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Viva Catalonia, Viva Israel

Just as Catalonia will soon be the state of the Catalan people, Israel is first and foremost the state of the Jewish people. There is no future for a binational state. Neither a federation nor a confederation, nor autonomy, nor cantons.

By Adar Primor | Sep.28, 2012 | 6:38 AM

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A flood of rejoicing people, a sea of striped red and yellow flags, a forest of posters, a few "middle fingers," and one simple message: "Catalonia is Europe's new country." That is how the largest independent demonstration ever held in Barcelona looked recently.

The carnival atmosphere at the gathering - held on Catalonia's national day, the Diada - was mixed with strong feelings that this is a historic moment. About one-fifth of the population of Catalonia - 1.5 million people - participated in the demonstration. They wanted to prove that the independence of the region with the greatest economic power in Spain is no longer an exotic idea that preoccupies only the margins of Catalan politics. Recently published surveys have proven that there is no mistake here: There has been a dramatic reversal in public opinion: 51 percent of Catalans now want to say "Adios, Espana" (only 19 percent are opposed).

When you add to that the fact that Xabi, Iniesta and Messi, Barca players, are already decked out in a uniform (their second one, for the time being) in the colors of the Catalan flag; when you include the warnings that government leaders in Madrid hastened to dispatch to Barcelona, and the urgent call for national unity issued by King Juan Carlos - then it is clear that the Iberian kingdom is in real danger.

In order to understand that, we have to follow the money. In Madrid the acute recession, the declining economy and the 25 percent unemployment rate led to the great Indignados protest; in Catalonia they led to a strengthening of the separatist movement, whose support has doubled since the outbreak of the crisis. The Catalans are tired of "carrying the poor regions of Spain on their backs." They claim that 9 percent of their annual GDP - about 16 billion euros - disappear into the coffers of the central government in Madrid. They feel that they are being robbed and are demanding to collect their own taxes.

But according to the separatists, "It's the economy, stupid" is only one of the issues. The main problem is the alienation of the central government.

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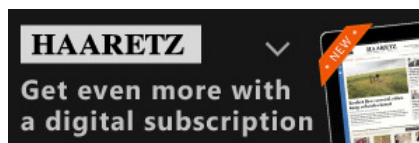
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"Our honor and our freedom are central to the awakening," says Alfons Lopez Tena, the leader of Catalan Solidarity for Independence and one of the leaders of the separatist movement, in a phone conversation. "Even without the economic crisis we would win a majority now."

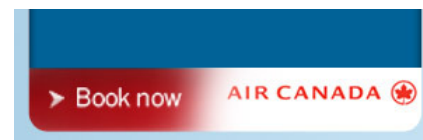
He and his Catalan colleagues accuse the conservative ruling Popular Party and its socialist predecessor of acts intended to undermine their language and their culture; they claim that by its actions the Spanish establishment has put an end to the "state of autonomies" that was established in Spain after the fall of Franco. Last week Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy summarily dismissed the Catalans' demand to collect their own taxes, providing yet more proof of the fact that he wants to exploit the crisis to restore Spain to the era of centralization, claim the Catalans.

The boomerang is already on the way: The Catalans will give their answers to Rajoy on November 25, the day of the early elections, which were announced this week by Catalan President Artur Mas, and are meant to bypass the Spanish constitution and serve as a national referendum on the independence of the region.

The hot potato will soon end up in the lap of the European Union. The paradox is that despite the euro crisis, the supra-national umbrella that the EU provides to its members encourages separatist movements to dismantle the veteran national edifice and replace it with a framework that allows for self-determination within the European meta-framework.

Spain will not easily give up its crown jewel, but Lopez Tena is losing no time in making a promise that Europe's new member state will be very friendly to Israel. In that too it will separate itself from its rival in Madrid. And here is another message. Just as Catalonia will soon be the state of the Catalan people, Israel is first and foremost the state of the Jewish people. There is no future for a binational state. The latest victory of the separatists in Quebec, Canada, the continuing efforts to dismantle the Belgian kingdom, and the national referendum to take place in Scotland in 2014 are only a few examples that prove this. Neither a federation nor a confederation, nor autonomy, nor cantons.

Binationalism is dead. Visca (Viva in Catalan) Israel, Visca Catalonia.



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