Transcription of the interview with Pierre Moscovici (Paris, 23 July 2008)

Caption: Transcription of the interview with Pierre Moscovici, Member of the European Parliament from 1994 to 1997 and from 2004 to 2007 and Vice-President of the European Parliament from 2004 to 2007, Minister for European Affairs from 1997 to 2002, French Government Representative at the Convention on the Future of Europe in 2002, President of the European Movement France from 2005 to 2006, Minister for the Economy and Finance from 2012 to 2014 and European Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs since 2014, carried out by the Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe (CVCE) on 23 July 2008 at the headquarters of the French Socialist Party in Paris. The interview was conducted by Christian Lekl, a Scientific Collaborator at the CVCE, and particularly focuses on the following subjects: the beginnings of Moscovici's involvement in politics, his experience at the European Parliament and the European Movement, France's European policy from 1997 to 2002, the work of the European Convention, the draft Constitutional Treaty and the Treaty of Lisbon.

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1. The beginnings of his involvement in politics

[Christian Lekl] Mr Moscovici, thank you very much for meeting us today, 23 July 2008, here in Paris, at the headquarters of the French Socialist Party, so that we can look back together at some aspects of your political career in the area of European affairs. You were first involved in politics as a member of the Communist Revolutionary League ['LCR'] in the 1970s; how did the LCR perceive the European Economic Community? Did it present a contrasting view of Europe?

[Pierre Moscovici] I was never a member of the LCR, I was a sympathiser, an ally, because in high school, then later as a student, I was outraged that the right had been in power for so long; I was horrified by the injustice of the Giscard years, which were extremely tough times, and thought that the Socialist Party — and here's the irony — was not a party showing any of the fighting spirit or credibility needed at that time. I supported the LCR though because I was involved in the various movements, although I was never an activist for it on European or international issues. Our views differed in that respect, and besides, the reason that I wasn't a member of the LCR was probably because there was a reluctance on my part to share in its vision of the world.

[Christian Lekl] And so you joined the Socialist Party in 1984 after meeting Dominique Strauss-Kahn at the École Nationale d'Administration [National School of Administration — 'ENA']. You also went to work at the Court of Auditors. So, for you, a young senior official and member of the Socialist Party, what did Europe represent at that time?

[Pierre Moscovici] Well, it was absolutely fundamental; when I was a student at ENA, for instance — where I met Dominique Strauss-Kahn, who was my tutor in one specialised subject area — I signed up for one seminar, which was an important paper, on the European Union's financial problems. I'd already been to the European Parliament and the Council by that time, and I had every intention of specialising in that subject. I found it enthralling, it was something fundamental within me. When I had been at the Court of Auditors, I then moved on to the Centre for Analysis and Planning at the Foreign Ministry where I worked on European issues. You know, it was no accident that I became an MEP, Minister for European Affairs, or now a member of the National Assembly and Vice-President of its Delegation for the European Union. Besides, I was a European as far back as the 1970s. In that respect, I had nothing to do with the leftists, ever. Throughout my life, I have always been a European, always a federalist, always committed to the ideal of a reunified Europe; I have always thought that the schism created by communism should not separate Europe for ever, perhaps on account of my father's Romanian origins and my mother's Polish origins. I always thought there was another Europe, a Europe that should become our Europe. And so in that respect, although changes — political changes — may occur and things may

evolve, on Europe, at least for a good 30 years or so now, I have been steadfast in my views.

[Christian Lekl] So the idea of Europe, or the European idea, was fundamental in your involvement?

[Pierre Moscovici] Yes, absolutely, the European idea featured heavily along my career path as a young senior official; it also had a powerful influence on me as a socialist. Basically, what caused me to get involved, for example, alongside Dominique Strauss-Kahn, then Lionel Jospin, Michel Rocard, in that social democratic branch of the Socialist Party, was that I acknowledged that Europe had constraints but that we should see them also as an incentive to surpass ourselves. I'm not in the camp that thinks that France was wrong to remain in the European Monetary System in 1983. I think we were right to get involved in Europe, and I voted 'yes' at Maastricht, I voted 'yes' to the Constitutional Treaty, I voted 'yes' to the Lisbon Treaty. I didn't do this telling myself that it was perfect; this Europe isn't exactly the Europe I would have liked, but I voted 'yes' each time, telling myself that, for a socialist, there was no alternative to being European, profoundly European. And I'll reiterate what I said at the beginning: European and socialist. The entire challenge for us is to succeed in ensuring that socialism doesn't disappear behind Europe. Socialism is not a form of Europeanism. However, if you are not a Europeanist, you cannot be a socialist.

2. His experience at the European Parliament and the European Movement

[Christian Lekl] Between 1994 and 1997, you were a Member of the European Parliament, then again between 2004 and 2007, as Vice-President. What was your motivation for taking on this role, and what were the highlights of these two terms of office?

[Pierre Moscovici] You know, my motivation is obviously, first and foremost, my commitment to Europe, and my socialist commitment, because I don't make a distinction between the two: I am both a European and a socialist. That is why I was a member of the PES group during those two terms, which were both cut short because, in both instances, I left the European Parliament to join the French Parliament. I would say that the circumstances were very different, the European Parliament had evolved considerably. The first time I was elected to it, the European Parliament was a kind of forum surrounded by lobbies; it was listened to but had little influence on the course of European integration. By 2004, however, it had become a proper parliament with powers as a co-legislator, able to exert pressure on the Commission, monitor it and censure it; in other words, a fully-fledged participant, especially in the 2004–2007 period, when I was Parliament's rapporteur on Romania's accession to the European Union. You could definitely see the interplay between the Commission, the Council and Parliament in which Parliament's consent was absolutely vital. And so I watched the European Parliament develop as an interlocutor. It is a truly fascinating entity, authority, institution, and I think we can expect great things from it in the future.

[Christian Lekl] You mentioned how the European Parliament's power has evolved. What is your view on the European Parliament's changing role, in particular in response to the problem of the so-called 'democratic deficit'?

[Pierre Moscovici] Look, you have to be realistic. The European Parliament is, I repeat, a fantastic institution. I am currently a member of the French Parliament and, as such, I have neither the work resources, the capacity to influence, nor the freedom of

thought that an MEP enjoys. MEPs are essential players on the democratic stage. Yet at the same time, the European Parliament remains somewhat detached, unknown to the citizens. European elections have the lowest turnout of all elections, they have the highest abstention rate: greater than 60 % in the European Union. So the European Parliament is not entirely all it should be in response to the democratic deficit inasmuch as its legitimacy, through the ballot box, cannot be compared with that of other — national — institutions, for example. That is why someone like me, who, by the way, spent three fascinating years twice over at the European Parliament, each time went back and took my seat in the national Parliament, because, to me, that is still the home of legitimacy. I feel we should address this, by having more transnational lists, by having a real stake in the European elections, in other words in the appointment of the President of the European Commission, by constantly politicising the debate on Europe, by also ensuring that the debate on Europe does not happen once every five years, at the precise moment the European elections are taking place. As long as we don't make this happen, we will feel, at any rate the citizens will feel, that the European Parliament is made up of representatives whom they barely know, whom they cannot hold to account, who are elected against a background of total remoteness. I was top of the list of candidates in the 2004 European elections in a large region in Eastern France, covering five administrative regions, 18 *départements*, 10 million voters … How can I be held to account for 10 million voters? It's a joke. There's a lack of proximity here, and as long as this problem — the need to have a stake in the elections, the proximity issue — goes unresolved, the European Parliament won't have all the power it should have.

[Christian Lekl] You were also President of the European Movement France between 2004 and 2006. What do you recall from that experience?

[Pierre Moscovici] It was very frustrating, because I was the first ever socialist president of the European Movement since its creation in France. The European Movement is a movement that was created between … No, there was actually another socialist president, I think in the 1960s, Gaston Deferre. So, I was the second, over 40 years later, bringing together the right and the left, or should I say, federalists from the centre and centre-left. And I immediately had the impression that the European Movement was hostile to the idea of a socialist president. I mean, people on the right in the European Movement are very happy to have socialists among them, but only if they are not led by them. So I had a difficult time because I felt that it was a movement somewhat stuck in its ways that did not want to allow itself to be influenced, that was not truly bipartisan. That said, there are brilliant campaigners in it who do invaluable work, but there is a rather outdated contingent too … Indeed, I spoke of the Convention as a unique experience, whereas my move to the European Movement was pure frustration. I would have loved to have experienced true bipartisanism, genuine tolerance, and to have encountered federalists with an interest in social issues too, but that wasn't entirely the case.

[Christian Lekl] More generally, what role do you envisage for civil society in European integration?

[Pierre Moscovici] Oh, I envisage a vital role, I believe in the success of the associative movement; I think that a real public forum will be developed through civil society, but that's not to say that the European Movement can claim to have the monopoly in that regard. It is too conservative in its approach, not only politically speaking but also in the true sense of the word. I'm talking about tomorrow's federalism, because tomorrow, federalism won't be the federalism of the Founding Fathers. To be federalist with six states is not the same as being federalist with 27 or 30. Significantly greater adaptability and flexibility are needed. We also need to invent not only functioning institutions but also specific policies. The European Movement is

stuck woefully in the past, devoted to the institutions and the Europe of yesteryear, and does not look enough to the Europe of tomorrow. And civil society must concern itself with this, with the Europe of tomorrow, not the Europe of yesteryear.

3. France's European policy from 1997 to 2002

[Christian Lekl] So in 1997, you left the European Parliament and became Minister Delegate for European Affairs until 2002, in Lionel Jospin's cohabitation government. How did you fit in among Jacques Chirac, President of the Republic, Lionel Jospin, Prime Minister, and Hubert Védrine, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and what were your main areas of responsibility?

[Pierre Moscovici] Well, I think, in that period, first of all I was the longest serving French Minister for European Affairs. I held the record for five years in the post. And no one will beat that record because, to be honest, it is probably too long. I think the last two years were somewhat redundant; after a while, a minister needs to move on, not stay for five years. And I think I was also the Minister for European Affairs who was most like a minister, rather than a state secretary. Why? Let's just say that the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hubert Védrine, with whom I got on really well, but who didn't have quite the same outlook on Europe as me, was, I felt, a little more … I wouldn't say sceptical as such, but more realistic than I was, less committed at any rate to building a federal Europe, but he was, in fact, very interested in cohabitation. He coordinated the cohabitation government's foreign policy between Matignon and the Élysée, and he left the European issues pretty much to my discretion, particularly as I myself had a close relationship with the Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, who is a very close political ally, and I had no problem with the President of the Republic.

This enabled me, I believe, to be at the centre of the major negotiations of the time, which was an extremely important period. I can name three such sets of negotiations: first, there were those on enlargement. That was when we started to look at the applications for membership, and negotiations were initiated, in 1997 in Luxembourg and in 1999 in Helsinki. Secondly, there were the so-called 'Agenda 2000' financial negotiations in 1999 under the German Presidency, which concluded in Berlin. Then thirdly, there were of course the negotiations on the Nice Treaty after the failure of the Amsterdam Treaty, on the institutional issues for which I was, without doubt, the central component, even though I don't claim authorship of the Treaty, which was ultimately adopted at a summit of the Fifteen and with a President of the Republic called Jacques Chirac, who in the end did actually choose decisive options. These were unique experiences for me, playing a central role in these various issues: highly formative, important, major issues. I should add that I was rather like Jean-Pierre Jouyet is today, within the French Presidency of the European Union of 2000, in that I was a kind of chief of staff, the central axle within the government, the coordinator of government action, and I did this because the cohabitation partners — the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister — were very busy with domestic schedules.

[Christian Lekl] So you mentioned these three or four main issues. Let's look at these issues in greater depth, if you don't mind. Let's start with the Amsterdam Treaty. Which measures was Lionel Jospin's Socialist Government able to develop in the Amsterdam Treaty?

[Pierre Moscovici] The Nice Treaty.

[Christian Lekl] The Amsterdam Treaty first. Or rather, was the new Government in agreement with what Alain Juppé's Government had negotiated?

[Pierre Moscovici] No. We wouldn't have ratified the Amsterdam Treaty if we had had a little more time. But we had just come into office, and the Amsterdam Summit was upon us a fortnight after the elections. We had talks, and we finally agreed that it would be wisest to let these negotiations go that we had not been following, because otherwise the President of the Republic could have caused a crisis, a major political crisis, objecting, 'I am the President', … and then with the Prime Minister, it would have created a violent clash of prerogatives. It could also have triggered a crisis in the financial markets, which would have said: 'These Socialists aren't veryvery European.' So perhaps a wave of mistrust towards us would have been triggered. We had just come into office, after all. And maybe there would have been a crisis within the majority. Therefore, for all those reasons, we didn't really get involved in the Amsterdam negotiations. Instead, we shifted the focus of discussion by introducing a resolution on growth and employment, which subsequently initiated a summit in Luxembourg in late 1997, and the creation of the Eurogroup, but, to be honest, as regards the actual Amsterdam Treaty, we kept out of it. And we had nothing to do with the failure of Amsterdam either — it was a failure on institutional issues which was primarily attributable to the major discord between Jacques Chirac and Helmut Kohl.

[Christian Lekl] In terms of enlargement, what was the Jospin's Government's policy on the EU enlargement that was already on the cards, in particular during the negotiations on the accession treaties?

[Pierre Moscovici] Well, I would say that there was a positive yet insufficiently enthusiastic attitude: positive, because we accepted the membership applications of six countries in Luxembourg in 1997, the applications of six more in Helsinki in 1999 as well as Turkey's application for full membership. Or, more specifically, we agreed to initiate talks with six plus six, and Turkey's application. So, we have always been open-minded about and supportive of enlargement. However, I do blame Lionel Jospin, the Head of Government and my friend, as well as Jacques Chirac and Hubert Védrine, for having always acted as though these new member countries were stowaways. I personally fought tirelessly to convey the idea that it's not just about undertaking enlargement; we also have to explain to the French people why we are undertaking enlargement. We not only have to explain why we are doing this but we also need to explain why it is an opportunity for France, an opportunity for Europe. And today, I think we are paying the price of this lack of enthusiasm, as it is clear that the French, in particular, have accepted enlargement with some reluctance, and they don't see how having the Poles in Europe, to cite the most striking example, is an opportunity for our country. I think that's a shame because enlargement is a wonderful, historic prospect, because it is an extraordinary plus, because to experience this continent reunifying is, I think, for a generation like mine — I'm 50 — something extraordinary, yet we don't see it that way. *I* do, but the French people don't. In this regard, there has been a lack of education, communication and explanation, for which we are now paying the price. But this state of affairs is not down to the Minister for European Affairs, as I was. In fact, I was rather a lone figure in making this case.

[Christian Lekl] You also mentioned Agenda 2000 and the discussions on it which were set against a background of difficult circumstances. So, in parallel with the establishment of the new financial framework, there was a need to decide on reform of the common agricultural policy and the new guidelines on structural measures. The financial impact of the forthcoming enlargements that you have just mentioned also had to be assessed. And so, in March 1999, the Berlin European Council went on to reach an overall agreement on Agenda 2000. Can you describe the atmosphere at this summit and tell us how the discussions unfolded which resulted in that agreement?

[Pierre Moscovici] I would say that just about all the drawbacks possible surfaced at that summit. The German Presidency sought to resolve a number of issues, including reviewing the British rebate, overhauling the CAP, also reducing costs for Germany which was and still is, in fact, the main contributor, even though France today is a very major contributor. And then there was frequent deadlock, which meant that, at the end of the day, I would say we acquired a French-style CAP. Jacques Chirac successfully insisted, at the time, that the common agricultural policy be saved as he had conceived it, although a second pillar was added, but the main part of it was actually retained, and the major reforms weren't made on that occasion. There were Spanish-styled Structural Funds including, I think, an increased number of derogations, and then a granting of funds which was extremely important for the cohesion countries. Thirdly, a British-style financing method was introduced, so not only did the summit not review the British rebate, but it actually led to an increase in the number of rebates. These were poor negotiations, but the German Presidency wasn't at fault; it even agreed with a degree of stoicism to pay for the others. I think the French attitude, the Spanish attitude, the British attitude, which had been extremely inflexible, led to this deal, which was not a good deal.

[Christian Lekl] So what about the Franco-German 'engine' in this area, or at this Berlin European Council?

[Pierre Moscovici] Between 1997 and 2002, Franco-German relations weren't great. First, there was discord between Helmut Kohl and Jacques Chirac, because Helmut Kohl reproached Jacques Chirac for his prevaricating and feebleness and also for having allowed the Socialists to win the 1997 general election. Remember that we won these elections after Chirac dissolved the National Assembly, when he hadn't needed to. Helmut Kohl was furious. I recall my first Franco-German summit in Poitiers, just after the general election and just before the Amsterdam European Council, and I felt as though someone had lowered the air conditioning. Here it was warm but there it was very, very cold, and yet we were in June. There was a truly frosty atmosphere. And subsequently, between Schröder and Chirac, there was discord because the two men were so alike, neither of them particularly European, both very realistic in any case, with no ideals, enthusiasm or spirit, and both wanting to safeguard the interests of their respective countries. They were generally perceived to get on well on a personal level, two political animals measuring each other up, but they were incapable of channelling this in a positive direction. In fact, Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schröder started to get along only after 2002, when they were both re-elected, rather miraculously, given that they both should have been beaten, and then the war in Iraq began, and they joined forces on this issue against the US, against the war, and that's when the period of their 'entente cordiale' began.

[Christian Lekl] So France held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2000. It was a significant Presidency, as it actively ended in December 2000 in Nice with a new, successor treaty to the Amsterdam Treaty. How did the negotiations develop, especially in the final hours, in Nice?

[Pierre Moscovici] Well, this also illustrates what I was saying a moment ago … about the Chirac–Schröder discord. I think that there had actually been a first summit held at Rambouillet, an informal one, where a fundamental issue was raised which basically poisoned the entire Presidency, and that was the voting parity in the Council between France and Germany. Jacques Chirac wanted to keep the status quo, arguing that 'It is irrelevant that there are an additional 20 million Germans, there is something symbolic in the equality between France and Germany.' Besides, I think, historically, he was right. In fact, that is what Konrad Adenauer used to say: 'If, one day, … Germany is reunified, France and Germany will nonetheless have to maintain continuous equality.'

But Schröder wasn't wrong either when he said: 'We do have 20 million more citizens, we need to take greater account of the size of the population.' However, I heard Gerhard Schröder *with my own ears* tell Chirac: 'It's not a problem for us.' From the start of the Presidency, Chirac proceeded on the premise that he would have no trouble with Germany. In reality, Schröder wasn't speaking the truth. It *was* a problem for him. And Germany conducted a kind of counter-campaign in that regard. From the moment the voting parity issue wasn't resolved, there was an overwhelming problem which had repercussions for all the other issues, and Chirac and Schröder had some very tough discussions, which resulted in a mediocre compromise, inasmuch as there was no double majority voting, there was no proper reform of the Commission, and an insufficient range of subjects were opened up to qualified majority voting; and hence the subsequent need to start afresh down the institutional route, a situation from which we unfortunately still have not emerged.

We ended up making a very large concession, too large in my opinion, concerning the number of MEPs allocated to Germany, with France agreeing to reduce its number to 72. Frankly, I would prefer Germany to have a few more votes than us in the Council than more seats in the European Parliament, because the 'gap' there is less significant: today, 27 MEPs is more significant than two votes in the Council.

[Christian Lekl] And what role did you take on personally at this intergovernmental conference?

[Pierre Moscovici] I chaired almost all the intergovernmental conferences. Or rather, I chaired all the intergovernmental meetings. The intergovernmental conference per se didn't exist, we just had a quarter of an hour at every General Affairs Council chaired by Foreign Affairs Minister Hubert Védrine. I chaired all the talks, and I must concede that, unfortunately, by the time we came to Nice, there was no conclusion. I tried to push matters along, I was brutal at times, and I was criticised for that, but that was because I really wanted things to get moving, because I didn't want any stagnation or input from supporters of the status quo, because I wanted to prepare for the summit properly. I may have made mistakes, actually, at that time, but I was the negotiator on this matter. But by the time we came to Nice, what I had done made no difference.

[Christian Lekl] Did the fact that there was, for example, a cohabitation government at that time hamper the negotiations?

[Pierre Moscovici] No, not in the slightest. We had an agreement, and in any case there was no clash within the cohabitation government on European issues. Each important meeting was preceded by an interministerial council at the Élysée, under the President of the Republic, and attended by the Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, the Foreign Affairs Minister, me, senior officials … there was a road map. Never, ever was there any conflict … except in Nice itself, when the treaty was concluded, I persuaded Hubert Védrine and Lionel Jospin to go and see Jacques Chirac to tell him that we should concede one vote to Germany, and Jacques Chirac said no. He said no because he thought that Gerhard Schröder had lied to him. He told me: 'He's lied to me, he's disrespected me.' And I think this tension between the two men resulted in the failure of Nice.

[Christian Lekl] At the Lisbon European Council, the European Union established a strategy for turning Europe, by 2010, into the most competitive, most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world; what were France's objectives at that summit?

[Pierre Moscovici] France was on board with this strategy. Remember, Europe was now the so-called 'pink' Europe: there were around 10 out of 15 Heads of State or

Government who were Socialists or Social Democrats. And the idea was to set up a strategy enabling Europe not only to match up to the United States but also to harmonise economic efficiency and social cohesion as well as to focus on environmental issues. Our objective was, therefore, to enrich that strategy and confer on it ambitious objectives. The problem was that it never really had any resources, in particular budgetary resources. There are subtle differences between developing an ambitious strategy, like the Lisbon Strategy, and merely implementing structural reforms; there was an imbalance, one might say that things were too liberal to act quickly, and the appropriate measures — or the appropriate momentum — were not in place to apply the EU's political power.

[Christian Lekl] But what was the point of setting up such a strategy involving an open method of coordination, a non-binding intergovernmental method unlike the Community method?

[Pierre Moscovici] That was the state of Europe. You know, you can't impose the Community method everywhere. Of course, that is the preferred method, but it isn't the universal solution either. And besides, it isn't accepted by everyone. That's how it is. In Europe, we also have to make compromises. That seems to be the first step for us. The problem is that there hasn't been a second step.

[Christian Lekl] And what is your assessment now of this Lisbon Strategy?

[Pierre Moscovici] I find it disappointing, like everyone.

[Christian Lekl] In December 2000, the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union ended without agreement from the Fifteen on the single statute for MEPs, a proposal which you supported with the President of the European Parliament, Nicole Fontaine. What were the issues surrounding this reform?

[Pierre Moscovici] Not only did I support it with Nicole Fontaine, but I also revisited it later when I was Vice-President of the European Parliament, because the subject area for which I was responsible as part of that appointment was the MEPs' statute. So, I followed this reform, I would say, almost to the very end. We got there, I think. It has just been achieved. Its aim is, on the one hand, to prevent MEPs being dependent on their national parliament and, on the other, to ensure that there is equal treatment between them, in all respects. The objective is to have true members of the European Parliament who are European by their very nature and bound by their institution. When you are an MEP, you are paid by your national parliament and you receive the same salary as a member of your national parliament. This meant that some members earned EUR 1 000 and others EUR 10 000 per month. That is not how you go about creating a proper parliament. And so it became necessary to draw up a uniform statute taking account of all the other necessary considerations, such as standards of conduct, travel expenses and costs of various allowances. Ultimately, it was about uniting, raising moral standards and making MEPs more independent. I think we have made it. But it was a long, long journey to get to this point.

[Christian Lekl] And how do you explain the opposition to this, in particular from the Nordic countries like Denmark, Finland and Sweden, and the United Kingdom as well?

[Pierre Moscovici] There is some nationalism and some puritanism involved. Yes, for some, this represented a considerable step up. The Germans, in particular, were very much against the idea that MEPs should have a statute that was more favourable than the arrangements applying to members of national parliaments. This wasn't a straightforward question. However, … when the European elections come around, there

may be a campaign. Let's not forget that while a member of the French Parliament earns EUR 5 500, an MEP will earn EUR 7 000, plus EUR 1 500 in a paid pension for his or her retirement, totalling EUR 8 500. What our German friends, for example, feared was a campaign raising public awareness, which would be launched against Europe and against the MEPs. That may happen. Then again, you must not bow to populism. I think it's great that MEPs are protected, that they have a proper statute which is the same for everyone, whether you are a French, Estonian or Greek member of the European Parliament. We are no longer, this Parliament is no longer the European Parliamentary Assembly of the 1970s. If you are a representative in the European Parliament, you are just that, an MEP, not a representative of your country in the European Parliament. It is essential that we get this point across.

4. The work of the European Convention

[Christian Lekl] The Laeken European Council convened a Convention on the Future of Europe which would result in a draft Constitutional Treaty. What circumstances triggered this constitutional process, or the pursuit of that process, given that Nice had already heralded the Charter of Fundamental Rights, drafted by an earlier convention?

[Pierre Moscovici] It's quite straightforward actually. At Nice, everyone pretended that the treaty was acceptable … that's normal. But everyone knew that it didn't go far enough. So, the next day, a declaration was made, annexed to the treaty — that's very unusual — saying that the project would have to be resumed. And the Laeken Declaration is the expression of what was decided in Nice, that is to say the idea of initiating certain projects, of reopening substantive discussions on those issues barely addressed, not addressed at Amsterdam, and not properly addressed at Nice, namely Commission reform, the question of subsidiarity, who does what in the European Union, qualified majority voting, the voting system in Parliament as well as the voting system in the Council, which is very important. And all these issues were therefore on the negotiating table. The remarkable thing is that they then … I mean, the European Convention, of which I too was a member, overstepped its mandate and kind of set itself up as a constituent assembly, even though the Laeken mandate — I can't think of the phrase it used — stated that it could go as far as a constitution. Not that it had to go as far as a constitution. But I admit, and Giscard did in fact say this at the time, there was a palpable spirit of convention. I just want to say one thing about Giscard, and that's that I was the only person against his appointment to the Convention.

[Christian Lekl] How was he chosen to preside over the Convention?

[Pierre Moscovici] First and foremost, he wanted to do it. Giscard is a political animal as well, a politician of great talent, and he started campaigning for it. He started doing the rounds, setting out his work and service record; it wasn't unreasonable that it should be a French national. But there was also this idea that the French hold over things should be lifted and, indeed, such issues still resonate in the institutional tradition. Jacques Delors himself did what he unfortunately does too often. He wants you to call on him but he doesn't campaign. Giscard had presented a show of force, created a fait accompli. And subsequently, there was a game played out between Chirac and Jospin, both of whom had an interest in Giscard becoming President of the European Convention, precisely to clear the way at home in time for the presidential election. Chirac was afraid that Giscard would topple him, and Jospin wanted Giscard's implicit endorsement. But this wasn't a sufficiently decisive factor for me; I thought that Jacques Delors was a better choice for President of the Convention than Valéry Giscard d'Estaing.

[Christian Lekl] Is that why you opposed his appointment?

[Pierre Moscovici] Opposed, that's a bit strong. Let's say that I argued that Delors would have been a better choice. I didn't oppose his appointment, in fact I went on to work very well with Giscard. But I wasn't convinced that he was the right man for the job, and, in the end, I still don't know if he was the right man for the job. He did some good things, truly he did, but maybe he lacked a sense of what the people could expect from a European constitution.

[Christian Lekl] So you said that you represented the French Government at the start of the European Convention until you were replaced by Dominique de Villepin. What was your view of this method, which was new compared with the traditional format of the intergovernmental conference? Did you feel that you were experiencing a historic moment?

[Pierre Moscovici] I would have had that impression if, at the end, it had been concluded with a 'yes'. But in the end, as that wasn't the case, I can't say that it was a historic moment. I wasn't involved in the creation of a constitution, because the constitution never came into being. But I was involved in a unique experience. One thing I can say, though, is that I am personally very taken with this convention model, as opposed to the IGC model. Why? Because the IGC is pure horse-trading: a non-transparent discussion between diplomats and ministers who are each defending their national interests. Everything is secret; we are not party to the deliberations. There are no decisions. So there is, in fact, no democratic process. Diplomacy is the opposite of bargaining. Diplomacy is the confrontation of national interests. And, to my mind, here was something very curious because it was not in camera, the meetings were held in public, the documents were available online, the speeches were made public, civil society attended, through the Committee of the Regions, through the ESC, and the media were there. And when the media are there, the decision-makers change their behaviour. They make every effort to convey a more open appearance, they make more concessions, they step back from fighting their own corner and protecting their national interests. This, without doubt, made it possible to create a sense of spirit between the members of the Convention as well as, I think, a dynamic for the Convention, meaning that the result produced is tremendous. I'm sorry, though, that the Heads of State or Government held things back somewhat. In some ways, I also regret that the third part was added, a part which had very little to do with the constitutional substance of the text and, in particular, ruined the debate in France to a large extent. I don't know if it would have been enough to leave it out, but it certainly complicated things. And so, yes, I recommend this convention model, and I would hope that the failure of the TCE, as a result of the French referendum and the Dutch referendum, does not mean that this formula, which has great merit, will never be used again.

5. From the draft Constitutional Treaty to the Lisbon Treaty

[Christian Lekl] How did you feel about the draft Constitutional Treaty? Did you campaign in the Socialist Party for a 'yes' vote in the referendum?

[Pierre Moscovici] Oh yes, I campaigned for a 'yes' vote within the party and in the country as a whole. I was part of something — and this is something of which I am quite proud, even if it didn't work out — as one of the main figures of the 'yes' camp in France; in my party, I was definitely one of the first, perhaps *the* first. That's neither here nor there, I'm not someone who is bothered by such claims. For me, it was a major

struggle, and I am quite proud to have helped to convince the Socialists. I tried to win over the French too, but with less success, more's the pity. However, having been a Convention member, having had the ministerial experience that I'd had, aware of the deficiencies in the Nice Treaty, recognising the qualities of the Constitutional Treaty, I couldn't not fight for this treaty, although I completely understood the difficulties of the campaign. I immediately sensed that it would be difficult, immediately. But, yes, I was a passionate campaigner, and I still think today that it was a missed opportunity for Europe. I say it as I see it, frankly. The convention method is infinitely superior to the IGC. The Constitutional Treaty stands head and shoulders above the Nice Treaty, and it is far superior to the Lisbon Treaty. It is way ahead of anything that will come out of the Lisbon Treaty, when we finally have an outcome. It isn't a perfect treaty, there are shortcomings, deficiencies, but it was something that nurtured a genuine European dynamic. Europe has missed an opportunity here. I'm not pining for the past here, nor am I questioning the democratic vote. The French cast their votes, the Dutch cast their votes, they are entitled to vote as they so choose. But on 29 May 2005, I said 'The treaty, *my* treaty, is dead.' I noted this with great sadness. And I knew at that time that we wouldn't make it. That said, yes, when I look at that period with hindsight, I am certain that it will continue to be a source, not of pride as such, in my life, but an exceptionally significant time in my life, an exceedingly intense period and a time when we missed our chance with Europe.

[Christian Lekl] And what remains today of the divisions in the Socialist Party, in particular in relation to the Lisbon Treaty?

[Pierre Moscovici] For the Lisbon Treaty, the Socialist Party repeated, in a more muted fashion, what was done in relation to the Constitutional Treaty precisely because it had suffered the misery of party divisions which cost it dearly, in fact enormously, in the presidential election. However, the Socialist Party doesn't have a clear understanding of its European commitment today. The Socialist Party doesn't know what it thinks anymore. The Socialist Party is confused. At European level, the Socialist Party is not an appealing option. It is a fractured party. I'm sorry to say it, I deeply regret it. And that also means that, from now until the next European elections in 2009, the Socialist Party will have to get its act together. This is one of the challenges for the party's congress. The Socialist Party will not build itself up again, it will not reinvent itself, it will not regain the trust of the French people if it cannot once more be a consistent, strong and vibrant player on the European stage.

[Christian Lekl] And, generally speaking, do you think that the treaty revision procedures need to be reviewed? I am thinking of the issue of 'double unanimity', the idea of having a hard core, an avant-garde, of pioneer groups or, more generally, the idea of enhanced cooperation, or is differentiated integration the approach to be adopted in order to deepen the integration process?

[Pierre Moscovici] One thing is certain: Europe is growing, today it has 27 members, and I continue to be convinced that it will have more than 30 one day. And one day soon. We can't all keep the same pace, be on the same footing, with the same level of commitment. That is a fact. What Europe gains in power, what it gains in size, it loses in homogeneity. It is increasingly heterogeneous, increasingly unequal. Mentalities, commitments, resources differ. On issues like defence, for example, there are some countries that are neutral, others that are very NATO-orientated, then you have countries that are more autonomous in relation to the US. There are countries that have an established defence policy, others that have a foreign policy, and others that don't. I am using this example, but it's the same for the euro to some extent, and this has to be considered. What I'm saying is, yes, I believe in the differentiation in European integration. But I do not believe in a two-speed Europe, because that is something very

different; the idea that there will be a primary permanent group and a secondary permanent group seems wrong to me. We aren't in a football championship, there aren't any criteria to say 'you're in the second division; you're in the first division'. You can't amass points; there's no winning involved. What I *am* saying is that Europeans must maintain a set of common principles, which is 'the Union': equality of rights and obligations. But after that, they can be different with regard to their policies and specific plans. Indeed, the euro is a de facto example of enhanced cooperation. Not all European states are in it, even though they are all eligible to be in it. Some can't be in it; others don't want to, like the British. If we look at European defence, this won't be achieved with 27 states, by definition. Some don't want it, others can't do it. And consequently, we will have to go down the path of what was, is and will be called, in Lisbon Treaty jargon, 'structured cooperation'. Such cooperation is conceivable in matters of taxation, education and research. There must be no hesitation on this. But it has to be on a voluntary basis, not on the basis of something predefined, and always on the understanding, which is crucial for me, that the cooperation must be inclusive: any country not involved in the cooperation measure from the beginning must be able to join subsequently. I feel that we will, in this way, succeed in building a Europe which will maintain a set of common principles, namely, the Union, and at the same time has policies which extend further in a given area. This is how I envisage tomorrow's Europe, but this differentiation is not the definitive answer. We have to remain a union. A union in diversity. In recognising diversity, we are also agreeing to cooperate.

[Christian Lekl] Mr Moscovici, on behalf of the CVCE, thank you very much for giving this interview.

[Pierre Moscovici] Thank you.

[Christian Lekl] Thank you very much.