

Reading E Bruges Speech

Margaret Thatcher (1988)

Britain and Europe

Mr Chairman, you have invited me to speak on the subject of Britain and Europe. Perhaps I should congratulate you on your courage. If you believe some of the things said and written about my views on Europe, it must seem rather like inviting Genghis Khan to speak on the virtues of peaceful co-existence!

I want to start by disposing of some myths about my country, Britain, and its relationship with Europe. And to do that I must say something about the identity of Europe itself.

Europe is not the creation of the Treaty of Rome. Nor is the European idea the property of any group or institution. We British are as much heirs to the legacy of European culture as any other nation. Our links to the rest of Europe, the continent of Europe, have been the *dominant* factor in our history. For three hundred years we were part of the Roman Empire and our maps still trace the straight lines of the roads the Romans built. Our ancestors – Celts, Saxons and Danes – came from the continent. ...

We in Britain are rightly proud of the way in which, since Magna Carta in 1215, we have pioneered and developed representative institutions to stand as bastions of freedom. And proud too of the way in which for centuries Britain was a home for people from the rest of Europe who sought sanctuary from tyranny.

But we know that without the European legacy of political ideas we could not have achieved as much as we did. From classical and medieval thought we have borrowed that concept of the rule of law which marks out a civilised society from barbarism. And on that idea of Christendom – for long synonymous with

Europe – with its recognition of the unique and spiritual nature of the individual, we still base our belief in personal liberty and other human rights.

Too often the history of Europe is described as a series of interminable wars and quarrels. Yet from our perspective today surely what strikes us most is our common experience. For instance, the story of how Europeans explored and colonised and – yes, without apology – civilised much of the world is an extraordinary tale of talent, skill and courage.

We British have in a special way contributed to Europe. Over the centuries we have fought to prevent Europe from falling under the dominance of a single power. We have fought and we have died for her freedom. Only miles from here in Belgium lie the bodies of 120,000 British soldiers who died in the First World War. Had it not been for that willingness to fight and to die, Europe *would* have been united long before now – but not in liberty, not in justice. It was British support to resistance movements throughout the last War that helped to keep alive the flame of liberty in so many countries until the day of liberation. ...

The European Community is one manifestation of that European identity. But it is not the only one. We must never forget the East of the Iron Curtain peoples who once enjoyed a full share of European culture, freedom and identity have been cut off from their roots. We shall always look on Warsaw, Prague and Budapest as great European cities.

Nor should we forget that European values have helped to make the United States of America into the valiant defender of freedom which she has become. ...

This is no arid chronicle of obscure facts from the dust-filled libraries of history. It is the record of nearly two thousand years of British involvement in Europe, co-operation *with* Europe and contribution to Europe, a contribution which today is as valid and as strong as ever. Yes, we have looked also to wider horizons – as have others – and thank goodness for that, because Europe never would have prospered and never will prosper as a narrow-minded, inward-looking club.

The European Community belongs to *all* its members. It must reflect the traditions and aspirations of *all* its members.

And let me be quite clear, Britain does not dream of some cosy, isolated existence on the fringes of the European Community. Our destiny is in Europe, as part of the Community. That is not to say that our future lies *only* in Europe. But nor does that of France or Spain or indeed any other member. ...

The European Community is the practical means by which Europe can ensure the future prosperity and security of its

people in a world in which there are many other powerful nations and groups of nations. ...

My first guiding principle is this: willing and active co-operation between independent sovereign states is the best way to build a successful European Community.

To try to suppress nationhood and concentrate power at the centre of a European conglomerate would be highly damaging and would jeopardize the objectives we seek to achieve.

Europe will be stronger precisely because it has France as France, Spain as Spain, Britain as Britain, each with its own customs, traditions and identity. It would be folly to try to fit them into some sort of identikit European personality. ...

Certainly we want to see Europe more united and with a greater sense of common purpose. But it must be in a way which preserves the different traditions, Parliamentary powers and sense of national pride in one's own country; for these have been the source of Europe's vitality through the centuries. ...

Let Europe be a family of nations, understanding each other better, appreciating each other more, doing more together but relishing our national identity no less than our common European endeavour.

Let us have a Europe which plays its full part in the wider world, which looks outward not inward, and which reserves that Atlantic Community – that Europe on both sides of the Atlantic – which is our noblest inheritance and our greatest strength.

Source: 'The future of Europe', speech given at Bruges, 20 September 1988

Reading F TUC Congress Speech

Jacques Delors (1988)

Today I wish to concentrate on four main themes. First, there is a great challenge before us. The potential benefits of completing the internal market by 1992 are very large; but we must, as your report says, maximise these benefits while minimising the costs. We must also preserve and enhance the uniquely European model of society. Secondly, we must again become masters of our destiny. It is only by relying on our own strength that we will be able to resist adverse external pressures. Thirdly, close cooperation and solidarity as well as competition are the conditions for our common success. It is impossible to build Europe only by deregulation. Fourthly the social dimension is a vital element. Your report shows that you are ready to be involved.

Your organisation has played a pioneering role in the history of the trade union Movement. When I was a militant in a French organisation, I learned very much from your experience. Your organisation has served as a model for other trade unions in neighbouring European countries in their fight for the rights of workers and for the defence of their dignity. This historic achievement helped to forge in Europe a new model for society, a model based on a skilful balance between society and the individual. This model varies from country to country, yes, but throughout Europe we encounter similar mechanisms of social solidarity, of protection of the weakest and of collective bargaining.

This model was associated with three decades of expansion following the Second World War. In recent years it has been threatened by adverse economic developments, some of which – but not all – have an external origin. Europe has grown increasingly vulnerable. We must now rely on our own forces. The globalisation of markets and new technologies affect our perceptions and our way of life. All those concerned with the organisation of our society must adapt. This, of course, includes the trade unions of Europe.

The countries of Europe are responding to the challenge in more or less the same way. They have succeeded in part but at the price of massive unemployment. Unemployment, dear friends, is our major challenge. A number of policies have been tried. There have been some successes. But the problem is far from being solved. The policies tried have not been adequate.

It is essential to strengthen our control of our economic and social development, of our technology and of our monetary capacity, as Europeans and also as Britons. We must rely on our own resources and preserve our European identity. We must pool our resources. In keeping with this spirit, there must be full and broad consultation with those involved in the production of wealth. Since we are closely dependent on each other, our futures are linked. Jointly, we can enjoy the advantages to be derived from this situation.

It is necessary to give a broader framework to this cooperative action, and 1992 does this. The governments and parliaments of the 12 member states have solemnly committed themselves through the Single European Act to such a framework. European unions and employers have also approved the objective of a truly Common Market, with their own conditions. This shared objective calls for a concrete and productive social dialogue at the European level. That is the reason why I invited those concerned to re-launch this dialogue in January 1985.

Many of the major decisions necessary for the completion of the internal market have already been taken or are in the pipeline,

as explained clearly in your report. The heads of state and government at the European Council in Hanover in June agreed that implementation of the 1992 programme has become an irreversible process. Your report rightly points out that there will be far-reaching consequences for industry and for the economy. The potential benefits are enormous. Realising that potential depends on all of us.

There are a number of ways of reacting to 1992 – and this is almost a history of British trade unions. First, there are the sceptics. They doubt that the potential benefits are large. They also fear that increased competition will only put at risk our social achievements. These people are already pointing an accusing finger at the single market and blaming it for all difficulties. Secondly, there are the enthusiasts. They see the completion of the internal market as the answer to all their problems. They maintain that it, alone and unaided, will result in the convergence of economic policies, the creation of millions of jobs and spectacular growth. Thirdly, there are the architects – and I am only an architect. They see the opportunities that are created and are ready to tackle the difficulties to which the internal market may give rise. I am in this camp. I hope that you will join it. Your report gives me the confidence that you will do so. Membership of the camp requires constant effort and imagination. Without these, the reality will not correspond to the dream.

The European Community will be characterised by cooperation as well as competition. It will encourage individual initiative as well as solidarity. If these characteristics are not present, the goals will not be achieved. A large market of 320 million will increase competition. It will benefit the consumer and allow European industry to compete on a world scale. It will create new job opportunities and contribute to a better standard of living. These benefits will only be fully achieved with increased cooperation in scientific, monetary and social fields, and they must be spread throughout the Community.

It was by no means a foregone conclusion that the governments of the 12 member states would reach the agreement that they concluded in Brussels in February of this year. The measures agreed there will increase the solidarity of the Community. This is an important aspect of our action. Between now and 1992 about £40 billion will be devoted by them to the following five objectives: the development of the backward regions of the Community; the restructuring of regions and areas in industrial decline; the fight against long-term unemployment; the provision of jobs for young people; and rural development.

You will notice that most of these objectives concern *all* member states. Some have expressed the fear that the north-south problems of a nation like the United Kingdom will be

neglected at Community level. This is not the case, as the list of objectives clearly shows. With these accompanying policies and with increased cooperation in areas like technology and the environment, but also cooperation in macro-economic policy, which does not currently exist, not only will 1992 be a factor contributing to additional growth and employment, it will also be possible to ensure that the advantages of the single market spread to all regions.

The social dimension is very important. Our Europe also needs clear rules and respect for the law. While we are trying to pool our efforts, it would be unacceptable for unfair practices to distort the interplay of economic forces. It would be unacceptable for Europe to become a source of social regression, while we are trying to rediscover together the road to prosperity and employment.

The European Commission has suggested the following principles on which to base the definition and implementation of these rules. First, measures adopted to complete the large market should not diminish the level of social protection already achieved in the member states. Second, the internal market should be designed to benefit each and every citizen of the Community; it is therefore, necessary to improve workers' living and working conditions, and to provide better protection for their health and safety at work. Third, the measures to be taken will concern the area of collective bargaining and legislation at European level. These are the principles for the action of the European Commission and its President.

Now we must make concrete progress. For this, we need the contribution of the architects. In May last year, when addressing the European Trade Union Confederation ... I made three proposals which were designed to show clearly the social dimension of the European construction, and you have noted them in your report. They are, first, the establishment of a platform of guaranteed social rights, containing general principles, such as every worker's right to be covered by a collective agreement – this is so simple but the following is more complicated – and more specific measures concerning, for example, the status of temporary work, to struggle against the dismantling of the labour market. Second, the creation of a statute for European companies which would include the participation of workers or their representatives. Those concerned could opt, on the basis of their tradition and wishes, between three formulae of participation; in respect of diversity of views, the proposal is on the table of the Council of Ministers, and I hope for a quick decision by the 12 governments. Third, the extension to all workers of the right to life-long education in a changing society. This would be done on the basis of existing provisions – different in each country – and after, through the

social dialogue, full consultation of unions and management. I intend to hold a meeting with the chiefs of national trade union organisations and the chief employers' organisations in January, at the beginning of the new Commission, to announce the social dialogue on a concrete and realistic basis.

These initial proposals should be studied and discussed. Other suggestions from both sides of industry are welcome. In my opinion, social dialogue and collective bargaining are essential pillars of our democratic society and social progress.

Dear friends, Europe must reassert itself. The world is looking at us. It is watching you British; it is watching the Germans, the French, the Italians and all the others. It is wondering how all these nations, which have fought each other over the centuries, have managed to rise up again when so much was pointing to their decline. Surviving, yes, declining, no. The answer is that Europe is reaffirming itself by managing its diversity. You dear friends, will remain Britanniques – British (Britannique is a French joke!) More precisely, some, like you, President, will remain Welsh; others will remain Scottish, Irish or English, and I am not forgetting the others. ... We all retain our individual way of life and our valued, specific traditions. Thanks to cooperation, and solidarity between Europeans, we will succeed in preserving identity and our culture.

Source: speech given to the 1988 TUC Congress, in TUC Congress Report, pp.568–70.