

'To be faithful to a tradition means to be faithful to its flame and not its ashes.'

Jean Jaurès

The Flame, Not the Ashes

Lionel Jospin

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Introduction

by Henry McCubbin

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During his short summer tour of Central and Southern America, Prime Minister Blair is quoted as saying in Brazil that France is an obstacle to the reform of the European Union. It is becoming a habit of our great leader to make these pronouncements from afar, six thousand miles away in this case. As the French see it, they are refusing to surrender totally the democratic rights of their people to unbridled, free-market globalisation.

What is it about the French that so annoys our Prime Minister? I would suggest it is the policy of his French counterpart and the French Socialist Party. In Lionel Jospin's speech on European Union reform of 28th May 2001, which is printed here, he declares 'We want Europe to be more than just one more market in a sea of globalisation. There is such a thing as a European *art de vivre*, a specific way of doing things, of defending freedoms, of fighting inequality and discrimination, of organising and handling labour relations, of ensuring access to education and health care. Social welfare rights have been won, trade union rights and the right to a free education.'

On a European response to globalisation he says, 'We must finally take action to stop any behaviour detrimental to the general European interest. Combating "tax dumping" is one immediate priority; it is not acceptable for certain member States to practise unfair tax competition in order to attract international investment and offshore headquarters of European groups.'

And on worker's rights, 'Europe cannot be merely a free trade zone. Working conditions must be harmonised upwards. We must reduce job insecurity and fight discrimination. Let us set the stage for a social dialogue with the trade unions at the European level... there must be a special focus on the provision of information to employees and their involvement in the life of companies, as well as on layoffs, the struggle against job insecurity and wage policies.'

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On defending public services against privatisation, the French Prime Minister says, 'To guarantee equality of citizens, and the general interest, Europeans need strong and efficient public services. I am in favour of a European Directive defining the legal framework that can consolidate, under State responsibility, the role played by public services in Europe. Europe denounced the Multilateral Agreement on Investment and, within the World Trade Organisation, defended the specificity of cultural creative work and cultural works. To prevent private sector interests from stifling the general interest, to prevent short-term profit seeking to ignore social justice and damaging the environment, "rules of the game" must be defined. Regulation fosters the expansion of international trade. Trade liberalisation ought not to undermine public services, cultural diversity, social progress or food security.' Of course, the Multilateral Agreement on Investment was vigorously supported by Britain's New Labour Government.

In his speech, Jospin has provided us with some clear policy prescriptions. His clarity of purpose contrasts with that of Prime Minister Blair. In his most recent contribution to the 2001 Labour Party Conference, in the section of the speech that dwelt on European policy, Blair revealed his ideology and, by association, that of his New Labour followers. I only hope that they have read his speech carefully. My many years working in television taught me to experience a speech live for the theatre, but read the text for the meaning. To start with, there is the astonishing admission for a Prime Minister who declared at the Amsterdam Council that Britain was leading Europe that 'For 50 years Britain has, uncharacteristically, followed not lead Europe.' Putting aside the arrogance of the assumption that it was in the character of things that Britain was in the lead, it was surely a gross admission of the failure of his own European policy. Perhaps Mr Blair thought that by winning the bicycle ride photo-opportunity for Prime Ministers in Amsterdam, he had taken the prize.

The British Prime Minister also used the European section of his speech to declare his personal ideological commitment to 'community'. Only New Labour could put a word, which has been used in so many different and sometimes contradictory ways, at the

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centre of its ideology. It fits with Anthony Giddens's search for the Holy Grail of the Third Way that concluded with an appeal for us to embrace what I can only describe as cuddly capitalism. Perhaps Blair feels that, because he attends meetings of heads of states which give rise to interpersonal relationships, that there is indeed a community, as many would understand it. However, it is the capacity of the word to flip from being descriptive in itself to being normative and requiring much further elucidation which allows Blair to avoid addressing the content and contradictions of the relationships within his imagined community.

Hence his failure to grasp the reasons behind opposition to globalisation as at present constructed. In his Conference speech Blair said, 'Today our idea of society is shaped around a mutual responsibility: a deal, an agreement between citizens, not a one way gift, from the well-off to the dependent.' Has he never asked himself why the Third World has a debt crisis? Has he never understood that the logic of capitalism requires that it is the poor who have to transfer what little they have to the rich and powerful? No longer are the mill owners forced to confront their workers in the same local community. It is the body of the market that is now invisible. Its hand is shrouded in the iron glove of World Trade Organisation regulations, as is all too manifest in mining communities, farming communities, and in the collective provision of health, education and transport.

Jospin has got the message from the masses on the other side of the barricades at Genoa, and he is aware of the call of Keir Hardie's comrade and founder of the French Socialist Party, Jean Jaurès: 'To be faithful to a tradition means to be faithful to its flame and not its ashes'. With this in mind, is Blair nothing more than a travelling salesman for free market capitalists, his new paymasters? If so, why, then, is he still leader of the British Labour Party?

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The Flame, Not the Ashes

by Lionel Jospin

'To be faithful to a tradition means to be faithful to its flame and not its ashes.'

Jean Jaurès

The French Prime Minister gave this address on 28 May 2001.

Europe has come into being during the last 50 years. It lives in peace, democracy prevails, our way of life appeals.

Just recently, the European Union has made further progress. Growth has resumed. Unemployment is ebbing. In less than eight months from now, the euro will be a concrete reality for 300 million European citizens. A European defence is being established. The Union is reasserting its social dimension. It is acquiring the instruments needed to protect health and the environment. The French government is proud of having contributed to these changes.

Yet peoples and some policy-makers are feeling a certain disenchantment and perplexity. And it is true that the future of Europe raises legitimate questions. Does Europe not run the risk of falling apart if it enlarges to the borders of the continent? How can Europe open up to globalisation without diluting its identity? To reform its institutions, should it reduce the role of Nation States? How can the citizens of Europe be given a sense of ownership and involvement in Europe?

Attentive to these questions, Heads of State and Government meeting in Nice last year decided to undertake an in-depth review of the future of an enlarged Union. European citizens are called on to take part in it. We have decided to get this debate under way in France. My remarks are a part of that process. This is my contribution, as a policy-maker, to the discussion now beginning.

I am French. I feel European. I want a Europe which asserts its identity, is more responsive to the goals of its peoples, and plays an

exemplary role in the world. This is why the debate must be about more than institutions and institutional reform. Europe is first and foremost a political undertaking, it is 'content' first and 'framework' only second. Europe is made up not merely of regulations, directives and disputes. It is first and foremost a work of the mind, a social model, a world view. The European idea as part of reality – that is what counts, as far as I am concerned. The Europe that I love, that I and countless others want to achieve, has a *social programme* (I), a *world view* (II), and a *political architecture* (III).

I

Europe must proclaim a social programme

Until recently, the primary focus of European endeavour was on setting up Economic and Monetary Union. That brought us real benefits. But now we must broaden our perspective if we want Europe to be more than just one more market in a sea of globalisation. Europe is, after all, more than a market. It bears within it a social model, the result of its history, which is taking shape in the ever closer ties being forged among European peoples. There is such a thing as a European *art de vivre*, a specific way of doing things, of defending freedoms, of fighting inequality and discrimination, of organising and handling labour relations, of ensuring access to education and health care, a European pace. Each of our countries has its own traditions and rules but together these make up a common whole.

This original social model should now be enshrined in the treaties and given practical expression in our policies. The justification for Europe is its difference. Let us remember that Europe is a civilisation that is at one and the same time a territory, a shared history, a unified economy, a human society, and a variety of cultures which together form one culture.

This civilisation is based on a community of values

Foremost among them are democracy and human rights. The 'Founding Fathers' called for a political Europe, and then built it, in order to deliver our continent from the empire-building and murderous totalitarianism which bloodied Europe in the 20th

century. Thanks to them, Europe is now a land of peace. Yesterday's enemies have reconciled. Disunity has given way to the quest for ever greater union. Of all the regions in the world, it is in Europe that the rule of law is best implemented. Europe is the only political entity in which the death penalty no longer exists. It is the land where respect for the human person has reached its pinnacle. Europe is called upon to make this message heard more broadly.

Europe refuses to divorce economic prosperity from social progress. This refusal enabled it to recover from the wars that had left it in ruins. Despite the remaining inequalities, it has today achieved a very high level of economic development. Social rights have been won – social welfare rights, trade union rights, the right to a free education.

To proclaim these values we provided the Union with a *Charter of Fundamental Rights*. The full set of principles which underpins European civilisation is enshrined in the Charter – the dignity and integrity of the human person, freedoms and solidarity, equality, citizenship and justice, as well as new rights such as those which relate to the preservation of our natural heritage. This Charter deserves to be considered the keystone of the European edifice. I hope it will be an integral part of the pact uniting the nations of Europe and constituting a community of destiny among Europeans.

This community of destiny should better inspire our common policies

Europe needs more economic solidarity. The single currency has now given us a much-appreciated stability. For the last two years, the euro has fulfilled its purpose as a common *shield* against international financial crises and competitive devaluations. To balance the structure of the Union, we now need *economic government* of the euro zone. Co-ordination of economic policies must be considerably enhanced. I propose that each member State consult its counterparts and give careful consideration to their recommendations before taking decisions which have a major impact on the zone as a whole. Let us set up a short-term economic action fund, to which each State would be eligible, to support any member country suffering from the effects of world economic turbulence. We must finally take action to stop any behaviour detrimental to the general European interest. Combating

tax dumping is one immediate priority; it is not acceptable for certain member States to practise unfair tax competition in order to attract international investment and the offshore headquarters of European groups. Ultimately, the corporate tax system as a whole will have to be harmonised.

Economic cohesion must serve social solidarity. This is what citizens are calling for. Europe cannot be merely a free trade zone. For the last four years, the French government has fought to give a new direction to the construction of Europe, focusing it more on growth and employment. Major strides were made with the adoption of the European Social Agenda. These goals must produce concrete results for all categories of workers. Working conditions must be harmonised upwards. We must reduce job insecurity and fight discrimination. Let us set the stage for a social dialogue with the trade unions at European level. A genuine body of European social law, establishing ambitious common standards, must be put in place and there must be a special focus on the provision of information to employees and their involvement in the life of companies, as well as about layoffs, the struggle against job insecurity and wage policies. We must aim for a European *social treaty*.

Similarly, to guarantee equality of citizens, solidarity among them and the general interest, Europeans ***need strong and efficient public services***. I am in favour of a European Directive defining the legal framework which can consolidate, under State responsibility, the role played by public services in Europe.

To promote employment, Europe must have strong industrial goals. Major achievements are possible with European integration – in the past, Ariane and Airbus; today, EADS in civil aircraft and, in the military sphere, the heavy transport aircraft project. These partnerships are important for our industries. They offer the resources needed for investment, lend industry the critical size needed on the world market, and make it possible to avoid the exclusive predominance, in crucial sectors, of the United States.

In the same spirit, Europe must assert itself as the continent of science and innovation. Knowledge is part of the European identity. But fragmentation of European research into insufficiently co-ordinated national endeavours reduces its efficiency. A true European

Research Area must be set up as a matter of urgency in such important fields as health and the environment, pooling its efforts as it did in space with the European Space Agency.

The unity of Europe requires stronger rights and protections for all Europeans

We must build a Common Law Area, for which the Charter of Fundamental Rights can serve as a reference. Under certain circumstances, it should be possible for the citizen to go directly to the European Court of Justice. We must harmonise the various national substantive and procedural rules. To start with, effective mutual recognition of court rulings and the creation of a court of arbitration to handle conflicts of national law would constitute major strides forward. I am thinking in particular of the thorny issue of divorce cases involving people of two different nationalities.

One of the fundamental rights of the citizen is security. Europe must help to guarantee it.

This involves, first, fighting crime. Because organised crime recognises no borders – a particularly obvious fact when it comes to money laundering, drug trafficking and all contemporary forms of trafficking in human beings – it should be fought at the European level. A number of our partners have proposed the creation of an integrated European police force. I for my part support the idea. I propose the establishment of an operational criminal police force centred on Europol. Let us entrust to a specific police force the task of protecting the external borders of the Union and its international airports.

The security of Europeans also requires the establishment of a true European Judicial Area based on enhanced co-operation among judges and ongoing harmonisation of criminal law in member States, which could ultimately lead to the creation of a European public prosecutor's office. It would be in charge of co-ordinating prosecution and government legal action at European level and would in particular facilitate the execution of letters rogatory throughout the Union.

Food safety is another requirement. Recent crises, particularly the

'mad cow' crisis, have demonstrated the threat to consumers from excessive production policies. We must collectively learn one urgent lesson: the citizen is also a consumer who must be better protected. Let us introduce in the Union the concept of the European consumer, based on the precautionary principle, full disclosure of information, and traceability of products '*from the pitchfork to the fork*'. I also propose, in the field of health care, the creation of a public health monitoring and early warning system to enable the authorities to respond immediately to a crisis when it starts.

In a world now globalised, our Europe cannot sit back as an island of relative prosperity and stability. To selfishly turn inward would be to fall victim to illusion and denial. Europe offers a model, a model open to the world and particularly to the Mediterranean and its rim. Europe is called upon to point globalisation in the direction of law and justice.

II

Europe must help chart the course for the world

I want a strong Europe which shoulders its full responsibility in the redefinition of the world order and which acquires the means to convey its message of peace, solidarity and pluralism.

On behalf of this pluralism, Europe must foster cultural diversity

One of the most valuable parts of mankind's heritage is its diversity of cultures. And that today is under threat. The market drives uniformity of consumption patterns and concentration of cultural industries. Of course, certain forms of expression – I am thinking here especially of film – have taken on an industrial dimension. But we must protect ourselves, collectively, from the threat of uniformity and the invasion of cultural products from a single source. This is a crucial issue for civilisation. This involves a struggle for European cultures of course, but also for all other cultures. This is a struggle waged by Europe at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, when Europe denounces the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, and within the World Trade Organisation, when Europe defends the specificity of cultural creative work and cultural

works. Europe must continue to act along these lines.

Europe is conscious of this issue because it harbours a great diversity of cultures. We are the heirs to these cultures in all their facets – religion, philosophy, literature, music and the visual arts – and all their expressions. They are our common heritage. For us as Europeans, culture is not, therefore, merchandise. It is first and foremost a part of our identity.

To sustain this identity, Europe must enable everyone to share this heritage. We must do more to foster mobility of students, artists and scientists. Ten years from now, it should be possible for young Europeans to do part of their studies in a Union country different from their own. Let us make the teaching of at least two European languages from a very early age the rule. Everything must be done – especially in schools – to give our children an awareness of the fact that their national heritage is part of an even broader European heritage.

Because culture is a living thing, it is incumbent on Europe to foster creative work. There must be a common policy specifically designed for culture and not dominated by the rules of competition and the internal market. In this spirit I propose the establishment, at European level, of procedures to support creative film, audio-visual and information technology work and European studios. At a time when digital facilities are being introduced in all of our countries, Europe should have its own television channel patterned on the achievements of Art. To my mind, Europe's commitment to cultural diversity exemplifies our vision of an open, international society committed to solidarity.

**Taking this approach, Europe is called upon to
defend peace and freedom in the world**

In the face of the temptation to engage in unilateralism – that is, the 'might is right' approach, or excessively simple viewpoints – Europe must be a factor of equilibrium in international relations. It does not want to be a dominant power but it can use its power to serve its values.

Europe can make its voice heard thanks to a common foreign

policy. Let us deepen our 'common strategies' in areas of the world where our interests are at stake. Let us strengthen the role of the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy. Let us see to it that the diplomacy of each of our nations is consistent with the definition of a policy common to us all. Let us enhance the influence, throughout the world, of an engaged and active Europe. Unified external representation of the euro zone by an elected chairman of the Eurogroup will help meet that goal. Let us introduce it as soon as possible. Additionally, the merger of the European consular networks abroad will enable 'European Centres' to serve European expatriates all over the world. These centres will give them a heightened sense of European citizenship.

To ensure security and also contribute to peacekeeping in the world, Europe needs a common defence. Its foundations have been laid. Thanks to recent decisions taken during the French Presidency of the Union, Europe is now acquiring a rapid reaction force within a permanent political and military institutional structure. The Union now needs a comprehensive doctrine on intervention and use of this force. The priority today is to strengthen a conflict prevention policy as the means of ensuring long-term security. At the same time, Europe must define its long-term defence strategy in line with its own interests and in compliance with its alliances. This means, in particular, that it must have a consistent position on the controversial missile shield initiative taken by the United States.

Beyond diplomatic and security issues, the economy and the trading system must be organised in a more equitable, more efficient manner.

Europe must help devise the regulation which the world needs

To prevent private-sector interests from stifling the general interest, to prevent short-term profit-seeking from ignoring social justice and damaging the environment, 'rules of the game' must be defined. The European Union can play a major role in devising regulations and act to foster three priorities.

The world economy must be given a stable framework. Recent economic and financial crises have shown that public and private sector

rules are needed to make the market economy work properly. Over the last three years, much has been accomplished based on lessons learned from these crises, but much also remains to be done, especially in the field of international financial regulation. Let us strengthen the role of the Bretton Woods institutions in managing and preventing crises. Let us make them more open and politically accountable. As the largest shareholder in these institutions, the European Union must make its voice heard. Let us think about how the countries of the euro zone can co-ordinate or even unify their representation in these institutions. Let us fight financial crime and unfair tax competition; the hesitation of the new American administration should not be a reason to call into question the work of the international financial action task force and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Europe will continue to assert its positions in favour of reforming the international financial architecture.

We want fair trade. Europe fought for the creation of the World Trade Organisation because that organisation handles trade disputes with objective procedures and thus protects us from unilateralism. Regulation fosters the expansion of international trade. Europe should make a case within the World Trade Organisation for a trade policy which establishes clear-cut limits. Trade liberalisation ought not to undermine public services, cultural diversity, social progress or food security. Europe must increase its solidarity toward developing countries to achieve a reduction in poverty. The South needs Europe. Europe will fight to help these countries take their rightful place in world trade. It will contribute to lightening the burden of debt which constitutes the main obstacle to their development.

The only development is sustainable development. The planet is under threat. We are accountable to future generations. Europe, historically an industrial heartland, a region having a high population density and poorly endowed with raw materials, has learned from the two oil shocks that the Earth is not an inexhaustible inventory of natural resources. This is perhaps why Europe is playing a leading role in the struggle for sustainable development, at a time when the United States appears to be evading its responsibilities. It is up to Europe to set an example: sustainable development is now a priority in the construction of the community. Nearly ten years after the Rio

Declaration, we must go further. Europe, which spearheads the creation of a world environment authority as proposed by my government, should have an ambitious policy aimed at devising and promoting technologies which respect the environment.

Europe needs institutions worthy of its societal goals and its world view. This is where the institutional debate becomes fully relevant.

III

A political Europe requires in-depth reform

A debate is under way on the future of the Union. Conclusions are to be drawn in 2004, and we also know that they will require unanimous agreement. Therefore a consensus will have to be found among the Fifteen. We must, of course, take account of the concerns of the candidate countries. Most of them have had the benefit of democratic institutions and independence for only a decade. It is absolutely necessary that they be involved in our debate.

Interesting contributions have already been put forward. Institutional 'models' have been proposed. In Germany, for instance, the SPD has suggested a structure for Europe inspired in large part by the German political system. Other proposals have been and will be made. Ultimately, at the end of the process, a compromise acceptable to all will have to be sought. This is why we cannot suggest institutional structures or propose solutions without first thinking about the political meaning which we wish to give to Europe. In particular, the discussion cannot avoid focusing on the role of nations within the European entity.

I will give my view, in that spirit. I do not separate France from Europe. Like many other ardent Europeans, I want Europe but my Nation remains important to me. My preferred policy would consist in building Europe without unbuilding France or any of the other European nations.

Thus, I support the excellent idea of a *'Federation of Nation States'*

'Federation' – a word which appears simple and appeals by its coherence, but which in fact has a great variety of meanings. For some the term means a European executive branch deriving its legitimacy

solely from the European Parliament. That executive branch would have exclusive jurisdiction in matters of diplomacy and defence. In the new entity, today's States would have the status of the Länder in Germany and States in the United States. France, and indeed other European nations, could not accept that status or that interpretation of 'federation'.

If, on the other hand, 'federation' is taken to mean a gradual controlled process of sharing competences or transferring competences to the Union level, then the term refers to the 'federation of Nation States', the term coined by Jacques Delors. This is a concept which I fully support. From the legal point of view it may seem ambiguous. But I believe it is politically sound, because Europe is an original political structure, a unique precipitate of an indissoluble mixture of two different elements: the federalist ideal and the reality of European Nation States.

This is why the concept of a 'federation of Nation States' so aptly reflects the constituent tension which underpins the European Union. There are nations, strong, vibrant nations for which identity is important, which constitute the wealth of our continent. And then there is also the determination of these nations to unite, to build an entity, together, which will make each constituent part stronger. There is history on the one hand, marked by national rivalries and selfishness, and, on the other hand, the programme focused on harmony and alliance. Very strong federative forces exist already – the primacy of European law sanctioned by the Court of Justice, an independent Commission, the European Parliament elected by universal suffrage, the single market and the single currency. But inter-governmental co-operation still plays an important role and will remain indispensable.

If we want to move towards such a federation, we must clarify the respective competences of the Union and the States. This must be done in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. The exercise should provide an opportunity to simplify the treaties which have become indecipherable as a result of successive negotiations and the gradual accretion of common policies.

This clarification should not call shared competences into question. These foster synergies between State and Union activities. One

example is training, education and culture. These areas remain within the primary competence of States; but for the benefit of all, they are also subject to common policies and community programmes which should be further expanded in future.

A fortiori we should reject the re-nationalisation of policies which have so far been devised and conducted at Union level. It would be odd to suggest taking further steps in the direction of stronger European integration and then start by moving backwards toward a national focus. I am thinking here in particular of structural funds. As for the common agricultural policy, it should remain at European level but be redirected. While preserving the competitiveness of our agriculture, we must help farmers to produce better to enable them to meet the demand for food quality and safety. The common agricultural policy must encourage more balanced development of rural areas, preserving the diversity of our traditional rural life and agricultural practices.

But, on the other hand, in certain areas the 'vertical' division of competences should be better implemented. The idea would be for the general framework of principles and objectives to be defined at European level, while political and technical implementation would be handled by either States or regions, depending on the constitutional framework and the administrative institutions of each member State. In this way it will be possible to avoid a proliferation of detailed standards which are, often rightly – hunting is an example that comes to mind – considered excessively niggling.

A 'federation of Nation States' would entail greater involvement of national parliaments in the construction of Europe. Current consultation procedures between the European Parliament and national parliaments do not go far enough. Let us vest in a common body – a permanent conference of parliaments or 'Congress' – a real political role. Meeting in regular session, it would monitor Community institution compliance with subsidiarity and hold an annual 'State of the Union' debate. This 'Congress' could play a role in amending the rules within the Union. With the exception of standards of a 'constitutional' nature, for which current ratification procedures would remain in force, treaty changes relating to common policy technical rules could be handled, thanks to this 'Congress', in

simplified procedures. This formula could replace, to good effect, the thirty or so national ratification procedures which would otherwise be needed in tomorrow's Europe. Common policies could thereby be amended far more flexibly.

As we move towards enlargement, enhanced co-operation will be indispensable. The enlargement of Europe is a historic necessity; but it is also a challenge. With the accession of new members, Europe will have to learn to manage diversity. A two-speed Europe is not an acceptable proposition. But institutional paralysis is a threat which we must ward off. Those wishing to go forward must be able to do so. This is why the enhanced co-operation mechanism was quite appropriately made more flexible in Nice. It could obviously be applied in such areas as economic co-ordination in conjunction with the euro, but also in areas such as health care and arms. This co-operation would enable a group of States to renew the momentum which has always driven European construction.

Our Union will also draw its strength from the vitality of its democracy.

Europe must be, for its citizens, a true political area

This means an area where debate is ongoing and where genuinely European political parties, like the existing Party of European Socialists, meet; an area where the peoples of Europe will be able, in electing their representatives, to make clear-cut political choices; an area where the responsibilities of those who make the decisions will be better marked out.

Europe has become a familiar horizon for our fellow citizens but they nevertheless feel a deep need for greater ownership of the European process and involvement. They want to shape Europe. For them, elections to the European Parliament should become the high point of democratic life in Europe. I call for an in-depth reform of the current election procedures. Let us find a procedure which would combine, in each member State, proportional representation and a system of large regional constituencies. This would bring the office-holder closer to the voter.

Between elections, the democratic process must not flag. In this

spirit I propose three initiatives. First, there is direct consultation of civil society through dialogue. Let us build on the broad spectrum of voluntary associations in France and Europe. Let us use the new communications technologies as in the planned on-line election of the first European Student Council. Second, there are regular consultations held in member States on a clearly identified important political issue which is European in nature. These consultations could take place in national parliaments or in *ad hoc* fora. Finally, there is an enhanced role for the European Ombudsman, whose existence is unknown to the overwhelming majority of European citizens. His role could be enhanced by appointing national or local correspondents. The ombudsman would then be in a position to fulfil his mission of resolving disputes between citizens and European institutions out of court.

The European institutions obviously need to be reformed.

The European institutions must be given greater coherence and efficiency

The European institutional system is focused on the triangle of the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament. This equilibrium remains crucial. Yet change is necessary.

The European general interest must be better safeguarded. That is the role of the European Commission. Its political authority and legitimacy must therefore be strengthened. For this purpose I propose that the President of the Commission be appointed from the European political group which wins the European elections.

The European Parliament, as the expression of the will of the peoples, would thus be in a better position to fulfil its role as the institution to which the Commission is politically accountable and which can pass a vote of censure against the Commission. In return, the accountability of the Strasbourg Assembly should be better defined. I propose that the European Council be given a right to dissolve the Parliament on the proposal of the Commission or the Member States. This could be used in a political crisis or to resolve an institutional stand-off. An equilibrium of this kind exists, as we know, in most large representative democracies.

Like the Commission, the Council needs to be strengthened because it is no longer fully playing its role. The future treaty should enshrine the European Council which brings together Heads of State and Government and the President of the Commission. This Council should have the task of approving a true multi-year 'legislative' programme, based on a proposal submitted by the Commission and the European Parliament. It should meet more often – for example, every two months – and concentrate, without superfluous protocol, on discussing general policy guidelines and major Union decisions.

Furthermore, the time has come to think of establishing a permanent Council of Ministers. Its members, having a status tantamount to that of Vice-Prime Ministers, would co-ordinate work on European issues within their own national governments. A body of this type could provide impetus, preparation and co-ordination of European work upstream of the European Council. In conjunction with the European Parliament, it would better fulfil its role as a co-legislator in framing European laws. In this last respect, voting should always be by qualified majority.

These are the guidelines and the reforms which I feel could underpin the institutional architecture of tomorrow's Europe.

These proposals suggest the idea, which I favour, of a European Constitution. A constitution would set out the structure and the functioning of the European institutions. Of course, it would not be enough to simply call a new treaty a 'Constitution'. A text of this type would only be meaningful if it were the result of in-depth reform and not the product of a simple redrafting of the current treaties. At the same time it is important that the constitutional process be a fundamental political act: the affirmation of a common goal, the expression of a collective ambition. This process would of course at first be conducted by governments; but it should also closely involve the citizens. The Charter of Fundamental Rights would be at the heart of the Constitution. Following the method used to such good effect in the drafting of the Charter, preparation of this Constitution could be entrusted at European level to a Convention bringing together the different players in the Union: States, national parliaments, the European Parliament and civil society. Final decisions would be taken by States and ratified by peoples.

The Flame, Not the Ashes

Because I am not a lukewarm European, I do not want an insipid Europe.

The Europe I would like to build is a strong Europe, conscious of its political identity, respectful of the peoples which make it up, shouldering its responsibilities in the world, prepared to support the burden of its defence, determined to preserve its balanced economic and social development model, resolved to define independently and stubbornly defend its diplomatic, industrial and commercial interests, passionately committed to its cultural diversity. The building of Europe demands the best of all of us: ambition and imagination in vision, humility and tenacity in work.

I am determined to respond, together with others, to the call of Europe.

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