

THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE BLACK SEA

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TOWARDS A GLOBAL RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGES OF EUROPEAN CONSTRUCTION

Nowadays, the Mediterranean is higher than ever on the agenda. Nevertheless, we do not know exactly where its borders are. Its frontiers are not historical, ethnic, national or governmental. The wise men of antiquity taught that its limits were where the olive tree ended. This typical tree of the region, the name of which appears with the grape-vine and the fig tree in the three holy books, is now the logo of the Mediterranean Forum.

In the past, the Mediterranean had a glorious history and existence. It was not only the 'centre' of the world, but the world itself where the north and the south, richness and poverty, young and old, the three monotheistic religions and the three continents met.

This 'Marvelous World', this integral scenery of culture, of men and women representing common characteristics, as well as dissimilar aspects, seems to have lost its affluence. However, although separated from one shore to the other, a sense of belonging exists within the Mediterranean. It is not a question of history or tradition, of geography or roots, of memory or belief, but of destiny. This is why it seems to us that, notwithstanding the external pledges and the internal threats, the coastal countries obviously retain the means of re-inventing the Mediterranean, as Paul Balta says, but only of course if they put their competency together and co-operate in forms of bilateral or multilateral action.

The year 1995 was rich in terms of various initiatives aimed at increasing co-operation around the Mediterranean. During its presidency of the European Union in the first half of 1995, France chose the Mediterranean as one of its main priorities, a choice that we welcome. The Barcelona Conference, held in November 1995, created a new momentum that has to be pursued. As to the Mediterranean Forum, it confirmed its validity notably with the fruitful discussions at the Ministerial Conference, held at Sainte-Maxime on 9 April 1996. What is more important is the successive presidencies of the European Union of France, Spain and Italy from 1995 to mid-1996.

On the other hand, the finalisation of the customs union between Turkey and the European Union at the end of 1995, is an important step in Turkey's process of rapprochement and integration with the European Union, and this will also have a particular impact on the Mediterranean dimension of European structuring.

The Inter-Governmental Conference of 1996, is thus in a context in which the Mediterranean, the cradle of various civilisations, rightly finds its significant place in European dynamics.

The Mediterranean basin is one of the regions which juxtaposes in its narrow geography the most diverse democratic regimes. As Mr. J. F. Daguzan of CREST has underlined, demographic and economic concerns constitute the main north-south divide in the Mediterranean. In this region, the stakes are numerous. In this climate of breaches at different levels and a world in re-formation, the renewal of the place of Turkey in the Mediterranean should be seen as a contribution to making the Mediterranean a vital region and one which would constitute a pole of stability in the world.

An editorial in the quarterly *Cahiers des Deux Mers* of the Institute Méditerranéen de la Communication accentuates a widely accepted reality that has tended to be forgotten over time: "United by the gates of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus, the Mediterranean and the Black Sea share the same waters, even though the divisions inherited from the Cold War era habituated us to consider them as two antagonistic spaces."

Indeed, we could not envisage the future of the Mediterranean without taking into consideration the situation in the Black Sea. After all, one is the construction of the other. In this respect, Turkey has already taken steps concerning the Mediterranean and succeeded in establishing a scheme of economic and cultural cooperation in the Black Sea.

The Black Sea Economic Cooperation project, initiated by Turkey, takes into account the deep and rapid evolution which has occurred in Europe and also the determination of the nations of the Black Sea countries to launch an era of peace and stability.

The aims are to integrate this region into the world economy, to diversify economic relations among the member countries by using the advantages of geographical proximity, the complementarity of their economies and, in short, to transform this common sea into a sea of peace, stability and prosperity.

Following a difficult beginning and a series of negotiations, co-operation among the coastal countries of this sea, which is Black in name only, is developing steadily through the creation of a Parliamentary Assembly, embracing the cultural dimension and with the creation of an investment bank and a small secretariat.

From the co-operation of the Baltic States to the Atlantic arc where the efforts of the French regions are obvious, there are many attempts in which the regions try focusing on the European axis in their own ways. In each case, there is a legitimate ambition to open a way through which one can respond to the new expectations in the face of the new configuration of the continent.

As for the Mediterranean, it has been waiting for a long time. In today's Mediterranean, 'viva la muerte' has become a deep, resounding scream. The forces of rejection are indeed powerful. The positive forces must be stronger. Recent initiatives and our experiences in the Black Sea show us that success is within reach.

To paraphrase Edgar Morin, we are actually in an era where realities are crumbling, but uncertainty is never complete. There are some islands of certainty and zones of uncertainty for which a strategy of thinking and a strategy of action could be built. If patience is the primary political virtue, it is meaningless without the capacity for decision.

Therefore, the question is to know if it is not through a synergy of different initiatives inscribed around these two spaces-the Black Sea and the Mediterranean-that the pioneers of the new European architecture will give to our continent its long awaited gleam, on the eve of the third millennium.

The European upswing towards the countries of Central and Eastern Europe on the one hand, and the impulse given to the Mediterranean dimension on the other, will appear as the only global approach which can solidify the process of Europeanisation and will be an asset to those who are ready to co-operate.

Europe must not be built against the Mediterranean, but must incorporate the Islamic and Jewish heritages which it has excluded since 1492.

At the entrance of Western Europe, Spain links Europe to Africa and its culture offers a synthesis of the Christian world and the Islamic world. As for Turkey-more European than Spain is oriental-she links Asia to Europe, controls the entrance to the Mediterranean at its eastern end and emerges in the new texture of international relations as a model harmonising the generalised values of the West with those of Islam.

The claim goes maybe even further. For the Black Sea and the Mediterranean together form the pillars where the penetrating geography of Eurasia stands. Turkey finds itself situated at the heart of Eurasia, at the crossing point of the two seas.

From one shore to the other, the future of Europe will be nourished from an area starting from the ex-Soviet Union, the Balkans and the Caucasus and ending in the Middle East and the Maghreb. Will not the future of Europe also benefit from the evolution through which the waters of these two seas would shine with the same fervour?

These considerations are voluntarily imbued from a 'rational optimism'. Turkey desires to contribute with a unique approach to the reflections on the future of our continent.

Moving from the mythological to the concrete should be our motto for the future of the Mediterranean, though we must retain just the right measure of Utopian thinking that can bring tangible results.