

28.12.2015 Challenges ahead for the nationalist majority

A two-year mandate is short, very short. The reform approved in order to create a single authority in January 2018 gives the newly elected Corsican representatives a very unusual and very tight timetable. They will have to prove themselves without really having the time. But their roadmap is clear: consolidate the victory of 6 and 13 December, and successfully carry out the transition to a new Corsican authority so that this can be the first step towards an independent Corsica.

In two years' time, a new electoral victory will be possible, and perhaps even easier than today, because the preconditions are now in place. We have overcome the political divisions previously created by recourse to violence in the nationalist movement. We have made the very idea of a nationalist victory credible to the electorate. And we have burst apart the traditional political model, which built its domination on its stranglehold over society.

The collapse of Jean Zuccarelli shows the illusory nature of the 'clanism': it gives an appearance of strength on the back of the fatalism of large swathes of the electorate, but the moment it loses its grip on power, it vanishes from the political scene. Around 2000 the Bonapartists in Aiacciu took the same path, the path that leads these forfeited majorities to oblivion.

Our adversaries obviously still exist in ideological terms, and their combined political families, given Sunday's results, are clearly greater than our own, even though the gap is much reduced. But their political tools are outdated, the planned elimination of two departments will increase their disarray still further, and the exercise of power will bring us many voters who voted for them - from habit or obligation, and doubtless for the last time.

Above all, we need to make sure that we do not disappoint or divide, that we cultivate union and create new vehicles for political action in which everyone - Inseme, PNC, Corsica Libera and others who are set to join us - will be united and complementary. The Executive of the regional authority, the CTC, is the first tangible sign of this rapprochement. This needs to be active on the ground so that it becomes definitively credible to all. The first battle to be won is the battle against ourselves. The majority which took the oath on Thursday 17 December in Aiacciu must be served without fail by all who support it.

In terms of the management of its responsibilities, three challenges face the new Executive: consolidating the finances of the CTC, responding to the backlog of issues, particularly regarding waste, and improving the conduct of territorial policies.

A budget needs to be presented and approved quickly, but the CTC's finances are under severe strain. The financial stability announced by Paul Giacobbi at the end of his term of office is fictitious. It has been achieved at the cost of some accounting acrobatics of which an audit should take stock: carrying forward expenses from one year to the next; allowing the gap to widen between programme authorisations, the expenses authorised, and payment appropriations, what can actually be paid; the creation of 'hidden deficits' by transferring them to other areas with reduced funding. The deficits of those Agencies, Offices and organisations for which the CTC is the financial guarantor of last resort (the regional park, association of abattoirs, etc.) are not taken into account, nor even properly estimated.

The CTC's debt amounts to more than €900 per head of population in Corsica, whereas the other French regions - while it's true that they have a narrower remit, but all the same! - are running at around €250-300. These 300 million euro of debt, even discarding the toxic debts converted into fixed interest loans at the end of the term, create an annual debt servicing charge that will only begin to fall seriously after 2038, in twenty years' time.

Revitalising the finances of the CTC will therefore be a tough task, and the impact will not be immediate. We need to take advantage of the merger of CTC authorities and departments to reduce outgoings. We also need to find new income streams, which political wisdom suggests is best done at the start of a term of office. There must be a serious review of the transport tax, frozen since 1992 (25 years ago!) by French law, which undermines any idea of fiscal independence. It has seen inflation erode half of its real-terms value. However, it is only logical to build the CTC's revenues on the strength of the mainstay of the Corsican economy, tourism, which generates the bulk of its income.

The new Executive will also have to cope with high-risk issues. Waste is the first of these, and the practical, effective introduction of "virtuous" mechanisms for sorting waste at source will be a political and moral obligation in the coming two years. Only a firm political commitment on this question will reassure local people and relieve the tensions around landfill sites during the transitional period. Waste conferences are needed to find a way out of conflict and find new synergies via a consensual roadmap to be created by authorities, operators such as Syvadec, and municipal groupings, and associations.

Another high-risk area is that of transport, although the designation of Rocca as buyer of the SNCM provides an initial response to the crisis in the public ferry company. But what will happen over time? Will the new company find its equilibrium? Will it benefit from industrial peace and an armistice from the rejected competitors who are talking about starting up a rival company? The regional airline also needs restructuring. There will be no shortage of hot topics!

And that's without taking account of all the arrangements that must be made, for example for the management of European funding. This needs to be fast and effective to avoid automatic decommitment by the European Commission in eighteen months' time, or even - why not? - to access some of the performance reserve that Brussels can allocate to the best performing European regions at the half-way point.

Then there is the political agenda. The December 2017 elections for the future Corsican unitary authority will very quickly dominate all the political challenges. Our success will largely depend on the quality of the negotiations on the legislation which will shape it. The new CTC Executive must win the arbitration on territorial balance, obtain the fiscal powers which will rescue the Miot decrees from threat of disappearance, and thus make its mark on negotiations with the State. The integration of the departments into the future CTC and the disappearance of departmental councils will create an institutional framework that is very damaging to the forces of political clanism. If this system had been in place since the failed 2003 referendum on the suppression of departments, there is no doubt that either or both of Gilles Simeoni and Jean Christophe Angelini would have been elected. The general election will be held in June 2017, in the aftermath of the presidential elections. We are in a better position than ever to win this election. Why not four national deputies? And what a start that

would be for the future of the political balance!

Everyone felt this during the inaugural ceremony on 17 December. A democratic revolution has begun, and that day saw the dawn of the period that should lead Corsica to independence in Europe. This is not the time to rest on our laurels!

Aiò tutti ch'hè ora!