

## 24.09.2014 The impact of the Scottish referendum

The impact of the Scottish referendum will only be measured with hindsight. For Scotland, nothing will ever be the same. For Europe, the debate on internal enlargement is now wide open, even if the 'no' victory delays the first practical steps. And for the stateless nations of Europe, including Corsica, a path has been opened up.

Scotland is entering a new phase in its relations with London. Yes supporters hoped to do so in the clarity of independent and equal relations between neighbours who are naturally inclined to cooperation by geography, economics and history. The winners of the day have no choice: they have to grant more devolution and more autonomy to the Scottish people, who may at any time conduct a fresh referendum if the situation does not develop as they expect - they have acquired the inalienable right to do so before the international community. "Scotland is in a position of strength" commented Alex Salmond after the results were published.

The devolution of new powers from London to Edinburgh will affect the relationship with Europe in one way or another. Will London alone control the energy question on behalf of the United Kingdom when 95% of gas and oil resources are in Scotland? The same goes for fishing, a key competence of the European institutions, when Scotland controls the majority of the United Kingdom's fishing. And in many other areas, Scotland will have full powers. How can the relationship between the elected representatives of this territory and Brussels be managed, given that London will no longer exercise any control over Scottish policy in these areas?

It would seem that a new place will have to be made for the Scottish institutions in European policy, a place entirely different from that of the Poitou-Charente region! A similar situation has already arisen in Belgium, where several powers - culture and agriculture, for example - no longer exist at the federal level since they have been transferred in their entirety to the Flemish and Walloon regions. Thus when Belgium held the Presidency of the European Union, a minister of Flanders or of Wallonia chaired European summits on agriculture, something which led France, always at the cutting edge of institutional developments, to refuse to participate in these summits chaired by Belgium because "the President was not a minister of state". For Scotland, we will have to go further, and admit a Scottish representative alongside the representative of Britain. What's the betting that France will sulk in the corner?

In any event, Scotland will have to be granted a special status among the regions of Europe. The issue was first tackled at the Convention which worked on the European constitution in the early 2000s, by making provision for "constitutional regions", those which have enough autonomy to have legislative authority and thus the power to implement European directives. The proposal was not followed up, and Scotland has just crossed a new threshold, that of an "institutional nation", even if it is not independent. The European authorities will need to respond to this development of its status, which will open the way for all the other stateless nations of Europe.

Now at last the curtain is coming up on the Catalan performance. The European Commission seems to have understood that crisis looms if it fails to accept the democratic demands of the peoples of Europe. This has been the thrust of statements from European commissioner Karel de Gucht. But Madrid is turning a deaf ear, unlike London which accepted the Scottish people's right to decide. David Cameron's self-congratulatory remarks about "behaving as a democrat" by allowing the Scottish referendum have been widely heard across the social networks from every Catalan militant. The Spanish government is enraged. The Generalitat decided by a large majority to call the Catalan referendum for 9 November 2014. The holding of the Scottish referendum, with a turnout of 85%, in universally lauded democratic conditions, has considerably strengthened the process. Madrid does not want to let anything out of its hands. But will it be able to hold on?

The time that we are living through is a historic one for the European Free Alliance. The Scottish and Catalan locomotives of our European political party are pulling the train of all the stateless nations. Corsica has coupled onto this general movement, and the large, high-level delegation that went to Edinburgh received broad coverage in the French and European media. And it's 9 November in Barcelona for the next date. The undignified declarations by François Hollande about the Scottish people have reminded Corsicans about his obstinate refusal to give equal official status to the Corsican language. Demand by the peoples of Europe for the recognition of their rights is booming. The Corsican people are part of this wave, and, profiting from the processes under way in Scotland and Catalonia, we too can upset the balance of power.