

## 13.05.2015 UK elections and Scotland *Tòmbula!*

An electoral tidal wave, or a political earthquake: there are no words to describe the extraordinary success of the Scottish nationalists this week in the British parliamentary elections. 56 of the 59 MPs elected by Scottish constituencies are now Scottish National Party MPs. Previously, there were only six. They will form a block, strengthened by the three MPs representing Plaid Cymru, the Welsh nationalist party which is also a member of the European Free Alliance.

The Scottish engine is running at full throttle, pulling behind it all the European Free Alliance parties - our forty national parties seeking self-determination for their peoples. In a Europe which has turned its back on the principle of 'unity in diversity', dominated by less and less federalised States, the power of the message sent by the Scottish people is bound to be a game-changer. For, just six months after the independence referendum on 18 September 2014 - 45% voted 'yes', 55% 'no' - the Scottish question has forced its way back onto the front pages in Britain and in Europe.

The general election results have shown that the 'no' vote in September's referendum has not curbed the rise of Scottish nationalist sentiment. If they were hesitant six months ago, the desire for freedom is still deep in the hearts of the Scottish people. The Scots were promised near-total devolution within the United Kingdom, a promise that ultimately persuaded a majority to vote 'no', but the reforms have remained blocked by the London political class. With 56 MPs at Westminster, devolution will acquire a new momentum! In fact, David Cameron is caught in the trap of his own promises - his promises to the Scots and his own manifesto commitment to holding a referendum on the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union. This will be a key moment in the coming debate: how can Britain stay united if Scotland votes to remain European and England votes to leave? If Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom diverge on this point, the independence question will be raised again by Scots who do not want to follow the majority vote in London. But even if they converge, and London votes for the status quo, the question will fundamentally remain: shouldn't Scotland be in control of its own choices over so crucial a matter?

The other main thrust of the SNP's platform in Scotland has been the priority given to the most disadvantaged groups in society. The contrast between the social policies conducted in Edinburgh and in London was the hallmark of Alex Salmond's government and was strengthened still further when Nicola Sturgeon succeeded him as party leader and First Minister of Scotland after the referendum. Tuition fees for students, childcare, boosting social protection, developing public health facilities: wherever Scotland's devolved powers allowed, Alex Salmond opted for a more social Scotland in opposition to a more conservative England. He did as much as possible in these times of crisis without endangering the economic balance of the country. But there is a very marked contrast with the harshness of the liberal English system, and the Scottish people, who have a very long social tradition, clearly recognised that in their choice. It is by conducting policies open to the greatest number that we succeed in reaching the greatest number: this obvious fact should be better understood by all the nationalist parties, whose first task is to unite their people in a common national project!

The Scottish example inspires and heartens us. Now it's the turn of the Catalans to take up the task: municipal elections are held at the end of May, then elections with plebiscitary force for the next Generalitat on 27 September, to assemble a majority in favour of a declaration of independence.

The Corsican people, too, must plan a route to independence in Europe. December's territorial election will be an important event. The examples from elsewhere in Europe should inspire us too: union and policy agreements within the national movement, pragmatism and efficiency in running public affairs when the responsibility is entrusted to us, a strong social policy to support the most disadvantaged. Let's help ourselves, and the Europe of people will help us!