

An Alternative Approach
to
Maltese International Politics
(1990 - 1995)

ARNOLD CASSOLA

LAYOUT PUBLICATIONS



Contents

Foreword	5
Malta and the EC	7
The CSCM: its Role and Challenges	15
North-South Relations: Malta's Commitment	21
Full Membership within the EC: the Prospects and Implications for Malta	29
Understanding One Another: the Real Basis for a New Concept of Security	39
Observer Status for Malta at the 1996 IGC	55

Foreword

This publication contains six papers on Malta's role and initiatives on the international scene. Having been written and presented a handful of years ago, i.e. between 1990 and 1995, the papers might seem quite outdated to a 1996 reader. Nevertheless, they do provide a clear testimony to the fact that during the five years in question the political structures in Europe underwent a complete overhaul: the *Warsaw Pact* was disbanded; the *Partnership for Peace* Programme came into being; the Rome Treaty was updated by means of the Maastricht Treaty; the *European Community* became the *European Union*; the Maastricht Treaty is, at the moment, going through a thorough revision process at the *Intergovernmental Conference* (IGC).

The stress in this publication lies on an *alternative approach* to politics. The alternative approach to Maltese international politics I have in mind, is one that privileges the search for peaceful solutions to military intervention; one that gives resonance to the social and ecological dimension; one that insists on cooperation and solidarity amongst all peoples; one that gives great relevance to the respect of minorities and the tolerance of divergent views; one that attributes a leading role in politics to culture and language; one that promotes policies based on reciprocal understanding amongst different races, peoples and creeds.

By harbouring this vision of politics I might be described as being more of an idealist dreamer than a pragmatic politician.

My answer is simple: history has proven that the traditional way of handling political issues has not led to everlasting peace. Maybe, a fair dose of fantasy and visionary dreams might simply do the trick and thus translate the idea of *unity in diversity* into a reality. This is something which all true democrats should aspire to achieve.

A. C.

Malta and the EC¹

During the past twelve months, the world has gone through a continuous and unexpected upheaval. It is clear that the political structures that emerged from fascism, Stalinism and the Cold War are crumbling for good. This political upheaval and the crave for change took place (and are still taking place) not only in countries which are geographically close to Malta (Eastern Europe) but also in other parts of the world which are culturally far from us (Albania comes to mind) and also much larger in size (e.g. Mongolia, Nepal, etc.). There is a strong will power in those countries that have long been oppressed and deprived of freedom, to rebuild their states on the basis of the respect and dignity of humankind. This entails a policy based on the respect of the "human dimension", by which politics becomes a means of serving the collective interest of human beings and all creatures on earth and not an instrument of oppression which favours a few to the detriment of the majority.

Alternattiva Demokratika cannot but rejoice at the downfall of these oppressive structures and it hails all those who, in some way or other, are doing their utmost to set up policies that have as their focal point the human being and, while trying to improve the condition of human kind on our earth, try to ensure that this is achieved in complete harmony with the environment and all other creatures that co-habit our planet.

We fully agree that the dynamic process of change and the progressive transformations that are taking place are highly positive measures. However, since the situation is still very unsettled and always *in fieri*, it is imperative that we do not remain fossilized on certain positions taken, since these may have been valid five, three or a year ago, but not necessarily so now. We must therefore keep up continuously with the changes that are incessantly taking place.

This keeping abreast with reality also applies to our approach towards the *European community*, which has to go through an

1 This paper was read at the *Nationalist Party's* Congress entitled *Pajjizna l-Ewropa*, in June 1990.

updating process in the light of developments that are continuously taking place in Europe as well as in Malta.

The initial objective of the EC was the economic union of Europe. The accent is now much more on the political union of the continent. *Alternattiva Demokratika* feels that negative consequences can ensue if special and privileged attention is not given to the social cohesion between the diverse peoples inhabiting our continent.

What does all this mean? It means that first and foremost Malta has to strive to establish a process of social harmonization between the rich nations of the North and the poor ones of the South and between the socio-economic structures of the West and those of the East.

In Malta, the main interest of the PN and the MLP is the economic factor, i.e. to what extent our adhesion to the EC can provide material wealth.

Alternattiva Demokratika feels that this materialistic approach to the issue is altogether a secondary factor. We feel that our country must strive to attain equal opportunities for all (whether one lives in Copenhagen or Munich, Salonica or Malta) in the way of conditions of work, social benefits, health standards, etc.

The great changes that are taking place in Eastern countries are creating certain social tensions which we have to tackle as quickly as possible if we want Europe to integrate on the basis of equality. *Alternattiva* insists on the term *equality*: the present German integration process is a clear example of the impending danger that an economic, political and social system be totally assimilated by another one. This type of assimilation could signify the failure of the concept of equality amongst different peoples.

While *Alternattiva Demokratika* cannot but rejoice at the downfall of the totalitarian and repressive regimes of the East, we should not take for granted the fact that the peoples of the Eastern block adopt *in toto* the systems and mechanisms of the West, mainly for two reasons:

1. The socio-economic system of the West, based nearly exclusively on the logic of profit and of an uncontrolled free market, has the enormous defect of denuding one of all sense of humanity and of creating a strong consumeristic mentality, which is the cause of great damage to the environment.
2. If the strong socio-economic structures of the West take over the weak structures of the East, the latter will remain always subservient to the former, both in materialistic and in psychological terms. Using the same yard-stick, the weak socio-economic structures of the South, e.g. Malta's, could be totally assimilated by the stronger ones in the North.

It is for this reason that *Alternattiva Demokratika* insists that what should happen in the EC is a process of harmonious integration and not assimilation. Assimilation brings about the weaker countries' loss of identity. While we believe that the weakening of the nationalistic tendencies that saw the light last century -and which brought about so much bloodshed and misery during this century- is a good thing, it is also essential that no race should give up its linguistic, cultural or historical identity. We must, therefore, strive for a democratic and harmonious integration, whereby all peoples are afforded the same degree of dignity and no hegemonic power imposes its economic, political or military strength on others. In other words, *cooperation* is to be the key word in our dictionary on European integration.

This cooperation can only materialize through a process of decentralization of power within the EC. Up to now, Brussels has only been oriented towards the internal market of the EC. It is now necessary that a new European structure be created. This structure should keep in mind not only the new reality of the Eastern countries but also of those countries on both shores of the Mediterranean. In fact, the heavy migratory flow from North African countries into the EC is the cause of strong racial tensions

which will certainly increase if stress is laid on assimilation and not on *harmonization*.

With this in mind *Alternattiva Demokratika* considers the *Council of Europe* and the CSCE as the ideal fora for the drawing up of a new process of integration and cooperation.

In the present age, there is absolutely no reason for the existence of military organizations such as NATO and the Warsaw Pact. We should strive for the progressive and continuous dismantlement of these two blocks in such a way as to ensure that the money traditionally voted for armaments be utilized for the attainment of social equality between all parties concerned.

This social equality can be made possible through a fairer distribution of wealth amongst all peoples. This distribution can be achieved:

1. Through the adoption of an environmental policy, harmonized and coordinated between North and South, East and West, in such a way as to be able to safeguard the seas, the rivers, the air, the food we produce, etc;
2. Through the investments of wealthy countries in projects sited in the poorer ones. The main object of these ventures should not be the amassing of profits by the former but the narrowing of the poverty gap by the latter. In other words, we would not like to see foreign investments in Malta or in Czechoslovakia because of cheap labour, but because there is a genuine will on the part of the wealthy investors to improve on the quality of life of those people that live in that part of Europe known as Czechoslovakia or Malta;
3. Above all, Europe must not in any way segregate itself from those societies and cultures that lie outside its borders. Instead, it should offer both its moral and economic solidarity to the people in the Third World so that even they can participate in this harmonization process.

SOCIAL HARMONIZATION, COOPERATION, EQUALITY, DEMILITARIZATION, DECENTRALIZATION, THE CONSERVATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT and SOLIDARITY: these are the goals which *Alternattiva Demokratika* is aiming at. The stone structure of the *Common European House* already exists. But this *house* has still got a lot of structural defects. We want to work to improve on it. We want to make a special effort to convert the *house* into a comfortable *home* where everyone can feel at ease. There are still many things in Europe that have to be adjusted. Until these adjustments are effected, it is imperative that the Maltese citizens become conscious of the advantages and disadvantages that full membership in the EC entails:

As regards *industry*, entry into the EC would bring about a higher degree of competitiveness. Consequently, on the one hand this would translate itself into higher standards as regards Maltese products (and Maltese consumers would benefit from this); on the other, it may also pose a serious threat to those industries that cannot afford to improve the quality of their product. It would therefore be wise if Malta started diversifying its products, thus moving away from the productive industry which at the moment constitutes the bulk of Maltese exports, towards a service industry.

In the same sphere, while appreciating the new prospects for Maltese industry to invest in the bigger market constituted by the EC, we must ensure that foreign investment is not attracted to Malta because of the cheap labour that our country might offer. We should never allow ourselves to be turned into second rate European citizens.

Although the percentage of gainfully employed in the sphere of *agriculture* amounts to less than 2.5% of the Maltese, full membership within the EC would bring about the total collapse of this sector if we continue programming our agricultural products according to the methods applied until now. This sector has therefore to undergo a complete structural rehaul, based on the

reconversion and diversification of the agricultural products. The same arguments apply to the *fishing* sector.

In the *institutional* and *legislative* fields, it is necessary that we create the appropriate machinery to be able to enforce the progressive laws of the EC. As things stand now, it is practically impossible for the Maltese State to enforce its own laws, which certainly still leave a lot to be desired as regards levels of standards.

Naturally, we appreciate the positive elements that EC membership can bring about:

The project involving a European *Social Charter* is a very interesting one and should be instrumental in raising the quality of life of the Maltese. However, up to now this *Social Charter* has not been adopted. *Alternattiva Demokratika* cannot envisage an EC having social justice as its mainstay, without this *Social Charter*.

The *environmental laws* of the EC are of a high standard and are bound to be advantageous to Malta both as regards the safeguard of the environment, consumer rights and the health sector. All depends, however, on our ability to create the proper mechanisms by means of which all these forward-looking laws can be enforced.

Naturally, the structural funds that the EC would put at the disposal of our country would carry an appreciable weight. These would serve to improve the standard of living of the Maltese.

Because of Malta's physical and geographical isolation, our relationship with an *open minded European culture*, which is both Christian and lay at the same time, cannot but be beneficial. In the *European Community* we perceive an institution which safeguards all fundamental human rights, such as one's right to work, justice, liberty of thought and speech as well as civil rights, including the free choice of one's religious beliefs or civil status, such as the right to divorce. Our country would be duty bound to recognize all these rights if it aspires to have all credentials of a full member of the EC.

Because of the fact that many aspects of the EC are still undergoing a process of change at the moment, and that others will have to change in the future, we believe that when the time comes

for Malta to join the EC, the final decision should be left in the hands of the Maltese citizen. We, therefore, propose that the Maltese government prepares a concise and clearly worded citizen friendly edition of the report of the Directorate of the EC to be distributed free of charge to all Maltese households.

This edition should be written in such a way as to be easily understood by the man in the street, who is normally not well versed in socio-political-economic matters. In this way, all Maltese citizens would have the opportunity to weigh the pros and the cons of EC membership, and when the moment of decision arrives this should be taken through a popular referendum.

The CSCM: its Role and Challenges²

It is a common saying that improved technology, the mass media and the ever faster and more comfortable means of transport have considerably reduced distances, thus transforming what was once a huge world into a global village: we all seem to be much closer to each other, both physically and culturally. The recent Gulf war has proved this statement right and wrong at the same time. On the one hand, physical distances really seem to have disappeared since a war going on in a certain place can have disastrous economic, political and environmental effects on countries thousands of kilometres away, in the space of a relatively short time. On the other hand, the Gulf War has contributed to highlight in a most glaring way the multi-secular cultural chasm which divides the Christian from the Islamic world. Ways and means of healing the severe wounds inflicted by the Gulf War must be seriously explored.

The years 1989-90 have seen the political world go through continuous and unexpected changes, with the political structures that emerged from the fascist and Stalinist systems and from the cold war, swiftly coming apart. In those countries that have not enjoyed freedom for many years a strong will to establish states based on the respect of the dignity and the fundamental rights of mankind has come up. A common aspiration is a political system with a human dimension through which politics becomes a means to serve the collective interests of humanity and all life on earth, and not a tool by which a minority manipulates or oppresses the majority. Undoubtedly, the new political climate and atmosphere brought about by establishment of the *Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe* way back in 1975 were certainly instrumental in the creation of this new political order.

One cannot but rejoice at the defeat of these old systems of oppression and express one's solidarity with all those who contribute to the establishment of political systems which enhance

2 This paper was read at the International Colloquium on *The Mediterranean: bridge or divide?*, organized in Malta by the *Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies*, in May 1991.

the quality of human life in harmony with the local and global ecology. The progressive climate of political *detente* in Europe must not, however, lead to excessive euphoria because enormous problems still exist in the Eastern and other parts of Europe. Governments in Western Europe and the EC should not limit their interests mainly to economic integration or to penetrating the Eastern markets. Moreover, the democratization of these areas must not be limited exclusively to free elections and to multi-party systems. Individual and collective rights, such as, e.g., the use and teaching of minority languages and the respect of the cultural traditions of minorities, must be entrenched in the laws of all countries.

Thus, situations where political freedom is suppressed and the speaking of a particular language is prohibited as, e.g., in the Kosovo region in Yugoslavia, where people of Albanian ethnic origin cannot speak their own language,³ or in Turkey where, until recently, it was illegal to speak the Kurd language, should cease to exist. These are problems which Europe must strive to solve because they are the problems of European countries but, at the same time, happen also to be the problems of European countries that form part of the community of Mediterranean countries. Our post-Gulf war reflections have led us to face a reality which can no longer be overlooked or sidelined. The Mediterranean area is ever more at the centre of a crisis, due to the strong instability of the Gulf region and the Middle East. Issues like the Palestinian, the Lebanese, the Iraqi and the Kurdish ones are still unsolved. The multi-varied problems facing European countries such as Albania, Cyprus, Yugoslavia and Turkey, the serious conditions of poverty and instability facing many Maghreb and African states and the radicalization of a large part of the Arab populations all need immediate attention.

3 This issue seems to be quite controversial. A document on Yugoslavia presented at the *Coordination of the European Greens' Venice meeting* (2-3 March 1991) clearly states that "Nel Kosovo si sommano la distruzione della preesistente sovranita', la persecuzione politica verso i singoli, la negazione di strumenti di identita' linguistica, l'oppressione e la discriminazione economica e sociale". On the other hand, two Yugoslav participants in the colloquium inform me that the Albanians and the Albanian language are totally protected in the Kosovo region, where bilingualism is constitutionally entrenched.

A Conference for Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean would certainly constitute the ideal forum for the discussion of the problems of the region. The De Michelis intuition and proposal (that participation in the Conference should be the widest possible, in order to include all Mediterranean countries and the states of the Gulf region) deserves to be strongly promoted and followed up. The past experience of the CSCE, and the successful results obtained, should serve as an eye-opener for the future and provide a most valid framework for the proposed CSCM. It has taken fifteen years of tough but peaceful dialogue within the CSCE to break down the iron curtain between East and West. If another fifteen years of tough but peaceful dialogue within the framework of CSCM were to be enough to break down the wall of diffidence existing between the Arab and the Christian worlds, this would certainly be a blessing for the whole of humanity.

Once a basic framework of principles is set up, what problems should the CSCM tackle? In the first place the *reconstruction* of the Gulf region. As a basic preliminary step, Europe should cease to consider Arab unity as a threat to peace and stability, and should, on the contrary, strive to make this unity come about. A united cooperative Europe and a united cooperative Arab world should be in a better position to dialogue and cooperate with one another. Europe should help in the work of reconstruction by giving priority to the interests of the Iraqi and the whole Arab population over its own commercial interests. The task of safeguarding the security of the region should be assigned to inter-Arab forces under the direction of the UN.

The CSCM should also strive to establish the principle of *self-determination* in this troubled area. This means that the Palestinian, Kurdish, Lebanese and Cypriot cry can no longer go by unheeded by the international community. The peaceful solution of these long standing problems, together with the smoothing out of the differences between Iraq and Kuwait, must be obtained around the conference table, if stability is to be reclaimed for the whole region.

The *economic disparity* between the richer states on the northern bank of the Mediterranean and the poorer ones on the southern bank is another topic deserving priority on a future CSCM agenda. The industrialized world should no longer consider the East and the South to be unlimited territories of economic conquest. The overdevelopment of one party can only be obtained at the expense of the other party. The CSCM should aim at a redistribution of wealth and human resources, such as to benefit the whole international community. The funds forthcoming from the total disarmament of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons on one hand, and progressive disarmament of conventional weapons on the other, should be reinvested in underdeveloped countries for the benefit of the populations living there. Eventually everybody will stand to gain from such operations. Moreover, developed countries should ensure that oil prices are not kept too low because this would only serve to widen the economic gap between developed and underdeveloped countries.

The CSCM should also tackle vigorously the problems caused by *immigration*. These have recently been highlighted by the mass exodus of Albanians to neighbouring countries, mainly Italy; of the Kurds, fighting desperately for their right to self-preservation and of the inhabitants living beyond the ex-iron curtain, who were attracted by the materialistic baits of a consumer western society, which from the outside (and quite understandably) seemed to be very glamorous and appetizing. European governments should ensure that, whilst encouraging each immigrant to maintain his own cultural roots, concrete opportunities of cultural and social integration should be made available to immigrants already present in their territory. Moreover, Europe should not slam its frontiers in the face of prospective immigrants, coming mainly from the African and Maghreb world.

However, the real solution to the problems caused by immigration lies in the better redistribution of wealth. Europe should embark on a number of economic projects for depressed regions which, because of this depression, usually have a very high rate of emigration.

These projects should be rigorously *ecocompatible*, since the destabilization of the ecological balance of the earth would eventually lead to further hardships for those populations who are already suffering so much. Priority should be given to fighting desertification in sub-Saharan Africa and to the creation of service industries and cooperative organizations in those countries where the rate of emigration is normally high.

Finally, I would like to point out that it is about time the international community, even within a future CSCM, started a process of rethinking on what *diplomacy* really means. At present, being diplomatic is usually associated with being insensitive to what is going on around us. There seems to be a total *hiatus* between ethics on one side and politics on the other. At the outbreak of any crisis, the legalistic aspect always seems to prevail at the expense of the human element. Thus, whilst on the one hand the annihilation of tens (or hundreds) of thousands of Iraqi people for the restoration of legality in Kuwait is considered within the law by the international community, on the other hand that same international community judges speedy intervention in favour of the Kurdish race, that is in danger of mass genocide, to be legally incompatible with international law! Certainly, some system must be devised whereby politics would go hand in hand with ethics, on a consistent basis.

In this respect, Malta should be in the forefront in the building of a humane political system. With its history and geographical position, Malta could indeed play an important part in the creation of a new social order in the Mediterranean region, based on the principles of equality, solidarity and cooperation.

North-South Relations: Malta's Commitment⁴

"Why should the rich North bother about subsidising the poor South"? This is a cliché one comes across quite often. The trend of thought behind it is that the South is ever increasingly becoming a burden on the richer countries of the North. Yet, have we all asked ourselves in what way the North has bettered its living conditions? And at whose expense?

The "civilized" world is celebrating the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's discovery of America. But does the "civilized" world realize that, apart from opening new horizons for the major European monarchies, this discovery also meant the beginning of five centuries of genocide, slavery, racism and colonization? Do we realize that the exploitation of virgin land, countries and peoples in the name of civilization has led to the myriads of social, economic and ecological problems our planet is facing today? I fear that many of us do not.

Yet, the rich industrialized areas in the North share a strong part of the responsibility as regards the moral and ecological pollution of our planet. The dumping of toxic chemical and nuclear waste by rich countries in the poorer countries of our planet has become an everyday affair whilst the squandering of energy resources by the rich countries, to the detriment of underdeveloped ones, is also a stark reality. If we are all to live on earth in a dignified manner, ways and means are to be found to drastically reduce the poverty gap that exists between North and South. Some of these measures could be "[...] the cancelling [of] Third world debt, raising prices of energy and raw materials to reduce consumption in the North, as well as major financial and technological transfers toward the South, with democratic control of concrete projects evaluated ecologically, socially and economically" (I am quoting from a joint NGO-Green Political Organizations Declaration on the Rio Process, issued on 17th December 1991 in France).

4 This paper was read in Malta at an International Seminar on *North-South relations* organized by the *Young European Federalists*, in May 1992.

Malta's Role

Being one of the few countries in Europe having a multi-millennial history of colonial domination, Malta can give some solid contribution towards the narrowing of the poverty gap between North and South. Obviously, in drawing up its foreign policy, Malta must take into account its recent application for membership in the EC. However, it would be a mistake on the part of the authorities to ignore our geographical position as well as those historical and cultural events which have forged us into what we are, i.e. the Maltese people. In a country like ours, where the parochial divide between blue and red, San Bastjan and San Ġorġ, Banda La Valette and Banda King's Own still persists, there still remains a rich cultural and historical heritage which, though apparently the result of conflicting cultures, co-exists in a most peaceful way and gives us our peculiar identity.

If in the past, and in certain instances even today, Maltese politics were also the product of artificially created conflicts between Northern and Southern components (Italian and Arabic cultures; English and Italian; Italian and Maltese; English and Maltese), we should now realize that this conflictuality is not compatible with present times. The Arab domination, British rule and Italian culture have together bequeathed us a priceless heritage and have contributed to the formation of our country, with its specific and unique identity.

We should all realize that diversity is a positive element. The culture and identity of Malta are the result of different and diverse cultures and this diversity gives us a certain richness which others might not have. Just as Malta managed to build its identity on the diversity of different cultures in the past, it is today the duty of our country to contribute towards the harmonization of those diversities which distinguish one culture from another in other areas of our planet: the differences between the peoples who live on the Atlantic coast or on the Ural mountains, between the rich Europeans of

Northern Europe and the poorer peoples born in African or Arab countries should not divide one from the other any longer but should contribute to bring these different peoples together.

I feel, and this is *Alternattiva Demokratika's* feeling too, that Malta can contribute in an effective way towards stability and co-operation in the Mediterranean region and in Europe by basing its foreign policy on peace initiatives, on the creation of a *European Charter of the Environment*, on the building of a *Multi-cultural Europe* and on a *Socio-economic policy* that gives top priority to social equality amongst all peoples and to the use of clean and renewable sources of energy.

Proposals

Malta should give its foreign policy that particular orientation that protects, privileges and harmonizes together: (a) the European dimension of our country; (b) its Mediterranean vocation; (c) its peculiar characteristics of insularity; (d) its specific linguistic and cultural identity.

(a) The European Dimension

The Europe one would like to see take shape is that Europe which bases its development first and foremost on the revaluation of the *social dimension*. There cannot be a really just and equitable Europe if a process of social harmonization, amongst all countries aspiring to form part of the EC, does not take place. Malta should see to it that the EC be centred around the basic concept of *equality* amongst all social partners, including the rich countries of the North and the poorer ones in the South. Therefore, the implementation of a *Social Charter* based on the concepts of *social justice*, *cooperation* and *equality* is an absolute must.

Another urgent priority of our "ideal" Europe should be demilitarization. Now that the *Warsaw Pact* has been disbanded, even NATO should embark on a project of progressive disbandment

of its military set up. The billions and billions of dollars that are currently invested in armaments should be channelled towards other useful projects that should help to fight and eradicate the causes of poverty and to better the quality of life of all creatures on our planet.

Our common European Home should tackle in a most vigorous way those environmental problems that are threatening our planet, such as the greenhouse effect, deforestation, desertification, the Ozone layer, etc. Malta should aim towards the creation of a *European Charter of the Environment*, that should draw up new policies for the future as regards *renewable sources of energy*, as also the protection of seas, rivers, the air we breathe, the food we eat, etc. These new policies could be financed, at least partially, by means of ecological taxes, which would be put to more effective use if administered and coordinated at regional level.

Malta is still quite distant from the "ideal" Europe I am here envisaging. We need to update our laws to make them conform with those of the community, especially as regards environmental awareness, health and safety measures on the place of work, consumer rights and civil rights (e.g. the free choice of one's religion and one's civil status). Above all, the state should be provided with all the necessary legal and moral apparatus to be in a position to ascertain that *all* laws in Malta are appropriately enforced.

(b) *The Mediterranean Vocation*

If the European home we are striving to build is to be the standard bearer of the concepts of *equality* and *social justice*, it stands to reason that the idea of a *Fortress Europe* vis a' vis other geographical areas becomes totally unacceptable. Fortunately, it seems that there are now some strong reservations in Europe regarding this idea. However, certain implications of the Maastricht Treaty could lead to the strengthening of *social inequality* within the EC, with the rich economies becoming richer and the poorer ones (usually the Southern areas of the EC) becoming poorer.

The EC should not contribute towards the building of a barrier of poverty between North and South. *Solidarity* should not be limited to countries within the EC but should be evenly spread amongst countries all over Europe, and indeed all around the World. In our specific case, Malta should do its utmost to ensure that the problems of the Mediterranean region be tackled with great urgency. It is certainly a positive sign to note that all local political formations agree on this point.

Malta should, therefore, strive in favour of the setting up of a *Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean* (CSCM), modelled on the *Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe*. It took fifteen years to bring down the Iron Curtain between West and East. If it took a hypothetical CSCM another fifteen years to tear off the curtain of poverty and diffidence that separates one people of the Mediterranean from the other, this would indeed prove to be an enormous success.

The problems to be faced, and solved, by a future CSCM are not only of a *political nature* (the Palestinian issue, Cyprus, Lebanon, the Persian Gulf, Yugoslavia) but mainly of a *socio-economic and environmental nature*. Indeed, e.g., one cannot ignore the fact that the bigger the process of desertification in the Sub-Saharan regions gets, the greater becomes the number of people that are going to "flee" towards rich, continental Europe. Likewise, the present economic embargo on Libya could eventually lead to the laying off of about one million Egyptians and hundreds of thousands of Tunisians and Palestinians working in this country. This would further increase the *immigratory pressure* on Europe, with *social tensions* and *racial problems* always on the increase.

It is, therefore, important that Malta contributes not only towards a full process of *democratization* in the above mentioned countries, but also towards strong *eco-compatible investments* in the East (Yugoslavia, the new independent states, Albania, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the ex-Warsaw Pact countries) as well as in Africa. If decent opportunities of work were created in these areas, the need to emigrate would decrease, the

inhabitants could contribute to the global welfare of their own countries and, at the same time, strong foundations for the building of pluralistic political systems would be laid. In other words, if Malta were to devote its efforts to the extermination of poverty in those areas of the Mediterranean mostly hit by this plague, it would also be contributing towards further stability in the whole region.

(c) *The Conditions of Insularity*

The *Europe of Regions* which we envisage should decentralize power by delegating decision making and finances to the regions, so that the specific problems of a region are tackled by the individual region itself. In this context, Malta, as the only island state in the Mediterranean (Cyprus is still faced with problems of internal division), should take the initiative to set up in our country an *Inter-island Network*. This network should aim at solving the problems that are common to most European islands in the Mediterranean.

In fact, the problems faced by these islands, from the Balearic Isles to the Egadi Islands, from Sardegna to Corsica, from the Greek Archipelago to the Yugoslav one, from Malta to Cyprus, are more or less the same ones: lack of water, deforestation, energy problems, the negative impact of mass tourism, the disposal of solid and organic waste, the pollution of the seas, etc.

Common research and action programmes could be drawn up by this Inter-island Network. These programmes would not benefit just single islands but all the island communities of the Mediterranean region, as well as those communities that live on the Mediterranean Banks of the European and the African continents.

(d) *The Linguistic and Cultural identity*

It is most important that the integration process taking place in the EC does not degenerate into an exercise of total assimilation. We should become citizens of that continent named Europe, which

protects the specific linguistic and cultural identities of each of its "citizens", including those belonging to ethnic minorities.

The number of minority languages and cultures in Europe is substantially high. Just think of, e.g., Catalan, Gaelic, Romancio, Macedonian, Frisian, Maltese itself and so many others. Malta could offer to set up in our island a *Centre for the Protection of Linguistic and Cultural Minorities within the EC*. Amongst these minorities one should include those extra-European communities that live in Europe (Philippinos, Maghrebine Arabs, Senegalese, Capo Verde citizens, etc.) and who consequently constitute a minority vis a' vis the local communities. This Centre, which would be run in conjunction with the *Commission for the Protection of Minor Languages and Cultures* already set up by the EC, would be expected to draw up adequate laws and effective policies that statutorily recognize the importance of minor languages and cultures and safeguard them as the common heritage of humanity.

The above listed suggestions are but some of the initiatives which a country like Malta could undertake as a contribution towards bridging the gap between North and South and making the world a better place to live in for us all.

Full Membership within the EC: the Prospects and Implications for Malta⁵

In the ongoing debate on Malta's prospective membership in the EC, *Alternattiva Demokratika* has made it a point to take a rational and critical approach to the issue, in order to be able to come to the most honest and objective of conclusions. At *Alternattiva* we are not hampered by any preconceived ideas and/or bias for or against joining the EC. Indeed, we are open to all sorts of suggestions, opinions, and criticisms from all quarters, since our aim is the global and lasting welfare of the people of Malta (and elsewhere) and not the petty and transitory gains of one traditional political party over the other.

We are, therefore, tired of the "partisan" and "biased" way in which the debate has been conducted by the two established parties, the *Partit Nazzjonalista* and the *Malta Labour Party*, up to now. Because of their egoistic and therefore limited outlook on the issue, the two traditional parties have kept the Maltese citizen in the dark as to the real implications of full membership, thus wasting years of precious time in empty rhetoric and vain party propaganda instead of trying to inform and educate the citizen on the issue.

In truly democratic and civilised societies, Parliament is the appropriate seat where such an issue should be debated. In Malta, the debate has generally been relegated and demoted to much less noble occasions, such as a talk in some local party *kazin* or even at gastronomical gatherings!

This myopic and partisan attitude towards such a sensitive topic, which is undoubtedly of National and Supranational importance, is not only limited to our shores but has even been exported abroad. Indeed, the twelve European MPs here present have had a chance to experience a sample of what the Maltese population has been subjected to in the current debate: the verbal and "verbose" exchange between the Hon. Lino Spiteri (MLP) and the Hon. Dr. Josef Bonnici (PN) at the September 92 inter-parliamentary meeting

⁵ This paper was presented to the *EU-Malta Mixed Parliamentary Commission*, in February 1993.

in Brussels must have left the Euro MPs wondering whether they were assisting at a "civilized" debate on the *free market* or else at a less civilized one in an *open market!*

We would like to state clearly at the outset that we totally support the European ideals of democracy, equality, freedom of thought, creed and movement, which are based on the respect of the fundamental and civil rights of all peoples. We also totally support the EC ideals of a federated Europe without frontiers and economic barriers. However, ideal beliefs are not always translated into concrete and *real* actions, as can be witnessed by the long standing sad state of impotence of the EC in the face of the atrocious conflagration plaguing Bosnian territory and other areas of ex-Yugoslavia. So, whilst keeping always in mind these undisputed ideals, we *do* have to be pragmatic and analyse the whole issue of EC membership in a realistic way.

Unlike the two traditional parties, *Alternattiva Demokratika* has no magic wand solutions or answers to the doubts and queries being aired by the different sectors of the Maltese population. Our main aim is to get to know more about the workings of the Community, to understand what the implications of full membership could be for a small country like Malta, and to pass on the information -in the most honest and unbiased way- to the citizens of Malta. It is therefore our intention to put a series of questions to the European MPs here present regarding the impact of full membership of the EC on the various sectors of Maltese society and to ask the Maltese Government and the party in opposition to clarify their strategies as regards the tackling of problems that could eventually arise.

As from the 1st of January 1993, various measures have come into force in the EC. Undoubtedly these are of great benefit to the consumer, and to the citizen in general. But how would they hit the Maltese community?

a)*VAT and Import Duties*: The EC countries have agreed on a two level system for VAT (5% and 15%). No customs duties exist between the 12 EC countries. In Malta, many imported goods from

EC countries are subject to heavy percentages of customs duty (something around 30% generally). Moreover, an additional levy is imposed on goods that are also produced in Malta. On top of it all, sometimes the citizen has to pay an additional 5% or 10% VAT, not only on services (hotel accomodation; airline tickets) but also on goods on which import duty and a levy has already been paid (e.g. restaurant bills).

Joining the EC would mean the introduction of VAT, even on Maltese goods and services. However, *Alternattiva Demokratika* wonders whether a 5% or 15% VAT on goods and seVICES would be enough to compensate for all the lost revenue resulting from the abolition of Import Duties.

b)*Banks*: Any bank in the EC can open shop in any of the 12 EC countries. The EC consumer is certainly going to have a much better and wider choice at his disposal. But on the local front, where the few local banks enjoy an absolute monopoly of the market and operate as a cartel, how are we gearing up for the competition of the free market? What steps will the local banks take to prevent the exodus of Maltese capital to EC countries, where better investment opportunities exist? Can they afford to increase substantially local interest rates without incurring great losses? Our *queries and doubts* seem quite justified in view of the fact that amnesties and incentives already given by the government to encourage repatriation of Maltese capital illegally transferred abroad have not really been successful.

On the *offshore banking* front, normally membership of the EC would entail a gradual phasing out of profitable service industries such as *offshore banking* and *the freeport*. How do the Maltese authorities expect to make up for the millions of liri invested in these projects and for the lost income ensuing from their eventual phasing out? Or will the government be seeking derogations in this field? Moreover, what measures would the Maltese government (and the Opposition) take to discourage the possibility of money laundering by foreign criminal organisations in Malta?

c)*Tourism*: For the EC citizens whose countries are members of the Schengen Convention, there will be no more passport checking at national borders (except for security reasons). What are the Maltese Government (and Opposition's) plans regarding the abolition of the enormous amount of red tape, rubber stamping, embarkation card filling, etc. at our frontiers? What safeguards are to be taken against the dangerous possibility of easy access to our country to people with a criminal record from neighbouring EC countries?

d)*Shopping*: Unlimited cross frontier shopping for personal use in the EC is now virtually a reality. How, and how fast, is Malta going to make the transition from the highly controlled present state of affairs (no more than 170 dollars tax free goods per person) to the liberalized shopping market? The amount of revenue collected through customs' duty might not be all that high, but how is the State going to make up for this lost revenue?

e)*Air Tariffs*: Deregulation is now on in the EC. This will lead to the lowering of prices. *Lufthansa* and *Alitalia* have already slashed their prices by about 30%. A real bonanza for the travelling citizen. How is this going to affect *Air Malta*, that is used to having a total monopoly on the Maltese market and to imposing its harsh tariffs on the "isolated" Maltese islander? How are *Air Malta*, Government (and the Opposition) going to make up for the drastic fall in profits of the airline to safeguard the jobs of the circa 1500 labour force?

The Work-force, Agriculture, Government Subsidies and Job Security

The Maltese economy is definitely not ready at the moment for the big leap into the FREE MARKET. The general educational level is still low by EC standards and, despite steps in the right direction, it will take some time before a better educated and better trained work-force is formed. How is the Maltese Government (and

Opposition) going to change the prevailing Maltese mentality, which takes *economic aid and assistance* for granted? Will EC regional and social funds be enough to replace the circa 30 million Maltese liri aid per year we have been receiving from the Italian government for the past few years?

The *agricultural sector* has to be restructured and modernised to meet increased competition and to take advantage of the new structures following the adoption of the Common Agricultural Policy. Membership should give rise to certain positive implications, such as investment in new agricultural structures, irrigation schemes and direct aid. However, adoption of the CAP mechanisms will also imply, amongst other things, that Maltese agriculture will have to adapt itself to a new price determination system and market regulation. This would eventually mean higher prices for the consumer. Moreover, the CAP will affect production mechanisms and the incomes of farmers, particularly the smaller ones. How does the Maltese government intend offsetting these losses?

Another big question mark concerns the *parastatal companies*. Parastatal companies like *ENEMALTA*, *TELEMALTA*, etc., enjoy a total monopoly of their respective markets. In what way are they preparing themselves to survive and thrive in a near future when monopolies will eventually cease to exist?

As regards small industries catering for the local market, these should be given sufficient time to adapt from a system of over-protection and virtual monopoly to a system of free competition with European firms producing the same kind of goods. As regards state aids and incentives to industry, Malta should seek derogations similar to those obtained by Eire, regarding community rules vis a' vis state subsidies.

Full membership of the EC must bring about the restructuring of Maltese *industry*. Here, *Malta Drydocks* and *Malta Shipbuilding* immediately come to mind. These industries are being subsidized by the government to the tune of 14 million liri per year. *Alternattiva Demokratika* has already made its position clear on this

issue, but I shall not enter into the merits of it now. What concerns us here is this: since the EC is against state subsidies of industry, what is going to happen to these lame ducks of Maltese industry -with their 4000 odd work-force- once the subsidies are withdrawn?

At this point, one cannot ignore another social aspect of Maltese society: *the demographic problem*. In twenty years time 25% of the Maltese population will be over the age of 60. People of a certain age do not have the energy, enthusiasm and motivation for retraining (if Maltese industry goes through a radical phase of restructuring). What are the government (and Opposition's) plans for such people? How can we inject new enthusiasm into these people? Certainly, regional and social funds forthcoming from the EC would be of great help and incentive in this regard, but it is of *paramount importance* that we start thinking of how we can *help ourselves* before asking others to help us!

The Environment, Land Speculation, Consumer Protection and Safety at Work

Undoubtedly, *Alternattiva Demokratika* cannot fail to point out that Malta would certainly stand to benefit from the high standards imposed by the EC in the respective fields of the *environment*, *consumer protection* and *safety at work*. What worries us is the *actual enforcement* of these standards. While our government is very prompt in ratifying conventions on issues that concern other countries and communities, such as, e.g., the charter for the protection of minority languages and cultures or the convention against the use of chemical weapons (sic!), it is much more reluctant to sign, ratify or bring into effect other *basic* conventions which concern us directly (*vide* the Berne Convention on the protection of endangered species, the Barcelona Convention on the prevention of sea pollution, the Law of the Sea, etc.).

Alternattiva Demokratika asks: what measures are being taken to update Maltese legislation in order to make it conform with EC directives and regulations? What stage has this process reached on

the legal and even on the administrative side? What concrete measures are being taken to make these laws *actually and effectively enforceable*?

As regards the liberalization of *acquisition of immovable property* in Malta by citizens of EC countries, this would bring about consequent negative pressure on the environment, and land in particular. Moreover, property prices would continue to increase at an alarming rate. Thus, people with "Maltese" wages would not be able to compete on the property market with others having "European" wages. In view of Malta's minute size, *Alternattiva Demokratika* considers it an absolute must that a derogation be given to Malta as regards the laws governing the acquisition of immovable property in the EC.

The *Political* Aspect

Joining the EC as full members entails the total acceptance of the *Rome treaty*, as amended in Maastricht. Considering that by 1996 there should be important institutional changes in the EC and also that Malta is a very small country with a very small population, *Alternattiva Demokratika* is concerned about the quality and weight of Malta's political involvement within the Community. What *political say* will Malta have in the EC, after the institutional reforms? Certainly, we cannot be big headed or too much self-centred. We should view things in their right perspective. However, it is important that Malta, despite its size, plays a dignified role with regards to the political decisions to be taken in the EC in future.

Generally speaking, EC ideals and directives would be of great benefit to Malta. The *Social Charter* would upgrade living conditions on our island; the EC directives on environment, especially *hunting*, would certainly be beneficial to us; the possibility in the future to have access to such *civil rights* as divorce or equitable proportional electoral systems would bring us in line with the majority of progressive European countries.

However, *Alternattiva Demokratika* fears that the present and future Maltese governments might be tempted to abuse of the possibility of obtaining derogations, by asking for them in those fields and issues, such as *consumer protection and hunting*, which might not be of liking to the party in Government. *Alternattiva Demokratika* would be totally against such derogations that would limit the Maltese citizen's basic civil rights.

The above are but a few of the queries that come to mind vis a' vis Malta's application for full membership within the present EC, and future EU (European Union). There might not be quick and ready answers to our doubts. Indeed, we are not asking for them. What we would like to see is a realistic, and not exclusively idealistic, approach to these issues on the part of the Maltese Government; and a realistic, and not an exclusively *a priori* antagonistic attitude, on the part of the Labour Opposition. If the Government and the Labour Opposition push their petty party interests aside, and keep in mind the common good of Malta and of its people as their main objective, it might be possible to start tackling seriously the many issues which have, until now, been totally or partially ignored.

One final consideration. It is now over 30 months since Malta handed in its application in Brussels. There are no doubts regarding Malta's belonging to Europe. There are no concerns about the stability of its democratic system. Yet, no response at all has arrived from the Commission in Brussels. Bigger and/or economically stronger countries in Malta's same condition have had their *avis* issued much earlier. We do not want any preferential treatment. However, despite our size and relative little importance on the international political chessboard, we expect to be treated with the dignity all peoples deserve. We would be glad if our guests the European MPs could convey to the Commissioners in Brussels *Alternattiva Demokratika's* preoccupation at such an apparently unmotivated long delay.

Issuing an *avis* within a reasonable amount of time is not a question of politics, it is neither a matter of tactics; it is just a question of good manners and respect.

Understanding One Another: the Real Basis for a New Concept of Security⁶

What is the contemporary world picture today? UN Peace keeping troops are sent over en masse to Bosnia Herzegovina to make sure that food supplies reach the famine stricken population in the area. The peace keeping troops become the objective of militia fighters who, apart from claiming a number of blue berets as victims, manage to slow down, if not at times bring to a complete halt, the distribution of supplies amongst those most in need. UN peace keeping forces are shipped over to war ridden and under nourished Somalia to try and force the warring sides into coming to terms and to feed the hunger stricken population. After some time, the locals turn against the peace keepers. The result: tens and tens of victims on the UN peace keeping troops' part, hundreds on the civilians' part ...and no solution at all to the ongoing conflict.

The Roots of Misunderstanding: from Colonialism to (unsuccessful) Emancipation

What is happening to the UN? Until some time ago, despite a few setbacks, it had the moral and physical strength to keep warring contenders at bay. People looked up to UN troops as true harbingers of peace and stability. This is now no longer so. Why? The answer seems to lie in the basic mistrust of anything foreign. This mistrust of foreigners is to be considered a typical feature of all peoples, all over the world. However, over the years, there has been a certain evolution in the people's way of thinking vis a' vis this topic.

In the past, when the powerful Western European colonial powers (Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, Holland, etc.) spread their imperialistic *credo* all over the world, the rich Europeans looked upon the inhabitants of their colonies as lesser beings whose only purpose in life was to be exploited and to help enrich the economy

6 This paper was read at the seminar entitled *Towards the Millennium*, which was held in Malta in August 1994.

of the "mother" colonizing land and the well-being of the dominating peoples; whilst, on the other hand, the "dominated" peoples would tend to take a fatalistic outlook on the whole issue of "colonization". Therefore, whilst deep down feeling totally alien to the colonizers' mentality, the dominated would subscribe to the way of life imposed upon them by their dominators, it being their only way of survival in a world regulated by a "might is right" concept. The *democratic deficit* imposed by the "dominators" on the "dominated" is obvious.

Today, things have changed considerably. Two destructive world wars, which were the result of expansionist and colonialist mentalities, have finally brought the Western world to its senses: the "dominators" started realizing what havoc they had wrought during the centuries through their expansionist policies; whilst the "dominated" started to emancipate their way of seeing things: no longer a fatalistic outlook on life, but a more positive one whereby the energies of the population of a nation were to be concentrated for the benefit of that same nation. This fight for the dominated peoples' emancipation spelt the end of the imperialistic era and brought to the fore the concept that every people had the right to self-determination. At least in theory, the democratic deficit seemed to be, little by little, made up for.

And yet today, as we approach the beginning of the third millenium, regional conflicts are the order of the day. Reciprocal hatred amongst different peoples, living within Europe and out of it, constitutes an everyday feature, and governments, even the "civilized" Western ones, seem to be at a loss on how to handle these new, but actually very "old" problems. Why is this so? The democratic deficit might be on the way out, bit by bit. However, there is still a greater deficit which has not been seriously seen to up to now: this is *the cultural deficit*.

Religions: a Unifying or a Dividing Factor?

It is a fact that varying political ideologies and contrasting economic interests are usually at the back of most conflicts on our planet. I would also list religious tensions amongst the causes of these conflicts. I shall probably be stretching the argument a bit too far to prove my point. The Mediterranean basin has been described as the cradle of civilization. It has given birth to the three great monotheistic religions: the Jewish, the Christian and the Islamic one. The ideal behind religions is that they should constitute a strong unifying factor amongst peoples. And yet, when we look around us, in time and in space, we realise that the mishandling of religions by human beings has led to atrocities of all kinds. In the name of God, men have caused atrocities against fellow men: in the past, being Jewish was a good enough excuse for the creation of a diaspora by the "non-Jewish" Mediterranean Romans or even for genocide by the "Christian" Third Reich. In the past, being a Muslim was a good enough reason for prolonged "Sacred" wars and suffering amongst Christians and believers of Islam. This unwarranted rivalry between different "believers" in the Mediterranean (but still, *believers*) led to a state of continuous acrimony between Christians and Muslims, even in our little island which, for over 268 years, was considered to be the last bulwark of Christianity against Islam, during the domination of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem. This "heroic" label can be attested in Maltese literature (written in Latin, Italian and Maltese) from its sixteenth century origins to the romantic works of 30 years or so ago.

This dichotomy between a "national" or "racial" self and "the other than us" is the result of a cultural deficit which, despite the progress humanity is supposed to have achieved, is always on the increase. Let us limit our perspective to the Mediterranean basin today. What is the panorama we are presented with? Indeed, a very dismal one: on the Northern coast of the Mediteranean, we find Serbs fighting against Croats in Croatia. However, at the same time, the two seem to have become virtual allies at the expense of the Muslims in Bosnia. This is a veritable example of how one can "conveniently" put to (good!) use the racial-religious excuse in order

to condone genocide. And the impotent UN peace-keeping forces are unable to act as the genocide goes on, mistrusted by aggressors and victims alike. In Cyprus, the divide is between Greek Cypriots (Christian!) and Turkish Cypriots (Muslim!). A problem that has lasted for two decades and which no one seems to be able to solve. In supposedly progressive Mediterranean countries in Western Europe, such as France and Italy, racial-religious tensions are continuously on the increase, with Le Pen's *Front National* and Bossi's *Lega Lombarda* rapidly gaining ground and playing against each other the insiders' (French, Italian = Christian!) and the outsiders' (North Africans, Somali, Eritrean = therefore, mainly Muslim) interests.

The panorama on the Southern coast of the Mediterranean looks even bleaker. And again religion seems to be playing an important role in the creation of the various divides in the region. A few examples: the Palestinian issue has been with us for nearly half a century now. All over the world people seem to agree that the Palestinians *do* have a right to live in their country alongside with Israel. And yet this obvious belief has not been turned into something concrete. The UN itself has come up with various resolutions binding Israel to return the lands occupied in 1967 and 1973 to their rightful owners. And yet, today, in 1993, these lands are still occupied territory. Despite some signs of goodwill on the part of the Rabin administration, the solution to the problems in this area seems a long way off. The Israelis' religion is Jewish; the religion of the Palestinians and the Arabs is Muslim. Apart from the many political issues and economic interests at stake, might this have something to do with the constant failure in reaching an honourable solution for all to the problems in the area?

In Lebanon, once the showpiece of the Middle East, where people of different creeds could live together in peace and harmony, the civil war amongst Christians and Muslims dragged on for years and years, and even now life is far from back to normal in this beleaguered country. The tensions supposedly stemming from religious roots are also to be found in a number of North African

Muslim countries. The economic blockade of Muslim Libya by the Christian Western world, as a consequence of the Lockerbie affair, has until now been totally unsuccessful in bringing any of the alleged culprits to book. On the contrary, it has only served to foster the Libyan people's siege mentality, to make them rally closer around their leaders and to strengthen their diffidence about anything Western and Christian.

In Algeria and Egypt, the attempts of governments (not at all democratic, by Western standards!) to emancipate and modernize the way of life and thinking in their respective countries has met with very strong resistance. This has meant the rise of Islamic fundamentalism as opposed to a moderate concept of Islam. A quick look at the Egyptian scene seems to have created this vicious triangle: the Government's attempt at reconciling Muslim tradition with a more open western (*ergo*, Christian) outlook has brought about a violent reaction on the part of the traditionalist faction (Islamic fundamentalism). In order to resist any form of traditional-mental-religious change, the fundamentalists have embarked on a series of terrorist attacks on Western (*ergo*, Christian) tourists visiting the country. As an obvious reaction, the Western-Christian tourists will start opting for other destinations. Basically, this implies that any attempt at bridging the multi-secular gap between Islam and Christianity is being totally thwarted. The culture deficit is always on the increase.

Increasing the Cultural Deficit

In my opinion, three recent political events of extreme importance have contributed to increasing the cultural deficit amongst different peoples. These are: the fall of the Communist regimes in 1989; the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait; and the resulting war in the Gulf in 1991. The *Cold War* took up the attention, energies and finances of the whole of Europe (and not only Europe!) for basically forty four years. The Cold War was putting up two giants, the USA and the USSR, one against the other. The two superpowers stood for totally

different values: democratic governments as opposed to totalitarian regimes; liberty as opposed to deprivation of liberty, a free market economy as opposed to a state controlled one and, if one were to stretch the argument a bit, Christianity vs. atheism. Basically, therefore, the Western-Christian world was rallying all its forces against the Eastern-Atheist-anti-Christian one!

With the total collapse of the Communist Block, the Western World might have found itself in a vacuum and, basically, at a loss in deciding what to do with itself. The traditional enemy did not exist any longer! How was it going to give vent to its warring instincts? And how were the weapons industries going to survive without the existence of belligerent countries, to whom weapons could be sold? The tyrant ruler of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, provided the solution to all these problems! The (hated!) Christian West had been providing him with all sorts of military weapons since the early eighties. His stock of armaments was solidly bolstered up by Western countries with the intention of acting as a bulwark against Iran's religious fundamentalists. This plan completely backfired on the Christian West since Iran remained a fundamentalist country whilst Saddam directed his aims against neighbouring Kuwait, with the excuse that the country's flourishing economy was a result of the Kuwaitis' friendship with the "corrupt" Christian West. Of course, the petroleum fields were at the bottom of it all! However, through his vile action, Saddam did in fact provide the West with a new enemy: no longer an atheistic, anti-God country, but an Islamic one.

By Western moral standards, Saddam is certainly to be considered a callous tyrant. However, the military mobilization of the Western world against Iraq certainly did not contribute to restoring peace and justice amongst the peoples of the world. On the contrary, it just created more suffering to one and all. What to a Western-Christian mentality might seem an obvious way of reacting in order to restore legality, is understood in a totally different way by a Muslim mentality. This cultural gap between the the Western and Eastern mentalities helped to further widen the democratic gap between the two. Playing on this possibility of different "cultural"

interpretations of the same actions, the despotic Iraqi leader started putting the Israeli occupation of Palestine on the same footing as his occupation of Kuwait: the Christian West had aided the Jewish Israelis to usurp the Palestinians of their homeland; and now the Muslim Saddam was paying the Christian West back by occupying its protege', Kuwait.

However, as a gesture of good will (sic!), Saddam was prepared to retreat from Kuwait if Israel acted likewise in the occupied lands.

Naturally, by any Western-Christian yardstick, there was absolutely no direct link between the Israeli and the Iraqi occupation. The two might have been parallel situations but certainly not convergent ones. Yet, what seemed to be an absurd and contorted logic to us Westerners, actually struck a forceful grip on the Arab peoples. Saddam had touched on an issue which seems to be getting more and more topical as time goes by: the question of double standards. His basic line of reasoning was this: "the UN resolutions say that Israel should give back the occupied countries. Israel does not abide by these resolutions and the UN does not do anything about it. Why should therefore the UN get at me if I do not abide by its resolutions?" Answer: "Because the UN discriminates against the Arab peoples". Though being undoubtedly in the wrong for what he had done in Kuwait, Saddam actually managed to rally a good part of the Muslim world closer to him.

The Question of Double Standards

As from the Gulf War onwards, the topic of double standards has gained in momentum. Was the UN acting consistently with its previous stance against Israel when it authorized the attack on Iraq? And did the involvement of the US tend to be a bit too high profile, thus obscuring the role of the UN? When the Gulf war was over, the Shiites in the Southern part of Iraq started pressing for their liberty, but they were brutally brushed aside by Saddam's forces. Why didn't the allied forces come to the rescue of the Shiites in a

speedy way? And why was Saddam allowed to continue with the manslaughter?

The Kurds in the North were also claiming a homeland for themselves. In this case, the inconsistent Saddam certainly did not follow the same line of reasoning he had come up with vis a' vis the Palestinian cause. On the contrary, he gave rise to one of the most brutal cases of genocide that humanity has ever been faced with. And yet, why did the Western world stay mum for such a long time and watch helplessly the butchering going on? Couldn't Saddam have been stopped immediately? Or was it because the allies, though firmly believing in the Kurds' quest, had to compensate Muslim Turkey for having aided the Western-Christian world against Saddam, and, therefore, could not actively take part in the formation of a Kurdish state?

All these question marks contributed not only to increasing the diffidence of the Muslim peoples towards the West but also to the stirring up of consciences in the progressive Western civilization itself. During the past two years people have even started questioning the role of the UN, with its gradual impotence in imposing peace, and the ever increasing policing role of the US. The conflict in Bosnia has definitely contributed to the general disillusionment. One asks: how is it possible that in such a small territory as ex-Yugoslavia, the UN and the EU have been totally unable to stop the escalation? One starts even doubting about a genuine political aim at stopping the conflict.

As regards consistency, Western-Christian consciences were stirred to the utmost during the last couple of months, when the Clinton administration first decided to bombard the Baghdad HQ of the Iraqi Secret Service in retaliation against the planned terrorist attempt in Kuwait against ex-President George Bush, and then the Mogadishu HQ of warmonger General Aidid. Of course, there are absolutely no doubts that despots like Saddam and Aidid have to be checked in some way. But this was not the most appropriate of ways: Saddam is still where he is and, with the killing of innocent civilians, he has managed to rally his people even closer against the

Western-Christian aggressor; Aidid remains tucked up in his hiding place comfortably directing operations, while Somali civilians die and others react brutally against UN peace-keeping troops. In this way, the American reaction has probably contributed in a strong manner to widen the cultural deficit between the Christian and the Muslim worlds. Even worse, these last raids on Baghdad and Mogadishu have further delegitimated the role of the UN in active peace-keeping. In fact, unlike other occasions, basically the US acted first and informed the UN later of its actions. The reactions amongst some of the higher echelons in world diplomacy were totally unprecedented: Perez de Cuellar, ex UN General Secretary, and the European Parliament condemned the Clinton administration for its raid on the Iraqi capital; Italy, an ally of the US, dissociated itself from the US raid on Mogadishu; the Vatican condemned the American authorities strongly on both counts.

What Can Be Done?

The scenario I have depicted is certainly an ominous one. But something must, and *can*, be done to restore confidence in the UN powers of mediation and of peaceful solution of conflicts. The important thing is restoring its somewhat charred image of universal credibility, which can only be built up again on the basis of a record of consistency. The US also has a big role to play in this confidence building exercise. The days of the Cold War are over; *the* great enemy *par excellence* does no longer exist and there would be no point in trying to create a new one to replace it. The US has an enviable record as regards civil, human and democratic rights. In these fields it has acted as a veritable example to other civilized societies; it would be a real pity if all the positive results that have come out of American society be forgotten or obscured because of certain hasty military interventions on the world scenes. The key word as opposed to *military* intervention should be *cultural* intervention.

The basic thing amongst people of different nationalities, beliefs, colour and cultures -though all living in the same Mediterranean basin- is understanding one another. It is not an easy task to achieve, but governments should make sure that their efforts are aimed in the right direction. While the Cold War was still on, the word Security seemed to be synonymous with militarization. Unfortunately, this outlook on the concept of security still seems to persist, so much so that such an important institution as the EU is quite intent on building up a Common Foreign and Security Policy based on the creation and strengthening of a military alliance, the Western European Union.

The presence of such a strong military alliance on the doorstep of the countries on the Southern shores of the Mediterranean sea would most probably be seen by these countries as a threat to their actual existence and would certainly contribute to increasing the diffidence already existent between the Northern-Christian and the Southern-Muslim cultures. What we need is the *defusing* of the already existing tensions and not *diffusing* them. It is obvious that the Northern Mediterranean countries are much stronger economically, politically and militarily than the Southern Mediterranean ones. In life, it is very easy for the strong to dominate and exploit the weak (*vide* our past colonial experience); it is much more difficult for the strong to shed off their superior tools and to put them at the disposal of the weak. And yet, this is the way, if we want to start bridging the multi-secular cultural gap and to build up confidence in one another.

It should, therefore, be much more feasible if the future European Union were to examine the recent resolution adopted by the Green Group in the European Parliament with regard to the establishment of a Common Foreign and Security Policy which is independent of existing military alliances, such as NATO and WEU. Such a policy would not only allow neutral countries within the EU to participate in it, but it would also do away with all the militaristic strings attached to it, thus instilling amongst Northern and Southern

Mediterranean countries an atmosphere of cooperation rather than of confrontation.

The next step would be an immediate halt to all exports of weapons and armaments, on the part of arms producing countries. Obviously, it would be very difficult for individual countries to give up abruptly this lucrative source of easy income. The implementation of such a measure should, therefore, be entrusted to the UN and the EU, who would have to make sure that member countries are not flouting the ban. Of course, a sudden prohibition of arms exports would cause quite a spate of unemployment in the Western World. Careful economic planning would have to go hand in hand with the implementation of such a ban, so that the arms industry be reconverted into other activities which would provide alternative job opportunities. In this respect, it is heartening to note that the European Parliament has decided to adopt in its 1993 Budget the *Konver Programme*. This is an original Green initiative proposing that the existing armaments industries should start reconversion into socially and ecologically compatible projects, without subjecting the hundreds of thousands of workers in this field to the logic of "Free Market Laws", i.e. basically by laying them off.

In 1991, the German Greens had pointed out that certain German companies had been co-producing arms with companies in other states and then exporting them to "hot" areas, including Iraq, Iran, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. This flow of lethal weapons from the Christian West to the Muslim world should be stopped immediately. The German Greens had, therefore, suggested that the ban on the export of armaments was, at the same time, to be accompanied by the termination of cooperation agreements with foreign partners for the development, production or marketing of armaments. This philosophy, I believe, should -and could- be adopted by all developed countries.

The drastic cuts in military spending envisaged by the above scenario would "liberate" huge amounts of money, which could be utilized for other purposes. What better way to start restoring mutual trust between North and South than by investing these sums

in poverty stricken areas, such as the Sub Saharian regions? Here, the climatic changes, caused by the industrialized world's insatiable thirst for affluence, are the chief source of rapid desertification. The effects of such desertification are disastrous and could veritably lead to a cyclic effect: poverty; wars; refugees; death; internal immigratory pressure on already overpopulated cities; the eradication of hundreds of thousands of people from their natural habitats and emigration to Europe in search of work; the increasing racial conflicts within Europe; the rise of various European political groups with a racist ideology; the danger of these autocratic racist political groups having access to power; the return to a *deja vue* situation where government policies are based on racial prejudices.

If the money forthcoming from the weapons industry could be deployed to create work opportunities in poverty stricken areas, the objectives reached would be twofold: the plague resulting from famine, death and unemployment would be on its way out and the immigratory pressure on Europe would be eased. It is imperative, however, that investment in the poorer economies must have behind it a different philosophy from the one actually adopted in the past: the Western industries must no longer look towards underdeveloped countries as a source of cheap labour and of further enrichment for the already rich investing company! This time, the investment has got to be eco-compatible and the benefits of such investment are to be reaped by the local inhabitants themselves. Only in this way can the economic deficit of the past be made up for in some sort of way.

Cultural Solutions

Disarmament alone is not enough to bring about a change for the better as regards Mediterranean and global security. What is also needed is a radical change in our cultural attitudes and mentality. We must realise and happily accept that the World, Europe in particular, is moving rapidly towards the formation of a multi-cultural society. Gone are the days when an ethnic majority was basically authorized to dominate over and exploit an ethnic

minority; gone are the days when the dominating cultural, literary, artistic and musical trends and tastes (usually pertaining to a minority) were imposed on the subjugated majority. It is now the era of *understanding* rather than of *domination*. In theory, the words "majority" and "minority" should disappear from our vocabulary. All cultures, whether they be major or minor, have a right to co-exist and to be treated with an equal amount of dignity.

Diversity must not be seen as a threat to our existence. On the contrary, the cross fertilisation of different cultures is to be considered a source of enrichment to one and all. The Mediterranean region is pullulating with myriads of cultural ferments. Until recently, we seem to have been taken up by the mania of trying to annihilate cultures other than ours. One must now turn the page over completely: we should certainly try and safeguard and treasure what has been traditionally ours for centuries, but we should also try and recuperate the patrimony of others and learn how to appreciate it and them, in the process. Harmonization is the key word. Therefore, *not* the assimilation of one culture by another but the blending of one into the other.

At this point, the tightening up of European external frontiers comes to mind. It is extremely sad to notice that while, on the one hand, the nine Schengen Treaty signatories are springing wide open the internal borders that separate them, on the other, Europe is sealing off most entrances to what has been termed the "Common European Home". The implementation of this measure is not only a blow to the possibility of establishing a reciprocal climate of confidence between peoples in the East/South and West/North, but is also resulting in being extremely unfair to all those refugees who are knocking at the doors of Europe to escape from poverty, hunger, wars and anti-democratic regimes. Admittedly, with the various interpretations given to the term "refugee" by different European countries in the past, much of the burden to shoulder the responsibility of offering a safe haven to the less fortunate members of humanity had fallen on Western Germany. After the unification, the Federal Republic of Germany changed its policy on the

significance of the word "refugee". And this meant even lesser access to refugees in Europe. It is about time that European governments shed off their egoistic attitudes vis a' vis acceptance of refugees. Each affluent European country should be allotted a yearly quota of refugees, in accordance with its size, population, economic resources, etc. Even little Malta should contribute to this exercise in confidence building by accepting to host permanently a token amount of refugees per annum. Bigger countries should then act accordingly and proportionately. It is only by *welcoming* rather than by *pushing away* refugees that Europe can effectively demonstrate that it is ready to accept and embrace the cultural backgrounds and beliefs of others.

There is still much to be done as regards the appreciation of reciprocal cultures. It is quite true that various European countries of the Mediterranean have cultural cooperation treaties with non-European Mediterranean countries. But, despite their indisputable validity, these treaties usually fail to render the average European citizen more conscious and aware of the lifestyle, tradition and beliefs of his non-European counterpart, and vice-versa. In my opinion, it is too much of a job to expect the cumbersome State bureaucratic apparatus to be able to bring the citizen closer to a foreign culture. It would be easier to do so on a regional or, even better, local basis. This is where local councils come in. In a few months' time Malta will be having its first local councils. One of the most urgent jobs I envisage for such councils is the creation of a programme for the appreciation of THE CULTURE OF OTHERS.

It might seem banal if I were to state that in a minuscule state like ours (316 sq. km.) quite a number of Maltese living in a certain area of our island know next to nothing about the lifestyle of fellow Maltese living in a different area. And yet, this is exactly the case. Ask some people of Sliema something about the lifestyle of the people of Zejtun, or vice-versa. I am sure that the only answer many would come up with would be based on a negative political perspective. Ask a city dweller from Valletta about his fellow citizens from the rural village of Munxar in Gozo, or vice-versa.

Despite the less than thirty or forty kms separating one place from the other, the culture gap would be abysmal. I can therefore already envisage the Sliema and Żejtun, Valletta and Munxar Local Councils organizing an exchange of their respective 4/5th Form Primary school children. For three whole days, a class and its teachers would be having their lessons, spending their free time, eating and sleeping in the school, playing fields and homes of a different part of Malta. This should enable the young students to experience and appreciate a different lifestyle and to understand the cultural background of fellow school children.

This confidence building exercise at micro level must be extended to macro level. Local councils in Mediterranean countries in the North and in the South should organise regular exchanges between school children from their early childhood. Admittedly, there are still many prejudices to overcome: for example, I am convinced that if they were given a choice on whether to send their offspring to live for a week in a family in Italy or in Libya, in France or in Egypt, the great majority of Maltese families would opt to send their children to the European countries. And yet, one must insist on this exchange exercise: if European children were brought up at a young age to understand the workings of a North African child's mentality and if a number of Iraqi children were brought up to understand the average American child's mentality, I am convinced that in the future there would be a lesser chance of seeing new Le Pens and Saddams.

Certainly, the above proposals might not seem easy to adopt. Many might probably accuse me of being a dreamer living in a world of fantasy rather than a pragmatic politician who can come up with concrete and practical propositions, easily adoptable within the parameters of International Law. I do have to accept this criticism since I am a bit of a dreamer living in a world of fantasy. But please allow me to keep on dreaming. I firmly believe that political and legalistic minds could do with a whiff of fantasy and imagination in the exercise of their profession. History has proved that the reciprocal trust, amongst all peoples, we would all like to see come

into being, certainly cannot be born out of solid armaments. Perhaps, vague dreams might just do the trick.

Observer Status for Malta at the 1996 IGC⁷

Two weeks ago, when addressing the assembly of the *European Popular Party* in Cannes, our Prime Minister insisted that Malta was moving closer to full European Union membership and that this process was now irreversible. To drive his point home, Dr Fenech Adami continued: "Not only has a motion been tabled in the European Parliament to grant Malta observer status at the 1996 Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC), but the motion actually states that Malta should also be given speaking rights"!

The Prime Minister's words at Cannes did us all at *Alternattiva Demokratika* really proud! In fact the requested observer status with speaking rights for Malta has come about thanks to AD's unstinted efforts during the past years, in conjunction with our European counterparts, the *Federation of European Green Parties* and the *Green Group in the European Parliament* (GGEP).

We have been given credit for our efforts by a part of the Maltese media, namely *L-Orizzont*, *The Times* and, in particular, *The Sunday Times*. Others did their best to hush up this bit of news.

I believe it would be interesting for readers to share the background details and backstage manoeuvres to this important resolution. It all started in February 1992. Bruno Boissiere, a French European Member of Parliament belonging to *Les Verts*, had just been elected Vice-President of the EU-Malta Joint Parliamentary Committee. We had occasion to meet briefly during the election campaign for a quick exchange of views. But things really started cracking in October of the same year.

While in Malta the debate on Europe was simplistically restricted to how quickly we would join on the PN's part (two years, according to Prof. De Marco!) or what a great disaster it would be for our island (the MLP viewpoint). Boissiere pointed out to us that the problem was exclusively an institutional one: before embarking

⁷ This paper was originally published as two articles in *The Sunday Times (Malta)* on July 9 and July 16, 1995.

on and completing the reform of its institutions, the EU was simply in no position to accept small states as new members.

We, therefore, decided to embark on a strategy whereby the Green Members of the European Parliament, with Boissiere and Alexander Langer in the forefront, would push from *within* the EU structures so that applicant members would have some sort of say in the restructuring of the Union, while AD would lobby for and plead Malta's cause among the European Greens. Thus, while the PN and MLP were straining themselves in a useless battle of futile promises on the one hand and Doomsday predictions on the other, AD simply stuck to the facts and got down to the nitty-gritty.

In January 1993, in a joint press conference, AD and Bruno Boissiere revealed that the *avis* on Malta would only be published in June 1993, after the holding of the referendum in Denmark. Come June 1993, and AD was proved to be right on the mark.

That month marked another milestone for AD on the international front: in Helsinki *Alternattiva Demokratika* was one of the 23 founder members of the *Federation of European Green Parties*. This put us on the same dignified footing as other environmental parties from much bigger countries in Europe, and therefore, our "political" weight within the European Greens was further enhanced.

While the latter part of 1993 was characterized by a concerted effort on the part of AD and the GGEP to create awareness on the status of applicant countries within the EU, the first half of 1994 instead witnessed a marked slump in these efforts, the reason being that all attention and energies in the European Union were taken up by the impending elections for the European Parliament, scheduled for May.

The European elections brought about a marked change in the geo-political fulcrum of the Greens: *Les Verts* from France were not re-elected. On the other hand, *Die Grünen* from Germany stormed into the Strasbourg assembly with twelve elected members. The risk was that the Green Group's attention would be totally diverted from the Mediterranean front to the Eastern one. Fortunately, this

was not to be. Palermo Mayor Leoluca Orlando was elected "Green" Vice-President of the new Malta-EU Joint Parliamentary Committee. His written pledge to AD was "*lavorare per avere piu' Mediterraneo in Europa e piu' Europa nel Mediterraneo*". Irish MP Nuala Ahern, another islander coming from a "poorish", "southern" economy, was nominated substitute "Green" representative on this committee.

The final combined Green and *Alternattiva* onslaught infavour of Malta's observer status at the IGC started at the beginning of 1995. In January, Socialist MEP Bernie Malone was sent over to prepare her report on Malta. The Maltese Foreign Ministry did not include AD among the constituted bodies that were to meet Malone. Following my written representation to the authorities on this unfortunate (sic!) exclusion, in mid-March AD was included by the EU Directorate among the interlocutors of *Forza Europa's* astronaut MEP Franco Malerba. Wenzu Mintoff and I put forward AD's "European" ideas.

At the end of March I attended a two-day Green Hearing on the 1996 Inter-Governmental Conference at the European Parliament in Brussels. At this assembly I put forward AD's proposal on observer status for Malta with speaking rights at the IGC. While at the European Parliament, Paolo Bergamaschi of the Green Group Bureau handed me the freshly published draft report on Malta by Bernie Malone. A very positive report indeed, but with no mention of observer status for Malta during the whole institutional process.

In April, Belgian Green MEP Magda Alvoet presented the Green-*Alternattiva* suggestions at a meeting of the European Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs. At the end of the same month, during another meeting in Floriana, Socialist MEP Enrique Baron Crespo confirmed to Wenzu Mintoff and myself that these suggestions had received favourable comments from within the Committee. We were approaching the final countdown!

At the beginning of June, I attended the Council meeting of the Federation of European Green parties in Budapest. The proposal that all applicant countries should be granted observer status with

Luckily for Malta, the majority of the Euro-parliamentarians present in Strasbourg had already given vent to their baser instincts earlier on Tuesday morning, when they booed French President Jacques Chirac (rightly so!) to their hearts' content, as he reported on France's six-month presidency of the Union. As myriads of "atomic" mushrooms, with the word NON daubed on them, started sprouting up all over the Parliamentary chamber, German green Frieder Otto Wolf called Chirac a "neo-Gaullist Rambo", while Anglo-Maltese Socialist Pauline Green described Chirac's decision to resume nuclear testing as "an environmental and human rights crime".

Having given vent to all their wrath, the Euro-parliamentarians must have decided to get back to being on their best behaviour and to do their good deed for the day. In fact, during the two-day debate on Malta's application, most of the comments by the Parliamentarians who intervened in the discussion were positive, irrespective of their political orientation.

Irish Socialist Bernie Malone started off by presenting quite a rosy picture of Malta, despite what she termed "the language problem" (very similar to the situation of Gaelic)! Italian Berlusconi astronaut Franco Malerba, an extremely intelligent and down-to-earth person with whom I was privileged to discuss politics at AD's offices, despite having on another occasion shown concern about Malta's ties with Libya, stressed that the Maltese economy is really booming and that it was time for firm commitments between the EU and Malta.

Spanish Socialist Maria Izquierdo turned Malerba's Libyan "concern" into a positive asset: "Malta would make a valuable contribution to the Euro-Mediterranean dimension of the EU due to its exceptional relationship with Arab states, especially Libya", she insisted.

French Radical Noel Mamere on the one hand pointed out the delicate situation concerning Malta's neutrality status. But Italian Renzo Imbeni, ex-Communist mayor of Bologna, retorted: "As far

speaking rights at the IGC was unanimously accepted and adopted in the final communique of the council meeting. Two days later Alexander Langer, co-Chairperson of the GGEP, tabled this Green amendment to the Bernie Malone report on Malta, which was to be discussed by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the EP, chaired by Frenchman Alain Lamassour, a couple of weeks later. On June 21, the Foreign Affairs Committee, made up of all parties represented in the EP accepted the Green-AD amendment, and the motion was put to a successful vote.

Where do we go from here? This week the Malone Report will be put before the fully convened European Parliament during the Strasbourg session. Since all political formations voted for the motion at the Committee stage, there is no doubt that the European Parliament will do likewise. One only hopes there will be no *volte-face* from the prominent Socialist group, the largest group in the EP.

* * *

Last Wednesday in Strasbourg, after a two day debate on Malta, the European Parliament approved the Bernie Malone report, which recommended that Malta's accession would be beneficial to the EU. The crux of the issue was whether Malta, together with Cyprus, should be allowed to attend the 1996 Inter-governmental Conference (IGC) with speaking rights, an amendment tabled by the GGEP, after consultations with *Alternattiva Demokratika*.

While, on the one hand, Cyprus fell victim to the Socialist amendment to the Green-AD proposal, on the other hand, Malta, forewarned a week in advance by AD of the European Socialists' prospected U-turn, managed to split up the Socialist vote and, with 252 votes in favour and 133 votes against, it was recommended that our country should be given observer status with speaking rights at next year's IGC.

The Nationalist Party has defined AD's achievement for Malta a "historic" step for our country.

as neutrality is concerned, I am sure that nobody in the Mediterranean area can feel threatened by this".

On the other hand, Mamere declared that "Malta has moved very fast in its reforms. But, while Malta is prepared, I am not sure if the Union is prepared"! At this moment, I was asking myself whether -being so advanced- it should have actually been the Maltese Parliament to hold a debate on whether the 15 members of the EU were to be allowed to take part in the IGC ... with speaking rights!

As for the European Popular Party MEPs, both Italian Gerardo Bianco and German Maren Gunther agreed that Malta had been waiting for too long and did not deserve such treatment. "The EU should not hesitate further *vis a' vis* Malta's application", they concluded. But then, the EPP is the *Partit Nazzjonalista's* natural ideological ally. If they don't say such things, who would?

All in all, even Commissioner Hans Van den Broek had a very positive opinion to voice about our country. But, beware: Van den Broek stated that two EU countries still have some reservations about Malta's application. It is up to Maltese diplomacy to get cracking, identify the two and try and find out what their reservations are.

As things stand, just one single vote is enough to block a new country's accession to the Union.

The only real discordant note in this overall symphony of praise for Malta came from British Socialist Gary Titley. He stated that Malta had economic difficulties and that neutrality was another problem. To conclude his "eulogy" of our island-state, he stated: "The issue of observership and speaking rights at the IGC is total nonsense"! Having heard Dr George Vella and Dr Alfred Sant over the past week-end state that "for the MLP the observership issue is immaterial, a useless palliative"; "nor are we interested whether Malta is given such speaking rights or not", I would strongly recommend Gary Titley for the post of "honorary" leader of the Malta labour Party!

Amidst this cacophony of voices, what stood out was the numbed silence coming from the area of the 23-strong Green Group in the

EP, basically the people who, together with *Alternattiva Demokratika*, devised, worked out and successfully completed this "dream" vote for Malta.

A bouquet of flowers marked the seat occupied by the late lamented chairperson of the Green Group, Alexander Langer. Alex had pushed the amendment through the Committee stage, despite the resistance shown by the European Socialists. On Wednesday Alex was not in Strasbourg to vote. The power of his mind and spirit was however there to guide the parliamentarians as they proceeded to push the button on the voting switchboard. And no Titley on this earth could break the wisdom of such a man.

Thank you, Alex for what you have done for Malta. I sincerely hope that in some way my country will one day be able to give you official recognition and credit for all your help.

* * *

When I look back over the past three years, at the endless conversations with Bruno Boissiere on tactics and strategies, I can only derive a sense of great satisfaction. The discussions, normally held over a plate of Mediterranean pasta and a bottle of Maltese wine (distilled from European grapes!) often developed from a twosome debate into a wider one, with Wenzu Mintoff, Saviour Balzan, Stephen Cachia, Alex Langer, Paolo Bergamaschi and, occasionally, Toni Abela, joining in. *A posteriori*, I must admit that it was all really worth it. The end result makes involvement in politics really worthwhile.

During the past six years or so, AD has been defined in various belittling ways by its political adversaries: "splinter group", "*nies bla direzzjoni politika*", "*erbat iqtates*", among other things. On the other hand, the 100-plus-year-old PN boasts of a LM50,000 salaried permanent representative in Brussels, while the 75-year-old MLP is affiliated to the largest Parliamentary group in the EP, the Socialist Group.

If in 1996 Malta will be airing its views at the IGC, like it or not, it will be doing so thanks to the "*erbat iqtates*" of *Alternattiva Demokratika*