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Catalonia

# A "demo for all" against independence

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**Antoine Larrache** of *l'Anticapitaliste* (newspaper of the NPA, France) spoke to Catalan left activist Andreu Coll after the demonstration against Catalan independence on Sunday 8 October 2017 in Barcelona.

## What is the political meaning of this event?

The demonstration on Sunday was terrible, there were 300,000 people. Some came from outside Catalonia, but the vast majority came from here. This is very bad news because it strengthens the reactionary bloc and prepares public opinion for the repressive measures that will happen this week.

Article 155 is not applicable without setting up an exceptionally strong system of repression. [1] They will therefore have to apply Article 116, which means a state of emergency or of siege. The first is more likely, they need the PSOE to pass that in the Madrid parliament, since it requires an absolute majority. This would allow arrests of 10 days before passing before a judge, listening, searches of premises and homes without warrant, suspension of the right to demonstrate, strike or even meet. A state of siege remains very unlikely because it requires a two-thirds majority in Parliament ... but it would allow the intervention of the army and the curfews. The king's speech was undoubtedly addressed to them to discipline them.

All parties voting for self-determination or independence will be attacked, first the parliamentarians and then the leadership of the organizations. They risk doing as in Euskadi, with the pretext of ETA, banning the parties. It depends on what happens tomorrow.

There will be no vote, there will be a speech by Puigdemont, which he will try to make as soft as possible, but it will be a declaration of independence anyway. So, it is possible that the state of emergency will be applied from Thursday or Friday ...

## What was the composition of Sunday's demonstration?

At the demonstration, there were "anti-nationalists", people from the centre-left, but also all the fascist parties. There were incidents with the fachos, who tried to attack journalists. There were incidents at the metros, they stopped beneath buildings where there were flags, to threaten people. But this was hidden by the official media.

The numbers present shows that the right is afraid - remember that after 68 the right-wing demonstration was enormous - but also that there is not a clear majority for independence, many people were demonstrating for the first time. There is a reactionary bloc in Catalonia, that is clear.

## What will happen tomorrow to change the situation?

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For now, there is no call to strike this Tuesday, it will depend on events. The unions are divided, there were many workers at the demonstration on Sunday. It looked a bit like the "manif pour tous" in France, with a mixture of hard right, soft right and depoliticized people, with a very low cultural level. [2]

Puigdemont will speak on television, he will be obliged to say something, to make a solemn proclamation. We are already occupied by the police, so splitting is a form of political suicide for the government of the Generalitat: the elite of the Guardia Civil already controls the ports, airports, basic infrastructures ... There may be a hyper-reactionary impulse, faced with a strike or a strong demonstration.

PS:

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[1] Article 155 of the Constitution gives full powers to the Spanish Government over an autonomous community, such as Catalonia. The article authorizes the national executive to "take the necessary measures to compel it to respect these obligations or to protect the general interest". For this, the government "will be able to give instructions to all the authorities of the Autonomous Communities". This article can be used "if an autonomous community does not fulfill the obligations imposed on it by the Constitution or other laws or if it acts in such a way as to seriously undermine the general interest of Spain", according to the text. In short, article 155 would allow the government to suspend the autonomy of Catalonia, prohibit the independence leaders from continuing to take action and take control of local institutions, including the police, the Mossos d'Esquadra.

[2] The "Demo for all" (Manif pour tous) was a huge rally against same-sex marriage (marriage for all) held in Paris in January 2013.