



## **Message from Catalan President Artur Mas upon his visit to Yad Vashem**

In the last few months, there has been an increasing trivialization of totalitarianism and nazism, consisting principally in comparing the process and political debate that is happening peacefully and democratically in Catalonia with totalitarian movements like Nazism.

This frivolous treatment of Nazism and its consequences is a travesty of justice and an attack on democracy and the good name of all those who support democracy.

Most of Nazism's victims on the Iberian Peninsula were Catalans. Catalonia itself can be considered a victim of Nazism: for Nazism's support of the extremist anti-Catalan uprising of General Franco in 1936; for the barbarian bombardments of Barcelona, Lleida, Granollers and many other Catalan towns and cities, made to serve as test subjects for aerial attacks on a defenseless civilian population; for handing over President of Catalonia, Lluís Companys to the Francoist regime so that they could execute him after the most summary of judgments; for the imprisonment, humiliation, torture, and forced labor until death of many thousands of Catalans in Nazi extermination camps.

In addition, there were many Catalans who fought against Nazism and in favor of democracy, like Pau Casals, or Dr. Trueta in the United Kingdom, who cared for and developed new methods for curing injuries of war, who used his experience in Barcelona to teach Londoners how to protect civilians from aerial attacks, who was commended by Winston Churchill himself; or Catalans who disembarked to fight at Normandy with the allied forces; fought in the French Resistance, from the airwaves of the BBC, the battlefronts, the hospitals, and through civic activism. The famous photo of an espadrille-clad foot squashing the swastika is much more than an image: it's a symbol.

Converting a victim into an executioner and insinuating that the democratic majority is totalitarianist are the definition of foul play.

This trivialization of totalitarianism has not been met with hostility by the State administration, as would have been desired, nor by many media outlets which have let themselves be used as the conduit for such accusations.

The Spanish government has not confronted the media, nor those party members or leaders, who currently govern Spain, who have directly compared the President of Catalonia with Adolf Hitler and the pro-sovereignty movement with Nazism. The

demands of some for violent resolution of the Catalan question have also been inexplicably left unanswered by the State.

Indeed, the response from State powers has not been definitive enough even in actual explicitly totalitarian cases, like the assault on the Delegation of the Catalan Government in Madrid, on last September 11th, that was quickly resolved with disproportionately low fines.

The repetition of false accusations of totalitarianism has only one objective: that of delegitimizing Catalan institutions, which the people of Catalonia has freely decided that the majority should be comprised of those in favor of having a referendum on Catalonia's future.

Neither Catalonia nor its government have ever been allies of the Nazis; Catalanism has never been a manifestation of totalitarianism nor of defense of a dictatorship. On the contrary, Catalonia, the Catalans, and Catalanism have been victims of the same, together with so many other millions of europeans, with whom the spilt blood of Catalans was mixed. That's how Joaquim Amat-Piniella, whose centennial we celebrated this year, explained it, in what is considered one of the 10 best literary works on the Holocaust: "K.L. Reich".

From this special place that is Yad Vashem, where we bear witness to the ignominy of Nazism and totalitarianism and remember the victims so that they will never be forgotten, as President of Catalonia, I solemnly reiterate the commitment of my country to respect, liberty, and democracy. Never again.