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**The Girondists have returned: After 200
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The federal democracy is the winner**

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THE GIRONDISTS HAVE RETURNED:
AFTER 200 YEARS OF CENTRALIST JACOBINIC POWER
THE FEDERAL DEMOCRACY IS THE WINNER

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There is a positive relationship between the European process of integration and the conversion of the nation States to federal or quasi-federal national bodies. The first ones to understand this were the moderate regionalists of Scotland, Wales, Britain, the Basque Country and Catalonia. This is the reason why they became loyal devotees of the EC.

Sweden had to reach the EC's doorstep in order to undergo the awakening of regionalism. At this very moment, the Regions of Stockholm, Sodermanland, Malmohus, Gavleborgs and Uppsala are already members of the Assembly of European Regions through their deputations. The AER - Assembly of European Regions - is an umbrella organization for 235 Regions, mainly of the EC but also of non-communitarian countries, as for instance Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria.

Region means, according to AER, a territorial and administrative whole, right below the national level and endowed with a certain degree of political autonomy and an assembly elected by the people. Examples of these Regions are the German Lander, the Spanish autonomous communities and the Swedish länen.

The AER was founded in 1985 in order to provide Regions with a united and qualified voice as regards the EC, the European Council and the ECSC. The principal aims of the AER include the disposition to work on the conversion of all European States to decentralized States (regionalized) or complex States and to introduce the Regions into the EC decision-making process. In the last analysis, the AER wants Regions to be recognized as the third legitimately administrating level of the EC/EU according to the principle of subsidiarity. The AER had an important halfvictory at the moment when the Community countries decided in Maastricht the creation of a Committee of the Regions.

The AER's activities are directed by a Bureau composed by 40 members and a defined number of commissions: encouraging regionalism, the relations with the EC, the Council of Europe, and so on. A special committee is aiming for a decentralized solidarity with the Regions of the Third World.

In a period of a few years ARE succeeded to start modelling politically the European regionalism. The only existence of the AER as a forum has achieved that houndreds of regional politicians, civil servants and experts in active service from all over Europe have had the opportunity of interchanging their ideas and experiences. Latest in Stockholm, during the month of May when the the AER's Catalan President, Jordi Pujol, concluded the conference "A Europe of Regions", organized by the Council of the Valley of Malar and the Deputation of Stockholm. President Pujol, who also is the President of the Catalan autonomous government, is one of the few regionalists who has been in prison because of his opinions. That occurred during the Franco period.

The most remarcable is -thinking about the heterogeneous character of the Regions- how easy it was to agree on the focusing, the instruments and the aims. Hence, with no overstatement, it can be stated that thanks to the AER, European regionalism is stronger than ever. Exactly 200 years after the dissolution of the first regionalists -I am now thinking about the French Girondists, being excluded from the power in 1793 and later executed by the Jacobins-, the regional focusing has returned - and with its full strength.

The modern nation State is - as it is well known - the son of the French Revolution. Less known is though that its homogenous and centralist form is the result of the struggle between the two main revolutionary factions, the Jacobins and the Girondists. The Girondists represented the provincial radical bourgeoisie, championing a different kind of State than the one of Robespierre and Saint-Just, extremists Jacobins. Instead of an intensely centralized State Girondists wanted a federal one, where liberty was not restricted to individual persons but broadened to the territories also.

It is very important to recall this in order to point out that the Jacobinic pattern reigning until now is not the only possible one.

On the other hand, today's regionalism is not the same as the one of former times. Regionalists are not nostalgic people thinking about the past. On the contrary, in northern Europe they are discussing the way of endowing the Regions with attractive economical power, how to liberate their driving force of creativity and to assure their future development in an independent way and on their own. It is a "functional~' regionalism. Somewhere else in Europe regionalists still consider strongly the questions of identity. But the functional perspective is gaining ground there.

Of course. Also, when an active and identifying regionalism recovers its the autonomy - as it is the case of the Italian, the French and especially the Spanish Regions - the perspective changes from activity to functionality.

Identity regionalists have to face the problem of arising a working and rather a better working body than the former vocational training as it is for their colleagues in the North.

The unavoidable difficulties with the "other" two bodies - the State and the EC - have also led the regional elites to consider broader political contexts, a phenomenon called by researchers the universalizing of the Region" by researchers. For instance, they have understood the convenience of negotiating with the Community the very questions of its competence. Or to make up alliances with other interested Regions and further on with those small States (for instance the northerner ones) which are paying special attention to their identity and which, as regards the

cultural and linguistic domains, are at the very same level as the greater Regions of identity.

Regionalists have started to think and to act in a European way, although until now they have only done it provincially. In fact, we are now evidencing the making up of a neo-regionalism, which combines and transcends -thanks to the recently achieved communitarian perspective- the two former patterns of regionalism: the identity and the functioning and both of them with the vision of the voluntarily united Europe. The political intelligence advises that this neo-regionalism should characterize itself as "Neo-Girondist", well understood that this denomination:

1. points up that people are on the ground of the radical and pluralist liberal philosophy
2. shows clearly that the aim is not the splitting up of the nation States but the substitution of the Jacobinic State-pattern by a Girondist one. In order to clear out the - neverthelesscomprehensible mistrusts of the central leaders.

The reference to the Gironde furnishes furthermore traditions, myths and martyrs, all of them being elements of great value for politics and maybe even more for such a sensible and presentable movement -avoiding to call it colorless- as is the neo-regionalist.

Most of people trying to understand the renaissance of the Regions do connect it with factors of economical and structural nature. People talk about the internationalization of the economy, the growing regional competence as regards the mobile productivity factors, the technological revolution, the horizontal networks, the cybernetics society, and so forth. All of these factors are certainly important as they are positive for the Region's sake: they deprive the State élites from their former information monopoly, they allow the emergence of regional élites with a higher preparation and with a knowledge of languages and they force the Regions to wake up and become active. However they do not explain the core of the question, which is: why do nation States allow Regions to become political protagonists again ?

As always, we have to quit the bottom of the pyramid and climb up to the top for really to understand what is happening. From there you can see that behind "the internationalization of the economy", "the technological revolution", "the networks", etc. you have the NATO, the WEU, the EC, the Long Peace and the NeoImperial Project -the EU- in (slow) gestation. Before I go on, I would like to stick up for the idea of the Empire.

I have lived long enough in Sweden to know that my arguing starts to be horribly popish and Catholic. And that is really what it is. However -and this is the truth- in the Mediterranean area people still remember that behind the closed doors of Rome you had Collective Safety, Order, Tolerance, Law and Right. With this history as a background I can now see how the Long Peace of the postwar and the nascent European Empire substitute the old-aged logical politics of the Unfortunated Period under the Fighting Kingdoms with a new one: the one of the scarce conflictive cooperation which slowly but surely excludes all those former systems that unavoidably led Kingdoms and Dukedoms against each other. This answers, I think, the question of why the nation States, i.e. the Kingdoms, can accept (probably, without any applause) the return of the Great Dukedoms, in other words, the Regions.

In fact, Peace deprives Kingdoms of their reasons to oppress their Great Dukedoms. From the time of the Fronde, the rebellious movements against the despotism of Cardinal Mazarin, Kingdoms have been mistrusting their Dukedoms -and specially the strategically very sensible Border Dukedoms- to go over to the extrawalls enemy in exchange for (generally) the perfidious promise of a freer position under its dominion.

Peace eliminates all basis of these fears. When Kingdoms loose their imperious reasons of fear and mistrust towards their Dukedoms they can also afford themselves to confer them a certain margin of action. As time goes on Kingdoms do discover that it is much better for the inner coexistence and the functioning that the different parts feel themselves respected, comfortable and fittable in the Totality. Tolerance towards Dukedoms might increase. Nevertheless always conditioning the latters to be conscious of their place inside the neo-imperial architecture (UE) and to follow a wise behaviour (the pattern

would be the commercial microdiplomacy of the old-time Phoenicians. Or -why not- the one of nowadays Catalonia).

On the other hand: In the course of time, the process of imperial unification eliminates the Kingdoms' tools to oppress their Dukedoms. In the well-informed, tolerant and democratically built Empire Law and Justice are governing. The imperial constitution protects the individual and collective rights and liberties of all citizen. When the Dukedoms are sure that their Autonomy is, in the long run, guaranteed by the Empire's operative forces of intervention, they loose all their motives to consider the Micro-Jacobinic alternative (desperate and dangerous) of trying to assure their very own safety by creating a micro State for themselves.

When Kingdoms do understand that there is no longer any reason to worry about getting "Balkanized" they can afford themselves to be even more generous with their Dukedoms. Once the infernal logic of the Fighting Kingdoms period disappears, the Empire, the Kingdoms and the Great Dukedoms can set up a democratic cooperation without any problem of antagonistic nature.

Finally the renaissance of Regions is to be considered in the view of the needs of the EC/UE of credible arguments against those who state that the EC only means a higher stage of central power. With an active support as concerns the process of regionalization, Brussels can achieve the institutions to be closer to the citizens and thus to create larger domains for cultural and linguistic diversity than the Kingdoms ever were able to.

The European integration has allowed the Regions' renaissance. Now it is up to the Regions to go further on. And mainly this should be done in two different ways: with the contribution of a perception -the one of the diverse Europe endowed with regional autonomy- which on the solid ground of the (catholic) principle of subsidiarity shall render more comprehensible and attractive the idea of the Empire. But also with the help of building practical bridges of cooperation above the Demolished (State) Walls. That is exactly what the Regions have been doing for a long time. The most original initiatives as regards the interregional collaboration are the Euroregions; these are made up by the regional microdiplomacies and crossing most of the States' frontiers. Until now with the only active support of the Council of

Europe and the bordering northerner States (the new Hanseatic League, the Regions of the Barents Sea, and so forth).

President Jordi Pujol has expressed this question as follows:

" States have created the skeleton of Europe - now the time has come for the Regions to provide it with flesh and blood".

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