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Catalonia:

25N: the trimmers trimmed... and with a Trojan horse in the Parliament!

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The results of the Catalan elections of November 25, 2012 show clearly that Artur Mas he has failed in his attempt to obtain an "exceptional majority". Despite his skillful attempt to take the lead of the dynamic opened on 11S and present the election as a plebiscite that would ignore their policy of cuts, his CiU (Convergence and Union) lost 12 deputies. Much of the electorate has not fallen prey to this manipulation, identifying CiU as the party of cuts, faithful to the business world, and as a force that has never wanted a real break with the current constitutional framework.

One of the most important political facts of these elections is the deepening of the crisis of the PSC (Socialist Party of Catalonia), which with 523,333 votes (14.6%) fell to a historic low. Without a credible project at the social or national level, the PSC is the living exponent of how social democracy is going through a historic crisis motivated by its extreme subordination to financial power and its dictates.

The rise of the *españolista* [Spanish centralist] vote, with the increase in votes for the PP (People's Party) despite Rajoy's cuts and the massive growth of Cs (Ciudadanos - Citizens) shows how the development of an independence movement without social content opens the door to demagoguery and a potential danger of social polarisation by the national question in a context where trade unions and the traditional left-wing parties have lost many of their links with a fragmented and de-structured working class. Once more the need to articulate a defence of Catalan national rights and the improvement of the living conditions of the majority of the population appears as a crucial strategic issue to head off the demagoguery of C's and the PP. The social and national questions must be directly linked.

ERC (Catalan Republican Left party), one of the big winners of the day picking up votes from CiU and the PSC, will have to decide how it manages its capital and whether it still opts to be a force with aspects of subordination to CiU, and if, with the excuse of influencing the national agenda of CiU, it opts to support it in its cuts policy, which would constitute a grave political and strategic error contrary to the interests of the majority of the people of Catalonia.

ICV-EUiA (Initiative for a green Catalonia - United Left) considerably increased its number of votes, but its growth does not represent a qualitative leap. Despite the support of Alexis Tsipras, the fruit of EUiA's international relations, the tone of the ICV-EUiA campaign was loose, limited to a criticism of the cuts, and it appeared as a conventional party inserted in the traditional party system, remembered for its managerial past. The proposals for a "Catalan Syriza" launched by EUiA some months ago, which merit further discussion and should be taken seriously, have lost visibility in the electoral process. Let us hope that in this new phase its links with the social struggles continue to increase at a time where we have to join forces against austerity policies.

The eruption of the CUP-Alternativa d'Esquerres (Popular Unity Candidates - Left-Wing Alternative), which anti-capitalists should celebrate, is the great novelty in the panorama of the left. Never until now has a left force located outside of the traditional parties and with a programme of rupture achieved comparable success. The CUP-AE has entered Parliament on the basis of a campaign with a strong profile of radical anti-capitalist and democratic rupture and a wide range of support that goes far beyond the pro-independence left, including the anti-capitalist left, organized alternative municipal groups and many sectors of the social left. The great challenge now is to collectively manage this success. For the first time many social activists are committed to a political alternative. This should not be an ephemeral commitment but the beginning of a broad process of social re-politicisation and organization. The declared desire to have a "Trojan horse" of the popular classes in Parliament should govern the parliamentary work of the CUP-AE and should allow a visualization of the possibility of practicing a different kind of politics, de-professionalised and in tune with the social movements.

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The great challenge of the Catalan left is to build a force that can become a majority in society and defeat the forces of austerity that drown us every day. This alternative will only result from the confluence of many organizations and wills, in a process that we are just beginning. The crisis leads to an increasing loss of legitimacy of the political system and the major political formations. We must deepen this dynamic and break from the current party system.

The two main forces of Catalan politics, CiU and the PSC, gained between them only 45% of the votes, less than half, and if we add the PP the percentage reaches only 58%. It is increasingly clear that there is a growing rejection of the major parties that are the mainstay of the current regime.

The next parliament will be marked by instability, with increasing attacks by the state and the Spanish political-media apparatus against the sovereignty referendum, with a deepening of the economic crisis and an almost certain full bailout for Spain. The opposition to the cuts that Mas and Rajoy are preparing for the future should begin now, as well as the requirement that the sovereignty referendum, as a democratic act, be held as soon as possible and that there are no maneuvers on the part of Mas to put it off. Our challenge is to relaunch the social mobilization and extend no truce to the new CiU government.