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The “Pre-Fascism” Argument: the Study of Authoritarianism in the 20th Century (from a Catalan-Spanish Viewpoint)¹

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abstract

This article presents a state of the art on the analysis of modern anti-parliamentarian phenomena, highlighting the emphasis put on both its precedents and long term triggers, also known as “pre-fascism”. The article first proposes to differentiate between these elements, which directly intervene in the development of such a specific phenomenon of the interwar period, and the ones inherent to the complex crisis of insertion of the democratic system in Western Europe. Secondly, these reflections are applied to the specific Catalonia-Spain case.

key words

Historiographical revisionism, pre-fascism, history of political thinking, nationalism, Catalonia 20th century.

In any attempt to explain the nature of the 20th century –and there have been many over the last ten years or so– I believe one problem that always comes to

1 The initial version of this article was presented at the seminar *Intellettuali del Mediterraneo e dittature del XX secolo* (Mediterranean Intellectuals and the Dictatorships of the 20th Century), Viterbo, 2000. Subsequently, two significant works on the issues covered have appeared: Enrique Ucelay Da Cal's *El imperialismo catalán; Prat de la Riba, Cambó, D'Ors y la conquista moral de España*, (Catalan Imperialism: Prat de la Riba, Cambó, D'Ors and the Moral Conquest of Spain) Barcelona: Edhasa, 2003, whose central argument coincides with the position we attribute here to Vicente Cacho Viu; and Maximiliano Fuentes Codera's *El campo de fuerzas europeo en Cataluña; Eugeni d'Ors en los primeros años de la Gran Guerra* (The European Force Field in Catalonia: Eugeni d'Ors and the Early Years of the Great War), Lleida: Universitat de Lleida-Pagès Editors, 2009, which is more circumspect with the pre-fascist argument.

the surface is the origin of authoritarian and anti-parliamentarian movements, of generic totalitarianism (the prevalence of a single party confused with the state), of fascism and Nazism, as well as of Bolshevism, all phenomena that helped shape the period and which people today strive to deem definitively finished. This, above all, when we can see that the world's (or Europe's) political evolution over the past quarter century has sought to unify under the slogan of overcoming the barbarity dominating the central years of the century (note here Gabriel Jackson's book *Civilization & Barbarity in 20th Century Europe*, 1997), as a mechanism for analysis that is identified with the "new generation" of the 1970s, charged with overcoming without hang-ups "everything" that the traumatic past had meant.

In this regard, the balance between the smug oblivion of consumers and the policies of affable and controlled memory conservation (almost always dumbed down to the television viewer) has found in today's mass media an outstanding ally: they have consolidated the route of simplification, of "goodies and baddies" (monocausality tends to identify only one guilty party and, by extension, its exclusive heirs) and have made great efforts to "explain" why today's democracy has nothing to do with those unfortunate episodes of four or five decades ago. This was one of the great concerns of, to quote an example, Primo Levi, in his *The Drowned and the Saved*.

The grasping force of the current wave of democracy (which is in the process of "self-globalising") even allows for the integration of old totalitarians and their natural successors, who adapt to democracy, even with their old, yet duly remodelled, parties and formations, and ensure their past is forgotten. At the same time, this new situation has permitted the spreading of the practice of "asking for forgiveness" (which even the Catholic church has done) as a means of definitively exorcising old ghosts and old culpabilities. A clean slate, as if, little more than sixty years after racist and chauvinist policies, the extreme Right had no presence or validity at all, even in the heart of "civilized Europe". In this regard, most salutary is the study of Piero Ignazi's *L'estrema destra in Europa* (Bologna, 1994).

In this complex confluence between cultural-political debate and historiographical praxis, recent years have borne witness to the appearance of a range of currents of thought, such as the German *Historikerkreis* ("the past that will not go away"), the German version of revisionist thought; such as global historic revisionism itself, arising from the ideological excesses of Cold War orthodoxies (especially noteworthy here was Renzo de Felice, who initiated, with his 1995 opusculum *Rosso e nero*, a significant and intense controversy with the so-called "anti-revisionists") or the more aggressive current of "negationism" (the personal and historiographical evolution of Ernst Nolte, based on revisionist positions, was particularly significant in this regard).

At the time, none of this had a particularly significant impact upon the Spanish cultural, political and historiographical worlds; neither did it effect Catalan culture, politics and historiography in the 1990s. Perhaps there were some skirmishes amongst journalists with regard to the view of Spain's democratic transition and a more dispassionate ideological assessment of the years of Franco's dictatorship, or the appearance of some movements in favour of protecting the "true historical memory" and denouncing the alleged ideological-interpretative tepidness of historians ensconced in positions close to those of power, in places of responsibility in the media, politics and academe (concerns about this conflict were reflected in the famous paper by Tzvetan Todorov, *Les abus de la mémoire* (1992)). One could ask oneself, even in Spain's relatively unimportant case, whether the use of memory is incompatible with the recording of history: the former is swayed by the political will of the moment, whilst the latter apparently continues to be governed by the ordered assimilation of knowledge.

Despite all this, what does appear clear is the difficulty in separating the analysis of 20th century totalitarianism and authoritarianism from the century's general political trends, from all the cultural and political debate that has accompanied it (applied to the case of Germany and whose retrospective application up to the second half of the 19th century is claimed, cf. Michael Stürner, *The Limits of Power: the Germans' Reencounter with History*, Berlin, 1992); and, on a borderline basis, applying to our current position, as intellectuals, historians and citizens, within this age-old dynamic. This difficulty, in the case under review, has brought about a let us say colloquial and political habit of universally employing the term "fascism/fascist", applying it to the widest possible range of manifestations and people, as a synonym for any form of social and political predominance that can be considered arbitrary.

Historiography, however, seeing itself violated by politicology and sociology, has been compelled to define and differentiate greatly: between fascism and lesser fascism, preindustrial fascism, totalitarianism, and conservative authoritarianism promoted by rightist oligarchies, etc. (without forgetting the casuistry opened up by the process of decolonisation around the world and the appearance of new "totalitarian democracies"). This would appear to be the only controversy over the nature and characterisation of "Francoism" and Franco's dictatorship that ended in a certain degree of consensus from the early years of Spain's democratic transition: that is, on the need to distinguish the brutal imposition of what Renzo de Felice dubbed Spain's Rightist Establishment from true fascism (something similar would happen in the case of Hungary, Romania, Portugal and even of Brazil under Getulio Vargas). Contrary to what occurred with the "revolutionary" mobilisation of the masses promoted by "true" fascism, in these other cases, authoritarian power was a demobilising factor that actually tended to present itself as the antidote to national traumas

caused by the socialist revolutions begun as a consequence of the contradictions of a modern democratic mass society. What has happened to the history of fascism, then is similar to what has occurred with the study of nationalism: those historians who believe in the possibility of a unified study of this other major phenomenon of the modern world lose ground to those who think the only possibility is to study individual cases, aware of the large number of differences that separate them. Indeed, this has led to a degree of divergence between historians, who are more relativist and cautious of nominal characterisations, and political scientists and sociologists, who are more likely to use the term “fascism” on an all-encompassing basis.

So, how far can we go in this establishing of taxonomies and differentiation of cases? What does it really solve for historians to establish the fact that Spain, for example, with all that happened from 1923 to 1930 and from 1936 (in some areas) to 1975, did not constitute a fascist phenomenon?

The fact is that, aside from describing cases, historians must aspire to understand the existence of general problems affecting large areas (progressively around the entire world) and giving rise to states of mind that lead to seeking explanations and solutions that are similar, albeit adapted to the individual circumstances of each case. From this viewpoint, although the different manifestations of fascism must be situated within the European inter-war period and as a result of the shock of participating in the Great War and its immediate aftermath (this need for contextualisation was the focus of Renzo de Felice’s famous work *Le interpretazioni del fascismo* [The Interpretations of Fascism], from its first 1969 edition), it could be said that the experiences of some non-belligerent countries (such as Spain) allow them to be regarded as suitable for inclusion in the generalised context of problems and the search for kinds of solutions similar to those in which we include fascism.

It could be said that, as the first truly global war in human history, the First World War involved neutral countries as well, forcing them to respond to stimuli similar to that of the belligerent parties (although without the specific political and military pressures, nor those of the directly-harmed masses, especially the ex-combatants). At the end of the day, the problem will consist in reaching agreement on the content and the limits we ascribe to the concept of “similar” responses. Even though it focuses on Germany, Andreas Hillgruber’s book *Die Zerstörung Europas: Beiträge zur Weltkriegsepoche 1914 bis 1945* (The Destruction of Europe: Contributions on the Epoch of World Wars, 1914 to 1945, Berlin, 1988) explains very well the impact the war/fascism combination had upon European dynamics as a whole.

Historical contextualisation requires the introduction of elements of cultural dynamics into the analysis of fascism and to assign them a significant

role with regard to the lengthy process by which Western Europe and its immediate surroundings tackled the problems raised by overcrowding at home and the ruinous cost of colonial and imperial requirements abroad. This is one of George. L. Mosse's great contributions to the history of Nazism.

The serious problem arises, however, when the search for cultural currents is believed will end up in fascism (which actually have clear roots in the nineteenth century's romantic irrationalism, as György Lukács sought to demonstrate in the case of Germany in his *The Destruction of Reason*, Berlin, 1953) ends up confusing them with fascism itself. The question that is raised is whether fascism would have been possible without the outbreak of the Great War, irrespective of the development of the radical nationalism, bourgeois anti-positivism and anti-parliamentarism that arose in the last years of the 19th century. The matter has been the subject of a masterful study by Zeev Sternhell in the case of France, attempting to apply to it Mosse's contributions with regard to Germany. He later attempted to generalise his arguments, with less success in my opinion, in collaboration with Maia Asheri and Mario Sznajder, in *El nacimiento de la ideología fascista* (*The Birth of Fascist Ideology*, Madrid, 1994), since they project onto subsequent fascist situations, movements and statements that fully affect the democratic crisis of the period.

There is an entire line of interpretation, one that is highly suggestive and cannot be ignored, proposes that the effects of the crisis of the classical liberal world in Western democracies resulted in the internal weakening of parliamentary systems and a definitive change in the nature and functions of the liberal state itself. This line of interpretation has produced one of the most brilliant explanations of origin of Nazism in Karl Dietrich Bracher's now-classic work *Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik: eine Studie zum Problem des Machtverfalls in der Demokratie* (*The Dissolution of the Weimar Republic: a Study of the Degeneration of Power in Democracy*, 1955). However, it would be unfair to ignore previous contributions on the general evolution of the West and, more particularly, the works of Richard Crossman, *Government and the Governed (A History of Political Ideas and Political Practice)*, (1939), which introduces the concept of the total state; that of Emil Lederer, *State of the Masses* (New York, 1940), which speaks of the dictatorship of the institutionalised masses via the state; that of the great scholar of liberalism, Harold Laski, *Reflections on the Revolution of our Time* (1943), a lucid analysis of the process of weakening of parliamentary regimes; or that of Jacob Talmon, *The Rise of Totalitarian Democracy* (1952), which speaks of the no-less interesting concept of "totalitarian democracy".

A large part of these contributions and concerns, as intelligent systematisation of something that hovered in the atmosphere of the Western world (of great interest is the anthology compiled by Mauriccia Salvati, *Da Berlino a New York. Crisi della classe media e futuro della democrazia nelle scienze sociali degli anni*

trenta [From Berlin to New York. Crises of the middle classes and the future of democracy in the social sciences of the 1930s, Milan, 2000]), we can find reflected in Francesc Cambó's work *Entorn del feixisme italià* (Regarding Italian Fascism, 1924), which by the following year had already been translated into French by Paris's prestigious *Librairie Plon*, responsible for collecting the best contributions to thought on the initial crisis of 20th-century Europe. The book is truly dominated by the unique confrontation of orthodoxies that broke out in the Catalonia of the 1920s, and is, although explicitly rejecting the "fascist revolution", regarded as praising it (and, directly, the Primo de Rivera dictatorship). It constitutes a rich and complex analysis of the subject of its subtitle: *Meditacions i comentaris sobre problemes de política contemporània* (Meditations and Commentaries on Problems of Contemporary Politics). Cambó stresses the importance of the fascist revolution above others of a more limited scope, as fascists "expose, with their negative aspect, the failure of the entire political system and of all the democratic and humanitarian ideology that has ruled Europe for close to a century" (p. 10).

It seems clear that this line of argument opens up a range of possibilities for analysing the complex mix of cultural, anthropological and political phenomena that lie behind the contemporary blossoming of mass societies. One of the lines including this complexity was represented by the then influential work of Carl Schmitt, *Die geistesgeschichtliche Lage des heutigen Parlamentarismus* (The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy, 1923), which denounced parliament as a bourgeois 19th century institution with no *raison d'être* in mass industrial and democratic society. Here we find ourselves before a true forerunner of fascism, aimed at sparking off a mobilisation of the masses in a radical, anti-parliamentary sense. Schmitt's retrospective line of argument is completely subject to this new will and the explosion of new political methods that have to interpret it.

It should be understood that this was just one of the many responses that were proposed: the entire gamut of responses, ranging from radical nationalism to national socialism, have been analysed in Stefan Breuer's splendid, *Anatomie der konservativen Revolution* (Anatomy of the Conservative Revolution. Darmstadt, 1995). Indeed, without going as far as this total and radical rejection that has just been explained as due to the trauma of the Great War (see, for example the work of comparative history *Guerre et cultures, 1914-1918*, Paris, 1994), the range of responses to the changes that Western societies were undergoing was broader and more nuanced.

Although they did not experience the virulence of these changes caused by the Great War, some Western societies, encouraged by their intellectuals (who had, by the end of the 19th century, definitively begun to be identified as such, as analysed from a socio-historical viewpoint in Christophe Charle's *Naissance des "intellectuels", 1880-1900*, [The Birth of the "Intellectuals", 1800-1900], Paris,

1990), gave similar responses (triumphant in the political sphere or not), driven by this omnipresent spirit of the times infusing the early 20th century.

Having reached this point, I feel that there is a clear need to return to the debate on "the case of Spain" and to the role that Catalonia played in it. Having established that it was not, in general terms and in the sense of political theory, a case of fascism, does not exempt us from it. We should be prudent in our use of terminology: however, prudence is also no grounds for exemption. Contextualising this particular case within a situation of a general crisis of a century-old political system and ideology (as we have seen Cambó suggesting) does not mean beginning to seek phenomena, particular events and individual and/or institutional meanings for something which, in the end, did not happen. A pre-fascist who lacks a situation that is not even slightly "fascistising" on the horizon or with no fascist regime in his or her direct sphere of activity is either not an active fascist (private convictions or cultural declarations with no impact are something else entirely) or the forerunner of nothing at all. Unlike Italy, which in 1932 saw the partnership between Mussolini and Giovanni Gentile interesting enough to write the extremely lengthy entry on the "*Dottrina del fascismo*" in the *Enciclopedia italiana*, a similar pairing, such as one between Primo de Rivera and Eugeni d'Ors (or the older A. Maura or one of his younger followers), aimed at explaining the nature and intentions of the first dictatorship of 1923 would be unthinkable in Spain. Those fascistising elements that did exist, such as Calvo Sotelo and Eduardo Aunós, were diametrically opposed to the dictator, whom they criticised savagely for his pro-parliamentarian weakness.

It is not a question of the more or less real possibility of the case of Spain resembling that of Italy, or even that of France, where it can indeed be said that fascist thought and a fascist movement existed, even though they did not manage to seize power (it is difficult to regard the Vichy regime as a fascist one, despite its collaboration with the Nazi occupiers); the works of Victor Nguyen (*Aux origines de L'Action Française. Intelligence et politique à l'aube du xxe siècle*, Paris, 1991) and Eugen Weber's now-classic *Action Française: Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth Century France* (1962) help us to properly understand this French intermediate point. Despite everything, in Spain, it is clear and spectacular that authoritarianism and violence characterised the political system for almost half a century, divided into two sub-periods separated by the short democratic interlude of the Second Republic, without forgetting the existence of the *Falange Española* (Spanish Falange), a party of fascist inspiration. Too many years not to make us reflect upon this 20th-century phenomenon, and its overall impact on internal Spanish affairs and the general issues of Europe. This periodic review appears more than justified, particularly with regard to Catalonia. It was an area subject to the same important influences that gave rise to the modern crisis of traditional European societies, in which historicist Ro-

manticism of the 1800s had played a very important role, and which saw uneasy coexistence between social and national positions in the difficult period spanning the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, without forgetting the radicalising effects of the world's rapid modernisation. It also constitutes an example of a country affected by the tensions of the imperialist crisis of the end of the 19th century. Thus it is that this type of general review is more important here than in any other part of Spain. This remains the case, even though it can be said that the dynamics of the state (a central issue in the establishment of totalitarian regimes) was not a strictly Catalan affair and thus the related disputes are relatively alien to it.

Additionally, in Catalonia, the impact of the Great War was clearly visible, and we already know that this conflict was the catalyst for the appearance of fascism in those countries that took part in it. The anarcho-syndicalist trade union CNT, for example, grew from 5,000 members in 1914 to half a million in 1918. Towards the end of 1916, Barcelona witnessed the birth of military *Juntas de Defensa* (Boards of Defence) that, despite their internal corporate political nature, added to a growing atmosphere of violent extra-parliamentary action. The “social war” between “white” or employers’ and “red” or trade union terrorism, with its daily deaths, extremely tense atmosphere, aggressive organisation of the bourgeois economic world that would lead to an Employers Federation with a decidedly antidemocratic direct action philosophy (a subject studied by Soledad Bengoechea in her *Organització patronal i conflictivitat social a Catalunya* [Employers organisations and social conflict in Catalonia], 1994) and with a clear weakening of the previous institutional life, constituted a phenomenon that inflicted violence upon town and country life in Catalonia from 1919 to 1921 whose impact could still be felt in the Civil War and which would lead many sectors of well-to-do society to openly support, from 1921-22 on, a solution imposing “order” that could only be led by the military (political crisis and social violence as the defining elements of the inter-war period).

Generally speaking, then, it can be said that Catalonia underwent a tense, unique evolution (including a nationalist movement) from the end of the 19th century to the years immediately subsequent to the Great War that would make entirely justifiable the existence of “pre-fascist” intellectuals and cultural, social and political movements proposing a “new” kind of society in line with fascism. Catalonia even had its volunteers fighting alongside the French in the Great War. Indeed, some Catalan politicians thought (or dreamt) the Paris Peace Conference, which put an end to what in Catalonia was called the “War of the Nations” (Rovira i Virgili), would encompass the “Catalan case” and thereby give definite closure to the age-old claims that set Catalonia against the Spanish state.

We should not forget the actions of Joan Estelrich (1896-1958), an important second-generation conservative *Noucentista*, who created the pressure group *Expansió Catalana* (Catalan Expansion, 1919), which was very active in the League of Nations, as he would later (1928) explain in *La qüestió de les minories nacionals* (The question of national minorities, translated into French as *La question des minorités et la Catalogne*, 1929). Lastly, we should also not forget that Barcelona was the stage for the coup that led to the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera, in the early morning of 13 September, 1923.

Despite all the former considerations, no interpretations of the events and cultural manifestations that may be made from the Catalan-Spanish contextualisation of the European framework of the time have managed to gain a hold (unlike the case of Portugal, where that of António Costa Pinto has done so, particular that of *Salazar's Dictatorship and European Fascism: Problems of Interpretation*, 1995). Despite this, some time ago a book was published that could have started a debate on reviewing this issue. The book, by Vicente Cacho, *Revisión de Eugenio d'Ors, 1902-1930* (Reviewing Eugeni d'Ors, 1902-1930, Barcelona, 1997), was the last one published in the lifetime of this pioneer in the field of "intellectual history" in Spain. Indeed, the author wished his work to be a true "re-view": he was indebted to the contributions of Zeev Sternhell and had no hesitation in regarding d'Ors as "the introducer of a primitive form of fascism into Catalonia" and the core of his thought as "classicism, the authoritarian variant of nationalism".

This is of more than mere anecdotal importance, given that d'Ors was the main intellectual shaper of the movement that would, in Catalonia, take the name of "Noucentisme" (as a break from the *vuit-cents* or 1800s) and it must be remembered that this *Noucentisme* characterised Catalan political nationalism, particularly in the period prior to the Great War: Cacho's book highlights the point to which d'Ors was considered a generational point of reference before 1914, even though he found it hard to sell, politically, his message of "fascism *avant la lettre*" which would lead him to state that the future would lead to inter-class mobilisation within a national framework. It should not be forgotten that, in the Italy of the early 1900s, a similar cultural movement, reflecting the concerns of intellectuals and of an equally conservative nature, became honed in magazines such as *Il Regno* and *Voce* and concluded in the founding, in 1908, under the stewardship of man of letters Enrico Corradini, of the *Associazione Nazionalista Italiana*, which was highly influential in the creation and definition of the subsequent fascist movement.

Cacho's work attempts to portray d'Ors as an intellectual characteristic of the early twentieth century, with his French influence (from the France of the *Boulangiste* crisis and the *Dreyfusard* and post-Dreyfus years), an individual in search of individual prestige that was unquestioned by his fellow citizens; of

sufficient independent means (even if through the enjoyment of continuous grants abroad) so that he would not have to depend too much on economic necessities that would forcibly shape the subsequent “organic intellectual”, of cosmopolitan taste that was irritated by “localist” necessities, who took part in the vitalist, chic bourgeois world whilst criticising its irreversible “decadentism” (which is, in fact, the natural development of the postulates of the late 19th-century modernism); who as a rule mistrusted the idea of the primacy of the will of the people inherited from the Enlightenment; and who had no hesitation in regarding himself as a qualified, not to say outstanding member (both intellectual and heroic, in Carlylean style) of the elite who have to take power to counter soiled bourgeois materialism and to ensure that society made the most of itself (as an evolution and sublimation of its original Regenerationism which still makes him trust the distinctly “un-revolutionary” normative need to move from chaos to order).

The doctrinaire *Noucentisme* (a radical way of adapting to the changing present), expounded by d’Ors from 1902-1904 on, had, in general terms, an undeniably pro-aristocratic and anti-bourgeois tone, which on occasion sought to reuse the provocative formulas of turn-of-the-century intellectualism, which did so in extolling syndicalism as a shock force that would revitalise a sick society, à la Sorel (it is impossible not to recall the chapter in Isaiah Berlin’s *Against the current*, 1979, on this French thinker and activist). This approach was in provocative contrast to the bourgeoisie’s attempts to counter the local workers’ movements and the endemic social crisis affecting the Barcelona area. Some authors (cf. particularly, G. Diaz-Plaja, *Lo social en Eugenio d’Ors y otros estudios*, [Social Issues in Eugenio d’Ors and Other Studies], Barcelona, 1981) have placed this “social” issue at the heart of d’Ors’s fall from favour in the eyes of leading “Catalanists” and his subsequent departure for Madrid in 1920-1922.

At the same time, d’Ors spoke frequently of nationalism, a term that he linked with imperialism and the need to mobilise the young, and which, around 1910, he attempted to sublimate in connection with the classicism and authoritarianism of Maurassian nationalism. He often spoke of the values of “the race”, although he approach to this was essentially rhetorical, with very few points of contact with those who were speaking of the Catalan “race” at the end of the 19th century (including Dr. Bartomeu Robert and his fellow-doctor Domènec Martí i Julià, from amongst the few who jumped on this short-lived bandwagon).

Although the works of Eugeni d’Ors are extremely varied and with a significantly journalistic slant, we can agree with Cacho and regard this author as characteristic of the pre-fascist currents of thought that spread through Western Europe prior to 1914 (despite the fact that we have already noted our disagreement with the automatic predetermination that might be implied by

the term "pre-fascism"). d'Ors's familiarity with French conservative nationalist culture helps to confirm this leaning. And, for their part, the characteristics of the dynamics of the Catalonia of the early nineteenth hundreds help explain why d'Ors's attempt to apply his doctrinal corpus to local realities was accepted as something natural. What is surprising, however, is the lack of followers of his, the eradication (almost to the point of disappearance) from the Catalan cultural and institution world that affected him after he left Barcelona in 1920 and, in the end, the irrelevance of his actions and impact during Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, especially when some of the general's collaborators tried to convince him of the need to forget about the old "Regenerationism" and move on to building the "new" state and nation.

Rather than enquiring about the reasons for Eugeni d'Ors "pre-fascist" solitude, I think it is more important to see the evolution and significance of other nationalist options, included in the multifaceted attempt (be it of a liberal or conservative stamp) to overcome this modern crisis at the beginning of the 1900s. To summarize greatly, it can be said the Catalan nationalism in which d'Ors was involved until the crisis of 1920 is doctrinally comparable to those schools of thought developing in nearby Western countries: it is made up of the requirements of a particular historical dynamic (within which Spain's colonial crisis of 1898 has always been regarded as a key catalyst); by the existence of a cultural, anthropological and psychological complex which determined the national sensibilities on an individual and collective level (here, the key difference for Catalonia was the fact that it was not a nation state); by the circumstances of the crisis of the growth of the nineteenth-century bourgeois world and its twentieth-century deformation with what we call "mass society"; and by the concerns of those intellectuals (Egon Friedell, in his *Cultural History of the Modern Age* (1927) speaks of the "end of reality", of the crisis of security in positivism and the appearance of anxiety and uncertainty) who, for a short period from the end of the nineteenth century to 1914, felt there was a need to intervene to impose order and a new moral sense and who thought they could actually do so.

For d'Ors, nationalism was an intermediate but necessary step on the road to the ideal, European-centric, cosmopolitan (i.e. imperialist) option. It should be borne in mind that he mainly developed his "*Noucentisme*" theory in Paris (between 1906 and 1911), whilst literally devouring French and German thought of the time (he also stayed in Munich frequently). It was, therefore, a very un-Catalan creation, full of precautionary measures against democratic liberalism and its system of legitimating the participation of the public masses, which also sought to limit the interventionism of the intellectual elites. The dramatic events of Barcelona's *Setmana Tràgica* (the "Tragic Week" of July 1909) ended up accentuating this aristocratic leaning. Shortly thereafter he could

claim that the youth of Europe was openly fighting against democracy, as it was an “annoying result of the spiritual decadence of the bourgeoisie of the second half of the 19th century”.

Importance has always been attached to the coexistence within Catalan nationalistic thought of elements and arguments that arise from the liberal democratic currents of the 1800s and those coming from conservatism. This diversity would remain in place over the course of the 20th century, and thus one has been able to talk of uninterrupted currents, of a certain logical continuity. However, even leaving d’Ors and his “different” pre-fascist meaning aside, we should regard the conservative world of the early 1900s (which we could associate with the ideas and actions of Enric Prat de la Riba) and its liberal equivalent (the case of Gabriel Alomar or Pere Corominas) as being significantly different from their 19th predecessors. The old dispute about freedom changed in terms of approach, in large part due to the new social pressures and, for this reason, even left-leaning intellectuals would end up denouncing as the “tyranny of collective forces”, to use Romain Rolland’s expression. However, despite the new “pure” dislike of democracy, in no case could one see a significant leaning towards a “pre-fascism” capable of modifying either collective behaviour or the Catalan political system.

The explanation for the differences contributed by the 1900s can to a large degree be found in the political and institutional actions of Catalan nationalism and not in its cultural or doctrinal manifestations. So, the fruit of any reflection upon the case of Eugeni d’Ors can only give highly slanted and relatively unimportant results. Most Catalan intellectuals would end up guided by the theory favouring public action: it was G. Alomar who, from a modern *Noucentista* left-wing position, would finally reproach the Catalan intellectual world that they remained guided by the “positivist evil”, i.e. with the aim of understanding the problems and seeking to solve them with ordered actions, within the existing institutional framework and the limits imposed by politics.

Can we say, then, that pre-fascism did not catch on in Catalonia due to the “un-twentieth-century” attitude of her intellectuals? The fact is that almost nowhere else did the formulation of a conservative nationalism that was aggressive to the point of linking itself with the imperialist demands of the time end up in actions that were liberal, democratic and even parliamentary in nature. And, almost nowhere else did conservative intellectuals merge actions in this sphere with a fusion of radical nationalism and social concerns (1919) close to socialist revisionism, as occurred with the Catalan conservatism of those still allied with the *Lliga Regionalista*, such as, for example the group headed by Jaume Bofill, the leader of Prat de la Riba’s direct successors. These were no “pre-fascist” yearnings, despite the fact that, the modern explosion of the mass society was constantly in their sights and was perhaps their main concern.

Not even when Puig i Cadafalch, the President of the *Mancomunitat*, hailed the new military dictatorship on 13 September 1923 was the feeling truly extra-parliamentarian. It was more a case of defensive conservatism born of the deep exhaustion stemming from the "social war" of 1919-1921.

The fact that parliamentarism was not criticised did not mean that it was not regarded as corrupt and harmful for the modernising aspirations of Catalanism. However, entire decades of *Vuitcentista* demands for a modern state and believing that corruption stemmed from Castilian-inspired centralism prevented anti-parliamentarism from finding a place at the heart of Catalan *Noucentista* nationalist ideology. Intellectual interventionism was accepted as an almost arbitrary action of the elite; the argument of boosting the national spirit of the masses was included as a key objective (in some cases there were even movements to mobilize the youth) and began to lead down the road to progressive state control (here referring to the alternative state control proposed in Catalonia) which pointed towards that state of "totalitarian democracy" that put a definitive end to the logic of the 19th-century argument of parliamentary liberalism.

No further significant collective step forward was made, and the fact that the dictatorships were Spanish and expressly anti-Catalan in nature removed the possibility of collective fascism. Indeed, conservative Catalan nationalism remained, politically, within the spectrum of parliamentary democracy even when the political tension of Spain's Second Republic led to its final crisis, from 1934 to 1936. Anything else was just individual actions, albeit sometimes extremely notable ones.