

A Europe of Hope

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Paris, within France, speaking its language, and France within Europe: Can the places that bear and take responsibility for this name, places where a fairly independent public discourse and political responsibility are held and taken up, become without presumption, without paradox or contradiction, the thoughtful, active, irradiating sources of an anti-globalization [*altermondialisation*] worthy of this name?¹ To this question, my hypothesis, my hope, answers “yes,” a “yes” that I will attempt to argue for.

As a faithful friend and appreciative reader of *Le Monde diplomatique*, I would like to pay homage to what I believe to be the most remarkable journalistic venture and aspiration of this half-century—that is of my entire life as an adult and a citizen—and not only in Paris but also in France and in Europe. During these past fifty years, undeniably and irreversibly passed, *Le Monde diplomatique* will have represented for me the honor and courage of what was, due to a complete and rigorous reporting of the news, often not obtainable elsewhere, more than a journalistic model passed down from the best of the past; it will have simultaneously signified, in the same movement, a call and an injunction to the future.

To the future of the world, that of France and Europe, certainly, but also well beyond. The reporting and analysis without concession and any “unilateralism” of the facts has been without doubt the rule, but also, at the same time, has been the call to do what is not done and thus remains to be done—the call to affirm, reaffirm, evaluate, and decide. It is thus not only the past of this newspaper that I would like to salute, but also what it asks and demands of us and the world regarding the future. This is why these few words will not only be that of a salute or an homage, but also wishes for a tomorrow.

I re-read the “Note to Our Readers” in the first issue of May 1954, signed by the new newspaper’s editorial staff, and, as is most likely, written by Hubert Beuve-Méry himself.

Now I thought, while reading this inaugural act, that if an analytical and rigorous history of this half-century of *Le Monde diplomatique* should one day be

written—an immense and necessary task for the historians of the future—we would find a faithful adherence to the fundamental missions assigned to it from the beginning. And all this, no doubt, through many shifts and sometimes bold, even risky, changes in direction, exposed to debate—which fortunately can happen among friends of the newspaper. This fidelity will have been maintained throughout all the changes in staff and leadership.

What changed—who could deny it?—is the world, not the newspaper, but its great homonym, its enormous referent, the world itself. The world has been shaken, fissured, and rearranged by all kinds of quakes. The concepts and forms of what we not long ago still called “the world of diplomacy” have been radically disrupted and upset, but *Le Monde diplomatique* has not changed in its founding principles, at least not in its spirit. It nevertheless will have become anti-globalized [*altermondialisé*].

Having reread, after Beuve-Méry’s “Note to Our Readers,” the editorial entitled “Resistances” written by Ignacio Ramonet, in the newspaper’s name, in the May 2004 issue, I found it not only rich and dense, even exhaustive in the brevity of its thirty six “nos” and eighteen “yeses,” if I correctly counted twice the number of “nos” than “yeses.”² And this is precisely “the call to resist.”

I subscribe as much to the thirty-six “nos” as to the eighteen “yeses.” They are not for me a Ten Commandments, but something like a set of commandments, a creed or act of faith for an ethics, law and justice, for a politics of our time and for the future of our world. In a moment, I will say why, on this anniversary, I would be tempted to privilege, in the political urgency of the day, at least one of these “yeses.” I, dare I say, who one day declared my old love for the word “resistance,” chose it, even in the plural, for the title of a book; I, who, for decades, and most explicitly in *Specters of Marx* in 1993 and *Cosmopolites de tous les pays, encore un effort* in 1997, as well as in many other places, spoke not against the cosmopolitanism of the citizens of the world, which I do not have anything against, on the contrary, but which still belongs to the era of political theology of sovereignty and the territorialized State; I, who have criticized the improper, excessive, and “instrumentalizing” use, the ideological and capitalistic misuse that has been made of the vocabulary of globalization [*mondialisation*], in reality of the only global market; I, who made a case for a new International, which I, after denouncing all the evils that must be resisted, defined at length as “not only that which is seeking a new international law through these crimes.”³ It is a link of affinity, suffering, and hope, a still discreet, almost secret link, as it was around 1848, but more and more visible, we have more than one sign of it. It is an untimely link, without status, without title, and without name, barely public even if it is not clandestine, without contract, ‘out of joint,’ without coordination, without party, without country, without national community (International, before, across, and

beyond any national determination), without co-citizenship, without common belonging to a class.”⁴

The one who wrote these lines, more than ten years ago, can only be pleased to see *Le Monde diplomatique* become, more and more, a major reference for the new anti-globalist [*altermondialistes*] movements. No matter how heterogeneous and at times confused they can still appear, these new anti-globalist [*altermondialistes*] gatherings are for me the only worthy and credible force of the future against the G8,⁵ the consensus of Washington, the totalitarian market, radical free trade, the “*poker du mal*”: the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the World Commerce Organization (WCO), against what is happening today, and could not but be happening in Iraq, according to the disastrous plans laid by Mr. Wolfowitz, Mr. Cheney, and Mr. Rumsfeld, well before September 11.⁶ As an aside, a certain “Brussels Tribunal” in the tradition of the Russell Tribunal, is underway in Istanbul, according to the best rules of law, to investigate and judge this plan for Middle Eastern and world hegemony.⁷

I do not believe that an overnight revolution could bring down all the superpowers represented by these sinister initials: IMF, OECD, WCO, etc.⁸ But the growing and ceaseless pressure of the anti-globalist [*altermondialistes*] mass movements and public opinion will weaken them and will not fail to force them—already compelling them in a certain way—to reform themselves. It will be the same for the UN and its Security Council, these remnants of the Second World War and its victors, as well as the Cold War.

In his 1954 editorial, Beuve-Méry slipped in a remark that could appear conventional, even patriotic, if not nationalistic. With respect to the common mission that consists “of working toward the peaceful development of international relations, Paris seems most suitable as the headquarters of the newspaper and French as its language.” “If, indeed,” as he had added, “French has already lost its former monopoly in diplomatic life, it nonetheless remains the most widespread language in these circles.”

Fifty years later, there is no question that *Le Monde diplomatique* maintains its headquarters in Paris and that its primary language remains French; even if it has become largely international and is considered throughout the world as the newspaper of reference, even if it is translated in so many languages, it clearly still maintains a Parisian and French base, which is undeniably rooted in Europe.

This, far from constituting a Gallocentric or Eurocentric limitation, I believe—I would like to believe—must call for an interpretation, an awareness, and a political duty that we must seriously and rigorously take into account. I know no country in the world, no continent, I can’t imagine any other place, where such a newspaper could be born, live, and survive with this freedom, these standards and these qualities.

It calls for us to take on, in the world as it is and as it seems it is becoming, an irreplaceable French and European responsibility in the anti-globalist [*altermondialiste*] movement, between American hegemony, the rise in power of China, and the Arab and Muslim theocracies.

I am not known for being a Eurocentric philosopher. Rather, for forty years, I have been accused of the contrary. But I believe that, without Eurocentric illusions and pretensions, without the slightest pro-European nationalism, without even much trust in Europe as it is or in the direction it is taking, we must fight for what this name represents today, with the memory of the Enlightenment, of course, but also with a guilty conscience for and a responsible awareness of the totalitarian, genocidal, and colonialist crimes of the past. Thus we must fight for what of Europe remains irreplaceable for the world to come, for it to become more than a market or a single currency, more than a neo-nationalist conglomerate, more than a new armed force. Though on this particular point, I am tempted to think that it needs a military force and a foreign policy capable of supporting a transformed UN, with its headquarters in Europe, having the means to implement its resolutions without leaving them up to the interests or unilateral opportunism of the techno-economic-military power of the United States.

From this point of view, I would strongly emphasize and privilege the thirteenth “yes” of the resistances suggested by Ignacio Ramonet. He says yes to a more social and less market-oriented Europe. A “yes” that I would develop into a “yes” to a Europe that, without being content with competing with the superpowers and without giving them free rein, becomes, at least in the spirit of its constitution and its political practice, an engine for anti-globalization [*altermondialisation*], its laboratory, even its force of intervention, for example, in Iraq or in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

A Europe that sets the example of what a politics, a thinking, and an ethics could be, inherited from the passed Enlightenment and bearing the Enlightenment to come, which would be capable of non-binary judgments.

A Europe where we could criticize Israeli policy, and notably that of Sharon and Bush, without being accused of anti-Semitism or Judeophobia.

A Europe where we could support the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to regain their rights, their land and a State, without condoning however the suicide attacks and the anti-Semitic propaganda which so often—too often—tend in the Arab world to give credence to the monstrous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.⁹

A Europe where we could simultaneously be concerned about the rise of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. Of course, Mr. Sharon, with his policies, is neither directly responsible for nor guilty of the intolerable return of anti-Semitism in Europe. But we must have the right to think that he has something to do with it, and that he benefits by calling upon the European Jews to return to Israel.

Finally, a Europe where we could criticize the agendas of Mr. Bush, Mr. Cheney, Mr. Wolfowitz, and Mr. Rumsfeld, without tolerance for the horrors of the regime of Saddam Hussein. A Europe where, without anti-Americanism, without anti-Israeli sentiments, without anti-Palestinian Islamophobia, we could ally ourselves with those—Americans, Israelis, Palestinians—who bravely criticize, often with more vigilance than we do, the governments or the dominant forces of their own countries, and thus say “yes” to all the “yeses” that I have just cited.

Thus this is my dream. I thank you for helping me, not only to dream this dream, to dream, as Ramonet said, that “an other world is possible,” but also for giving us the strength to do everything in our power so that it may actually become possible. Billions of men and women in the world share this dream. Slowly, with the labor pains of birth, they will bring it to the light of day, one fine day.

—Translated by Pleshette DeArmitt, Justine Malle, and Kas Saghafi

NOTES

This article appeared under the title of “Une Europe de l’espoir” in the December 2004 issue of the monthly *Le Monde diplomatique*.

1. This term has no exact equivalent in English. As opposed to the English “anti-globalization,” the French term is a positive demand for an other (*alter*) world (*monde*). Derrida has, of course, written extensively on *mondialisation* and its translation as “globalization.” It should also be noted that throughout this article Derrida makes use of the relation between *le monde* in the title of the newspaper and the *altermondialist* movement—Trans.
2. Ignacio Ramonet, “Résistances,” *Le Monde diplomatique* (May 2004): 1.—Trans.
3. Jacques Derrida, *Cosmopolites de tous les pays, encore un effort* (Paris: Galilée, 1997); translated by Mark Dooley as “On Cosmopolitanism” in *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (New York: Routledge, 2001).—Trans.
4. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), 85.
5. The G8: the group of the seven most industrialized countries, plus Russia.
6. Ramonet employs the phrase “poker du mal,” in his article cited above, to refer to the influence exercised by the world powers and their economic policies over the rest of the world.—Trans.
7. The Russell Tribunal was an international public body organized by Bertrand Russell, with Ken Coates and others, to investigate and publicize war crimes and conduct of the American forces and its allies during the Vietnam War. In 1967 representatives of eighteen countries, including James Baldwin, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir, participated in two sessions of the tribunal in Stockholm and Copenhagen.—Trans.

8. There is no precise way of rendering “une révolution dans le style du ‘grand soir’” in English. “Grand soir” refers to the day of the social revolution and is often used in an ironic or derogatory sense.—Trans.
9. First published in 1903 in the Russian Empire, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is a text purporting to describe a plan to achieve world domination by the Jewish people. Numerous independent investigations, notably articles in *The Times* of London in 1921, have proven the writing to be a hoax. Nevertheless, it is still considered to be a factual document in parts of the world where anti-Semitism is widespread.—Trans.