Chapter 3

What Frontiers for What Kind of Europe?

Jean-Louis Bourlanges

I would like to share some reflections on the insoluble question of the frontiers of Europe.

First, I deplore and condemn the fact that Turkey today has become a hostage to the European debate. If this country is now at the heart of EU debates, it is not because of its own virtues or vices, but because its EU candidacy has suddenly forced us in the EU to confront all the unresolved questions linked to the construction of the European Union. The issue of Turkey has crystallized the many passions and the many doubts within the EU about Europe's real frontiers and the very nature of the European project itself.

There are various reasons why we have been unable or unwilling to deal seriously with the question of the frontiers of the European Union. Some are good and some are bad. In the first hesitant moments of European construction, it may have been both difficult and useless to tackle such a vast and thorny issue: difficult, because it may have been risky then to expose ourselves to a controversy about the frontiers of Europe; useless, because Stalin—as well as Tito and Franco—had saved western Europeans from this concern by providing the Community with particularly solid political borders. Jean Monnet's method of moving forward by small steps, which was pragmatic, progressive and well-considered, was a fully justifiable response to the situation at the time. Experience tells us that politicians are loath to commit themselves over the long or very long term, and that nothing is as timely as an issue that does not need to be dealt with immediately.

An Original Ambiguity

It is appropriate to underline here the original ambiguity of the European project. From the very beginning of the Community adventure, with the Schumann Declaration of May 9, 1950 creating the

European Coal and Steel Community, we were confronted with ambiguity. In fact, no one was ready to risk defining what the expression "building Europe" really meant. Does this ambition, carried high and strong by those we rightly identify as the "founding fathers," mean a definite and irreversible bringing-together of one and the same civilization, of related peoples separated artificially by the follies of states and the disaster of two world wars? Or does it mean recognizing that states beyond the civilizing area of Europe have the vocation to join the Union as soon as they share its values and succeed in putting them into practice? In short, should we envisage the European project as the political expression of a common cultural heritage—or as the organized affirmation of an interdependence of chosen values? This choice, although essential, has never been made.

It is interesting to note that the two great French figures of the European project of the 1950's, Robert Schumann and Jean Monnet, united as they were, really expressed different views about this. Both foresaw the unity of Europe as the remedy for the wars that had ravaged the continent, but their ideal was not quite the same. The first, originating from Alsace-Lorraine, which had known military tragedies born out of the division of the Continent, had always been deeply convinced of the cultural proximity of the two great continental powers, France and Germany. In his eyes, the European Community clearly had a vocation to reconstitute the political unity of a common civilization. The second, on the other hand, saw the project to unite the European continent as the beginning of a progressive but general reconciliation of peoples sharing the same values. According to Monnet, the European Community had a vocation to break down, finally, frontiers born of history, geography, culture or religion to create a vast area of peace and prosperity. Schumann was the man of a Europe deeply rooted in a shared territory; Monnet appeared as a professional intermediary between peoples of indeterminate origin.

The Cold War prevented this original contradiction from having negative effects on the beginnings of European construction. Through its radicalization of what was at stake and the ideological and political freeze into which it plunged the European Continent, the Cold War anaesthetized the entire debate on frontiers. The borders of the nascent European Community were principally those determined by the Iron Curtain—artificial, ideological borders, having nothing to do with

geography. The Continent was cut in half, one part united by very intense links to countries beyond the Atlantic and the other part in the orbit of Soviet power. The two blocs held diametrically opposed values but were united nonetheless in their common desire for universality. These two contradictory concepts of universality permitted the European Community to benefit from firmly established frontiers without even having to identify its cultural or geographic specificity.

The fall of the Soviet bloc and the call for accession launched by the countries of Central and Eastern Europe inevitably revived the old debate on the frontiers of Europe, with the "kidnapped" half demanding its re-entry into the common home, without us really knowing how far the common home should extend—Ukraine, Russia? In Copenhagen in June 1993, heads of state and government decided to 'kick for touch' and to fix, in response to the pressure of the candidacies, a series of criteria that virtually constituted a number of prior conditions for the accession of new members. These criteria were of a political, economic and '*communautaire*' nature: rule of law, stable institutions, pluralist democracies, respect for minorities, acceptance of a market economy and taking on board the '*acquis communautaire.*' The conclusions of the Copenhagen European Council represented a significant ambiguity. Should we assume that they should only apply, in conformity with the Treaty that set out the specifically European dimension of the Union, to European states alone? Or should we consider that these political criteria are sufficient in themselves, and authorize enlargement to all states that respect them? It is more than likely that the European Council had, in 1993, accepted the first interpretation as its own view and that it was a few years later, when the Turks knocked on the door with renewed vigor, that the second interpretation prevailed, with the risk that any attempt which aimed to give the Union stable and definitive borders would be illusory.

What is Europe?

Today, Europeans find themselves confronted by two distinct questions: should the Union be restricted to the geographic, historic and cultural borders of Europe? How should these frontiers be defined? The advantage of a negative response to the first question is that it dispenses with the need to reply to the second. The disadvantage is that it prevents us from building a Europe that is anything other

than an increasingly vast zone of free trade and inter-governmental co-operation. Put another way, these questions could be formulated thus: will the accession of Turkey result from its belonging to European civilization or, as Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan has suggested, from a will to make the Union a "crossroads of distinct civilizations"? Let us try to find an answer to the question of what constitute the frontiers of Europe.

Traditionally, the definition of frontiers has resulted from an uncertain coming together of geographic congresses and diplomatic conventions. This is, in fact, because the Old Continent—"this little headland of Asia," according to Paul Valéry—is far from possessing clearly defined natural boundaries. In the north and the west, the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans, the water and the ice, constitute a solid and indisputable barrier, even if the cultural exchanges between the two shores of the Atlantic have been intense. All the other frontiers, however, are rather uncertain. To the south, the Mediterranean is a closed sea; if it has progressively become a dividing line between two different worlds, it is clearly not for reasons of geography. Until the fifth century AD, it was, on the contrary, a link between the scattered elements of a single Greco-Roman civilization. In the east, it is difficult to see a significant dividing line at the Urals range and in the river of the same name that runs through the middle of Kazakhstan.

Thus geography only offers us partial certainties. Let us turn to history. Europe owes its essential features to Greece, to Rome and, by way of Christianity, to the Orient. However, it was only in the middle of the first millennium that these scattered elements, as they say in chemistry, "precipitated" and gave birth to a specific civilization, etched onto a defined territory. The fall of Rome had carried away with it the notion of a universal power, with the enslaving division of society and its crushing by state taxation. Quoting Jean Baechler, Alain Besançon has underlined that "the novelty of the western Roman Empire came in *not* reconstituting itself." Except in the east, the Empire only survived the fall of Rome as a fond memory, a pipe dream or a violent episode. The princes of Rome reigned over what they thought to be the universe. Their fall brought with it the break-up of the Empire, the territorial division of power, the emergence of kingdoms, and, in their wake, the advent of nation states. These appeared all fully equipped for the European adventure, carried for-

ward by a high-risk mixture of religious emancipation, popular entrenchment, identity fervor and existentialist anguish.

The fall of Rome, which ground to a halt the rising and falling pumps of deductions and of public expenditure, both permitted and required the revenge of society on the state. It permitted it because the reappropriation of financial resources by society, in the midst of the greatest disorder, made possible a sustained movement of investment and innovation. It required it since the disappearance of public beneficence obliged European elites to find the means to survive and prosper locally, through the optimal exploitation of the human and technological resources at their disposal. The Europe of the harness and the watermill is a Merovingian creation, as are, indirectly, the fifteen centuries of uninterrupted progress since then. Growth and progress was the product of the fall of Rome.

This politico-economic revolution was accompanied by a change, still more fundamental, in beliefs, in thought and in their portrayal. The triumph of Christianity consecrated the fertilization of what remained of the Greco-Roman heritage to the most revolutionary of the oriental religions. It was in the fifth century, with the conversion of Clovis and the eradication of Aryanism, that everything moved forward. Aryanism denied the divinity of Christ and subjected the government of the City to the all-powerful authority of God and his Church. The dogma of the Trinity proclaims, on the other hand, the divinity of the Son, his essential equality with the Father, and reestablishes, in this way, a logic of alliance and thus of independence between God and men, inherited from the Old Testament. The political and religious culture of modern Europe is entirely derived from this matrix.

The triumph of Christianity made Europe the crucible of a singular history, characterized by the progressive autonomy of three powers, spiritual, intellectual and temporal. The emancipation of political power, which was becoming progressively democratic, was accompanied by the parallel emancipation of knowledge. From Boèce to St. Thomas Aquinas, from William of Occam to Descartes and to Kant, the great intellectual figures of Europe all proclaimed, each in their own way, the rights of reason and their compatibility with the exigencies of the Faith. "That is of another order"—nothing describes Europe better than the famous words of Pascal. The freedom of the 'Moderns' came out whole from this great and ancient cultural matrix,

which, as a result of separating civil and religious law, made possible reason, progress, religious freedom, the equality of individuals and the sovereignty of peoples.

This particular adventure was etched out on a specific territory: the emigration of the centers of decision to the north in response to the barbarian, the Arab Islamic and Turco-Islamic invasions combined their effects with those of geography to produce a territorial grouping that is clearly circumscribed at its northern, western and southern limits, if it remains, even today, uncertain of its eastern limits, with Russia really representing what Turkey wishes to be: a buffer zone, a crossroads between eastern and western civilizations.

A Difficult Choice

These considerations are incendiary and politically incorrect since they assign a determinative role to religion, in its dual historic and social dimensions, in the territorial designation of European civilization. However, we would need a heavy dose of rashness and naivety to consider that a body of human beings could ignore the weight of the history of which it is made. It is clear that today's Europe must practice religious pluralism and live in an intelligent way with the fifteen million Muslims who are on its soil and who have chosen to live there. The question that is put to us is not that of tolerance towards Islam. To be European does not, thus, mean to be Christian today but to have been ten centuries ago.

The question is of another form: must the European Union welcome the peoples who recognize and put into practice European values, that is to say potentially the whole planet, or should it only bring together the peoples who have invented and developed these values? It is important to note that the enlargement of the European Union does not follow the second logic. It does not seem that the current leaders of the European Union wish to favour historic criteria, as we have defined them, to decide their borders. Their choice is just as legitimate as any other and we should not refuse in an arbitrary way any approach that aims not to make participation in the historical-religious experience of European nations a precondition of accession. We must however be coherent: if we respect the principle which says that the dividing lines drawn from our history should not exclude a state of

the European Union which is secular, and if we recognise that Turkey has the status of a candidate for accession as a result of its European vocation, we will not be able, tomorrow, to refuse Moroccan, Algerian and Tunisian candidacies nor those from the states of the Transcaucasus. These countries cannot be held as being less European than Turkey in the eyes of those who hold the Copenhagen criteria as the exclusive condition of accession. The Union would thus become engaged in a process of enlargement that would be both continuous and undefined.

Confronted by the dead-end in which we find ourselves—the Copenhagen criteria are too universal, geography is imperfect and history is argued over by many—a final approach could be considered: we should no longer try to draw the frontiers of Europe, rather we should seek to determine those of the European Union. This would mean bringing together all those who agree on a similar vision of Europe. The definition of the European project cannot be limited by vague or pious wishes or be content with concepts and aims which are imprecise and not obligatory, such as the promotion of peace, the search for prosperity or the defense of individual and collective liberties. A truly European project requires that the parties committed to it agree among themselves on the federal character of the pact that binds them and on the full extent of the delegation of competences granted to the federal body.

We should note that today, more than yesterday, member states are reluctant to commit themselves to the path of a precise, coherent and binding politico-institutional clarification. The accession of Turkey to the Union will add even more to the heterogeneity of ambition and to the confusion of the institutional construction. The draft of the Constitutional Treaty is not of a nature to lift the numerous 'mortgages' which weigh on the nature of the European Union, since it establishes as fact the federal powers of the Union, that is to say what represents the hard core, where the policy truly begins: foreign and defense policy, economic, budgetary and fiscal policy. Even if it represents a clear advance in terms of the comprehension and efficiency of the Union, this text remains obscure about the real objectives of the Union and on the efficient sharing of political roles between it and the member states.

Thus, we are, today, in a paradoxical situation. We are enlarging the European Union but without knowing who we are, what we have

the ambition to make together and how to achieve it. Truly a strange enterprise, worthy of Dino Buzatti, referred to by Jorge Sampaio. In order to continuously enlarge the borders of the Union, it is forbidden to reflect on what it is, what it wants and what it is doing. In politics, at least, post-modernity, particularly the European kind, is rather disconcerting.