

The Force of Europe

“...I write.../about what we have destroyed, /
especially in ourselves...”
José Ángel Valente

The force of Europe is not the Europe of force. Short-sighted, accustomed to dealing with the problems of an economic community and not of a European Union, many leaders are once again proclaiming that the solution lies in force and in increasing defensive weapon systems. Faced with the United States’ immense military capability, it only occurs to them to try to be competitive in this same field, instead of being complementary in many other areas.

We defend a significant number of things that we hold in common, and Europe has received essential aid for its very survival during extremely serious times during the last century. But this permanent recognition does not justify accepting all that the United States decides to do today, but rather just the contrary.

We know well the significance of the peace that security brings, and for that reason we tirelessly seek the security of peace and justice. Terror – whether it is based on reality or not- maintains unity. But not for long. Citizens perceive the exaggerations, the inventions, the intimidation, and they begin to react, to measure the depth of their suffering, and to become personally uncomfortable with the sad reality of the silence imposed on them. The security that Europe must seek is security that originates in endogenous global development, in the eradication of tax havens, and in the consolidation of democracy on a worldwide scale.

Instead of “preventive war”, Europe must be the leader in “preventive peace”. And in addition to efficient military alliances, Europe must place itself at the vanguard of education, science and culture. It must be a global symbol of ethics, justice, liberty and creativity. This is the force of Europe.

More resources for a Europe of force? What would solve a great part of the problems we presently face is to have more resources for the force of Europe, for its cultural and intellectual leadership. The force of Europe is the force of the spirit, of creative powers, of human tension, of permanent reactions against a social pathology that leads us to consider the exceptional as normal and the unacceptable as acceptable. The force of Europe is being a permanent source of democratic values: justice, liberty, fraternity, equality.

The European Union’s great riches lie in its diversity. Its strength resides in being united by a series of universal values. Europe comprises an exceptionally broad multicultural context, a plurality of religions, languages and ethnic groups. It is “multi” in almost all dimensions and, thus, it can be “great”. Europe’s multiple identities are permanently fed by deep roots that enable it to preserve its different characteristics in a formidable fabric of interspersed multicolored fibers, in a painfully-formed crucible that has given rise to the present-day hybrid Europe that is capable of confronting the risks of uniformity, herd mentality and subjugation that, in my opinion, are the greatest threat for humanity at the dawning of this century and millennium.

So that interaction among different cultures may be enriching, Europeans must be well aware of their distinctive characteristics and reject the permanent temptation to imitate others beyond her frontiers. Without

ethical points of reference, it is impossible to stay on course. Europe must be guided by steadfast principles without transferring its responsibilities to the whims of the “market”. And Europe must finally decide --and this is the moment, while drafting the European Constitution-- what these principles are and what direction it wants to take.

To base economic development principally on military strength is a crass mistake, because there can be no war economy without war. It is logical that the motor of the American economy is closely linked to the circumstances of Europe, but to compete with Europe, not to depend on it. At the European Union summit held in 2000 in Lisbon, it was decided that “In 2010 Europe must be the leader in a knowledge-based economy”. If not, it was understood that Europe would irreversibly lose its capacity to compete commercially with the United States and Japan, which devote almost double the European average to investments in research and development (R&D) and profit from the talent which, with short-reaching policies, arrives from all over the world, especially Europe. It is estimated that the intellectual and scientific “brain drain” from Europe in the last few years affects over 400,000 individuals. Today “balanced budgets” are presented without underscoring that certain sources (such as the Cohesion Funds) will no longer be available in a few years. Measures are being implemented to take the quantitative and qualitative steps necessary to make a satisfactory contribution to the global heritage of knowledge, to adequately disseminate European contributions, to rapidly protect copyrights and increase the number of patents, and to promote European involvement in art, film, the audiovisual media, publishing, etc. Nevertheless, to-date, and three years after the Lisbon Summit, it does not appear that the European heads of state have taken seriously the need to convert Europe into the world’s leader in the knowledge sector and, in

consequence, in the knowledge-based economy. And neither has something as important for the future of Europe been included in the draft Constitution.

The force of Europe is the force of anticipation and prevention, the great task of universities and scientific and academic institutions. A memory of the past, yes, but above all, a vision for the future. The European Constitution should bring peoples together, not separate them. Especially in the culturally heterogeneous federal states, a context must be created for interaction rather than isolation.

The force to tackle the causes of the great challenges of the present: poverty, exclusion... A Europe at the forefront of international cooperation which, at present, with the exception of the countries of Northern Europe, is a true disgrace. The average percentage of the GDP of OEDC countries devoted to the development of less advanced countries is presently 0.2% in contrast to the 0.7% average promised in 1974.

The force of the most efficient educational systems: a multilingual, artistic education. A Europe that educates citizens of the world who are prepared for transparent democracy. A Europe of education and culture, especially devoted to children and youth, convinced that this is the only way to strengthen and ensure a less somber future.

The force to maintain the principles for internal and global governance, to strengthen the United Nations, to revive “We, the People...” and endow it with all of the energy it requires to put an end to the present situation of total impunity at the supranational level. A Europe at the vanguard of the observance of democratic principles, with an efficient justice system that

has totally eliminated the death penalty; a Europe in compliance with the conventions and declarations of the United Nations.

The force to lead the formation of “new alliances” to reduce with diligence and with experienced human and technical resources the impact of natural or provoked catastrophes.

The force to be the best in protecting the environment, in contrast with an Administration which, at the height of its dominance, does not subscribe agreements such as the Kyoto Accords on climatic change –already quite watered-down– and allows emission levels of contaminating gases to be increased (another absurdity of the Bush government). But Europe must be the first to comply with Agenda 21, under impeccable scientific supervision.

The force to provide exemplary security in the health sector, in the workplace and in the area of citizen safety, through the development of a grand plan for citizen safety with all of the necessary resources, and the full collaboration of the police and individual citizens, with a diligent and efficient judicial system that will not under the guise of fighting terrorism threaten universal rights such as the presumption of innocence and the right to legal counsel.

The force of mind over muscle, in which public services are not abandoned to the will of the economic interests of giant supranational corporations.

The force of conciliation, of selflessness, of friendship and solidarity among peoples, of openness, of a culture of peace. A Europe which, together with a diligent preventive effort, participates in the International

Criminal Court, in denouncing and punishing those who commit acts such as those of September 11th, 2001, but who likewise judge with the same severity what is presently occurring in Guantanamo and Iraq. Europe must represent serenity, efficient justice, and the respect for life.

In short, the force, of an immigration policy that fulfills promises, that is in permanent contact with the countries which, exploited and impoverished, send us their emigrants, as Spain did not so many years ago and, in general, in Europe.

Faced with those who believe that they must continuously preserve the status quo, we must give, and give of ourselves. Faced with those who easily tire and fall by the wayside, we must continue our march forward. Faced with a Europe of force, a force of Europe: a creative force, the force of inspiration and illumination. The force that provides reasons for living to the means for living. The Europe of the word, with the indomitable force of the spirit.

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