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PREFACE

Very early in this excellent book, Albrecht Rothacher suggests that Europe is standing at a crossroads. What is interesting about this observation is not just how correct it seems at this precise moment, but how often and in how many ways it has been said about the European Union in the past. If Europe is a journey as this book suggests, every enlargement, every treaty, every divided Council and every opinion poll often seems to place us at a crossroads of a kind. The new constitutional treaty agreed at Brussels in 2004, and at the time of writing poised to run the gauntlet of national parliaments and public opinion, is unlikely to change the perception that European Union is a journey, as Rothacher rightly suggests, without a clear destination. Indeed, it is probably the greatest achievement of the EU that it has endured, and added so much to Europe's common life, in the complete absence of any clear consensus among Europeans about what it is for and where it is going.

The fact remains that European Union is both a destination and a way of getting somewhere. It is a *modus vivendi* for a continent with an historic leaning towards armed conflict and military dispute. It is a mechanism for creating a single market that has delivered extraordinary prosperity for Europeans. But it is also the expression of the idea, long latent on the European continent and its offshore islands, that Europe's peoples form a political community of a kind and that they must someday have institutions that express that. If the first two, at least in the current liberal consensus about the value of regulated free markets, seem uncontroversial, the last still has the quality of an existential debate for many in Europe. Decades of failure to properly articulate an objective view of European Union to European citizens — on the part of governments, an increasingly powerful media and the

institutions of the EU themselves — has left a deep void of public incomprehension. This in turn has encouraged a tabloid perception that unscrupulous pro-European integrationists have had the better of the past five decades, expanding their sinister project without the burden of too much public scrutiny or comprehension. If the Eurosceptics sometimes sound paranoid and parochial, it is at least in part because defenders of European Union have too often given them little reason to think otherwise. The space between the Philadelphia dreams of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and the more ambitious *conventionels* and the stubborn nostalgia of the British “withdrawalists” is still much too sparsely populated by public debate or media attention. And therein lies a real failure to make the European Union comprehensible to the people it serves. It also suggests that we may find ourselves at the European crossroads for a little while longer.

Part of the problem, as Rothacher points out, lies in the tendency to subordinate the political argument for European Union to the economic one, especially in more euro-wary countries like Sweden and Britain. This creates a debate on Europe that is badly misshapen. Unless we can talk openly about the political instinct that leads many Europeans to the conclusion that the European peoples have (a) a common cultural and political heritage, (b) an inescapable political interdependence in the face of global political, economic and ecological challenges and (c) a responsibility, given Europe's traumatic history, to bind themselves together politically so that they can never again be broken by military conflict or disfigured by dictatorship — both painfully recent memories in much of Europe — the argument for European Union will sound half-baked, and Europe's crisis of identity will persist. If nothing else, we will have no apposite response to those who can and do make the inverse of this argument: that the tribal European nation states can never form any kind of political community, federated, confederated or otherwise.

This intelligent book does not duck that argument, or the questions it raises. Indeed, Rothacher is clear that unless we try to understand Europe as a political problem we will never understand it at all. As important as it may be to understand the neo-functionalist analysis of

the inter-institutional dynamic, unless you learn to see the European Union as it looks to a Brussels *fonctionnaire*, or an Irish farmer, or a Portuguese businessman or the Prime Minister of Poland, it simply won't make any sense. It won't make a lot of sense when you *do* learn to see it that way — but that is at least partly the point. The fact that this book is leavened with this kind of perspective makes it a refreshing analysis. For all of the ink spilt at the feet of individual Union policies, it is still rare for a writer to consider Europe as a whole, in its many political contexts. Nor does Rothacher confine himself to description, and his prescriptions for the European Union are lucid. Whether you agree or disagree, whether you think Europe's journey tends to gloom or glory, the arguments in this book will make a good companion at the European crossroads.

Graham Watson MEP
Brussels
June 2004

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACP	African, Carribean and Pacific group of states
CAP	common agricultural policy
CFI	Court of First Instance
CFP	common fisheries policy
COR	Committee of Regions
COREU	European Correspondence
CSFP	common security and foreign policy
DG	Directorate General of the Commission
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC	European Commission
ECA	European Court of Auditors
ECB	European Central Bank
ECJ	European Court of Justice
ECS	Economic and Social Committee
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
ECU	European Currency Unit
EDC	Eurpean Defense Community
EDF	European Development Fund
EEC	European Economic Coomunity
EIB	European Investment Bank
EIC	Euro Info Centres
EMI	European Monetary Institute
EMS	European Monetary System
EMU	European Monetary Union

EP	European Parliament
EPC	European Political Cooperation
ESCB	European System of Central Banks
ESF	European Social Funds
ETP	Executive Training Programme (in Japan)
EU	European Union
Euratom	European Atomic Energy Community
FVO	Food and Veterinary Office
IGC	inter-governmental conference
ISPA	Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession
JET	Joint European Torus
LDC	less developed countries
MEA	multilateral environmental agreements
MED	Mediterranean
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
OAD	Official Aid for Development
QMV	qualified majority voting
SIS	Schengen Information System
TAC	total allowable catches
TEN	Trans-European Networks
UNICE	Union of European Industries
VAT	value added tax
WEU	Western European Union