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THE CRADLE OF CATALAN SEPARATISM

WHITE-COLLARS IN BARCELONA DURING WORLD WAR I

The development, sociology and political orientation of white-collar workers have monopolised lots of historians' attention in order to uncover, particularly, their relationship to fascism and the triumph of National Socialism: scholars have researched the German case in comparison to other state cases such as the French, English, Italian, the North American or even the Peruvian. Nowadays it is widely accepted that there is not a unique behaviour of white-collars towards fascism or any other ideology. And, instead, that their political orientation depends on the particular state society, culture and history, capitalist development, economic situation, working and living conditions, among other factors of the researched period.¹ Less attention has to date been paid to the relationship between white-collars and the development of sub-state nationalisms.² Yet in some particular cases, at least in Catalonia (the north-eastern region of Spain), this group of workers played a major role in the appearance and development of the most radical tendencies within Catalan nationalism (also known as Catalanism): separatism.

The following paper is part of a wider project on comparative history on the relevance of white-collars in sub-state nationalisms. As this is a work in progress the article is due to present the general ideas and concepts involving white-collars in Catalonia, especially in Barcelona, and their relationship with Catalanism and specifically to their relevance in the origins of Catalan separatism.



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Thus, in the first place the paper exposes the origins and social background of Catalan white-collar workers. After that, it explains their relationship with bourgeois and blue-collar workers. Next, the article presents the major pillars of the white-collar ideology. Finally, it depicts the profile of the enemies of the separatist white-collar workers: a Spanish ultra-nationalist group arose in Barcelona. The paper ends with some arguments explaining why Catalan white-collar workers, or at least a part of them, tended to radicalise their Catalanism and can be considered the cradle of Catalan separatism. Although references to previous periods are made, the article is focused on the World War I period (1914-1919) when the process mentioned above took place.

White-collar workers in Barcelona

The first decades of the 20th century radically altered the social texture of Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia. In 1900 the city had half a million inhabitants, thirty years later the population would exceed one million, becoming the largest city in Spain and rivalling Madrid. During this period Barcelona turned into an industrial and, to some extent, a cosmopolitan centre. Since the late 19th century a constant flow from the poorer rural areas of Catalonia to Barcelona (and to a lesser extent to other coastal towns such as Badalona), had begun.

This migratory process could last for long as, in some cases, the arrival of these Catalan-speaking immigrants to the city saw an intermediate stage in inner towns – Balaguer, Tàrraga, Manresa, Tortosa, among others. The immigrants worked there for several years and to a large degree they achieved some professional qualification through this process. When they finally arrived in Barcelona their professional skills allowed them to get a more qualified job instead of engrossing the blue-collar workers ranks.³ In this long migratory process – regarding time but not space, as the average distance between those towns and Barcelona was 150km or even less – these immigrants started a family. Most of the Catalan-speakers arrived during the last decades of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th

could escalate socially, to become members of the lower middle classes at least.

During the years prior to World War I a second type of Catalan-speaking immigrants arrived in Barcelona. These were fifteen- to twenty-year-old men, second or third sons of rural families. Following the Catalan heritage system, the first son was the heir (*l'hereu*) of the farmhouse (*el mas*) or family business. His brothers (*els fadrísters*) would only receive a part of the legacy, if any, at their parents' death. Therefore, especially in harsh times, they had to pack off and try to find a professional horizon in the towns or in the city. They had great expectations of finding a job upon their arrival in Barcelona. Some dreamt of being proprietaries, businessmen, shopkeepers or even writers, artists or intellectuals.⁴ The most fortunate, with enough family funds, could enrol at professional schools or at the university, but they were just the lucky few.



The bar at the Centre Autonomista del Comerç i de la Indústria, early 20th century
| ARXIU FOTOGRÀFIC DE BARCELONA

The majority of the *fadrísterns* became members of the Centre Autonomista del Comerç i de la Indústria (CADCI, Industry and Trade Autonomist Centre). There they met the sons of many of the Catalan-speaking immigrants arrived to Barcelona during the last decades of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th who, despite their efforts, had not been able to afford a better education for their boys.⁵ Nationalists of all sorts of branches of Catalanism ruled the CADCI. The centre, founded in 1903 in Barcelona, had 3,000 members in the World War I period. Its aim, according to the statutes, was to 'group the shop men to assist them to improve their morality, their culture, their physical health and their material life in line with the autonomist and Catalanist principles'.⁶ The CADCI had its own commercial schools where, thanks to affordable fees, those *fadrísterns* and sons of immigrants got basic education while working as shop assistants or sales clerks in the tertiary sector, becoming white-collar employees in the private sector.

The white-collar category is a lower middle-class group, heterogeneous and with diffuse boundaries. It includes apprentices, servants, collectors, storehouse employees, assistants, accountants and salesmen, working in shops and offices or as clerks in banks and factories, among others. All in all these white-collarers were part of those sectors that worked for others in the broad ranks of dependent labour, performing non-manual work and paid in salary, instead of wages. This group has been defined as the new middle class in opposition to the old middle class of craftsmen, shopkeepers and small businessmen – people working for their own account.⁷ But a much more appropriate way to define this group is according to its members' own vision.

Catalan white-collarers in Barcelona, as in the rest of continental Europe, did not think of themselves just as members of the labour force, neither workers nor proletarians, but as members of the middle class, a class of dependent labour. In their vision a clear line set them apart from blue-collarers. They identified themselves as the aristocracy among the workers and they had a clear sense of corporate identity. Catalan white-collarers also shared common expectations: their aim was to become shop owners and proprietaries as their patrons and, thus, they tried to dress like them. Their particular way of dressing was an external marker of the group,

clearly differentiating them from the blue-collar workers. They wore high-collared shirts with a tie, a wool or cotton suit, polished shoes and a hat. However, due to a lack of money their dresses and shirts had to last and this poverty could be easily seen in their darned parts.⁸

Thus, Catalan white-collar workers aimed to become, in a broader sense, part of the old middle class, while maintaining the distance with the blue-collar workers: a line to cross from above and a line to keep clear from below. The mental and social vision of themselves coincided with their urban distribution: Catalan white-collar workers generally lived in the central neighbourhoods of Barcelona (Ciutat Vella, Eixample and Gràcia) where they also worked. There, they were closer to the rest of the middle classes than to the lower classes: the middle and upper classes lived mainly in the central and north-western neighbourhoods of the city while blue-collar workers lived foremost in the southern parts – the ones closest to the Mediterranean Sea.⁹

The bourgeoisie and the blue-collar workers did not consider white-collar workers part of their own groups and saw them as members of the opposite group instead. For instance, the Catalan bourgeois vision of white-collar workers was well reflected in several plays that exposed the impossible love between shop assistants and daughters of businessmen.¹⁰ Typically, the wealthy family could not stand such an engagement, reminding their girl that ‘the man you have felt in love with is nothing... he is nothing but a well-dressed worker, a man of the same category as our doorman, servant or coachman’.¹¹ On the other hand, most of the manual workers were immigrants from the south of Spain – thus, non-Catalan-speakers – with few professional skills, who considered the white-collar workers as the extension of their patrons.¹²

Of course, considering their expectations, during the years preceding World War I Catalan white-collar workers worried more about bourgeois thoughts and opinions than about those among blue-collar ranks; being considered ‘workers’ was even insulting, they thought. There was a strong relationship between the patron or principal and the assistant or clerk, which in some ways was patriarchal or corporatist: the employer was also relevant to the private life of his white-collar worker. In some cases the salesmen

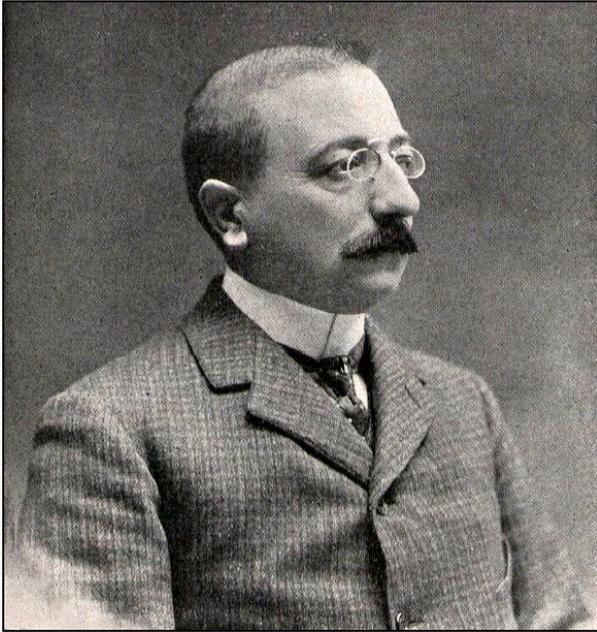
literally dreamt at the shop or office, as many of them – especially the apprentices – slept there. But, in fact, the working conditions were even worse than those of the manual workers: just depending on the patron's will, white-collars had to cope with very long workdays and low salaries. Moreover, they had to work on Sundays because the shop owners argued that the blue-collars could not buy in their shops during the rest of the week, as they were at the factories. Due to their position white-collars could only express their demands through modest demonstrations and by sending delegates to visit the patrons or, as a final option, by breaking shopwindows of those owners refusing to close by eight in the evening. Despite CADCI's efforts and a 1904 law fixing the (eight) working hours, white-collars never fully achieved their demands.¹³

When the white-collars met Domènec Martí i Julià

While young white-collars dreamt of a better future important changes took place within the Catalan nationalist movement. As the Spanish monarchy under king Alfonso XIII deepened in its crisis, the conservative Catalan nationalists of the Lliga Regionalista (Regionalist League) saw a good opportunity to attain the concession of some sort of basic self-government: the *Mancomunitat de Catalunya*. The *Mancomunitat*, established in April 1914, was a merge of the four Catalan provinces under one government and president: the Lliga's leader, lawyer Enric Prat de la Riba. Despite this autonomy being flawed, as it lacked appropriate resources and no Catalan Parliament existed yet, Catalanists saw the *Mancomunitat* as a first step towards the attainment of a Home Rule.

The centre-left Catalan nationalist party, the Unió Nacionalista Republicana Federal (UFNR, Nationalist Republican Federal Union) repeatedly failed in its attempts to establish an alternative political project for the Lliga.¹⁴ The UFNR leaders opted for a coalition with the Partit Republicà Radical (PRR, Radical Republican Party). The PRR was very popular among blue-collar workers in Barcelona and had a strong anticlerical and anti-Catalanist discourse, equalling Catalanism to bourgeoisie.¹⁵ In time however the party tempered its discourse and even

favoured the concession of the *Mancomunitat*, resulting in an electoral decline. Both republican parties thought a coalition would solve their respective problems, but the collaboration failed.



Domènec Martí i Julià (1861-1917)

In spring 1914, the UFNR collapsed. Thus, while the Catalan conservative nationalist area was taken over by the Lliga, the left nationalist wing was vacant.¹⁶ Psychiatrist Domènec Martí i Julià, president of the Unió Catalanista (UC, Catalanist Union), seized the moment to transform this Catalanist pressure group, founded in 1891, into a truly modern political party. Since its foundation the UC had presented itself as an assembly of all sorts of

Catalanists, regardless of their political preferences as the Unió did not believe in electoral politics. Due to the rising hegemony of the Lliga and Martí i Julià's sympathies for the popular classes, and notwithstanding the desire to act as a unitary platform, Unió leaders realised that the preponderance of the regionalists in Catalan politics made Catalanism appear as a bourgeois movement and that this image limited its growth, especially among the working class. Therefore, the psychiatrist and the rest of the UC leaders had undertaken a close collaboration with the UFNR, leaving them very disappointed when the UFNR entered into a coalition with the PRR anti-Catalanists.

Doctor Martí i Julià was a popular figure at the CADCI, where he often gave talks on politics, but also on diseases, health, sanitary and work conditions. He was fully convinced that ‘national freedom’ could only be achieved gaining ‘social freedom’.¹⁷ Willing to abandon anti-electoral politics and in order to organise the *Unió Catalanista* as a political party, the psychiatrist initiated a total reorganisation of the platform. The loyalties of the adhering centres were put at stake during the spring and summer months of 1914.¹⁸ The end of this process established twelve centres across the ten districts of Barcelona. These centres promoted activities related to Catalanism, including teaching and practicing Catalan dance (*la Sardana*), performing plays and songs in Catalan, organising trips and excursions to discover the rural – the so-called *truly* Catalan – Catalonia, and Catalan language was taught. The centres also hosted conferences with diverse topics, ranging from the history of Catalonia to issues related to sanitary conditions. Men and women of all ages were allowed to take part. Moreover, some of these centres organised sections for younger males, usually the propaganda sections and tutored by adults. Youngsters organised leisure activities but also, and especially, political meetings where adults disseminated their doctrine towards a young audience. These sections were labelled as *Joventut Nacionalista* (Nationalist Youth) plus different ‘war names’ related to the myths of Catalan nationalism, such as the medieval golden age of the Crown of Aragon or the siege of Barcelona in 1714.¹⁹



Seals of Catalan separatist groups | AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

Despite Martí i Julià's efforts, the reconversion of the *Unió Catalanista* into a political party failed.²⁰ Anti-electoral politics were so well and so deep established among the *Unió* members that no one was prone to take part

in the elections.²¹ As a consequence the whole process ended in a retreatment and most of the centres merged to sustain just a few of them. It was clear then that what kept the centres alive was leisure and not political discourse. The epilogue of the process took place in July 1916 when Martí i Julià resigned as the president of the *Unió*, quitting politics altogether. It was not easy to replace him as no one wished to be the president, reducing the Catalanist platform to merely a name and a seal.²²

The *Unió*'s conversion failed, but Martí i Julià's message, spread during the last thirteen years at the CADCI, constantly gained appeal among young white-collars. This was linked to the extraordinary changes in Barcelona following the outbreak of World War I. Due to the war situation all over Europe, Catalan factories exported large quantities of food and industrial products. At the same time, and this because of the drop in imports, the consumption of local products increased, favouring speculative business and a rapid enrichment. However, salaries did not rise in line with prices and export rendered some products scarce. Obviously, social sectors with fewer resources were the most affected. The price of food increased by eighty per cent between 1915 and 1920. The same occurred to rental housing, domestic fuel and clothes, among others.²³

As social and working conditions worsened due to the effects of wartime disruption, Catalan white-collars realised that their expectations of becoming shopkeepers, businessmen or proprietors – members of the old middle class – would hardly be achieved. Therefore, partially and slightly, they now thought that maybe they had more in common with the blue-collars than with the *petit-bourgeoisie*: middle classes appeared more distant than ever before. Martí i Julià's death in late June 1917 was followed by a turbulent summer with a deep crisis of the Spanish Restoration regime, after which the *Lliga* – the patrons' favourite political party – accepted to participate in the Spanish cabinet, and this for the first time since its foundation in 1901. White-collars completely lost their confidence in the nationalist conservative party. From now on, they joined PRR members in criticising regionalists. White-collars started to pay much more attention to their own social situation and to that of the blue-collars and, all in all, were prone to a soft version of socialism – the one spread by Martí i Julià. The psychiatrist had died but his ideas remained.²⁴

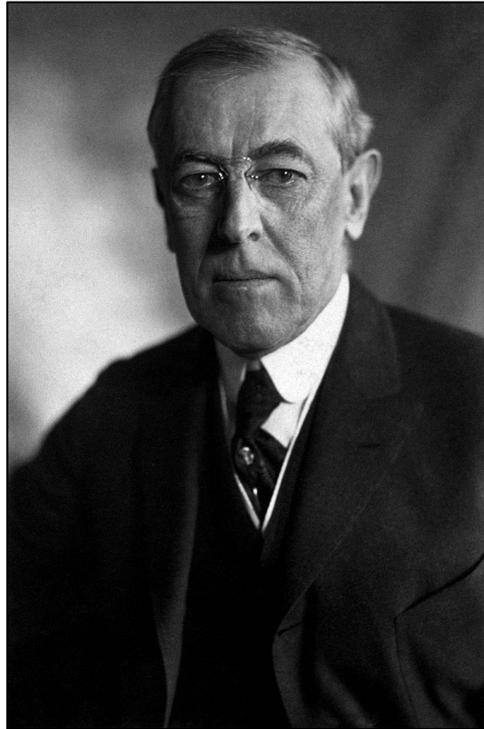
Moreover, until 1910 the immigration to Barcelona from the rest of Catalonia predominated, but from then on the percentage changed and immigrants from Valencia, Aragon, Murcia and Andalusia doubled the Catalan newcomers. While Valencians and Aragonese maintained a stable migratory flux – some, if not most of them were Catalan-speakers –, the real novelty was the arrival of Murcians and Andalusians, especially during the World War I period. To some extent the later groups of non-Catalan newcomers from the southern parts of Spain achieved a symbolic presence in Barcelona, reaching 25% of the immigrant numbers. Furthermore, until 1915 Barcelona grew by territorial expansion, after which the city centre began to densify. Ciutat Vella, the living and working place for many white-collars and for some blue-collars, became a space of interaction. Catalan-speakers could feel for the first time that a ‘Hispanisation’ of Barcelona was real: Spanish language was more and more common and openly used, not only by the State administration or at the theatre and in newspapers, but also in the street. In this sense columnist, writer and philosopher Eugeni d’Ors, ideologist of the Lliga, made a clear statement at the beginning of this turning point: ‘While our Catalan language spreads everyday more and more its dominion as a literary and intellectual language, [...] among the popular masses it seems always in constant withdrawal, diminishing in relative demographic extension... A friend of mine confessed to me that he had never met so many doorwomen, so many tram employees, not speaking Catalan.’²⁵

Through daily contact with the ‘others’ – the non-Catalan-speaking immigrants – the *fadrísters* and the sons of those Catalan first immigration flows, both engrossing the white-collars ranks now, began to ask themselves who they were. While in their towns or villages, with no Spanish immigrants, or in the *Catalan* Barcelona the necessity to define themselves had been less important, if not completely unnecessary, but now they had to deal with this issue. Those just arrived knew the rural, the ‘real’ Catalonia from first hand; Barcelona-born sons of Catalan immigrants knew it through the occasional visits to their grandparents and family but mainly from their parents’ mourning and melancholy, especially if things had not been as expected. In both cases, as Àngel Guimera’s popular play *Terra baixa* (*Martha of the Lowlands*) put it in

more idealistic terms, they knew the virginal and truly Catalan character of the Upper lands (the rural Catalonia) and were now confronted with a non-Catalan city: a sin city. Statements such as ‘Catalonia for Catalans’ would easily take root in their minds, especially when Hispanisation was obvious and when some, not even many non-Catalan-speaking immigrants became white-collars as well.

The separatist route to a better future

Nationalist movements from Eastern and Central Europe seized World War I to publicise their demands and to gain support from one of both sides, especially from the Entente Cordiale. These movements saw a splendid opportunity to make their aspirations come true when the president of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, proclaimed the right of nations to self-determination. Clearly the Lliga was not eager to reshape Spain or to change the monarchic regime: its members were willing to defend their economical interests and to command and modernise the state. But those claiming ‘Catalonia for Catalans’, in line with their nationalist counterparts elsewhere in Europe, recognised in self-determination a definitive frame to obtain a Home Rule for



US President Woodrow Wilson in 1919, one year after his famous Fourteen Points, including self-determination for minorities

| WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Catalonia and, obviously, the establishment of a republican regime in Spain, eventually reshaping the state into a Castilian and Catalan confederacy.

For the very first time within Catalanist circles groups of young white-collars (and a very small number of petit-bourgeoisie intellectuals) openly defined themselves as 'separatists'. Since the appearance of Catalan nationalism by the end of the 19th century 'separatism' had been a controversial element. 'Separatism' is a slippery term and its political range makes an agreement on its meaning very complex. For some it means the demand of separation of a 'national community' from a larger group or community to establish its own state, be it independently or linked to the former by a federation, confederation or any another type of bond to be determined. Precisely because the relationship is not always clear, others claim that any demand for greater autonomy of the 'national community' already implies a 'separatist' aim itself.²⁶ Those who are against any change in the political *status quo* usually sustain the second vision.

In great measure the Catalan cultural movement had turned into a political nationalist movement due to the failure of the Spanish Empire by 1898. Already then did some Catalan nationalists plead a 'Catalan State', but with terms as nation, region or community involved it is not yet clear among historians what those Catalanists exactly referred to when talking about 'state'.²⁷ Since that very first moment until World War I the political, intellectual and economical elites in Madrid rejected every demand for autonomy coming from Barcelona as a separatist demand. And on the other hand, once and again, all sorts of Catalans – including those supposed to be more radical, such as playwright Guimerà – defended themselves arguing they were not separatists of the state but of the elites managing the state.²⁸

This nonsense dialogue essentially rose from two competing cities, Madrid and Barcelona: the former with the administrative power of the State, the latter, being Spain's most populated city at the beginning of the 20th century, with its vigorous industry and bourgeoisie. Madrid obviously was not willing to transfer the state control, while Barcelona expected not to be

less and asked for more power, based on its economical strength.²⁹ After the decline of the Empire, Madrid elites could not differentiate the Spanish ways of being imperial from the Spanish national character, still under construction. Almost as if it had an atavistic component Spanish nationalism was born terrified by any discussion of the shape of the state, as it immediately recalled the separation of Cuba and the rest of the colonies. Catalan nationalism, in all its variations, proposed a new political shape for Spain but any proposal coming from Barcelona was already under the suspicion of separatism due to the analogies with the lost colonies. However, Catalan nationalism – especially the one coming from the Lliga Regionalista – could not conceive itself as a separatist movement and soon became trapped into a paradox: while it had a Catalan discourse for its Catalan audience, it had a Catalan discourse for its Spanish audience as well.³⁰ To combine both discourses, not necessarily based on the same requirements at the same moments, was not easy.

By the end of the war some Catalan white-collars, with no professional horizon left, claimed to end this double discourse. They defined themselves as ‘separatists’, not only turning their back to the Madrid elites but also willing to reshape Spain. They proposed a powerful Catalan state with a proper government and, as a result, plenty of jobs to fill far beyond the new employments established by the *Mancomunitat* and already taken by university cadres.³¹ In theoretical terms the Catalan separatist proposal never went far beyond *La nacionalitat catalana* (*The Catalan Nationality*, 1906) written by Enric Prat de la Riba. The leader and ideologist of the Lliga Regionalista presented Catalonia as the true nation of the Catalans, and Spain merely the state containing it. Catalan language was central in this idea.

Though Martí i Julià published lots of articles throughout his life, he left no ideological synthesis or theory. At his death none of the psychiatrist’s lieutenants were able to offer a coherent ‘separatist’ discourse and during political meetings they often repeated statements such as the right of Catalans to defend their language or the right to have a Home Rule or a state. These arguments were rooted in the historical past (the medieval grandeur settled in the medieval ages by the Crown of Aragon or the aim to recover the Constitution and liberties lost after Phillip V in 1714), mixed

with Romantic myths. They also proclaimed an anti-imperialist discourse, rejecting the imperial vision of the regionalists' Catalan nationalist proposal for Spain, and seizing the argument of self-determination.³² Of course, the discourse was republican as there was no option of changing the *status quo* under the monarchy.

Instead of denying they were separatists, nationalists proposed a model outlining a confederal shape for Spain, indistinctly making use of the terms 'federal' and 'confederal'. Though closely related to federal republican ideologies, this particular Catalan separatism stemmed from the legacy of *Unió Catalanista* images, based on the confederacy between Castile and Aragon during the glorious medieval period, two equal nations within Spain. The idea underpinning separatists' thoughts was a strong Catalan administration and a weak Spanish central government, and not the way round. This vision could sometimes even include Portugal as the third state of imagined United States of Iberia.³³

The fight for the urban space

The end of the war brought new Catalan separatist youths, many of whom were white-collars, into the scene. Now they were not linked to any centre of the *Unió Catalanista* anymore.³⁴ The armistice fuelled agitation around the self-determination in Catalonia. Alfonso XIII asked the leader of the *Lliga* in Madrid to find out a way to calm down the situation. Consequently, Francesc Cambó led a campaign to demand a Home Rule for Catalonia but he probably overstepped the monarch's expectations: soon he found himself with no control over the centre-left and separatist extreme demands.³⁵ By mid-December, groups of separatist white-collars organised daily demonstrations in La Rambla, the core of Ciutat Vella, which were repressed by the Spanish army and the police. By Christmas 1918 a new entity, the *Liga Patriótica Española* (LPE, Spanish Patriotic League), came to the fore with the aim of 'fighting against separatism and maintaining the Spanish unity', as put in its foundational manifesto *¡Viva España!*

The Liga Patriótica had no political aims and was a paramilitary platform to help the army and the police in their duty against the Catalan separatists.³⁶ The movement consisted primarily of low-level officials working for the Spanish administration in Barcelona, plainclothes army officers, off-duty policemen, discontent members of the PRR and even teachers defending the 'right to keep teaching in Spanish'.³⁷ All in all, they were a mixture of people worried about their jobs with the arrival of a Home Rule and, in its wake, a new Catalan administration. The reason was clear: the *Catalan Orthographic Normative* (1913) had been approved parallel with the establishment of the *Mancomunitat*.³⁸ This *Normative* comprehended the norms regulating a standard model for written Catalan, necessary knowledge in order to obtain an employment in the first Catalan administration. Those not skilled in the Catalan language would have no option to be recruited.

The LPE established its headquarters near the beginning of La Rambla, while the spiritual headquarters of the tiny group of separatist youths (altogether about 2,000 members) was the CADCI at the end of La Rambla. As a result, during the end of December, the whole of January and the beginning of February 1919, while the regionalists tried to obtain the Home Rule with a fierce opposition of both liberals and conservatives in the Spanish parliament, the city centre of Barcelona (La Rambla and the close-by streets) became a battlefield. Every evening separatist white-collars and Liga Patriótica members fought with sticks and a few guns. The balance was heavy: five people were killed and many more injured. What was at stake was a professional horizon hidden beneath the obvious patriotic Catalan and Spanish nationalist claims: gaining the urban space was gaining visibility.³⁹

By mid-February 1919 Barcelona anarchists initiated a major strike. Fearing a revolutionary period similar to the Russian Revolution and because their industries were at stake, the Catalan bourgeoisie decided to suspend the Home Rule campaign, which was going nowhere, and to collaborate with the Spanish government to stop the strikers. The clash between patrons and blue-collars, following now the anarcho-syndicalism instead of the PRR, swallowed the in numbers less important fight between Catalan separatists and Spanish radical nationalists. At the

beginning of the strike the separatist white-collars supported the blue-collars, but after several weeks of street rallies, fights and assassinations they ended questioning if manual workers had not gone too far.⁴⁰

In this mood, a Catalan politician gained popularity among the separatist white-collars: Francesc Macià. He had begun his career as a Spanish army officer but in 1905 he quit, as he was disappointed in the army itself, the government and the monarchy. Macià began a career as politician, gaining a seat at the Cortes. In the course of fifteen years he evolved politically from regionalism to an apparent heir of Martí i Julià. In March 1919 Macià established with the *Federació Democràtica Nacionalista* (FDN, Nationalist Democratic Federation) his first political party. Its aim was to gather the diffuse claims of Catalan separatism into a coherent message and to meet the white-collar demands, but also those of the *petit-bourgeoisie* and the blue-collars. Despite the efforts it was soon clear that even Macià's most enthusiastic followers, the white-collars, mistrusted electoral politics: the FDN project was able to gain their sympathy but not their votes. Macià would gain more and more relevance in the years to come but by the end of the war Catalan separatism was not powerful enough yet. It would not be for the next century, though it was established as a political option.⁴¹

Conclusions

As in the rest of continental Europe, Catalan white-collars saw their group as distinct from those above (*bourgeoisie*) and below (manual workers). When they were confronted with a war-related social and economical crisis their hopes of improving or even maintaining their working conditions seemed hard to achieve. Patrons, the *Lliga* voters, appeared as partially responsible for their situation. White-collars rather leaned to the left, to a soft version of socialism, while blue-collar workers in Barcelona embraced, generally speaking, anarcho-syndicalism: the collar line remained clearly marked. With no professional outlook left from above and no chance of collaboration from below, some Catalan white-collars imagined a new route to secure or improve their working positions: a Catalan state, including self-government and public jobs.

Catalan white-collars shared with their continental counterparts a bureaucratic concept of success and demanded a powerful public sector. The existence of Catalan nationalism, the perception of being 'true' Catalans (compared with the Castilian-speaking immigrants) and their inadequate training to enrol in the *Mancomunitat* led the white-collars to demand a strong Catalan autonomous administration. The Spanish administration in Barcelona did not offer sufficient suitable positions for their profiles and was hence no option. Spanish government delegations were perceived as something distant, due to the manners of many of the bureaucrats coming from the rest of Spain, the use of Castilian language and, also, because the Catalan governor was the one ordering the repression against any Catalanist gathering, by definition suspected as 'separatist'.⁴² A wider scope, taking into account the behaviour of those young white-collars who in the 1930s achieved a position in the Catalan autonomous government under the Second Spanish Republic will confirm the arguments presented here.

The sub-state nationalism in the north-eastern region of Spain presents, therefore, a new element to consider in states with similar situations. Further and deeper research would allow us to understand the role played by white-collars in sub-state nationalist (and separatist) demands in Catalonia and all over continental Europe. Moreover, a comparative study between sub-state nationalism and white-collars in continental Europe on the one hand and this relationship in Ireland, Wales and Scotland on the other, as the white-collars' characteristics in the UK were very distinct, would be most welcome.⁴³

Endnotes

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² R. Koshar (ed.) *Splintered classes. Politics and the lower middle classes in interwar Europe* (New York, 1990). In this highly recommendable work only the cases of Germany, England, France, Italy, Romania, Denmark and Belgium are discussed.

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