

THE BETRAYAL OF SOCIAL EUROPE

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Professor José-Félix Tezanos, Director of the Fundacion Sistema and editor of its periodical Revista Temas has organised several years running an Encuentro [colloquium, or 'meeting, encounter'] in the exceptionally beautiful Spanish university city of Salamanca. This year, the second time I've gone, the Encuentros were devoted to the subject "What course for Europe" ["El Rumbo de l'Europa"] and my paper below more or less lets fly against everything I think is wrong with Europe as presently organised. I remain a convinced European and live in hope that we may manage to build a genuinely democratic European Union, no matter how badly it may have started out. This paper will be published [in Spanish], probably in the Spring of 2007, by the Fundacion's own publishing house, Editorial Sistema. I am grateful to José-Félix Tezanos for allowing me to post my contribution here in English.

The Salamanca Encuentros roundtable in which I have been asked to participate is titled *Social Europe: Social Cohesion and Wellbeing*. My contribution will argue that Europe is not promoting social cohesion but, to the contrary, is fast travelling towards social dislocation and a lower degree of wellbeing than in the past. This outcome is not an accident but reflects, rather, deliberate policy choices, designed to promote neo-liberal, market-oriented "solutions" whose impact is not merely predictable but dire.

THE WRONG ROAD

The European Commission is the executor of these policies, with the collusion of the great majority of European member States, all of which are influenced by business and financial elites whose lobbies are omnipresent in Brussels. Europe has chosen neo-liberalism as its guiding principle and has therefore simultaneously chosen to sacrifice social cohesion to market- friendly options. The proposed Constitutional Treaty for Europe, quite rightly rejected by the peoples of France and the Netherlands, would have

set this direction in stone. Thanks to the defeat of the Constitution—whose cadaver the Commission is nonetheless trying to resuscitate—Europeans still have a slim chance to shape their future in a more positive direction, but the window of opportunity is both narrow and rapidly shrinking. It is therefore difficult to be optimistic in this regard but our need for a better politics and a liveable Europe for our children demands that we at least try.

Spaniards mostly either abstained from voting in their national referendum on the Constitution or voted *Yes* as a kind of reflex. The dominant logic seems to have been: [1] This document is about Europe; [2] Europe is A Good Thing; therefore [3] I will vote “Yes” [or not bother to vote at all]. There was little or no debate within the country and critical examination of the text was not, to say the least, encouraged. As Minister Lopez Aguilar remarked, “One does not need to read the Constitution to know that it is good”.

This is not a condemnation of the Spaniards. Even the most cursory knowledge of recent history helps one to understand that, from the Spanish point of view, the advent of Europe and the advent of Spanish democracy roughly coincide; that Europe has for many years contributed to Spanish GNP at the rate of at least one percent a year and that the Spanish vote was highly determined by Spain’s own national political experience. The result was that the Spanish people followed the Minister’s advice and did not generally read the document itself—they just assumed that it was, as he put it, “good”. Spaniards are furthermore astonished, at least in my experience, when they learn what the Constitutional Treaty they were asked to vote on actually contained.

Let me make clear that the criticisms expressed here concerning the proposed Constitution and Europe’s present orientation do not in any way imply criticism of Spain, Spaniards or the Spanish vote. It does mean, however, that Spaniards, as well as other Europeans, would do well to take a serious second look at the path Europe has embarked upon and join with each other in attempting to construct the Europe of Social Cohesion and Wellbeing being put forward in Salamanca, in my view both optimistically and prematurely.

WHY REJECT THE PROPOSED CONSTITUTION?

Many things were wrong with the European Constitutional Treaty [ECT]¹. Normally, a Constitution should be drafted by people democratically elected for that purpose [a Constituent Assembly]. The document should be relatively short and confine itself to stating general principles and to a description of executive, legislative and judicial

¹ The reader should know that my own knowledge of the Constitution is based on the French version of the official text “Traite Etablissant une Constitution pour l’Europe”. Any translations or renditions in English are my own and not necessarily the official wording.

powers and the separations, checks and balances between them; as well as setting out the rights and duties of citizens. A Constitution, as the supreme law of the land, should be above all comprehensible to the people it is intended to govern. Finally, it should be amendable. As the French Constitution of 1793 said, "One generation should not have the right to prescribe laws for succeeding generations". Such a basic, solemn document as a Constitution should not be too easy to amend, but nor should it be too difficult. Times change and laws, after careful consideration, should sometimes change with them.

On all these criteria, the European Constitution fails. It was drafted by 105 people appointed for the task [the "Convention"]. Some members were, of course, elected officials serving in national parliaments or the European Parliament, but they were not elected for the purpose of drafting a Constitution and arguably they did not adequately represent European opinion. Electing a Constituent Assembly would have created a Europe-wide debate, whereas the actual proceedings were carried out in an opaque way, with most Europeans unaware that drafting was even going on. Furthermore, the members of the Convention could only amend texts set before them by the Presidency [Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and his immediate colleagues]. They could not even make inputs of their own. Some European parliamentary groups like the Socialists tried, and failed, to have certain proposals accepted, whereas citizens had zero input. Those who did draft the text had no discernible interest in promoting social cohesion or citizens' welfare so it is not surprising that these do not figure in the text.

This text was nonetheless enormously long: 232 pages in the official French version, plus several hundred pages of annexes and protocols. In contrast, at 58 pages, the Spanish Constitution is already quite long as national constitutions go, and comes to about 18.000 words. The Constitution of the United States is about 5000 words long and has been in force since 1787 because it is amendable and can be adjusted for the needs of each generation through judicial interpretation.

The ECT must hold some sort of record for length but also for complexity. It is full of cross-references so that one cannot understand many important articles without referring to other articles; themselves sometimes referring to still others. Reading this document seriously means cutting through a whole *maquis*, a jungle of superposed prescriptions which ultimately give the most important powers to the unelected Commission. Anyone without a higher education would be hard put to read it; a law degree would be good preparation.

That the French made the effort to decode this immensely complicated text, despite all the efforts of the government and the major political parties telling them not to bother, is to their credit. Some organisations like Attac, working with others in the 900-some citizen collectives that sprang up all over the country, also carried out the work of educating ordinary citizens, helping them to penetrate the *maquis* and to understand the

real content of the ECT. Finally, the ECT would have been almost impossible to amend or invalidate, requiring a triple unanimity of the Convention, the Council of twenty-five member States and their twenty-five parliaments.

Business, financial, media and political elites in France were all in favour of the ECT and they were relentless in their campaign for the Yes. Even the so-called public service media invited news and talk-show commentators in a ratio of 3 or 4 for the Yes to each commentator for the No. The employers associations [MEDEF or, at the European level, UNICE]. The government, as well as the leadership of the socialist party attempted to frighten the electorate, predicting chaos unless the Yes won.

A CHARTER FOR NEO-LIBERALISM

The elites had good reason to favour the ECT: it was designed to serve the needs of those at the top of society. Normally, popular sovereignty has been the basis of every constitution since the American and French Revolutions but in this one the people were entirely absent; their sovereignty was never recognised. A Constitutional preamble typically begins with “We the People....” or a similar phrase: the ECT begins with “His Majesty, King of the Belgians” and goes on to list the heads of State and government before getting around to mentioning the people in the fourth or fifth paragraph, as a kind of afterthought.

These apparently formal or symbolic arrangements are echoed throughout the text. Why can one argue that this Constitution embodies the *anti*-social cohesion point of view now dominant in Europe? Is it not significant that the phrase “*free and undistorted competition*” recurs 24 times, beginning with Article I-3 describing the **objectives** of the Union? Competition may be a good tool in some cases, at some times and in some national contexts but it is only a tool and cannot be enshrined as a general principle, as is the case in the ECT. Any knowledgeable economist can explain that in his profession, “competition” has at least five different meanings.¹

It is extremely dangerous to include competition as one of the guiding principles of a *political* document. Even worse, it may not even work for economies. As French economist Jacques Sapir points out:

An argument setting up competition as a central principle of economic organisation is ‘false’ in the sense that various scientific discourses have been proven false throughout history....the discourse of those who defend competition as a central principle is the equivalent, in economics, of defending anti-darwinist theories and creationism.

¹ See Jacques Sapir, « La Fin de l’Euro-liberalisme », Eds. Le Seuil, Paris, 2006, especially Chapter 1 and p. 55

In any event, the ECT is full of detailed economic prescriptions and such prescriptions have no place in a constitutional document. Aside from the ECT, the only recent historical example where one finds such precise guidelines for running the economy is the Stalinist Constitution of the Soviet Union, drafted by the Politburo in 1936. While the USSR 1936 Constitution is naturally full of collectivist wisdom, the ECT proposes “free and undistorted competition” as a goal of Europe, on the same level as peace and wellbeing of the population; it is of the same nature as liberty, security and justice. [Article I, 3].

Other Articles hammer home again and again the need for free trade, freedom of investment and the primacy of the market—the word “market” recurs 78 times in the text. One might argue that Europe’s prosperity and therefore the economic wellbeing of its citizens depends on free circulation of goods, services, capital and people, as the ECT constantly repeats. But when one discovers just how the Commission understands and plans to implement such “free circulation”, one also understands that the wellbeing of citizens has nothing to do with it.

The Bolkestein directive on the free circulation of people within Europe provides a good example. Before it had to be substantially modified due to public outcry, this directive actually set out to organise one major contributing factor to social breakdown by prescribing an entirely new legal principle called the “country of origin”. According to this principle, a worker from one of the ten newly acceded countries [or even workers from outside the EU with a valid work permit in any of the 25 member States] would be free to work in another European country under the laws obtaining in his or her own country of origin. The receiving country would not even have the right to be informed of the presence of foreign workers on its soil; no declaration to any authorities, including work inspectors, social security or the like was deemed necessary.

Inside the European Union of 25, wage differentials may differ by a factor of ten or twelve to one and social protection laws show equally wide variations. The initial directive, as wary European citizens fortunately understood, was an invitation to capital to organise the “race to the bottom”, and to bring masses of poor Eastern Europeans, prepared to work at almost any price, into the more developed Western States. Many Europeans remain convinced that the goal of the Bolkestein Directive was at least partially to break down social cohesion in countries that have achieved some measure of it by making workers’ lives more precarious.

WHY TRUST THESE PEOPLE?

It is small wonder that recent polls show that Europeans do not particularly trust European institutions, or are at best neutral towards them. They are quite clear, however, that business has a great deal of clout with European institutions. Asked if business influences the EU, 79 percent replied Yes, business influences the EU either strongly or fairly strongly. In the newly acceding countries, 87 percent thought business had a strong or fairly strong influence. On the other hand, NGOs were [correctly] perceived by 59 percent to have little or no influence on the EU.

The European respondents to this survey were quite right to point to business influence: the number of lobbyists in Brussels is estimated at about 15,000 of which the huge majority represent business interests and only about ten percent of them represent NGOs or regional European interests. So far, the Commission has successfully resisted passing any law which would require lobbyists to register, although such requirements exist even in the ultra-liberal United States.

The same survey posed questions to which the choice of answers was Trust/Do Not Trust/Neutral. Between 29 and 37 percent of respondents express trust for the European Union, the European Parliament, the European Commission, and the Council of Ministers; a consistent 20 percent express no trust and 44 to 52 percent are neutral. To say the least, in the kindest interpretation, Europe is not well understood and only about a third of respondents harbour a positive sentiment of trust towards its institutions.¹

THE BLUEPRINT FOR SOCIAL DISLOCATION

The European Constitution showed its neo-liberal colours especially in its treatment of public services, or rather what it termed Services of General Economic Interest. Articles III-166 to 168 literally organise the demise of public services and the right of member States to provide subsidies. These services are made explicitly subject to the rules of competition. If the Commission decides that the aid given by a member State to a public enterprise is incompatible with the rules of the internal market [demanding “free and undistorted competition”], it can order the guilty State to eliminate or modify the subsidy.

A decision to accept a subsidy and to consider it compatible with the rules of the internal market in any given member country must be *unanimously* approved by all 25 member States. Whenever the determinants of social cohesion are involved, the lowest common

¹ Penn, Schoen and Berland Associates, “Survey of European Citizens” conducted in May 2006 and dated 25 May 2006.

denominator is systematically applied. Thus Articles III-168 through 175 make it virtually impossible to harmonise fiscal policy or social or environmental legislation—at least to harmonise them upwards. Unanimity is generally required and the unelected Commission remains the final judge of national choices. If this Constitution were in force, it could thus dismantle environmental as well as social protection measures. Given the tenor of this particular Commission, undoubtedly the most neo-liberal in European Union history, one is quite sure it will still try to do so whatever the fate of the ECT. The market must decide!

Tax rates inside the EU are also widely disparate. Most of the newly acceded States have opted for “flat taxes” of between 10 and 18 percent; these rates apply to businesses, personal consumption and revenues. In contrast, French and German corporate taxes, for example, are more than 30 percent. Under these circumstances, and since unanimity is required in matters of fiscal harmonisation, it is clear that only downward harmonisation can ever be adopted—for the simple reason that low-tax member States see their fiscal policy as a comparative advantage for attracting foreign direct investment and for competing in international markets.

This suits the neo-liberals perfectly: as the famously neo-liberal Frits Bolkestein remarked, it is very difficult to reach agreement on tax questions so the best corporate tax rate that European countries could set would be ideally zero.¹ The ETC contains 448 articles: not one of them calls for anything but tax and social-policy *competition*. No space is provided to set a European-wide minimum salary nor to harmonise salaries upwards, but nothing forbids setting them below the poverty line. That is exactly where they will tend to go under present European leadership.

Capital, on the other hand, enjoys complete freedom to do as it pleases. Any restriction on capital flows within the Union, or even with regard to non-EU members, must be agreed unanimously. Article III-314 on European trade policy is worth quoting:

“.....the Union contributes in the common interest to the harmonious development of world trade, to the progressive dismantling of restrictions on international exchange and on foreign direct investment and to reducing tariff and other barriers.”

These objectives are precisely the ones that were sought by neo-liberals in the Multilateral Agreement on Investment [MAI, defeated in 1998] and which they are still seeking through the World Trade Organisation.

In the case of Article III-314, the EU was not just legislating for its own members but for the world, attempting to pry open markets everywhere. So far, Trade Commissioners Lamy and Mandelson have based their demands within the WTO and in bilateral or

¹ See Jacques Genereux, *Manuel critique du parfait Européen*, Eds. Le Seuil, Paris, 2005 p.81 who quotes Bolkestein on the matter of taxes.

regional trade agreements on this philosophy. Total freedom of capital movements and totally free trade bring into play what David Ricardo called in 1817 the “*iron law of wages*”. Wages tend to be reduced to subsistence levels when many workers living in societies at very different levels of social development are placed in competition with each other. Nothing has changed since the early nineteenth century and at last the capitalist class, working through the European institutions, sees its opportunity for revenge against the gains of workers over the past several decades.

THE ELEMENTS OF SOCIAL COHESION

What would be the constitutive elements of European social cohesion? At the very least, the first requirement would be that the EU not attempt to destroy what remains of it in individual member States. One cannot count on Europe to do so. The ECT was a blueprint for forcing governments to discourage or dismantle many national institutions still contributing to social cohesion.

Surely the presence or absence of public services plays a part in the wellbeing of citizens. In societies where public services are of low quality or entirely absent, inequalities are necessarily higher and the “social wage” is reduced. Laws concerning social protection, minimum wages, limitations on work time, workplace safety and job security are important elements of social cohesion as well. Countries where the prevailing social logic is “every man [or woman] for himself/herself” are high-risk societies whose members are too busy trying to take care of themselves and their families to care much about each other and the overall condition of their society.

Much was made of Part II of the European Constitutional Treaty, the so-called Charter of Fundamental Rights. The advocates of a Yes vote claimed it would repair anything that might otherwise be wrong with the ECT. In fact, a careful examination of the Charter shows that it is not a progressive instrument but regressive with regard to several national constitutions [and certainly to the French Constitution of 1958].

Take the right to free education: this right is guaranteed in the Charter only for obligatory education, which in France is from the ages of 6 to 16. What about kindergarden? What about the last years of high school, the final prep class for the *baccalaureat*, the university? These too are free in many countries, including France.¹² What makes anyone believe that Europe can be the “competitive” society touted by the loudly trumpeted “Lisbon Strategy”, which itself calls for a huge effort in higher

¹ A personal note here: I completed a Licence ès Philosophie in 1967 at the Sorbonne and earned a PhD at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences sociales, also part of the Sorbonne, in 1978. Both degrees, which took about three years each, cost me the equivalent of about 100 euros a year.

education, when these levels are not available to all and people can be excluded on grounds of family revenues? Furthermore, many specialists of early childhood education say “Everything is decided before the age of six”. How are we to integrate our immigrant populations if small children have no prior apprenticeship in the local language and customs before starting the “official” –and free–classes at age six? This Article [II-74] is an invitation to a class society, structured along financial lines.

The following Charter Article [II-75] guarantees the right to work and to choose a profession. All well and good, but in the French wording at least, what the Article means is that if you can find a job, you have the right to work, period. The second paragraph makes this clear: “Any citizen of the Union has the right to look for a job”. Since the right to a job is also the basis in law for the right to unemployment compensation, and since the EU does not recognise this right elsewhere, one wonders how social cohesion can be achieved when such a universal need is not admitted in law.

The Charter also forbids discrimination based on sex, race, colour, social or ethnic origins, genetic characteristics, language, religion or convictions, political or other opinions, belonging to a national minority, fortune, birth, handicap, age or sexual orientation [II-81]. This list would seem to cover absolutely every possible source of discrimination. But should one cheer? Not too soon, because when one gets into the serious part of the Constitution, which is to say Part III, one learns [III-124] that an actual law making such discrimination effectively illegal must be unanimously approved by all the member States, some of which have laws which do not outlaw discrimination [against national minorities for instance] and are not likely to give them up.

The Union “respects the right of old people to lead a decent and independent life and to participate in social and cultural life”—but people of other ages aren’t mentioned. Strikes are authorised in the Charter, but employers are also given the right to lock-out [III-210, 6] a “right” which is specifically outlawed in the French Constitution, for example. This same, long Article III-210 is perhaps the best demonstration of the will in the higher spheres of Europe to discourage social cohesion. The text also specifies that *unanimity is required for any law pertaining to social security and social protection of workers*; for protection of workers in case of an end to their job contract; collective representation and defence of workers’ interests as well as many other important social questions.

SOCIAL COHESION COSTS MONEY

More proof of the will of Europe to move towards social dislocation through neo-liberal policies is to be found in its financial and monetary policies. Quite simply stated, if Europe wants social cohesion and social wellbeing, these must be paid for. They are not

going to fall out of the sky or appear by magic, particularly in circumstances where the ten new countries, for obvious historical reasons, find themselves at a much lower level of social development than the fifteen others. Look at the amount Germany has spent on bringing East Germany up to the level of the West [an effort not yet entirely successful despite the billions of euros invested]. Look at the structural funds supplied to Portugal, Ireland, Greece, Spain and other regions like Southern Italy. Even within the early EU member-States countries, people have to be protected against the ravages of the market and of globalisation; they must be able to count on quality education and health care; they must have access to decent work and to compensation when unable to work; they should have adequate retirement plans.

Unfortunately, nothing in the present Treaty [Nice, the one we are presently living under] nor in the proposed Constitution provides any hope that Europe will give itself the means to carry out any of the indispensable tasks necessary for its citizens' wellbeing. The absence of such material resources will give the "market solution" primacy over social ones, and that is precisely what the Commission and the European elites hope for. Meanwhile, the ability of individual member States to provide for social measures within their borders is being steadily eroded by EU policy. Let us look briefly at what would be required to provide Europeans with social protection, wellbeing and cohesion.

THE VITAL ELEMENTS

A realistic budget: Europe's budget is limited to 1.04 percent of GDP. Even the United States, not noted for its social generosity, spends 20 of the Federal budget [and the States spend a great deal more] on the wellbeing of citizens.

Taxes: Unlike most normal parliaments, the European parliament has no power to levy taxes [it does not even have the power to introduce legislation, but that is another, equally sad, story]. Even a one percent tax on corporate profits would go some way to rectifying this situation, but this would probably be forbidden by the constant insistence on the "freedom of capital" to do as it pleases.

A Central Bank under political supervision and with a broader mandate: Unlike virtually any other Central Bank in the world, with the possible exception of New Zealand's, the European Central Bank is completely independent of any political control and its chief is appointed for nine years. The Bank's only mandate is to control inflation [by raising interest rates]. According to many reputable economists, it has at times raised interest rates without any economic justification, without a sign of inflation in sight. This Bank is not required to worry about economic expansion, full employment or

any other policy which would increase the wellbeing of ordinary citizens. High interest rates and zero inflation do, however, satisfy the desires of shareholders and *rentiers*.

A capacity to borrow: Every country in the world is able to issue bonds. These bonds may be more or less risky, of greater or lesser value, but the right of the governments in question to issue them is not in doubt. The European Union cannot borrow, even though, considering its economic standing, its bonds would undoubtedly be rated triple AAA—that is, of top investment grade. How, then, does it plan to improve and integrate its infrastructure, invest in research and higher education [which the “Lisbon Strategy” claims is indispensable for its future]; put in place Europe-wide clean energy and environmental policies or carry out any other indispensable projects?

A monetary policy geared toward economic expansion : Here again, as with the mandate of the Central Bank, the “Stability and Growth Pact” is narrowly conceived, interested only in punishing member countries whose rate of inflation or accumulated debt is judged by the neo-liberal Commission to be getting out of hand. This is T-Shirt Europe: One size fits all.

A decent solidarity fund for the newly acceded countries: This is not slated to happen either [no budget, no borrowing] and the ten newcomers will be kept for the foreseeable future as reservoirs of cheap labour and good places to delocalise industry so as to push down wages everywhere. The 10 new countries will not get the same treatment as previous arrivals, including Spain. Forty percent of the already insufficient budget is still spent on the Common Agricultural Policy, mostly to provide extra income for the richest farmers.

A Eurogroup with some political courage : Theoretically, the Eurogroup, made up of the finance ministers of the twelve Euro countries, could alleviate some of these deficiencies—it could, if it wanted to, launch bonds and adopt common infrastructure policies; it would take a major political fight but it could also, probably, instate taxes on corporations and on capital flows. No signs of any such thing are visible.

UTOPIA

The rest of this contribution will content itself with what should happen rather than what is actually happening. For that reason, it can be seen as utopian, at least temporarily.

The first question to ask in defining a Euro-topia is to ask Why? The best reason to construct another model in Europe, a Europe of social wellbeing [which I call Europe of

the Common Good]¹ is simply because no one else is going to do it. Nothing can be expected of the United States in this regard; its model is neo-liberal to the core. The Chinese model so far displays the worst features of both neo-liberalism and Communism. Some Latin American countries [Venezuela and now Bolivia] are attempting something along the lines of a social-cohesion model but a truly social model cannot be generalised to the whole of Latin America which does not boast enough abundant and expensive natural resources like Venezuela's and Bolivia's oil and gas.

So either Europe pulls itself together and creates a continent-wide social and ecological model which could be an example for the entire world--which it could then help the entire world to follow--or no one does.² Europe has 450 million people and a GDP slightly larger than that of the United States; it has a highly educated and healthy population; it has traditions of social struggle and emancipation and all its members are now democracies. With all these advantages, it could afford to be ambitious.

Elements of the Euro-topian model would include:

- Cheap fast trains and cheap or cost-free internet for all; public services on principles of same cost to all, for all, regardless of distance, and integrated across the continent;
- Quality free education for all the youngest Europeans, but especially for immigrant children, as soon as they are out of their nappies;
- Quality free higher education limited only by individual capacity, plus a policy of permanent adult education and retraining;
- Important investment in science and a concerted effort to bring home the 400.000 European scientists, educated at European expense, now resident in the United States—which means providing them with good labs and good salaries;
- A Europe-wide guaranteed minimum salary and unemployment benefits;
- Universal health and maternity care;
- Reducing military expenditures [of which the proposed ECT demanded an increase] but integrating our defence and investing in intelligence and peacekeeping forces;
- A European defense force making its own political decisions [the ECT placed European member countries under the command of NATO];
- A rapid increase of the Development aid budget to the 0.70 of GNP that the United Nations has been requesting for over thirty years; simultaneous cancellation of all developing country debts; respect for all nations' food sovereignty;

¹ See *Nous, Peuples d'Europe* [Paris, Eds. Fayard, 2005], forthcoming in Spanish with Icaria Editorial

² For a much longer development of this theme, see Susan George, *Another World is Possible If....* [Verso, London and New York, 2004] in Spanish *Otro Mundo es Posible Si....* [Icaria Editorial and Intermon, Barcelona, 2004] and *Nous, Peuples...* as above

- A policy of “reinforced cooperation” among its members so that those States which wanted to move more quickly or more deeply towards harmonisation of fiscal or social policies could do so, while always remaining open to newcomers;
- A policy of “concentric circles” in order to provide special cooperation with countries like Turkey, the North Africans and other Mediterranean countries, Sub-Saharan Africa;
- An all-out investment in environment-friendly technologies and architecture; alternative energies, energy and water conservation policies; city and regional environmental planning.

How can we go about achieving the Euro-topia of our dreams? The only viable answer is through greater democracy, through more confidence in the views of European citizens and through opening new vistas, including corporations, to democratic practice. This means, above all, democratising European structures—particularly the Commission and the Parliament—an aim which the proposed Constitution certainly did not achieve.

European elites, particularly the Commission, were surprised and furious at the results of the French and Dutch referenda. Their attitude was summed up by Commission Vice President Gunther Verheugen, whose reaction to these votes was quoted in the *Financial Times*: “We must not give in to blackmail”. So much for the principle of universal suffrage. Verheugen and those who think like him, would be far happier to see a Europe where all public services were privatised, all labour was “flexible” and all human activities—including health, education, culture, water and so on—were sources of profit.

Social cohesion and wellbeing do not enter into their equation and the sooner this is recognised, the better position we shall be in to fight back. This is the challenge of the coming decades and the task will demand the efforts of all European peoples. We must hope that they can unite in the defence of democracy, in the knowledge that “Another Europe is Possible”.