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EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

The European elections, which took place last Sunday, May 26th, were held for the purpose of electing 751 members who, over the next five years, will represent the European Union's 28 member countries in the European Parliament. Each country elects a number of representatives proportionate to the total number of its citizens. A few countries held the election several days earlier, including the United Kingdom, which continues to be part of the European Union. These countries believe that it is more democratic to hold elections on a weekday instead of on a Sunday.

Although these elections don't directly affect the governments of European countries, their results do have a significant political impact in these countries by providing a clear indication of the level of approval for the current governments. In some instances, as was recently the case in Greece, the result of the European election leads to a recognition of the inevitable fall of a current government which will then incite a call for new elections.

Many observers and political analysts had predicted that the results of this election would have disastrous consequences for the future of the European Union. Along with the inevitable Brexit, this election was expected to be a clear predictor of the diminishing role of the European Union as an important multinational protagonist on par with the United States, Russia and China. This prediction was based on the growth of anti-union movements which had turned into governments in Italy, Hungary and Poland. In many countries the advancement of these movements coincides with the directives proposed by North America's President Trump, and his ideologues.

According to such predictions the new European parliamentary election would result in the consolidation of a majority group of euro-skeptics. This would mean an end to the long standing domination of a European Parliament wielded by center and right wing pro-European parties, a domination which had been far removed from the extreme political left and right within European politics.

Fortunately, none of that happened this last Sunday. Contrary to all these predictions, a very small political force gained significant footing almost doubling its number of elected representatives. This force consists of parties seeking to protect the environment in the belief that their safeguarding efforts are crucial, not only to the future of Europe, but to the future of the entire planet.

The result of the election had not been predicted, or even imagined, by the political scientists. But it can be explained by the appearance on the scene of many young European voters who had not participated in these elections up until now. These young students, who had been demonstrating in many capital cities on Friday afternoons, willingly missing class in order to crowd the streets and parks with picket signs demanding that governments take action in defense of the common good, emerged as an electoral force.

This thing which appeared to be a game played by rich children imitating that Swedish teenager, Greta Thunberg, awakened the commitment of many older citizens to the parties that had been championing this cause in national elections with little success up until now. From now on, parties promoting the protection of the environment will be a visible and active force in the decision making process of the European Parliament.

Socialism and social democracy have not disappeared from the European Parliament. The undermining of these parties, which is undeniable in Germany, may be compensated by their advancement in Spain and the Netherlands, and by a timid reaction seen in France where they will rise from the ashes in which they'll find themselves after Hollande's presidency.

We can't ignore the fact that the party of the current president, Emmanuel Macron, got fewer votes than the extreme right wing party of Marine Le Pen. The difference was small, but it's significant because Macron will have to do something quite difficult in the two years he has left before he's up for re-election.

The European Union has been strengthened by this election despite the fact that Brexit is still being settled, or not, depending on what the British parliament determines during these next few weeks.