

## Letter from Europe

### How France Saved Europe for Civilization – Part II Or the three bitter pills that it took to do it

*Eric Britton, EcoPlan International, Paris, Friday, August 12, 2005*

Brrng. Brrrng. O dear, that phone again. Hello.

Monsieur Britton. Un instant, s'il vous plait. Le Président de la République wishes to speak to you.

And then, after a short wait: Hello Eric. This is Jacques Chirac.

Monsieur le Président, honoré.

No, no Eric. Let's speak English like we always do.

Oui , Monsieur le Président.

No, I am serious. I finally got down to reading that piece you wrote on the morning after that disastrous Referendum in May, you know the one where you talk about how "Fifteen Million Frenchmen Can't be Wrong, and How France is Saving Europe for Civilization" (I loved it). <sup>1</sup>And it gives me an idea.

Thank you for the kind words, Sire. But how can I help?

Well, you seem to have some ideas about how France can save Europe. And of course if we can do that in a way that the world can see and appreciate, well then we can get back into a strong leadership position that France deserves and must have. After all, we invented Europe, n'est-ce pas?

That makes sense to me, Mr. President.

Bien, but now tell me how we can do it.

If fact, Mr. President, I have been giving this considerable thought and had indeed come up with a three-point high profile policy package for France to take the lead once again. But then when I discussed it with all my French friends and colleagues they all told me – one hundred percent to the man, woman and household pet – that my plan was, excuse my French, "impossible".

But you know Eric that "l'impossible n'est pas français". So tell me.

Do I have to?

Yes. And by the way my staff tells me that your residential permit needs to be renewed shortly, and you know . . .

Hmm. I see, Well let's take it one at a time. There are three parts in all. I call them the three bitter pills.

To get us going, there is no doubt in my mind that the first thing you can do, that you need to do, to regain your leadership in Europe, is to make and indeed insist on about as hard a proposal as you can imagine.

Mais non, cher ami. What might that be?

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<sup>1</sup><http://the-commons.blogspot.com/2005/06/010605-how-in-2005-french-saved-europe.html>

Let me start with the good news. That the government of France approach the twenty five members of the Union with the proposal that a single language be used for all European affairs and communications as of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006. In this way there would be enormous savings in translation and interpretation costs, and among other things the more than one hundred million euros that it presently costs the European taxpayer can be directly recycled into the educational systems of al countries in the Union for the next five years to help manage this transition.

What a wonderful proposal, mon excellent ami. And indeed I have always thought that the language of France, the language of Molière, the language of diplomacy, literature, and of course love, should be the lingua franca of the world.

Almost, Mr. President. But now the pill.

Almost? Pill? What do you mean, mon excellent ami?

Mr. President, what I am suggesting is that your government should propose that the language of Europe should be English.

(Ghastly silence on the other end.)

May I go on to the second of my proposals?

(Ghastly silence on the other end.)

The second pillar of the winning French strategy is to propose that all the institutions of Europe be located in a single place. And that place must, for now at least, be Brussels.

Sob.

Once again there will be enormous savings since as you know at present the circus of the European caravan ever schlepping between Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg is horrendously costly, and as well serves as a major source of distraction for those who are charged with the job of making Europe work.

Strasbourg too? What else is left.

Mr. President, this leads us to the third and final pillar of your leadership strategy: agricultural subsidies.

(Again silence, broken only by a long slow groan.)

Mais, Britton, I fear to hear what you have to propose on this.

And rightly so Mr. P., since the proposal is to cut all agricultural subsidies across the board by 50% starting on 1 January 2006. And once again, these funds are to be redirected into basic education, public health, simplification of administration, and historical levels of support for the full and rapid integration of communities and groups that are at present cut off from the mainstream of European society, well-being and solidarity. Your "fracture sociale" Monsieur le Président.

Is that all? So, you are asking us to give up our language, our European capital, and our precious agricultural subsidies. What a terrible cost. And what do we get in return for these sacrifices, Monsieur.

Simple, Mr. President. You save Europe for civilization.

Click.

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*Happy Ending:*

Dateline: Paris, Monday, 7 May 2007.

By Eric Britton, Foreign correspondent,

## **Chirac reelected for historic third term**

Monsieur Jacques Chirac was yesterday overwhelming reelected with a historic majority for a third term as President of the French Republic.

Analysts agree that the reason for his success was his path-breaking leadership role in single handedly breaking through the political and economic impasses that were strangling the European construction with his totally unexpected tri-partite proposals of September 2005 that served to reshape the institutions of Europe forever.

His totally unexpected proposals for restructuring could only have come from a French leader, and when they were presented were immediately accepted by all the remaining members of the Union leading to a new phase of Europe.

One result of his proposals was to create a new economic profile for the Union has permitted massive investments in education, retraining, administrative reforms and related social projects in France, which have led to growth rate of close to five percent and massive reductions in unemployment.

Indeed, it can truthfully be said that France, and President Chirac, saved Europe for civilization.

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