

Transcription of the interview with Jacques Delors – Part 3 – Jacques Delors, President of the European Commission from 1985 to 1995 (Paris, 16 December 2009)

Caption: Transcription of the interview with Jacques Delors, President of the Commission of the European Communities from 1985 to 1995, conducted by the Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe (CVCE) on 16 December 2009 at the Paris-based premises of the think tank 'Notre Europe', of which Jacques Delors is the founding director. The interview, conducted by Hervé Bribosia, Research Coordinator at the CVCE, particularly focuses on the following subjects: Delors's appointment as President of the European Commission, the Single European Act, the accession of Spain and Portugal to the European Communities, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the negotiations on the Maastricht Treaty, the subsidiarity principle, the work of the 'Delors Committee' on Economic and Monetary Union, the coordination of economic policies and the 1993 White Paper, the non-participation of some Member States in the single currency, the 'Delors Packages', a review of the Delors Commission and the Delors method.

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I. His appointment as President of the European Commission

[Hervé Bribosia] What were the circumstances surrounding your appointment as President of the Commission? Until that time you had been François Mitterrand's Finance Minister. Who were your allies, and who were your potential rivals, if any?

[Jacques Delors] I myself wasn't a candidate for the post of President of the Commission at all. All I'd done was tell the President of the Republic that I wanted to stop being a minister. What I mainly disagreed with was some of the Élysée's working methods. What would one say nowadays? Over-centralisation, the way of appointing the ministers. So I was thinking of stopping, I was 60 at the time, I wanted to serve out my term as Mayor of Clichy and go back to university teaching. So I'd told him before that I wanted to leave the government. So it was in the back of his mind. Then after that Chancellor Kohl, whom I'd been to welcome before the Fontainebleau European Council, told me that he was prepared to give up a German Presidency — because according to the protocol it was their turn — in favour of a French Presidency. But not just any French Presidency. I'd kept that to myself. He saw Mitterrand and François Mitterrand seized the opportunity and said: 'So, we need ... if it's possible to have a French Presidency ...' They had a round-table discussion over one candidate, it didn't work out.

[Hervé Bribosia] Who was it?

[Jacques Delors] No, no, I won't say who it was. And then, since Jacques Delors is a firm, plain man who's a good manager, well, he knew it would get through so he in fact put my name forward and it worked at once.

[Hervé Bribosia] Did Margaret Thatcher support you?

[Jacques Delors] Well, at the time she said: 'Yes, OK.'

[Hervé Bribosia] You were twice re-appointed as head of the Commission, once in 1989 and once in 1993, for a shorter term.

[Jacques Delors] The first time was in 1988, since my term was for four years: '85, '86, '87 and '88. And the second time it was for two years, because people knew it was the end.

[Hervé Bribosia] And did your re-appointment for further terms go through on the nod?

[Jacques Delors] In 1988, even Mrs Thatcher said yes.

[Hervé Bribosia] No objections? And what about the second time?

[Jacques Delors] The second time, she knew I wanted to leave. It was because they were having so many problems finding a successor, not because of me but with each other. I'd said: 'I'll do two years and that's it.' And Mitterrand agreed: 'Jacques Delors will do two years, and that'll be the end of it.' So there weren't any problems for those two years.

II. The Single European Act

[Hervé Bribosia] So the Single European Act was signed in February 1986, in other words a good year after you started as President of the Commission. What do you remember about those intergovernmental negotiations? What influence did the Commission, or possibly you yourself, have over them? You went on to say later that that Single Act was your favourite. Why?

[Jacques Delors] I still think that. I'll tell you why. In two stages. Firstly, as soon as I'd been appointed in June 2004 [sic], or the beginning of July 1984, listen to me, I'm sorry, 1984, I can't get used to growing old ... I had to go round all the capitals, ten of them at the time including Greece. And as there had been the Fontainebleau European Council which had patched up what, for the sake of brevity, I'll call the family quarrels, I made a proposal to them, I said: 'Right, there are three possible factors which could get things moving again: an institutional change, a single currency or a common defence system.' Knowing that the ten countries wouldn't agree on them. So I did my rounds, it all went very well, I was well received, with Émile Noël, the irreplaceable Émile Noël, to whom we should pay tribute, who had been the Secretary General of the Commission for a long time. And I knew there were some of them who wouldn't go along with it. I said to them: 'Your economy isn't doing well, though — supposing we applied the Treaty of Rome? You have a single market. That would be a stimulus to your economies.' I had examples, it worked, they went for it. So as soon as I took over, I put forward 1992 as the proposed date for the single market. Parliament agreed, so did the governments, but there was one obstacle to overcome. It was that, because the proposals for setting up the single market had been drafted by the Thorn Commission and hadn't been accepted, we had to get a unanimous vote in favour. So I told them that needed to be changed, but meanwhile the bright sparks surrounding Kohl and Mitterrand had invented a new treaty. I arrived in Milan in June 1985, before the European Council chaired by Mr Craxi, with a draft treaty on the table put together jointly by France and Germany. That irritated me already because there weren't two of us, there were ten ...

[Hervé Bribosia] You weren't involved?

[Jacques Delors] No, no, there were ten, it irritated me that two countries ... well, anyway. And then, what's more, I read the document: it was the European Confederation provided for in the Fouchet Report. Just that. The intergovernmental arrangement ...

[Hervé Bribosia] It was a leak of the Fouchet Plan?

[Jacques Delors] Yes, it was, although they didn't know that. Neither of them was aware of it. So anyway, I had someone working with me, François Lamoureux, who had all the texts in Milan. I said to him: 'That's more or less the Fouchet Report, but we haven't got it.' 'Ah,' he said, 'but I have got it.' François Lamoureux was an excellent man, who has since died, before his time, alas. So I went to see Mitterrand and Kohl. I said to Kohl: 'You're a federalist — can you agree to that?' And with Mitterrand I went on the offensive at once, I said to him: 'That is the Fouchet Report!' And they realised straight away that ...

[Hervé Bribosia] But who had drawn up that draft?

[Jacques Delors] People working for both countries, I won't mention their names. I know who it was, but I won't mention their names.

[Hervé Bribosia] At the administrative or diplomatic level, then?

[Jacques Delors] At the level of the leaders' private offices. What's more, they hadn't shown it to the others, and I demolished it although I'd only been at the Commission for six months, I demolished it and I asked, I said to them: 'Listen, you have two possibilities. Either you abstain when a text doesn't suit you as regards the single market, and it'll go through. Or you change the treaty.' And after discussing it, we had to change the treaty, and that was when Craxi did something historic. He said to the European Council: 'We'll vote on it.' Seven countries said: 'We should change the treaty,' and three were against. We set up an intergovernmental conference. That's how it goes, sometimes it's just the luck of the draw. It was Craxi, you see, who's so disparaged, well, with pressure from Andreotti too.

[Hervé Bribosia] So the IGC, the Intergovernmental Conference, opened.

[Jacques Delors] As regards the Intergovernmental Conference, we can say without bragging — well, there was a Luxembourg presence which was very accommodating, very remarkable, but it was us who drafted 80 % of the texts.

[Hervé Bribosia] By us, you mean the Commission?

[Jacques Delors] That's right. It was the first time that had happened.

[Hervé Bribosia] So the Commission was very influential in the drawing up of that draft treaty.

[Jacques Delors] Oh yes, with the Single Act! I wanted there to be the single market and the possibility of extending qualified majority voting as well. But I also wanted there to be the social aspect. I also wanted there to be solidarity between poor regions and rich regions. I also wanted there to be a few words about the environment. It all went through apart from a few words about the single currency. And the Germans were against that.

[Hervé Bribosia] It was there in embryo, of course?

[Jacques Delors] Yes, it was, it was in the introduction, a little sentence, like Tom Thumb leaving a trail of white pebbles, you know the story ... I'd put it there, having been a Finance Minister [...]. So we arrived in Luxembourg, where the Council was chaired remarkably well by Santer. We should give Jacques Santer the credit he deserves. The commitment of the Luxembourgers to Europe is remarkable. From Jacques Santer to Jean-Claude Juncker, by way of Werner who inspired me ... remarkable! So the day before, he didn't want that little paragraph. I went to see Kohl and said to him: 'Look, it's quite simple, if we have a single market tomorrow, people other than you are going to raise the question of the single currency. So put a few words in and that can also be a way of showing that the EMS is useful, do you agree?' He did. That left Mrs Thatcher. And I was able to talk to her while the sitting was suspended and she finally agreed.

[Hervé Bribosia] What did you do to convince her?

[Jacques Delors] Oh, it happened twice. In 1985 for what I've just said, and in 1988 when the German sub-presidency secured the big budgetary agreement for me. I spoke to her in good faith, I didn't spin her any yarns. I'm telling you, she's a woman who was against my ideas but who was extremely courteous, extremely respectful of others. She said: 'Right, well, if that's all it is ...' I said: 'It's the only thing, Mrs Thatcher, which is stopping us setting up your single market which you also like.'

[Hervé Bribosia] And it's your favourite treaty precisely because it brought the whole political spectrum together into balance ...

[Jacques Delors] A balance between the political and social aspects, a balance between the advantages of the single market and solidarity between the regions, with the way forward open even to progress on the

environment and the single currency. So it's a treaty I'm very fond of, because we got 80 % of it — due yet again to people like Émile Noël, François Lamoureux and others, and even people working for the other Commissioners, particularly Mr Perissich, who is still active. So it was a treaty we made ourselves. The Luxembourgers were very cooperative and very open to us, because agreeing to texts drafted by the Commission is not easy for a government. The Luxembourgers are very European. They didn't do it out of carelessness but out of a European spirit. We worked well together and that was it. The treaty was agreed to — a miracle! — 12 months after I took office. It was adopted and then there was a referendum against it. But it was implemented in 1987.

III. Spain and Portugal join the EU

[Hervé Bribosia] So, at the same time as you were negotiating what was to become the Single Act, you were also negotiating the Treaty of Accession of Spain and Portugal. Those two countries were finally able to join the Communities just before the signing of the Single Act. To what extent did those negotiations overlap or affect each other?

[Jacques Delors] No, I mean that up until I arrived, negotiations used to be divided into segments according to subject. And despite the best efforts of Lorenzo Natali, a remarkable Member of the Commission, no progress was being made. So the Italian Presidency, which was getting tired of it, said that it was up to the President of the Commission to deal with it. So I spent two nights with Spain and Portugal and I managed to get an agreement, by taking all the issues together. There you are, that's how it happened.

[Hervé Bribosia] But did Spain and Portugal have an opportunity to influence the text in any way?

[Jacques Delors] No, not the Single Act but they did influence the negotiations. Then, as the negotiations were over, Mr Andreotti trusted me with the great task of winding up the negotiations, Mr Andreotti about whom you can say what you like but he is a great European, I could mention a number of areas to you where he left his mark on the forward march of Europe. So, when that had been done, they arrived in Milan in June 1985, but they kept silent. Magnificent, two nations like that arriving and keeping silent the first time, showing that they were joining a family — a magnificent example! When you see their current standard of living [sic] and what it is now, you can see that Europe has been useful to them. And you can see that Portugal and Spain have been among the greatest supporters of forward movement by Europe. It's really remarkable. So I did ... My view regarding the President of the Commission, you see, was that he had to be useful. So I was useful to them by making it possible for the single market to be set up. I was useful to them by enlarging the Community. In those days you were more trusted by the governments, otherwise you got nowhere. Governments, European Council, major international organisations ... So you have to be useful. I realised that I had to be useful. Sometimes I had to pay a price, I didn't always get my own way. But you have to move forward in the end. So that's the great lesson I learned, to be useful, and then the more useful you are the more you are listened to.

IV. The fall of the Berlin Wall

[Hervé Bribosia] At the end of 1989 there was the fall of the Berlin Wall, of which we've just been celebrating the 20th anniversary. What was your personal experience of that major geopolitical event and what attitude did the European Commission adopt towards the risks of instability, the reunification of Germany, the prospect ...?

[Jacques Delors] Before that, though, there was a major event. The point was that once we had got the Single Act, how were we to make a success of it? I was given two months to go round the capitals, during the UK Presidency in December 1987. And at the beginning of 1988, I produced this report — it was the German Presidency, great results achieved, such as the agreement on the Community budget — and I had

announced that there would be multiannual perspectives. For me that was a really important event, all the more so, of course, because in 1988 there was a general feeling of euphoria because there had been a return to growth. The establishment of the Delors Committee on ... So, the fall of the Berlin Wall, in the Commission we were still in a position of strength, or at any rate of trust, let's say. Once the thing had happened, the next day, I called the Commission together and the day after that I did an interview on ZDF in Germany where I said that the Eastern Europeans belonged to Europe. I went for a bold stroke there, well I suppose I rather overstepped my [...].

[Hervé Bribosia] Did you have the support of the other Members of the Commission for that course of action?

[Jacques Delors] Oh yes, but not from the governments, it was from the Members of the Commission. I said to them, I said: 'I'm making sure that we don't overstep our powers. But there is a clause in the Treaty of Rome, a declaration annexed by Germany which says, in 1957: "Should the situation change one day, this must be taken into account."' So I gave an interview to ZDF the day after saying that the Eastern Europeans belonged to Europe. That's all I said about it. Well, that caused a stir ...

[Hervé Bribosia] Hadn't you discussed it with the Heads of State or Government first?

[Jacques Delors] No, no, no ...

[Hervé Bribosia] It was a personal initiative of yours?

[Jacques Delors] When events like that happen, and when you already have confidence because you've done things, you have to take these risks. They could have kicked me out the following week, but there you are ...

V. Negotiating the Maastricht Treaty

[Hervé Bribosia] So, in February 1992 there was the signing of the Treaty of Maastricht, another treaty. It was the Treaty on European Union, the outcome of two intergovernmental conferences. We'll come back to the one on Economic and Monetary Union, and the other was on Political Union. As regards the structure of the Treaty, and considering the nature of the European Union, what was at stake in the arguments that took place on that question? And who were the leading lights?

[Jacques Delors] There were several rounds of arguments. The first one was beyond me. It was when Mr Genscher said [...]. The fact is that I had been concentrating on foreign policy, leaving EMU to my very eminent Danish colleague Mr Christophersen. But there was to be a chapter on EMU where I intervened and lost. So the first thing that struck me was the way people deliberately stirred up political passions. Mr Genscher said: 'As we are going to have a common foreign policy,' (his words) 'we must have a common defence policy.' Of the 12 countries there, there were three which said: 'But defence means NATO.' That was the whole story. At that point I said to them, though it got me nowhere: 'Gentlemen, don't talk about common foreign policy, it's beyond our reach. Talk about common foreign policy measures when you are in agreement.' There was nothing to be done, they wanted a text, which actually is a complete mishmash, a text talking about common foreign policy. I've never believed in that. And I think that when you make announcements like that, you disappoint the peoples of Europe because it can't be done. I had told them to talk about common foreign policy measures. That was the first point which struck me. The second was to do with Economic and Monetary Union. I went there once, Mr Christophersen insisted on it [...]. I said to them: 'Among the criteria for accession to EMU, include long-term unemployment and youth unemployment.' Spain refused, the Germans and Dutch were happy. So they only included their economic and financial criteria. But I had made that suggestion to demonstrate clearly the link between the economic and the social aspects. I lost. The third battle was in Dresden, over the temple or the tree.

[Hervé Bribosia] The structure of the Treaty, the structure of the Union.

[Jacques Delors] That's right, I said to them: 'The Treaty has to be a tree with several more or less developed branches.' I was supported by certain countries, by Germany. Not by France. But against me I had the Dutch, the British and the Portuguese. So my idea wasn't accepted. And they opted for the temple, with three pillars.

[Hervé Bribosia] And the European Union which had no legal personality ...

[Jacques Delors] I lost the battle. So I lost two battles out of three. But I fought. Credit where it's due. There you are, so I said to them: 'Now look, your temple [...], it has led to badly put-together treaties, including the Nice Treaty and the Lisbon Treaty,' because they didn't take [...], they refused to be realistic. They couldn't see what could be done and what couldn't be done. And there was already this obsession about the European Council, etc., the intergovernmental way ... Well, it was a battle between [...] — even if the federalists thought I was weak and lukewarm — between a federalist view at the top and an intergovernmental view which has just grown and grown ever since.

[Hervé Bribosia] But now with the Lisbon Treaty we have the European Union, a single legal personality, there are no Communities any longer. Officially there are no pillars any longer, so we have got to that tree-shaped structure.

[Jacques Delors] There is just something which will still be obvious to my Luxembourgish and Belgian friends, which is that all the symbols of what could be a second mother country, our country plus Europe, have disappeared. They have been abolished in the treaty.

[Hervé Bribosia] There was European citizenship, though, wasn't there?

[Jacques Delors] There's no point in talking about an ever closer European Union when you throw out the anthem, the flag and all that. They're symbols which don't seem to be anything much, since no one is asking people to say: 'Give up being French, Luxembourgish or Belgian, you're European.' No, they're not being asked to do that. They're merely being asked to accept the fact that there is another dimension to their feeling of belonging. That is what has been destroyed by the concessions made to the British.

[Hervé Bribosia] All right. But the Maastricht Treaty is also the treaty on European citizenship.

[Jacques Delors] Yes.

[Hervé Bribosia] Through local and European elections, in particular. At the time, did you see these advances as major advances?

[Jacques Delors] Yes, I did. My greatest battle at the Maastricht Summit, during the meeting, was over the social chapter.

[Hervé Bribosia] The social chapter ...

[Jacques Delors] I had proposed it. There wasn't only me. The trade unions played a major part in it, with the idea, too, that when the two sides of industry reached agreement, we converted that into European law. The Dutch Presidency was lukewarm about the text, the British were against it. That was when Kohl came to see me and said: 'Jacques, we've already got enough as it is, give that up.' I said: 'Never.'

[Hervé Bribosia] It became the social protocol.

[Jacques Delors] There you are. 'Never,' I said. I went to see the Dutch Presidency and I said to them: 'Never.' I went to see the British and I said to them: 'Why don't you go for an opt-out?' They did two opt-outs, on EMU and on that. And it was passed, the social chapter. Luckily. Even if it means it just stays there

as a plan to inspire all the countries.

[Hervé Bribosia] And the inspiration for this social protocol was the social charter signed in 1989.

[Jacques Delors] Yes, already in 1989, but I had after all, you see, done some work on the social dialogue then which everyone spoke highly of. Because, when all's said and done, as I was saying to you a short while ago, it wasn't easy. There were risks, but I wanted there to be some social rights in there at least, so I produced that charter, but I didn't do it myself. I had it done by the Economic and Social Committee, so that I could say to the governments: 'Look, it wasn't me who did it, it was all the social partners — you're surely not going to turn it down?'

[Hervé Bribosia] Mrs Thatcher did actually help you, then, to get to the Maastricht social protocol. Wasn't there an intellectual continuity between the two?

[Jacques Delors] No, no, it was before Maastricht, in 1989 ...

[Hervé Bribosia] In 1989, yes, that's what I'm saying ...

[Jacques Delors] She was against it for a reason she mentioned during a sitting. She said: 'Right, I see what Jacques Delors means' — it was never 'President', it was Jacques Delors, not that it bothered me, I like my name — and she said: 'Yes, but you see, I think all this talk about social partners ... what I think is that there's the nation and the citizen, and as for the rest ...'. So she didn't ideologically accept this idea of social partner. But the other countries voted and that charter was followed by a start being made on implementing it, but that meant that we went on with the social dialogue, I won't say any more. The fact is that in the meantime the employers had grown stronger and stronger with the deregulation after I had left. The trade unions got rather tied in knots. You know, while I was there, the social dialogue ... You'll see the book Gabaglio has brought out on the establishment of the 'Compañeras'. But they needed technical help from the Commission. The social partners are comparatively weak, they're rather divided among themselves. They don't have the same traditions. So we weren't their mentors, but we were their technical experts, and from the day that that technical expertise was no longer available, it didn't work — regardless of the political reasons and of the fact that the balance of power had altered.

VI. The subsidiarity principle

[Hervé Bribosia] Another guiding principle of the Maastricht Treaty is the principle of subsidiarity, whereby, to put it briefly, a higher level of power must be empowered to deal only with those matters which are better dealt with at that level, let's say. Whose idea was it to formalise this concept, which derives from the social doctrine of the Church, in this way? What need did it meet and, with hindsight, do you think the principle was of any practical use?

[Jacques Delors] Yes. I think the Protestants said it before the Catholics, to be historically accurate. I did a great deal of work on it. And secondly, a personalist like me can only be in favour of the principle of subsidiarity. So I realised at a particular time that the wind, after the Danish referendum result against the Treaty, I realised — and then a UK Presidency — that there had to be ... so I proposed repealing a dozen or so directives. And among the ones I [...] it's very typical of the contradictions you find in the European countries, there was one about the transporting of swine or pigs. It said that each pig should have its own place in the vehicle, and that it must also be able to look at another pig so that it wouldn't be mentally or psychologically disturbed. The text had been adopted in 1979, I'd had nothing to do with it. I asked for it to be repealed. Kohl burst out laughing, but the British, who were keen on animal protection, took another line altogether. So I'd put my finger on where it hurt. And as a result, subsidiarity — 'Yes', I even told you a moment ago that I supported the approach taken by the Lisbon Treaty, but the governments also had to find a way out of their contradictions.

[Hervé Bribosia] But who went and sought out the principle so that it could be formalised in the Treaty?

[Jacques Delors] Of Maastricht?

[Hervé Bribosia] The principle of subsidiarity, who went and found it?

[Jacques Delors] I did. I talked about it too. Because I didn't trust people. When I said to the European Parliament, and I was misunderstood: 'Listen, in the near future 80 % of the economic legislation is going to be coming out of the European Union, the national parliaments must give it some attention,' I received insults, but that is what it meant. The principle had to be put into practice. And I also know what federal States like Germany are like. So I had the idea before the governments. It was the British who put it on the agenda for their Presidency, because of course ...

[Hervé Bribosia] They saw it as setting a limit to the action the European Union could take.

[Jacques Delors] Yes, if you like. I responded. I proposed repealing 12 pieces of legislation. Some of them caused bewilderment at the Birmingham European Council.

[Hervé Bribosia] I think Margaret Thatcher supported you on the subsidiarity principle ...

[Jacques Delors] Oh yes, of course. But afterwards ...

[Hervé Bribosia] Wasn't that a bit suspect?

[Jacques Delors] No, no. I must tell you, I had a great deal of respect for her, and I won't change my view. She prevented [...], she put up all sorts of obstacles to my doing what I thought was right for Europe. But from the human point of view — and it's more than I'll say for some heads of government — she was faultless.

VII. The work of the 'Delors Committee' on Economic and Monetary Union

[Hervé Bribosia] As regards Economic and Monetary Union, you've been described as the midwife of the euro, with Schmidt and Giscard as its forebears and Kohl and Mitterrand as its godparents. The Hanover European Council of June 1988 had made you chairman of a committee whose job was to make practical proposals. The committee was eventually named after you, the 'Delors Committee' — just like the report you submitted in April 1989, the 'Delors Report'. How was the committee set up and how did it operate?

[Jacques Delors] To start with, hats off to Mr Werner! He'd been given the job of producing a report several years beforehand. He chaired a committee of senior officials and his report was a point of reference for us. So all credit to Mr Werner, a great European but a man who also, when he was President of the Council, agreed to chair a committee of technocrats.

[Hervé Bribosia] So you met him on many occasions?

[Jacques Delors] Yes, I did, and I really think ... I was due to go to the Werner Foundation and I wasn't able to go there. But we should pay tribute to him, because part of our report was borrowed from the Werner Report. That should never be forgotten. Secondly, before Hanover, Mr Genscher had talked about a single currency, and Mr Balladur, the Prime Minister, had talked about a common currency. I thought the atmosphere was right, I left them to it, Kohl first invited me to lunch at his house in Ludwigshafen and said to me: 'So, we're going to have to do something for the single currency.' He said to me: 'Right, there could be a committee of Finance Ministers.' 'Oh no,' I said to him, 'not the Finance Ministers, the governors of the central banks. Those are the ones: technical expertise and credibility!' 'So,' he said, 'could you chair it?' I said to him: 'Yes, I'll take the risk.' As President of the Commission, it was a risk. So I said to him: 'OK.'

Up to the last minute, in Hanover, the President of the German Central Bank, the Bundesbank, wasn't keen. He tried to prevent it, then later on he was in the group, he caused me a fair amount of trouble. But anyway he had his own ideas. And then Mrs Thatcher said: 'As long as it's about finding out how it could be done, let's do it!' So there was a committee of all the governors of the 12 central banks, plus three experts I had had appointed and who were good. So there we were, we set up this group, which was hard work ... stormy at times. But we managed to get unanimity, including the Governor of the Bank of England, who prepared the ground for it politically. But he said to Mrs Thatcher: 'They asked me how to do it, but not what to do.' So the report was adopted unanimously, which gave it strength. But it was extremely difficult.

[Hervé Bribosia] The essence of the report is in the Maastricht Treaty, would you say?

[Jacques Delors] No, not the economic part.

[Hervé Bribosia] Not the economic part?

[Jacques Delors] It's a bit out of balance as regards the monetary and budgetary aspects.

[Hervé Bribosia] You mean the report was more balanced from that point of view.

[Jacques Delors] That's right, the macroeconomic policies and the monetary policies. And from then on, I fought to get it rebalanced, but to no avail, as you can see. To no avail, I'm telling you.

VIII. The coordination of economic policies and the 1993 White Paper

[Hervé Bribosia] You have often regretted the absence of genuine coordination of economic policies.

[Jacques Delors] I'm not talking about an economic government, you can say that in your archives. Because [setting up] an economic government means, for the Germans, politicising the Central Bank and monetary policy. It isn't acceptable to me either. So I talk about coordination of economic policies, and it hasn't been done. The result is that the euro protects but it doesn't act as a stimulus. The second result is that when there was the recession, the lack of real cooperation, of a spirit of cooperation with the governments came into play, and all we had was the sum total of the work done by national parliaments and not [...] Now that Europe is 60 years old, one might have expected something else.

[Hervé Bribosia] But was the White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment of 1993, to your mind, a way of rectifying that?

[Jacques Delors] Yes, it was a way ..., no, no, 1993 was a bad year for Europe.

[Hervé Bribosia] There was the recession.

[Jacques Delors] The recession, the break-up of the EMS, all that ... So my idea was that, with things breaking down because of the new wave of technological progress, especially in information technology, and with globalisation, it was time to react. But we had to react on both the national and the European levels. So the cure I prescribed was partly national but also involved a European part. It's still being talked about today, especially as regards research.

[Hervé Bribosia] Was it the Lisbon Strategy in embryo?

[Jacques Delors] Yes, that's right. A collective approach to transport, the environment, there was a large part that was to do with the environment. The report just managed to get adopted at the Brussels European Council, under a Belgian Presidency, a very good Belgian Presidency, by the governments.

[Hervé Bribosia] That was the 1993 White Paper.

[Jacques Delors] Yes. I said to them once — because it was discouraging, even Kohl was taking notes saying it would cost money — I said to them once: ‘Do you know, you put me in mind of a middle-class family, from Brussels, let’s say, which says: “I’d like a fine three-piece suite. I’m going to call in a craftsman.” They ask the craftsman and he makes his three-piece suite. “Thank you.” They pay. And the craftsman, a conscientious man, looks in the window six months later to see what’s happened to his three-piece suite. And it’s in the cellar. Well, that’s just what you want to do with my report. You’d be better off not adopting it than putting it in the cellar!’ They adopted it, but the Finance Ministers didn’t follow it up and it was never implemented — except that it influenced the national governments, especially as regards the management of the labour market and so on. But it was never really implemented. And that White Paper prefigured what would come next. You can still read it today, it’s still up to date. In fact, some political parties are still parading it. But that’s how it happened, and they only agreed to it because I came out with that dreadful remark. At that point ... because during a gap in the meeting Mitterrand had said to me — yes, it was Mitterrand — ‘Well, I hope you’re not going to let yourself be pushed about.’ So I got my courage back.

IX. The decision by certain EU Member States not to join the single currency

[Hervé Bribosia] Let me come back briefly to the single currency. At the time of the Delors Report, how many Member States did you think would be able to adopt the euro as the single currency, at least to begin with, and what do you think of countries like the United Kingdom and Sweden which were extremely reluctant to join the euro zone? Was that a problem?

[Jacques Delors] Yes, for some of them I think the single currency meant a deepening of European integration which wasn’t in line with their thinking. In the United Kingdom and Sweden. What gave Sweden even more objectives was that it was a model at the time. And it still is a model. And there were the Mediterranean countries — as the Germans used to say contemptuously — the Mediterranean countries — Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal — who said: ‘But what will happen?’ The ‘Club Med countries’, as a German Finance Minister said. So all that had an effect. Well, the British, by not joining the EMU, had some good years, because they had exchange rate flexibility, but it hasn’t been like that for three years now. The Swedes foresaw the banking crisis and played a much more intelligent game, whichever government was in power, whether it was the Conservatives or the Social Democrats. As for the other countries — the ‘Club Med countries’ — Prodi, when he was President of the Council, put in a remarkable amount of work, Gonzales ... now that they’ve joined, and so we got EMU with ten countries out of twelve, nine countries out of twelve, since there’s Greece ...

[Hervé Bribosia] ... which came later. And at the time of the Delors Report, were you already thinking that only two or three or more would sign up to the euro?

[Jacques Delors] No, I had a feeling that the United Kingdom wouldn’t agree to it. Nor Sweden either, for other reasons, but it wasn’t yet a member of the Union. That came later. It was a forecast. So the United Kingdom wouldn’t agree to it. I thought the countries in the southern club would have difficulties. France was a done deal because Mitterrand had accepted the principle of the independence of the Central Bank. So that was settled. But there you are, that’s where we were at the time. My great idea was economic and social; I’ve talked to you about losing the battle on the indicators. So I’d already lost then. I came back later when Mr Jospin became Prime Minister and argued for it again, but I got nowhere, the French like to put names to things. It was called the ‘stability pact’, they had ‘and growth’ added and they were happy. That’s the French mania with putting names to things that I never stop criticising. That’s the reason why we now have [...]. As for me, my position in France is a difficult one because I’ve never criticised the Central Bank, still less either Mr Duisenberg or Mr Trichet. When I talk to them, I ask them questions but it’s all really very technical. I’ve never adopted the line of Mr Sarkozy for the camera or that of Mr Chirac. I’ve never adopted the line of an economic government. But I think that there is an imbalance between the Monetary

Union and the Economic Union. It's vital to restore the balance, and now they're starting to realise it. I did an interview with *El Pais* a few days ago, you feel nowadays that ... So how are we to go about it now, that's another matter. But we need to finish because the euro protects, even when we make stupid mistakes, but it doesn't stimulate. So we've had: 'Yes, but the answer I get from Trichet is: "We've had a 2 % growth rate over ten years, we've created 15 million jobs."' That's true, but it isn't enough, as we can see!

X. The 'Delors Packages'

[Hervé Bribosia] The 'Delors Packages', as they're called, were also named after you. This was the first time we'd resorted to medium-term financial perspectives, for the 1988–92 period in the case of the first package, and 1993–99 for the second. What was behind the actual idea of financial perspectives which has now been formalised in the Lisbon Treaty as the multiannual financial framework, and what was the framework for the negotiations?

[Jacques Delors] It dates from 1986. At the time, when Parliament was refusing to sign, there was no budget. We were on provisional twelfths. So I got prepared for the European Council of December 1986, under the UK Presidency, and I said to Mrs Thatcher — who afterwards said she was sorry she'd listened to me: 'We're bankrupt. We can't pay any more.' 'What?' It was the same day that I got her to approve the Erasmus programme, people forget that without my efforts it wouldn't exist. France has never grasped that. So that's what I said to her. And she said: 'That can't be so. You'll have to explain it over a cocktail before the European Council dinner,' because there was the dinner and then, the next day, the meeting. Over the cocktail, I told her what was on my mind. She regretted it afterwards. I spoke for three quarters of an hour, and as a result the governments said: 'Dear oh dear, Mr President of the Commission, you have two months to go round all the capitals and tell us what people think!' In January 1987 and February 1987 I packed my bags and went round all ten countries and produced a paper called 'Making a success of the Single Act' explaining the whole business. From then on, 1987, there were two setbacks. And in 1988, the German Presidency. In January, Kohl invited me to a meeting of the German Council of Ministers. I explained things and we succeeded in getting the package adopted. But before that, I had persuaded Mr Stoltenberg that there should be a multiannual agreement with Parliament to avoid Parliament [...]. And that was when the idea of multiannual perspectives came up. Mr Stoltenberg — very courteously, since it was against his inclinations — agreed to it. So we held meetings and at the same time as the Delors I Package, we had the multiannual budget perspectives, and they've been there ever since.

[Hervé Bribosia] And is the framework for negotiating these financial perspectives a purely intergovernmental framework? Or is it closer to a Community type of negotiation?

[Jacques Delors] No, no, the Commission prepares the draft and then it's between the Council of Finance Ministers and Parliament. It's what you'd expect. We've twice succeeded in avoiding any form of budgetary crisis, though, any kind of pointless row between Parliament and the Council of Ministers.

[Hervé Bribosia] And at the time, there were already demands from certain so-called net contributor countries. I'm thinking, in particular, of the British rebate.

[Jacques Delors] No, the British rebate had been settled in my time by the Fontainebleau European Council before I was President of the Commission, in 1984.

[Hervé Bribosia] That's right. But it had to be renewed.

[Jacques Delors] But after that they had a lot of discussions. When the 1988 budget package was being put together, we decided to leave that to one side. The great confrontation of 1988 took place — and there were historical reasons for it — between the Germans and the Dutch. Awful. I was there, it was awful.

[Hervé Bribosia] What was it about?

[Jacques Delors] Everything. Everything. It all goes back to the war. Anyway. We got through 1988, however. I said: 'Don't let's touch the British rebate.' Then in 1993 I said again: 'Let's deal with agriculture. Don't let's touch the British rebate, because we won't get anywhere.' Now, of course, the question is bound to come up again!

XI. What the Delors Commission and the Delors method achieved

[Hervé Bribosia] Jacques Delors, we're coming to the end of this interview. Everyone remembers the Delors Commission as one of the most fruitful in terms of European integration. What do you think were the factors or the circumstances which accounted for that success? You sometimes hear people talking about Delorism. How would you define the Jacques Delors method?

[Jacques Delors] Let me start by saying one thing. The people in power at the moment say: 'Delors was very lucky.' Duly noted. Secondly, Mr Dehaene said: 'Delors is a myth.' Duly noted. I worked hard, according to three principles: I serve governments, I defend the interests of Europe and, thirdly, I look for convergence. And if people trust me, I make proposals. That's it. So I've lived like that for years, that was my philosophy of action. That's what Delorism is as far as Europe is concerned. As regards France, it's striking a balance between the economic and the social aspects. So there you are, that's how I've lived. I know now that [...] people can't say I kick up a fuss or that I talk, but I am a bit hurt to see people saying that basically it's a myth. Why does Mr Dehaene say that? Well [...]. I worked for ten years, perhaps I was lucky. What I say is: 'Duly noted.' But all the same ...

[Hervé Bribosia] Was the Franco-German pairing a useful support, even so?

[Jacques Delors] Yes, but you had to be on the line. As I mentioned to you in connection with 1985. You had to be on the line. Secondly, I think all the countries helped me. That's what's always been different about my pronouncements. All the others have been useful. If you don't get that into your head, you won't understand anything about Europe. Luxembourg was remarkably useful, Belgium, the Netherlands. They were all useful. So why talk about the Franco-German pairing? It was, of course, but that isn't enough. In my time, I can tell you, without the others we wouldn't have succeeded. That's the only message I'd like to leave with you. Because people want to criticise. I've been lucky, it doesn't bother me in the slightest, frankly. You see them at work or you will see them at work. But this question, all countries belonging to the Union, at one time or another, have helped us take a step forward. Full stop. And especially Luxembourg. Never forget that, because it's the smallest country and I learned from Jean Monnet that you had to keep your ears open and listen to all the countries. That's my philosophy, it isn't at all about being proud. I listen to all the countries. I listened to all the countries.

[Hervé Bribosia] Jacques Delors, thank you very much indeed for giving us your account of events.

[Jacques Delors] Well, there you are, I just knocked it out as it came, I let myself go.

[Hervé Bribosia] Thank you.

[Jacques Delors] Not at all.