There is a veritable paradox in the issue of why those who believe in the State, all those “state worshippers” and “stateophiles” who have made it their political stock-in-trade, are doing nothing to reform it. In their eyes, the State is the instrument of action *par excellence* for all areas of economic and social life. They reject the market and the private sector, they are distant and disdainful towards civil society, and they glorify all that is public and collective. Moreover, they use the entire spectrum of public intervention – and God knows it’s a diverse one! – to domesticate the economy and make it obedient and subservient through levies, taxes, contributions, obligations, legislation, regulations, admonitions, and so on.

It cannot be denied that the State is appearing more impotent and powerless each day, incapable of dealing with problems that it is constantly promising to solve. It seems to be becoming more and more inefficient: the resources it deploys are constantly growing, whereas the results obtained – when there are any – are increasingly feeble. Not only is the State failing to achieve its objectives, the adverse impact of its actions is also becoming increasingly evident. International comparisons in virtually all areas show that the government in France is performing less well than in other States, which have reformed their methods of financing, their organisational structure and their management. The intervention of the French government is stifling the production sector, which is the only area actually feeding it. And to top it all, the State is living from hand to mouth, with no vision, crippled by debt, moving from crisis plan to emergency plan – and this is the State that was supposed to embody long-term needs and respect for the fate of future generations!

Faced with this damning picture – in this field, as in so many others, the comparison with Germany is striking, one could be forgiven for assuming that the political forces who make the State the be all and end all of their credo would be springing into action to reengineer it: when the tool in which you believe no longer works, it seems only logical to overhaul it. Instead, they have spent their time patching things up, postponing changes, constantly adding more resources, amassing administrative structures, making the present taboo and lionising the past... And all this has been done while pointing the finger at companies which, bending under the weight of levies and regulations, are doing their utmost through constant changes to generate the productivity gains that will enable them to resist ever greater competitive pressure.

France invented the modern State...more than two hundred years ago. It has been efficient and has unquestionably contributed to economic and social progress. A major project for our country would be to reinvent the 21st century State...even if we are not the innovators that we were in the past since other countries – like Sweden, Canada and the UK – have already done or are currently doing just this. This is a huge undertaking, with a scope ranging from local authorities to central government, from tax reform to social security reform, from schools to universities, from hospitals to courts. Let’s introduce technology everywhere, let’s take Europe into account, let’s entrust companies with the things that they do better than the State, let’s rethink the duties of the State,
reduce the scope of governments, modernise their means of action... And above all, like Sweden, let’s revolutionise the civil service: without a new system of human resources management – recruitment, remuneration, promotion, mobility, incentives, retirement - there can be no reform of the State.

We can see why the paradox is a dilemma: the state worshippers are mainly supported by a portion of elected representatives and public sector employees – broadly speaking, this covers public sector companies, local communities and social security bodies -, which, like other beneficiaries of the current system, are doggedly opposed to the reform of a State that they have largely “harnessed” to their benefit and that provides them – on credit, on top of the levy frenzy – with income, status and security... Those who believe in the State are passively witnessing its inevitable decline, while corporations – who don’t have much faith in it – want it to be thoroughly overhauled, because this is the sine qua non condition for restoring their competitiveness and hence their survival! The pact of responsibility should begin with this reengineering of the State, which should be set in motion without delay...with the help and support of business.