

JEAN-LUC MÉLENCHON

THEY MUST ALL GO !

THERE'S NO TIME TO LOSE, WE NEED A CITIZENS' REVOLUTION



JEAN-LUC MÉLENCHON

THEY MUST ALL GO!

**THERE'S NO TIME TO LOSE, WE NEED A CITIZENS'
REVOLUTION**

For Églantine

“Nature and history in spite of their brutality and their ferocity are a cry of hope.”

Jean Jaurès, Buenos Aires, 1911

Unless otherwise indicated, the footnotes have been translated from the original French version of this work.

Translator's notes are identified by the acronym TN.

Translated by the left party : Hilary Péré and Romain Nguyen Van

Cover photograph : Remy Blang

Realization of the cover : Muriel Knezek

TABLE OF CONTENTS

“THEY MUST ALL GO!” 1

A NEW REPUBLICAN FOUNDATION..... 8

A Genuine Democratic Revolution - A New Foundation - Why a Constituent Assembly? - The People are Deserting the Ballot Box - The World is Becoming Blurred - A Change of Political Style - Change Begins in the Mind - Rebuilding the School System - The Best of the Best - Dismantle the Education Market - Free the Media - The Invisible People - Elections in the Media Too

ANOTHER WAY OF SHARING OUT WEALTH 24

The Hidden Hoard - Hand Back the Money - Social Apartheid - The Fear of Poverty - Social Retrieval! - The Money Guzzlers - Indecency: the Accounting Currency - The Nullards Grant Themselves a Reward - Let’s Banish the Financiers from Production! - Getting Rid of Bad Examples - Maximum Salary, Maximum Income - Our Night of the 4th of August

PULL OUT OF THE TREATY OF LISBON 38

A Broken Dream - A Globish Gargoyle - Europe in its Present Form is Not the Solution. It is the Problem - It Works Less Well and Costs More - Organised Pillage - Authoritarian Europe - The New European Totalitarianism - Pull Out of the Treaty of Lisbon - A New Referendum on Europe

ECOLOGICAL PLANNING 49

Green Capitalism Charlatans - A New Collective Consciousness - The Ecological Catastrophe is Already Upon Us - Free Trade Must Stop - Shorter Distribution Channels - Two Modes of Planning - Pulling Out of the Nuclear Industry

BUILDING ANOTHER PEACE..... 60

Disastrous Self-Centredness - The Clash of Civilisations: a Deadly Poison - The Example of the Russian Bogeyman - Hand in Hand with the Germans. But Which Germans? - Regionalist Fever - The Climatic Factor - The Arrogance of the G8 and G20 Countries - The American Risk - The Refusal of a Grand Transatlantic Market! - Complete Independence - Disarmament

IT IS POSSIBLE! 74

Audacity to Counter the Straitjacket - We Are Rich! - Creating a Citizens' Revolution in France - Let Us Dare!

“THEY Must ALL GO!”

“They must all go!” Soon this will be the slogan of millions of people. They will pull up the powerful by the roots because they’ve had enough of seeing them pillaging and wrecking our country, wasting the efforts of the workers, dilapidating the know-how, selling off our innovations and condemning the people of the world’s fifth economic power to suffer increasing poverty and a reduction of all the social entitlements that have been fought for and acquired over a century and a half of history. They will do this because they feel outraged by the arrogant behaviour of the money lovers, disgusted by the selfish way of life they impose, and furious with the evident ruses behind such slogans as “Work more to earn more”; “Moralise capitalism”; “A Grenelle¹ for the environment”; and so on. I hope that’s clear. The beautiful people, the satisfied, their high priests and moralisers who are at the top may well choke with indignation; they may well brandish their pathetic red card: “Populism!”, “Outrageous!” No matter. It doesn’t bother me. I can live with it.

¹ TN: Named after the original Grenelle agreements of May 1968 which were drawn up to resolve the government crisis arising from the students’ and workers’ revolt and the widespread strikes at the time. Large concessions were made but General De Gaulle called for general elections and they were never signed. The word is now given to consultations with different organisations, unions, etc. on all major societal subjects.

Jean-François Copé, President of the UMP at the *Assemblée Nationale*, expressing his fear said, “At the moment, there is a deplorable atmosphere of the night of the 4th of August².” Well your Lordship, it’s on its way! It is amusing to see how the “*Casse-toi, pov’con*”³ stickers edited by the Parti de Gauche, are sold out as fast as they can be printed and delivered. From this I conclude that when we move into a more active phase, the momentum surrounding “They must all go” will produce fireworks a thousand times bigger than at the outset. For the injunction will be aimed not only at the president, the king of his circle, and at his ministers - that government board of directors of the Fouquet’s clique - but also at all the members of the oligarchy which is benefiting from the present wastefulness. So, “They must all go!” the bosses who are too costly, the wizards of wealth who transform everything human into merchandise, the tax refugees, the financiers whose demands cripple firms. They must all go too those high priests of the so-called “decline of France”, who with their sordid refrains inject the poison of resignation. And while I’m about it, “They must all go” too, those anti-heroes of sport, gorged on money, dodging their taxes and quite immune to gratitude. We say to them, “Beat it! Out! Move over!”

The country is brimming over with talent, blocked behind the wall of money. Those who leave will be replaced within 24 hours by others better than they, who have more consideration for other people, are more inventive, less addicted to money, and more loyal to their republican country. Wherever I have been - in factories, offices, senior civil-service administrations, banks or the mainstream media - I have met with an overflowing energy and enthusiasm for a possible change. We need have no fear, nothing will be lacking.

If I speak with such assurance, it is because this same watchword in Spanish, “*Que se vayan to-dos*” has already done its work elsewhere. It is the slogan by which, one after the other, each of the revolutions of South America over the past 10 years have regenerated their countries. It is from this example that

² The night of 4 August 1789 when the Constituent Assembly signed a decree abolishing the privileges of the *Ancien Régime*. The abolition carried no indemnity.

³ TN: “Get lost you sad moron” (approximate translation): the reply made by Nicolas Sarkozy to a heckler in a crowd who was calling out to him.

I draw my cast-iron optimism. Those people, who are a thousand times less well-off than we, and are neighbours of a paranoid United States of America, have nevertheless turned the tables on the powerful, bare-handed. They have released an irresistible torrent of collective energy and have begun to rebuild their countries which the free market has ransacked. So, it is possible.

Of course, those countries, their revolutions and their leaders are judged with sarcastic scorn by the European media-political caste which considers them as a bunch of folklore natives, dwelling in countries too exotic for us ever to compare ourselves to. But there is one thing that is absolutely identical on both continents, and that is the confident arrogance, bursting with self-satisfaction of the conservative and social democratic nomenclature. People who in Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, and elsewhere, are at present seething with rage. For they did not see it coming. Strong and confident from having been in command forever, sure that they were applying “the only possible policy”, afloat on an ocean of massive abstention at the polls, they were first ejected from power, and then dissolved in the citizens’ scorn, sometimes in less than a month. Since then, their rage and their malicious scandal-mongering have been let loose in vain, for, repeatedly and massively, votes have confirmed the legitimacy of the new teams in power and of their policies. Normally, this success should interest the whole of the European left, which seems to be in the habit of subscribing to failure everywhere. But that has not been the case. The European social democrats are barking along with their Latino counterparts who are often corrupt to the core, and are sometimes even confirmed murderers.

For my part, I have studied those revolutions as closely as possible. I have found in them the indispensable ingredients for my own country. The goody-goodies make fun of me: “Bolivia is not France”, they say. Well, what a surprise! Thanks for reminding me! Yet these same nasty jokers have no scruples about imposing the same free-market recipes in all parts of the world - in Bolivia as in Hungary - wreaking the same havoc everywhere. Of course, for us there is no model. But there are experiences that can inspire, and examples that can be followed.

What I am calling for is a “citizens” revolution in France. The word “citizen” indicates both the means and the final aims of such an action. This duality is a decisive factor because of the puerile imagery that surrounds the word “revolution”, stupidly associating it with some kind of plot for an armed “*Grand Soir*”. A few of us were looking for a term that would correctly describe the emancipation that we want to happen. At one meeting, I had tried out “Revolution via the Ballot Box”, which finally is not explicit enough, even though the term does away with some violent myths. Then we went for “Democratic Revolution”, one of the terms used in Latin America. Finally that sounded vague. And Martine Aubry had already borrowed the term. Will it catch on or not? Her spin doctors will settle that. As for us, we were wondering how to name what is at the same time what we wish to do, the method, and the final goal. Then the term “Citizens’ Revolution” was mentioned, and we realised that the people of Ecuador were actually establishing the latter in their country in a spectacular way⁴. It was a good omen.

The revolution I wish for is first and foremost a citizen’s revolution, in that, whilst taking root in the social movement, it will be launched and led by the ballot paper and by elections. It is true that we shall have to vote a lot and often, given all there is to be done. This primacy of the ballot box has been the great contribution of the South American revolutions. Popular involvement is massive, multi-form and constant. And there is much voting, after extraordinarily fierce election campaigns! The old hackneyed refrain which says that left-wing revolutions cannot co-habit with democracy is archaic. Conversely, we can see very well how the conservatives are not on good terms with democracy. In Europe, the French, Dutch and Irish referenda on the Treaty of Lisbon have demonstrated that the decision of citizens is purely and simply cancelled when it does not conform to free-market dogma. And every day, the European Union increases this authoritarian drift.

⁴ Citizens’ revolution (“*revolución ciudadana*”) was the concept proposed by Rafael Correa for the presidential election of 2006, which he won. This revolution was first and foremost constitutional. By referendum it gave full powers to the “National Constituent Assembly”. The government is called the “Government of the Citizens’ Revolution”.

In a citizens' revolution, the source of power is in the people. The people's will is the sole norm, to which all must conform. It must be active and obeyed at all times, and not exceptional and treated with scorn, as is the case with the present regime.

The citizens' revolution is neither a cosmetic nor a face lift for the Old World. It is a reversal of power. Power, which will be taken back from the oligarchy, from our presidential monarch and from the rule of money. It will turn them out. It will change the institutions in order to reach these objectives. It will overturn the primacy of finance, abolish the dogma of "free and undistorted competition", reorganise production and the sharing of wealth. It will also decide what we mean by "wealth": all that is human first of all. Thus the citizens' revolution will be a revolution of the different institutions, of social relationships and of the dominant culture.

Next, this will be a "citizens'" revolution because it is a case of doing, not what is good for this or that category of people, but what is good for all, as human beings. It is in this sense that the citizens' revolution is republican. It must define what the common interest is, then impose it by law, and when necessary, enforce it over individual interests each time it is necessary. I am well aware that this notion of common interest gives rise to radical criticism. For some people, the sum of individual interests is enough to define what the common good is. The common interest, according to their interpretation is thus an ideological fancy which leads to totalitarianism. For others, the interests at stake between the rulers and those they rule are necessarily in conflict. Consequently, the common interest can only be an illusion at the service of the rulers, who use the expression in order to put over the idea that their norms are in the common interest.

To its credit, I think that political ecology has settled this debate. For there exists a common interest, objectively established and common to the whole of humanity, which can be expressed in every field. It concerns the protection of the ecosystem on which human life depends. The citizens' revolution is directed by political ecology. Obviously that does not solve the problem of how to decide what is good for all. There is nothing absolute in this domain. Everything should remain

relative and reversible. We must leave this question to collective debate. For this debate to be efficacious it must be free, with argumentation as the sole requisite. This citizens' debate should not be just a one-party debate. There must be no dogma, no "religious" injunctions. In consequence the citizens' revolution is a radically secular affair. Fore-warned is fore-armed, is it not?

This book is neither a manifesto nor a programme. Both of these are available. They have been drawn up by the Parti de Gauche activists with whom I am committed⁵. Furthermore, there is an on-going public debate with all those who wish to be involved in the preparation of a Front de Gauche government platform. I am writing these lines to a different end: that of sharing my optimism and enthusiasm with others. And of spreading the will to act rather than to quibble. I see so many long faces, so much resignation, so much bitterness and chewing over of prejudice. We need to turn the page. The shipwreck of this new age of capitalism and its radical blindness in the face of the mortal devastation of our ecosystem leaves us no choice. We have before us a wonderful invitation to act and to imagine ways of getting human civilisation out of the present deadlock. Faced with the extent of the damage, we not only have a free hand, but are under an obligation to act in an entirely different way. At the start of this century, is it not tremendously stimulating to know that we are being called upon to invent new rules for living in society?

This book is voluntarily short. It does not treat all the subjects that matter. It is an outline of the way to set the citizens' movement in action, if the vote should so decide. I am voluntarily taking my wishes for reality. It lends them the force of contagion. This method seems to me quite stimulating. It is radicalism as I understand it: very concrete and governmental. The fact of having a governmental policy does not mean that you have to reduce your objectives, as some people keep on repeating. On the other hand I don't deny that I am often exasperated when I see what I call, for want of a better term, "the Other Left", whose sole political project is restricted to a mere compilation of union claims. And finally, what a lot of rubbish those political marketing slogans such as "My project is yours" are. The

⁵ www.lepartidegauche.fr

activists of the left have accumulated precious knowledge and experience. It is their duty to put all this at the disposal of everyone in the form of operational political proposals. Those who really want to overturn society must know how to do so and to what end. This outline is there for that purpose. To make debate possible. And to give inspiration.

A NEW REPUBLICAN FOUNDATION

A Genuine Democratic Revolution

So, what is proposed here is not just an old-fashioned UMP-PS¹ style alternation. Those who are hoping that after Sarkozy France will be satisfied with a simple change of presidential style have got another think coming. That is not what the country wants. Best be prepared for this without flinching. A citizens' revolution is not only a governmental political programme, it is also the action by which the people recover the reins of government in all sectors of society. All sectors, without exception. Nor is it a question of declaring, as used to be the case that "the mines are for the miners and the land is for those who work on it". You don't destroy the dictatorship of the shareholders just to establish corporate government. The citizens' revolution proposes, the "primacy", as it were, of the common interest in every domain. Method is as important as action. Popular involvement is the key word. The driving force is the social movement. The citizens are its heroes. A citizen is a strange creature. A mutant. To become one you have to discard all prejudice and self-interest in order to propose what is good for all. That is what will be asked of everyone. Each person, whatever his or her social condition, will be called upon to get involved in everything, everywhere, and at all times.

¹ TN: The UMP (Union for a Popular Movement) is a centre-right political party in France, being one of the two major contemporary political parties in the country along with the centre-left PS (Socialist Party).

Of course, the approach of the citizens' revolution will differ depending on the sector concerned. You do not go about drawing up a plan with railway personnel and rail passengers in order to achieve the objective of "zero lorries" crossing the country by road, in the same way as you go about overturning the mass media system. The method you use for setting up a public financial service is not the same as that for re-building the health system. There are many more examples. Whatever the domain, the aim is to identify the common interest and to set up procedures to bring this about. All those who make proposals, introduce actions and carry out controls, will follow this requirement. They will do so as citizens. This revolution is first and foremost a political revolution.

A New Foundation

In this sense, the citizens' revolution represents a comprehensive overhaul of our country. At this very moment I hesitate to write "a new foundation" for the country. In fact, I think we really need to go back to square one, as it were. My reasoning on this subject is quite concrete: what the country needs is a constituent assembly. I can already see people raising their hands in horror. A constituent assembly! It's outrageous! As I remember it, those prudes were not so shocked when the constitution was modified recently. In fact it has been modified 24 times since the original coup de force by which it was established in 1958 - even though its supporters presented it as a model of stability - and 10 times since the year 2000! An average of once a year! And all that to such an extent that some of the latest modifications have not yet been transposed into law and thus cannot be enforced. One example concerns the right to retire at the age of 60. If the dispositions relating to the organisation of a referendum on popular initiative provided for in the last modification to the constitution² had been set out in fundamental law, we would have been able to collect the signatures to organise a referendum on the subject.

² The last revision to the constitution was that of 21 July 2008.

So, instead of reforming the present constitution by bits and pieces, as has been done in the past, and which insidiously and dramatically alters the balance of power, we need to change things completely. Above all, the convening of a constituent assembly would mean that every French person would be called upon to become involved personally in the collective re-writing of the pact that unites them as a people and as a nation. We are talking about a new republican foundation for the country itself.

Why a Constituent Assembly?

There's no use saying that there are more urgent things to do. I took good note that in all the countries of South America where there has been a new democratic upsurge, they began by convening a constituent assembly. It could have been said that there were more urgent things to do in those countries, which were submerged by poverty and wrecked by neo-conservative policies. But, when I was there, they explained to me that it was necessary to have a constituent assembly in order to legitimise power again, in response to the challenge presented by the sheer amplitude of abstention, notably among the poor. Now, you cannot bring about a fundamental democratic change in a country if the people are nowhere to be found. The constituent assembly was for them a powerful exercise in the re-appropriation by the people of political democracy. In Venezuela for example, you had to have seen the articles of the new constitution which were visible all over the place - even printed on packets of pasta - to understand how, at grass roots level, millions of poor people became involved in hundreds of debates, as the drafting of the text proceeded. People who subsequently turned out massively to elect the constituent members. This is how a dear friend, Max Arvelaiz, the young man in charge of President Chavez's diplomatic office described the situation to me: "The poor and the common people thought that leaders were all the same, and that in any case elections and institutions were not for them. As long as they have not changed their minds, our democracy will remain a sham. And what about our programme? How can it be made to last? How

can we resist in the face of a counter attack from the reactionary powers and their media?” Since then, the Chavists have won eleven elections out of twelve. And the people took to the streets *en masse* to rescue their president from the clutches of the putschists who were preparing to shoot him³. My reasoning follows the same line.

The constituent assembly in France will personify the rebirth of our people, whereby it will give our republican nation a new foundation. Because for the moment, in the face of the abuse, betrayals and different trafficking of Sarkozy’s crew and the social abuse it inflicts on our people, the voting booths are emptying fast! To such an extent that abstention has taken the form of a cold, civic insurrection. “They must all go!” they say under their breath. I say it out loud.

The People are Deserting the Ballot Box

It is indeed the case that at each election new records of abstention are recorded. So the next day we weep, and then we forget. Much more exciting subjects take over. An example of this was the fabricated controversy on the opening of brothels which was brought up just before the second round of the regional elections, following the abstention peak of the first round when one out of two voters had stayed home. That was 15% more than the time before! But the show must go on they say. There has been a devastating void at each election since Nicolas Sarkozy was elected in 2007. The municipal elections of 2008 were submerged by abstention: 8 million people said, “Who cares?” A historic record for these elections. And yet we were repeatedly given the same old serenade: “proximity elections”, “homespun elected representatives”. The municipal elections were supposed to attract an overwhelming number of voters. But this paternalistic blah- blah was lost with all on board, in an ocean of sullen disavowal. Then the show moved on. With no more success. A new record was set: 20

³ On 11 April 2002, a group of military putschists, supported by the United States illegally detained President Hugo Chavez. This event is related in a documentary film *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised* by Kim Bartley and Donnacha O’Brian.

million votes disappeared as compared with the presidential elections. The void was filled with a new outflow of regretful commentaries. People were soon tired of the bragging of the president's friends who claimed to have won the battle of the survivors. What came next? The regional elections of 2010. More trouble! The lists of the presidential majority lost three quarters of the Sarkozy vote. In other words, 14 million fewer votes were cast. I shall stop there: there is no end to this phenomenon. We know what the result is: nobody believes in anything anymore. This is especially true among young people. No decision seems legitimate. No authority is really respected. With such a state of mind, what is destroyed is not only the moral and political principle of public spiritedness; the country itself is breaking up. Now France and its republic are one. Such is its identity. If we give up on our citizenship we cease being the people of this nation and become the mere occupants of a land, of a territory.

In this context, the coincidence between the Woerth–Bettencourt affair⁴ and the butchering of the right to retirement was a timely reminder of the sarcastic scorn of the presidential entourage. At present, the country is beside itself, both literally and metaphorically.

The World is Becoming Blurred

How can they continue to govern in such conditions? By pushing the days along one at a time, that's how. By making reality as confused as possible. Under Sarkozy there is permanent diversion. His multiple gesticulations dissolve all landmarks. Right and left, top and bottom, back and front, everything is mixed up! Socialists in the government. Right and left seem to have ceased to exist. Then top and bottom disappear too, when those who exercise power use gutter language ostentatiously, and flaunt their vulgar, upstart glitz! Back and front disappear also in sordid subterfuge. Well! Well! What have we here? The European Constitution! We thought it was behind us after the “no” to the referendum! Well, that's being

⁴ TN: There was a suspected financial link between Liliane Bettencourt, the owner of L'Oreal, and the minister Eric Woerth. The latter resigned over the scandal in which his wife was also involved.

too naïve, here it is again. Right before you! It's just like the author of the original text, Giscard d'Estaing, said, all they did was make it illegible. They did it deliberately, by cutting and pasting! No one can do better than this lot when it comes to killing the meaning of words so as to stop people thinking. For "Reform" read being fleeced; for "Equity": arousing jealousy; for "Secularism": recognising and subsidising all religions; and for "Republic": repression and law enforcement; and so on. Nothing means anything anymore, unless it means the opposite or something else again. In such a context, everything which embodies any form of authority in our society is swept down the drain of disgust. Indifference or defiance vies with rejection, and sometimes with hate. Opinion polls show a deep contempt for elected representatives, journalists, magistrates, and the police. What consent remains for the rules of the game when all those who uphold them are rejected? So the temptation to use force spreads quickly. Henceforth, punishment for insulting behaviour rains down on more than 30,000 people each year. People are arrested by their thousands. Almost 5% of the population old enough to be imprisoned is held in custody each year! Not to mention the grotesque complaints that are lodged for "insulting behaviour towards the Head of State", against people who use his own expression "*Casse-toi pov'con*"⁵, as did a facetious demonstrator during a presidential procession. In short, there is a barely-concealed attempt to criminalise social protest, and even media opposition. These harmful measures should not be taken lightly. They are diversionary actions which put the accent on law-and-order, and are building up, day by day, one after the other, gradually permeating peoples' minds. At the present time the Roma population is being hounded, people are being harassed because of their visible difference. This is a scenario which makes the blood run cold, of even the most insensitive. And yet, the well-to-do have their minds at ease, the *blasé* are resigned to everything. Life goes on. Things have always been this way. You are born, you die. There have always been the rich and the poor. There is nothing new under the sun my dear sir. Whilst popular wrath rises from the depths, a gentle purring puts all political

⁵ Hervé Eon, a Parti de Gauche activist received a court sentence for having brandished a placard with the words "*Casse-toi pov'con*" as the presidential car drove by. TN: The phrase may be roughly translated as "Get lost you sad moron".

debating to sleep. But these same old soporific tunes work only if we don't contradict them.

A Change of Political Style

I am well aware that my way of speaking, loud and blunt, transgresses the smooth, fixed order of society. It is a line of action as much as a state of mind. This book is meant to follow the same pattern. But we can't hide the fact that much harm has already been done, and we need to deploy a considerable effort if we are to work up peoples' enthusiasm again. The citizens' revolution cannot progress successfully unless we find a way to reply to the henceforth deeply-anchored suspicion of institutional political action. We must be aware of this suspicion and answer it.

For example, the constituent members of the revolution would not be eligible for re-election in the following assembly, just as in 1789⁶. Nor would the out-going members of the previous assemblies. That goes without saying, for it is necessary to renew and revitalise the national representation - on the left as well as on the right. But above all, it is at the top that things need changing. Today our monarch fills us with indignation. But it is better to blame the system which enabled his accession to power than to attack him personally. We need to turn the page on "presidentialism". A nation of civic-minded people wants nothing to do with this paternalistic archaism. If we are to have a decent adult political existence, we have to get rid of the egotistic fantasies of would-be presidents. We need to attain civic dignity. This requires a good, stable, parliamentary regime.

⁶ A decree of 14 September 1789 forbade the members of the National Constituent Assembly to stand for office at the following elections.

Change Begins in the Mind

I place the constituent assembly at the top of the list of tasks we need to accomplish in order to get the citizens' revolution under way. For all that, this does not mean that all the changes we are aiming at depend on the new institutional framework that will have been built. The new foundation of our country must be that of society itself, in all sectors: the firm, the neighbourhood, the township, the county, the school. Everywhere citizenship must be in control. This is not just an abstract process. For citizenship to progress it must form an intrinsic part of the citizen himself – or herself. Condorcet⁷ was the first to epitomize this notion: “A republic is not possible without republicans”. So yes, everything begins in the hearts and minds.

The first means of this emancipation is the way in which the citizens' revolution itself is carried out, and its capacity to lead and to educate. Then there are the cultural and artistic works of those who decide to throw their creativity into our combat. A poem, a song, a painting, a play, a sketch are often more effective than any number of meetings. On this level we cannot and must not anticipate anything at all. Individuals and groups will be given complete freedom of imagination in this domain. But society itself possesses the tools whose function it is to prepare everyone to play a civic role. Two of these roles are very controversial: education, and the media. These should be at the base of civic consciousness.

Rebuilding the School System

Have no fear; I do not intend to describe here the school system I wish for. It would take a whole book for that. Besides I have already written such a book⁸, when I was Minister of Professional Education. There remains my profession of faith. I firmly believe that the acquisition of a professional qualification should be

⁷ Nicolas de Condorcet (1743–1794): mathematician and politician. Author of a report on public education (20 April 1792) which advocated free education for all.

⁸ *L'Ecole Globale*, L'Harmattan, 2001.

the correct guide-line for a humanist school-curriculum. But I'd better stop there. One can soon find oneself jabbering on that subject. In any case, it is a hot potato, and I imagine it will form the object of tough debate. Here, for once, instead of stating what governmental political action can bring to the schools, I want to evoke what schools should contribute to civic life. What do we ask of education? That it prepare young people who are entrusted to its care to become citizens. Such is the founding role of republican schools. I can only repeat the intellectual definition of the word citizen: to be capable of stipulating not what is good for oneself, but what is good for all. To do that one has to be able to remain at a certain impartial distance, leaving aside one's personal interests and one's prejudices. That is something that can be learned. We know how to go about it. It is not a question of civic instruction. It is a case of individual sensitivity. That is why the school of the republic must be a secular school. For its vocation is to free the mind, not to fill it with dogmatic locking mechanisms. In such a school, it is a question not only of teaching, but of educating: an important nuance. It is about acquiring knowledge and discernment thanks to learning. That goes without saying. But it is also a question of awakening and educating taste and sensitivity, so that everyone can feel and speak the language of reality, from music to mathematics. Here, we are talking about culture, about art, about all that should nourish us throughout our existence in order to reach personal fulfilment. By which I mean we should become people who are capable of understanding by empathy, as much as by reasoning, the potential of our fellow creatures.

The Best of the Best

That is why we must aim at excellence. Our objective must be to be the most highly educated nation in the world. This is something that is easy to plan for and to measure. In order to do all this we need a gauge to test human progress on the subject. There exists a prototype of this type of indicator of human development, devised by the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), in order to classify countries based on criteria other than their differences in wealth.

The fact is we have no other choice. France has no other natural resource more abundant and productive than its people. Grey matter is our only raw material. Fortunately we are not setting out from nothing. Whatever the prophets of doom may think, our education system is one of the best in the world. For example, France is the third industrialised country for the number of qualified people in science, as a ratio to the working population - well ahead of the United States, Germany and Japan. Education has to be the top priority for the country in terms of the common interest. Right from childhood and throughout life, we must educate ourselves and become better people, for ourselves and for others. The citizens' revolution is political humanism.

Dismantle the Education Market

Obviously, we must re-examine the devastation that has been wrought by current policies. I accuse the right-wing government teams in place since 2002 of deliberately and methodically breaking up our republican education system and of directing people towards the private sector. By which I do not mean denominational schools only. These are but one aspect of the problem with which we are confronted. I am thinking of the capitalist sector of initial and continuing education. The aim of the free-marketeers is to constitute an education market. If we look at the initial education sector, this is worth \$1,800bn per year worldwide. Free-market organisations such as the OECD are pushing relentlessly towards turning education into a merchant value. Several basic conditions have already been met for this in France. One, for instance, is the abolition of the school catchment areas. This has released a mass of potential clients as consumers of education services. There is a general move towards making the schools autonomous. This is being done in order to introduce keen competition among commercial education suppliers. It is also the case in the universities. When the whole process has been completed therefore, each of these merchants of education, in competition with each other, will sell their mixture of more or less reputable diplomas. The clientele of what remains of the public sector will have become

thoroughly disgusted. This project brings with it a string of dangers for our country. No young person will be able to study other than *à la carte* and according to the state of his or her bank account. The whole social and political model which represents the republican ideal is being undermined. The programme of the citizens' revolution is first and foremost to thoroughly overturn this competitive logic. By this I mean that we would cancel straight away all the measures that have been taken which were aimed at transforming education into a merchant value. Obviously that implies that public funds be strictly reserved for state schools. But also that all measures that introduce competition into schools be abolished. Inevitably such a policy will displease those who are benefiting from it. It goes against some powerful financial interests and some fat situational revenues, even within the state education sector. Among the academic establishment and senior officials, some of those who survive all political alternation see themselves in business as managing directors of education centres. The battle looks like being tough. Here is where the citizens' revolution can be fully enforced. But we shall not let ourselves be intimidated as the left did when faced with the henchmen of the Catholic Church over the Savary law⁹. On the contrary, we shall accept confrontation, we shall nourish it and the citizens' votes will settle the issue.

Free the Media

As the starting point I put forward the idea that the citizen must use his, or her, brain in the service of the common good. That's all very well. But how? First of all by getting an education. But the schools can't do everything. You have to do things for yourself. That is why it is necessary to stay informed day by day. Is that possible today? It is quite unbearable to see how the media treat the right to be informed: lots of noise but no depth. You have to do some screening. But how can the millions of decent ordinary people who get 90% of their information from the television news do this? On the main evening news viewers are treated to a high

⁹ TN: A proposed law concerning private education and secularity. It was withdrawn in August 1984 following large demonstrations by Roman Catholic activists.

dose of stress. The predominant values of the media shown are blood, suspicion of others and self-deprecation. Form is at the service of content. Short shots! No time for reasoning. Emotion over reasoning. Impulse over emotion: sex and violence. These products are end-of-aisle displays, put there to rivet people's attention. All that makes it impossible to produce any coherent thought. But as Patrick Le Lay¹⁰ said, the most important thing is "to make human brain time available for commercials". In fact, the media system is not content with just reporting reality to the public; it presents a selection of reformulated and rehashed facts which modifies the minds which "receive" it. "But journalists have a conscience and a professional code of ethics", people tell me. Of course they do. But so what! Don't they also live in society? As with all other professions, journalists have their own particular ideological conditioning, both social and material. The pressure of their social condition is very strong. There is, at the bottom of the ladder, a reserve army of young people with short-term contracts and trainees, employed as casual labour. In such social conditions, who is going to seek out their boss and criticise the way the media treats a piece of news? Not many journalists are free enough to be able to free themselves. They need to eat like everyone else! Standardisation becomes embedded in people's minds. Pens and cameras conform and self-censure. This is more due to fear for the future than to that of a telephone call from the media owners.

Finally there are the material conditions of the work itself. Especially in television. When you have five subjects to treat in one day, how can you treat them correctly? What does the journalist do therefore to minimise the risk of misinterpretation? He, or she, conforms to the dominant ideology! In what way? By following all existing prejudice! It is the very negation of the profession. Is it possible to resist when you are working in the heart of the main media system? To say you can is rubbish. For proof of this, let's look at the Bettencourt affair. It started out on the outer edge of the media system and stayed there. For a certain time. What is dangerous is when the system points all its guns in one direction,

¹⁰ TN: Patrick Le Lay, President of TV channel TF1.

assigning the different roles according to its puerile logic! That Lagardère's¹¹ newspapers and magazines say no ill of the system is to be expected. But if they all repeat the same thing on controversial subjects, the manipulation has no odour and is only detected when people have become seriously intoxicated. The very existence of free thought is called into question by these media feeding-bottles.

The Invisible People

In fact, the most serious manipulation is not to be found in the presentation of political events in the news programmes. It is something more underhand, which insidiously impregnates people's minds without their realising it. Quite simply it is the representation of the world which is imparted by what is shown; and equally by what is not shown. In other words it is the "As seen on TV" phenomenon, but also its opposite: "Not seen on TV". And if you haven't seen it, then it doesn't exist. Or is not important. Daily doctoring! Guess who is invisible on the telly? The majority of our people. The working class represent 23% of the people we see on the screen, whereas they make up 23% of the population. If you add all other employees, that makes only 18% of people shown. Yet workers and employees make up 53% of the population, that is to say the sociological majority of the country. Women's lot is not much better. Apart from being given the roles of bimbos and decorative commercial roles, they are mainly on the side-lines. On the other hand those who hold professional jobs represent 60% of the people seen on the screen, though they make up only 15% of the population. Television thus presents a society that is totally imaginary: a deceptively middle-class, male-dominated world, from which workers and employees have disappeared. When the French national audio-visual council (CSA) published a report which revealed these facts, I was struck by something very interesting. The commentaries on the report focused on an entirely different aspect: they regretted the disappearance of "diversity" from the screen. Since "diversity" is something which exists in all

¹¹ TN: Jean-Luc Lagardère. The Lagardère group is present in 40 different countries in many sectors: press, television, advertising, publishing, sport and the aero-space industry.

sectors of society, this is a subject which can be treated, without mentioning the bothersome subject of social inequality. Whew! But sooner or later all that will come to light. Discriminations have the bad habit of being superimposed and cross-checked.

Contempt for real people, lack of concern for their vital participation in the life of the country, is mental apartheid. This, for us, is a serious political barrier. For the very people we would encourage to come to the fore are being convinced that they are not even worthy of being seen.

Elections in the Media Too

It is evident that what is shown formats our consciousness. We have the right and even the duty to make this our business. To do so is not a threat to freedom. Generally, I think we have the right to choose whether or not we finance so-called “reality television”, television games that deaden the mind, or the increasing presence on the screen of abject violence, and so many other degrading things which debase those who participate by watching them. What we have to do is give a chance to those who propose something different. I am not claiming that this should be imposed, or that we bring in a system of surveillance by some kind of censorship committee. What I propose is that we leave it to the citizens in this domain. At the moment, we are waiting to see who our monarch will nominate as president of *France Télévisions*. After which, we shall cover the successful applicant with ineffectual sarcasm. I suggest that there is another way to choose the president. Those in the profession could draw up a list of required qualifications and aptitudes. Then, after having interviewed each candidate, they could let everyone who pays their television licence vote for the candidate of their choice. If the radio and television flagship could recharge its batteries by drawing its energy from the people, then we should have no trouble in extending this method. Voting, public participation. Everywhere! That is what we need. The newspapers supervised by the subscribers - they know them better than the latest editorial recruits; the editorial staff under the control of their committee. And so

on. Co-operatives everywhere. No press empire anywhere. The existing ones should be dismantled. Above all we must untie the mental leashes! Thus, the norm in the editorial offices should be job security, rather than job insecurity; the right to be given the time to do the job well, rather than the obligation to do it quickly; time for continuous training, rather than makeshift training as the need arises. Finally we have had enough of the unmovable sacred cows! Everyone should have the right to a sabbatical: to travel, teach and return to the job. What I am saying may be resumed thus: it is impossible to carry out a citizens' revolution without entering the media, fully and firmly, with a view to their emancipation.

Now let's move on and look at the purse strings. Let's talk money. Money that is lacking and that we have to find.

ANOTHER WAY OF SHARING OUT WEALTH

Money! It seems it can change a pumpkin into a carriage. And yet, look at that old lady who is bursting with money¹. She can't remember whether she is the owner of an island or not. What is sure though is that she has sharks in her house! A bunch of smart Alecs taking advantage of her deafness, and her lackeys who are skinning her alive. Does she even look happy?

Money! It ought to be a simple public asset. But no. Cash is the king of the carnival. Profit, which is a private taxation, is called value. Public taxation, which is destined for the common good, is referred to as costs. In place of the public financial service which should guarantee the circulation of a vital flow there is the buzzing of a swarm of predatory banks. It is they who enjoy the exclusive privilege of creating money. Why is that so? For money was always an attribute of central power, as old as human society itself. Banks are tentacular; they refashion the world as it suits them, outside all concrete reality. 90% of the money that is in circulation in the world has no connection with transactions concerning material goods. We save the banks from drowning in their own venom and they bite the hand that saved them – ferociously. Look how they are now treating the countries that have become indebted to them! Money is as abundant for them as it is rare for us. We know the old tune: “Where will you find the money?” “There’s no room for manoeuvre.” Here is how to break this bad spell: “Money? There’s a lot of it, and it belongs to us. We’re going to take it back, and we’re not afraid!”

¹ TN: Liliane Bettencourt. Owner of L’Oréal.

The Hidden Hoard

The European statistics are indisputable². I underline this fact because the figures I shall now quote have been contested many times, as if I had made them up. Jean Peyrelevade, former president of the Crédit Lyonnais bank, made himself ridiculous by calling me a liar in *Le Monde*. I mention this anecdote to show how the diffusion of certain figures can be a contentious issue.

Over the past 25 years, the redistribution of all that has been produced by the French people has been modified in the most unscrupulous fashion imaginable. 10% of the total wealth produced has been transferred from the pockets of those who produced it to those of the owners and shareholders, even though the efforts that went into production after 1983 led to a phenomenal increase of 30% in productivity gains. This daylight robbery represents €195bn per year - a sum that would enable a general increase in salary of around 20% for 24 million employees. Just €30bn of this hoard would suffice to increase the minimum wage to €1,500 per month. A mighty change for the 3 million employees concerned! It would only cost €4bn to increase the minimum social benefits by 30%. 3 million people are concerned and 6 million dependants. That is a lot of people and they are not among life's most fortunate. We could make plenty more comparisons of this kind which would show in a striking fashion what a great deal of happiness depends on the restitution of this money, and we could thus challenge those who are confiscating it.

Hand Back the Money

Once recovered, whether distributed directly as salaries or invested in public services, the €195bn per year would represent a huge breath of air. This is sorely needed to revitalise the country, for it would put new life into all the vital circuits. Instead of vanishing in financial bubbles which wreck and ruin

² Eurostat: Directorate General of the European Commission charged with providing the European institutions with statistics. <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/eurostat/home>

everything, the money would circulate. With VAT at 19.6% and with income tax and CSG³ at 40%, some of it would return to the coffers of the state to be redistributed between pockets and services. This figure of €195bn is known to all. If we were to restore the portions of the cake to what they were 25 years ago, would this plunge France into war communism? Everyone knows that this is not so. And so far I have only mentioned the global distribution of the wealth produced between labour and capital. Let us look at the ordinary - the contribution of all to the common good through income tax. That is to say, the taxation of labour and of capital. In our turn we shall employ the profuse vocabulary which usually precedes the spoliation of the benefits that employees have obtained and enjoyed: “Equity” is the sly cry of those who want to match the period of retirement insurance contributions between the public and the private sector - in the least favourable way, of course. “Equity” we shall ironically reply, when we tax the revenues of capital and labour in equal proportion. Thus, €1,000 “earned” overnight on the stock exchange during sleep will not be less taxed than €1,000 earned by the sweat of the brow. In reality, capital is taxed at 18% whereas labour, on average, at 42%. In France that represents a difference of €100bn, which could be recuperated. Each year! That is more than the deficit of the government budget. 20 times more than the usual annual deficit of the pension schemes. In the name of “equity” we shall joyfully put an end to this privilege so that everyone can live well. To do so is urgent.

Social Apartheid

We are the fifth richest nation in the world. At the same time there are 8 million poor people in our country. The last official statistics for the period 2004 to 2007, showed a terrible increase: a further 1 million people were added to this figure. That means that 400,000 unfortunate people sink into poverty each year in France. And how many more are clinging to the edge of the cliff? Already there

³ TN: *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*: supplementary social security contribution in aid of the underprivileged.

are all those women who are stuck in precarious and part-time jobs. Among this great mass of people, 2 million work from morn 'til night, killing their lives as they trudge along and lose time in transport, and who are nevertheless poor. 2 million people are in grossly inadequate housing, among which there are 600,000 children and 100,000 people with no fixed address. To whom may now be added another 500,000 people with no personal home. Among them, around 100,000 live in hotels, and not luxury hotels either! Then there are 100,000 who live on camp sites. Not for leisure of course. All those people have nowhere else to go. And that is not all; there are yet another 40,000 desperate people who live in what are modestly called "makeshift dwellings". And so many of them are young people. What a start to life! Such is our country, France: there is not one large city where you don't find men, women, and children sleeping on the ground because they have nowhere to go. They are under archways and bridges, on benches and in cardboard boxes, as thousands of passers-by step around them in embarrassed indifference. Citizens? How could they really be citizens? This situation is an extreme illustration of the link between equality, sharing out of wealth and citizenship. If some of us can have no other preoccupation than that of surviving from one day to the next, we are not equal in our right to participate in the affairs of the community. The sharing out of wealth is not just the social sector of the citizens' revolution. It is its starting point. For there is no question that we accept any longer that such a large number of our people remain in a situation which condemns them to poverty, thus depriving them of their sovereignty.

The Fear of Poverty

The reality of widespread poverty is a phenomenon which is still denied by a large number of the elite. We are so ashamed of ourselves that we have become used to putting up with the insufferable. We prefer not to think about it. The direct link between the extreme accumulation of wealth and extreme poverty is kept hidden. It is quite obvious that the free-market system has deprived the greater number in order to endow the most privileged. So, those who had little received no

more. Above all, by reducing labour rights in the name of flexibility, the salaried class has been disarmed and fragmented. The social mistreatment of women spreads fear in homes. The fear of social downgrading plays an important part in the spreading of social selfishness. This vicious circle feeds upon itself so well. The visibility of the poor, except in those places where the rich take their vacations, does not bother the system, even though it is the proof of its failure from the human point of view. The more visible the poor, the more we are afraid of becoming poor ourselves, and the less we fight, for fear of losing what we have. The less we fight, the more deregulation progresses and the more new poor there are. This progression which is like a time-bomb, explains why so many people increase their revenue in such an indecent fashion and why so few rebel. What the imbalance in power renders impossible for the time being must be recovered by the use of civil rights. In other words, the necessary recovery of social rights will be carried out by the legislative branch of the citizen's revolution.

Social Retrieval!

We must not be afraid of taking. And taking a lot from those at the top. What a permanent field day the age in which we live is for those in power. The number of rich people has risen concomitantly with that of the poor. Since 2004, the number of people with more than €100,000 annual income has increased by 28%. Of course rich and poor are not equal in number. But we can ask ourselves if it is worth heaping misery on so many, so as to stuff so few to bursting point? Between 2004 and 2007, 10% of the richest people collected 33% of the increases in revenue! They alone reap 25% of the country's revenue. In other words one quarter! At the same time, the 10% at the bottom of the ladder have to share the tiny crumbs of what is left, that is to say of 3.5% of total revenue! Since 1998, the average income of 0.01% of the richest people has increased by 51% - that is for 6,000 people. During the same period, the salaries of 23 million people - 90% of all employees - have increased by only 3.1%. So, the income of 6,000 gluttons has increased seventeen times more quickly than that of 23 million people! Of course,

the above-mentioned percentages do not concern the same amounts of money. But all this is unlikely to change if we do not set things in order. As a recent official report by INSEE⁴ states “inequality is increasing to the advantage of the highest revenues”! Who is going to believe that such guzzling will stop of its own accord? Those who are filled to satiety think that they are quite within their rights. To take their plate away we need a balance of power and a high level of civic consciousness. And nothing less than a revolution.

The Money Guzzlers

At the top end of these ultra-rich who are bursting with money are the bosses of the CAC 40⁵. Contaminated to the core by finance, the heads of these firms sit on their stock options like hens hatching their eggs. Big finance has made them psycho-dependent. For the most part they live outside the actual reality of their firms’ production. Do they even know what it is? Their pulse beats to the rhythm of financial performance. The progression of their salaries has no rational relationship to that of the wealth that is actually created by their firm in the country. The proof of it is that since the beginning of the 2000s, the incomes of the bosses of the CAC 40 has increased eight-fold. Just like that! Those who spout about “salary moderation”, the advocates of austerity, those who vow to eliminate salary costs, and those who would eradicate “social privileges”, have increased their own salaries by 700 %! This means that a good number of these CAC 40 bosses earn more in one day than a worker on minimum wage earns in one year. Moneyed people are in the front row. French bankers and bosses of insurance companies have again stuffed themselves full of bonuses this year (2010), crisis or no crisis. They have shared out €2bn among themselves. 2 billion!

⁴ TN : *Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques*: French national institute of economical and statistical information.

⁵ CAC 40: the 40 largest firms in France quoted on the stock exchange.

Indecency: the Accounting Currency

Perforce, these dancing figures no longer evoke anything concrete. What unit of account can we use so that everyone can get a clear idea of the situation? I don't know. Euros? We would soon lose our bearings. Some people get a better idea by converting into francs. In order to make comparisons that are understandable from a social point of view, I have decided to count in terms of the SMIC⁶ (minimum wage). It is enough to make you dizzy. In 2009, the year of the banking crisis, Baudoin Prot, the big shot in BNP Paribas bank received 200 SMIC years - an increase in salary of 131%! In euros that represents a salary of €2.37m for 2009, the year of the banking crisis. And that's not all: for that same year, €4.6m in stock-options were at his disposal in an account. This fabulous sum represented an increase of 430% in one year. It must be said that BNP Paribas is full to bursting, like a tick on a stray dog's neck. Still in the year 2009, it made a profit of €5.8bn. It also set aside €500m for bonuses for its managers and traders. That makes an average bonus of €250,000 per egghead. Do you know what the average salary⁷ is in this country? It is €2,000 euros. For one year's speculation, these big money grabbers at BNP get a bonus equivalent to 10 years of the average salary. That is the tariff for the top brass. At the bottom end, for those behind the counter, it's bread sandwiches for everyone. The 200,000 BNP employees only got a 1% general increase and a €1,200 bonus: a good net monthly SMIC at the bottom end, more than 250 SMICs apiece at the top. Can you get any greedier than that?

Well yes you can. At AXA, the boss Henri de Castries dealt himself a 30% salary increase – a sum equal to 265 SMIC years. He too had a nice increase of 57% on his packet of stock options. That is to say, he had €3.2m in salary, topped up by €8.2m potential added-value on his stock options! That, for just one year made him well over €10m - about 1 million a month. A bonus which is equivalent to the pay of that of 1,000 minimum wage earners. Isn't life wonderful? What feats did these people accomplish? What kind of genius do they possess? What improvements have they brought? None. Nothing. Conversely their firms' results

⁶ TN : *Salaire Minimum Interprofessionnel de Croissance*: guaranteed minimum wage.

⁷ The average salary is the sum of all salaries divided by the number of employees.

dropped by 20%. I maintain that these people can leave at no cost to society. On the contrary, we would save money.

The Nullards Grant Themselves a Reward

Why should it be considered an exaggeration to say “They must all go!” when referring to these people? Do they not, in their turn, do the same thing? “They must all go!” say those brilliant bosses referring to their employees who cost too much. They then pay their first round of drinks from the bloodletting. This year (2010), Carlos Ghosn, the boss of Renault-Nissan, has pocketed 770 SMIC years, that is €9.24m. He has given 6,000 people the sack since 2008. In 2009, Chris Viehbacher of Sanofi-Aventis treated himself to 590 SMIC years - that is €7.1m. He gave 3,000 people the sack and offered the survivors a princely 1.2% increase. Christophe de Margerie at Total took 375 SMIC years, just a 21% increase, for a total of €4.5m. 550 villeins lost their jobs in the French oil refineries. Gérard Mestrallet must have wept hot tears over the 31% loss at GDF-Suez. But his salary was nevertheless increased by the same percentage. No doubt out of a sense of humour: minus 31% for the firm, plus 32% into his pocket. How funny! He got a total of €3.34m in 2009. During that time the gas for cookers, water heaters and boilers suffered an increase of 15%. And what about Didier Lombard, president of France Télécom, the firm where “it must not become fashionable to commit suicide”? He got €1.7m in 2009. Only just over 100 SMIC years. Next to nothing isn't it? Then there is Lakshmi Mittal, of Arcelor. He does much better, as he dismantles the French iron and steel industry: 216 SMIC years in 2009. That sets a man up for you!

Let's Banish the Financiers from Production!

When I propose to share out revenue to make people better off, the sharp-tongued disciplinarians reply “we must first of all produce wealth before we

distribute it.” There is no slogan more laughable than this one. For in fact, wealth is produced in great quantities in this country. So, if we are going to talk about the production of wealth, let us do so seriously. For production too must be freed from the stranglehold of the financiers. The financiers and the sales managers, who have taken over the posts of command, must be ejected. They have fixed imperative requirements and goals that are often in complete contradiction with the technical constraints of production; or which impose an impossible working pace or servitude on employees. From which the latter are sometimes able to escape only through death. This has been shown in recent times by the wave of suicides which has struck some firms.

So yes, we must rid production of the cancer of finance. The best example that we can give here is that of Airbus. From the moment that financiers and business directors replaced engineers at the head of the firm, contracts were scheduled that set absolutely untenable delivery conditions. These *Pieds Nickelés*⁸ set in march a gigantic dysfunction which resulted in delays in production, and accounts collapsing under penalties owed to the clients for late delivery. It was Louis Gallois⁹, not I, who said this, in an interview with *Le Monde* newspaper. Such are the geniuses that threaten to leave the country if we dare set a limit to their greed. Let’s just send them a calm message: “Good bye!” “They must all go!” People won’t even notice. Others will take charge quite easily, just as efficiently, and at lower cost! It is not true that you need the incentive of amassing money as the driving force to produce quality goods. There are cooperatives in this country which prove the opposite every day. To really liberate the system of production, we should re-orient the system of ownership on those lines. It works already in some places, and is not very complicated to set up. It can be done gradually, everywhere. Like Jean Jaurès I believe that “when everywhere work has taken on the great form of cooperatives, when people are no longer just passive employees, but partners with a direct interest in the progress of the wealth created by and for

⁸ TN: A popular series of cartoon books whose three little heroes were wily, clumsy, lazy and rather dishonest.

⁹ TN: A senior civil servant. Appointed president of Airbus in 2006, then of EADS (European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company) in 2007.

themselves, then all activities and initiatives, all operations will be galvanized by an incomparable stimulus.” To begin with, and in this same spirit, the abolition of the system of stock options would result in a much healthier social situation.

Getting Rid of Bad Examples

What a long list there is of profiteers and parasites with whom we could dispense quite easily. The system knows this only too well. That is why it maintains its window dressing. For instance, let us take a look at that good piece of news which appears at regular intervals in press-release titbits: there are more and more millionaires in France! We should rejoice. Does that not imply that one day or other we shall all be millionaires as well? That we all have our chance. If we don't seize it then we only have ourselves to blame. Isn't that true? This idea that everyone can become an important person is crucial. It ensures that people remain quietly in their pigeon holes. Nothing is more soporific than those unexpected success stories where the hand of fate in private life takes over from the invisible hand of the market. People such as singers, sportspeople, smart Alocs of reality television shows and winners of the state lottery are spreading the fumes of the opium of the people. Nowadays they have adopted publicly the culture of social irresponsibility. “I should quite like to live in France”, declared Nicolas Anelka in December 2009 to the newspaper *20 Minutes*, “but it isn't possible.” We know why. It's because of the taxes. This ungrateful man went on to say, “In France there is a problem with money. I don't want to play football and pay out 50% of what I earn. France is a hypocritical country.” But who is this Anelka? Someone who owes everything to the taxes and contributions of his fellow-citizens. Trained at the cost of the tax payer at the (French) National Football Institute he owes his career to those who pay their national insurance contributions. His precious ability to run behind a football has indeed been saved by the costly repair of his serious knee injuries, paid for by our National Health Service. It may be noted that these sportsmen are the greatest consumers of medical care, proportionately to the rest of the working population. Yet they are lucky enough to be exonerated from national

insurance social contributions on income they receive from the commercial use of their image. In this vein of despicable shamelessness, professional sport has recently beaten all the records of brazenness. Consider the tennis men who played in the last French team at Roland Garros. All five competitors are tax refugees. And above all, so is their coach! Not one of these “exemplary stars”, who are presented as heroes, has taken on any social responsibility. If those who are held up for our admiration behave in this way, then this irresponsible conduct is perceived as normal and just. It justifies the tax evasion of the most powerful. For, a whole lot of grand profiteers of French labour, technique and know-how hide behind these puppets. Such are tax “refugees”. Have we any idea of these sums of money misappropriated and taken away from our collective efforts? Not to mention the €40bn lost through tax fraud. In 2008, for example, these sums amounted exactly to the sum which the country’s national debt cost us.

Maximum Salary, Maximum Income

In a republic, the top priority must be the common good. The new system of distribution of wealth which the citizens’ revolution must bring in does not merely concern people’s pockets, though it goes without saying that it must also do that, for, from the social point of view it is urgent to increase salaries. What we need to do is revive the very substance of the country, which has lost its strength. The burning obligation is to rebuild the state and the public services. Installing a sound, high-quality public service constitutes a choice about the type of society we wish to live in. This alleviates rather than adds weight. It is a question of setting up ways and means which will enable everyone to make decisions as freely as possible. That means, for example, being able to travel about easily, cheaply and in comfort. Or having access to high quality health care and education without being prevented from doing so by differences in income or place of residence. What is at stake is individual freedom.

We need to build up a new state of mind. Otherwise how can we create an ambience of community life in which the accumulation of money would not be the

sole prospect for the future, placed as it is now at the summit of our social values? We should build a virtuous link between the highest and the lowest salaries and incomes. Let's start with the salaries. We must introduce a maximum salary in this country. This maximum salary could be established by following the proposition of the Confederation of European Unions. At the top end of a firm there should be no salary more than twenty times higher than that at the bottom end. It is not a question of egalitarianism, nor of standardisation. I am quite aware that there are tasks which have a different use and exchange value, and that all are not bought at the same price. But this system links all levels of the pyramid. Thus, if the person at the top of the salary scale decides to increase his (or her), salary, he will be obliged to increase those at the bottom end. That creates a kind of automatic coupling between the highest and lowest salaries - when a firm is successful.

That is not all. There is no question of being content with merely reducing the enormous gaps between salaries. We must prevent the 'top' people from cosseting themselves with no regard for the rest of the company. We should also fix a maximum national income. Let us put an end to the individualistic illusion which consists of seeking happiness through opulence whilst others live unhappily in privation. What income scale should we have? The same as for salaries. There should be no income over twenty times that of the median standard of living, the income under which half of French people live. That would put the ceiling around €350,000 per year. Which is €30,000 per month! That is still a lot of money. So please don't bay at the moon when you read this. What do we do concerning income over and above this scale? Well, it's quite simple, we take all of it. We take it all and share it out among everyone.

Our Night of the 4th of August

I can hear the clamour. Take everything? That's horrendous! Yet there is nothing unreasonable about it. Taxing at 100% the part of income which exceeds €30,000 a month concerns around 0.05% of taxpayers. In the end, that is not many people. But it would create a good atmosphere. The fascination that unlimited

money holds up would be broken. It would make it easier to get rid of the deregulation and the abuse of power which were introduced by this regime – which reigns and shares out nothing. Also, to have a fair system, we need to introduce 10 additional tax brackets. In that way the change from the present top bracket at 40% to 100% above the maximum income would be gradual and gentle. Keep calm folks! You are not in the line of sight. This firm but progressive implementation will only concern taxpayers who declare more than €70,000 per year. That is to say 5% of the wealthiest taxpayers. And there's no use telling me that if such a measure is taken it will break the backs of the “creators of wealth” along with their business spirit. We must not lose sight of the fact that the average income of the 3 million company bosses in this country is €40,000 per year. At this level, the maximum income and the new income tax brackets would take no more from them than they do now. And even if you take the bosses who have between 50 and 100 employees, their income is on average €110,000 per annum. We are still well below the proposed ceiling of around €352,000. These examples show that when we talk of maximum revenue, the people we intend to make cough up are the rich recipients of unearned income and the rogue bosses. Don't tell me either that we shall not be able to do it because no one has ever managed to do so. In fact, it has already been done in France. On the night of the 4th of August 1789 precisely. A decree which abolished privileges fixed the ceiling of the cumulative amount of private income at 3,000 pounds of the time. Next, may I remind those who forget, that up to 1986 there were 14 income tax brackets in France, as against 5 today, peaking at 65% as against the present-day 40%. And in the United States in 1941, President Roosevelt put the top income tax bracket at 91%. It remained at this rate until 1964. And then it was at 70% until 1980, before the reactionary nincompoop Reagan came to power. If they did it we can, and we can do it even better today, when inequality of income is greater and more indecent. That, dear Mr Copé and the ladies and gentlemen of the UMP, is the night of the 4th of August that the citizens' revolution promises.

PULL OUT OF THE TREATY OF LISBON

A Broken Dream

What does the concept of popular sovereignty even mean for a member of the European Union? Not much. This is the first obstacle to the programme of the citizens' revolution. Now we shall turn our attention to the question of Europe. You think the subject bores people and irritates them? What I think is that we need to make an effort on this and not just move on to the next subject, for it is a really important and dramatic affair for the left, who had hitched its project to the construction of Europe. Such was the case for me, and I am sure I am not the only one. Europe was supposed to have been the way to restore popular sovereignty which had been brought into question by globalisation and by the power of the United States. That was how it was. People may snigger at this idea we had, but that was really what we thought at the time. Maybe everyone has forgotten the context in which this came about. The left had been in power in France since 1981. We had had four devaluations and an exchange control. Our leaders decided to batten down the hatches in order to protect what they had already achieved. They needed to set up another framework for the next leap forward wherein Europe would attain a level of government "that would be pertinent for social change". At the time the European Union was limited to 15 members. They thought that the more we moved towards economic integration, the more we would achieve political integration - that is to say democracy. It was a dream. We know what happened after that. The position was based on a terrible miscalculation. For we

know now that in its new age, capitalism can only be integrated into the system by doing away with all regulations. Beginning with those that had been installed by the citizens via parliamentary laws and political alternation. We have let the monster loose in our own backyard, and we have done so all by ourselves! The monster is insatiable. A new phase then followed. Capital now demands that norms forbidding its control be enshrined in the constitution. Some want to forbid public deficits via the said constitution; others want us to have European agreements which forbid tax increases. In the future, countries may even be punished by being deprived of their right to vote at the European Council.

A Globish Gargoyle

So, what is left of our dream? It is now just a poor gargoyle which drones on monotonously in globish - that strange non-language: a kind of global English that you hear in airports and that is used by souvenir vendors. Decisions are taken that do harm to everyone. There is a growing popular antagonism. The one thing that is now clear is that Europe is not clear. How could it be otherwise? There were six members to start with. It was like a club, a kind of collective. Now it has become a galley ship. There are 27 of us on board. Well, perhaps not. Maybe there are 28 - unless it's 30. Not counting the countries awaiting their turn. How many of them are there? We are not sure of anything anymore. At each step the institutional imbroglio gets worse. We can see for ourselves in what state the European Union has been since the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon, which, we are repeatedly told, has given it "stronger and more legible institutions". It's like a bad joke! There are now three heads of the executive instead of two - which is already a lot, given the respective harm they wreak. First, there is the President of the Council of Governments who continues to change every 6 months. Next we have the permanent President, who in fact is changed every 2 years. Finally there is the President of the Commission who is installed for the lifetime of the European Assembly, which is 6 years. "Strong and legible" they say! Those three tread on each other's toes all the time. The resulting shambles wipes out the little legibility

that already existed. What control can the citizens possibly exert amidst such confusion? None. But that is how it is meant to be.

Europe in its Present Form is Not the Solution. It is the Problem

Europe was to be the solution. We've heard that refrain often enough. It was the solution to practically everything. But as time goes by it turns out to be exactly the opposite. The present Europe is not the solution. The present Europe is the problem. First of all because it is instrumental in reducing citizens' fundamental democratic rights. Where Europe intervenes the citizen is expelled. The posturing of the atrophied European Parliament is a simple diversion. Secondly, because it siphons off the wealth produced by our country, for the benefit of this free market construction which is destroying our economic model. Europe is destroying our republican history, making us pay for it the hard way. Through their net contributions to the European budget, the French people are generous donors. Didn't you know that? In 2009, France gave Europe €5bn more than it received. The bill is getting bigger and bigger. To such a point that each French person contributes €284 a year to the European budget, as compared to €200 for each German person. The British pay only €150 per head. In fact, they have obtained a reduction on their contribution. And guess who pays the greatest part of this reduction. The frogs themselves, the Frenchies, in other words us. From 2005 to 2008 our country paid out an additional €5.6bn to enable the British not to pay the same sum. A sum that is twice the budget of the Ministry of Culture! Or the equivalent of the pensions' deficit for 2008.

Why should we stand for this any longer? What advantage do we get in return? What good? What service? What respect? Nothing. Absolutely nothing more than we could get for and by ourselves. Nothing, except to be treated badly. Indeed, we often do not have the right to read in our own language the documents under discussion that concern our own country. English is the master language everywhere in the European bureaucracy. They readily make fun of our so-called "exception" - and they point a finger at our "arrogance": two very French

“Jacobinic” attributes. For the rest, our country is fed a never-ending stream of niggling and destructive injunctions, all, without exception, aimed at the dismemberment of everything to which France is attached and which it has taken generations to build.

There is not one single example of a social improvement that has been brought to France by Europe. Not one! The new statutory rule of “free and undistorted competition” is applicable in all circumstances on all subjects - to the point of ridicule. “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity” have been dissolved in the Code of Trade.

It Works Less Well and Costs More

One has to see for oneself the obduracy with which the French system of public services is under attack. It is a system that is the very foundation of our egalitarian conception of life in society. An example of such an attack is the way in which the European Commission, in order to privatise the electricity networks, forces EDF to sell electricity to its competitors at cost price, whilst the latter have no obligations with regard to investment or production. These competitors then hasten to re-sell at market price, thus reaping a healthy profit. Let us imagine the opposite situation for a moment: supposing we were in power and we brought in legislation which would oblige the large private firms to make what they produce available to the community, without pocketing the profit - which is a private-sector tax. Imagine the outcry there would be! “No effort without a financial return”, they would yell! Is that so? What about us then? What do the consumers get in return for the exorbitant profits handed to the private producers of electricity? Are the consumers, both private and professional, given a reduction in price thanks to their blessed competition? No, on the contrary. What we are witnessing is the disappearance of all existing protection. The famous “regulated” prices which are supposed to reassure public opinion are being secretly abolished under the impetus of the European Commission. The consumers, who were formerly customers of a public service, find themselves at the mercy of speculation on the energy markets.

The result of this ludicrous policy which opens up the energy market to competition is that the price of electricity, which for its part was not regulated, has suffered a spectacular increase of nigh on 200% since 2004 – with peaks even higher than that, for there was one instance of an increase in the price of electricity of more than 1,000% in the space of a few hours, due to the lack of planning and of co-ordination between producers! Whilst electricity is obviously no ordinary commodity, the people in Brussels who organised this anarchy, and those who transposed it to France, are dangerous and irresponsible. This example underlines what can only be called an illegitimate policy. The result is that everything works less well and costs more. The invisible hand of the market is much less efficient than the employees of a public monopoly in providing good, timely and inexpensive service. Best therefore to return to the system of public service.

Organised Pillage

Thus, their latest whim is to privatise the infrastructure of the energy sector in order to increase competition. For France that would mean losing control of the largest electricity network in Europe - that is to say of 100,000 km of high and very high voltage lines - and of the longest gas pipeline network in Europe – that is to say of 31,600 km of pipeline which provide France with the best gas network in Europe. These electricity and gas services are our national pride. They were paid for with public money and maintained by the sweat of the French people's brow. And they now want to sell them off to the private sector at a very low price, as usual, with no regard for maintenance or renewal. The result is foreseeable. It would be a catastrophe. That is what happened in California where “the most advanced economic region in the world” found itself in the middle of a blackout for having handed its electricity supply over to the “free market” and to the greedy, grasping people who run it. Wherever such European directives abound, we find the same denial of the general interest.

Authoritarian Europe

We have practically become used to all this and might well end up by no longer being wary. The way in which the Treaty of Lisbon¹ was forced upon the French people was scandalous. It was a carbon copy of the Constitutional Treaty of 2005 which the latter had refused. After this *coup de force* its protagonists felt neither shame nor remorse at having violated a democratic decision taken by the peoples of two European countries via a formal vote. They just went on to other things. Nevertheless, this treachery laid the unfortunate foundation for a new system of governance. Up until then, Europe had been simply a-democratic, considering that intergovernmental negotiations were held in lieu of democracy. This way of doing things then gave way to an openly anti-democratic *modus operandi*: whatever the vote of the people of the different countries - when Europe deigns to consult them - is of no matter, for it is the decision taken in the secrecy of the European Commission that prevails. Just remember what happened to the Irish “no” vote. There are numerous examples of this type of behaviour. To mention just one: the postal service. The European Parliament - in keeping with the instinctive feelings of all the peoples of Europe, for whom this public service is often the oldest in Europe - rejected a proposition to deregulate all the postal services in the EU. This would have created the largest deregulated postal area in the world. In spite of this vote, however, the European Commission did not hesitate in persistently presenting exactly the same text down to the last full stop, until its persistence finally paid off: the parliament gave in and reversed its decision. Since then the EU has slipped without resistance into an authoritarian sequence. We are living in times of imposed decisions. The initial condition being that the latter may brook no discussion. A good illustration of this can be seen in the plans to save the European countries which are victims of speculation by the bankers. Take Greece for example: whilst that country is on the brink of catastrophe, the EU has imposed a shock treatment on it which is bleeding the Greek people and is stifling the country’s economy. A proposition by Angela

¹ On 4 February 2008 the French *Assemblée Nationale* and the Senate convened in congress at Versailles and voted to revise the constitution enabling them to ratify the Treaty of Lisbon.

Merkel threatened it with the suspension of its voting rights at both the Government Council and the European Parliament. With the gun held to its head, Greece submitted to the diktat. It is hard to believe! We talk to Greece as if they were an occupied country.

Tomorrow, will it be the turn of France? The current idea is to make it obligatory to present a country's budget to the European Commission before presenting it to the national parliament. This is an odious abuse of power. It represents a return to the equivalent of the *Ancien Régime's* right of veto: an unelected faraway body could decide on the fate of the budget before the representatives of the people see it. This practice of using a veto is a violation of the French people's history. I remind readers that, in France, the left and the right were born from the debate on the king's right of veto concerning the decisions made by the Assembly. On 11 September 1789 the *députés* who were opposed to the king's veto were requested to place themselves on the left of the chairman, the king himself, and those who were in favour of the veto, on his right. The left side won and with it popular sovereignty. I can only hope that a similar cause-and-effect scenario will come about here.

The New European Totalitarianism

At present, decisions are being made that touch on essential aspects of the lives of the countries concerned. No discussion is possible, and there is no opposition from the national governments. The system has gone from a democratic, through antidemocratic to authoritarian. We have now reached a stage which is more violent, more dangerous, and more humiliating for the peoples concerned. Europe is engaged on a downward totalitarian slope. I weigh my words and choose the adjective deliberately. Not content with imposing, by will or by force, its decisions concerning public life, the European Union henceforth invades our private lives to control, supervise and standardise. Is this an exaggeration?

Alas no. The following is no small example. I refer to the SWIFT² affair. No effort was made at all by the European governments to prevent the European Commission from awarding the United States a one-sided privilege which infringed upon the personal freedom of the European peoples. The affair concerned the networks of private bank accounts. The United States now has the right to access these networks and can place whomever they wish under surveillance. Incredibly, no reciprocal right exists. That is to say, no European government has the right to access an account of any American whatsoever. This measure was adopted with the greatest of discretion and in the most cowardly fashion, following, and in spite of, the opposition of the European Parliament which had initially rejected this scandalous violation of individual rights. Again, the rejection was all to no avail, for the measure was finally adopted at the July 2010 session of the parliament - a parliament more docile than ever. It was then publicly assumed.

Pull Out of the Treaty of Lisbon

In short, many, like me, who had been among the most ardent supporters of the European dream, have thrown in the towel. And yet how enthusiastic I was! I was a federalist for so many years, and I remained a federalist whilst campaigning against the Constitutional Treaty of 2005 - precisely in the name of our high European ideal. I dreamed of a European Union in which all delegated sovereignty would be returned to the control of the European Parliament, that is to say to the peoples' elected representatives. In fact, we were projecting our republican ideal onto Europe. But perhaps the opportunity to build this enlarged Europe has already passed away. In the year 2000 Chirac and Jospin agreed to reject the German offer of establishing a Franco-German sovereign parliament common to our two countries. This offer was presented by Joschka Fischer, the then environment minister for the Social Democrat Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder. Since then, what

² The organisation which coordinates transactions between 8,000 financial establishments (both large and small) in Europe.

concrete perspective has there been for my republican federalism? And today, what meaning can it have in reality, in the context of a 30-member union tied down by East-European nationalism, Mediterranean regionalism and the unanimous and enthusiastic Atlanticism of this small world? Unfortunately, we are in the presence of absolute unrealpolitik.

So, finally, we may ask ourselves whether our dreams and ambitions have not turned us into the useful idiots of a monstrous bureaucratic grinder. We cannot but think that when we see the exclusive “progress” that has been made in Europe: they have succeeded in imposing the market economy, by all available means. Particularly where people did not want it. In these conditions, for me, the affair is quite clear: I call it a day. That’s enough! I say goodbye to my federalism since it now has no object. I am stowing it away, ready to be brought out again should the historical occasion arise. I shall get it out and polish it up from time to time when I give my ideas a spring-cleaning. But I shall no longer get involved in anything but concrete and immediate objectives that are linked to the republican and social rebuilding of my country.

A New Referendum on Europe

So we must now go to work with a pneumatic drill in order to extract the deep roots of the cancer which free-market Europe has sunk into the body of our republic. We must ask the French people to give their opinion on the essential questions concerning their republican identity. For example, should we continue dismantling our public services? For me the answer is quite clear: with regard to the application of the Community’s ruling on this subject, we must ask to opt out. The United Kingdom was allowed to opt out for exactly the opposite objective, namely the prevention of all social legislation that was more favourable than that which existed in the UK. We too would opt out in order to remove our public services from the system of “free and undistorted competition”. We would also opt out to allow our central bank, the *Banque de France* - which still exists - to support the country by granting loans to the government and to the public services. Yet

another opt-out would be needed from the free circulation of capital, thereby putting a stop to speculation. And so on. In short we must opt out of the Treaty of Lisbon. The means must be in keeping with the ends. Since we are talking about returning the power to the people, we must consult them. That is also the way to respect our partners. For the signature that was given yesterday by the governments cannot be withdrawn without a formal order from the people. In this domain, the citizens' revolution will consist of proposing, by referendum, that those articles of the treaty that are contrary to the interests of the French people will no longer apply.

To put this reversal into practice we also have to consider the question of the responsibility of individual people. All those who, from near or from far, within the structure of the state or as representatives of France, helped to install this monster, should be relegated to other tasks. What we need are diplomats who will restore France's word, rather than our high priests here at home reciting the mass of the Brussels lobby. We are not interested in Baroness Ashton³ and the 5,000 European foreign affairs bureaucrats. We shall no longer accept that they be lavished with resources whilst our embassies and *Alliance Française*⁴ centres throughout the world are in a state of stagnation. José Manuel Barroso is nothing to us. At any rate no more than he is to those Portuguese who expelled him from power in their country. There are plenty more examples. What we must do is chase these people from our lives. In our own country we must abolish their absurd rules and their wicked norms based on social selfishness. "They must all go!" And let those who want to keep them, do so - but elsewhere. Such is the price to pay for the people to recover its sovereignty, and thereby its citizenship. In all places, and in all circumstances.

³ Catherine Ashton has been the EU representative for European affairs since 1 December 2009.

⁴ TN: *L'Alliance Française*: a French foundation founded in 1883. With centres throughout the world and in the main French cities, its aim is to promote the French language and culture. It is apolitical and a-religious, funded by the French government.

ECOLOGICAL PLANNING

I don't believe we should try to save the planet. The planet couldn't care less about us. The Earth could roll through infinite space without signs of life, except for a couple of cockroach colonies and the odd scorpion – they say that this vermin could even survive a nuclear war. We should therefore not lose sight of the objective of our ecological action. Our fight is “only” about preserving the ecosystem that makes human life possible. No other issue presents such a challenge to human consciousness. What should we do? Who can take on this challenge? The gods? The invisible hand of the market? Or us, only us, with our limitations? For anyone with a bit of common sense, the cause cannot be ignored. And yet, not everybody agrees, far from it. The gods and the market are still in the race. It is our duty to pull human society out of this rut. It really isn't that easy. One has to think, make suggestions, debate, try and then control. And when a decision is made, we must abide by it. Everyone should do their bit. This is the essence of the citizens' revolution.

Needless to say, giving in to New Age wild metaphysical imaginings or to the celebration of “Pachamama” or any other “Mother Earth” will be of no help in acting efficiently. Political ecology first and foremost demands human qualities: rationality and responsibility. No god whatsoever will weigh the consequences of our actions on Judgement Day as far as ecology is concerned. If we fail to save our ecosystem, hell will be nothing more than the world of decay we shall have fallen into. As a matter of fact, quite quickly there would be nobody left to suffer this punishment. If we do succeed there will be no other paradise than our good old world, with its glorious dawns and its stunning sunsets, life, love, death and all of

the other simple, yet so complex things of that kind. The gods may leave the stage. We are alone. Such is the price of our emancipation.

Green Capitalism Charlatans

Those who greenwash their immorality are yet another kind of pest. They are merchants of illusion with their army of spin doctors. From repeatedly watching their commercials, we are all made to feel guilty about our individual habits. The result is always the same: “you must buy this, you must buy that”. Buying and producing more and more “so everyone can have their share”. The old refrain starts ringing out automatically. Capitalism has struck a gold mine; through its guilt-creating sermons it will help stage a productivist recovery. Sometimes, they launch great worldwide projects. Look at biofuels, for instance: what a bright idea! Eco-friendly? “Of course! You get the raw material from plants!” And the result of it all? Thousands of acres of agricultural soil will be over-tilled. Meanwhile, these fertile areas are not being used for food production, despite the fact that humanity is still a long way away from food self-sufficiency. This is merely a great green swindle! The problem of “green capitalism” is not with “green”; it is with “capitalism”! Capitalism is, in essence, productivist. Despite the current ecological crisis, one can only be worried to see how blind both our system of production and society remain, faced with this problem. They appropriate the consequences of their worst excesses to make us resort to their crooked methods again. That was what happened when a market of “pollution rights” was created out of greenhouse gas increases. Now, what was that all about? It consisted of selling pollution permits to companies. Companies with too many permits may in turn sell them to companies who don’t have enough. Of course only the “invisible hand of the market” could come up with such a wonderful invention. The only thing is that it totally failed to cut greenhouse gas emissions. On the contrary, they increased by 1% since the European Union created this market in 2005. What is even more serious is that these “pollution permit” quotas, granted too lavishly for free up until 2012, have actually become subsidies for the most polluting sectors.

That is the case with coal-fired power stations, those greenhouse gas belching giants. While they were granted pollution permits for free, the power station owners reaped fat profits from selling their extra pollution permits on the so-called “carbon market”. They could then invest in more ... coal-fired power stations!

These disastrous carbon markets have also been infected by the finance virus. Some bankers started designing derivatives, first of all in the US, in Chicago, before exporting their poison to Europe. The use of these speculative products inevitably caused wholly irrational carbon share price variations. The initial objective, i.e. the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions was lost sight of on the way.

The motivation of green capitalism in this case boils down to the prospect of \$560bn in returns that the carbon markets might represent by 2020 compared with the miserable \$30bn they brought in in 2006. What an incredible system! To top it all, a number of companies have been outsourcing production to countries whose environmental legislation isn't as tough as in developed countries so that they can then boast artificial gas emission reductions in Europe and thus earn bonuses. Here is one example: Carlos Ghosn outsourced Renault and Nissan car production to Turkey, Morocco, Algeria and India to bring production sites closer to new markets, he argued. That's a downright lie! 90% of the cars produced in giant new plants in Morocco will be exported. That is what they call “green capitalism”. You have been warned!

A New Collective Consciousness

Boosting sales or ripping people off is not the only objective of the “green capitalism” clap-trap. Its ideological stakes are high: it seeks to dampen down the now established reputation of capitalism as a destructive force. Somehow, awareness is spreading about the link between capitalism and the devastation to our ecosystem. For a social system, nothing could be worse than the rejection of such values. State communism in the East collapsed because “it didn't work”. It

didn't fail as a concept; neither was it a failure for the bureaucracy that was living off it. But it failed for the millions of people who were busy trying to have their fair share of the simple joys of life. The 2010 BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico was capitalism's Chernobyl. Coming after so many other disasters, so many other examples of all shapes and sizes, that incident has left a deep mark on our collective memory. Each of these episodes, together with the managers' greed, the CEO's recklessness, the first world power's helplessness, all contribute to a scathing indictment of capitalism. Those who have no understanding of politics whatsoever take the issue personally. This new awareness is being fed by the silly propaganda broadcast by those advertising agencies that greenwash their products and masquerade consumerism as good deeds for the planet, endangered species, you name it. It is all of no use.

One way or another, political ecology has now become the fringe of a new form of collective consciousness. A consistent conceptual framework was formed by our republican ideals and our ecological and socialist values. Given what's ahead of us, they constitute our only intellectual toolbox to act wisely in the new century. That is why I kindly invite those who continue to argue that ecology is a diversion from pressing social issues for a left political agenda to button it. It's not as if the destruction of the environment that makes life in society possible weren't a serious problem. It's not as if climate-driven migrations, workers being poisoned, health issues and pandemics due to ecological indifference were not social issues. And I'm naming only a few of them. As if the destruction of nature's beauty weren't a large-scale theft from those who used to enjoy it for free, having nothing else!

The Ecological Catastrophe is Already upon Us

There's one thing we can be sure of: the human ecosystem is at risk of collapse. Since the 1980s, there have been three times as many natural catastrophes. According to the UN, nine natural catastrophes out of 10 result from climate change. Each year, they leave 300,000 dead. And here is another verifiable

fact: in the course of the 20th century, sea levels have risen, on average, by 17 cm a year. Likewise, drought-ruined lands, which already represent 41% of the planet's surface, will progress dramatically and soon represent 70% of it by 2025, according to the UN. Climate change is unquestionable. That is the simple truth and we must admit it. Wouldn't you agree? After all, this isn't a minor issue. If climate change is a reality, as a large number of us strongly believe, then we had better get cracking. The usual ranting of the free-marketeers will not do: "There's nothing we can do about it; it's a global issue", "Only the EU could do something, if it wanted to", "Our businesses will be disadvantaged if we impose constraints on them that others don't have."

For us to take action, we should begin at the beginning. We're told: "This is a global issue; there's nothing we can do about it." Yes there is! There's a lot we can do to at a national level to stop the damage. And we can also weigh in the balance. Quite heavily. The EU is the world's top exporter and importer. As things currently stand, the EU will not lift a finger. But we can constrain the EU. We can seize free-trade by the throat and drag it outside. I'm not just talking about prohibiting strawberries in December and cherries in January. I'm talking about putting an end to an entire economic model.

Free Trade Must Stop

The dogma of free-trade was the brainchild of an 18th century intellectual¹ in a world that was still largely agricultural. Its modern day disciples have no problem accusing Marxism, which was born two centuries later in an industrialised world, of being archaic. There isn't much left of the so-called "comparative advantages" of trading around the world, when the advantages in question are exclusively social and rely on the possibility of over-exploiting workers and on child and convict labour. Carbon dioxide emissions come from an ever increasing production of goods, but also from the fact that we transport these goods over

¹ *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776) is Scottish economist Adam Smith's most famous work.

increasing distances. It's all a scam. Over the past 30 years, global trade in goods has risen a lot faster than the actual production of goods. This is quite revealing. The actual usefulness of this commercial bubble has never been called into question. This logic has intensified with factory relocations. Increasingly, goods are produced far from where they are purchased and they must travel thousands of kilometres. Pairs of jeans sold in France that were once produced in France's Nord Pas-de-Calais region and in Belgium are now sewn in the Philippines or in Turkey. Your jeans have thus travelled 40,000 kilometres on average before they end up in your shop and on your behind. What's the collective benefit from that? None at all! Jobs in the French textile industries have gone. Factory workers in Turkey or in the Philippines toil like slaves. Cargo ships and then lorries consume thousands of gallons of petrol to carry those pairs of jeans. And they're not even cheaper for consumers. The only ones who take advantage of the situation are those shareholders that have increased their profit margins at the expense of the workers and of the environment. Free trade is a triple sham: it's an economic mirage, a social scourge and an ecological disaster. It's time to say stop! Not only can we say it, but we can also make it stop. Today wise politics, in all domains, should be driven by one obsession: relocating production to France.

Shorter Distribution Channels

Setting up shorter distribution networks is the key to economic transformation in our country. It will take a while, it will be complex, but it can be assessed and it can be observed, company by company, product by product. On just one condition: that the working citizens should be asked their opinion. When they realise that such an organisation is a way for them to relocate the tools of their trade, then they will work flat out to make it a success. Entire sectors of production must be relocated: jobs will be created, the kinds of production and their methods will undergo profound changes. We will not hesitate to impose taxes on a number of goods crossing our borders, depending on the economic and social standards by which they were produced. Depending also on the distance they have travelled

before they reached our borders. A kilometre tax? Yes, why not? Do we really need to import asparagus from Peru and tomatoes from Israel when we can grow them just as well here in France? We would do better to redirect our agriculture towards diversified produce of quality for our own population. It's time to wave goodbye to export-oriented agriculture! On the contrary, we will help Southern countries to protect their own agricultural production instead of destroying it with our exports. Choosing to relocate comes within the prerogatives of national sovereignty. Some people are alarmed at the prospect of seeing human beings crossing borders without an entry permit. Personally, I'd rather prevent goods from entering our territory. Those merchants who still want to trade with us will have to show their green credentials! And the others? "They must all go!"

Two Modes of Planning

It's time for us to take a turn for the better. That is why I'm talking about ecological planning. Some will of course be startled by the mere word "planning". They make me laugh! As if the free-marketeers hadn't been planning the pace of implementing the Bolkestein directive several years in advance! As if the great capitalist companies were not planning their research agenda and production projects years in advance! Making the decision to move from one production system to another, from one system of trade to another in an orderly way: that's what ecological planning means. In other words, we will debate solutions and assess our needs. It also means we will set up a programme to put our means of action into motion. We will then bear the consequences of our democratic decisions collectively. The very goals ecological planning seeks to achieve make it necessary for it to combine local and global economies carefully. This is all very tangible. If things are not planned, they are left to the invisible hand of market forces and to liberal norms. These forms of planning are all the more pernicious as they are never debated openly. The consequence of unruly market development, unchecked by the citizens and their body of laws is here before our very eyes. Let me pick out just one example among thousands. A recent INSEE study shows that

in just 14 years, shopping distances in rural areas have increased by 29%! Who decided it? Was it inevitable? Or, was it the consequence of a preposterously liberal policy of spatial management based on construction sites sprawling at the expense of arable land? The closing down of public services, post offices, tax offices, hospitals and schools, should they not share responsibility for the boom in car journeys? Had they not been planned? Who debated them where they are being implemented? Liberal planning is an insidious and faceless tyranny that conceals the consequences of its goals. Ecological planning is an act of popular sovereignty; this is democracy in action; better still, this is the republic in action, since it works in the interest of all. The ecological planning bill brought before parliament by the Parti de Gauche and French Communist Party members in 2010 specifies what should be done. It proposes that “the nation’s ecological planning should determine the nation’s medium and long-term strategic choices and objectives in ecological, social and environmental matters and also as far as spatial planning is concerned. Furthermore, it will define the necessary means to meet these objectives.” The bill also defines “the action plans to fulfil the stated objectives within five years”, along with the necessary “legal, fiscal and administrative tools”. The plan will notably have to “decide the direction of water, agricultural, transport, housing and energy policies, and decide their pricing methods” for private individuals. To say that water should be considered a public good is merely a return to common sense policy-making. Finally, the plan will set hardened environmental and social responsibility criteria for companies. Labour law will give employees a say on the environmental conversion of systems of production.

Pulling Out of the Nuclear Industry

For it to work, we need to put forward big challenges. By establishing and meeting ambitious objectives, our country will regain its self-confidence. The example of freight is a case in point. Our option: freight trains should carry lorries. Our goals: no lorry in sight between the Belgian, Spanish and Italian borders. This isn’t out of reach: a dense, intricate railway network has already existed in our

country. It developed steadily from the industrial revolution up until the 1920s, when our country started to become car-dominated. This process led to the closing down of thousands of miles of railway. We must re-open them. This holds true for passenger transport too. The blind spots that are deprived of public transport, such as the overseas departments, many suburban areas and some rural departments are at the top of the list. My analysis is the same on nuclear energy. We must pull out of it, gradually and methodically. To do so, we must build new public energy-production facilities that can provide cheap and clean energy. It is sheer madness to say that we're going to continue producing energy through a system in which a single incident may be as destructive as all the catastrophes that our country has ever experienced in its entire history. Besides, it's also a system that leaves behind waste that is ecologically harmful until the end of time. Going on like this is insane. To say that pulling out of nuclear energy is impossible is simply wrong. On the contrary, it is realistic. Phasing out nuclear power is possible, if we take it gradually, if we spare no technical, engineering and productive effort. This gives the lie to that preposterous argument according to which one must choose between nuclear energy and living in the Stone Age.

Personally, I was convinced by technicians and engineers who believe that geothermal resources can take over from nuclear energy production in different ways. The heat stemming from deep underground is genuinely renewable. If we combine that resource with energy savings, an immediate substitute is within reach. Energy self-sufficiency can be guaranteed for good. This is not so with nuclear energy! *Ad nauseam* its supporters claim the opposite. The fact that nuclear energy depends entirely on uranium, a rare fuel, is more often than not passed over in a silence. France hasn't got a gramme of it. Should we decide to boost our nuclear energy production, as President Sarkozy would like us to, we'd be heavily dependent on that non-renewable resource.

This is all the more true as uranium will soon become a much-coveted object – the world's uranium reserves are expected to last for another 80 years only. In 20 or 30 years' time, with a consistent alternative energy policy, we shall be able to come out of the woods. Of course, the nuclear waste will remain, if

research cannot solve the problem posed by its radioactivity. Nothing can justify the money lavished on nuclear energy, at the expense of almost all the other energy sources. The only solution towards gaining national self-sufficiency is to replace nuclear energy. If our energy production depends on a resource that might draw us into disputes and whose access might be denied to us, we shall find ourselves in a very precarious situation. Energy self-sufficiency means security; only self-sufficiency can make France a force for peace instead of one for imperial ventures.

BUILDING ANOTHER PEACE

Disastrous Self-Centredness

All I have seen and read has taught me that if we have a citizens' revolution in France, it will not leave the world indifferent. The possibility of contagion could be upsetting for some. It's no use dreaming: citizenship cannot exist at a national level if we have to submit to being controlled in the global arena. The surest way to retain control of our decisions is to maintain peace. Yet this question of peace is a blind spot in political discourse in France. Why is this so? As far as I know, peace is not the natural state of societies. On the contrary, it is a very delicate political construction, made up of a combination of unstable factors. As things are at present, it is as if war were the eternal problem of others: some kind of exotic subject. It is disastrous self-centredness! To start with, the dominant ideology acts as if Europe were committed to tranquillity - as if it had learned a lesson from the wars of past centuries which tore it to pieces. What naive optimism! The absence of war since 1945 is accredited to the existence of the European Union. This is sheer propaganda! It was the Cold War and "the balance of terror", as they said at the time, which stabilised the Old Continent. The old reasons for international skirmishes were thus relegated into the background. You will have noticed that the conflicts in Europe re-surfaced after the fall of the USSR. Have you observed how the maps drawn since then present a permanent situation throughout history? It is well to be aware of this. In Europe, as elsewhere, the old embers of national conflicts are still warm. Present-day Europe is quick to

re-assure itself. It wants to believe that the tensions in the world will be dissolved by “velvet” revolutions like the one that was handed to it on a plate by the Soviet empire.

In this simplistic picture, the only perceived threat is international terrorism. This is just not credible! The place given to terrorism in the order of threats is totally over-estimated. The main risk remains the old inclination to quarrelling between nations and empires. Each time that a difference of interest cannot be settled, the permanent urge to affront one’s neighbours – those on the outside, and those on the inside – eats deeply into the different human communities. The world is already dominated by power struggles. In the future this phenomenon will be on a parallel with the population explosion. Just imagine: there are now as many people living on this earth as have lived since the beginning of humanity. And we are supposed to believe that things should quieten down?

The Clash of Civilisations: a Deadly Poison

As far as I can see, things started going downhill after the fall of the Berlin wall, starting with the break-up of Yugoslavia¹. Thus were revealed the dark forces that were penetrating Europe and the rest of the world. Let us just look back to those times. In Yugoslavia there was both economic and political inequality. This was named differently, using the vocabulary of a religious war between the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Muslim faiths. Combined with the most archaic nationalism, it formed a most malodorous brew. Out of this lethal mix, Samuel Huntington coined the thesis of “the clash of civilisations²”, according to which different cultures and religions draw the map of the world and of future conflicts. He swore he wanted to lay this clash to rest simply by describing it. In fact, what

¹ On 25 June 1991, Slovenia and Croatia unilaterally declared themselves as independent, followed on 29 February 1992 by Bosnia. Far from seeking to appease ethnic and national tensions, the USA, the IMF, and the European Commission were among the first to recognise the independence of these states, thus hastening the end of Yugoslavia.

² TN: *The Clash of Civilisations*: a political essay published by the American Samuel P. Huntington which appeared in the magazine *Foreign Affairs* in 1993. Huntington later expanded his thesis in a 1996 book: *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*.

he was doing was providing the arguments and pretexts which enabled American imperialism to set up all sorts of manipulations and interventions throughout the world. Whole battalions of politicians aligned themselves with the American empire and took up the fight.

As did Nicolas Sarkozy. On 27 August 2007, soon after his election, in a speech before the French ambassadors. He paid allegiance to the American credo by pointing out the risk of a conflict between “the West and the Muslim world”, which he described as constituting the first threat to world peace. His remarks are completely absurd. What then is “the West”? And what is “the Muslim world”? They are not political entities. What’s more, secular France does not define nations by their peoples’ main religion. A few months later, when he took the title of Honorary Canon of Lateran, he defined France as a Christian nation. And all this with complete disregard for the history and the secular identity of the republic he presides. Later, in Riyadh, he went on to chant ludicrous apologia of God and religion as the foundation of peace, and even of the human identity. All these aberrations have given an ideological turn to French diplomacy, isolating it and reducing its audience. They have served to fuel a completely short-sighted Atlantic drift. Under Sarkozy, France has re-joined the NATO military command. Big deal! At present, it is a military alliance with no political objective since the end of the Cold War - a pure imperial organ of the United States. Can anyone prove the opposite? As a result, our country is bound up in the Empire’s most questionable adventures - in Afghanistan for example. We inundate public opinion with humanitarian stories whilst our armies prosaically serve as an escort for the laying of pipelines. Our soldiers and diplomats have no place in such ventures. “They must all go!” Soldiers and diplomats alike must be brought back from Afghanistan and from all military committees on which they sit where Atlanticist policy is put into practice. They must be called back to carry out tasks in the service of our citizens’ sovereignty and the independent policy of the republican ideal. For it is urgent to act differently and elsewhere.

The Example of the Russian Bogeyman

I do not believe, alas, that Europe is dedicated to peace. If we do not control our political action carefully, war will return as spontaneously as humidity appears on damp walls. Have you noticed how easily tension with Russia has been introduced? It protracts the old Cold War mentality in public opinion. The Cold War is over is it not? We are back again in the usual confrontation between the big powers for the control of raw materials. At present it is about oil and gas. What is France doing here? It is following the North American cowboys on the range. Provocations are on the increase. It wouldn't take much for them to install a NATO base beneath the wall of the Kremlin. So, whenever one of the countries surrounding Russia sets off a popular movement, all the North American agencies and their spin-doctors come running. There are real fireworks! Lovely-coloured revolutions: orange here, violet there. Local political marionettes are put in place – all the more dangerous in that they are very soon discarded by the people they have duped. These manoeuvres destabilise the newly independent countries whilst re-assuring violent and irresponsible autocrats such as President Saakachvili, the Georgian tyrant. Those people are smart Alecs. They push the world towards international confrontation in order to save their own skins at home. These warmongers foment violence incessantly. And when the American government sweetens them up shamelessly, it is frightening to see that the danger is no longer a mere remote probability, but is already looming large.

As far as our country, France, is concerned, the Russians are not our enemies; on the contrary. But what about human rights? Our opinion on the question of human rights in that country is one thing, quite another is our appreciation of the role of Russia in the construction of peace in Europe. Mixing the two levels leads us nowhere, except to play the part of useful idiots and tip the balance of power in favour of the United States of America.

Hand in Hand with the Germans. But Which Germans?

The threat of trouble along the borders of the European Union is visible. But such threats also exist within the European Union. Many of them originate way back in history and are entrenched in people's memory. To put things bluntly, I do not see the relations of the Germans with their neighbours as being definitely appeased. We ourselves, the French people, would do well to recognise that the generation of leaders of reunited Germany is no longer the one whose reasoning was driven by remorse and contained by the division into two states. Opposite the German leaders rid of their complexes, there should be French leaders with their eyes wide open. This is not the case. To have agreed to the Germans' having more members of the European Parliament than the French is a grave mistake on the part of France³.

It is a decision, which is in contradiction with the spirit of the Franco-German founders of the European Union. De Gaulle and Adenauer were quite unequivocal on the subject when they declared that, whatever the circumstances, equality was the only basis for relationships between our two countries. I believe that we cannot guarantee peace between our peoples if we prefer illusions to reality. The rhetoric on the Franco-German relationship should be replaced by practical measures. It is the permanent duty of our country to build up a close relationship with the Germans. Everyone, in whatever place they find themselves, should undertake this task.

That is what I have done myself. When we launched the Parti de Gauche, we very much wanted our first meeting to take place in the presence of our alter ego and inspiration, Oskar Lafontaine, President of Die Linke. The month before the meeting, we went as a delegation to ask him to sponsor us. We have been in constant touch ever since.

In contrast, how disappointing it is to see the state of hostile posturing to which the official relations between Paris and Berlin has been reduced. I say this in all seriousness. And I don't care what the usual stance on the subject is: "All is

³ The Treaty of Nice (26 July 2001) gives 99 seats to Germany and 74 to France.

well ladies and gentlemen!” For the fact is that Europe is in for some serious internal upheavals. We must control the coming shock wave. In the end, the relations between the French and the Germans always seem to be the sensitive spot which gets infected. There are plenty of subjects of discord here.

Regionalist Fever

Several countries in the European political space are also going through a period of turbulence. In the east, for example, the borders separating certain ethnic communities are in turmoil. Exacerbated nationalism is openly and shamelessly expressed. In central and southern Europe, new nations, or ones that have long been split, are cracking under the effect of internal tension. The progression of this morbid process is very familiar to us. The states, which have been dismantled by the free market, are absent from the scene. So communitarianism takes over. As social problems increase, solidarity disappears. In some places there is a tendency for people to isolate themselves from others in order to live a better life. This is what is happening in Belgium, for example. The Flemish want to separate from the Walloons and constitute a separate entity. What will the Walloons do if that happens? No one discusses the subject. Why is that? Everyone knows that Belgium is a totally artificial state which was created by the English at a time when they were seeking to keep the French as far away as possible from the ports that were nearest to their own coasts. Those who are interested in history know to what extent the Walloons became involved with the French. It is easy to imagine that in the event of a breakaway by the Flemish, the Walloons would want to be attached to the French Republic.

Many French people - like me - are most enthusiastic about this possibility. It would represent a radical change of the borders in the European Union. But, you say, there is the precedence of German reunification. Even so, it would still make France a really large country. And quite a few people would be alarmed, don't you think? We may note that the reunification of Germany raised quite a few problems, even though they were pretty well stifled. At the present time there are

similar cases, in Eastern Europe and in the south, which are even tenser. We cannot really make any kind of forecast on this subject. But neither can we ignore it. For it is our duty to examine the problem, even if we don't talk about it. And we, the French, with a population that will become the largest of the EU in the next fifteen years, whose country has the largest territory, who has second-largest GDP and is also a nuclear power, we cannot just be content with waiting to see what such slippery customers as the Belgian Christian Democrat Van Rompuy and the Englishwoman, Labour Baroness Ashton - brought up under the American umbrella - decide to do. On the contrary we must assume our responsibilities and make proposals without fear.

The Climatic Factor

We can understand quite easily how the tensions which arise within and between nations interact. I began by describing those that affect us closely, but like everyone else, I can see quite clearly the tensions which exist among the big groups of the world. These problems also concern us directly. Furthermore at this level a new factor is at work: the impact of the economic crisis combined with the increase in environmental crises. We are ill prepared to anticipate the consequences of environmental disasters. Yet they are a direct cause of the destabilisation of international relations. For example, population movements caused by climate change are completely disturbing neighbourly relations between many of the countries in which refugees are circulating. Or again, the difficulty of access to vital raw materials, such as water, can provoke bitter competition. We are aware of the highly inflammable context in which this question is being raised in the Middle East. And we find nothing better to do than to impose an agricultural model, which eradicates local subsistence farming. This is absurd. And criminal. The responsibility for this state of affairs lies with the WTO. What we should do is change the mandate that each European country gives to its representatives. It must be radically re-phrased, following public debate, so as to give priority to the existing situations: that is to say to environmental and social criteria. The current

hierarchy concerning standards applied and tools used for the different actions should be reversed. It would be in the common interest to introduce international climate rights, in which all peoples would have a say. The Bolivian President, Eva Morales at the Cochabamba summit, put this proposition forward in order that crimes against the environment, which lead to an environmental imbalance in the world, should not go unpunished. It is important that his plan to set up an international environment tribunal succeed.

The Arrogance of the G8 and G20 Countries

What stability, what mechanisms exist to redress the spreading imbalance? There don't seem to be any. Or worse, if they do exist they are undermined by the different attacks from the arrogant methods of the dominant countries. Their aim is to substitute the balance of power relationships for relations based on cooperation. For example, a UN commission, the UNCTD⁴ exists which deals with trade and development, but the G8 and the G20, which represent the countries with the largest GDP - from which 90% of all nations are excluded – act as if it does not exist. Why does France endorse this attitude?

Another example is the IMF. The latter gives itself the raw power to exert financial pressure over the weakest nations, whilst the US alone has a veto. Why did France accept the superficial redistribution of voting rights by Dominique Strauss-Kahn⁵, when “a real democratic reform” had been promised⁶?

We need to do something else, differently, elsewhere and with different people. In the Latin American countries, the Bolivarian alliance of peoples, under the impetus of Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador, are trying to create means of egalitarian regional cooperation in which the commercial sector does not dominate everything. The French ought to seek inspiration from this, rather than acting as cheer leaders for the WTO so as to destroy customs barriers.

⁴ United Nations Conference for Trade and Development.

⁵ Director of the IMF in 2007.

⁶ Decided in 2008, this reform redistributed, only a very small portion of votes within this institution and did not call into question the US veto or the domination of the northern countries.

The American Risk

Following this constant philosophy of power relations is bound to lead to a show of force. In such a context, the theoreticians of “the clash of civilisations” come into their own in the United States. They go to work on the decision makers. The country’s militaro-industrial lobbies are mobilised. They don’t waste time on idle talk. They know what’s coming: a first-rate upheaval. That is the American risk. The United States is living on credit, off the backs of the rest of the world.

They print money in a continuous stream. To such an extent that they no longer publish government measurements concerning the state of development of this money supply. It is “paper money” with no material counterpart. This situation goes way back. To August 1971 in fact, when President Nixon decided to separate the dollar from its equivalent value in gold. Since then the dollar is worth just what people think it is worth. Its circulation is guaranteed by military might. What are we talking about here? The military power of the United States rests on its 735 bases throughout the world, in 130 countries, and on all 5 continents. They have 600,000 troops stationed abroad. The military expenditure of the US equals that of all the other countries of the world put together. How can anyone be so naïve as to believe that such a military arsenal, such a capacity for military intervention, exists exclusively for the universal good and to ensure general peace? The fact is that they are there to serve the interests of the United States of America. Meanwhile, the balance of economic power in the world is changing. It is swinging towards China, the workshop of the world, which is becoming predominant in finance, trade and technology. Some day or other, a combination of factors will confirm this swing of the centre of power. When that happens it will be a major turning point in human history. For when the US loses its first place, it will go sliding down towards the bottom ranks.

There will be devaluation on an astronomical scale, as big as the mountains of dollars which are issued with no equivalent clearing value. Can we seriously believe that the United States will just sit by and accept this disqualification? For it

will change not only their classification in the order of nations, but also their daily way of life.

There is no reason why we should not take clear steps to distance ourselves significantly from all this. I can already hear the Pavlovian reactions of some people, resonating like vuvuzelas: “Anti-Americanism!” they will say. And I can tell you that some of these reactions are really nasty, for I have had a taste of them myself. When I told Pierre Lelouche on a television programme that on the subject of Afghanistan he was under the influence of the arguments put forward by the CIA, he replied by threatening to shoot me! This should not impress us. The same moderate “good chaps” swallow all the stories spread by the different “superior Americanism” opinion-influencing agencies. As a result, certain questions, even though they are essential, as they concern peace in the world, are automatically answered by incantations. Intimidation is used, rather than well-argued debate.

The Refusal of a Grand Transatlantic Market!

Being independent with regard to the United States of America does not denote an irrational hostility towards that country. Rather we can say that it represents a kind of training in mental autonomy, the first effect of which is to make us become responsible, and used to thinking and acting by ourselves - as adult citizens who are in control of their choices and decisions. This policy is not limited to military concerns. We must refuse to increase our economic and political links with the United States of America.

But for the moment, let us put a stop to the project for a “grand transatlantic market” which the European Union is seeking to promote with the United States of America. The aim of this project is to abolish all restrictions on trade and financial transactions between the two sides of the Atlantic by 2015. There has been no debate whatsoever on this subject. Our parliament has never spoken of it. But the European Commission and the European Council have discussed it, there are yearly meetings on the subject, and the European Parliament

has voted several enthusiastic resolutions. The French must withdraw from all governmental and parliamentary committees concerning this affair. But the dossier has a special life of its own. It is such a big affair that no one wants to believe it. During the European election campaign, I thought that after having done all we could to disseminate information on the subject via our blog and an informative booklet, we at the Parti de Gauche would provoke a headline-catching debate on this theme. But absolutely nothing came of it. There was not even the slightest response from the media. We sent out this explanatory booklet to 600 journalists, but there was no feedback whatsoever. Clearly some people are petrified by the USA.

Complete Independence

In all fields involving citizen sovereignty, the French must be completely independent from the United States of America. Ultimately, the more progress we make in that direction, the more we shall have a free hand to act in other fields. It is not a simple matter. The United States do not like people who stand up to them, and they have a lot of tablemates among the elite of our country. But there is nothing new in all this. We have been “surrounded” before in this way. And we broke out of the encirclement. We must, therefore, according to well-established French tradition, find economic and military partners who will enable us to secure this independence. The kingdom of François I in the middle of a period of Christian hysteria formed an alliance with the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. The French Republic, which is uncompromisingly secular, became an ally of Orthodox Russia. This resulted in all kinds of agitation and much swearing. Yet we are still here, and perhaps even because of these contradictions. Such partners can still be found.

In the world that is now emerging we must turn towards the developing countries. We have better things to do than to bark after Russia, snub China, ignore Latin America and despise the Maghreb–Mediterranean countries with which we have historical and linguistic links. I shall get straight to the point: I believe that

21st century France should establish a close cooperation with China. With regard to the economy we can understand each other easily. Between us there is a common culture deeper and wider than that which we share with the North Americans. Like us, the Chinese have for centuries given a central place to the state in their development. In international relations, they do not practise the blind imperialism of the Americans. China is a peaceful country. There are no Chinese military bases in the world. There is not a single Chinese soldier abroad, outside the United Nations missions. China is not interested in power relations of this kind. Technically China is at the cutting edge in many fields where we ourselves are in a good position. So it will be possible to have a more balanced and stimulating relation with that country than with the American empire, which is technically in decline. It seems logical, therefore, to conclude that France should be the first to build up a partnership with the Chinese. Were we not the first western country to recognise officially the Chinese Peoples' Republic in 1964, under the authority of General de Gaulle? This was met with squealing and sulking. The rest of the world, following the rules set by the United States of America, preferred to shower its affection and attention on the improvised state of Taiwan. That the Chinese regime does not suit us is one thing, along with the fact that capitalism is wreaking havoc there. However, that this should serve as a pretext for letting the United States alone make agreements with China, on a G2 basis - which is henceforth more and more the case - is a terrible political mistake. It is our independence which is at stake, that is to say the possibility to do what we like without being controlled or punished by the current tutors of the world.

Disarmament

We are one of the five official nuclear powers in the world, eight if you count India, Pakistan and Israel. We are among those who feel themselves protected, and rightly so. This is not a small factor in the balance of power. In fact it is crucial. France always speaks loudly even when it whispers. It can play a leading role for peace. I just said how it could contribute to lowering the different

causes of tension. It begins by accepting to look these causes squarely in the face and then by adopting an independent policy concerning them. It also requires having a clear position with regard to the foremost peril that humanity has brought upon itself. Worldwide nuclear disarmament is an overriding necessity.

It is all the more feasible in that it is realistic. We will not begin by disarming France unilaterally. We must demand that those who are able to destroy the world several times over, namely the United States and Russia, disarm seriously. Next, or simultaneously, the others should follow in a proportionate manner. This is an additional reason for never giving up the fight against nuclear dissemination and for co-operating with others throughout the world to create denuclearised zones. What credibility can we have when Nicolas Sarkozy insists on affronting Iran on the nuclear question, but says nothing in favour of denuclearisation in the Middle East in general? We cannot wish, even though I think it is right, to twist the arm of theocratic and dictatorial Iran, if at the same time we do not express a clear refusal of a nuclear exception for Israel.

IT IS POSSIBLE!

Audacity to Counter the Straitjacket

We should be contagiously optimistic in order to convince others of what we wish to do. For in our country, there is a well-established party of backstabbers: the “declinists”! For this group, regardless of the subject, France is always “behind”, “stragglng”. They maintain that decline is here, floating in the air like the background music of a horror film. This idea holds pride of place in the mainstream media. It has created a contagious sentiment that is stoking depression in the media. This jubilation in degradation is offensive to those whose work is looked down on. Time and time again arguments are churned out without a single thought for established realities and in ill faith! I read an editorial writer praising a people that knew how to stay silent, while here people protested to maintain the retirement age at 60. What is the outcome of this hoax? Doubt and self-disgust. That is the aim: to convince us that we are so worthless that we will not dare to do anything. The message is repeated in a continuous loop: things are going badly because there is not enough market demand, there is not enough Europe, there is not enough flexibility, etc., etc. The declinists do not provide analysis, they drum an opinion. They must be confronted. But beforehand we need to put an end to the fear of being perceived as ultra-chauvinistic for recognising the success of our country or comparing it favourably with other countries.

We Are Rich!

This self-doubt so well-distilled, this despondency so viciously blended, is a straitjacket against audacity. It prevents us from seeing what is really important, that is, the immense potential and energy that is present in our country. The truth is that France has never been as rich in its entire history. It produces €1,995bn of goods and services per year, while in 1981 it barely produced €1,000bn. It is the fifth richest country in the world. Its public patrimony exceeds €3,000bn. And this does not take account of private patrimony. And above all, this does not take account of the boundless wealth of creativity, generosity and openness of our people who today are shackled in the chains of the dominant model of social egoism. We must break these chains.

Creating a Citizens' Revolution in France

Revolution. This is a scary word. Why? Can we complain of the 1789 Revolution? This founded the modern era, according to Goethe. We owe our republican identity and the advent of the era of human rights to this revolution. Revolution is too much when life is ambling along nicely, but that is not the case when the disorder of the world foretells that we have no future. In the face of this waste, even those most removed from politics start to take notice. They are angry: "But who decided that?" Good question. I shall sum up the answer. Finance commands and holds command of everything. It dominates all power and all ownership. It is the dictatorship of shareholders. The value held at the command post is free and undistorted competition. The ideal lifestyle is ostentatious overconsumption. From the great economic machinery to the small scale of private life, everything has been aligned to the same norms. This is the governance of our time, which I call "globalitarian".

The result of this system has overtaken all of the capitalist and socialist governments of the past, who have been blind to it. Drunk on certainties, intoxicated by its own propaganda, the system is floundering in systemic financial

crises. It is a witness, unable to believe its own eyes, to its dynamic of destruction of the human ecosystem. Governments become agencies of political spectacle. People working in production, whether highly skilled or poorly skilled, are at the service of inept objectives and are treated worse than the machines that they created and run. That is true throughout the world as well as in France. We can begin to break free from this chain of events, here. How? I shall summarise once again: by abolishing the dominance of finance and by establishing popular sovereignty everywhere, where it should be. France is the country where a great new page of the history of the world can be opened once again.

Let Us Dare!

The world of the new century presents all sorts of major opportunities for our countries provided that we act with optimism and self-confidence. The French have a singular place as they bear a singular history and are united by the universal cause that they engrave on the pediment of their town halls: “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity”.

Between Mediterranean and Atlantic, present in the Pacific and the Indian Ocean, sharing a border with Brazil, the world interests us and concerns us in a concrete and stimulating way. We have nothing to fear of broad horizons. We are a country whose egalitarian passion is perceived abroad. It is mocked by some while for others it represents wild hope. As Eric Cantona said in response to the hazy debate on national identity: “Being French means being a revolutionary!” Rather than blushing or imitating the mannerisms of the Anglo-Saxon world, let us liberate ourselves! I shall finish my outline of the citizens’ revolution in France by borrowing the definition of Saint Just¹ regarding the great 1789 Revolution: “Let us dare! These words contain the whole politics of our revolution”.

¹ Louis Antoine de Saint Just (1767-1794) was a major actor of the French Revolution and one of the main authors with Robespierre of the 1793 Constitution which installed universal suffrage in France for the first time. He was also responsible for the first republican social distribution laws, which benefitted the poor, children and the elderly.

Jean-Luc Méléchon

19 August 2010

Lombreuil