thereby involving the other regions. At the same time, the literature, history or any other discipline to come out of, for instance, Castellón de la Plana (Valencia), Ibiza (Balearic Islands) or Andorra would have to be made known in Barcelona. During the thirties, this project would gradually be consolidated through various publishing initiatives such as the Barcino publishing house, or cultural publications like *La República de les Lletres* in Valencia or *Nostra Terra* in Perpignan. At the same time, this activity was closely linked to the active policy of expanding the teaching of Catalan to all regions in which it was spoken, but not granted official status. In this line, initiatives carried out in Andorra, Northern Catalonia or Mallorca were driven by the *Associació Protectora de l'Ensenyança Catalana* (APEC) (Association for the Protection of Catalan teaching) that was active in all these regions, and particularly in Mallorca where it set up a sister organisation whose aims were stated by its president in 1932 on listing the projects yet to be undertaken:

But the Association could still take on a further mission, which to date, due to limited resources it has only been able to hint at, and that is to extend and intensify its activities to all Catalan speaking areas, Mallorca, Valencia and Roussillon, to there revive, through education, our glorious language¹⁷.

At the same time the new Catalan authorities also initiated a policy of collaboration beyond the limits of autonomous Catalonia. In this line, the Councillor for Culture, V. Gassol, on granting assistance to the government of Andorra for education in Catalan, said:

Considering that the Generalitat of Catalonia deems one of its most essential duties to be the extension of its cultural activity to all the regions affected by our language, and one of the ways this task can be accomplished is by financing education in the aforementioned Republic, (...) ¹⁸.

In turn, in Valencia the parallel organisation APEV was established, mirroring the Catalan association with which it was to work in close cooperation. As I mention above, the language was the main factor in these cultural links, and for this reason it was to become the area to which the

greatest effort was devoted.

An agreement was reached that established the orthography of the language in accordance with the work of the philologist Pompeu Fabra and the Institut d'Estudis Catalans (Institute for Catalan Studies), and was widely accepted in all the regions, despite certain controversial issues, thus for the first time allowing the creation of a literary tradition in a unified language. In the same spirit of constructing bonds between the cultures, a range of Pan-Catalanist manifestos were published in Catalonia calling particularly for greater fluency in relations with Mallorca, signed by the autonomous authorities and the most important representatives of the country's culture (May 1934 *Comitè de Relacions entre Catalunya i Mallorca* –Committee for Catalonia-Mallorca Relations– and April 1936 *Missatge als mallorquins* –A Message to the Mallorcans)¹⁹.

Political projects

Although these cultural projects clearly provoked a constant series of attacks on 'Catalan interventionism', the political projects led to even more violent criticism. The transversal Catalanism that ranged from the conservative nationalists of the *Lliga Regionalista*, to those on the left in the ERC, through the centre *Partit Catalanista Republicà* (Catalanist Republican Party) to the socialist members of *Unió Socialista de Catalunya* (Socialist Union of Catalonia), created links with the various parties in Mallorca and Valencia. In this respect, the minority Christian democrat party *Unió Democràtica de Catalunya* (Democratic Union of Catalonia) became the group that most theorised and worked towards the Pan-Catalan objective. The party, one of whose leaders was the member of parliament M. Carrasco i Formiguera, executed in 1938 in Francoist territory, issued the following ideological statement at its second Congress:

In the hope of a definitive solution to our national problem, we must take advantage of the means that the political situation presents in every moment to raise the conscience of our people; and to prepare the reconstruction of our national unity through the introduction of the Catalan nationalist movement in the lands of Valencia, Balearic Islands, Catalan Aragon, Roussillon and Andorra²⁰.

One task that had to be undertaken:

From Catalonia every assistance must be given, first and foremost that of discretion. This, nonetheless, is not incompatible, rather the contrary, with every Catalan party's seeking an alliance with a political group in those regions that comes closest to its own ideology. The Democratic Union of Catalonia will work enthusiastically to reach an understanding with nuclei allied to them that are organised throughout all the Catalan lands.

These proposals from UDC were followed by other parties such as ERC, which despite the modest nature of its party policy on this issue, caused great uproar. At their Second Ordinary Conference a brief rhetorical statement expressed the wish to extend Catalan nationalism to Mallorca and Valencia. This "anecdotal" reference provoked an avalanche of accusations that branded the party in power in Catalonia as an imperialist force with headlines such as: "Maciá's dream to become Emperor of Catalonia, Valencia and Mallorca"²¹:

The issue is no longer to do with demands for Catalan freedoms, nor cooperating in the movement for autonomy in other regions in the noble aspiration for a federal Spain. It is the foolish imperialist dream of a nationalism that has shown itself for what it is; not the liberator of a people oppressed by centralist absorption, but the curtailer of other liberties that with the process of time and through the course of history have shaped personalities that are totally separate from Catalonia, peoples who feel they have the right to live for themselves and with Spain, (...). And against this historical reality, Maciá rebels with all the iron forcefulness of a conqueror, and the Left of Catalonia reveals itself as an Almogavar recruit, ready for the foray and invasion at the cry of: Valencia and Mallorca for Catalonia!²².

While up to 1931 voices from Valencia had alleged that the conservative Catalan nationalists were "imperialists" exclusively bent on augmenting their industrial fortunes, now republican and left-wing nationalists came under attack for the sole reason of their Catalanism. This situation showed that the anti-Catalanism encouraged by certain sectors in Valencia was not a question of right or left, but rather a simple confrontation between Spanish and Catalan nationalism. At the same time in Mallorca, the conservative nationalist leader F. Cambó put into effect a

wide range of political and cultural projects that would reaffirm the links between island Catalanists and those in Catalonia. Clearly, the marked ERC-Lliga bipartism that divided Catalan politics during the period of the republic (1931-1936) could not remain outside the Pan-Catalan debate. The two major forces in the Catalan political arena, representing a large part of Catalan society (with the exception of the anarchist working class that on occasions aligned itself with ERC), inevitably became involved in the Pan-Catalan debate. Thus, while prior to 1931 the Lliga had fostered conservative nationalist projects in Mallorca and Valencia, the ERC began to do the same from then onwards²³. Confrontation arose between the two parties surrounding their activities in the other regions where they hoped to dominate the emerging Pan-Catalanist sectors. However, this struggle was appeased by the joint activity of the Catalan political and cultural forces within the Pan-Catalan framework. In this way, the evolution of political and cultural Pan-Catalanism was marked by a diverse series of events in the thirties. It was seriously held back as a consequence of the proclamation made by the President of the Generalitat of the Catalan State on 6 October 1934, and by the subsequent suspension of autonomy. Likewise, during the civil war (1936-1939) it was limited to left-wing nationalism.

Minorca, Alghero and the Eastern Fringe

As detailed above, the three main regions of Pan-Catalanism were Catalonia, the island of Mallorca and the Valencian Country, although they did not represent the whole picture of the Catalan Lands map. None of the remaining areas, the islands of Minorca, Ibiza and Formentera (the Balearic islands), the fringe of the Spanish region of Catalan-speaking Aragon and the Sardinian city of Alghero, testified any nationalist movements. Some Minorcan Catalanists and certain intellectuals in Alghero made the occasional proclamation for Catalan nationality, but without any type of social base²⁴. Even so, there was no shortage of constant references from the Pan-Catalanists in Barcelona or Valencia towards those lands, which unlike the others, were not capable on their own of building nationalist movements.

Barcelona, the alternative capital. Catalonia: reformer of Spain

The high rate at which Pan-Catalanism grew in the 1931-1939 period was in part due to the increasingly important role assumed by the city of Barcelona. The granting of political autonomy had given the Catalan capital an unprecedented political and administrative power, which must be added to the industrial and commercial strength that had existed since the middle of the 19th century. In this way, Barcelona became an alternative state capital to Madrid. This came from two Pan-Catalanism related perspectives. Firstly, from a questioning of the structure of Spain, which according to most Catalan nationalists should be constituted as a federation of the four major existing national areas: the Catalan Lands, the Basque Country, Galicia and Portugal, and Castile. This desire to redesign Spain appeared in Barcelona and Catalonia. In addition, from a second perspective the Catalan autonomy opened up a wide range of opportunities in this city for those who wanted to follow a political or administrative career. Since the 19th century, the University of Barcelona had been the focal point for Mallorcans wishing to study, and now it was disposed to receive the Valencians who had traditionally looked towards Madrid for a career in the administration. As noted above, the hegemony held by the centre of the peninsular over the periphery was starting to be brought into question. Fear of a change of hegemony in the Iberian peninsula, albeit incipient, began to gather strength in the political circles of Madrid.

Civil War, growth and the end of Pan-Catalanism

The military revolt by the Spanish army in July 1936 that led to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) brought about major changes in Catalan nationalism. The first and most direct of these was the disappearance of conservative Catalanism, which due to pressure from the left-wing sectors and its identification with the Francoist side was forced to flee Catalonia to avoid the uncontrolled violence in the first months of the conflict. Meanwhile, the national and independent tendencies on the left were enjoying an exceptional presence and began to permeate the Partit

Socialista Unificat de Catalunya, at the same time continuing within the sectors of the ERC that despite the difficulties, continued to control the autonomy. For some months, this autonomy in fact enjoyed a certain de facto semi-independence resulting from the destruction of the Spanish Republic's power structures.

Against this background, Pan-Catalanism was to experience one of the most important moments, albeit symbolically, of the 1931-1939 period: the operation to overpower Mallorca organised by the Catalan government²⁵. This military operation, according to some authors organised by the Mallorcan ERC politician Antoni M. Sbert, involved the participation of volunteer soldiers from most Catalan parties and trade unions, of which the Estat Català independentists played a leading role. At the same time, the historian A. Rovira i Virgili launched a journalistic campaign in the nationalist press in which he linked the operation to the Pan-Catalan project in relation to the Catalan conquest of the island seven centuries before. In other words, the aim was to recapture the island of Mallorca (together with Ibiza and Formentera) from the hands of the rebels and Mussolini's Italians and return it to Catalonia, the motherland. On this issue, in one of the many articles he devoted to the subject, and once the offensive had begun, he said:

Now the Catalan expeditionary forces have gained a foothold in Mallorca. The flags of freedom that years ago flew over the other islands of the archipelago are now hoisted over the largest of the islands. The liberators of Mallorcan soil set sail from the coast of the Principality today as they did seven centuries ago. The destiny of the Balearic Islands is united –as can clearly be seen– to that of Catalonia. From this side the impulse of redemption reaches our Islands²⁶.

Although somewhat later, a group of Valencian volunteers joined the assailing forces, thereby heightening the almost *mystic* mood of the nationalist expedition.

Notwithstanding, although the origin of the expedition does not only lie in a nationalist determination (Mallorca was the airbase from which Italian planes set out to bomb the republican Catalan and Valencian coasts),

various Spanish republican politicians saw in it what Rovira i Virgili had so often repeated. For example, the President of the Republic, Manuel Azaña in conversation with the ERC member M. Santaló at the end of 1936 listed the times that according to him the Catalan government had overstepped the boundaries of its authorised powers since the beginning of the war:

Why count! They created the Council for Defence, they set about leading their own war, which was just a way of impeding it, they wanted to take Aragon, they decreed the senseless expedition to the Balearic Islands to construct the great Catalonia of Prat de la Riba...²⁷.

Despite these criticisms and the resonance of the nationalist campaign, the offensive in Mallorca ended with the withdrawal of Catalan troops on the orders of the central republican government.

Pan-Catalanism during the war

As I have described above, war brought the disappearance of the right-wing Catalan and Valencian nationalists. However it had the opposite effect in Mallorca, which in the first moments came under the control of the rebels, characterised by an impassioned Spanish nationalism hostile to any national sentiment or language other than their own. This ultra-Spanish nationalism became even more violent in its attitude to everything remotely related to Catalan as a consequence of the attempt to take Mallorca in August 1936. This culminated in the execution of several prominent Mallorcan Catalanists such as the Mayor of Palma de Mallorca, Emili Darder, for their left-wing, Catalan nationalist beliefs. Many others were forced to sign a manifesto in which they withdrew their support for the *Resposta als Catalans (Response to the Catalans)*, written in reply to the *Missatge als Mallorquins* received a few months previously. At the same time, a campaign of repression was activated against the indigenous culture, the language and bodies such as the *Associació per la Cultura de Mallorca (Association for Mallorcan Culture)* and its journal *La Nostra Terra (Our Land)*, both renowned for their militant Catalanism.

In contrast to the situation on the island, radical nationalists in Catalonia, although now excluded from the Catalan government,

introduced major changes in the political structure in preparation for the end of the war once the rebels had been defeated. This was expressed in numerous speeches, as in the words of cultural activist Josep M. Batista i Roca:

No-one can imagine that after all the efforts to gain victory, Catalonia will allow itself to be intimidated back within the strict limitations of the Statute. It is not only the Catalan Republic that must be born out of this revolution. From the total collapse of the Spanish state that we are witnesses to today, must emerge the union of all the Catalan speaking countries: Catalonia, Valencia, the Balearic Islands and the Catalan area of Aragon, in one political unit. There is no reason why this Republic of the Catalan Lands should not later maintain relations with the other national Republics that will be created on the Peninsula. And in this way, we will move from the second Spanish republic to a Union of Republics, or at least a Confederation²⁸.

For its part, certain Valencian Pan-Catalanist intellectuals like university professor E. Gómez-Nadal believed that communism held the ideal solution to the various nations making up the Spanish state. However, the conflict, increasingly favourable to general Franco's fascist troops, would gradually dilute Pan-Catalanism and Catalan nationalism, thus closing the circle with the end of the conflict and the loss of autonomy in Catalonia.

Following eight years during which the Catalan language had enjoyed official status in part of its lands, with the consequent strengthening of the culture and politics common to all the regions, the Francoist military victory marked the beginning of what was to be the long dark night of dictatorship.

Conclusions

Without a shadow of doubt, the national Catalan Project during the years 1931-1939 did no more than establish the foundations and demonstrate what could be achieved in a prolonged democratic political context. The first Spanish experience of democracy and the opportunity for autonomy in Catalonia opened up for the first time the real possibility of a Catalan nationalist cultural politics designed to bring all the Catalan

speaking regions closer together. At the same time, this impulse strengthened the small Pan-Catalanist nuclei in Valencia and Mallorca, and roused certain sectors in Northern Catalonia (France), Minorca and Andorra. The networks of cultural bodies supporting the language and the growing presence of the new nationalist forces did not manage, however, to establish a sufficiently consolidated political space.

Despite the advances made towards a consciousness of a united nationality, the course of political events during the thirties in Spain and the end of the Civil War in 1939 would truncate any possibility of Pan-Catalanism. A national consciousness which, although it was not the main objective of the Catalan political parties and was extremely weak in the other regions, became a reference and an irrenounceable desire of Catalan nationalism.

Clearly, the republican period in which the foundations of this national vision were established was the key moment for the introduction of a cultural and political project that today, at the beginning of the 21st century, still continues to arouse the same defensive postures and the same feelings of hatred.

Notes

1. This article thus becomes a synthesis of a book to be published in 2005.
2. Soldevila, Ferran: *Història de Catalunya*, 2^a edition. Barcelona, Publicacions de l'APEC. Barcelona, 7, 1932.
3. Essential reading on this question is Ucelay da Cal, Enric: *El imperialisme catalán*, Barcelona, Edhasa, 2003.
4. A Prat de la Riba, Enric: *La Nacionalitat Catalana*. Barcelona, Edicions 62, 1982, p. 144-148. The article was first published in the magazine *La Senyera*, 12, January 1907.
5. *L'extensió del patriotisme català*. *La Publicitat*, 11, March, 1932. The article was accompanied with a map of the Catalan Countries divided according to the various dialects of the language.
6. Rovira i Virgili, Antoni: *Catalunya i Espanya*. *La Publicitat*, 19, March 1931.
7. Bayarri, Josep Maria: *El perill català*. Valencia, Consell Valencià de

- Publicacions, 1933, p. 15.
8. Diario de Sesiones de las Cortes Constituyentes (DSCC) 23, September 1931, p. 1088-1095.
 9. My doctoral dissertation, soon to be published by Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, examines the Catalan Minority in the Constituent Cortes of the Second Spanish Republic (1931-1933).
 10. Rovira i Virgili, Antoni: "Enllà dels rius i de la mar", *La Publicitat*, 25, September. Republished in *La Veu de Mallorca*, 3, October 1931.
 11. Carreras Calatayud, F.: *De Madrid estant. Dues reflexions sobre notes de actualitat. El Camí*, 23, April 1932.
 12. DSCC. 16, June 1932 p. 6259. This speech formed part of the debate on the possibility of aggregating the Catalanian territories.
 13. "Els mallorquins davant del monument a Rafael de Casanova", *La Publicitat*, 25, September 1932.
 14. "Les festes de l'Estatut", *L'Opinió*, 25, September 1932.
 15. "Aspecte francès del problema català", *La Revista de Catalunya*, May 1931, p. 483.
 16. Op cit. in *El imperialismo catalán*, p. 740.
 17. This speech by M. Folguera i Duran was reproduced in various newspapers, for example, *El Matí*, *La Publicitat* 27-II-1932 or in the Bulletin of the APEC itself: *Missatge Presidencial. Als socis de l'Associació Protectora de l'Ensenyança Catalana*, 15, March 1932, p. 207-211.
 18. AGDPB, Lligall 4157. The General Council of les Valls d'Andorra dated 6-X-1931 sent a letter to Francesc Macià in gratitude for the subsidies offered for these areas: 'En Roc Pallarés i Rossell, Síndic (...) is honoured to express to the most honourable citizen En Francesc Macià, (...)Andorra's most profound and cordial gratitude for the generous annual subsidy of sixteen thousand pesetas awarded by the said Government in this Republic (...)'
 19. I deal with the second of these manifestos in González i Vilalta, Arnau: "La Comunitat Cultural Catalano-Balear (1936)", *Randa*. Barcelona, 2004, p. 153-166.
 20. Comment in *El Matí*, 27 October 1933.
 21. The Management Commission of the Valencian Statute published the following note in *El Mercantil Valenciano*: "This Management Commission of the Valencian Statute, in accordance with its spirit of the strictest and most determined Valencian character, and bearing in mind the historical mandate that obliges us as Valencians to be respectful to all our neighbouring lands, and in consequence, to command respect for the Valencian Country in its history and in all its manifestations, both respectfully and energetically raises its voice in protest against the agreement adopted by the Congreso de la

Ezquerra Catalana de Catalunya to carry out an intense campaign in Mallorca and Valencia “to awaken Catalan national sentiment”, since Valencia has never been part of that Catalan nationality, but rather in contrast, historically has its own clearly and precisely defined Valencian nationality.

But while registering our protest, we wish to make clear that the members of this Commission hold no ill-will towards Catalonia; rather, on the contrary, in the reliquary of our affinities and fraternal attachments are sheltered our affection and sympathy towards our Catalan brothers, but with an ever-present clear distinction being made between the different personalities of Catalonia and Valencia’.

22. “Macià quiere ser emperador de Cataluña, Mallorca y Valencia”, *El Pueblo*, 1, July 1933.
23. My article on one of these organisations Actuació Valencianista d’Esquerra de Barcelona, appeared in *Afers* (València), n. 45, 2003, p. 342-353.
24. The Sardinian city of Alghero was conquered in 1334 by the Catalan-Aragonese crown. The indigenous population were subsequently expelled to be replaced by citizens of Barcelona who brought with them the Catalan language that survives to the present day.
25. This operation is analysed by Masot i Muntaner, J.: *El desembarcament de Bayo a Mallorca: agost-setembre 1936*, Barcelona, Publicacions de l’Abadia de Montserrat, 1987.
26. Rovira i Virgili, A.: “Que sigui cosa de pocs dies!”, *La Humanitat*, 18, August 1936.
27. Azaña, M.: *Memorias políticas y de guerra*. II. Barcelona, Crítica, 1978, p. 291. Politician S. de Madariaga follows a similar line of thought in his work *España. Ensayo de historia contemporánea*, (Spain- An Essay on Contemporary History). Buenos Aires, 1964, p. 511 when he says that the ‘orgy of separatism’ cultivated by the Generalitat is revealed when ‘Catalonia had thrown itself into conquering Mallorca on its own as in the times of James the Conqueror’. Other authors such as M. García Venero as pointed out by Massot i Muntaner (1987: 54) analyse Bayo’s disembarking from this perspective.
28. Batista i Roca, J.M.: “Les realitats de la guerra ens han portat més enllà de l’Estatut”, *La Humanitat*, 13, August 1936.

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