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CENTRE FOR POLICY STUDIES

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Dear Charles:

I send you herewith the list of a speech wh. I have drafted about Europe. I have tried to give historical & literary clothing to what I take to be the Prime Minister's current view on the Community. The core of the speech is on pages 10-11: strength through diversity; harmony yes, uniformity no.

With best wishes

Hugh

Hugh Thomas

DRAFT SPEECH

THE FUTURE OF EUROPE BRUSSELS SEPTEMBER 1988

Brussels is, of course, an appropriate place for a consideration of the significance of where we currently stand in the development of the European Community. This is not simply because it is the headquarters of the European Commission and the meeting place of the European Council. It is because it has been for centuries the heart of Europe in a way that none of the great capitals of the longer established nations have been. It is no insult to praise the historic achievements of this capital long before the creation of the state of Belgium. In the Grand Place we commemorate Count Egremont and Horn, whose execution by a Spanish governor inspired the war of Dutch independence, a war which represented the war for the idea of liberty itself, not just that of the Netherlands.

We recall that it was near Brussels in 1815 that the greatest battle in European history was fought - and again we do not now see Waterloo as an Anglo-German victory over France but as a European one over autocracy and imperialism of the old kind. Byron's lines about the Duchess of Richmond's Ball in 1815 recalls that there was a "sound of revelry by night", here was interrupted by the warnings of battle. Our present endeavours in Europe are dictated by a desire partly at least to prevent the possibility of any further such message that a

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European conflict might interrupt our peaceful undertakings, whether they are called by the name of revelry or something else. Belgium's own role in the history of European freedom has been decisive, as we all know when we recall why Britain and France went to war against militarism in 1914.

The European Community came together in the years after the war for a variety of reasons: first, there was a determination among the new leaders on the continent, particularly in France and Germany, that the old quarrels in Europe should not lead to a war between them again as had happened on three occasions between 1870 and 1945; second, the countries of Western Europe were withdrawing from their great empires in the wider world and knew that their economies might be submerged unless they collaborated with their close neighbours; that was particularly important when it seemed that economic world power lay in the hands of one or other of the two "super powers," as they were coming to be known, with their far larger internal markets; third, there was a sense, particularly among the countries occupied by Nazi Germany that they had far more things in common than those that divided them - Christianity, care for constitutional government, respect for the law, affection for fair play, and admiration for individual achievement.

Such feelings were sustained by the recollection of the past unity of European culture and the knowledge that for

generations Western Europe had alone prized the great achievements of the ancient world.

Democracy had been first used in a recognisable form in Greece and in the ancient German tribal assemblies. Respect for the law was a Judaic form. But in the long centuries of absolutist rule, in the Middle East as elsewhere, such things died out even in the places where they were conceived. The fires lit in Athens and Jerusalem were rekindled in such cities as Amsterdam, Geneva and, we believe above all in London.

The relation of Britain with the continent of Europe has often been stormy. Still the relation has been the dominant factor in our history. The first cultivators of Britain were part of a continent-wide phenomenon, the Celts. We can understand neither the development of our language, nor of our traditions, nor of our religion if we neglect the three hundred years when we participated in the empire of Rome. The Anglo Saxons, like the Norsemen and the Danes who followed them, were continentals. Our nation was restructured under Norman and Angevin rule in the Middle ages. For several hundred years, the English and the French fought each other, but those wars of the 14th and 15th centuries were less international conflicts than European civil wars.

Britain, France and Spain took in the 16th century the path of expansion as Portugal had before them, and Holland did

later. But though these empires seem to us to be typical manifestations of the nation state, those whom we encountered, converted to Christianity and set forth on a new path towards civilisation, as well as commerce, saw us simply as Europeans just as the people of the Holy Land had seen the Crusaders as being part of a single movement, however much they disputed.

It is true that, for four centuries, our traditional policy was to resist the single strongest power in Europe. For that reason we fought Philip II, Louis XIV, Napoleon, the Kaiser and Hitler. We did so to save our island from absolute power or militarism or, in the case of Hitler, worse. We did so to preserve the diversity and many sided greatness of Europe where peoples with small populations looked to us as the defenders of their rights. We fought unashamedly for European liberty. Had it not been for British involvement (why not admit it?) I daresay that Europe would have been united long before now. But what sort of unity would it have been? It would, at different stages, have been at the cost of all Protestant Europe, of independent Holland, of Catholic Spain and of the reviving traditions of European liberty. Every country in Europe has benefited. British assistance helped to preserve, in the 18th century, the freedom of Prussia. Every schoolboy knows that proud France would not have been able to look the twenty first century in the eye had it not been for our efforts

against the Germans in the two wars of this century. Italy was helped to become a nation by British diplomacy. Spain would not have got rid of Joseph Bonaparte had it not been for the Duke of Wellington.

I cannot leave the impression that I think our European contribution has been purely one of politics and war. All English literature has been deeply marked by continental experience. Half of Shakespeare's plays seem to have been laid in Continental cities. The romantic poets of England spent their lives on the European continent. Many of the greatest English men of letters from Scott to George Eliot, Tennyson or Henry James (if we can claim that great nationalised Englishman as one of ours, as surely we can) allowed the continent to inspire them with subjects. Painters such as Turner had continental European travels which made him as much a man of the South as of this island. In this century, millions of English men and women have found pleasure and spiritual peace in the continent of Europe whether they find that in Gothic churches or sunny beaches.

The process was reversed too. The British are remembered for their innovation in the industrial age. But we needed continental markets for our products to be successful. What we had to offer the continent was less our superb landscape or our picturesque life than our devotion to liberty and to law. That

was much admired and it inspired our neighbours. The Huguenots fled to Britain in the 19th century to our great advantage. Nearly every French regime in the last century sent their exiles here: including, indeed, Louis XVIII and Louis Philippe, Napoleon III and Eugenie. The last heir of Napoleon's family, the Prince Imperial died fighting for Britain in South Africa. Both the father of modern Italy, Mazzini, and his great imperial opponent, Metternich spend months in London. It was indeed in London, on the steps of the British Museum no less, that Metternich met another great exile the French statesman Guizot and there remarked with a smile "L'erreur ne s'est jamais approchée de mon esprit". We were proud for many generations to be the sanctuary of free peoples, of Spanish liberals as of German romantics. The Hungarian liberal Kossuth died in London and when the Austrian general Haynau, who had persecuted him and shot his friends, came to England he was chased by an angry English mob into a brewery. In recent years we are happy to find our shops and streets crowded with our neighbours who come to buy our wares.

The culmination of our long history of carrying the flag of liberty in Europe was the Second World War. British assistance to resistance movements throughout the war kept alive the flame of liberty until the day of liberation came. "Set Europe ablaze" was Churchill's order to his ministers in charge of

special operations on the Continent. That instruction made us a major partner in the development of events. The noise of the Lysander aircraft carrying agents and provisions to occupied Europe was a reminder of liberty and a presage of Britain's continuing concern for her continental friends. Our island was also the great island fortress which enabled the Liberation to be organised. Equally important, the voice of Britain was heard from the BBC. Our great national broadcasting company in the war represented us at our best: honest, and candid; optimistic, but not bland; quiet and under-stated and, because of that more powerful than the gloating and triumphant voices of Goebbels' puppets.

After the war Britain gave every encouragement to the movement towards European economic unity every encouragement. Winston Churchill's speech at Zurich in 1946 was indeed among the first to use the expression "United States of Europe". Still, we expected at that time Europe to associate herself in unity without us. Perhaps it was a mistake. Many people think so. On the other hand, there were sound reasons for the judgement of my predecessors of that day. The pound sterling then was the world's largest reserve currency. Our Indian Empire had gone. But we were still responsible for half of Africa. We were a world power and we believed that we had a responsibility to be so. Still, by the end of the 1950s, we

had changed our minds. We saw in the prospect of European collaboration real possibilities for ourselves both in politics and in economics. We also considered that we had much to bring to Europe. Much to the regret of our party, our application to join the emergent community was rejected by General de Gaulle in 1963. It was not until 1970 that a wise French government under Monsieur Pompidou changed their policies. I do not wish to dwell now on that action by General de Gaulle. Like most of us I admire his grandeur and the elegance of his prose. But that action was a serious mistake from everyone's point of view.

Nevertheless, that long period in the European political wilderness, 1963-1970, it enabled us to think deeply about, and to discuss at length, the nature of our commitment to the new Europe. The vast majority of the population, of course, voted positively in 1975 when we had our referendum on the subject. I think they did so with their eyes open.

First they were told explicitly by us, their political leaders, that they would not lose their national customs, laws and characteristics if we joined. We accepted General de Gaulle's vision of Europe as a Europe of nations. We thought it possible that we could obtain the advantage of economic union without any surrender of political independence. We think that now too. Of course that combination is a new

concept. It is one not easy to grasp by those used to governments playing a determining part in national economic life. But it should not be so difficult to a new generation which has been accustoming itself to governments which provide the frame of economic life but leave everything else to the people.

Second, we did not vote in 1975 for an end to the Atlantic Community which in defence and culture has done so much for us all since 1945. We might wish, as I do, to build up the European pillar in NATO and make it more effective. But that does not mean the abandonment of our close and creative alliance with the United States. The military success of NATO should not cause us to forget the real interdependent cultural unity which since the second world war has been built on both litorals of the Atlantic.

Third, and most important of all, we did not vote in 1973 for the creation of a new European super state. The formation of the European Community was surely an admission that the nation state of the old sort had had its day. Europe needs a community in which there are all kinds of associations, governmental as well as private, not one where policy and law (in the end it might be) are determined on high. We have not embarked on the business of throwing back the frontiers of the state at home only to have a super nation state getting ready

to exercise a new dominance.

Nor was the kind of Europe for which we voted one in which uniformity would be enforced at the cost of diversity. This is a most important matter. In my childhood it was still possible to travel across the continent of Europe and find innumerable variations in dress, food, music, dances, national and regional customs, language and dialect. Much of that has already changed. Much of it, to be fair, has occurred in consequence of the modernisation and increasing prosperity of Western Europe. A computer in Glasgow is likely to look much the same as one in Munich.

All the same, diversity is one of England's glories. Harmonisation of products as requested by the European Commission is all very well if it genuinely enables the same product or the same service to be available throughout the Community. The word harmonisation with its hint of musical concordance is a fine word. But uniform regulation are less inspiring words. Everyone knows that. Who would be happy if there was only one beer to be obtained in Europe, however excellent? Or if the only radish measured four centimetres and was no thicker than two? Or if the only pair of blue jeans had a particular shade and fit? Or if French cooking drove out Yorkshire pudding or vice versa?

For these reasons, a commitment to diversity is as important

as one for harmonisation. Most good Europeans accept this. The Scots are fine Europeans but have no intention of abandoning their laws. There are whole areas of social and political life which no good Frenchman would dream of abandoning. The same goes for us all. Human nature is immensely rich and we have evolved innumerable different approaches to living together. We do not want any customs - any more I should say since much has been already lost - to die if only because what may seem unnecessary today may come to be essential in the next generation.

Some will say that these and other attitudes indicate that we are bad Europeans. I reject that accusation as plain silly. All serious European business men and wealth creators recognise the significance of British initiatives in the field of assisting the single market, which, of course, will include services as well as growth of manufactured goods and agriculture. Our work in rationalising the procedures for establishing the European budgets has benefited all nations in the community. Further, we are among the most prominent of those Europeans who realise that, whatever we do in the western end of the continent, should not prevent us from keeping the door open to future collaboration with the countries of the east. All our history insists on such an attitude. We are part of Christendom and the onion-domed churches of Central and

Eastern Europe ring for all of us. The war of 1914 was triggered by an assassination in what is now Yugoslavia. Britain and France went to war in 1939 to save Poland and we nearly did so in 1938 to save Czechoslovakia. Whatever happened in 1945, we shall always look on Warsaw, and Prague, as great European cities, along with Budapest and the capitals of the Balkans. With changes evident in Russia, changes in those countries are probable too. We do not want to have so frozen a structure in Western Europe that we cannot adapt to make use of the new opportunities and the new challenges which may open there.

The innovative character of the European Community is worth emphasising too for the wider world. We are not the only group of countries which wish to preserve national sovereignty but at the same time to participate in both economic life and other programmes such as ecology with neighbours. The way that we manage to do this can, therefore, be an example to the world.

Others have agreed that for Europe to compete with the super powers, we will need a great deal of further unity than we now have. But both in industry and in international affairs we have surely lived through the era when big is thought to be beautiful. The super states themselves may find themselves after all adapting in the next century to various kinds of new association. The United States is already, of course, a

federation and the nature of government there is likely to change if the world situation offers a real chance of disarmament and regulated peace. The signs are that the Soviet Union may move towards a more decentralized system in the next years if things go well. In Europe our notions of collaboration are certain to alter too.

Surely there are few in Europe in their right minds who would not look on the idea of a centralised European government, even if it were situated in here un Brussels, as a nightmare. If I speak candidly sometimes that is because that is our national tradition. I do not want to delude people with dreams. Facts are better than dreams, as Churchill once said, particularly if they are good dreams. ??

The problem and the opportunity presented to us by Europe is symbolised by an ancient controversy as to where Europe begins and ends. In Greek days don't forget the word Europe after all, merely indicated central Greece. It later was extended to all Greece and later still to the landmass behind it. The frontier between Europe and Asia was fixed at the River Don. General de Gaulle used to speak of Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals and certainly in my childhood we still spoke of Russia-in-Europe. These geographical doubts remain. They are symbolic of the fact that in Europe everything is possible.

Brussels has also a long history of being an outward looking

city. It was here for example in 1520 that the painter Durer saw for the first time the treasures of the New World which Cortes had sent from Mexico as a present to that great European, the Emperor Charles V. The treasures were of a beauty that he had never imagined possible. We cannot hope in future to be sure of producing in Europe men with the discernment and quality of Albrecht Durer. But we can hope, from the strength of a renewed Europe, to find men who will be able to appreciate the new world, an interdependent planet not just a continent of the 21st century and take advantage of its opportunities for a revival of order, law, civilisation and art. It is worth remembering, after all, that while in 1992 we shall celebrate the achievement of the single market, we shall also be commemorating the 500th anniversary of Columbus's discovery of America: a great event carried through by a man about whose nationality historians dispute - was he Italian, or Majorcan or even Jewish? - but who certainly was a characteristic European of his age.