



Loyalty Punished

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For years the “military question” was one of main problems in ensuring Spain’s constitutional order. In the 19 and early 20 centuries, the military resorted to force to resolve changes to the “situation” when faced with inoperable and falsified elections. Later came the *coup d’etats* –corporative acts of intervention in the country’s political life. Franco’s regime was the result of a *co-up d’etat* and civil war. The Armed Forces were, at all times, one of the pillars guaranteeing stability. This is why, during the Transition, everyone worried about the military accepting the text and how it would fit into the new Constitution. The King’s role and the intelligence and know-how of men like Gutiérrez Mellado, Quintana Lacaci, Liberal Lucini and Saénz de Tejada, to name but a few, made the Armed Forces full and complete integration possible, finally solving a problem that had hounded Spain for years.

The other day, Lieutenant General Mena made a statement befitting a high commander these days. He reminded everyone the Constitution has limits and bestows on the Armed Forces a clear and definitive mandate, written by General Gutiérrez Mellado, on defending the integrity of Spanish terri-

tory and the constitutional order. He said: “if these limits were passed, when at the moment fortunately seems unthinkable, Article 8 of the Constitution would be applied: the Armed Forces, made up of the Army, Nave and Air Force, have the duty to guaranteed the sovereignty and independence of Spain, defend its integrity and constitutional order.”

Everyone noticed that the Lt. General’s words are very representative of how the vast majority of officials feel, something that should make our politicians happy. After such a complicated history, our Armed Forces are calling for the Constitution to be enforced and respected.

This is as true as the fact that Defense Minister Bono’s authority has dropped to a minimum due to his abusive use of soldiers killed in action for political ends or the Armed Forces themselves in his ongoing test of strength with the Prime Minister. Bono knows this, but he trusts internal discipline will allow him to emerge from the Ministry unscathed.

Once again, the role played by General Felix Sanz is surprising. His responsi-

bilities do not include proposing punishment for a Lt. General who simply defended the Constitution, or for anything else. This is the specific role of the Defense Minister. Trying to win points from someone who is constantly ignoring you is, just a little, humiliating.

Our Minister's reaction is also significant. Right now the Socialist Party's concern is not that the Armed Forces will attack the constitutional order but how to get them to passively stand aside as they dismantle it -to get the Ar-

med Forces to ignore their sworn duty. Bono can use them to get votes and pressure the Prime Minister, but our Generals cannot remind the public of their Constitutional responsibilities.

We are, quite simply, faced with yet another act designed to impose a change in regime, to which some Generals appear to lend themselves in order to keep enjoying the sweet disdain of the Defense Minister.

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