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Catalonia

Permanent confusion or strategic re-orientation?

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Last October we saw the collapse of the various projects for change put forward in Catalan society and politics since 2011 and 2012. Specifically this means the perspectives set out by the 15 May movement (Indignados) and its subsequent political currents, Catalunya en Comu and Podem or the pro-independence forces. A major reason for the success of both currents resided in their capacity to offer a project of rapid and easy change.

Sometimes simplifying reality can be necessary to encourage a certain mobilisation. The problem arises when the facts brutally produce a scenario that is much tougher than foreseen. This is when the long term is imposed over the short term. The challenge for them is then to maintain the motivation and mobilisation of their own base while the strategic perspective becomes more complicated.

None of the following perspectives are today credible as achievable projects:

- ‘easy’ independence through repealing each law blocking independence in turn supported by PdeCat, ERC and the ANC (Puigdemont is the leader of PdeCat)
- by converting themselves into the sincere and combative guarantors of the decisive break, pushing the movement to its limits expressed by the CUP (radical left wing of independence movement)
- the articulation of a new majority for change in the whole of the Spanish State put forward by Catalunya en Comu/Podem (currents led by Ada Colau and Podemos)

Each project does indeed function as legitimate proposals that express particular political areas. Given their internal collapse, the respective founding projects have been transformed into weak charades.

October ended in a defeat that was never really acknowledged. A defeat that is perhaps temporary, not necessarily definitive but a defeat at the end of the day. A defeat not just of the independence movement but also for the Comunes movement (grouped around the Mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau) for inverse reasons – the lack of active, concrete political activity in relation to the proces (process – the mainstream independence project). We have, all of us, to take this on board and understand it as this is a condition for the strategic recovery of the struggle. This resurgence does not easily fit in with all the urgent parliamentary manoeuvres and the climate of permanent electoral competition.

The legitimisation of Puigdemont exemplified at the last moment in the designation of Torra as the Catalan president has as much symbolic power as it is empty strategically but it reflects the consolidation of the right wing leadership within the independent movement. This implies the re-assertion of political premises that have outlived their usefulness and are even worsened by the very profile of the newly elected president. The ERC intends to explore new approaches but runs the risk of just capitulating in a disordered way.

The CUP can stick to its honest voluntarism which does not question the fundamental limits of the independence movement expressed in the 21st December events. Neither, it seems, does it particularly look to win support from the social base of the non-independence left.

On the other hand the Comunes movement is stuck in a process of ‘eurocommunication’ which brings them closer to the legacy of the Moncloa Pact and the Tripartido (the famous deal between the right and the left that managed the post Franco transition) than to the values of the 15M movement.

Permanent confusion or strategic re-orientation?

It is not easy to sketch out a road that leads to a real break with the system in the context of the existing relationship of forces and which could correct the inherent weaknesses of the process as well as overcoming the divergence between the future proposed by the independence movement and that envisaged by the 15M movement. However the first step is to be conscious of the necessity of working at this. Searching for a new way forward begins by recognising the present one is blocked. .

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