

*Margaret Thatcher's Memoir of the
Fontainebleau European Council
(June 1984)*

Written shortly after the event

This transcript follows the original handwritten text of the memoir.

Studying the text together on 14 September 1992, I asked MT when and why she had written it? She replied that it was done shortly after the event with the aim of refuting misinterpretations, commenting that her Foreign Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe, had been making notes all the way through the meeting. The implication is that she was guarding against the Foreign Office version prevailing.

MT mis-spelled 'Fontainebleau' throughout the text, writing it as it sounds, i.e., 'Fontinbleau' or possibly 'Fontenbleau' (the word is a little hard to make out). Her error has been silently corrected in the text that follows. She also got the name of the her hotel wrong: the British team stayed at L'Hôtellerie du Bas-Bréau at Barbizon, not the 'Hotel Barbizon'.

Christopher Collins

**Margaret Thatcher Foundation
27 May 2015**

Foultier

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We concluded that President A. attended had two possible courses of action and had not decided which to pursue

1 - a solution - i.e. a triumph for France in the chair

2 - a failure - all due to Britain!

We were not optimistic about getting a good result, indeed I had said as much in a radio comment. And at the last moment - 3 or 4 novel schemes had been proposed, quite different from those we had pursued at Brussels. I thought this was a stalling device indicating lack of will to resolve the matter.

We arrived - having decided our tactics on the Amelover - at our hotel - The Barkham - a charming and I can very emphatically hotel. As always the atmosphere at the beginning, superficially cordial. We went to the castle to be received by the President with full honours - all the way up the steps to the entrance. Under by the lake and

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Others gave their views - and so I was packed by.
What was his game plan? It soon emerged. The cent-
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mentioned the names of the Dolbinov's & others and had had a very good Western press for days so.

Heads of government dinner at our hotel started off in a rather artificial way. It would have been better if we had left the Dolbinovs to talk about but there was not much more to say. Conversation turned to weak rather futile anecdotes - but the dinner itself was delicious.

Over coffee in the lounge, we noticed that foreign Ministers were taking their own coffee outside and concluded that they had finished their allotted task. However an emissary returned with the news that Chysson had been given his version of the Dolbinov visit and the budget discussion had not even begun! The President's displeasure was made plain and they returned to their separate deliberations. We in the meantime talked about the future of Europe - some of the things in our (U.K.) memorandum and others known by the curious title of 'Aloren Europe!' The question of the number of

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10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

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What had we to gain - what to lose? If no agreement was reached we were going to be in some difficulty because

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Nevertheless we could not agree to an unfair settlement because it would be unfair. Nor would we bargain a permanent increase in own resources for only a temporary gain. Moreover, unless an agreement were reached the whole community would be in financial difficulties in a matter of months with totally unknown consequences.

I saw Dillenkofer separately and Kohl separately. We had wanted refunds of 70% of the VAT / expenditure gap. The most they were prepared to offer was 60%, but we had got everything else virtually agreed, - in particular the link with increase in own resources and an ad hoc settlement for one year only. Eventually after much

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Still one other thing we had to watch - Cavett Fitzgerald suddenly said he assumed that it was agreed that extra resources would be found for 1984 because the budget was already overspent. It was an attempt to bounce us. We fought it down on the grounds that it was contrary to the Treaty - but once again we were above in our opposition although our reasons were sound.

After a very late lunch - by this time very good humored because we were pleased the deadlock had been broken, we agreed to a series of committees to discuss other matters - a whole raft of them. Then the press conference at the famous Joubertean business school - the customary carping questions (!) and then home. The essential points were that we had secured a settlement linked to "own resources", that the net amount we pay to the Community under the increased own resources was less than we are liable to pay under ~~present~~ arrangements, and that the refunds do

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