

Europe fears battle ahead with Thatcher

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'Nightmare' of central control under attack

- Mrs Thatcher continued her tour of Europe in Luxembourg by reiterating her criticism of EEC unity proposals
- Yesterday she spoke of "the nightmare" of central control and pressed her view of free enterprise policies
- As criticism of her Bruges speech grew across Europe, British officials acted to limit the damage
- She also threatened to block European plans which would cripple the future of British commercial TV

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From Nicholas Wood in Luxembourg, and Our Foreign Staff

Mrs Thatcher reinforced her criticism of the "Utopian goal" of a united Europe in a speech in Luxembourg yesterday as storm clouds of rejection gathered over the Continent.

Undaunted by the criticism of her Bruges address the previous day, she spoke of a centralized nightmare and pressed on with her rival concept of "willing and active cooperation between independent sovereign states" pursuing free enterprise policies with a minimum of regulation.

Speaking in response to an address by Mr Jacques Santer, the President of the Luxem-

bourg Government (the equivalent of prime minister), she said: "A centralized European government would be a nightmare."

"Of course, we want Europe to move unitedly; of course we want to work more closely together; but it must not be at the expense of individuality, the national customs and tra-

EEC move opposed2

ditions which have made Europe great in the past and are the best hope for its future.

"Whatever the theoreticians may say, the reality is that our people want to be European, but they want to be Luxembourgers or Britons too, which control their own destinies in the hands of their own elected representatives."

Mr Santer paid tribute to her tenacity, frankness and loyalty.

Senior aides travelling with the Prime Minister said she wanted to provoke a wide-ranging and fundamental debate about the future of Europe. "We have reached the stage where we don't give a damn what people say so long as they eventually come round," said a member of her entourage.

European leaders and European Community officials reacted with dismay and pointed to a "major battle ahead" over the ultimate nature of the entity. Mr Andreas Papandreu, the Greek Prime Minister, and current chairman of the Council of Ministers, sought an explanation during a BBC radio interview.

"It is difficult for me to believe that Mrs Thatcher would be prepared to put in question, unilaterally, the European Single Act, which binds the 12 by validated international treaty," he said in an interview in a London hospital, where he is being treated for a heart condition.

He considered it "extremely important at this stage that

Mrs Thatcher inform the Community formally of the exact meaning of her vision of Europe".

"There is a lot of Genghis Khan in this speech," was the typical comment of a Member of the European Parliament, while Mr Leo Tindemans, the Belgian Foreign Minister, likened Mrs Thatcher to General de Gaulle.

"De Gaulle was quite a formidable personality. It's certainly not an insult," Mrs Thatcher responded.

Other diplomats and officials took comfort in the fact that Mrs Thatcher had expressed similar views before, but that on this occasion the Prime Minister had declared that Britain's destiny lay in Europe.

However, the response was overwhelmingly negative and British embassies in the EEC had the Bruges speech translated and sent to "key personalities" in business, the media and politics, urging Europeans to read the whole text.

Mrs Thatcher's comments seemed certain to set the stage for confrontation at the next EEC summit meeting in Rhodes in December.

West German officials said Mrs Thatcher had "simply not understood" the 1992 process. "Deliberately or otherwise" she was confusing long-term goals, such as a single European currency, with the more immediate aim of the abolition of frontiers to create the single market.

"Of course we must have controls on crime and terrorism," one senior official in Bonn said. "But the EEC is doing this by strengthening external frontiers, not internal ones. Most terrorists and criminals do not use normal border crossing points anyway. Most arrests take place because of police surveillance inside the EEC, and this sort

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