

## **Pursuing the European Dream: the Second Olympic Ring**

### **The European Union, co-founder of the Four-Sea Alliance**

by Raymond Van Ermen – 18<sup>th</sup> September 2005.

2004 and 2005 marked a milestone in the history of Europe. We should mention in particular the reunification of Europe with the shift from a 15-nation Union to a 25-nation Union, the referenda on the European Constitution, and the changes in Georgia, the Ukraine and Lebanon, which have altered the democratic scene and the political deal. If Europe wants to remain true to its reputation of helping countries come out of dictatorship, not endangering democracy within its borders and taking expectations into account both within and outside the Union, it must embark on a new approach and “gear up”. All the more so since three of its current policies should be seriously questioned:

- *The enlargement process has become chaotic. Although originally, it was a factor of stability, it is now transforming into a source of instability. Paradoxically, it is simultaneously too fast and not fast enough. It is therefore “neither immoral nor illegitimate” to say that the time has come for Europe and its partners to move to another system to ensure internal democracy, peace, stability and prosperity for all.*
- *The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership is a failure (1) in the field of fundamental rights. These results, which are the fruit of the timid policy of the Union, are unacceptable for civil society. It is not enough to envisage new ‘conditions’ for governance, citizens must be given the right to bring an action before an ad hoc Court of Justice.*
- *The so-called neighbourhood policy is no match for the changes wrought in 2004 and 2005 (2). The distinctions made between categories of countries and rules are ambiguous and unsuitable.*

*There are good reasons for further enlarging the European Union, particularly to Turkey, but there are just as many to stop the process.*

- *Further enlarging the Union means encouraging the development of a vicious circle already observed in Europe with the rise in power of far-left and far-right parties and the transformation of so-called right-wing, left-wing and centre parties into something which is almost a ‘one and only party’, the ‘neue mitte’ (3). It may not be a major problem for politicians fishing for an electoral mandate, but it is bound to be one for citizens who know the price of blood paid by European men and women to these old demons. Since the negative French and Dutch votes, it is clear that the peoples of the old Europe no longer understand or no longer follow European developments and that they cannot be simply overlooked without running the risk of sending the Europe supertanker crashing on the shoals. As a commentator pointed out, “the ‘no’ vote is based on the idea that the position of Europe has changed from what it was after the second world war, when its purpose was to ensure peace on the continent; Europe has now become the accelerator, not to say the organizer of undesirable mutations” (4).*
- *On the other hand, the enlargement process in its current form is not – paradoxically – fast enough to respond to urgent forthcoming issues (particularly as regards energy and democracy). The future of the European Union hinges on its relations with Mediterranean countries as well as with countries bordering the Adriatic, the Aegean Sea and the Black Sea. We need them as much as they need us. What is required is another form of initiative than the neighbourhood policy scheme with its “everything but the institutions” motto which places those countries in a kind of vassalage to the EU.*

*In this context, pursuing the “European dream” (5) requires implementing an “Olympic ring strategy” which, after the reunification of 2004, would launch a new alliance. This means that the Union – which is not meant to become an empire – needs to have its construction completed by the creation of a second ring intertwined with the 25/27-nation Union. The Alliance would focus on four ‘baskets’. This strategy would replace that of the “post-modern empire” (4) and be based on two pillars:*

- (1) *Halting the enlargement of the Union for the time being and enhancing the 25/27-nation Union, particularly through the development of participatory, representative democracy (including a pan-European referendum), an action programme (involving the public and private sectors as well as civil society) designed to achieve a flourishing economy and the European social model which would be discussed by States-General in the EU Member States and adopted by a Third Convention.*

- (2) *In the autumn of 2005, starting work on a "Four-Sea Alliance for Human Security by 2010", with four specific thematic 'baskets': energy and water, free and fair trade, democracy and fundamental rights, youth. The Four-Sea Alliance would have its Council, High Commission and Senate established in Istanbul – a bridge between the East and the West – and its Court of Justice set in Strasbourg – a city that symbolizes post-war reconciliation. Its membership scheme would differ from that of the European Union, though the Alliance would have strong instruments at its disposal for implementation and mutual control as well as exclusion. Relevant European Commission services would move to Istanbul to be integrated into the Alliance's High Commission. The 2010 Euro-Mediterranean free trade area would become the "Four-Sea free and fair trade area".*

At the beginning of August 2005, the Tällberg Forum, set in the heart of Sweden, welcomed personalities such as the Polish Prime Minister and the President of Georgia. The Polish Prime Minister underlined that the past fifteen years have been the happiest in the whole history of Poland, because of the role played by the prospect of joining the Union and related mechanisms (rules, a deadline, a supporting procedure). This has helped create a sufficiently strong political consensus to accept changes which are sometimes difficult to cope with. The President of Georgia asked EU Member States to give Georgia and the Ukraine the same opportunities as Poland for taking advantage of these mechanisms to foster change in their own country (Note : since then, Georgia and the Ukraine have launched the "Community of Democratic Choice"). Members of European civil society in EU Member States must listen to this message from Poland, Georgia, Turkey and the Balkans, just as they must relay the deep concerns accounting for many European citizens' distrust towards the orientations which politicians want them to adopt.

Consequently, for civil society organizations in the 28 relevant nations, including Turkey – some of which worked for the success of the negative French and Dutch votes while others campaigned for a positive vote in the same countries, plus in Spain and Luxembourg – the task ahead is clear even though it is not easy.

Pro-peace and pro-cooperation European civil society organizations have five simultaneous tasks to perform today:

- (1) **Justice.** As Jérôme Jaffré remarked, "left-wingers need to understand why their 'yes' vote has been so little convincing. This position cannot merely offer voters the prospect of entering the global society and accepting the rules of the game. The vast majority of left-wing voters will only follow their 'spokespeople' if they see them introduce their own objectives of progress and justice in a global society" (4). Organized civil society must table its proposals for greater solidarity and greater justice within the Union and between the Union and its partners from developing countries.
- (2) **Security.** Civil society organizations must also have a clear idea of today's three major issues at stake that justify new forms of alliance: (i) resources, firstly in terms of energy but also in terms of water, (ii) demographic developments and our needs in this respect, (iii) alliance against terrorism, which requires the accelerated democratization of four-sea countries (in this respect, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership is a failure). These three major issues cannot be addressed without an alliance of the countries bordering the four seas.
- (3) **Solidarity.** Since the Unesco enquiry in 1947 and more specifically since 1949, several pacts, charters and declarations have helped "overcome" the prevailing individualistic liberalism of the 1948 Human Rights Declaration (5). European civil society must remain true to itself and prepare for new advances, particularly by trying to adapt our European vision of fundamental rights – focused on the individual – to the challenges of the future. A multicultural Europe must give itself the means to achieve greater solidarity.

- (4) **Participatory democracy.** In a context of economic globalization and political disillusionment, organized civil society must work ever harder for a European Union close to its citizens and hence for a participatory, representative democracy. There can only be an acceptable exit from the European crisis "upwards", via a 'D' plan (D like democracy, not D like dictatorship, or just C like communication). A European public area must be created within the Union by setting up a pan-European referendum/consultation, a step which is just as important as the move from a voting system based on the poll tax to universal suffrage. Civil society in the EU must also fully support civil society in non-EU countries, which is engaged in a "democratic revolution" that seems to have a major impact on the scale of other historic moments such as 1789, 1848, 1917, 1945, or 1989 (2). Civil society must also encourage citizens to make more use of their double voting rights: when going to the polls (by extending the scope of their European citizenship) and on the market (through their purchases and investments) in order to defend and protect their rights, including within the framework of globalization.
- (5) **Innovation agreements.** Finally, innovation is not solely dependent on research. It is also the product of new multi-stakeholder mechanisms for debate and agreement. The concept of *innovation agreement*, promoted by the European Feira Council, should be taken up and extended to the theme of a "flourishing economy and a well-being society for all". Reflecting on new negotiation mechanisms as generators of innovation and consensus (two key objectives for progress) should include reflecting on the new missions of the Economic and Social Committee at a European and national level as well as on those of the Committee of the Regions and national city associations, as a negotiation forum for public authorities, businesses, trade unions and civil society and a relay centre for a decentralized implementation of agreements. This would mean taking up Robert Schuman's vision and resuming the work put on hold in this field.

To meet the fears and expectations of the peoples of Europe together with the hopes of the peoples of Turkey (including the Kurds), the Ukraine, Georgia, the Balkans and the Near East, we must draw positive lessons from the effect of gravitational attraction of the European Union (6) while going beyond a neighbourhood policy based on carefully maintained ambiguities and mottos such as "everything but the institutions". We must also move on from the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership which has proved unable to act as the driving force expected (1). In fact, we need to propose a clearer, integrated solution with a new deadline – 2010 – for the establishment of the Alliance for Human Security with its specific institutions, while the draft constitution must be "revived" in order not to lose its acquired benefits for citizens, such as the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Although the two subjects are interlinked, they have to appear as clearly distinct. The peoples of the European Union (to be distinguished from their political representatives) will only massively approve a European Constitution which is more necessary than ever if political leaders show they can provide an original solution to the current imbroglio resulting from a series of mistakes made by members of the elite, who were deemed in recent publications to have "betrayed Europe" (8) or to "be the grave diggers of Europe" (9). The 25/27-nation Union must halt its enlargement process while being "one" of the members in a broader Alliance on vital issues for Europeans and their allies.

## The 25/27-nation Union

The project of enhancing the 25/27-nation Union must focus on the constituents of participatory democracy and on its social model. A Convention III must set the relevant action programme. There is nothing new here, although it must be pointed out that in the event of a simple solution such as the one already proposed for the swift adoption of a shortened Constitution taking up a number of chapters from the draft Rome II Treaty is not acceptable to EU Member States, there is no reason why civil society should not table again the demands already expressed which have not been accepted in the draft Constitutional Treaty, such as electing the Commission President by universal suffrage. Everyone knows that the EU and many of its Member States have an 'elite' problem. A catharsis is therefore needed in this respect, which the election of the Commission President by universal suffrage could bring about.

The debate on the social model must aim at creating new forms of solidarity and justice in order to come out of the current mutation of capitalism by an "upward" route (through a new development phase) rather than a "downward" route (through a war on resources). This phenomenon, which has been announced for the past thirty years as being expected for the beginning of the 21st century, is more noticeable as a result of the rapid increase in the world population and the scarcity of natural resources pushing up raw material prices, including petrol prices. Moreover, the hosts of solvent client populations will move from Anglo-Saxon countries overburdened with debt (US, UK) and other over-equipped countries to the new poles of demand (Central and Eastern Europe and above all Asia). Other factors must also be added, such as the rise in power of the Internet economy, the drop in trust towards business leaders, the growing reputational risks, the new role played by intermediaries such as rating agencies, etc. The challenges mentioned above are aggravated by two new challenges: on the one hand, the ageing of the population, which "disrupts social models, creates huge debts and announces intergenerational conflicts" (10) while raising the issue of migratory flows; on the other hand, the "building of a new international division, with tremendous relocation flows which have only just begun" (10).

These new forms of solidarity for a flourishing society for all in a multicultural Europe would be one of the themes of Convention III. It is a matter of great urgency and since any institutional change is slow by definition, civil society, starting with major social movements – with trade unions in the lead – must make use of "their second voting right, the monetary vote": this is an essential weapon in a globalized economy for all those who want to promote their vision of human rights, fair trade, environmental protection and health. This voting right must be exercised at the level of investments and purchases. Pension funds, hypermarkets' purchasing policies, services offered by banks, all this constitutes the sphere of action of a tripartite partnership established among public authorities, businesses and civil society, which can foster the quickest changes in favour of citizens. This could be one of the topics on the agenda of Convention III.

Europeans will therefore be able to hold their own within the framework of globalization and build new bonds of solidarity within the Union and with the other peoples of the world.

## The Four-Sea Alliance

The Four-Sea Alliance for Human Security is meant to bring a set of new elements (differing from the neighbourhood policy or the Euro-Mediterranean policy) which the British Presidency should ask to examine:

- It is open to the countries bordering the four seas (Mediterranean Sea, Adriatic, Aegean Sea, Black Sea), which are critical areas for world stability.
- It would turn Istanbul into the new gravity centre (this alternative path should be the subject of exploratory talks when opening the accession negotiations scheduled for October 2005).
- It would have its own institutions, established elsewhere than Brussels, including in the field of the rights of the Alliance's citizens.
- It would be equipped with membership mechanisms (vision, assistance, monitoring, date) and systems for multilateral control (open coordination method, OSCE scheme, etc.), something which the Polish Prime Minister underlined was one of the best points of the Union and other formations.
- Membership rules should enable countries that have adopted a democratic agenda to be part of the Alliance by 2010 (thanks to a swifter procedure than for the Union), whereas the monitoring and peer-review procedures as well as provisions for sanctions or even exclusion would prevent stagnation in the field of human rights, as is the case with the current Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. An exclusion procedure would be provided for.
- The Alliance would focus on vital issues for sustainable development, such as energy and water (first 'basket'), as the European Coal and Steel Community did in its day.
- It would implement the project of a Euro-Mediterranean free trade area by 2010 while extending it. This area would become a fair and free trade area for the whole territory of the Alliance (second 'basket'), thus reinforcing its regional weight.
- The third 'basket' would concern democracy (including membership criteria along the lines of the Copenhagen criteria, or similar to those that the Community of Democratic Choice Georgia-the Ukraine plans to adopt), fundamental rights (a citizens' charter, the product of a dialogue between civilizations on 21st-century issues marked by interdependencies), together with a right to control (as the OSCE already does) and an essential right to take action before a Court, the mechanisms of which would have to be studied in cooperation with the Strasbourg-based European Court of Human Rights. This is a vitally important framework, as the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue of civil society has shown. No progress can be achieved if citizens are forbidden to express themselves. The Court should ensure "*the lifting of legal and practical restrictions to civil society participation (...) as concerns freedom of association, assembly and expression and the freedom of movement*" (as stated in the final declaration of the Luxembourg EuroMed Civil Forum,).
- Finally, a fourth 'basket' focusing on youth would provide young people with the elements that will shape a common future while defining their rights and obligations, among which mandatory non-military national service, preferably carried out in another country than their own.
- The Alliance would have a Council and a Senate (with EU members being elected within the European Parliament), both established in Istanbul.
- It would also have a High Commission, equally based in Istanbul, in which officials from the European Union would be seconded from the relevant services at the European Commission in Brussels.

- The Alliance would be the first instance of practical implementation of the proposals of the United Nations Commission on Human Security. Its establishment is set within the call for an Alliance of Civilizations proposed by the Spanish and British governments.

## Conclusion

Europe is undergoing a deep crisis. It has to do with Europeans' relationship with the wider world (globalization), European institutions (European governance), multinational companies (market power), our cultural diversity and our roots (local level). In the face of the crisis experienced by the political world and businesses alike, with neither of them being trusted any longer by a large part of the population, it is essential that the lifeblood of the Union should come up with new proposals.

We need a response to the mutation of capitalism, the crisis of the European project, the problematic issue of its frontiers and the search for convergences for the European social model. This response must improve management (governance), re-establish trust, demonstrate that we can make the European social model progress further and contribute to peace and democratic advances within the European Union and outside it as well as to a dialogue between a multicultural Europe and the other regions of the world (10).

For a young British expert, Mark Leonard, the Union has become "a new type of empire", which does not impose its power by force. Quite simply, it constitutes an 'attractor' and any country that may want to join it must deeply change its whole arsenal of laws. In this respect, the Union may be called to "pacify" a region of the world representing a third of the world population – a tremendous project that may almost be described as missionary! Is everything really for the best in the best of all possible European worlds? There is a dual danger today: firstly, to build the Union against the will of its peoples, paving the way for all sorts of extremists, which would make for new blood baths; secondly, not to be able to meet new challenges and dangers quickly enough, such as the risk of a war on resources, which is an equally unacceptable prospect. This is why the "Olympic ring strategy" proposed above, with a Union that no longer "necessarily" keeps on growing, entering instead into associations with the many countries that want to join it today within new institutions focused on a few major challenges (the 'baskets'), will enable the Union to be more efficient. This strategy will also contribute to restoring public confidence and helping candidate countries as early as 2010 to become part of an Institution whose methods will give it the means to meet the most urgent challenges while keeping the doors open to the future.

- (1) *From Barcelona Process to Neighbourhood Policy*. M. Emerson and G. Noutcheva. CEPS Working Document 220/March 2005.
- (2) *The Reluctant Debutante. The European Union as promoter of democracy in its neighbourhood*. M. Emerson & Co. CEPS Working Document 223/July 2005.
- (3) *Que veut l'Europe ? Réflexions sur une nécessaire réappropriation*. Slavoj Zizek. Ed Climats, 2005.
- (4) *La France au miroir de son non*. Jérôme Jaffré. Le Monde.
- (5) *Le Rêve européen*. Jeremy Rifkin. Tarcher/Putnam, 2004.
- (6) *Why Europe will run the XXIst century*, by Mark Leonard. Center for European Reform.
- (7) *Les Droits de l'Homme sont-ils exportables ?* Joseph Yacoub. Coll. Ellipses, 2005.
- (8) *La Trahison des Elites*. Raoul Marc Jennar. Fayard
- (9) *Les Fossoyeurs de l'Europe*. Fabrice Amadeo. Bourin Ed., 2005.
- (10) *L'épopée des civilisations*. Bernard Nadoulek. Coll. Eyrolles, 2005.

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