

25.3.2016 L'avvene semu noi!

Harnessing the energies of its people to seize the institutions necessary for its fulfilment: there in a phrase is the mission of a nationalist party. Has this been satisfactorily achieved in Corsica today? Probably not, because the Corsican people have so little time or energy to spare.

There are nationalist parties in Europe that thoroughly fulfil this essential role; for example, the Scottish National Party, which is continually advancing the cause of the Scottish people.

It is very instructive to consider the history of this old European party – founded in 1934 – which is in the process of forcing the recognition of the Scottish people and their right to self-determination onto the British and European political stage.

The SNP initially knew long periods of stagnation, during the war and in the post-war years, and it was not until 1970 that the first SNP MP was elected from the 59 constituencies in Scotland. At that time, Scotland was ruled by a government whose prime minister is directly appointed by the council of ministers in London. The SNP then led a campaign to re-open the Edinburgh parliament, which had been closed for almost three centuries since the end of Scottish independence in 1707.

Scotland gained its 'devolution' in 1998 when the British Parliament passed the Scotland Act, following a referendum in Scotland a year earlier approving the call for autonomy.

In 1999 the elected assembly of this new parliament met for the first time. The SNP sat in the opposition with a third of the seats, behind a very dominant Labour Party. The result was more or less the same four years later, in 2003. But in 2007 the nationalists made a breakthrough, and, with 32.9% of the vote, they achieved a relative majority which enabled them to take the reins of the Scottish government for the first time.

In Corsica, with our 35.4% of the vote and the arrival of Gilles Simeoni with a relative majority at the head of the Executive of the Corsican regional authority, our present political situation quite closely resembles the SNP's position a decade ago. Will we be able to expand on this initial success as the SNP has succeeded in doing in Scotland?

For over the last eight years the SNP has seen strong political growth. After a first four-year term of office made difficult by the fact that it only had a relative majority, in 2011 Alex Salmond won 45.4% of the vote and an absolute majority of seats. During these four years the SNP has been renewed and strengthened. It campaigned for a referendum on Scottish independence that David Cameron was forced to accept, given the election results and the absolute majority of seats obtained by the Scottish nationalist movement.

To win its referendum and keep 'yes' in the minority, London made extravagant promises, accompanied by threats (on pensions, for example). The 'no' vote won with 55% of the vote in September 2014. But contrary to British hopes, the SNP took up the challenge. In just a year, membership rose from 30,000 to 130,000. Alex Salmond appointed Nicola Sturgeon to the head of the

party and the Scottish institutions, and in May 2015 the SNP took 56 of the 59 Scottish seats in the British Parliament at Westminster, with a very symbolic 50% of the vote.

On 5 May, new elections will be held for the Scottish Parliament. The polls are predicting further success for the SNP. At the same time, London's decision to hold a referendum on Europe (the vote on Brexit) is boosting the call for self-determination in Scotland, where the 'REMAIN' vote is ahead in the polls, whereas the 'LEAVE' campaign is ahead in the UK as a whole. Scotland planning to remain European even if London decides to leave: what better argument for relaunching the independence campaign and demanding a new referendum?

The European Free Alliance General Meeting to be held on 1 April in Ajaccio will be an opportunity to think about how we in Corsica too can follow up on the magnificent success of 13 December in the Corsican assembly elections. The SNP president Ian Hughton, who is also an MEP, will be among the delegates present in Corsica.

Their political history should illuminate our own, and we should understand, now that we have achieved political responsibilities, how important it is for a political party to perform if it is to consolidate its achievements and prepare for the new challenges ahead. One of the EFA's mottos is "We are the future". Let us make it our own: *l'avvene semu noi!*