

Transcription of the interview with Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul (Paris, 26 September 2012)

Caption: Transcription of the Interview with Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul, Secretary-General of the 'Notre Europe' think tank from 2004 to 2011 and political analyst for the European Commission Representation in France since 2011, carried out by the Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe (CVCE) on 26 September 2012 in Paris. Conducted by François Lafond, Managing Director of EuropaNova, the interview particularly focuses on the following aspects of the life of Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa: his personality, his role as Chairman of Notre Europe from 2005 to 2010 and his work as Italian Minister for the Economy and Finance from 2006 to 2008

Source: Interview de Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul / GAËTANE RICARD-NIHOUL, François Lafond, prise de vue: Alexandre Germain.- Paris: CVCE [Prod.], 26.09.2012. CVCE, Sanem. - VIDEO (00:35:28, Couleur, Son original).

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URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/transcription_of_the_interview_with_gaetane_ricard_nihoul_paris_26_september_2012-en-a653e93d-834a-40b2-9082-b4386a475563.html



Last updated: 05/07/2016

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I. Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa's work as Chairman of the 'Notre Europe' think tank

[François Lafond] Gaëtane, can you remember when you heard about Tommaso's death, what your thoughts were? Where were you and what effect did it have on you?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] I think it was a Sunday or at any rate at the weekend, because I was at home, in a family setting and not at all a professional one, which goes to show that you are never prepared for that kind of news. The setting, too, was a bit special. It was a great shock, I think everyone was very shocked because there was no forewarning of his sudden death and one felt that someone who was, how can I put it, at the peak of everything he had done in his life, I mean all of a sudden all the skills he had amassed, his whole vision was becoming extraordinarily useful and vital — I think we really can use that word — in the crisis. He was obviously very much in demand, and that is very probably, in fact, why he had that problem because he had perhaps been rather overdoing things.

[François Lafond] Well, let us try now, with you, to look at Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa's work in the Notre Europe think tank. You came to Notre Europe in April 2004, if I'm not mistaken. You were general secretary, and the chairman at the time was Pascal Lamy, then, in 2005, so slightly later, Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa took on the chairmanship of Notre Europe. What are your memories of how that came about, the transition, I mean — you were right at the heart of the structure — what were your impressions when he was appointed and when he arrived, and how did it happen?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] Well, it is true that in a short time I did indeed get to know three chairmen, because when I arrived Mr Delors was still chairman of Notre Europe. Mr Pascal Lamy arrived shortly afterwards. The decision on that had already been taken, in fact, so I took no part in the decision. As regards Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa, on the other hand, I was there for that. To begin with I think it was on a proposal from Pascal Lamy, but of course it was immediately seconded by Jacques Delors, as he was very fond of him. It was quite easy, in fact, because there were not many people who could actually lay claim to the spirit of Jacques Delors' vision, his action. With Pascal Lamy, that created no difficulties with anyone, of course, he had been the head of his private office for a long time, and Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa as well. What I mean is there was an immediate consensus in the governing bodies of Notre Europe that he would be welcomed with open arms. That's how it was. I think he himself hesitated because he had decided to ease off, to do fewer things and so on, and then it was while talking to Pascal Lamy, to the team, to me too — he told me — that he had been won round to my way of seeing things, that there you are, he wanted to have a try at taking the job on.

[François Lafond] So how did that happen exactly? Did he come once, twice, three times a week?

Was he there all the time? Because he had lived in Germany before, he still had ties in Italy, so how did it work in practical terms?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] He divided his private life between Italy and France, which made things a little easier as regards his being in Paris. So each time he came to Paris, I think that must have been something like — it varied over time — sometimes he was able to come three times a month, but more often it was once or twice. As a matter of course, obviously, he used to drop in at Notre Europe and he tried to see me, but also to see the people in the team. He was, after all, someone who really loved taking an interest in what everyone at Notre Europe was doing.

[François Lafond] So I know there were working meetings at Notre Europe fairly regularly, every Monday or on other days. Did he take part in those meetings, did he ever come to them, what actually used to happen?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] Yes, yes, he did, so there was a meeting, in fact I think there still is now, every Monday lunchtime, a meeting of the general team, so when he was around on a Monday, obviously he would be there, and it was always very pleasant because one of the skills he had was of really adding depth to what Notre Europe was doing, being able to put it in perspective, supply a vision, and so he really added value at those team meetings because all of a sudden people would come out of them saying: ‘Now I know why I’m doing that and I know it’s part of a wider project.’

[François Lafond] So he would speak during the meetings?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] He used to speak. Actually, it used to make us laugh because he would sometimes complain that they were too long, and then when he came he would speak for quite a long time. So I used to tease him a bit about that because ... and then he would tell us all about what he was doing outside as well, which was really interesting for us as he was involved in quite an impressive number of activities.

[François Lafond] And in terms of giving direction to the work, did he have special requests, were there particular subjects on which he liked to work or did he ask certain people to draw up notes on specific things?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] I used to find that he would strike a very good balance between observing that to start with he was not there for 100 % of the time, which meant that he had to let the team get on with it, let the general secretary find his or her own way of proceeding and own ideas, but from time to time he did used to come to us with a specific idea that he wanted to work on bit by bit, that used to go into our programme planning and we would make a full-scale project out of it. That was obviously the case with anything concerning the euro, but he also gave a boost to a project, for example, about the US–EU relationship, you see. So he did have ideas, but he didn’t try to exert an influence on everything. He had a few projects which were dear to him and which he tried to put forward and put into the general programme, and then, of course, he used to look at the programme which would emerge from our collective thinking and give his opinion on it as a whole. But he really was someone who trusted people. It was a relationship of trust.

[François Lafond] Within Notre Europe there was a management board, there was a European Steering Committee, a steering council with major European figures on it, generally speaking appointed by Jacques Delors when he was chairman. So by and large they were friends, people who had the faith, the same faith or the same European vision as he had. How did that work, that is to say what part did Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa play, what stance did he adopt in that inner sanctum, because perhaps he did have to attend two or three meetings of the European Steering Committee, and how

did that function — to give us some idea of the relations between Jacques Delors and Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] Well, Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa was, I think ... he was there right at the start of the committee, in fact, of that European Steering Committee, not on the Board of Directors but on the committee, and ... well, I wasn't there at the beginnings of Notre Europe, but from what I was able to see, he had always been a driving force on the steering committee. It was he, for example, who was behind the proposal we often hear talked about but which dates from 1999, that the major European political families should put forward a candidate for the presidency of the Commission to lend weight to the European elections, for example. He was the one who drew up the paper and presented it before the steering committee. So he was always a driving force and, in fact, after the meetings of the Board of Directors, well, it was he who really prepared them, and as for the meetings of the steering committee, they were prepared, I would say, perhaps in a triangular way between Mr Delors, him and me, and then of course the team, where we would reach an agreed position, in fact. We would reach a three-way agreement on a draft agenda. So what really happened was that Mr Delors remained as the chairman of the steering committee, he used to consult, he used to work hand in hand with the chairman of the Board of Directors of Notre Europe, who was Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa, and at the member level too. There were the original members, who were in fact closer to Jacques Delors, and then there were some members who came afterwards or sometimes at the suggestion of Tommaso.

[François Lafond] Who, for instance?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] I can't recall a specific example, but I do know, for instance, that he put forward the name of an Italian political figure, Piero Fassino, who did come a few times. I haven't any other specific examples in mind, but he used to have ideas and, of course, if Mr Delors was in the least hesitant, he wouldn't impose them, but he used to make a real contribution.

[François Lafond] I see. One characteristic of Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa is that he wrote a lot too. He wrote books, he wrote articles and other things. Did you yourself ever see him writing? What was that like?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] I never saw him write at Notre Europe, but we did ... well, I looked over pieces of writing which he sent me for [my] opinion or, the other way round, things I used to write and which he had me correct in one way or another. He needed ... already, I think, he was someone who really had a need of it and he was a pretty good writer. So he used to mull over his drafts of written pieces quite a lot, I believe. I have the impression he gave a great deal of thought to them and he was someone who was very painstaking in his writing. He didn't just sit down and write any old thing. I think he had to get into the right state for writing; you felt when you read a text of his that it had been thought out, that before writing it he had put in work reading, researching, which meant that he had an academic style rather than a journalistic style.

[François Lafond] And as and when he altered other people's writing, what was that like? Was his writing illegible, was it clear or was it tortuous? I do know of famous people whose writing is fairly difficult to read.

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] No, not at all, I used to really like his way of writing. Now there are some who may like it less because he was rather given to writing perhaps rather long sentences — that's what I was saying, it was less journalistic — but I myself am very fond of it, it's just a matter of taste. No, as far as texts by other people were concerned, his style was more to ring up with oral comments

to tell us to make changes ourselves rather than making changes directly on the text himself. And he was ... well, what I mean is he was someone who had a sense of priorities, so that he wouldn't spend hours revising a text by someone else, since it was a text by someone else, you see, and he would trust the person concerned and it was up to him or her to take responsibility for what they had written. So he did actually allow the researchers at Notre Europe a great deal of freedom.

[François Lafond] Did you ever manage to grasp what he thought was the point of a think tank taking part in the public discourse, especially as regards European matters, in other words how did he feel a think tank or a political thinking panel like Notre Europe was useful? As a means of stimulating discussion? Or in what way?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] I think he really had a faultless vision of what Notre Europe was striving to be, in the sense that he thought that what we could offer, obviously, was the know-how and the thinking that many men and women in public life simply do not have the time to put in. Stopping, in other words, and standing back slightly when the decision-makers are under pressure to act, and also never losing sight of the militant aspect, in other words that we were not doing it just for the research as an end in itself but because we wanted an idea to be fed into the public discourse and make its way. So there you are, it was really that combination of rigour and analysis and research which we had to take the time to do properly and seriously, and at the same time bearing in mind that we weren't doing it merely for the pleasure of research but also because we wanted it to end up influencing the course of events.

[François Lafond] If you had to evaluate the weight and the influence that Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa exerted on Notre Europe, still bearing in mind a possible comparison with the record of previous chairmen, what words would spring to mind?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] The influence he had on ...

[François Lafond] ... Notre Europe and the people working at Notre Europe, as you were a group of researchers, there were different personalities even within Notre Europe, so what is left of it, in fact?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] Well, I have already talked about how he really gave a meaning to what we were doing. He gave us a vision, a global outlook whose effect was that we really felt we were involved in a collective enterprise. He listened to the researchers very carefully, in other words, as I said, he trusted them, he allowed them independence, which boosted confidence in the team, and then there was an aspect which was perhaps rather less, how shall I put it, less visible outside, of course, but Notre Europe was at a stage where it was absolutely vital for it to diversify its sources of funding and develop. So he was the one responsible for setting up a committee of guarantors — a 'Board of Trustees' in English — on which he really wanted there to be people, even prominent people, who were committed to ensuring Notre Europe's long-term survival, to making sure it was also financially viable and wouldn't just rest on whatever laurels it might have won in the past, that it should always be on the lookout for developments, and that Board of Trustees, as it was defined, meant continued financing but it was also the idea of a certain continuity in the Notre Europe project as originally dreamed up by Jacques Delors. It meant remaining true to the values which Jacques Delors had wanted to breathe into the project and to which he too was attached.

II. Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa and his work at the Italian Ministry of the Economy and Finance

[François Lafond] Another thing which surprises me a great deal, as he did hold senior positions in the civil service, he was a Director-General at the European Commission, he was a banker. Was he a man of the left?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] [Laughter] He was in the Prodi government, as Minister for Finance. Now when people asked him, he didn't like putting himself into a political box. He used to say that was first and foremost in the service of the nation and his ideas, and so he did not have ... he wasn't sectarian, I mean, he would not have wanted to be put in a box that he couldn't get out of. But I think that he did indeed have ... well, he was closest to the social-democratic movement, perhaps, in Italy, and particularly Prodi. But truly he was ... it was firstly a matter of his beliefs, his ideas, and he used to talk to any and everyone, whichever side they were on.

[François Lafond] Did he have people in to see him at Notre Europe?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] Politicians?

[François Lafond] Yes.

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] I think his political activity was more focused on Italy and Notre Europe, it was more ... Yes, he did ask people in to see him, but really as part of his European militancy work, rather than political work in the ideological sense of the term.

[François Lafond] Then there was the period when he was a minister in the Prodi government, for two years — two years that were fairly complicated, I imagine, as he was in Rome and at the same time went on being chairman of Notre Europe — so how did that work? Did there have to be a change in the relationship?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] Yes, of course. Well, the question did come up, of course, of whether we should replace him. Afterwards, little by little, in fact, we realised that, looking beyond Pascal Lamy and Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa, it was harder for us to identify anyone on whom there could be a full consensus. There was also the fact, you see, that the government no longer seemed to be very stable in terms of staying power, so we never knew when his tasks there would end. So I think there was to some extent this uncertainty which led, de facto, to his staying on as chairman of the board, and the board wanted him to stay on. He was actually much less in evidence, but he relied on me a great deal during that period and what I knew was that he was on the end of the line, you see. If I really had a problem, he would sort out a way of replying to me, either by telephone or by email. So he was much less in evidence physically, but he was in evidence as moral support and as someone you could refer to.

[François Lafond] And was he the one who was in direct touch with you himself, or was it someone from his office?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] No, no, it tended to be him. I was in touch with his office a little, but hardly at all.

[François Lafond] I would like to go back for a couple of minutes to the time when he was part of the Romano Prodi government as Minister for Finance. How did you regard his political experience? What I mean is how did you assess the fact ... — since you must, after all, have had to keep track of what he was doing indirectly, either through the French press or even the English-speaking press, or the Italian press — I mean, what was your view of what he did; did you say to yourself: 'He shouldn't have gone there' or 'He was right to do that' or ... what did you actually think of that political experience, given that it added yet another dimension to the scope of his action?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] Yes, yes, it did, but in the end it was more a parenthesis than ... He himself, out of modesty, I believe, used to say that it was more of an accident than anything else, but there you are ... Everyone thought he had done the right thing in saying yes. I don't think anyone has ever asked that question, in the context of Italy, or of Europe, but there you are ... Everybody thought he really did have something to offer and he did ... What was striking was to see that basically it didn't change him and he didn't really ... although you really do see people change a lot when they take on a ministerial post, you didn't have the impression that that had changed him, but for the fact that the pace of things probably took him by surprise and the fact that he no longer had the time he liked to take to think things over, to centre himself, to stand back; I do think that actually did rather shock him, but overall he remained faithful to what he was and faithful, well, he had a mission he had set himself and he was not going to be influenced by external events, there you are, he knew what he was doing, he wasn't, I think, sensitive to criticism or to ... Well, he had his sights set, that was the impression he gave — and I do think he was actually appreciated for his efficacy and rigour. I wasn't in Italy after that, so I didn't see all the details of his work, but that was the impression one had from the outside.

III. The personality of Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa

[François Lafond] How would you define the personality of Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa — what adjectives or descriptive terms spring to mind when you have to explain to someone who never met him what Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa was like?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] To start with his personality, he was a real gentleman in the Italian manner, one might say, very level-headed, very considerate, that's how you might describe the personality, the man. Then, as ... in his professional dealings, he was someone ... I don't think I have ever come across that combination in anyone else, I mean that at one and the same time he combined great know-how, wide experience of European integration, both theoretical and practical, and he had really held on, heart and soul, to a very strong European ideal, which in some people who have worked with the institutions, etc. can fade with time, whereas with him it had remained very much alive, very strong, really like the early activists, I would say, and so he was good at getting ideas moving, getting things through which had seemed impossible to begin with but which little by little became possible precisely because he backed up ideas that were rather idealistic with a high degree of skill. And so people listened to him. That was it, and he had the ear of a number of people who appreciated his skills and therefore also listened to the militant, the more militant side of his proposals.

And he was a very determined kind of person. What I mean is, his great characteristic was that big smile he used to give whenever you saw him, even in difficult times, even at the tensest moments, and that was that mixture of kindness and determination which radiated from that smile, and the determination really was a fairly important part of his personality.

[François Lafond] You mentioned his very strong European ideals. What fed them, what did those ideals feed on, because there were definitely times when he had doubts, and how did he overcome those doubts, in your opinion?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] I think he was a man of great culture. He was someone who read a lot, who was fairly learned, so he had the feeling that his vision and his convictions were very solidly

anchored, so that they weren't brushed aside as you might say with the back of the hand by temporary difficulties. He had a sense of history, both of historical depth and of prospects for the future. So he saw difficulties as something rather ephemeral in the end and something which, taking the long-term view, would look like small obstacles, not major difficulties, and that, I think, was what really gave him that determination, and he was greatly influenced afterwards, I think, by the long tradition of the great Italian federalists. He was ... the legacy of Spinelli, of course, was a fairly large part of his make-up. So there too he had that strength of relying for support, of referring to the work done by idealists which had had practical results, so he also thought of himself as the heir to that tradition.

[François Lafond] Was he a person of whom you could say that he was ambitious, not necessarily for himself, but because he had an ambition — well, you said ... you mentioned Europe — but was he an ambitious type of person?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] He was ambitious for his ideas. Yes, I would say that he really was someone ... I do not think he had any personal ambition. I think that if he did, it was more about getting his ideas taken up. He knew that to get his ideas taken up, at certain times in his career, he had to be in key posts and influential positions. Otherwise you get left behind. I think, though, that his driving force was really that. It wasn't a sort of ego trip, it was about doing something rather than being someone.

[François Lafond] You have already mentioned it earlier, but I would like to be quite sure I have understood what you meant: there are two books which he ... the last two books or two important books he wrote were *Europa, forza gentile* — which was in 2001 — and the second title, the second book, was *Europa, una pazienza attiva*. My question is this: were this 'gentle strength' and 'active patience' not just words which he used for Europe but which applied to him himself, to the very personality of the man?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] Oh yes! 'Gentle strength', yes, I think that suits him really well, in the sense that he was someone who came across as being someone very strong and, deep down, very sure of himself, and someone who knew where he was going, what he was doing and, at the same time, conveying a consideration for others, a willingness to listen and a kindness — that is the right word — which was very characteristic, yes.

[François Lafond] Yet there is a mystery about Padoa-Schioppa: I can't work out what, apart from the building of Europe, was the man's motivation, his basic motivation, in other words what was it that stirred him to action, what was the driving force behind all that? Curiosity, ambition, the public good?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] The public good, I think, was a very important factor in the choices he made in his career. He used to explain it ... he once gave an address at his old school — he was at the Bocconi — in which he explained that he had once given it thought and it was obvious to him that public service was something that he had to be involved in. So it was really a choice which guided his whole professional career. A sense of history, as I was also saying, I think he was a very deep person who wanted to be useful and useful in a way which would go deep down, which would be genuine, not just a flash in the pan. He wanted, that is, to have an influence on the major options taken in public affairs and, in particular, in the building of Europe, and he was also someone who seemed to be quite serene and quite philosophical in his private affairs, which he talked about very little, although he sometimes gave us advice on our private lives, and he always came across to me as someone who was not in the least tortured, he knew what was what, he had grasped a great many things about the

meaning of life, at any rate that was the impression he used to give.

[François Lafond] So there was a kind of wisdom.

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] A kind of wisdom, yes.

[François Lafond] And as regards the advice? About what kind of thing ...?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] [Laughter] Well, it was rather more personal advice, I would say, but ... I can't really think of any specific examples, but it is true that, given as it was in that slightly Italian accent and with that smile, it was really very effective.

[François Lafond] Gaëtane, you have had the good fortune to work with some rather exceptional people, as I was saying: Jacques Delors, Pascal Lamy, Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa. Before that, you worked with a Belgian minister. When you look at the wider European scene nowadays, where are the future Tommaso Padoa-Schioppas?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] [Laughter] There's one part of me that worries about not seeing any. At the same time, I think there are still loads of people who are full of ideals and who have a real sense of public affairs and who really believe in European integration. I would be inclined to think that the personalities, what has changed a great deal is the context, meaning that at one and the same time ... We have a generation in power which in a sense falls between two stools, in other words not only did they not experience the war, they haven't necessarily experienced Europe as something that has to exist either, Erasmus ... So it may perhaps be a generation which has a less firm grasp of the point of European integration. At any event that is the more reassuring analysis of it; the other is that ... The main line of thinking which is likely at first sight to last is the world of communications we find ourselves in today, which is nothing like the world in which Jacques Delors or even Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa lived, meaning that we are in the realm of the instantaneous, of public opinion which people consult on anything and everything. I think that it does have its usefulness, because I think we have realised that there was a problem of making a connection between the European project and ordinary members of the public. That is important, we can't go on moving forward with blinkers on as far as that is concerned, but at the same time men and women in politics have much less opportunity of standing back, and especially of verbalising that need to stand back, that's what I mean. They might perhaps want to do it, but they no longer have a way of communicating to ordinary people that need which, as I was saying, we feel, to look at the meaning of history rather than at the immediate reality and the demands of, and the response to, our immediate needs.

[François Lafond] What did he have, a BlackBerry or an iPhone?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] [Laughter] Well, I don't know, a BlackBerry, I think, but he didn't use it at all in the way some people might use it. He wasn't the type of person to be answering e-mails the whole time and ... I think he had a way of organising his days such that he had a time for everything, and was not forever being involved in answering, communicating — that wasn't his style at all.

[François Lafond] Was family important to him?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] Yes, I think so, even if he talked about it very little ... but I have had occasion to meet his family a little since his death, and yes, I have realised to what extent he was a happy, masterly figure, as you would expect, of course, but more than that, the personality we had the opportunity to observe, to experience, was quite obviously someone who had a great impact in his family circle as well.

[François Lafond] And now my last question: if there is anything that has stayed with you from your collaboration and your working regularly with him, what would it be? What do you carry with you, in the end, which is deeply rooted in your ...?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] The way I felt about it was that I was really fortunate, just to be with Mr Delors, Pascal Lamy and Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa, but it is true that in the end he was the one who was my chairman for nearly five years after all. A great stroke of luck, and I also think I had ... I was already basically quite a determined person, but seeing people like that who know where they're going, who have convictions and who push ahead with that driving force, that influenced me, certainly, in the sense of not necessarily looking for immediate satisfaction in what one is doing professionally, but always holding onto the point of what one is doing and, above all, being motivated primarily by one's ideas and seeing them moving forward rather than by any personal fulfilment.

[François Lafond] And I can't help asking you just one final question. You have just brought out a book on the federation of nation states, which is an idea Jacques Delors brought to prominence and had been using for quite a few years. What did Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa think of that expression?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] That may have been one of the few little differences of opinion he did actually have with Mr Delors. He wouldn't necessarily have used that expression himself, because he was a very post-Westphalian type of person, you might say. He wasn't very fond ... he shied away from using the term 'nation state' because he actually thought that the whole problem of Europe lay in the fact that most politicians were incapable of thinking outside the nation-state frame, but when you ... but he didn't make a fetish of words. When he was discussing things with me, if he realised that in the end we saw things in more or less the same way, we were just putting it differently, he used to say: 'Why not?' You see, he wasn't hung up on concepts and ideas and he understood perfectly well that what we were seeking to do with this concept of a federation of nation states — what Mr Delors first tried to do, of course, and which I have tried to extend a little with the book you mentioned — was actually to reassure people by telling them that the scheme for a European federation was not going to be a scheme which would, how shall I put it, eliminate the nation states and their particular identities, that it was a scheme which was in fact going to be based on the diversity of their cultural identities, on different ... national sensitivities, and that is something I believe he was committed to as well. He was a person who loved Italian culture, French culture too, for what was special to each and what each brought to the building of a united Europe, and actually he always used to say: 'Be careful when it comes to coordination between the Member States. Let us not go too far, because what counts is to strengthen European collective action, which means federation, the central point, because once we have widened its field of action, we will also have circumscribed the relevance of its action and we will let the states and the regions be important entities.' He often said that in the United States, the states were strong states, you see, there you are, with powers of their own. So in the end, even if he didn't want to use that word, his vision was no distance at all from that way of seeing things.

[François Lafond] But was he a federalist in reality, and did he say so?

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] Yes, he was a federalist, yes, absolutely, in the tradition of Spinelli, but let me say again that he wasn't so much concerned about pushing terms or ... it was the underlying ideas which interested him.

[François Lafond] Thank you very much.

[Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul] Thank you.