

EMBARGO: THURSDAY 5TH JULY 1979: 20.00 HRS

SPEECH BY CHRISTOPHER TUGENDHAT, COMMISSIONER OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, AT A DINNER GIVEN BY THE WELSH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY IN CARDIFF, 5TH JULY 1979, IN PRESENCE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES

THE EUROPEAN IDENTITY

Patriotism

"To be European is to share in the inheritance of each of the European peoples, not to lose the heritage of one's own", said Christopher Soames, formerly a distinguished British Vice-President of the European Commission. I would add to that by saying a good European is also a patriot in his own country. The European Community provides the framework within which the individuality and diversity of our nations can best be expressed and linked in constructive rather than destructive endeavour. It is certainly not - as sometimes appears to be thought - a Community where a sanitised, standardised Euro-ism can be devised by committees of experts and promulgated by Regulation.

We do have shared values, ideals and interests which the Community exists to promote. And/^{as}the Community develops and is seen to embody and uphold those aspirations important to the lives of our citizens, so will it increasingly attract their respect and loyalty. It is from the habits of co-operation and the perception of shared objectives that our sense of a common European identity can evolve. In so doing it will broaden, rather than diminish or extinguish, the particular patriotisms of the nations which together make up the Community.

Tonight I would like to talk about these shared aspirations and to explore a little the broader goals of the Community of which we are now a part. It seems appropriate to do so here in the capital of Wales because your country provides an example of the way in which a sense of identity, that of being Welsh and proud of it, need not be exclusive of a wider sense of belonging, of being British and proud of it too, but rather enables both loyalties to be enriched by each other.

All the traditions and regions of the Community, from the Shetland Isles to Sicily, and from Bantry Bay to Bavaria, are equally important and equally to be cherished. A strong cultural tradition, such as you have here in Wales, is a valuable contribution from the Welsh people to the Community, without which we would all be the poorer.

Welsh citizens have a long tradition of contributing to the spiritual, philosophical, economic and political life of places outside Wales. Skipping over the many British leaders for whom you have been responsible during the past century I would like to remind you of the distinguished international career of that 19th century "apostle of peace", (and later MP for Merthyr), Henry Richard, who combined a passionate affection for Wales with an unceasing attempt to draw together old enemies in Europe. When he organised the first European peace conference in 1848 he held it in Brussels. I hope that our efforts in Brussels today are a step towards the goals of peace and international order for which he laboured.

Our common heritage

Joining the European Community has involved a major and difficult adjustment for the British people. The Community is Britain's first permanent peacetime engagement on the continent since the Middle Ages, so we should not be surprised if our focus takes time to adjust. But no matter how many times we hear discussion of Britain "in Europe" or "out of Europe" it is a fact that Europe is where we are, and where we always have been.

Culturally, spiritually and politically the history of Europe is our history too. Our language, literature and music blend countless European influences and inspirations. Our ideas about the world owe a debt not only to men such as Locke, Burke, Hume and John Stuart Mill but also to Voltaire, Rousseau, Hegel and Marx. And no British Government has for long felt free to ignore the political developments on the European continent, whether they were wars, new alliances or expansionism by a powerful European power - as two World Wars remind us.

The days of Empire allowed us for a time to regard European affairs as somewhat parochial compared with the task of spreading British influence around the globe. But with this great phase of our history over and Empire gone the illusion of separateness from Europe can no longer be sustained. Britannia does not now rule the waves, nor can ruling the waves any more guarantee the freedom and prosperity of British subjects. In the European Community Britain is returning to its natural home in Europe, rather than setting out to explore it for the first time. T.S. Eliot summed it up rather well

when he wrote "We shall not cease from exploring and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time".

The Values of the Community

What makes the European Community a real Community today is more than geographical proximity or common material interests. It is our sense of common values, above all our common pursuit of freedom and peace. A belief in the value of the individual lies at the heart of the development of our European civilisation and today gives it much of its strength and moral purpose. It is not necessary to claim that all great ideas have come from Europe - other parts of the globe have contributed much to religion, art and music over the centuries - to recognise the particularly remarkable contribution its thinkers have made to political thought. The democratic ideals of free elections, freedom of speech, equality of opportunity, equality before the law, freedom from arrest without trial, and the pursuit of social justice, plurality and tolerance all owe much to Europe.

In the post-war years, when a new Europe was being constructed out of the rubble of the old, the Founding Fathers of the Community - men like Schuman, Monnet and Adenauer - believed that if the leading democratic nations of Europe overcame their old rivalries and entered an entirely new relationship then, in addition to reducing, (or eliminating) the prospect of armed conflict between them, they would also immeasurably strengthen the freedoms and rights which each of them cherished. The safeguarding and enhancement of democratic liberties has from the outset been a major objective of the European Community. That is why we find in the Preamble to the Treaty of Rome, the technical and economic content of which is more widely known, the statement that the contracting States 'wishing to eliminate the barriers which divide Europe' are resolved 'by thus pooling their resources to preserve and strengthen peace and liberty' and call upon 'the other peoples of Europe who share their ideal to join in their efforts'.

A Democratic Community

In the world of today, where democratic ideals are not always on the advance, it falls to the Community to uphold the banner of democracy by showing that it works, that it can help proud nations to forget old animosities and work together, and that it enables men and women to live more happy, fulfilled and useful lives than is possible under any other system. That this role of the Community is often more clearly understood outside than inside it was shown by the speed with which three European states which recently threw off dictatorships - Greece, Portugal and Spain - applied to join as a means of strengthening and guaranteeing their newly established democracies.

If the Community is to carry out this responsibility it must itself be an example of an order which translates these principles into reality. In its respect for the rights of all its Member States, regardless of their size it must exemplify partnership. In its ability to embrace the rich diversity of customs and interest of our peoples it must demonstrate tolerance. In the application of its rules it must underline the impartiality of justice. And by providing in 1979 the opportunity for citizens to have their voice heard at the centre of Community affairs in a directly elected European Parliament it indicates its awareness that institutions should serve the people and respond to their aspirations and needs.

Our Common Interests

If our vision of the European Community is to inspire and unite our peoples in a secular age we need to recapture some of the enthusiasm for the ideals which motivated its establishment, and give them greater prominence. But at the same time our vision must be sustained by organisation and by economic strength.

The founders of the European Community rightly concluded that economic pressures in a world where the individual European nation state was increasingly conscious of its inability alone to safeguard its own interests helped provide an impetus towards European unity without which their hopes of progress would have been less soundly based. They also recognised that a strong democratic system needed the support of a successful social market economy.

The Treaty of Rome therefore provided a detailed practical basis for the development of a wider common market and for the complex task of reducing barriers between the Member States. Those charged with the task of implementing its provisions find themselves deeply involved in economic and legal details which, in their humdrum and pedestrian nature, often seem far removed from any grand European ideal but which may nonetheless be another well-made brick in the slow and unspectacular construction of a Community that will last.

The Community of the Nine is a powerful economic force in the modern world. It has a gross national product not far short of that of the United States of America, and considerably above that of the Soviet Union, China or Japan. Its population is larger than that of either of the two super-powers, and it leads the world in many of the most important technologies. Member States transact some 40% of the free world's trade, and hold some 30% of the world's currency reserves. They provide almost half of the official development assistance to the Third World, and much of investment and new technology which developing countries seek.

These impressive facts illustrate the considerable economic strength of the Community in the world today, yet they tell only half of the story. The remarkable post-war recovery of Europe has been accompanied by a relative decline in the world power, political, military, and economic, of the European nations. While our trade has expanded, our share of world trade has diminished. Whereas once Europe met some 90% of its own energy needs, it now depends on imports for around 50% of its supplies. Our technological and industrial dominance of the world has been considerably reduced while new developments in Japan, the USA and the Soviet Union have proceeded by leaps and bounds.

Europe therefore presents a picture both of great strength and of great vulnerability. Great prosperity has also brought with it greater dependence. In the world of the super-powers there are in Europe new imperatives leading to co-operation, because only thus can our nations play the effective world role which by tradition and civilisation they expect, or protect the vital markets and sources of supply on which their prosperity depends.

Technocracy is not enough

Vision and self-interest therefore flow side by side as the motivating forces of the European Community. That is as it should be.

But in our anxiety to show to a sometimes sceptical public the practical benefits of the Community it seems to me that we have often over-emphasised its material and technical aspects. A Community based only on mutual self-interest must be a sterile and unfulfilling objective, nor could it in the long-run survive. Our experience in recent years has shown that if the ability to reach technical solutions to problems is not allied to a strong political will the over-riding commitment to self-interest can block all progress towards our goals.

The European Community has no Bill of Rights, no proclamation of the Rights of Man to which its Members are required to give allegiance, nor is it necessarily vital that it should have one. It does, however, have a fundamental commitment to the traditions and values of liberal democracy. In the years immediately ahead it will be up to all of us in the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers and the European Commission to assert, and defend, and strengthen those values and thereby establish among our peoples a new awareness of our common heritage, common purpose and common European identity.