PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH

ON

EUROPE

IN

BRUGES

ON

20 SEPTEMBER 1988
First, may I thank you for inviting me to deliver this address.

Where better place to speak of Europe's future than in a building which so gloriously recalls the greatness that Europe had already achieved over 600 years ago?

Perhaps I should also thank you for your temerity in inviting me to speak on the
subject of Europe at all.

If you believe some of the things said and written about my views on Europe, it must seem rather like inviting King Herod to speak on the subject of nursery education.

Britain and Europe

So I might start by disposing of some myths about my country, Britain, and its
To hear some people, you would think that Britain first interested itself in Europe some time in the late 1950s, was rebuffed by General de Gaulle's non, and finally limped into the Community in 1973 as an unconvinced member, wishing heartily that it could be somewhere else and since then has spent all its time arguing about relationship to Europe.
its financial contributions.

Well, there certainly was a very real problem over our unfair share of the costs of the Community which had to be solved - and has been solved.

But that view of Britain's role is a travesty.

The fact is that Britain's relations with the
rest of Europe, the continent of Europe, have been the dominant factor of our history:

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the Celts, who first cultivated our land, came from the continent of Europe;

for three hundred years we were part of the Roman Empire, an experience which shaped not only much of our language but

The Celt, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Norman, and Dane all had a go at restructuring our nation - to win a favourite Community War.
Norman and Angevin rule in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Anglo-Saxons, like the Danes who followed them, came from the continent of Europe, and our nation was, in that favourite and treasured word, "restructured" under Angevin rule. Many of our laws and traditions.
from the sixteenth century, Britain looked outwards from Europe to a wider world - as had Portugal before us, and France, Spain and Holland after us.

The difference was that we were more successful;

for centuries, Britain was a home for people from the rest of Europe who sought sanctuary from tyranny;
British assistance to liberation movements throughout the last war kept alive the flame of liberty until the day of liberation came.

And it was from our island fortress that the liberation of Europe itself was mounted.

Britain did indeed fight wars against other European countries - which European
country did not?

But the cause for which we fought -

against Philip II, against Louis XIV,

against Napoleon, against the Kaiser,

against Hitler - was to save Europe from

falling under the dominance of a single

power.

We did not fight against Europe.

We fought against tyranny and for

freedom.
Had it not been for Britain, I dare say that Europe would have been united long before now.

But at what cost would that unity have been achieved?

Would Prussia have maintained its independence in the eighteenth century without British help?

Would Spain have rid itself of Joseph...
Bonaparte without the Duke of Wellington?

Would Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands be free now but for the determination of Britain and America to fight Nazi tyranny?

Moreover, when the movement towards European economic unity gathered force after the last war, some of the most powerful encouragement came from Winston Churchill
in his renowned speech in Zurich in 1946.

It is true that Britain did not then grasp the opportunity to become part of the emerging European Economic Community.

With hindsight, that was a setback for Britain.

But it was also a setback for Europe, which set out to build a Community without the benefit of the British traditions of—
individualism, of freedom under the law
and of common sense.

Europe's Future

This is no arid chronicle of obscure historical facts.

It is the record of nearly two thousand years of British involvement in Europe and contribution to Europe.
Yes, we have looked also to wider
as have most European nations,
horizons— and thank goodness we did,
because Europe would never have prospered
and never will prosper as a narrow,
inward-looking club.

But that does not diminish the fact that
Britain is as full, as rightful, as
wholeheartedly a part of Europe as any
other member state of the European
Community.
The European Community belongs to all its members, and must reflect the traditions and aspirations of all of them in equal measure.

And let me be quite clear.

Britain does not dream of an alternative to a European Community or of a cosy, isolated existence on its fringes.

Our destiny is in Europe, as part of the
Community - although that is not to say that it lies only in Europe, any more than that of France or Spain or indeed the Community itself does.

The Community is not an end in itself: not an institutional gadget to be endlessly modified in the search for theoretical perfection.
It is the instrument by which the people of Europe can ensure their future prosperity and security in a world in which many other powerful economies are emerging and in which increasing numbers of countries will have access to powerful and sophisticated weapons, including nuclear weapons.

The world will not wait for us.
We cannot afford to waste time on internal disputes or arcane institutional debates. Europe has to be ready both to ensure its own security and to compete - and compete in a world in which success goes to the countries which show the greatest flexibility and guarantee the greatest freedom for the enterprise of their people.
I want this evening to set out some simple guidelines for that future which I believe will ensure that Europe does compete and will succeed.

**Strength through Diversity**

My first guideline is: forget a United States of Europe, it will not come!

First, strength comes through diversity. We should welcome the differences in our national tradition, and ways of thinking, rather than strain fruitlessly to homogenise them in a United States of Europe.
I do not say that lightly: after all, it was Winston Churchill in Zurich who was one of the first to speak of a United States of Europe.

The fact is that the founders of the present European Community did their thinking at a time of Europe's maximum weakness and division.

In the historical circumstances of the
time, in which the United States of America played such a crucial part in the victory of democracy, it was natural that they should believe that Europe's salvation lay in federation and the creation in the longer term of a single European State.

There are two fundamental weaknesses in that theory.
But that theory underestimates the strength of national traditions in Europe and the desire of people to preserve them. Those national traditions and the regional differences are part of Europe's vitality and inventiveness, which give it the great cultural achievements of the past, such as this magnificent hall.

Can anyone believe that such a monument would ever have been created, had it been
the task of 'COREPER DEPUTIES' to supervise its design, as is the case with the new Council Building in Brussels!

Europe will be stronger precisely because it has France as France, Spain as Spain, Belgium as Belgium, and Britain as Britain, each with its own language and traditions, rather than trying to dissolve them into some sort of neutral
personality.

If we try to enforce uniformity we shall deprive Europe of the source of its greatest achievements.

A commitment to diversity is as important as one for harmonisation. We should accept diversity as a strength, not try to harmonise it away.

The second weakness of the federalist theory is that it fails to recognise greater decentralisation as the path to economic...
and political success.

I am the first to say that on as many issues as possible the countries of Europe should speak with a single voice.

I want to see them work more closely together on the things we can do better together than singly.

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 — and this is where I take issue with some of the recent comments by President Delors— working more closely together does not require a sacrifice of political independence or of the rights of national Parliaments; it does not need the creation of a new European super-state with the Commission at its heart.
It is perfectly possible for countries to work together while preserving their national sovereignty, to obtain the advantages of economic union without the sacrifice of political independence. Look what has happened recently in the Single Act programme: agreement on liberalisation of capital movements; on mutual recognition of professional qualifications; on home buying liberalisation. All measures to liberalise markets and facilitate economic convergence by reducing intervention by governments. This may not be easy to grasp for those who are used to governments running the economic life of a country.
But for those who believe that governments should provide the framework, while leaving everything else to the decision of individual people, it seems quite natural.

Indeed I find it ironic that when those countries such as the Soviet Union which have tried to run everything from the centre are learning that success depends on developing power and decisions away
from the centre, there are those in the West Commission in Brussels who seem to want to move in the opposite direction.

Let me say bluntly on behalf of Britain: we have not embarked on the business of throwing back the frontiers of the state at home, only to see a European super-state getting ready to exercise a new dominance from Brussels.

Then imposed at a European level, I believe that this is now widely understood and accepted in the Community. But we must be vigilant against the temptation to see more regulation as an easy way out of old or new problems.
It is absolutely crucial for the European Community's success that, at each stage of its development, it should act with the full consent of the people. That will not be achieved by extension of the powers of the Commission or the invocation of the European Court in a form of judicial review.

It will require decisions reached by negotiation between sovereign governments,
each elected by their people, with those decisions subject to confirmation by national Parliaments.

Certainly we want to see Europe more united.

But it must be in a way which both preserves diversity and enlarges liberty.
Europe open to enterprise

My second guideline is the need for the Community to encourage individual enterprise if it is to flourish and succeed.

The basic framework is there: if you read the Treaty of Rome carefully you will see that it is indeed a Charter for Economic
Liberty. It has not always been applied that way. We would not need a single National programme now if the |
But that is not how it has been applied. Community's initial impetus to liberalisation had been |
so far sustained.

Our own experience in Britain has pointed the same way.

We have rediscovered the spirit of enterprise by realising that public resources are in fact private resources taken by the state, and that the individual is far better equipped to take
many decisions than the state is.

The aim of a Europe open to enterprise is the moving force behind the creation of the Single European Market by 1992.

By getting rid of barriers, by making it possible for companies to operate on a Europe-wide scale, we can best compete with the United States, Japan and the other new economic power centres arising
But completion of the Single Market must not mean tying ourselves up in ever more regulations.

Indeed it should mean fewer regulations, but simpler and clearer ones.

Our aim is not to regulate more or to issue ever more directions from the centre.
It is to deregulate, to liberalise and to open up.

If we can achieve that, we will have established a very good model for the Community's future development in other areas.

Rather than setting grandiose objectives such as a European Central Bank for the sake of having yet another European institution,
let us proceed by considering at each stage what is necessary. We have only just reached agreement on liberal free movement of capital — do we yet have free movement of capital around Europe? Have we abolished exchange control?

The answer is no, not yet.

Until we can take these basic practical steps, it is a waste of time to argue about a European Central Bank, which presupposes that individual governments have been agreed.
are prepared to give up fundamental economic decisions. By all means, let us find practical ways of co-operating. If they cannot even decide to give up exchange control and to allow free movement of capital, then it is illusion to expect surrender of control over national economic policies—and I do not but we must not hide from ourselves that all our experience suggests that for a moment believe that most European governments want that anyway—are prepared to surrender control over national economic policies.
It is the same with frontiers.

Of course we must make it easier for goods to go through frontiers.

Of course we must make it easier for the citizens of the Community to go through frontiers.

But it is a matter of plain commonsense that you cannot abolish frontiers if you are still going to have the capability to stop the movement of drugs, of terrorists.

Of course, we should abolish unnecessary controls at frontiers, just as we are doing internally.
of illegal immigrants.

So, my basic guideline is that we should avoid rhetoric. We need to suppress the tendency towards inflated oratory. (Comment: We should practice what we preach.)

We shall make much quicker progress if we define practical steps towards closer cooperation and concentrate on achieving them.

After all if we do complete the single market in 1992 it will have taken 35 years
of detailed work since the Treaty of Rome first set the target.

The fourth guideline is that Europe open to the world must remain.

We must ensure that our approach to the outside world is consistent with what we preach at home.

We cannot work to reduce barriers and
regulations within Europe, while
practising protectionism in our trade with
other countries.

There are powerful pressures internationally to
reduce agricultural support and protection so that market
agriculture, unless we are prepared to
force again operate in this sector. We in Europe should
continue the process in Europe beyond the
start which we have already made.

Just as economic success in each of our
countries has come from restructuring,
from getting rid of restrictive practices
and subsidies, and by privatising state-run industries, so the expansion of the world economy requires us to continue the process of removing barriers to trade in the multilateral negotiations in the GATT.

Europe has a longer tradition than any other country of being outward-looking, and therefore has a responsibility to give a
lead here, a responsibility which is particularly directed towards the less developed countries. They need greater trade opportunities, not the dumping of Europe's agricultural surpluses in the form of food aid.

Europe and Defence

Lastly, we need to look much more seriously at
Europe's role in defence.

We can be satisfied with what NATO has achieved over 40 years.

The fact is things are going our way: the democratic model of a free enterprise society has proved itself superior; freedom is on the offensive the world over for the first time in my life-time.
But there can be no question of relaxing our defence.

Indeed it is quite clear that Europe is going to be called upon to bear a much heavier responsibility for its own security than in the past.

To do that we must find ways:

- to maintain the US commitment to Europe's defence, while recognising the
burden on their resources of their world role and their natural desire to reduce their defence spending in Europe itself - particularly as Europe grows wealthier;

- to meet the requirements for stronger conventional defence in Europe to match the modernisation of Soviet forces and overcome the shameful reluctance of some European countries to provide the
necessary funds even for an adequate defence;

- to keep public confidence in the continuing need for nuclear deterrence based on modern weapons;

- to preserve Europe's strength and unity at a time of change and possible instability in the Soviet Union and
Eastern Europe, while keeping the door open to future collaboration with those countries.

NATO and the WEU have long recognised where the problems lie and have pointed out the solutions.

The time has come when we can no longer put off giving substance to the declarations about higher overall defence
spending and better value for money
through the standardisation of equipment
which have for too long remained empty
phrases.

It's not an institutional problem, it's
not a problem of drafting: it's something
much more simple and more profound: it is
a question of political will and political
courage, of convincing people in every
European country that they cannot rely for
ever on others for their defence but must shoulder more of the burden themselves.

It comes down to one single word: leadership.

The future must lie:

in strengthening NATO, not in seeking alternatives to it;
in removing the obstacles to full military collaboration between all NATO's members,
in particular those who cannot bring themselves to integrate their forces fully with NATO;

and by developing the WEU not as an alternative NATO, but as a means of strengthening Europe's contribution to the common defence of the West.

It is to this task, to enhancing our security, rather than to devising new long-term
goals for the European Community that the weight of European governments' intellectual and political effort will need to be devoted over the next few years.

The British approach

I have set out the ways in which we in Britain want to see Europe develop.
It is a pragmatic and common-sense, rather than visionary approach, and all the better for that.

It does not require new documents: they are all there in the North Atlantic Treaty, and the Treaty of Rome, texts written by far-sighted men.

What we need is to get on with the business of implementing those texts
rather than let ourselves be distracted by distant and utopian goals. (Comment: isn't that what happened to the "janitors?".)

However far we may all want to go, the truth is that you can only get there one step at a time.

Let's concentrate on making sure that we get those steps right and the rest will follow.