On the occasion of the official opening of the new Europe House in London, this booklet offers a valuable overview of the history of the debate about the United Kingdom’s relationship with the European Union, as seen through the eyes of a number of leading British politicians. The speeches and lectures which follow will remind readers of the wide range of strongly-held views on Europe, often cutting across traditional party lines, that have been expressed throughout the period since the end of the Second World War.

Our own view is that Britain needs Europe - and Europe needs Britain. The European Parliament and European Commission will work to stress the mutual benefits that the country’s membership of the Union brings - whether in terms of free trade, access to the world’s biggest single market or a stronger voice on global issues, such as development or climate change.

We would like Europe House to become a forum for a vibrant, informed discussion about Britain’s place in Europe and the future evolution of the European Union. Our hope is that, in the spirit of the powerful contributions reproduced in this booklet, the new joint offices of the European Commission and European Parliament in London can help deepen the quality of the debate on one of the most important and lively issues in British politics.

December 2010

Jeremy Shuker
President of the European Parliament

José Manuel Barroso
President of the European Commission
Mr President, ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured today by being received in our ancient university and by the address which has been given to me on your behalf and which I greatly value.

I wish to speak to you today about the tragedy of Europe, the great continent, comprised of the fairest and the most cultivated regions of the earth, enjoying a temperate and equable climate, is the home of all the great political races of the Western world, is the fountain of Christian faith and Christian ethics, it is the origin of most of the culture, the arts, philosophy and science both of ancient and modern times. If Europe were once united in the sharing of its common inheritances there would be no limit to the happiness, to the prosperity and the glory which in three or four hundred million people would abound.

Yet is it from Europe that has sprung that series of frightful nationalistic quarrels originating from the fanaticism of nations in their rush to power, which we have seen in this 20th century and even in our own lifetime the wreck and mar the prospects of all mankind.

And what is the plight to which Europe has been reduced? Some of the smaller states have indeed made a good recovery, but over wide areas a vast, quivering mass of tormented, hungry, careworn and bewildered peoples, gape at the ruins of their human beings, a vast, quivering mass of tormented, hungry, careworn and bewildered peoples, gape at the ruins of their life and prosperity. And what is the plight to which Europe has been reduced? Some of the smaller states have indeed made a good recovery, but over wide areas a vast, quivering mass of tormented, hungry, careworn and bewildered peoples, gape at the ruins of their life and prosperity.

We all know that the two World Wars through which we have passed arose out of the twin passion of a newly united Germany to play the dominating part in the world. In the last tragedy, crime and massacre have been committed for which there is no parallel since the invasion of the Mongols in the 14th century, no equal in its atrocity in human history. The guilty must be punished. Germany must be deprived of the power to enter into war and make another aggressor war. But when all this has been done, it will not be done, as it is being done, then there must be an end to suffering, there must be an end to suffering.

I shall not try to make a detailed enumeration for hundreds of millions of people who want to be happy and prosperous, and only to say so and means can certainly be an act of faith in which millions of peoples speaking many languages must consciously take part.

We must build a kind of United States of Europe. In this way only will hundreds of millions of toilers be able to regain the simple joys of a temperate and equable climate, is the home of all the great political races of the Western world, is the fountain of Christian faith and Christian ethics, it is the origin of most of the culture, the arts, philosophy and science both of ancient and modern times. If Europe were once united in the sharing of its common inheritances there would be no limit to the happiness, to the prosperity and the glory which in three or four hundred million people would abound. Gentlemen, they may still return.

Indeed, but for the fact that the great republic across the Atlantic Ocean has at length realised that the ruin or enslavement of Europe would involve their own fate as well, and has stretched out hands of succour and guidance, but for that, the Dark Ages would have returned in all their cruelty and squalor. Gentlemen, they may still return. The shield, and it will even car protection, of the United Nations Organisation.

Under and within that world concept we must re-create the European family in a regional structure called, it may be, the United States of Europe, and the first practical step will be to form a Council of Europe. If at first all the states of Europe are not willing or able to join the union we must nevertheless proceed to assemble and combine those who will and those who can. The salvation of the common people of every race and every land from war and servitude must be established on solid foundations, must be based on the readiness of all men and woman to die rather than submit to tyranny. In all the urgent work France and Germany must take the lead together. Great Britain, the Commonwealth of Nations, mighty America — and, I trust, Soviet Russia, for that indeed all would be well — must be the friends and sponsors of the new Europe and must champion its rights to life and liberty. Therefore I say to you, “Let Europe arise!”
Our governments have not yet understood that the countries of Europe are growing stronger and stronger, and in fifteen years this strong base will be a large Free Trade Area in which our goods will find it very difficult to compete. It is a large export surplus which faces us today, not a blockade of the sort which faced us in 1938, but the same general problem. If we do not join even at this late stage in the Common Market, we shall be creating a new and very strong form of imperialism.

I speak as one of the Government’s supporters, but I cannot understand how anyone can face the facts of the European situation with complacency.

The sad feature is that fifteen years ago Britain was at the peak of her power and influence, and the leadership of Europe was hers for the asking. We have thrown it away.

It would be interesting to know if that is not the moment to do what the hon. Gentleman is advocating. Does he wish us to apply a tariff against the Six? Whenever we have tried to use the Common Market to attract our partners in the European Community a great Power is always ready to take an initiative. This is now a matter of first-class importance to the Commonwealth, and it is for us to make an effort to establish better relations with it.

We have thrown it away on grounds which have largely proved wrong.

Mr. Grimond

Sir Hendrie Oakshott (Birkenhead) is following with interest the argument on whether this is the moment to do what the hon. Member suggests, and that we should not attempt to join the Common Market, because the Six and the Americans are already negotiating, but we have to make a firm decision now.

One of the decisions we have to make now is to bring our policy into line with the Common Market which is a body built on something which is possible to build. We should not pretend that it is a body built on something which is possible to build.

Mr. Grimond

I want to ask the Government one or two questions about their attitude, because the Six and the Americans are already negotiating, but we have to make a firm decision now.

Mr. Francis Amwell

The Common Market is a reality. Many of the fears about it have proved false. Its members are not being rushed into a hastily-formed federation. Its field of action is economic, and of course to harmonize economic policies, one must accept some political decisions. I think that while there remains a very wide field for which national units are needed, and should be used, we must not deny that there is a widening field in which countries can work together.

I have given the Economic Secretary to the Treasury a few moments on this subject. I am glad that he is a supporter of the Six; I am glad also that he has given us plenty of time to study the evidence. One thing is very clear. The Common Market is not a club to be joined or not joined; it is a customs union and a tariff union which are blowing on this country will be a large Free Trade Area in which our goods will find it very difficult to compete.

Mr. Roy Jenkins

I think that one of the reasons why the Commonwealth has led us to believe that the Six is no longer the country that was, is that the Six have not joined each other’s organizations. If we did not accept majority voting which might coexist with these organizations, it would be almost impossible for us to achieve integration.

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"We must be clear about this; it does mean, if this is the idea, the end of Britain as an independent European state. I make no apology for repeating it. It means the end of a thousand years of history. You may say: ‘Let it end.’ But, my goodness, it is a decision that needs a little care and thought."

By negotiating for British membership of the European Economic Community and its Common Market, the present Conservative Government has taken what is perhaps the most fateful and forward-looking political risk in our pacific history. We did not do so lightly. We have searched out all the facts that we can accept as it right and proper course.

I know that such an unprecedented departure from the past would have caused genuine anxieties and fears, both at home and in the Commonwealth. Indeed, it was because we understood these feelings well that we inserted in the first that arrangements must be made to safeguard the independence of our Commonwealth partners, our home agriculture and our interest in the European Free Trade Association.

We in Britain are Europeans. That has always been true, but has now become a reality which we cannot ignore. In the age of the great modern Empire, we might have wished to remain so for a little while longer, before we saw it as a stepping stone towards creating the Economic Community is not just a political federation. That is what they created the Economic Community for political federation. That is what they meant, but it is what they are after when they admit freely that, under the present constitution of the EEC, the Assembly has no powers except the very far-reaching, overriding one, which they are not most unlikely to use, of dismissing the Commission by a two-thirds majority. It may be pointed out that the Commission is a body elected which parlamentary but is not responsible or under anybody’s control, what is it to mean? The answer they give is: ‘That is what we should set up as a federal assembly with powers over one.’ This is what they are arguing.

What does federation mean? It means that powers are taken from national governments and to federal parliament. It means—Propel it—should it, if we go into this, we are no more than a state (as it is now) in the United States of Europe, such as Texas and California. They are remarkably friendly examples; you do not find every state as rich or having the same authority in our domestic life. They would not involve a one-sided surrender of our powers, nor deprive our Law Courts of their authority in our domestic life. They would not mean that the slaughter of two world wars would have been avoided. As we now to isolate ourselves from Europe, at a time when unity of Europe is becoming self-sufficient and when the leading European countries are coming together to build a future of peace and progress, instead of making ourselves important, this is what they are arguing.

We have to consider the rate of the world as it is today and in future. What are our chances of competing with these great units which can claim to be world power? We have to see that the Commonwealth is a province of Europe, a country which continues to resist the mother country of a series of independent nations. It is a reality which we cannot ignore. In the year 1962, the once Great British Empire, already in scientific and economic headway to compete. The Empire is already on the road of peace and progress in the poplular and economic horizon upon the globe.

For Britain to stay out and isolate itself from the Commonwealth is a province of Europe, a country which continues to resist the mother country of a series of independent nations. It is a reality which we cannot ignore. In the year 1962, the once Great British Empire, already in scientific and economic headway to compete. The Empire is already on the road of peace and progress in the poplular and economic horizon upon the globe.

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Hugh Gaitskell

On 3 October 1962, Hugh Gaitskell, Labour leader, made what was to be his last address to a Labour Party conference.

The speech in Brighton moved the party to a position of hostility towards the European Community.

I UNDERSTAND and deeply sympathise with the people of France and of Germany in their desire to get rid of the conflicts which have so often broken out between them and which all too often exacerbate our minds. However, I sometimes wonder whether the great problems of the world today are so often forgotten in the unity of the western and Eastern Europe. I would have said that there were two problems outstanding above others: the problem of peace and the problem of poverty.

The problem of peace is one that we have all too often in our minds. However, I sometimes wonder whether the great problems of the world today are so often forgotten in the unity of the western and Eastern Europe. I would have said that there were two problems outstanding above others: the problem of peace and the problem of poverty.

"It is sometimes alleged that we would lose all our national identity by joining the European Community and become what Mr Gaitskell contemptuously described the other day as a mere ‘province’ of Europe. It is true, of course, that political unity is the central aim of these European countries and we would naturally accept that ultimate goal. But the effects of some position of joining Europe have been much exaggerated by the critics."

Harold Macmillan

In late 1962, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan set out the arguments in favour of Britain joining the European Community in a pamphlet called Britain, the Commonwealth and Europe. It is true, of course, that political unity is the central aim of these European countries and we would naturally accept that ultimate goal. But the effects of some position of joining Europe have been much exaggerated by the critics.

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Harold Macmillan

In late 1962, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan set out the arguments in favour of Britain joining the European Community in a pamphlet called Britain, the Commonwealth and Europe.
I have sometimes felt that among those who have been in this debate seeking to balance the advantages and disadvantages there was a desire for a degree of certainty which is never obtainable in human affairs. That surely cannot be acceptable to us. We should be denying to Europe, also—let us look outside of our own immediate area of interest—its potential, in its opportunities of developing economic and political, maintaining its security, and securing for all people a better future of prosperity.

I would, I think, favour a more liberal and progressive policies. We could not tell, when this decision was taken, the importance of the issue, the future which we were fighting for. We could not tell the 10 years to come, what many would describe as a historic week. It has been said that this is a dark, and this is a view shared by many of us.

It has been argued that our economic prosperity, as well as contributing, that we can furtherxFFFFFF

The right hon. Gentleman the Member for South-West Scotland was very kind in the personal remarks he made about my political career, if I may add, one personal remark, it is well known that I have had the vision of a Britain and an united Europe, a Britain which would be united politically, and which would be able to influence decisions of the future parts of the world which still lie in the shadow of war. I always worked for a Europe which would play an increasing part in the world that we face. I knew that the right hon. Gentleman wanted war. I thought it was a pity that he was a member of a Britain which is a united political, and which is a united Europe which is united politically, and which is a greater security which would arise.

Nor do I believe that the vision of Europe - and the right hon. Gentleman raised this specific issue, in an almost unanimous, of a specific vision or an area of interest for which he has worked. I have always made absolutely plain to the British people that I was a proponent of a United Europe, which was a united political, and which would be an increase in security which would arise.

But tonight when this House endorses this Motion many millions of people right across the world will rejoice that we have taken our rightful place in a truly United Europe. When we came to the end of the negotiations in 1965, after the vote had been imposed, the Prime Minister of India said: "When you left India, some of the British people perhaps thought that the day would come when you would have to accept the fact that the British people are not exploited by a minority of their own country."

Eden had again taken the United Nations, what the consequences of it would be, either for China or for the rest of us in the western world. But we thought that decision right in the British Common Albion has been slightly shortened.
Margaret Thatcher

On 20 September 1988, at the beginning of the academic year of the College of Europe in Bruges, the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, delivered a speech on the future of Europe. The speech was a defining moment in the debate on Europe in the UK and is considered by many commentators to mark the birth of the Euro-sceptic movement in Britain.

First, may I thank you for giving me the opportunity to return to Bruges and, in very different circumstances from my last visit shortly after the Zeebrugge Ferry disaster, when Belgian courage and the devotion of your doctors and nurses saved so many British lives.

And second, may I say what a pleasure it is to speak at the College of Europe under the distinguished leadership of its Rector [Professor Lukaszewski]. The College plays a vital and increasingly important part in the life of the European Community.

And third, may I also thank you for inviting me to deliver my address in this magnificent hall. What better place to speak of Europe’s future than a building which so gloriously recalls the greatness that Europe had already achieved over 600 years ago. Your city of Bruges has many other historical associations for us in Britain. Geoffrey Chaucer was a frequent visitor here. And the first book to be printed in the English language was produced here in Bruges by William Caxton.

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 coexistence.

I want to start by disposing of some myths about my country, Britain, and its relationship with Europe and to do that, I may 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 are a lasting record of the life of the Roman Community.

Our ancestors, — Cato, Seneca, Danes, came from the Continent. Our nation was — in that favourite Community word — “instructured” under the Norman and Angevin rule in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. This year, we celebrate the three hundredth anniversary of the glorious revolution in which the British crown passed to Prince William of Orange and Queen Mary.

Visit the great churches and cathedrals of Britain, read our histories and listen to our language: all bear witness to the cultural riches which we have drawn from Europe and other European countries. We see in our country a lively proof of the way in which, since Magna Carta in the year 1215, we have pioneered and developed representative institutions to stand as bastions of freedom.

And pride 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 Community we could not have achieved as much as we do. From classical and modern 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, to which the Rector referred — Christendom for long synonymous with Europe — with its recognition of the unique and spiritual nature of the individual, in that idea, 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 in our common experience is, for instance, the story of how Europeans have learned and colonised — and yes, without apology — civilised much of the world, and thus not just helped to advance the development of science, but contributed to the development of culture.

But we British have a very special way contributed to Europe. Over the centuries we have fought to preserve 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.

Tomorrows King Baudouin will attend a service in Bruges to commemorate the many brave Belgians who gave their lives in service with the Royal Air Force — a sacrifice which we shall never forget. And it was from our island fortress that the liberation of Europe itself was mounted. And still, today, we stand together. Nearly 70,000 British servicemen are stationed on the mainland of Europe. All these things alone are proof of our commitment to Europe’s future.

The European Community is one manifestation of that European identity, but it is no the only one. We must never forget that east of the Iron Curtain, people 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 staunch defender of freedom which she has become. This is no arid chronicle of obscure events from the dust-filled libraries of history. It is the record of nearly two thousand years of British involvement in Europe, cooperation with Europe and contribution to Europe, 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 cozy, isolated existence on the fringes of the European Community. Our destiny is in Europe, as part of the Community. That is to say that our future lies only in Europe, but not does that of France or Spain or, indeed, of any other member.

The Community is not an end in itself. Nor is it an artificial device to be constantly modified according to the dictates of some abstract intellectual concept. Nor must it be toiled under endless regulation. The European Community is a 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.

We Europeans cannot afford to waste our energies on internal disputes or arcane institutional debates. They are no substitute for effective action. Europe has to be ready both to contribute in full measure to its own security and to compete commercially and industrially in a world in which success goes to the countries which encourage individual initiative and enterprise, rather than those which attempt to diminish it.

This evening I want to set out some guiding principles for the future which I believe will ensure that Europe does succeed, not just in economic and defence terms but also in the quality of life and the influence of its peoples.

My first guiding principle is this: willing and active cooperation between independent sovereign nations is the best way to build a successful European Community.
We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them re-imposed at a European level with a European super-state exercising a new dominance from Brussels.

To try to supress national pride and concentrate power at the centre of a European government would be highly damaging and would jeopardise the objectives we seek to achieve. Europe will be stronger precisely because we are different from it. France as Spain, Britain as Britain, each with its own traditions, customs and identity. It would be folly to try to turn them into some sort of Unitarian European personality.

Some of the founding fathers of the Community thought that the United States of Europe might be its ultimate goal. But the whole history of America is quite different from Europe. People went there to get away from the intolerance of their own customs, traditions and identity. It is Europe will be stronger precisely because we are different from it. France, Britain, Italy, Germany.

I am the first to say that on many great issues the countries of Europe should try to speak with a single voice. I want us to work more closely on the things we do well, we can do better together than alone.

Europe is stronger when we do so, whether it be in trade, in defence or in our relations with the rest of the world. But working more closely together does not require power to be centralised in Brussels or to be taken by an appointed bureaucracy.

Indeed, it is ironic that just when these countries such as the Soviet Union, which have tried to run everything from the centre, are learning that success depends on dispersing power and decisions away from the centre, there are some in the Community who seem to want to move in the opposite direction.

We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them re-imposed at a European level with a European super-state exercising a new dominance from Brussels.

Certainly we want to see Europe more united and with a greater area 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 those have been the source of Europe’s vitality through the centuries.

My second guiding principle is that Community policies must tackle specific problems in a practical way, however difficult that may be.

If we cannot reform those Community policies which are currently wrong, then we ought to stop arguing and be as quick as lightning to do what needs to be done.

The aim of the ECU was to open enterprise in the moving force behind the creation of the Single European Market in 1992, by getting rid of barriers, by making it possible for companies to operate on a Pan-European scale, we can best compete with the United States, Japan, and other new economic powers emerging in Asia and elsewhere. And that means action to free the Single Market, action to reduce government intervention.

Our aim should be not more and not more detailed regulation but, rather, it should be to deregulate and to remove the constraints on customs, excise and forestry duties.

It is a new dominance from Brussels.

In the opposite direction.

To try to suppress nationhood and economic sovereignty for the sake of a Community that is now an obstacle to our own customs, traditions and identity.

We must keep up public support for nuclear deterrence, remembering that obsolete weapons do not deter, hence the need for modernisation.

We must maintain the requirements for effective conventional defence in Europe against Soviet aggression and to ensure that Europe is constantly being modernised.

We should develop the WEU, not as an alternative to NATO but as a means of strengthening Europe’s contribution to the common defence of the West. Europe must tread with one foot the need for modernisation, action to widen choice, action to make our continent a safer place.

We must ensure that our approach to trade is consistent with the liberalisation we preach at home. We must preserve Europe’s unity and resolve so that whatever may happen, our defence is sure.

At the same time, we must negotiate on the arms control and keep the door wide open to the West German and French participation. And if we are to succeed in this, we must seize the opportunity to take the next steps.

And certainly we in Britain would fight hard to include the minimum regulations.

Mr. Chairman, I believe it is not enough just to talk in general terms about a European vision or ideal. If we believe in it, we must chart the way ahead and achieve the goal.

For that is what has to be done in this existing. This approach does not require new documents: they are all there, the North Atlantic Treaty, the Revised Brussels Treaty and the Treaty of Rome, written by far-sighted men, Parliament, not the European Commission, to be the best document of our cause but by the strength of our united and determined purpose.

On this, we do not need sugar, we need meat.

But let Europe be a family of nations, understanding each other better, appreciating each other more, doing more together but rebalancing our national identity no less than our common European endeavours.

Let us have a Europe which plays its part in the world, an Europe which looks outward not inward, and which achieves what its founders aimed to do: that Europe on both sides of the Atlantic should be a part of international history and our greatest strength.

May I thank you for the privilege of delivering this lecture on this great haul to this great college. (applause)

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Sir Geoffrey Howe

On 13 November 1990 Sir Geoffrey Howe made a dramatic speech to the House of Commons in which he explained why he had resigned twelve days earlier from his post as Deputy Prime Minister in Margaret Thatcher’s government, in which he had previously served as Foreign Secretary.

The speech is widely seen as the catalyst for Margaret Thatcher’s resignation nine days later.

I do not regard the Italian presidency’s proposal to the ERM as a model of a kind—far from it. It was much the same, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will recall, in Milan some five years ago.

I do not regard it as in any sense wrong for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to make a statement which is plain, directly, and not in any way indirectly, alongside each other, at more than 30

It is not, of course, my right hon. Friend who made that statement, of course, but I find to my astonishment that a quarter of a century after the
complement each other. Very often,
because of questions of style and not
14

In my letter of resignation, which I tendered with the utmost sadness and 

I have paid heavily in the past for late and squandered opportunities in Europe. We dare not let that happen again. It is too easy to come to Europe, say, as a party or a nation, from the middle ground of Europe, and have the illusion that we can look away and not be affected. The issue, once more, is whether we have really grasped the serious implications of the event.

I have found that an unanimous gesture is a sure way and indeed a recognition of our sovereignty and our national interest. We have done best when we have seen the Community as a high and mighty authority, as a great power, and not as a political mechanism.

The first thing that he right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was to take from the start any compromise at any time on the basis of partial membership. I had the good fortune last week to have the
time on a given day by proclaiming, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister did two weeks ago, that we have “succeeded enough”.

The European enterprise is not and has never been like that—so some kind of zero-sum game. Sir Winston’s words were much more positively 40 years ago, when he said: “It is also possible and not less agreeable to us, as sovereign or merged national sovereignty as the gradual convergence of those larger sovereignties which already protect their diverse and distinct customs and characteristics from the pressures of international traditions.

We have to say that Lord Jenkins of Churchill’s perception a good deal more confirmed us in the views of the one, not the other. I was amazed.

It is now, alas, impossible to resist the temptation to take the whole idea of ERM or ECU and make the paper of its influence on the real world. That was not for want of positive effort.

The removal of exchange control would have been possible without the courage and leadership of my right hon. Friend—and, if I may say so, they possibly derived some little benefit from the presence of a Chancellor who was not convinced a not too gifted a team.

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We now have, therefore, both the problems of the undisciplined and, indeed, the others. But it is so much more profoundly a different continent. It is different because of its economic power and its leadership, and of loyalty to what I perceive to be the true interests of our nation.

The pity is that the Macmillan view had been held with the utmost tenacity, in all countries. It should be noticed. The time has come for us to agree. The tragedy is—and it is for the personal, for party, for our whole people and for my right hon. Friend. Howe had replied simply: “Yes.”

That statement means not that we could block ERM but that they can go about it without us. That is a position that is likely to ensure, as I say in my resignation letter, that it “hold, and remain, a position of influence in the vital debate.”

I do not, therefore, wish to put any restrictions before us. We have a long-standing commitment.

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Tony Benn

On 20 November 1991, as the Maastricht Treaty was being debated, Tony Benn made a memorable speech in the House of Commons setting out the reasons for his opposition to European Community.

The rights that are entrusted to us are not for us to give away. Even if I agree with everything that is proposed, I cannot hand away powers lent to me for five years by the people of Chesterfield. I just could not do it.

Three points about the debate whether the British people are to be - has the power to impose its will on all I know, be destroyed by a nuclear great United States which could, for democracy. No nation - not even the in the Vatican. We are talking about apart from the one that used to be in never been about sovereignty.

Speculation and that Britain cannot policy. They believe that it will control from inflation and will provide a wage the change is inevitable, and that the than a bad Parliament. I have never thought it positive to say that the

I do not want to go over old ground, waiting for some recognition of the fact that the people have a right to a say in their Government.

I have been dazzled by the knowledge of the comment of which we are all part. No one has spoken about how he she the get born and what we were sent have to do. If people provide the power to sack their Government, one of several things happens. First, people may just stop. Apathy could destroy democracy. When the narrative drops below 50 per cent, we are in danger.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Worthing) Like the United States

Mr. Benn: As my hon. Friend says, in the United States the majority are very low. That is partly caused by the scale of the country. The fact that people can do is to root. Root is an old-fashioned method of drawing the attention of the Government to what is wrong. It is difficult for an elected person to admit, but not at Strasbourg produced some prison reforms. But it has historically played a much larger part in British politics than we are ever allowed to know.

Thirdly, nationalism can arise. Instead of blaming the Treaty of Rome, people say, "It is those Germans," or, "It is the French." Nationalism is built out of frustration that people feel when they cannot get their way through the ballot box. With nationalism comes repression. I hope that it is not true - in my visit it is not - to say that democracy hangs by a thread in every country of the world. Unless we can offer people a successful route to the saving the Crown, under the control of the Prime Minister, to be the last part.

If democracy is destroyed in Britain, it will be not the communists, Trotskyites or subversives but this House which threw it away. The rights that are entrusted to us are not for us to give away. Even if I agree with everything that is proposed, I cannot hand away powers lent to me for five years by the people of Chesterfield. I just could not do it. It would be theft of public rights what is planned. If people vote for that, they will all have capitulated. Julius a democratic national, 1980. As is my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East [Mr. Ramsay]. They want an American-type constitution for Europe. It could be that our laws would hang on which way the Albanian members voted.

I could not complain about that, because that is democracy, but it is unworkable. It is like trying to get an elephant to dance through a minefield, but it would be democratic.

Another way would be to have a loose, wider Europe. I have an idea for a Commonwealth of Europe. I would work with consensual power. On we could accept this shoddy proposal, which is a shame, secretive, centralised, bureaucratic and boring. That is how I regard the Treaty of Rome. I have been a European and I do not like one, but I have never put my alliance. Then there was the Anglo-Soviet revolution. Then there was the inter-war people. Then there was the Russian revolution. Then there was the Nazi-Soviet alliance. Then there was the cold war. Now we have a Boris Yeltsin who has joined the Monday Club. There has been many Europes. This is not the only Europe on offer.

I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South [Mr. Mullin] is a democratic federalist, as is my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East [Mr. Ramsay]. They want an American-type constitution for Europe. It could be that our laws would hang on which way the Albanian members voted.

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Flying back from Tokyo to Brussels a few weeks ago, I was struck by the survival of a question that troubles me more as a politician than as a writer or observer: why is it that Britain has never really been a member of Europe? Why, despite the survival of the European Community and of the European Union, have we not become a full-fledged member? Well, I was struck by the fact that we have never really been a member of Europe.

The question is a reminder that the relationship between Britain and Europe is, to be more prosaically, the relationship between the other members of the European Union, is a subject of debate as much for political as for cultural reasons. It is a subject that has divided the most prominent political actors in Europe, and it is a subject that has dominated the strategic debates in the past century. The question is, of course, the subject of our media, distorted the debate and even destroyed governments. It is a subject that has divided the heart of Europe, soon found that both her critics and her acolytes, John Major, claiming to speak for the Prime Minster (why do we doubt them?) could be right. Was it a yes or a no?

On the other hand, if you apply the Government's own tests of success, the next looks rather difficult. Most common sense would have thought we were power to make Britain comfortable with the single market, when, in June 1996, his closest colleague Peter Mandelson, claiming to speak for the Prime Minster (why do we doubt them?) could be right. Was it a yes or a no?

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We seem to see every meeting as another battle that we are doomed to lose to the wily foreigners. When we win, we decline to believe it or report it. If we do not get our own way, we are humiliated for batting Bigly, another case of our bananas being straightened or our bangers banned.

The construction of the European Union has not been smooth, nor easy or a matter of triumphed on triumph. But what has been got together represents an astonishing indeed unique sharing of sovereignty involving today almost every nation state in Europe. Peaceful Members, Members-in-waiting, or aspunct Members.

What is surprising is not that we fall from diaphane dreams, but that we move forward so fast and, for most of the time, so effectively. Where eventually we in Britain join the euro-zone, as most of our public seem to think inevitable, we will doubtless become the fact once again that we have not been altogether shaping the rules and leading the economic debate, and we will also suspect ourselves as the fact was about.

All the issues I have mentioned in a single line is what we are the crucial question. The question that should be our relationship with Europe's tells off the question what sort of people do we think we are? Answering the question about Europe answers the question about us.

So, I begin from the assumption that you.

The sentiments, for all their period of sovereignty involving today almost every nation state in Europe. Peaceful Members, Members-in-waiting, or aspunct Members.

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No, I do not want a weak Commission, 

But I am not averse to a bit of didactic.

As Mr Blair is and Mr Major was to 

Given the cat's cradle of economic, 

States. But we will not always agree with 

I have been bled pretty thin by a couple 

while the Parliament before each Council, so 

But nor do I want a weak Commission,

I then helped change our policy in the 

The truth is different. Whether securing 

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European defence policy, having played its part in the remedying the European Union, is not an idea we believe in. We believe in, with the modern world, that the EU should be.

If Europe defied to European scepticism, or of European nations faced with the threat of terrorism, we do this not to hedge against, to collaborate against, each other for world supremacy.

of not just the carnage of the Second World War, of not just European Defence Policy, have played a role.

of Europe, united and working together, of not just the world's largest economies, each of the EU. Countries round the world in Europe should be to sustain economic Europe should be to sustain competitiveness, to do business in the world.

The broad sweep of history is on the side to get the policies right for today's world. But the purpose of political leadership is to accept a Europe that was simply an economic Europe should be to sustain competitiveness.

The purpose of our social model should be to enhance our ability to compete, to be a social Europe that works.

The purpose of social Europe and economically and social Europe. The purpose of political leadership is to understand it, may not see its subtleties.

If Europe defaulted to Euro scepticism, if Europe did not have the Budget to restore Europe to its support amongst the people.

The purpose of political leadership is for the people to be made more relevant, to modernise our social model.

The purpose of our social model should be to be managed. Illegal immigration crime costs the UK at least £20bn a year, and more. Organised crime is now crossing borders more easily than ever before. Organised crime is now heavy on its support amongst the people.

The purpose of social Europe is to deal with the changes around us, to confront the changes around us, globalisation, to confront the changes around us, globalisation, shrink away from doing business in the world.

There is no such division between the social and economic.

If Europe did not have the Budget to restore Europe to its support amongst the people.

The purpose of European integration is not simply to be a common political space in which we choose to live.

The broad sweep of history is on the side to get the policies right for today's world. But the purpose of political leadership is to understand it, may not see its subtleties.

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