

ROBIN COOK, PES PRESIDENT 2001-2004

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Robin Cook, a great man for Europe I often remember Robin Cook. I hear his laughter, his voice, his accent. I see his expressive face, his vivid and intelligent eyes, his warm smile, his red beard, and his air of a Scottish pirate. He used to say that his looks did not fit "this media era"... I had never met him until I became Foreign Minister in 1997. I had only heard about his huge talent as a speaker and as a keen debater in the Commons. I was immediately struck by his energy, his quick intelligence and his diplomatic creativity. I thought that a strong relationship with Britain and the present Labour government were perfectly compatible with, and even complementary to, the strategic understanding between France and Germany. It was also important to him. We worked a lot together. We co-chaired the Rambouillet conference on Kosovo and we supported each other in the Council of General Affairs on the Middle East. I gave him my support on Hong Kong. We went together to West Africa, to the Ivory Coast, and Ghana and we launched a convergence movement between the British and French diplomatic corps in Africa, which would have yielded huge results had it been pursued with patience. In Saint Malo we managed to make progress towards a Defence Europe. We were convinced that we would be able to broaden the European consensus, slowly but surely on the matter of foreign policy. We became friends and met time and again, once thanks to Madeleine Albright. When I think of him I feel both sad of his absence and encouraged by his memory. He was a great minister for Britain. He was a great minister for Europe.



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