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Catalonia

"We are a nation and we have the right to decide"

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INTRODUCTION: THE RIGHT TO DECIDE

Just over two years ago, *Convergència i Unió (CiU)*, the bourgeois nationalist coalition which had been in power for the last 21 years, was ousted from the Catalan autonomous government. The incoming coalition of the Catalan Socialist Party (PSC), *Esquerra Republicana (ERC)* and *ICV-EUiA* (itself a coalition of ex-Eurocommunist, Greens and a grouping of various shades of communist and Trotskyist organisations) soon began talking up the need for a new and more radical Autonomy Statute.

However, this new-found radicalism was in large part based on the calculation that the Popular Party (PP) would again win the state-wide elections to the Spanish parliament, the reforms would be blocked and the coalition would score political points in Catalonia without actually having to put its money where its mouth is.

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/gif/revoltaglobal.gif>]

The calculation backfired. Aznar was kicked out and the process of drawing up a new statute had to go ahead in very different circumstances. After many months a compromise was reached in the Catalan parliament embracing all forces bar the Catalan PP. This proposal was then sent to the Spanish parliament, where it was further watered down following a deal between Zapatero (who had publicly promised to pass whatever proposal came from Catalonia) and CiU leader Artur Mas, possibly heralding a change of partners in Madrid, where the PSOE had hitherto governed with the support of ERC and the United Left (IU). Nevertheless, the result was enthusiastically accepted by the PSC and ICV-EUiA, though not ERC.

[Revolta Global](#), the Fourth International organisation in Catalonia, criticised the method and content of the original proposal from the very beginning. But it has also been one of the prime movers of a broad-based campaign (also involving ERC) under the slogan "We are a nation and we have the right to decide", ie that it is up to the Catalan people, and not the central Spanish parliament, to decide what statute they want. A demonstration called by the campaign on 18 February saw by far and away the biggest turnout in Barcelona since the mass mobilisations against the Iraq war three years ago.

Revolta Global has argued that the best and clearest way to reject the proposed statute, which satisfies neither the demand for self-determination nor the demand for socially more progressive policies, is to vote No in the referendum set for 18 June. To explain its position, which is shared by none of the major parties, it took advantage of St. George's Day, 23 April, when Catalonia's patron saint is celebrated by people coming out in huge numbers to buy each other gifts of books and roses from street stalls specially set up for the occasion, to hand out 10,000 copies of the leaflet translated below.

Ten reasons for a left and Catalanista "NO" to the "Statute of Moncloa"

ETA's permanent cease-fire does not only represent a hope of peace for the Basque Country. It also contributes to a dissipation of the dramatic quality that has always surrounded the debate about the right of self-determination of peoples. At the end of the process that is today beginning in Euskadi, it will be necessary to give the say to its citizens. If that is so, why should Catalonia renounce the democratic yearning to reach full self-government?

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/Catalunya.jpg>]

Why should it have to accept - precisely now! - a reduced status "for a lifetime"? The will to reform the prevailing legal order does not result from anybody's whim. The necessity for change arises from the exhaustion of the state model inherited from the transition. Almost thirty years ago, the national aspirations of the peoples that long had been subjected by the dictatorship were only partially satisfied.

Since then, social and economic changes, accelerated by globalisation and the demands of European construction, have been increasingly coming into conflict with the restricted framework of that centralist and monarchical "Spain of Autonomies".

The urgency of facing the despotism of the multinationals or the necessity of conceiving citizenship from a racially mixed national reality, has forcefully mixed old democratic aspirations and new social demands. For the people, the necessity of taking their destiny in their own hands is already on the agenda.

From that optic, the project of Statute that was adopted by 90% of the Catalan Parliament was very modest, and tried to meet some of these aspirations within the framework of the monarchic Constitution of 1978.

The version that the Spanish Cortes now gives back to us, trimmed and limited by the pact between the government of Zapatero and CiU, seriously weakens that Proposal and turns it into an absolutely unacceptable text for Catalonia. There are ten powerful reasons here to say "NO" to what is already known as "the Statute of Moncloa"...

1. This Statute bears the scars of the anti-Catalan campaign of the Spanish right, before which the PSOE government has yielded - when it has not lent a sympathetic ear to its theses. In a certain way, this is the Statute of the PP, a law which is the product of the demagoguery, pressures and threats of the heirs of Francoism.
2. This Statute refuses to Catalonia its right to affirm what it feels fully, how it has imagined itself throughout history: as a nation. A nation that, therefore, has the right to decide and has the right to self-determination. This same history and, concretely, the years of a transition watched over by the army, has charged the term "nationality" with a precise significance: a people subject to monitoring.
3. This Statute denies to Catalonia its fiscal sovereignty and the means to face the growing social necessities of the country. Neither its own Tax Office, nor transparency. Catalonia's fiscal balance continues to be one of the best kept secrets of the State. The lack of resources hits the poorest layers of the population hardest. Opacity moves us away from distributive justice and solidarity towards the social groups - and the territories - that need it.
4. There is no new model of financing. The increase in the share of certain taxes (VAT and personal income tax) that would belong to the Generalitat will not resolve the problem. The State refuses to yield decisive resources, like company tax. This policy, very well known, has systematically pushed the Catalan autonomous administration to resort to indirect taxes, instead of limiting big fortunes and capital income. The new Statute presents an ambiguous formulation about fiscal progressivity, responding to the interests of the right and the employers.
5. There is no bilateralism in the relations between the central government and the Generalitat. The State in fact retains the last word on all subjects. The absence of a clear definition on investment or the future mechanisms of restoring the balance between autonomous communities makes the advance promised to Catalonia more than doubtful and on the contrary bestows a heavy duty of tutelage on the central bureaucracy.
6. No "leap forward in self-government" will take place, contrary to the predictions of some sectors of the left. The

"We are a nation and we have the right to decide"

State resists the transfer of powers basic to the development of the country, as is the case with ports and airports. Control of Barcelona's airport has not been achieved, not to mention a cluster of tolls around Barcelona and its industrial periphery.

7. There is no progress in the democratic rights of citizenship. The most advanced provisions have been removed from the Proposal adopted on September 30 of last year: ability to call popular consultations, revision of statutory laws... If the secular character of education has already been battered in Parliament by the demands of Catalan clerical nationalism, correcting this has not been a priority for Spanish socialism - very much on the contrary!

8. The new social and environmental rights - emblematic for political formations like ICV-EUiA - have been trimmed and disfigured. The formulations are general and they do not contain mechanisms to guarantee their carrying out. Thus, women have the right to control their own bodies... in the framework of a legislation that continues to characterise abortion as a crime. We have the right to "dignified death", that is, there will be no opening of the question of euthanasia... Vagueness also characterises the references to cooperation and solidarity with the poor people of the planet.

9. The Statute does not substantially improve the position of the language. Catalan can only prevail if it becomes a privileged vehicle of social communication. Judges continue to enjoy a position of linguistic privilege. Only by making demands on the administrations, the multinationals and the big companies will it be possible to guarantee the linguistic rights of citizenship and promote the use of Catalan.

10. This Statute does not allow the integration of immigrants in full conditions of citizenship, for want of legal instruments and resources. Participation in the "control of contingents" thus comes down to the shared management of an injustice for thousands of men and women. The deprivation of rights suffered by this group undermines the labour market and favours the rise of xenophobia.

[https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/capcelera_36.jpg]

The so-called "Catalan way", an institutional bargaining distanced from popular participation, has led to this frustration. The young people and worker's movement of France, mobilized against precarious contracts and vanquishing the government's neoliberal turn, offer us a very different example.

It is necessary to follow the way shown on February 18. Now, we must vote "NO" to prepare a new citizen's attack. Some will say that in voting "NO", we will be playing the game of the worst enemies of Catalonia's liberties. The same voices warned us last year that to resist the European constitutional treaty was to align with the far right.

However, it is certain that the victory of that "NO" in France and Holland prepared the formidable social explosion that we now witness. Perhaps somebody is confusing the voice of French youth with the racist harangues of Le Pen? Here also, nobody would attribute to the influence of the PP a forceful "NO" from Catalan citizens. It is not enough to protest against this insult with abstention or a blank ballot.

We have to force the effective withdrawal of an unacceptable project. Who talks of complicity with the right? The Valencian Statute, agreed between the PSOE and the PP, tried to limit Catalan aspirations. With the Catalan Statute the aim is now to scale down Basque aspirations. This Statute - and the pact that has prefigured it - prepares a turn to the right in Catalonia and throughout the State.

The days of the Tripartite government are numbered. The leaders of the PSOE seek, through the conservative nationalist forces, the agreement of alliances to undertake neoliberal reforms - in the tax or labour areas - such as those that provoked the French revolt. In order to open a perspective of progress and liberty for working people and

"We are a nation and we have the right to decide"

for the peoples, we must start to resist this attack. In the referendum if June 18, it is necessary to reject unequivocally the shameful Statute they are trying to impose on us.

WITH A BRAVE, CATALANISTA AND LEFT "NO"!