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Toy police

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If the Mossos can’t even keep the Palau de la Generalitat secure, we already have a make-believe police force of our own

I often get the impression that we Catalans are living proof of the theory put forward by Weber, the German sociologist who argued that national minorities without a state of their own throw themselves into “economic activity”.

He specifically mentioned the Poles—who were not independent at the time—the French Huguenots, the English Quakers and the Jews. Though it must be said that, with the last group, he got it completely wrong. They now have not only a state of their own but also the leading economic, technological and military power in the Middle East.

All this comes to mind in light of the Mossos’ latest blunder. A group of teachers entering the Palau this Thursday has once again put the Mossos in the firing line. It has also called into question security at the seat of the Generalitat’s presidency.

With the terrorism alert at level four, I don’t even want to think what would have happened if, instead of teachers, they had been jihadists ready to blow themselves up. Touch wood. Though it also says a lot about the standard of our education system. What an example to set for students!

Still, this is not the first time something like this has happened. On January 3, 2020, during Quim Torra’s presidency, apparent members of the ANC gained access to the building. They even managed to take the Spanish flag down from its flagpole.

A couple of years earlier, on June 2, 2018, Lluís Llach, former CUP lawmaker Antonio Baños, actress Sílvia Bel and Somescola activist Teresa Casals got onto the main balcony—the most sacred spot in Catalan politics—to hang a banner reading “Freedom for political prisoners and exiles”.

Torra himself must have either agreed to it or authorized it. At a press conference, I asked Meritxell Budó, the spokesperson at the time, what it cost to put up a banner like that. After all, if four private citizens could do it, anyone had the right to do it. The question went unanswered.

But the most striking episode—if you’ll pardon the pun—came on November 8, 2020. During the coronavirus pandemic, a group of people threw paint at the façade to protest measures affecting the restaurant industry. I think they were the owners of a tavern who were fed up with the restrictions. Once again, the Mossos were caught with their pants down.

Anyway, the two most recent high-profile episodes were the Blocus protest on October 26, when around thirty businesses were vandalized, and the incidents following the November 8 general strike, which apparently also took them by surprise.

All this came after Major Trapero was replaced by Ferran López at the head of the Directorate-General of Police, and after Sílvia Català was appointed as the new chief, replacing Miquel Esquius, who has retired. But if the Mossos can’t even keep the Palau de la Generalitat secure, what use are they? We’ve built a make-believe police force.

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