

**POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION:
THE CASE OF JACQUES DELORS**

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What I wish to explore in this paper are the dimensions of European political leadership. By "European" political leadership, I mean the political leadership emanating from and relating to the complex polity of the European Community (EC); I also mean the set of political demands and opportunities (in the form of situations and events) that, over the life of the Community, have given rise to instances and manifestations of political leadership which in a number of respects - its duration, effects, style, sources of legitimacy and support - can be distinguished from strictly national leadership.

Here it may help if we take a look at the literature which has dealt with the question of political leadership in the context of European integration. We see that in this highly original context, political leadership has been a difficult concept to define. It has, in turn, been downplayed; deemed to be of a primarily structural (institutional, systemic) nature; it has been attached to national figures (such as Charles de Gaulle); or, alternatively (or simultaneously) to "supranational" figures such as Altiero Spinelli, Jean Monnet, Walter Hallstein and, more recently and, for the purposes of this paper, more pertinently, Jacques Delors.

The earliest studies of the European Community posited that political leadership of the Community would come from the supranational European Commission established by the founding

¹This forms part of a wider study of the political leadership of the EC in the 1980s and early 1990s.

treaties of the 1950s. These treaties were inspired by the work of the Frenchman Jean Monnet. He counted on a supranational institution to embody and pass on a cumulative wisdom and experience, borne of cooperation and collaboration on an international level, in the pursuit of peaceful political, economic and social relations between European peoples. Monnet believed in the leadership both of men of vision, and of institutions and structures: men of vision would provide the vital *élan* required at times to alter circumstances, break bottlenecks and strangleholds, but would be structured in such attempts by older, and therefore wiser and knowing institutions.

Neo-functionalism, which emerged in the USA in the early 1960s, was the first complete theory of regional integration to address the EC. It took Monnet's functionalist² understanding of how such institutions would work, and added analyses and predictions of their own, drawn from national experiences of the behaviour of legislative and executive powers. The neo-functionalists assumed accordingly that the unelected, independent Commission, charged with implementing and guarding the treaties, would formulate and implement a sufficient number of effective policies for national administrations to begin to shift their attention, and modes of operation, into the arena of the new European institutions. Functional 'spill-over' would occur, hastening the integration of the European Community member states. For the early neo-functionalists, political leadership, in so far as it was

²In his focus on levels of organised activity other than the nation state, in his quest for peace, and in his faith in the potential of international institutions to re-organise and marshal functional activity, and win popular legitimacy, Monnet can be considered to have been inspired by the functionalist thinking of David Mitrany. Monnet also believed in a new federal polity for Europe. See David Mitrany, *A Working Peace System*, Chicago, Quadrangle Books, 1966; David Mitrany, *The Functional Theory of Politics*, London, Martin Robertson, 1975.

studied at all, was deemed to be primarily structural, emanating from a supranational institution.³

Charles de Gaulle dealt a fatal blow to such expectations by intervening dramatically, in the mid-1960s, to shatter the Commission's credibility, and repossess the decision-making stage for national leaders and their governments. Neo-functionalists subsequently revised their earlier work, adding the role of national leadership and leaders to their lists of variables and factors shaping Community decision-making. In 1968, E.B. Haas, the father of the US neo-functionalists, undertook a review of his own theory of neo-functionalism.⁴ In this later work, he pointed to the fact that his earlier model of European integration had not taken into account the effects of "background variables" in the situation of member states, such as a change of national leadership, perhaps in the form of a "single charismatic figure who is able to rule because of a crisis in a portion of the union".⁵ More precisely, of his earlier work, he said: "The phenomenon of a de Gaulle is omitted."⁶ His conclusion concerning the momentum, or dynamics, of integration, based on the experience of de Gaulle in 1965 and the empty-chair policy, were that incrementalism in decision-making would prevail unless disturbed by a visionary using "high politics":

Integrative decisions based on high politics and basic commitment are undoubtedly more durable than decisions

³Ernst B. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social, and Economic Forces, 1950-1957*, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1958; Leon N. Lindberg, *The Political Dynamics of European Economic Integration*, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1963.

⁴Haas, *The Uniting of Europe*, 1968 edition.

⁵Haas, 1968, p.xiv.

⁶Haas, 1968, p.xxii

based on converging pragmatic expectations. A process of integration spurred by the vision, the energy and force of a Bismarck, a Cavour, or a Disraeli is clearly more productive of permanence than an indirect process fed by the slow fuel of economic expectations. On that type of scale, a Bismarck and a de Gaulle will always be more effective than a Monnet, Hallstein or an Erhard. /But the fact of the matter is that Europe did not have a Bismarck in 1948 or 1950. In the absence of the statesman who can weld disparate publics together with the force of his vision, his commitment, and his physical power, we have no alternative but to resort to gradualism, to indirection, to functionalism if we wish to integrate a region.

Yet the national sources of political leadership now identified by the neo-functionalists as potential prime motors of integration were to prove just as unpredictable as had the Commission. They became discredited during the 1970s when, with few notable exceptions, the Heads of State and of Government of the six, then nine EC member states dealt miserably, if at all, with even the most essential of the Treaty of Rome's provisions (the establishment of a single and unique European market in goods, services, capital and labour). With European integration in the doldrums, scholarly interest in the EC as a shining beacon of the benefits of regional integration faded: few studies emerged to shed light on a state of affairs increasingly regularly referred to as 'eurosclerosis'.

Matters were to change in the 1980s. By 1984, the long-standing budgetary dispute involving the British had been resolved, and

longer-term measures for managing the EC's finances were launched. By 1986, Spain and Portugal's entry to the EC had brought the total number of EC member states to twelve. A year later, the Single European Act came into force, heralding, finally, the single European market outlined by the Treaty of Rome thirty years earlier, and promising a number of additional common policies to compensate for the inevitable inequities of a barrier-free trading area stretching from the Atlantic to the Oder. Unsurprisingly, such a burst of activity reawoke the academic community, of the US and Europe alike.

Of the studies to emerge from this awakening, many sought to rework existing models and theories of European integration. A popular topic of study to emerge from such intellectual activity was the "dynamics" of integration: what, precisely, it was asked, had caused the process to tip over into a phase of virtually unprecedented consensus and reform? The political leadership factor, marginal in the 1950s for America's political scientists of European integration who then observed with fascination Europe's attempts to unify and secure everlasting peace and prosperity, now seemed more relevant to understanding events than ever before, since a number of singular phenomena relating to leadership were clearly present in the 1980s.

There was a row of national Heads of State and Government enjoying unprecedentedly long and stable periods of power; a need for the resolution of matters of key national interest - mainly revolving around finance - for three of the 'big' members: France, Germany and Britain; and a highly visible, and apparently fearless - in the face of formidable national leaders such as Margaret

Thatcher - Commission President, Jacques Delors, who was also to enjoy an unusually long term of office (7 years by 1993). Unexpected international events (the unification of Germany in 1990; the end of the cold-war era) were, moreover, to provide considerable scope for leadership activity, this in addition to the job of completing the agenda of 1992.

In an attempt to explain the developments of the 1980s, then, political leadership once more came under the magnifying glass of the integration theorists, and EC integration theory inched forward once more as a result. The consensus view appeared to be that a combination of determined and resourceful national statesmanship on the part of François Mitterrand, and the missionary zeal and technical and political expertise of Jacques Delors, the Commission President, accounted for the EC's integrative lurch into the 1990s. The precise measures for the mix varied with each account, different studies according differing degrees of influence to the two main protagonists and their support systems. Lindberg and Scheingold's revision of neo-functional theory, written in 1970⁷ seemed to hold true for the 1980s too:

(...) leadership is the very essence of a capacity for collective action. In terms of our model, leadership is a crucial activator of coalitions that conduce to system growth. It is the function of leadership to aid in the identification of problems; to evaluate, store, and retrieve information; to see to it that differences are handled in acceptable ways; to

⁷Leon N. Lindberg and Stuart Scheingold, *Europe's Would-Be Polity*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1970.

articulate goals for the collectivity and to symbolize them effectively; to build up support in the legitimacy of the system; and to engineer consent by organizing bargaining and the exchange of concessions. Leadership has been available from two sources: the supranational institutions and the national governments. The Community's greatest successes have been scored when both were available to aid in the processing of demands.

Wallace, Wallace and Webb, writing in 1983⁸, were more decisive about the role of the national half of this leadership equation. The authors' analysis of a number of cases of EC policy-making concluded that for policy-making to work, political leadership, in the form of a commitment (based on national interests) by one or more of the EC member states to the policy issue in question, was the critical factor. A. Moravcsik later proposed that these interests were in turn largely determined by domestic political factors, hitherto under-researched. In both cases, therefore, attention was paid to national leadership, conditioned and brought into being by domestic factors.⁹

It is true that leadership of the EC has essentially come from national sources, mainly from the large countries (particularly France), and has sometimes been of the dramatic, rhetorical type (de Gaulle; Thatcher; Mitterrand). By 1993, national political leaders, through the increasingly familiar institutions and procedures of the Community, clearly carried the most significant

⁸H. Wallace, W. Wallace, C. Webb (eds.), *Policy-making in the European Community*, 1983 (2nd edition), London, John Wiley and Sons,

⁹Andrew Moravcsik, 'Negotiating the Single Act: National Interests and Conventional Statecraft in the European Community', *International Organization*, 45, 1 (1991), pp.651-688.

weight in shaping both the incremental and the 'history-making' developments of the EC - in backward as well as forward directions.

But Lindberg and Scheingold's supranational institutions; Haas' Monnet and Hallstein have all clearly played *some* role in furthering European integration. Their style has typically been gradual, incremental and pragmatic, as was expected of unelected, unrepresentative supranational leadership. The one main exception to this rule was Walter Hallstein, whose strong Commission lead between 1958 and 1967 precipitated de Gaulle's heavy-handed, but effective, national intervention in the steering of the EC.¹⁰ Jacques Delors, as President of the European Commission between 1985 and 1993 has in many respects come to embody both the Bismarck and the Monnet of the late twentieth century; to have created a new style of "European" political leadership which draws on both the national, personalised, and the institutional, incrementalist styles identified by integration theory as factors contributing to the dynamic nature of European integration.

It can be argued that the presidency of the Commission, restricted in its sources of legitimacy, in its scope, its constituency and its remit, is not to be seen as a source of **political** leadership; that its will is ultimately subjugated to that of the EC's member states. Formally-speaking, such of course is true. What interests us here is that under the helm of Delors, the Commission has been **perceived** to have provided a form of political leadership

¹⁰And some research did propose that it was mainly "European" leadership which accounted for the successes of the 1980s. cf. W. Sandholtz and J. Zysman, '1992: Recasting the European Bargain', *World Politics*, 1989, vol/part 42 (October), pp.95-128.

unprecedented in the Commission's history; and perceptions are, after all, of most critical significance in the EC like in all other polities.

Because therefore we perceive Delors to play some type of leadership role; because he has without a doubt constituted a model of European political leadership against which previous incumbents have already been compared, as future ones undoubtedly will be, it is my intention here, within the framework of a larger study of political leadership and European integration, to investigate the nature of Delors' leadership. My objective is to consider the extent to which at least a part of Delors' successes and failures as Commission President can be ascribed to the opportunities and constraints of the forging of a new leadership model. What I mean by this is that in becoming such a public figure, and in unashamedly adopting the leadership style and discourse that he has (a mix, as we have seen, of national personalism and supranational incrementalism), Delors has challenged traditional perceptions of political leadership. His challenge has both allowed him to shape the course of European integration and attracted a good deal of criticism which, ultimately, curtailed his scope for action. These are points to which we will return specifically in our conclusions.

EC LEADERSHIP AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE

My method - given the constraints of this paper - is the analysis of Delors' political discourse. A leader's political discourse, after all, is the one dimension to his or her role most immediately apparent, most immediately susceptible to interpretation and comment, and

one which is governed by rules and boundaries established by the tradition and precedent of political leadership. It is also one of the tools of a political leader.¹¹ Analysing the discourse of contemporary political leadership, moreover, represents a method which, in the early 1990s, was increasingly representative of the research into and teaching of political science in the UK.

What then are the characteristics of Delors' discourse? What do these suggest to us about his own perceptions of his leadership role? What style does this amount to? Could his leadership be the blueprint for future would-be European leaders? Or is his an idiosyncratic style, facilitated moreover by the fact that he is French? (French leadership has always, since the beginning of the EC, been credible, if not always positive or welcome.)

Politics can be seen as an intricate network of utterances, linguistic exchanges, and responses.¹² In the EC setting, there are specific conditions and settings for these interactions: the coexistence of national and supranational, elected and unelected sources of leadership; the building of rules, conventions and precedent for a new polity, in the context of strong national politics. European integration has moreover spawned new linguistic markers of

¹¹We would suggest that it is a political leader's discourse - in other words, his or her rhetorical address to his or her followers - which embodies the relational aspect of leadership. "*The study of leaders is not the study of leadership: It may tell us a great deal about decision-making but little about leadership unless the followers and the relationship between them and leaders are studied simultaneously.*" Lewis J. Edinger, (ed.), *Political Leadership in Industrialized Societies*, New York, John Wiley and Sons, 1967, p.61.

¹²See John Gaffney, *The French Left and The Fifth Republic. The Discourses of Communism and Socialism in Contemporary France*, London, Macmillan, 1989, p.26: "We shall take political discourse to mean the verbal equivalent of political action: the set of all political verbalisations, and expressible forms adopted by political organisations and political individuals. It generates response which may range from indifference, through hostility, to enthusiasm and which may or may not lead to political action. It is as complex in its interrelations as political action is. The significance of any instance of political discourse will be affected by its overall relation to political action. And together discourse and action constitute political practice."

political responsibility and accountability, fuelling the debate about the most appropriate centres of political leadership with concepts such as *subsidiarity; intergovernmental vs. Community powers; Community vs. Union competences*, and so on.

These points are of special interest when we come to consider the discourse of Jacques Delors, given the complexity of the context of his discourse: not only is he the President of the most powerful of the EC's supranational institutions, with the formal and informal constraints that this placed on his discourse (see below); he is also French - and so, we can assume, will embody certain French rhetorical traditions; he is, moreover, Catholic, and a Socialist. On these last three grounds alone his discourse could be expected to encounter incomprehension, hostility, derision, or all three on the part of, say, the British. Let us look then more closely at the context of Delors' discourse.

CONTEXT

1. The post: President of Europeans?

As we have already pointed out, the college of Commissioners was established to act as the collective memory and wisdom of the new European polity. Commissioners are therefore sworn to independence from their own, or any other, national government. They are charged with the initiation of common policy, and with supervising its implementation. They are to mediate between member state governments for the attainment of the common, European interest. More prosaically, they manage the purse-strings of the European Community.

The President of the Commission speaks on behalf of the Commission and represents its views, and policies, both to EC member states, and outside the Community. He has the title of President, and to a considerable degree can behave like one: since the time of Roy Jenkins' Commission (1977-81), the President can attend world summit meetings, for example. More importantly, the President attends the twice-yearly summits of European Heads of State and Government (the European Council) alongside another leader bearing the same title - the President of the French Republic, a Head of State. Delors is certainly portrayed as a leader with a status equivalent or similar to that of Head of State. *Président de la Commission des Communautés européennes. Un titre qui lui donne rang de chef d'Etat;...the successor to Charlemagne;...the Czar of Brussels; Brussels chief; the boss of Europe* : these are just a selection of the terms in which Delors has come to be described. BBC2's Newsnight, on 3 June 1992, even displayed footage of Delors that day above the rubric 'EC President'; this was both a mistake, and a cruel jibe, given the results of the Danish referendum on Maastricht the previous day. Delors, moreover, cultivates this dimension to his role, making his presence at summits highly visible, giving press conferences and making many public appearances.

Such an institutional context will inevitably shape Delors' public discourse. In particular, he must reconcile the political requirements of his job - mediation between national interests - with the more technical and technocratic aspects - the formulation and implementation of policies designed to serve the common, ie., European interest. A similar tension, equally significant in terms

of influences on Delors' discourse, is to be found in his own private and professional itinerary, to which we now briefly turn.

2. The man: politician or technocrat?

When asked on French television's *Marche du Siècle* in May 1992 which careers he had envisaged as a child (he is now engaged in his fourteenth occupation), Jacques Delors replied unhesitatingly that he had once hoped to become either a clothes designer or a film director or, failing either of those, a journalist. These perhaps were rather surprising aspirations for a Paris-born child of rather modest means (born 1925; his father was a lowly employee at the Banque de France; his grandfather a farmer in the Corrèze). Delors has been described as 'a pure product of social-catholicism'¹³. His Catholicism certainly plays a role in his life and is acknowledged publicly,¹⁴ while his political background is one of continuous activity, either as an activist-cum-lecturer/researcher in the Catholic trade union, the CFTC (*Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens*) (later CFDT - *Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail*); initiator of political clubs in the 1950s and 1960s, and again now in the 1990s; technocrat at the French Planning Commission; or minister in the first three of Mitterrand's governments between 1981 and 1984. Professionally, therefore, he has mixed politics (special subject: finance and the economy) and more administrative careers (he began his career at the Banque de France where he enjoyed rapid promotion); he has equally fitted in a spell (1972-9) as lecturer at

¹³D. Bell, D. Johnson and P. Morris (eds.), *A Biographical Dictionary of French Political Leaders since 1870*, Herts., Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990, p.116.

¹⁴The May 1992 *Heure de Vérité* programme began with the presenter explaining to viewers that he had to hurry and get on with the interviews as Delors wanted to get off on time - to attend Mass.

one of Paris' more exclusive universities (Dauphine).¹⁵ He is considered to be extremely hard-working, knowledgeable and ambitious.

In terms of the French political landscape, Delors' background and personal convictions (he has continuously, in virtually all of his posts, pursued his interest in the rights of workers and citizens; in a more community, collective-based society; in moral and social justice) have made him politically rather promiscuous. He has served both Gaullist and Socialist administrations and, although a member of the French Socialist Party (PS) since 1974, has relatively little internal party support other than from the so-called *transcourant: Démocratie 2000*. Like Rocard, Delors is often dubbed *un outsider*, and clearly belongs to the *deuxième* and not mainstream French left. He perceives himself as a social-democrat, and as heavily influenced by the works of 1930s French intellectuals like Emmanuel Mounier, a humanist and the founder of the socially-minded individualist philosophy of 'personalism'. He remains keen to modernise and reform the French political left.

Delors, then, is an unelected President with a Head of State's responsibilities but a broker's role. He is a figure characterised by internal contradictions: *Sa clef est sans doute dans cette double nature, qui persiste. Toujours gosse des rues et patron de l'Europe. Orueilleux et humble. Pédagogue et homme d'action. (...) Cette dualité est sa force.*

¹⁵For bibliographical information see: Gabriel Milési, *Jacques Delors*, Paris, Belfond, 1985; Bernard Maris, *Jacques Delors. Artiste et martyr*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1993; Bell, Johnson, Morris (eds.), *A Biographical Dictionary of French Political Leaders Since 1870*; Boris Johnson, 'The House that Jacques is building for France', *The Daily Telegraph*, 19 June 1991, pp.18-19.

C'est aussi sa bride.'¹⁶ What are the effects of such a context on the text itself?

THE POLITICAL DISCOURSE OF JACQUES DELORS

From what precedes, we can expect a style of discourse which is marked by both the unique nature of Delors' post (which, until 1985, had been interpreted within the discursive norms of the Monnet, incrementalist-type leadership style), and the characteristics of Delors' personal and professional convictions and experience. We may be less certain of the extent to which typically French traditions of rhetoric and intellectual debate will be present, for Delors has not received the sort of higher educational training so typical amongst members of the French political class (he went neither to university nor to one of the elite *grandes écoles* such as l'ENA).

Televised interviews are the chosen medium for this study of Delors' discourse, this for five main reasons. First, interviews with Delors on French television typically provide Delors with the opportunity to shed some of the constraints placed upon him when speaking solely as President of the Commission and on the Commission's behalf. Indeed, in the interviews studied, Delors was expected (he willingly obliged) to step out of his Brussels shoes for at least part of the exchange. As a result of such expectations, Delors reveals more of his own, personally held, views than can ever be the case in the majority of his speeches.

¹⁶Daniel Rondeau, 'Comment Delors est devenu grand', *le Nouvel Observateur*, 12-18 September, 1991. "The key to understanding him is undoubtedly lies in this dual nature of his, which never leaves him. He is still both the small boy playing in the street, and the boss of Europe. He is both proud and humble. A learned, teacher type, and a man of action. This duality is a source of strength, but also a check."

Second, interviews (the majority lasting at most one hour) allow Delors to expand upon his ideas far more than in the more formal setting of a press conference or speech. We shall see that for this reason in particular, the interview suits not only our own methodological approach, but also Delors' style of discourse extremely well.

Third, the interview setting gives Delors the opportunity to exercise control over the debate and the subject matter (by posing additional questions; rewording interviewers' questions; turning interviewer's questions back to the interviewer him or herself; regulating the speed with which subjects are tackled, for example), and so behave as if in charge - as a leader - and as a *pédagogue* (a teacher) as is his style, as we shall see. Finally, authorship is less uncertain in the case of interviews than with official speeches.

For the purposes of this study, the following interviews have been used extensively (other interviews, several speeches and Delors' own books have also been used as case material for analysis). These were all programmes recorded at the time of the negotiation and signing of the Maastricht Treaty on European Union in late 1991 and early 1992, and with Delors' relation to the Treaty in mind, and provide for intense questioning of the guest - Delors - by the programme presenter, invited journalists, and (in the case of *Marche du Siècle*) by selected members of the live audience:

7 sur 7 (TF1; 1 December 1991)

L'Heure de Vérité (A2, 5 January 1992)

Marche du Siècle: les valeurs Delors (A2 ; 26 February 1992)

L'Heure de Vérité (A2, 17 May, 1992).

We suggested above that Delors combines a statesman-like vision with Monnet's daily pragmatism and realism. Delors' discourse clearly reveals his perception of these two distinct dimensions to his leadership of the Commission and, indirectly, the Community. Let us see the ways in which he expresses these dimensions to his leadership role.

VISION

This term refers to the understanding which Delors purports to possess of the Community, and of Europe in the broader sense. It covers the past, present and future, each of which is of equal significance. Delors' claim to possess a vision rests first and foremost on his knowledge: of Europe's past; of a vast range of its present concerns; of the possible outcomes of given courses of action. The most frequent vehicle for the expression of such knowledge - and one which lies at the heart of Delors' delivery - is the statement of truths (often as aphorisms) which are known to Delors but which require precise, careful explanation and illustration in order to be transmitted to Delors' immediate and wider audiences. Let us look at some examples of the truths themselves:

"Mais en réalité en histoire rien n'est irréversible." (But in reality, nothing in history is irreversible)

"Le discours politique doit s'affirmer. Mais en s'affirmant il déplaira. Et pour gouverner un pays parfois il faut déplaire." (Political discourse

must be firm. But in so doing, it will displease. In order to govern a country, it is sometimes necessary to displease)

"Quand on est socialiste, on est internationaliste." (If one is a Socialist, one is also an internationalist)

"(...) ce ne sont pas les hommes politiques qui font le Destin, c'est le Destin qui fait les hommes." (Politicians don't make destiny; destiny makes men).

Such maxims and aphorisms (expressed via the use of the simple present tense, often of the verb of being and truth 'être') convey Delors' own certainty, and confidence in his world (or more specifically, European) view, and are consequently intended to bolster his audience's faith in his leadership capabilities.

Inevitably, the seriousness with which Delors delivers such truths could, and does, expose him to derision, ridicule even, from those with more a developed sense of irony and self-deprecation.¹⁷ But this is a style in keeping with Delors' religious and political background, where earnest convictions, meticulously elaborated and presented, are considered key to the successful transmission of one's message; hence the frequent occurrence of the term "expliquer" in Delors' responses, and of expressions such as: (...) *il faut dire aux gens*; (we must tell the people); *soyons clair*; (let's be clear about this); *je voudrais insister sur (...)*; (I would like to

¹⁷At one point in the January *Heure de Vérité* programme, Alain Duhamel (in both *Heure de Vérité* programmes by far the most aggressive of Jacques Delors' interviewers), on the subject of unemployment, turns to Delors and says: *"Donc, explication de Delors?"* (So, what's the Delors explanation for that?) Later in the same interview, Delors (on the number of trained engineers needed in France) says, *"Je n'en suis pas sûr."* (I'm not sure). To which Duhamel replies: *"C'est une bonne nouvelle."* (That's good news!) Anne Sinclair introduces her December 1991 *7 sur 7* interview with Delors by reminding the latter that he is known as *l'infatigable Sisyphe d'une Europe de plus en plus unie*. (The indefatigable Sisyphus of an ever more united Europe.)

emphasise that..); *il faut leur faire comprendre* (we must make them understand), and so on.

Behind Delors' claims to knowledge of truth lie a number of legitimating factors. Some of these we alluded to earlier: Delors' accumulated experience of French and European politics at both grass-roots and leadership levels; the Treaty-prescribed role of the Commission to be the guardian of the said Treaties, the Commission's collective memory. But there are others: Delors' acknowledged phenomenal work rate and assiduity, which allow him a complete grasp of a wide range of *dossiers* and to speak on behalf of the college of Commissioners (the more negative manifestation of these qualities is his equally acknowledged inability to delegate work effectively); Delors' unblemished record as a supporter of European unity which gives him the right to speak in terms of *nous*: we Europeans; and Delors' personal and political convictions, of which his Catholicism and zest for social and workplace fairness are the most appealed to, and pertinent.

Less obvious, but equally relevant as a legitimising claim to a vision for European unity, is Delors' recognition of the notion of peace as the fundamental *raison d'être* of the Community. For Delors, the success of the EC's founding fathers in establishing a polity which would ensure peace is the single reason for which *nous* (good Europeans), but more particularly *je* (Delors) must continue to bear the flag of European unity - even, or especially, when this resembles a cross: if only to ensure that Europe's nations remain at peace. Of interest to our discussion is that, in contrast to the assured, balanced and logical way in which Delors develops the truths referred to above, his references to European unity as

the guarantor of peace are invariably delivered in a far more emotional, passionate tone, suggesting personal conviction and missionary zeal: "*Je suis hanté par le déclin de l'Europe depuis 1919. Mon engagement est contre le déclin.*"; "(...) *nous ne pouvons pas jeter à la poubelle de l'histoire 35 ans d'une expérience réussie qui a amené entre nous la paix, le Concorde, l'échange et la compréhension.*" ("I am haunted by Europe's decline since 1919. I am working resolutely against this decline."; "(...) we cannot discard 35 years of success which has brought us peace, Concorde, increased exchanges and understanding.")

Delors' vision of what integration must stand for, what it must protect and guarantee; his vision of the awful alternatives to peaceful integration, oblige him to reveal the conditions of its fulfillment; in other words, the mission that both he, and the Community at large, must pursue.

MISSION

1. The task

Here Delors is highly prescriptive and voluntarist. Only if Europe can attain certain social goals; if it can abide by and promote a certain morality; if it can, at its most prosaic, but essential level, enhance the life of the ordinary citizen and worker, will it succeed in maintaining internal cohesion and therefore remain at peace. It is not hard to guess on which elements of Delors' personality and experience the Commission President draws in order to posit such views: Delors' is a clearly moralist, humanist philosophy, as we have seen.

Examples of the language of prescription, and the moral precept is heavily used, in particular the verbs *falloir* or *devoir* (to be necessary; to have to), the most frequently occurring verbs in his answers to interviewers' questions. For example, in response to a question concerning the rise of rival nationalisms in central and Eastern Europe, Delors replies: "*Il faut faire très attention. Il ne faut pas que cette Europe s'éclate. Il faut quand même garder certaines apparences.*" ("We must be careful. Europe must not disintegrate. We must maintain certain appearances.") Later, on the same topic: "*Et c'est là la première erreur qu'il ne faut pas commettre. Il faut dire aux gens, que l'Europe c'est un beau projet...*" ("That's the mistake that we really must not commit. We must tell people that Europe is a wonderful thing...")

We should note in passing that there may at first glance appear to be a contradiction between the social, moral mission which Delors believes to be the Community's, and the economic, free-market policy proposals with which he is most frequently associated: the 1992 Single Market Initiative, and the completion of Economic and Monetary Union in particular. On further examination, however, Delors is clearly associated with similarly large-scale policy initiatives more in keeping with the political and moral philosophy he espouses: the Social Charter, for example, or the so-called Delors II spending plans for the 1990s; the structural reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, and policies for education and training.¹⁸

¹⁸Delors' activity in these respects as Commission President bears similarities with his work when he was adviser on social affairs to the gaullist Prime Minister Jacques Chaban-Delmas in the late 1960s. Then, Delors was largely responsible for negotiating agreement with the unions on Chaban-Delmas' project for *la nouvelle société*. Delors was also then working closely on a blueprint for a national adult education policy (*la formation continue*). See Bell, Johnson and Morris, p.116.

Delors frequently refers to himself as initiator and proposer of the task: he knows what has to be done to achieve given goals. Thus, via the repetition of *je*, he appropriates certain tasks which in reality are more the work of a team, not just of Delors. Delors is said to be a poor delegator, so perhaps he can in fact claim the major part of these tasks.¹⁹ What is more important here is that Delors actively seeks to portray this dimension of his leadership. Taken with what has gone before, we have the somewhat paradoxical image of the pragmatic, "hands-on" visionary:

"Vous savez, on ne fait rien sans à la fois une vision et une démarche pragmatiques"; "(...) une vision réaliste des choses doit nous amener à agir ensemble." (You know, nothing is possible without a vision and a pragmatic approach; (...) a realistic vision of things should lead us to work together.)

"Je suis encore en train de l'étudier" (I am still in the middle of studying that);

"Je suis en train de préparer ça." (I am in the process of preparing for that);

"Je nourris dans ma tête de projets multiples pour l'année prochaine." (I am already thinking up numerous projects for next year);

"Dans le paquet Delors II, comme on dit, j'ai proposé..." (In the Delors II package, as it's called, I proposed....);

¹⁹We should note that while Commission decisions are collective, and are usually portrayed as such, recent years (1991-2) have seen dramatic cases of internal dissent (for example between Leon Brittan and certain of his colleagues over the De Havilland - Aérospatiale affair in late 1991; between Delors and his Commissioners in late 1992 over the GATT dossier); furthermore, rumours periodically circulate to the effect that Delors himself is an overbearing and authoritarian president. See G. Ross, 'Sidling Into Industrial Policy: Inside the European Commission', *French Politics & Society*, Vol.11, no.1, Winter 1993, France and the European Community, pp.20-44 for an interesting view of the internal workings of the Commission.

"Et moi j'ai pensé à une autre idée, sur laquelle je suis en train de travailler." (As for me, I thought of another idea, which I'm currently working on);

"Mais il faut ajouter tout de suite (...) qu'avant la relance que j'ai faite par l'objectif 92..." (But I must add right away (...) that before the relaunching of Europe by the 1992 programme, for which I was responsible....);

"J'ai douze pays à gérer" (I have twelve countries to manage);

The last two of these claims to a personal task are extraordinary, for they imply vast ambition, if not arrogance. Yet Delors remains deadly serious; he even likens such work to a craft; his pride and skill to that of a craftsman, engaged in the task of achieving lofty goals:

"(...) je suis aussi heureux [as Commission President], aussi satisfait, un petit peu comme un artisan qui fait une chaise et qui dit, pas à lui seul, il appelle ses camarades, ses collaborateurs, "est-ce que cette chaise est bien? Ah oui, aujourd'hui on a bien travaillé", eh bien, pour moi, c'est la plus grande récompense et cela n'arrive pas tous les jours."

(I am equally happy, equally satisfied as a craftsman who makes a chair and who says, not to himself but to his friends and helpers: "Don't you think this chair is good? Haven't we worked well today?" Well, for me, it's the same sort of reward, and it doesn't happen every day.)

We should add that the notion of task invariably implies some form of sacrifice, and Delors' role as Commission President is no exception. On several occasions he has referred to his job as a

sacrifice, particularly in the 1990s when there were opportunities for him to return to top-level French politics. In early 1993, for example, he stated openly that to have chosen to remain in Brussels rather than return to France (he was speaking of spring 1992, when there was a chance of him becoming French prime minister) was not a question of taste, or personal preference, but because he had a duty to remain in his job; hence, it was a personal sacrifice for him.²⁰ We are less concerned here with the truth of such statements as with the fact that Delors makes them publicly and so deliberately paints a certain picture of himself. This mix of missionary rhetoric and idiosyncratic, moralising yet enthusing pragmatism, is a dimension to Delors' leadership discourse even more patent in his exposition of the methods which he and the EC must adopt in order to fulfil their task.

2. The method

Key to Delors' perception of politics and, more generally, society, is his notion of how things should be done; according to which method. There is a right and a wrong way of doing things. These concepts have underpinned Delors' work at each stage of his professional life, and his lessons to others, and are based on the ability to undertake a clear analysis, and to propose simple solutions. Methods, moreover, require teachers, a role in which Delors fits happily, as we have seen. It is interesting for our study that Delors' own discourse, in the way it is structured and in the way in which it is delivered, provides the best illustration of the type of thinking and logic - the method - which Delors would see

²⁰"Si je suis resté à Bruxelles, c'est par devoir plutôt que par goût. C'était une sorte de sacrifice." *L'Événement du Jeudi*, 1-7 April 1993, p.21.

employed in the formulation and implementation of policy. In other words, Delors' discourse acts a role model for the methodology of building Europe, since his arguments are constructed in much the same rigorously logical way as the problem of European unification should be tackled.

In this sense, Delors' discourse becomes a template for the how of political activity. It is a patient, logical and amply illustrated (some would say long-winded, patronising) exposition of what is involved. Delors never seems happier than when given the chance to explain what he means (for this reasons, interviews are a particularly appropriate object of study); he appears a born *pédagogue*.²¹ (Delors even draws on the world of school and learning itself to illustrate his points, and underline his own style: "...et s'il y a un mauvais élève dans la classe..."; "Elève doué, peut mieux faire, l'Europe.") His professional itinerary does indeed include a spell as associate professor (at the Paris-Dauphine university, from 1972-9); and Delors' own *autodidacte* background (his higher education was not accomplished formally, but by means of evening classes following a full day's work), combined with his familiarity and obvious affinity with the Catholic teachings of moral codes and precepts, is arguably at the root of his predilection for the *exposé*, and his mastery of the art.

Let us look at the typical Cartesian methodology employed in Delors' exposés. First, Delors introduces the vast majority of his responses with a marker such as "*Tout d'abord*" (first of all),

²¹Comparisons have been made between Delors and Pierre Mendes-France in this respect. The latter, as President of Council under the Fourth Republic, brought a teacher-type approach to the leadership role, explaining policy decisions directly to the French public via the radio, for example. See *L'Événement du Jeudi*, 22-28 October 1992, pp.38-9.

allowing him to announce the structure of his response and, thereby, control and shape it in the way which he - not the interviewer - chooses: " *Tout d'abord, la question de la culture; "Tout d'abord, il faut rappeler deux choses.*" (First of all, there is the question of culture; First of all, we must remember two things). Second, Delors presents what are usually to be the two main elements of his response; virtually all of his replies are built on this model, which allows him (if the interviewer does not interrupt him) to arrive at a typically French *synthèse* at the end of his exposition; allows him, in other words, to demonstrate that all problems, however complex they may seem, can be dealt with and resolved in a methodical fashion: "*Le sentiment national s'exprime en Europe à travers deux données simples. La défense de ses intérêts économiques, sociaux et financiers, aussi l'expression d'une certaine conception du monde.*"; "*Tout d'abord, en ce qui concerne la fraternité, elle se traduit par deux aspects différents.*"; "*Il y, bien entendu...on songe à deux moyens essentiels...*" (The national sentiment expresses itself in Europe via two simple facts: the defence of Europe's economic, social and financial interests; two, a certain view of the world.; First of all, where fraternity is concerned, it is translated into reality in two ways; Of course, there are...we think of two essential means.)

Third, Delors makes frequent use of verbs such as *revenir à, rappeler, reprendre* (to return to; to remind; to take up again) in order to structure his argument, refer to earlier exchanges during the conversation and to underline his control, both of the linguistic exchange itself, and of the subject matter; such verbs also allow him to create the impression that all is part of the whole. Finally,

Delors' discourse is structured by the use of other grammatical markers of logic and of clarification. These are further means of underlining his message, or revelation, which is that the most complex-seeming situations - the construction of Europe; French politics and so on, in fact lend themselves to simple, clear methods and solutions: *C'est pourquoi*"; *"C'est ce qui s'appelle..."*; *"La question est que...."* (That is why...; it is what we call...; the question is that...)

We suggested above that Delors' critics may resent his style as patronising, condescending, evasive, in putting form before content. In fact Alain Duhamel, in the May 1992 *Heure de Vérité*, did become visibly irritated by this aspect of Delors' discourse and resorted, at one point, to reminding Delors of the title of the programme (the Hour of Truth), exhorting him to come to the point, and speak his mind. It is perhaps fairer to note that this type of discourse, similar to Rocard's *parler vrai* is not uncommon amongst members of France's more centrist, corporatist, social-democrat *deuxième gauche*.

How then is such discursive rigour to be applied to the task: creating Delors' *modèle de société européenne*? Delors is required to get the task underway; he is the linchpin of his design. We saw earlier how Delors perceives this role as his mission - his duty and, at times, his sacrifice. His role is to propose an overrarching programme of proposals, and to impart a sense of direction for policy and reform. His college of commissioners are left with the task of preparing the more detailed, individual programmes or projects by which the programme can be implemented. Both Delors and the Commission as a whole are then responsible for

securing the collaboration of the EC's other institutions, and of the member state governments, in the implementation of policy proposals.

We can note that inspiration for much of Delors' method appears to come from Jean Monnet's style of politics: Monnet's was a method based on the magical combination of vision and pragmatism; of daring (when required), and wise, unprepossessing incrementalism at all other times. Thus, in the same way as Monnet believed it was essential to change circumstances themselves when no solution to a given situation could be found, and did so, so Delors, on arrival at the Commission in 1985, set about, he tells us, discovering in which direction he could most successfully (in terms of winning the support of member states) create a new situation, a basis for a relaunch of integration.²² These were examples of vision, of daring. But much as Monnet also relied on simplicity and gradualism in order to win support, and therefore on the day-to-day collaboration essential for the implementation of his vision of European unity, so Delors underlines constantly in his discourse the need for simplicity and clarity of the means of European politics.

One means employed by Delors to portray himself as a teller of the simple truth is to mark himself off from the group which he calls *les intellectuels*, this despite the fact that, given his own prolific writings and public appearances, he is clearly an intellectual (in the French sense) himself. In the early 1990s, Delors' plans to

²²The 1993 Single Market programme launched in the mid-1980s was due in part, as Delors saw it, to his having consulted the national capitals on taking up his post in 1985 to find out what developments would be acceptable to each member state. cf. J. Delors, *La France par l'Europe*, Paris, Grasset, 1988, p.49.

reactivate (by proxy) his political club *Témoins*, included opening its doors to *les intellectuels* as well as to politicians. By choosing to refer to such people as outsiders, Delors signals to his television audience, made up of ordinary men and women, that he too is ordinary: "*Ce qui lui [à l'Europe] manque maintenant, c'est que les intellectuels y portent davantage d'intérêt.*" (What Europe lacks now are intellectuals who take an interest in it.) And if he is ordinary, yet still manages to accomplish his task, then the EC cannot be as complex, or its problems as intractable, as they may appear to be. Monnet too, we remember, stressed his ordinariness (for example in his memoirs - he was not a public speaker).

The term '*simple*' itself (and its variants) also feature strongly in Delors' responses to questions, with the effect that the audience begins to feel, to believe, that virtually all dimensions of European integration are, after all, straightforward, therefore unthreatening: "...*et moi, j'ai proposé une formule plus simple.*"; "*Ça, c'est une peur typiquement français. Pour une raison très simple.*" (So I proposed a very simple formula; That's a typically French fear. For a simple reason.)

Our analysis of Delors' discourse has thus far revealed the key dimensions of Delors' perception of his own leadership role within the Community. The daring of vision, combined with the simplicity of incremental pragmatism are Delors' favoured methods for the creation of a more just (morally and economically) European society. It is primarily his vision of a moral and socialising mission for the Community, and his clear understanding of the means required to establish and project this desired *modèle de société*, which constitute his discursive and

political methodology. It now remains to return to the broader question of European political leadership from which we began, in order to draw certain general conclusions from our study: what has the Delors experience taught us about the role of Commission President as political leader? What predictive value does his interpretation, and expression, of the role have?

CONCLUSIONS

1. Renewed academic interest in the political leadership of the EC, generated by the clear shifts and progress made in European integration between 1984 and 1992, led to the conclusion that national leadership was the critical factor of success in securing these advances. This is a view in line with the evolution of integration theory during the late 1960s, when national political leadership was seen to be responsible for the most significant changes - negative or positive - in the integration process.
2. Nevertheless, Jacques Delors, who will become the longest-serving Commission President (if he remains in post until 1995, has clearly emerged as a leading European leadership figure in this integration process. His media image, in particular in Britain, is of a leader - if not the leader - of a would-be federal and united Europe and, in many respects, far exceeds the reality of the scope of his office (although, as an unelected official and in comparison with most elected European political offices, this scope is unprecedentedly broad). In the UK, this leadership image has at times been highly negative: a Commission President had never

before arrogated such political responsibilities and initiatives, with such effect.²³

3. Delors has deliberately contributed to the making of this image, and has thereby undoubtedly magnified the role of the Commission President more than any of his predecessors. Delors is the first Commission President to have publicly - in part via his discourse, as we have seen - redefined the role. In so doing he challenged the prevailing norms of political leadership, which were essentially based on national paradigms. He demonstrated that a new form of political leadership - accompanied by an appropriately iconoclastic discursive style - could exist, and function with success. His public discourse reveals a personal vision of a particular model of European society, based on a set of moral precepts for a peaceful, fairer and more individual-centred organisation of human relations, and achievable by the implementation of fundamentally simple methods and policy instruments. This is a discourse which is clearly representative of all of the most significant strands of Delors' private and political life: his Catholicism, his reforming Socialism, political activism and experience of ministerial office.

4. Delors has thus shaped a unique model of behaviour and discourse while President of the Commission which, at the very least, has enabled him to be perceived, for positive or negative reasons, as having contributed decisively to the political leadership of the Community in the period 1985-1992. Empirical research is still required to test such observations against a more comprehensive theoretical explanation of the most salient factors

²³See *The Guardian* of 8 June 1993 for a discussion of Delors' media image in the UK.

and structures of Community leadership. Most importantly, empirical work is required which compares Delors' discourse and image in the mid-1980s with that of the early 1990s, when he seemed weakened by the Maastricht debacle. We would be interested to discover whether his discourse then reflected the retailoring of his role that was imposed upon him by far less favourable economic and political circumstances than in 1985-7. These circumstances meant that public opinion became far less tolerant of the perceived working methods of the Community's institutions. As a consequence, efforts were undertaken in 1992-3 within the Commission to establish subsidiarity, and to arrange for greater openness of its own and other EC institutions' (notably the Council of Ministers') operations.

A spate of newspaper articles had appeared on the heels of the Danish referendum of June 1992, and at the time when Delors was due to be reappointed as Commission President for a further two years. These articles had portrayed Delors as being somewhat chastened by the difficulties that Maastricht had run into; as being calmer, quieter, more of a servant to the member state governments than had ever been the case, and having espoused the cause of subsidiarity in order to respond to new circumstances.²⁴

In the meantime, our findings raise a number of questions concerning the future of the role of Commission President, and of Delors himself. Namely:

²⁴*The Economist* 27 June 1992, p.46; *the Guardian* 17 June 1992, p.19.

a/ It is possible that Delors has created a style of supranational leadership which is now *de rigueur* for future Commission Presidents. Potential successors to Delors are: Ruud Lubbers of Holland (traditionally one of the 'little' EC countries, with no history of credible, decisive, European leadership); Felipe Gonzalez, Prime Minister of Spain (one of the EC's two newest entrants and a latecomer to Western European-style democracy and so, as with Holland, no historically-legitimate claim to EC statesmanship); Gianni ('greasylocks') de Michelis, self-styled Italian disco king: Italian statesman (de Gasperi, Spinelli) have historically played significant parts in furthering European legitimacy, and so lend some legitimacy to de Michelis' aspirations. Even Margaret Thatcher had at one point a number of supporters in favour of her assuming the Commission presidency on the departure of a man she was assumed to despise (of passing interest: Delors is invariably respectful, admiring, even, of Thatcher in references to the former British prime minister).

Delors remains the only unelected European-wide leader since Jean Monnet to have so left so clear a stamp on the role of Commission President. In that Delors, unlike Monnet, has the experience of ministerial office (albeit appointed, not elected), and conceivably entertains the ambition of elected office, it may be that he has shaped a more realistic model of supranational leadership for would-be, politically ambitious, European leaders to follow. Delors' discourse clearly demonstrates that he has arrogated a legitimacy and political credibility far greater than his predecessors; that he has undertaken more, and assumed a higher public profile than they ever did, all of which has enabled him to

act more like a national leader: this is the foremost reason for the creation of what we could call the Delors phenomenon, or myth.

b/ It seems interesting to enquire whether the model is appropriate to national leadership, more precisely to the Presidency of the French Republic. There is still a reasonable chance that Delors will become a candidate to the French presidency in 1995. It may be that Delors' behaviour and discourse are appropriate, or at least adaptable, to this position; on the other hand, his ways may be too idiosyncratic - and so ideally suited to the unique, relatively unprescribed, undefined and unscripted post of President of the Commission. This is a question which transcends the more obvious issues of Delors' support within the French PS, amongst the French electorate and so on, which will obviously determine his chances of election, if candidate for the presidency. We can suggest that Delors' discourse contains within it enough 'modules' of nationally appropriate leadership characteristics for these to be stressed, should Delors find himself candidate for the French presidency. For, although so much of Delors' political experience prior to 1985 has been of the detailed, technical, policy-making kind, our study of his discourse as Commission President has revealed a capacity to emphasise the more statesmanlike qualities of his role.

c/ Finally, we may wonder whether the Commission is the only potential source of political leadership possessing a more Europe-wide appeal than the traditionally dominant, culturally and linguistically-constrained national polities. When the Danish people surprisingly voted 'no' in June 1992 to the Maastricht treaty negotiated and signed by national leaders, parliamentarians,

national, but particularly European, may have concluded that the key to successful EC politics lay ultimately in the direct relationship between European citizens and their elected members of parliament. In this context, the European Parliament may come to be a new rival source of candidates for a European-wide, European-style, political leadership of the EC.

Delors did not rush to uphold the outcome of the Danish popular vote as a welcome sign of increased citizens' participation in the building of European Union, despite his concern, throughout his political life, with the citizen and his or her political representation. Yet it was precisely over questions of political representation that European public opinion was most vocal in the early 1990s. Political leaders were seen as having become too far removed from the concerns of their electorates, as having fallen into the widening gap between their rhetoric, on the one hand, and reality on the other. Even Delors' discourse was considered to mask a profound disrespect for public feeling. In becoming so much like a national leader, Delors' European message was ultimately treated like that of the national leaders: with suspicion, and the call for change.

Thus we end on a paradox: Delors' style of leadership as Commission President bore many of the hallmarks of national forms of political leadership: he presented a personalised and powerful profile, possessing of a vision and the understanding of how to get things done. This was a style which enabled him to shape the course of European integration. For a time, partly via his public discourse, Delors was able to redefine his role and its responsibilities, and behave more like a national political leader

than as the head of an international administration. But when this style itself was called into question by public opinion, Delors was deemed as guilty, if not more so, given the nature of his office (hitherto only responsible for the low-profile politics of policy proposal, implementation and administration) as the national leaders themselves. Subsequently, his scope for action was considerable diminished.

Delors has tried to downgrade his discourse and style of political leadership to one now deemed more fitting to his role. Thanks to the relatively undefined and **unscripted** nature of the Commission presidency, Delors can at least contemplate changing styles whilst in full flow; a national leader is far less likely to have such an opportunity. Nevertheless, it is too late for him to efface the image of **President Delors**, even if he wanted to. He has created a style of European political leadership which will afford his successors more choices - discursive as well as programmatic - than any President of the Commission to date.