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Course of *History of International Relations*

Tories of Europe: The Iron Lady, Europe and the role of the Media.

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Academic Year 2015/2016

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Introduction

The aim of this work is to put in perspective and analyse the long and often troubled relationship between Europe and the United Kingdom, and with particular attention to that part of the Country embodied by the Conservative Party. This association has never been particularly easy and has oftentimes been fraught with obstacles, misunderstandings and misdirection in a series of ups and downs that culminated with June 2016's *Brexit* Referendum with which Britons decided to exit from the European Union. During its forty years long partnership periods of enthusiasm followed periods of scepticism with the perception of Europe going from negative to positive and back again and thus reflecting the image of a Country that has never been quite able to find its proper place in Europe.

Inside the Conservative Party dedication to the European cause has often been a factor of dissent and harsh disputes. And, as everything else in this relationship, even the way in which citizens reacted to Europe has been a source of division, turning around depending on the historical period, the actions and reactions of political Parties and the way in which the media painted Europe by playing up on historical prejudices and reaffirming Britain's national identity against the foreign power of European bureaucrats.

The bulk of this change happened during the 1980s and Margaret Thatcher's premiership. Things, however, were more complicated and this turning reflected a multifaceted scenario that was influenced by internal politics, the Labour-Conservative dialectic, the international framework of the Cold War and changes inside the Community itself. The greater part of this work will consist in an analysis of this relationship from the perspective of the Conservative Party, which for many years had been considered the '*Party of Europe*' as well as the '*Party of the Nation*'. Tories were at the government when Britain made its first application; they were at the Government when the UK entered into the EEC, campaigned for 'Yes' in the 1975 Referendum, and were at the Government during the whole decade of the 1980s fighting the battle for the Rebate under their leader Margaret Thatcher and battling against more integration and a more 'social' model of Europe.

They have always been ambiguous in their positions regarding Europe and for all that it was considered the pro-Europe Party there have always been internal dissent and anti-Marketees, especially among the backbenchers. Tories would fight for the Common Market but would also fight anything that could diminish their national identity and reduce their own sovereignty. Nevertheless they had chosen the path of pro-Europeanism, and they did so for a number of reasons among which economic prosperity and common defence against Communists were some of the most important ones.

Additionally, Europe has been also used as a tool for Parties' dialectic and the Conservatives have been pro-Europeanist in the measure in which Labours have been anti-Europeanist. Things had started changing during the 1980s when a more 'social' model of Europe brought Labour to a change of policy. Furthermore Thatcher's aggressive and intransigent attitude during her battle for Rebate, and her more censoring comments from mid-80s onward, managed to progressively paint the EEC in a more negative light as years passed.

Of the utmost importance in the development of this Eurosceptic perception was the attitude of the media, the television and the newspapers, especially Conservative and Centre-Right ones. They showcased Europe's economical drawbacks, painted Europe as a foreign power, stressed sentiments of Britain's national identity and did give much contribution in the creation of a European identity.

An analysis will be made on different articles from two different newspaper, the Centre-left *The Guardian* and the Centre-Right newspapers like *The Times* in order to see how their vision of Europe developed, going from a mostly positive or ambivalent attitude to either a support embodied by a strong critique to the anti-Europeanistic position taken by Thatcher during the Bruges Speech in the case of *The Guardian* to the more critic stance taken by *The Times*.

The element of media's influence was showcased also by the television and Britons, historically not very knowledgeable in matters of the EEC found their biggest source of information on the topic in the TV. Covering of Europe in the news treated for the most part the negative impacts especially those concerning the economy. Even lighter hearted shows such as sitcoms like the very popular and

acclaimed *Yes Minister* – cited by both political scientists and textbooks for its accurate portrayal of the Country – saw Europe as a target for jokes and heavy handed satire in which the Community was seen as a perplexing bungled mess, as exemplified by the fight between the *Eurosausage* (salami, bratwurst and the like) and the *Great British Sausage*, and whose aim was to come up with ridiculous ideas and legislate on useless things while attempting to strip Britain of its treasured national identity. Ultimately while the relationship between the EEC and the UK has never been an easy one, changes inside the Country, in the Community, in the international arena and the progressive antipathy with which the ruling Party and the media saw Europe certainly did not make this relationship any easier.

Chapter 1: The United Kingdom, the Tories and Europe: from the mid-40s to the mid-70s

This first chapter serves as a historical introduction that describes and explains the situation and the relationship between the United Kingdom, and in particular the part of the Country embodied by the Conservative Party with Europe and the European Economic Community (EEC). This relationship has always been a peculiar one as the preconceptions and the prejudices of the Britons – who however are not the only ones with long standing bias towards those coming from the other side of the Channel – came long before the establishment of those institutions that would later become the European Union (EU).

It is particularly interesting to see how the Conservative's – and indeed the British's – attitude towards Europe changed overtime. The idea of Europe as we know it today was, in fact, born from a desire for '*ever closer*' relationships among the European Countries after the end of World War II. Britain, however, had not initially been part of this design as in those years it could still count on its position of being one of the Great Powers. Moreover the UK, traditionally, had always been more linked, both culturally and economically, to the Countries of the Commonwealth. This position, however, had changed overtime: 1956 and the Suez Canal Crisis had officially stripped Britain of the title of Great Power and, thanks to the process of Decolonization, the Empire had started to crumble away.

It was this climate that changed British's stance on Europe and brought the Conservatives – after vain attempts of counterbalancing the newly established EEC's power with a European Free Trade Association (EFTA) – to launch an application to join the Six in the European Communities. The Tories had become the pro-European Party of Britain. Although this does not mean that the Party was uniformly pro-Europe as there were many – even among the MPs, and especially among the backbenchers – that were decidedly against any type of European project. Many among the electorate were also not interested or even against a British's accession to the EEC. However, as things stood, the Conservative Party was in those years for all intents and purposed *The Party of Europe*.

The Tories, which were now both the Party of Europe and the Party of the Nation were pushing for entering in the EEC, not for any idealistic pro-integration objectives but for economical and practical purposes. Historical necessity – and a good dose of miscommunication and underestimation – pushed the Tories, which were then the Party at the government, to launch an application in 1961. However, this application, and the following one made by a Labour's government in 1967, were rejected by a veto of the then French President Charles de Gaulle who saw in the UK too strong a menace for the French's leading role in the Community, too risky a outlet for further American interference in Europe and a danger for a set of common policies – such as the agricultural one – which were very important for his Country.

In Britain in the meanwhile Conservative Party leaders had changed and all of them, with some being more so than others, had been pro-Europe. Even the party members, and the electorate in general – although not by the wide margin one would expect – had become more amenable to the idea of joining other European Countries in the Community. And with the election of Edward Heath – the truest and most convinced pro-Europeanist of the Tories – as Party leader first and then as Prime Minister, a third, and last, application was launched. This time it was a success and from the 1st of January 1973 the United Kingdom officially became part of the EEC.

Nonetheless things changed again and just a few years after he got elected and brought the UK in Europe, Heath had to give up his place away, of Prime Minister to a Labour-led government presided by Harold Wilson, and of Party leader to Margaret Thatcher. With this new election the Labour government had promised a renegotiation of the terms of accession and a subsequent referendum – the first whatsoever in British history – with which the British people would decide whether to remain in the EEC or not.

The Conservative Party of Margaret Thatcher actively campaigned for a 'Yes' to the EEC in the referendum, with leaflets, speeches and meetings and when in June 1975 the 'Yes' won with a two-to-one majority all doubts that the Conservatives sided against the will of the people were swept away. The 1975 referendum not only consecrated British's place in Europe but at the same time it cemented Margaret Thatcher's role as the leader of the Conservatives and paved the

way for the start of that process which, in the space of little more than a decade, moved the Tories' from a position of pro-Europeanism to one of strong Euro-scepticism; all in the mould of what would come to be known as Thatcherism.

1.1 Post-war Europe and the United Kingdom

*We are with Europe, but not of it. We are linked, but not comprised. We are interested and associated, but not absorbed. And should European statesmen address us in the words which were used of old, 'Wouldest thou be spoken for to the King, or the Captain of the Host?' we should reply, with the Shunammite woman: 'Nay sir, for we dwell among our own people.'*¹

The European Economic Community (EEC) remained, as an institution, inaccessible for the government of the UK until 1973. After declining to join the Six Founders, Britain faced in 1963 its first veto, issued by the then President of the French Republic Charles de Gaulle, for its application to join the European Community. And only at their third try, nearly a decade later did the UK manage to join, not altogether happily, the other continental powers into the European project.

The EEC was born with the Treaty of Rome, signed on March 25 1957 and later established in January 1958. At its beginning it was composed of the *Six* – Belgium, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands – those continental European states that, on April 18 1951, had signed the Treaty of Paris in order to establish the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). Both organisations were born out of a will for closer cooperation among European states after the end of World War II.

The first, as it was the case, was created with the will to bind even more closely European nations – in particular both France and Germany, mindful of what happened years earlier with the cases of both the Ruhr and Saar – within a supranational institution that shared two of the most important driving sectors of

¹ Winston Churchill (1976)

economy – coal and steel – in order to minimize and avert any other major source of conflict. Among its aims fundamental was also the idea of promoting economic prosperity and building a stronger Europe capable of withstanding the ever-powerful rise of Communism² throughout the Continent.

Initially, however, the UK was not part of this common vision. After having declined to join the Six in signing the treaty of Rome, the perspective for Britain, in the eyes of Winston Churchill, was to be *pro-Europe but outside of it*. Time, and the realization that its position as a Great Power was to come to an end, inevitably changed British position on this matter. But hundreds of years of dislike and prejudices would not be overstepped all that easily.

The relationship between the United Kingdom and the Continent has never been a particularly easy or clear-cut one. Historically the UK has, in fact, always been both part and apart from Europe and the prejudices that the Britons have towards it are deeply rooted. Some would argue that British people are, in a sense, almost genetically different from all the other Europeans not only due to their geographical location but also for their history, and thus the whole European project has always been, if anything, alien to them.

As George³ says these prejudices are deeply entrenched in popular culture and they mainly relate to a general wariness towards Europe – most especially with regards to France and Germany – a special attachment towards the Commonwealth, the ‘*special relationship*’ with the U.S. and concerns over their national sovereignty. Indeed, the strong British sentiment of national identity dates back to centuries ago, precisely to the Hundred Years War⁴ that the Kingdom of England fought against the Kingdom of France. And so, as Colley⁵ stated, an Englishman is everything a Frenchman is not, and thus, the idea of a Union, especially a political one, with the ‘*Continental*s’ decidedly rubbed many Britons, particularly those of the elder generations, in the wrong way.

The two strongest and most important continental powers were seen almost as aggressors and the general consensus was that while France would attempt to impose

² Dinan (2008), p.21

³ George (2000), p.18

⁴ Bloom (1990), p.65-6

⁵ Colley (1994)

on Britain its foreign conception of democracy and role of the state, Germany would interfere at economic level with an attempt to recreate a protectionist 20th century *Zollverein* with itself at the helm⁶.

These prejudices towards Germany and in an even greater measure France are, as already stated, considered almost a peculiar characteristic of the particular English form of national identity. They are mainly expressed as a sentiment of concern for interfering towards and attempting to dominate the United Kingdom. Even more so British people developed overtime a completely different judicial and legal system as opposed to the one that came to be in other European countries and that was subsequently reflected in the development of the institutions of the European Communities first, and European Union second.

Furthermore, historically, the UK has always been wary of any and every attempt to unify the Continent. It can also be added that up until a few decades ago the United Kingdom never looked, as a means of partnership and kinship, towards Europe, but rather towards the other English-speaking countries of the Commonwealth. These common roots, traditions and language shared by the United Kingdom, the countries of the Commonwealth and the United States of America were seen as a much more important common denominator than any type of geographical proximity could hope to be.

So why did the UK, and in particular the Conservative Party, whose bottom line was to be the 'Party of the Nation', move towards Europe in the second part of the 20th century?

In Brussels on January 22nd 1972 the British Prime Minister Edward Heath signed the UK's treaty of Accession to the EEC. It was the third British attempt to enter in Europe, the second proposed by the Conservatives. But why and how did the Conservative Party become that times' 'Party of Europe'? Part of it was due to historical necessities, another came to be as a form of miscommunication with other European Countries on the shape this relationship would take, an additional part was due to the underestimation of those same Countries' willingness and ability to form an effective partnership and, lastly, part of it was used by the Conservatives as a tool in the political dialectic between the UK's two main parties.

⁶ George (2000), p.19

Astonishingly, among the first people who called for a kind of ‘United States of Europe’ was Winston Churchill in September 1946. As quoting from his famous ‘Speech to the Academic Youth’ held at the University of Zurich: *“There is a remedy which [...] would in a few years make all Europe [...] free and [...] happy. It is to re-create the European family, or as much of it as we can, and to provide it with a structure under which it can dwell in peace, in safety and in freedom. We must build a kind of United States of Europe.”*

And although his vision was most definitely different from the one adopted by Rossi and Spinelli in the Ventotene Manifesto – the document that would become some sort of Bible for the European Federalists – his speech was nonetheless met with enthusiasm by the continental political establishment and with approval by the American government.⁷

According to Churchill, in fact, Europe had to quickly revert to more democratic principles in order to play its part in the fight against the rise of Communism by increasing their economic and political might. But, again, Britain would not be part of this ‘United States of Europe’ – *“But we have our own dream and our own task. We are with Europe, but not of it”*⁸ – and rather it would act as a sort of sponsor and enabler while keeping true with the tradition of the Commonwealth and the Empire⁹.

Aided by the strength of this Churchillian rhetoric on 5th May 1949 ten states – Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom – would sign the Treaty of London, which established the Council of Europe. Expectations on its role were however differed among countries.

While the Scandinavians, the UK and Ireland were keen on maintaining the intergovernmental nature of the Council, the Benelux countries and Italy were, as always, more oriented towards federalist tendencies while France tended to be interested in integration as a way to constrain Germany. The intergovernmental model proposed by the British won and the European federalists, feeling betrayed and frustrated, had to find another way to attain their objectives.

⁷ Crowson (2006) p.14

⁸ Churchill (1930) p.48

⁹ Conservative Party Conference Report (1949) – Macmillan, p.65.

Indicative in this instance is the case of Paul-Henri Spaak, the Belgian politician and statesman who after resigning from the presidency of the Council of Europe in 1952, proceeded along with Alcide de Gasperi, Konrad Adenauer and Robert Schuman to create the EEC.

So why had Britain – and in particular the Conservative party – been rallying for ‘*a kind of European Unity*’ if the result was a lukewarm intergovernmental institution mainly interested in discussing matters of defence? Considering the situation by the point of view of the Conservatives – who were at the time in the opposition – one could say that the Party was playing an internal political game against the Labours and their perceived mishandling of the situation in Europe while at the same time trying to distract the attention from internal problems and their own role inside the parliament.

If one, on the other hand considers the point of view of the United Kingdom as the Nation, not only there is an historical precedent of the Britons trying to resist any form of domination over Europe – aggression that at this time was embodied by the Communist forces of the USSR – but there is also to consider the point that at that time Britain itself was the main European economy and still one of the Great Powers¹⁰ and they perceived any endeavour towards European integration as not effectively likely or at best particularly threatening to their position.

This position of being one of the Great Powers has, in fact, always been one of the pivotal characteristics of the Conservative, one that still today can be seen in the rose tinted glasses of nostalgia of the elder generations of Englishmen. Thus, the idea in which a united bloc of European countries could deal with the US and the Commonwealth with Britain as a common denominator would fit perfectly in the post-war scenario as Churchill envisaged it.

The passing of time however changed everything. The EEC project exceeded every expectation, 1956 and the Suez Canal Crisis stripped Britain of its Great Power status, and the Decolonization destroyed the Empire; and so in just a short amount of time the very position of the UK on the chessboard of world politics was overturned.

The Empire had been another of the key concerns for the Conservatives, one that yet again contributed in remarking the significant difference between the United

¹⁰ Crowson (2006), p. 16

Kingdom and the rest of the world. It was one of the factors that helped making Britain the greatest world power between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th.

As the power of the Empire progressively eroded so did the power of UK, but the legacy it left remained for years, along the relationship with the Commonwealth, one of the first and foremost concerns of the average Conservative activist, a sentiment that lasted well into the latest years of the 20th century¹¹.

But while at that time the priority for the UK might be the preservation of the links with the Empire, for Western Europe the pressing need was to recover from war-time damages. Economic recovery was, of course, strengthened by American aid plans but closer cooperation and integration among European states was one other fundamental objective in the eyes of European leaders that thanks to the idea of French foreign minister Schuman of creating a shared European Coal and Steel Community¹². And even if the British Labour government had been invited, as early as 1950, to participate in the negotiation it declined bringing upon itself heavy critics from the Conservatives, who at the same time tried to use Europe as a weapon to discredit Labour in the internal political debate.

The Schuman Plan of May 1950 had in fact been proposed as the basis for a wider European integration. As previously stated, Britain was invited to take part in this process of negotiation. However, The British Labour government, under the guide of Clement Attlee, after examining the French proposal rejected the invitation on 2 June 1950.

London felt that the Schuman Plan was not in line with the basic principles of their policies, both foreign and domestic, as this institution would imply a loss of sovereignty. Over the years, a great number of scholars studied what happened in that instance and many of them regarded the decision taken by the Attlee government as the mistake that made Britain lose the so called 'European Bus'¹³.

Of course this does not imply that the whole Conservative arena was uniformly pro-Europe. On the contrary there were many, such as Enoch Powell, who were staunchly opposed to any type of European project, especially those that

¹¹ Seldon, (1997) p.486

¹² Dell (1995) ch. 5.

¹³ Clemens (1999) p.241

threatened to move towards a federative model. The party was already then split between those who would come to be known as the anti-marketeters or euro-sceptics and the pro-European conservatives.

This debate continued strongly throughout the years and as a faction managed to overcome the other the whole relationship and approach to the EEC changed. Of course even most of the pro-European Conservatives did not favour Europe for some rosy cheeked idea of a federal supranational institution, but they were instead mostly willing to go into Europe in order to be able to *'take the lead'* as otherwise they might be excluded or economically damaged. It was for the most part a functional approach with which Britain would be able to retain a measure of control towards the decisions taken among the European context.

There was however one major obstacle in this, that is the fact that enthusiasm for Europe was shared mostly among a few middle ranking party figures and most certainly not among the bulk of the Conservative electoral body which regarded Europe with either indifference or thinly veiled dislike¹⁴.

The average Conservative voter was, in fact, more concerned with the relationship with the Commonwealth and the Empire rather than any measly newborn European project. The idea, however unpopular, of Continental unity was in the end accepted due to the added power and protection it could give to the *'Western Bloc'* in the framework of the Cold War and the Communist menace.

The creation of the NATO in 1949 and the failure of the French counterproposal of a European Defence Community (EDC) allowed the pro-Europeanist parts of the Conservative party to believe in the concrete possibility of promoting a sort of political unity, always along intergovernmental lines, inside the Council of Europe, one that would control and harness European military power while allowing the rearmament of West Germany.

At that point neither NATO nor the Council of Europe or the Western European Union (WEU) that came to be in 1954, could be viable options for European integration – to the relief of many in Britain, most Conservative included – and the European federalists knew that. It was up to them to come up with a new formula for attaining their objectives.

¹⁴ Crowson (2006), p.20

Thus given the situation, both political and economic, in which the United Kingdom versed after the end of World War II it is not difficult to imagine why they took the decision to maintain closer relations with the Commonwealth rather than with Europe. Their position as the preeminent European economy of the time and being one of the Great Powers gave Britain a much more ample space of manoeuvre in the political scenario. Additionally the creation of the EEC was initially seen as a matter of not much significance because it represented only one sector of industry that would be shared among the Six, and even if it was a particularly important sector the UK's economic preponderance was too big in the 50s for this to be seen as a problem.

Consequently the Conservative's attitude on this subject took on a dismissive stance that believed that any success of the EEC would not harm British economic interests. This led to an underestimation of the effective powers and objectives of the EEC, and thus assured the unhindered wrestling of economic leadership in the Old Continent away from Britain.

Emblematic for what the situation would evolve into, is the fact that after the British refusal of taking part in the building of what would later become the European Union, Jean Monnet – one of the ECSC's founding fathers – asserted that *"There is one thing ... British will never understand: an idea. And there is one thing [they] are supremely good at grasping: a hard fact. We will have to make Europe without [them] but then [they] will have to come in and join us"*¹⁵. As it turned out his statement reflected precisely what happened in the following years.

The WEU and the failures of the EDC created a sort of *'False Sunset'*¹⁶ for the Conservatives. Politicians of the Six knew by then that they had to find new avenues for the purpose of uniting Europe, avenues that had nothing to do with common defence and that could be undertaken even without the adhesion of the United Kingdom.

Using the means of economic integration, as it was, would suit the Six just fine; and so in 1955 in Messina, Sicily, a multinational meeting was convened. As it was the case, Britain – even though invited – sent, and only for a short time, just one

¹⁵ Quoted in Kitzinger (1962), p.87

¹⁶ Crowson (2006), p.26

civil servant¹⁷ who withdrew from the talks when it became clear that Britain would not be able to dissuade the other countries from their proposals for a custom union.

In Messina the Foreign Ministers of the Six convened on their shared wish to start engaging in negotiations to expand European integration, to all sectors of economy but with a particular eye to the areas of transport, conventional and nuclear energy and in the economic, social and financial fields. This however did not encompass all the purposes of the Messina Conference, another – and probably the most important – objective was the creation of a common market.

The discussions were mainly based on the contents of a memorandum, proposed and adopted on May 15 1955 by the three Benelux countries – the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxemburg – which contained all the ideas and various proposals.

This joint memorandum, which had been sent out to West Germany, France and Italy two days later, drew out a plan for the revival of the European integration. It was examined and discussed on 1, 2 and 3 July 1955 in Messina and it was at this conference that the European integration process, which had faltered with the failure of the EDC, was brought firmly back on track. This conference would, in fact, result in the signing of the Treaties of Rome, in March 1957, which set up the European Communities.

The change of governments from Eden to Macmillan and the problem of having to appropriately rekindle the relations between the Britons and the Americans after the 1956 Suez Canal Crisis left the new Tory government too busy to follow what was happening at European level. Furthermore many in the UK misleadingly believed that in no way any process of European integration could impinge or do any economic harm to the United Kingdom.

Having failed to steer the Messina Conference into their preferred direction of a free trade area, rather than the common market it would come to be, Britain under the new Conservative government of Harold Macmillan, tried a new approach. With the Treaty of Rome the Six, which of course mostly meant France, had decided to include even their overseas territories into the tariff borders of the newly born European Economic Community. This alarmed and offended the Tories, especially

¹⁷ Young (1989)

the backbenchers, as this decision could affect British agricultural products and Commonwealth trade; as a response the British government proposed the creation of a FTA (Free Trade Area) that excluded all overseas territories, the Six however met with suspicion this new proposal and the possibility of creating a free trade area among European countries was dismissed with a French veto on December 1958¹⁸.

As an ulterior response to this, on September 1959 at the so called Stockholm Convention, the United Kingdom signed, along with other European countries such Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, and Switzerland, a European Free Trade Area (EFTA) that would try to be some sort of counterbalance for the newly established EEC.

EFTA, embodied Macmillan's effort to not only find an alternative model to the EEC but he also hoped to put enough pressure on the Six in order to reopen negotiations for a free trade area¹⁹. Macmillan had put his hopes on the support of EFTA from the United States but his plans were thwarted as the US “*disliked the idea of EFTA*”²⁰ and saw, instead the EEC has the more advantageous organisation.

Britain had failed in this new operation and in a few decades all the members of EFTA but Switzerland and Norway would become part of the European Integration project proposed by the EEC.

The success of the EEC, the loss of Britain's world power status – which is well exemplified by the 1956 Suez Canal Crisis – made it possible for the UK to change its views on the matters concerning Europe. Thanks to the EEC France and Germany – for all de Gaulle's dislike for the American government – were getting closer to each other and to the United States on economic issues and Britain was risking getting alienated²¹.

Additionally the British Empire was crumbling away due to the start of the process of Decolonization and therefor that which for a long time had been the backbone of the entire British Empire could no longer be relied upon. Furthermore the US had long wished for Britain to join the EEC for it felt that the UK would be

¹⁸ CPA Committee (1957) quoted in George (2000), p.26

¹⁹ Dinan, (2004) p.91

²⁰ Quoted in D. Dinan (2004) p.91

²¹ Dinan (2004) p.93

then able to influence the functioning of the new organisation from the inside²². This, of course, contributed to the British's decision to radically change its policy towards the EEC. Thus, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland officially applied for EEC membership on August 1961.

1.2 From the Failure of the First Application to the Entrance in the EEC

The end of the negotiations is a blow to the cause of the wider European unity for which we have been striving. We are a part of Europe, by geography, history, culture, tradition and civilization [...] There have been times in the history of Europe when it has been only too plain how European we are; and there have been many millions of people who have been grateful for it. I say to my colleagues: they should have no fear. We in Britain are not going to turn out backs on the mainland of Europe or the countries of the Community²³.

From January 10th 1957 Harold Macmillan, also known to the general public by the half ironic half fond nickname of 'Supermac', had become the latest Tory Prime Minister. In his book Harris – citing his biography by Alistair Horne²⁴ – describes him as 'More Edwardian than the Edwardians he [...] personified'²⁵ and humorously asserted that he personified the 'nation's idea of what it was to be a Conservative'²⁶. Known for being witty, pragmatic and unflappable he was the architect of the first British application to the European Communities.

At that time Britain had already lost its superpower status and the historical period was most certainly an unstable one. But why then did the United Kingdom bid for an EEC membership in that climate? What pushed the British on a complete

²² Young and Kent (2004) p.203

²³ Edward Heath (1998) p.235

²⁴ Horne (1989) p.145

²⁵ Harris (2013) p.419

²⁶ Harris (2013) p.419

reversal of their policy on that matter? Would joining the Six in their project really solve the problem linked to the loss of international preponderance? First and foremost to keep in mind is the fact that Macmillan had long been accused of being inconsistent in his attitude and stance towards Europe – especially in the years that preceded 1957 – and even if the publication of his private diaries has somewhat challenged this perspective, the UK’s clean move towards has to be ascribed to more than just a simple decision following the end of British primacy in Europe.

Additionally as maintained by George in his book Macmillan’s decision to move from the failed initiative of a Free Trade Area to the unsuccessful 1961 bid to the EEC was mostly due to the influence of Peter Thorneycroft – Tory Strasbourger and Chancellor of the Exchequer – and two civil servants Frank Lee and Herbert Andrew²⁷. And so, while economic reasons were, in fact, doubtlessly of the utmost important, two other events should be counted as just as fundamental in the British decision to take a bid to Europe. The first is the appointment, in July 1960, of sir Edward Heath – strongly committed to and a known supporter of the European cause – as Lord Privy Seal as well as the support of the United States of the Six’s initiative²⁸.

Furthermore it is no less important to mention that even with its mediocre results and inability to effectively function as a counterbalance to the European Communities, EFTA could also be seen, at least in the hopes of the governing Party, as a mean to negotiate for membership in the EEC in a somewhat stronger position, which is to say in a trading bloc rather than as a single nation²⁹. Once again, however, EFTA did not deliver as expected and the envisaged *en-bloc* entrance did not succeed.

Speculations that the application to the EEC, and the consequent start of a process of negotiation, was near had been rife since the mid-1961, most especially since the Cabinet had decided not even a year earlier that the Nation was to ‘draw closer to the Economic Community’. And, as a matter of fact, things happened just as expected and on July 31 1961 Harold Macmillan rose during a session at the

²⁷ Crowson (2006), p.28

²⁸ Interview to Lord Edward Boyle of Handsworth quoted in George (2000), p.28

²⁹ Steinnes (1998), pp. 61–80

House of Common and declared his intention to launch a bid for the United Kingdom to become part of the EEC.

Many, however, regarded his speech, as surprising as it felt like coming flat to the expectations, moreover it was brief, and with a distinct lacklustre quality to it³⁰. The people, the press and other politicians were perplexed by the almost unenthusiastic manner in which the Prime Minister communicated his intentions despite the fact that for all being considered the ‘pro-European’ party the Tories were still quite sceptical towards the whole European affair, seeking entrance, in many cases, mostly by necessity – and external American pressure – rather than any strong pro-European sentiment. Harold Macmillan however was not the kind of man to be forced to seek access to the EEC without being fully convinced of the benefits of doing so. Yes, there had been pressing on him and he had to play the hand he had been dealt both politically and economically but he did not blindly try to lead Britain to Europe while hoping for the best.

And even if it is often said that the UK had been deceived on the true supranational inclinations of the European Community in reality it was not the case and this is clearly explained by Macmillan himself in a pamphlet called *Britain, the Commonwealth and Europe* in which he affirmed that British people were indeed Europeans and that “*accession to the Treaty of Rome would not involve a one-sided surrender of sovereignty [...] but a pooling of sovereignty by all concerned, mainly in economic and social fields*” he continued by stating that “*the form which political unity of the Community should take [was] under active discussion in Europe, where opinions of it [were] strongly divided.*” And although there was a school that believed in the concept of a European federation “*the bulk of public opinion [was] firmly against the extinction of separate national identities and would choose a Europe which preserved and harmonised all that [was] best in [the] different national traditions [...] favouring a more gradual approach worked out by experience instead of a leap in the dark*” concluding by stating that “[*that*] view [was] shared by many leaders of opinion in Europe”³¹

³⁰ Citing from the *Guardian* in George (1994), p.33.

³¹ Quoted in Wall (2008), p.3

Consequently it would be inappropriate to say that the support that a large part of the European elites and people had for the supranational model was unknown in Britain. Truth was, in fact, that the British Tory political elites, and in particular the Prime Minister, had carefully weighted the pros and cons of an application, trusting the fact that a huge part of those involved were rather more keen on following a less 'extreme' way, one that did not involve the extinction of separate national identities.

So indeed did Macmillan knew the state of things and his fervidness to join the Common Market sprung from a keen and "*mature strategic analysis*"³². As he wrote in his diaries the fact that Britain had declined to join the original Six at the beginning of their project was to be imputable to the then economic climate, to its position of being a Great Power and the fact that the UK traded more with the Commonwealth.

However, as things stood 1956's Suez Crisis changed British's position on the chessboard of international politics while at the same time the economic growth of the Countries of the Common Market surpassed British's growth³³. And so the Prime Minister decided to call for an application to the Treaty of Rome trusting the fact that many in Europe had no intention to move, much less so in the short time, to a proper federal model. To add to that it is important to point out that at that time there was a propensity in the whole Country, and most especially in the Cabinet, that an eventual British entrance in the EEC would allow the UK to shape the EEC in a more '*outward-looking group of Nations*'³⁴.

Even the composition of the Government reflected this position. Lord Alec Douglas-Home – who would later become for a short time Head of the Party and Prime Minister – was appointed as Foreign Secretary, however, and much more importantly, Edward Heath, a true Europhile who shared the federative mentality of the Six– who would too, and with more success, follow the path of Party and Government leadership – was appointed as his number two in the House of Commons and put in charge of the entry negotiation. Additionally two other figures that were zealously pro-Europe were appointed at two important Ministries:

³² Harris (2013) p.436

³³ Quoted in Wall (2008), p.2

³⁴ Mendoza (1992), p. 574

Christopher Soames at the Agriculture and Duncan Sandys at the Commonwealth Relations. In that instance even the opposition from the Tory backbenchers was more subdued than what could be expected³⁵.

This of course does not imply no resistance at all – Britain had always had a good amount of scepticism and there have always been anti-marketters or Euro-sceptics as they would come to be known in later years – and there were a number of internal dissidents inside the Conservative party, led by Robin Turton, Derek Walker-Smith and Peter Walker, who voiced their discontent with the situation and who tabled on the last days of July 1961 a motion that criticized the upcoming British application to the EEC. However during the parliamentary session that decided to launch the application the government managed to win – even though there were a number of problems linked to the abstention of a number of Tory MPs (Members of the Parliament) – with a margin of 313 to 5³⁶. And while this abstention was indicative of a slight malcontent that had to imply a satisfactory arrangement had to be planned with the utmost care for the entry, Macmillan had managed to win his majority.

Negotiations with Europe were slow, even thanks to the fact that not only the EEC – and its Member States – had to negotiate with Britain to reach an agreement, they also had to reach an agreement among themselves. Moreover thanks to the slowness of this process malcontent and despondency were spreading even more throughout the Tory electorate, particularly the rural one but the political elites were sure that after the successful conclusion of the negotiations the electorate would change its opinion thanks to a strong governmental campaign³⁷.

However what the Prime Minister did not account for was the reaction and demeanour of suspiciousness and almost outright hostility of the then French President Charles de Gaulle who during a press conference held on January 14 1963 declared his opposition and consequent veto for the UK's application, citing, among other things, what he perceived a fundamental incompatibility between the interests of continental Europe and the British ones. Two weeks later the accession negotiations were adjourned.

³⁵ Harris (2013) p.437

³⁶ Crowson (2006), p.29

³⁷ Crowson (2006), p.31

There are a number of reasons that explain why de Gaulle was so adverse to an eventual British entrance, some had to do with his idea that the UK could jeopardize the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) – it is, in fact, important to remember that Agriculture was important sector for both the French and the British – while trying to shape the EEC into an enormous Free Trade Area (FTA). Additionally while the problems related to the CAP did not particularly worry anyone in London, the tune was different in rural areas – especially the ones held by the Conservatives – where a large part of the constituencies suggested that a large degree of farmers was firmly against the Common Market.

However, his most famous objection and the biggest motivation for the veto was linked to the relations between UK the US. According to de Gaulle Great Britain was, in fact, to be seen as an American '*Trojan Horse*' and thus allowing the United Kingdom to enter would mean allowing an even greater American influence inside the European project.

De Gaulle also declared that rather than an enlargement it was better to support an acceleration for the purpose of greater integration at the Common Market level. De Gaulle shed doubts on the veracity of the British's commitment to Europe while his suspicious attitude found its reason not only on matters related to the EEC, but also to the traditional anti-British sentiment that has long been a characteristic of the Frenchmen – which is to say that the prejudice was no one-way street as the British had it, and this is explained in the first part of this chapter, and so did the French. Not only de Gaulle's personal distaste for the Brits – a distaste that he had nurtured since his time in exile and which brought him to say that Britain was the hereditary enemy of France³⁸ – but also Franco-British history can, once again, be seen as a determining factor in the refusal to allow the UK in the EEC.

After the first veto Britain was put in a very difficult position, as was the Conservative Party. And while casting France in the role of the villain³⁹ would resolve most of the internal criticism, tensions among the Tories were heightening and there was the concrete risk that a new party line could emerge, one that brought the Conservatives further apart from Europe leaving not only the Liberal Democrats

³⁸ Peyrefitte (1994), p.153 t.1

³⁹ Crowson (2006), p.33

as the only pro-European party in the Country, but at the same time leaving themselves open to the Labours' critiques that would openly blame them for their failure in the European scenario.

By late 1963 the internal structure of the Conservative Party was changed: Macmillan had retired due to medical problems and was replaced by Douglas-Home who lost the general elections of 1964 and introduced the current ballot system to elect the new head of the Party. And after he himself stood down he was substituted by the strongest and most convinced Europeanist the Conservatives had to offer, Edward Heath, who would, in 1970, launch the third application which brought Britain finally in the EEC.

In the meanwhile Labour had won the general elections twice, one in 1964 with a narrow majority and one in 1966 where they managed to win additional seats at the House of Commons. And in 1967 Harold Wilson, the new Labour Prime Minister, announced a second application to the EEC. At the time Labour's attitude towards Europe had swung between one extreme and the other, from extreme opposition to complete approval and it was only with the 1966 election that the Labour Manifesto proposed a British entrance in the EEC.

For what regards the Conservatives those years had seen a strong increment of pro-Europeanists but Labour's move to try to implement a direction that until then had been seen principally as a characteristic of the Conservatives created a number of instabilities in the Party.

First and foremost Wilson's actions could be seen as an impingement in a policy line dear and near Edward Heath. Secondly the problem this situation created was linked to the behaviour and approach the Tories should take towards this new application, should they adverse it? That, however, would mean rejecting years of hard work and a precise set of ideals that had tortuously and difficultly become part of the Conservative Agenda. Should they, on the other hand, wholeheartedly support Labour's application? But what about an eventual success then, would Labour take all the merits of a battle that had been historically a Conservative one? Or what would happen if, by contrast, this new application failed while the Tories wholeheartedly supported it? How big of a political loss it would imply for the Conservatives then?

In the words of the pro-Europeanist Conservative Gordon Pears '*[the] main concern [...] must be to avoid being tied too closely to the actual conduct of the negotiations and so being associated with their failure if they do fail*⁴⁰'. This was, in fact, the best possible strategy they could have adopted for a number of reasons. First, they could avoid having their reputation tarnished for a second failure of the application – even more so considering the fact that Charles de Gaulle was still President of the French Republic – and secondly since they could use their eventual failure as a demonstration of the incompetence of the Labour administration. This all by maintaining their position vague enough in order not to risk by taking too strong a stance in one direction or the other.

In the mid and late 60s the Conservative Party was still definitely Europeanists and as a matter of fact the number of MPs and members of the party that were pro-Europe had increased by a good margin during the years of the Macmillan government. In the Conservative propaganda the Labour administration was too inefficient and incompetent and it was highlighted how they themselves would be much more suitable, given their previous experience and what they learned from it, to launch another application to the EEC, one that could actually be successful. And whether fortuitous and lucky political circumstances or well thought and planned political propaganda the Conservatives, in that instance, were absolutely right. Labour's application failed, and it was the subsequent one, launched by Edward's Heath Tory government, that finally managed to bring the United Kingdom to Europe.

Heath had, in fact, planned to both discredit Labour by pointing out their inefficiency in internal politics and blaming them for another failed application while at the same time proposing the Tories as the truly strong pro-European Party, all by maintaining the internal discourse on Labour's economics failures alive. Heath's strategy that only the Conservative should be trusted enough to weather the negotiation for a successful EEC entrance was set. And whether by political acumen or by a stroke of dumb luck his stance gave its positive results.

On 29 September 1967, the Commission of the European Communities had, in fact, delivered a positive opinion on the applications for accession of the United

⁴⁰ Ashford (1980), p. 103.

Kingdom and the other countries – Ireland, Denmark and Norway – that applied for EEC membership. Despite the Commission's positive opinion and the positive vote of West Germany, Italy and the countries of Benelux, the enlargement was still met with disfavour by President de Gaulle. Apart from pointing out the current economic problems that the UK was facing de Gaulle was still firm in his belief that the United Kingdom's accession to the EEC – even providing the British's acceptance of the terms laid down in the treaties – would fundamentally change the nature of the Community and moving it further away from its intended purposes and transforming it into a single free trade area.

Aside from these economic factors de Gaulle was still concerned with even additional interferences from the US that could be facilitated by a British entrance. Foreign policy was another matter of disaccord between Charles de Gaulle and Harold Wilson for while the latter was advocating for more US' involvement in European defence and security the first was still adverse to a more Atlanticist position. And so on 27 November 1967, before any talks regarding the application could commence and after nine days after the British Government was forced to devalue their currency, President de Gaulle held a press conference in which he declared his opposition and placed his veto – for the second time in little more than six years – to the United Kingdom's accession to the European Economic Communities. And thus the Conservatives' gamble that any application forwarded by the Labour was destined to fail proved itself true.

However the situation that the Heath's Opposition was facing was not altogether calm and positive, there were, in fact, a couple of worrying facets in the situation. The main preoccupation that was afflicting the highest members and the pro-European exponents of the Conservative Party was that another veto to the British entrance could compromise once and for all any favourable feelings that the public opinion had towards the EEC. Furthermore any additional instability on the European front could restart the process of internal fragmentation on the 'Europe issue' fomenting the sentiments of the anti-marketeters dissidents. And in order to quell any and all eventual problems before they arose Heath and his advisors decided to look for alternatives to the EEC such as a strengthening of EFTA or an interest

towards the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between the US, Canada and Mexico.

Fortunately for them what partially resolved the question was the resentment that the other members of the EEC felt and demonstrated towards what was perceived as the French's umpteenth negative interference and close-mindedness on the matter. The other Five countries were not willing to accept France's unilateral veto and were willing to work towards a solution even ignoring de Gaulle's threat to leave the Community in case Britain were to accede. This difference of opinion between France and its partners on the issue of British accession directed the Conservative strategy on Europe. As demonstrated by the further and further isolation that de Gaulle was facing in Europe, Heath and other Tory Europeanists such as Dodds-Parker decided to capitalize on the idea that European politicians were angry enough with the French on the matter of British accession. Another favourable conjunction was that Charles de Gaulle, architect of both vetoes would come to the end of his tenure as President of the French Republic a mere year and half after his second veto. Negotiations were finally able to restart and Heath, though still at the Opposition, was ready to take part in this process.

1.3 Entrance in the EEC and the First Referendum of 1975

*We're in – But without the fireworks*⁴¹

De Gaulle's successor, Georges Pompidou, was more amenable to the plight of the British government and was more sympathetic to their desire to enter the EEC. However there were still a number of issues to be discussed and settled before the United Kingdom could start, for what could be hopefully the last time, the application to the European Communities.

And while Heath was keen to keep his Party's commitments in line with the harmonization with the policies of the EEC a number of crucial key points were still

⁴¹ David McKie, Dennis Barker (January 1st 1973) – The Guardian, *We're in – But without the fireworks*

to be studied, problems such as the ones related to the current Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) rules had to be discussed, and so would the issues linked to commerce with the Countries of the Commonwealth and the role that the pound sterling would come to have in the international scenario with the prospect of an European monetary union. Other issues such as the prospect of other new applicant Countries and the terms of entrance would have to be analysed.

This, however, did not stop Edward Heath from trying once again to join the European Communities. After winning the general elections he had, in fact, become Prime Minister on 19th July 1970, and just a few weeks after moving to number 10 of Downing Street he set forth another application. The Conservative's Manifesto of 1970 had, once again, supported British's EEC membership, citing both the positive aspects and the obstacles but maintaining, after two consecutive vetoes, a more detached stance on the process of application itself. While, in fact, according to this manifesto, joining the European Communities would create extremely favourable opportunities that would create '*economic growth and a higher standard of living [that] would result from having a larger market*⁴²', there would be short-term disadvantages that would, as a matter of fact, have to be weighed against long-term benefits.

With the perspective of two failed applications and the general elections in sight, the Manifesto had, however, kept intentionally vague the very process of application deciding to focus instead on 'negotiations', maintaining that '*[their] sole commitment [was] to negotiate; no more, no less. As the negotiations proceeded [they would] report regularly through Parliament to the Country*⁴³'. And while the general consensus was not 'if' but 'when'⁴⁴ the United Kingdom joined the EEC the Tories decided to take this more prudent path.

Heath and other Europeanist Tories, however, need not have worried because this time the application went forward and those negotiations, that for years had been so far away, were concluded in a year, and in July 1970 the European Economic Community Bill entered in Parliament. It was around this time that the possibility of a referendum on the matter was brought forth, but soundly refused it maintaining that

⁴² Cited from 'A Stronger Britain in the World – Conservative Manifesto 1970.

⁴³ Ibidem.

⁴⁴ Crowson (2006), p.38

the constitutional sovereignty to decide on this matter belonged solely to the Parliament⁴⁵. It was a wise decision from the part of Edward Heath as, in that period polls showed that the electorate was mainly unconcerned or even contrary to the entry⁴⁶. Time would change, again and again, the positions of the general public in the referendums to come.

As things went, in July 1972 – despite some anti-European Conservative MP’s rebellions and thanks to the favour of pro-European Labour MP’s⁴⁷ and after denying once again the call for a referendum – the bill was finally approved and on the 1st January 1973 the United Kingdom officially became a Member State of the European Communities. Things, however, were bound to change rapidly as a year and a month later Edward Heath lost the general elections to Labour and the asset of Party changed again when he lost the leadership of the Conservative Party to Margaret Thatcher whose future negative stance on Europe would shape Conservative policies for years to come.

With the victory of 1974 Labour, yet again with the figure of Harold Wilson, came back to the government in UK and in Labour’s own electoral manifesto the Party had promised to revisit the terms of British’s entrance in the EEC. On January 1975 Wilson proposed and announced a referendum, which would be held in June, on the matter. In the meanwhile a new leader had emerged at the helm of the Conservative party in the figure of one Margaret Thatcher. And even if she had challenged Edward Heath for the position of Party Leader at that time she was, or appeared to be, supporting of the British position in the EEC and would later campaign for a ‘Yes’ – which is to say to keep Britain in the EEC – in the referendum.

On 8 February 1975 the British newspaper The Guardian analyses the figure of ‘Mrs T’⁴⁸, then front-runner in the battle for Tory leadership quoting her praise to Edward Heath’s work on EEC membership and her response to the claim that she was unenthusiastic on the subject of the Common Market by asserting that “Mr

⁴⁵ (July 15 1971) – The Times, pp. 1, 6.

⁴⁶ NOP Market Research Limited. National Opinion Polls National Political Surveys.

⁴⁷ Hurd, D. (1979), p.68

⁴⁸ Simon Hoggart (8 February 1975) – The Guardian, ‘Howe tipped as third man while Mrs T fights for the centre’

Heath's outstanding achievement [...] was to lead Britain into the European Community, after [their] unnatural exclusion for so long. This torch must be picked up and carried by whoever is chosen by the party to succeed him. Experience shows that [British] presence in the Community has helped ensure that it is outward looking". This is a far cry from the attitude Dame Thatcher would take on the European matters years after she became Prime Minister, but at that moment she was solidly in the 'Yes' campaign even if it is now known that in that period she personally did not have particular views on the future of Europe⁴⁹.

But even so Conservatives were still firm in their support for Europe, and on Wednesday 26th March 1975 in a discussion held at Thatcher's Shadow cabinet in the Leader's room of the House of Commons both the Europe Debate and the EEC Referendum Campaign were discussed. For what regards the first topic the Shadow Cabinet decided to use winding-up speeches of the Frontbenchers insofar both the Shadow Cabinet and the previous Conservative Cabinet had been united on the EEC issue. This, of course, ties up with the second issue, that of the referendum campaign, and it was there proposed for the Conservative party to give its support in order to stay in the EEC, as no other organization – particularly the group Britain In Europe (BIE) – could be as effective or as important in securing a positive outcome⁵⁰. On the other hand the 'No' campaign, whose points could potentially interest the Conservative electorate suffered a great loss of appeal and ended up – mainly thanks to Enoch Powell's fervour in supporting Labour over the pro-European Conservatives during the 1974 general elections – with the labels of 'Reds' and traitors⁵¹. This, of course, contributed in strengthening and solidifying even more the Conservative 'Yes' campaign.

In that same March's meeting of the Shadow Cabinet it was deliberated that the great number of leaflets on both the topic of the EEC and Britain in Europe that had been distributed could probably be more decisive than the media for the referendum, which could be *'won or lost by the doorstep'*⁵².

⁴⁹ Hurd D. (2003), p. 236.

⁵⁰ Thatcher Foundation Archive (26 March 1975) Leader's Consultative Committee

⁵¹ Crowson (2006), p.41

⁵² Thatcher Foundation Archive (26 March 1975) Leader's Consultative Committee

On Friday 7 March 1975, in a strong speech to Conservative Association of the London University Mrs Thatcher had asked, on the matter of the upcoming referendum, whether it was in Britain's best interest to remain a member of the European Community or, if, on the other hand, should they cut themselves adrift and try to go it alone. Be as it may the future of the whole Country was at stake and it was the precise responsibility of the Conservative Party to take a stance and defend the position of Britain in the EEC and as '*Britain has never been isolationist, it must not become so now*⁵³'. She affirmed that a new *Great Debate* – such as the one had on the issue of joining – should start all over again, but this would not be a simple debate on entering or not, but one in which it would be discussed whether or not to experience the trauma of pulling out.

This, of course, doesn't imply that the Conservative Party felt a particularly strong ideological fervour to the European cause, as the true European enthusiasts – just as the true European sceptics – were small in numbers and not very incisive on a whole. But while the 'No' campaign was disorganized and divided although it pushed on traditionally important Conservative issues such as the loss of national sovereignty the 'Yes' campaign better organized, better planned and better funded and pushed on equally important matters such as the creation of numerous new jobs. Another important aspect of the campaign, although The Shadow Cabinet had not reputed it as important as the capillary campaign with the leaflets, was the support of the media – those very same media that in later years would become some of the most anti-Europe media in the whole Continent. Most media had at that time, in fact, supported the 'Yes'.

When the results of the referendum came out it became apparent that the 'Yes' campaign had won by an extremely wide margin: with a turnout of around 64% and a result of 67.2% to 33.7%, 2 in 3 voters had decided for the 'Yes'. The people of the United Kingdom had decided to remain in Europe.

This referendum is extremely important in British History, not only because it was the first democratic exercise of its kind in the Nation, but also because it cemented Britain's place in Europe. But while the Country had decided, this

⁵³ Thatcher Foundation Archive (7 March 1975) Speech to London University Conservative Association

referendum brought with itself a number of dregs that stirred internal trouble inside the two main political parties and while this would sow the germs of a Labour's future division the Conservative Party came out unscathed if not somewhat strengthened by it. This is so; first and foremost, because its outcome – with its two-to-one majority in favour of Britain's permanence in the EEC – was a success for and *of* the Conservatives and their campaign and this meant that they finally had the demonstration that they had bet on the right horse. Even more so this outcome brought an extremely positive start for Margaret Thatcher's leadership that began with a very positive win on her part and inaugurated, in British history, a period of time was associated with her figure. Thatcher's Years, Thatcherism and Thatcherite are now terms that we use to indicate a precise sets of policies, ideas, beliefs and attitude that came forth from her tenure as a Party leader first and then as a Prime Minister and the beginning of it all came with the success of the referendum.

Things, however, were bound to change and so would Thatcher's – and the Conservative – attitude with regards to Europe. The current dichotomy of the Conservative Party, split between being the pro-European Party and the *Party of the Nation*, would greatly diminish and almost cease to be and the party that fought for the right of entering in the EEC became in little more than ten years the bastion of Euro-scepticism. Britain, with or without '*fireworks*⁵⁴', had finally entered in Europe but what the British people and Governments felt about Europe entering in Britain remained to be seen.

⁵⁴ David McKie, Dennis Barker (January 1st 1973) – The Guardian, We're in – But without the fireworks

Chapter 2: Europe in Britain (and Britain in Europe)

This second chapter describes some of the most characteristic – and peculiar – aspects of Britain as a member of the European Communities while concentrating on the analysis of the peculiarities and the points of friction that the United Kingdom developed from the end of the 1970s. This chapter, in fact, serves as a basis to understand the change of attitude – and the internal splits and divisions – that would happen inside the broader part of the Conservative Party during the latter part of the 1980s.

Its implications are far-reaching and way more complicated than what could be expected at first glance and only a thorough analysis of the internal situation – of both the Party and of the Country in general – corroborated with a research of the external situation and its pressures could help us understand why this change happened, and why it happened as it has. What were the modifications and happenstances that led the Tory government under the guide of Margaret Thatcher to radically re-evaluate its position with regards of the EEC.

Britain has, in fact, always been a world unto itself, not only for its rather obvious geographical position but also – and rather more importantly – for its political structure. And as this analysis hinges on Britain – and what makes Britain unique – it would be, in fact, rather opportune to note that the British parties are extremely peculiar derivations of the society that generated them and that neither of the two principal political forces of the Country shared much with other traditional political parties of Continental Europe, be they Christian Democracies or Socialist Parties.

It can be said that much of the positions that the Conservative Party – at least in the '*battle for Europe*' – took had depended on the stance taken by its direct opposition, the Labour Party. Labour – and the trade unions to which the party was linked – had traditionally been a great deal more sceptical of the European project. However the 1980s saw in the Continent a progressive shift towards a more and more social dimension of the European institutions that led to a '*Europeanization*' of

the Labour Party, emphasised by the signing of the Social Charter a document that was one of the milestones that helped turning towards Europe a sizable part of the anti-EEC Labour. Conversely the Conservative Party started to become more and more adverse to Europe as its powers became more permeable and impinged upon what the Government, and Margaret Thatcher, regarded as national sovereignty and internal matters.

Ultimately these changing attitudes were a consequence of internal British changes in leadership and position. However, they also point out a change in European policies and priorities, which from mid-80s onwards, started including a more social dimension. And as its policies changed and the very concept of European integration progressed so did the attitude of both the Labour and the Conservatives.

Additionally as much as can be said on the relationship between Europe the Tories, many a scholar still interrogate themselves on the evolution of Mrs Thatcher position towards Europe; whether her dislike has always been present, if well concealed, or if it were the changes in Europe itself that turned her away from the project. In any case, as thing stand, it is impossible to deny that her attitude towards Europe was one of the main elements that created in her Party a cleavage big enough to make her government fall. Ultimately it was Europe that brought her to her knees without ever loosing an election.

However it is important to point out that of all the elements that took part in the shaping of the relationship between Europe and the United Kingdom external elements were just as important as internal ones. Consequently in order to better understand all the features of this multifaceted relationship one cannot be exempted from analysing one of the most defining features of the second half of the last century, Communism.

The relationship with the Communist world was, in fact, a pivotal element in the dialectic between Europe and Great Britain. And as the Communist threat grew bigger the more Britain got closer to its allies, cementing its ties with other European Countries in an anti-Communist key. Conversely, when the USSR ceased to be threat then the unity of the Western European bloc – and of Europe in general – started mattering less and less.

Moreover, as Thatcher knew, the changes that the Communist bloc was facing opened up a path for a new kind of Europe, one that could look not only to the Countries of Western Europe but also to those of Central and Eastern Europe.

2.1 The Initial Position of Labour and Conservatives

'They [The Labour Party] are not fit to manage a wheel stall':⁵⁵

'A Conservative Government is an organized hypocrisy':⁵⁶

The attitude that two main Parties in Britain had towards the European Community, its policies and the concept of European integration changed multiple times since the very birth of the post-war pro-Europeanistic movement. Both parties changed their position on the matter of the EEC, the Single Market and European integration back and forth numerous times and both alternatively moved from approval to opposition and vice versa. It is quite telling that both these Parties, which should ascribe to very different political tendencies, moved somewhat similarly on the topic of EEC membership.

This is probably due to the fact that both the Labour and the Conservatives are expressions of some unique sentiments, behaviours and characteristics that make the British people British. The attachment towards the importance of national sovereignty was as strong in the Labour as it was in the Conservatives. Furthermore these two Parties shared other terribly important baselines such as a preference and attachment to the Commonwealth and its interests, the preponderance of the special relationship with the U.S. and the commitment to protect and support the so-called Atlantic Alliance.

Thus, before analysing the stances that both these Parties took in regards to the European project it would be opportune to note that both of them are extremely

⁵⁵ Winston Churchill (1945) [on Clement Attlee's Government]

⁵⁶ Benjamin Disraeli (1845)

peculiar derivations of the society they came from and that – even more so in the case of Labour – they did not share all that much with other Continental parties. There was, in fact, no form of conventional Christian Democracy in Britain, not like there was in Europe.

Additionally it should be useful to remember, that the whole European project was born by the shared idea of three different men, the Italian Alcide De Gasperi the Frenchman Robert Schuman and the German Konrad Adenauer, which came yes from three different countries, but who all belonged to their Countries' respective Christian Democrat Party.

And while the Conservative Party simply could not be defined as a Christian Democrat Party, things for the Labour Party are a little more complicated because while the first did not in any ways define itself as a form of Christian Democracy, the latter saw itself as a proper Socialist Party. And while the British Labour Party defined itself as a Socialist Party in theory, in practice – even if they too belonged to the Socialist International – they shared little in common with the other Continental Socialist Parties such as the French or Italian ones. This is because the Labour Party was a firm expression of the British working class and the British trade unions, which at the time were very strong.

As explained by Kevin Featherstone, few, in Europe, have '*been troubled by questions concerned with European integration as much as the British Labour Party*⁵⁷'. And, in those years, neither the working class nor the trade unions were particularly keen on joining the EEC and the Common Market. This is due to a number of reasons among which the most important are linked to the feelings of national superiority and the remnants of the spirit of imperialism that were still imbued in a large part of the society⁵⁸.

And thus while it was true that the Labour was the mirror of the British working class, this working class was one that set itself apart from all others. Not only, in fact, there was in Britain the widespread desire – that touched each and every social class – for being nearer to their kinsmen of the Commonwealth but also, thanks to a glorious past still not much far behind, there was still a common

⁵⁷ K. Fearherstone (1988), p.41

⁵⁸ S. George and D. Haythorne (1996), p.3

sentiment of being in a predominant position, an idea of '*Britishness*' that meant both taking a leading position and expanding much farther than just the confines of Europe⁵⁹.

In a situation in which this '*Little Englander mentality*⁶⁰' was still so diffused, where the national and political tradition was still rife with sentiments of imperialism and nationalism, and as the working class and the trade unions were themselves expressions of this mentality, it is no wonder then why the Labour had so many difficulties in accepting the EEC. This also explains why the Labour Party was so very different from other Socialist Parties of Continental Europe; their very history changed their concept of Socialism and that same history that produced those sentiments of national pride, blended with the favourable – compared to the rest of Europe – economic situation of the early 50s made it so that the Labour were convinced that their '*way to Socialism*' was the best way to Socialism⁶¹.

This, once again, highlights one of the peculiarities of British Politics: for a considerable amount of time the Conservative Party, the *Party of the Nation* was the one with pro-Europeanist tendencies – albeit with no idealistic love for the project and a consistent number of internal dissidents – while on the other hand the Labour Party, the *Socialist Party*, was firmly against it, as was its electorate and the whole system of trade unions.

Furthermore after having analysed this, one could almost say that in the light of what both these Parties represented both of them could, in different ways and different methods, both almost be called the *Party of the Nation*. Conservatives and Labours both moved back and forth many times from approval to disapproval, and vice versa, with regards to the EEC and while at the beginning it was the former that pushed to enter the European Communities while the latter opposed it, after the end of the 1980s the situation was turned over its head with the Conservatives sceptical while the Labour wholeheartedly with it.

Consequently if one were to analyse Labour's attitude towards Europe it would not be incorrect to say there was a complete U-turn in the matter of just a couple of decades. This change, however, did not come out of the blue but rather it

⁵⁹ T. Nairn (1973), p.42-77

⁶⁰ P. Teague and J. Grahl, (1992), p. 208

⁶¹ S. George and D. Haythorne (1996), p.5-8.

was a long and drawn out process that came out in tidal waves of approval and disapproval that came and went during the 60s and the 70s. Their stance moved from circumspection, antipathy and hostility, to a quasi-disgruntled and tepid acceptance to extreme enthusiasm and intense eagerness.

This shift in position is not only a result of multiple changes in leadership, that, from the 1960s on, brought to power those with a more and more positive view on Europe, but it is also due to the dramatic changes of British's position in the international scenario.

After the end of World War II the United Kingdom was one of the Great Powers, with an Empire, a florid economy and a consistent volume of market exchanges with the Countries of the Commonwealth. After 1956, however, the realization that things had started changing was steadily, if a bit slowly, taking place on all level of the British society. And with a marked decline in international power, the Empire dissolving, the volume of market exchange with the Commonwealth shrinking and a general stagnation in the economy there was naught to be done for Britain other than try turning in other directions.

By then finding an alternative to the old *modus vivendi* was a matter of national interest, and neither Party could do much else than try to gently steer its electorate towards the direction that seemed the 'safest', which meant towards Europe. The EEC had, by then, proved itself to be a tremendously advantageous organization, which quickly overtook the UK's place in Europe, both in terms of volume of economic exchanges and in economic prowess. By the time this realisation had sunk in, the only feasible thing to do was to join the other European Countries and try to steer this process from the inside by having Britain take a leading position in the very same organization it initially shunned.

The Conservatives quicker in realising this, and after trying and failing to build up a solid alternative to the Economic Communities with the EFTA, by 1961 the Tories, by then at the government, had already launched an application to join the EEC. On the other hand Labour's early attitude towards was much more tortuous, passing from the definitive no of the earliest years, to an application in 1967, to wanting to renegotiate the terms of accession and calling a popular referendum on the permanence in the EEC in 1974.

Consequently, as already stated, Labour Party's relationship with Europe has for long time been rife with ambiguity and its changing positions on the issue highlighted a situation in which the Party itself was suffering from a condition of severe internal conflicts. For a concrete historical analysis of how Labour's attitude changed it is best to start with the Party's position after the end of World War II, when the project for a federal Europe was born.

During the second half of 1947, in fact, Labour had been at the government with Clement Attlee as Prime Minister, and he was firmly opposed to any British participation in the deepening of European Integration by either means of the European Community of Coal and Steel – which Attlee's government rejected – or by the Council of Europe⁶², which was born as a purely intergovernmental project.

This strongly antagonistic position towards Europe remained unchanged through all the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, before starting to change from the mid-60s onwards. By 1970 joining the European Communities was a point in Labour policy agenda although there were still numerous problems of internal divisions and dissidents, and even the electorate was not much interested in the European question.

There had been a definite and distinct lack of enthusiasm in both the electorate and a number of Party members, which resulted in Labour having a quite confusing and mutable stance on Europe. And while Labour had, in fact, initially been extremely supportive of the creation of EFTA in 1959, by the early-to-mid 60s some exponents of the Party – among which was the figure of future Party leader and Prime Minister Harold Wilson – were beginning to be convinced of the positive aspects an entrance in the EEC could comport.

Another quite daunting consequence of the internal debate on Europe was the creation of internal groups which supported the adhesion to the EEC and who could potentially break the party in two on that very same issue – and this actually happened years later with the split and birth of the Social Democratic Party.

Consequently how, when and why did the Labour party change its position on the matter of the EEC? During the earliest 1960 Labour was in the opposition, and, under the leadership of Hugh Gaitskell, it had fiercely opposed EEC membership

⁶² S. George (1991) p. 3

when Macmillan applied for the first time in 1961. Gaitskell had been an adamant opponent of British's EEC membership, going as far as defining it as a *'betrayal of thousands years of history'*⁶³ during the Labour's Party Conference of October 1962. But only five short years later another application to Europe was made. This time a Labour government made it.

This change was due to both a change in leadership – Gaitskell having suddenly died in 1963 – and an ulterior deterioration of the British economy. And it is exactly around the economy that the Labour application was decided upon. And so during the '60s Labour's position on Europe changed in the measure in which it concerned an economic rejuvenation on British's part.

This, of course, does not imply that the Labour had suddenly become pro-Europeanists, on the contrary as there were many, both on the right and the left of the Party, who opposed to an EEC application on the grounds that an EEC membership would destroy national sovereignty and the Country's democracy. Consequently the 70s saw their dawning with a convinced pro-Europeanist leadership in the Tories with the figure of Edward Heath, but with a Labour Party still very much divided on the issue.

This division lasted for decades and Labour's attitude towards Europe remained quite contradictory, shifting from the 1967's application to the 1975's referendum to a 1980's commitment to withdraw from the EEC. Another fundamental change in position happened in 1985 when the new Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock – who had he himself once been an anti-marketeer – decided to assert a wider and stronger control on his Party in order to be able to 'purge' the Labour from its more militant *'Hard Left'*⁶⁴ exponents and at the same time change its position on the matter of the EEC withdrawal.

Consequently it is safe to assume that the commitment to shift position on Europe was more opportunistic than genuine and that, once again, the issues linked to Europe were used far more as a inter Party and intra Party tool rather than ideological positions. It was a long process but by the end of the decade large parts

⁶³ H. Gaitskell (3 October 1962), - Labour and the Common Market - speech at the Labour Party Conference

⁶⁴ K. Featherstone (1999), p. 4

of the Party were beginning to accept Europe as a vehicle for economic reforms⁶⁵. Moreover the defeat Labour suffered during the General Elections of 1987 contributed in softening even more their position on the EEC, which resulted in their final acceptance of the Single Market and a newly found willingness to accept EEC's action and cooperation on a range of issues such as environment and social policy.

However, on the other side of the political spectrum the Conservatives, now under the firm hand of Margaret Thatcher were entering in a new, and progressively harder, anti-European stance, where the newest European programmes, as for example the European Monetary Union (EMU), went completely against Tory's positions. Furthermore other factors, such as the possible reunification of Germany in the near future and the progressive weakening of the USSR and the Soviet Bloc, brought Margaret Thatcher further and further away from the Continent and its projects, and thus providing the last steps that crowned the Conservative Party as the 'Eurosceptic' Party it became during the 1990s and the 2000s.

Conversely, the late 80s and early 90s saw the beginning and development of a process that made Europe a bit more '*socialist*', or better yet '*social*'. As a matter of fact, numerous policies and institutions that were introduced were well seen by the Left and this new social dimension radically changed the stance of most anti-European Leftist Parties.

Additionally, as a response to a strong loss of powers and influence during the Thatcher's governments, British Labour had started to develop more and more links with their '*Sister Parties in Europe*⁶⁶', while the trade unions, once one of the main pivots of Labour's anti-Europeanism, had begun to look at the Continent for support as a consequence of a substantial loss of power deriving from the Thatcherite anti-trade union legislation.

Thanks to this conversion pressure grew for a more human and social side in Europe – particularly in regards of the Single European Act (SEA), the first major revision of 1957's Treaty of Rome – and as a consequence The Social Charter, ratified by all with the exception of Britain, was introduced. This contributed to an

⁶⁵ Ibidem, p. 65

⁶⁶ Labour Party NEC (1991) – Opportunity Britain, p.52

ulterior ‘*Europeanization*⁶⁷’ of the Labour Party, also emphasised by the signing of the Social Charter. This document was, in fact, another key feature, which helped turning a sizable part of the anti-EEC Labour into a pro-European one. In the words of Stephen George and Deborah Haythorne, the core values of the Social Charter ‘*championed the rights of workers, women and pensioners*⁶⁸’ and consequently it would have been neither wise nor ideologically viable for the Left to go against it.

Additionally the Conservative Party was undergoing a serious transformation in the Thatcherite image, leading it to modify its attitude towards the EEC. After having grudgingly signed the Single European Act Margaret Thatcher thundered against the Social Charter stating that ‘*[the Conservatives had not] worked all those years to free Britain from the paralysis of Socialism only to see it creep in through the back door of central control and bureaucracy from Brussels*⁶⁹’.

Therefore during the last few years of the 1980s the political climate in the United Kingdom saw the support for Europe rise on the side of the Labour and wane from the Conservatives. The latter had, in fact, underwent a souring of its stance towards the EEC especially from 1984 onwards⁷⁰ after the end a long and hard-fought battle, won by the Prime Minister’s perseverance, on Britain’s contribution to the budget. From then on, each and every European proposal was met, on British part, with more and more hostility as time went on, grudgingly signing the Single European Act and thundering against The Social Charter.

Before that, however, they had wholeheartedly supported another European proposal; the Single Market, which proposed to move the EEC towards a position near and dear to that of the current Conservative government: that of free-market and free-trade. Things, however, were bound to change because while in the United Kingdom the Single Market was seen as an independent and separate project, in Europe it was seen as a part of a cohesive and structured path towards integration

⁶⁷ The term is to be intended as per the definition given by K. Featherstone (1999) *British Labour Party from Kinnock to Blair: Europeanism and Europeanization*, p. 2 – *Europeanization as the conception and assertion of interests on the part of key actors and institutions, and their cognitive and affective response to participation in EU activities.*

⁶⁸ S. George and D. Haythorne (1996), p.10

⁶⁹ Margaret Thatcher (1988 October 14 Friday), *Speech to Conservative Party Conference*, Conference Centre, Brighton

¹⁶ S. George (2000), p.16

and, eventually, the single currency⁷¹. As things stood then, the EEC and the Thatcher's government were heading in radically different directions and conciliating them would be an extremely delicate exercise.

To conclude it is therefore safe to say that the changing attitudes of the Labour and Conservative Parties can be seen, among other reasons, as a consequence of internal British changes in leadership and position. However, they also reflect and highlight a change in European policies and priorities, which from mid-80s onwards, started including a social dimension.

This process also reflects the attitude that the two main political Parties in the United Kingdom had with regards to the European Communities as a whole. And as its policies, positions and the very concept of European integration changed so did the attitude of both the Labour and the Conservatives, who moved towards the start of the 1990s with bias, perspectives and approaches that were radically different from those of the early 70s when the UK finally managed to land its EEC membership.

2.2 The opposite views of Thatcherism: no clear stance on European issues

*'Of all the elements combined in the complex of signs labelled Margaret Thatcher, it is her voice that sums up the ambiguity of the entire construct. She coos like a dove, hisses like a serpent, bays like a hound – in a contrived upper-class accent – reminiscent not of real toffs but of Wodehouse aunts.'*⁷²

Much, both positive and negative, has been said on Margaret Thatcher's position towards Europe and whether or not her critical approach was just her natural predisposition to the Continent or a reaction to a perceived excessive European encroachment on the most delicate matters of British sovereignty and national

⁷¹ Ibidem p.17

⁷² A. Carter (1983) in *The New Statesman*.

interest. The positions are many and seemingly irreconcilable and even her closest advisors and secretaries, for all intents and purposes, could not and cannot seem to find an accord or a common ground or on her behaviour and ideas regarding Europe and the EEC.

Thatcher's rhetoric when dealing with Europe and European integration was usually provocative and often decidedly caustic and not even the '*Eurocreeps*'⁷³ were exempted from her wit. And as Dr Helene Von Bismarck states in her article '*Margaret Thatcher: the critical architect of European integration*', her most famous quotes with regard to Europe are: '*No, no, no!*' '*We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them re-imposed at a European level*'; and, possibly the most famous of them all, is the straightforward '*I want my money back!*'⁷⁴.

Each of these quotes sum up three different negative moments in the struggle between Margaret Thatcher and the Continental institutions. The first, and most recent, dates back to October 1990 when Dame Thatcher vocally refused the propositions to increase the powers of both the European Parliament and of the European Commission. The second refers to one of the most caustic passages of her 1988's Bruges speech.

This speech not only helped to immortalise the term '*Eurocreep*', but it also set the tone for the bitterest period of dispute between the Prime Minister, with her negative stance on the future of the European Community, and the European élites. The third and last phrase dates back to the early 1980s and it perfectly reflected her firm position during the long and drawn out battle, which would eventually be won in 1984 after five years of struggles, for the renegotiation of the United Kingdom's contribution to the European Community's budget.

These quotes give the sense of how much she would fight for and at what lengths she would go in order to protect British interests in the Community, but for all her aggressiveness towards Europe during the 1980s, not only she had campaigned for the 'Yes' during the 1975 referendum, but she had also signed the

⁷³ A. Clark (1993), p.225 entry for *September 1988*

⁷⁴ H. Von Bismarck (4 May 2016), '*Margaret Thatcher: the critical architect of European integration*' in *The UK in a Changing Europe*

Single European Act during 1986, well during those years in which her opposition to certain aspects of Europe was at its strongest.

And even now, decades later, we do not have a univocal and shared analysis on her true stance on Europe. However, quoting what Professor Richard G Whitman wrote in 2013 in the British *think tank* Chatham House, what we can definitely say is that ‘*Margaret Thatcher's policy on European integration was aggressive in public tone but pragmatic in practice*⁷⁵’.

And as much as her positions can be considered multifaceted and hard to define, one must always remember that the 1980s, for all intents and purposes, were fraught with some of the most important changes – both inside and outside the European Community – that had happened since the start of the Cold War period. Ultimately we can rightfully say that the World was changing and, consequently, so was Europe.

The former saw the progressive disintegration of the Cold War order – which was, coincidentally, one of the main points that had endeared the whole European project to the Conservatives back when Europe was seen as a sort of shield against Communism – the disaggregation of the Soviet Bloc, the dissolution of the USSR and the collapse of the Communist regimes of East and Central Europe.

The latter, on the other hand, saw the 1980s as the decade which marked a strong and definite revival of the project of European integration, and while this encapsulated plans, such as the Single Market, that were near and dear to the Conservatives they also included plans that were absolutely not well regarded by the Tories. The revival of European integration had, in fact, also meant and included a new social dimension that was decidedly unpalatable for the Thatcher’s government and most of the Conservatives.

And while Thatcher’s position might, at a first glance, seem ambivalent in many respects, it nevertheless remains true to her first and foremost interest: protecting British’s interests by any means possible.

Before her tenure as a Prime Minister – and when joining Europe seemed like the best thing to do for the good of her Country – her position on European

⁷⁵ R. G Whitman, (9 April 2013) ‘*On Europe: Margaret Thatcher's Lasting Legacy*’ in Chatham House

Integration was in line with the pro-European segment of the Conservative Party, which means that she supported British accession to the EEC, and campaigned, after recently being elected Party leader, for the ‘Yes’ in the 1975 referendum. When, after winning the general elections of 1979 she became Prime Minister her support of Europe was very much not under any question.

The earliest years of Thatcher’s government featured an extremely pragmatic stance on European policy. And while, at the beginning, there was no question on her support of Europe it soon became apparent that what Margaret Thatcher considered one of the foremost points of the UK’s national interest was jarring with the EEC: the proposed reduction in the UK’s payments to the EEC budget. She fought for four years in order to reduce British’s financial contributions, which were considered to be too onerous, to the European Communities.

But even if these drawn out negotiations resulted in 1984 in a budget rebate, with a great victory on her part, it is nevertheless apt to say, quoting Campbell, that by then *‘her relations with her European partners had [already] been poisoned by the interminable wrangle over Britain’s contribution to the Community budget’*⁷⁶.

And even if her ties, with Mrs Thatcher solidly at the helm guiding the EEC towards the Single Market, with Europe had improved until 1987, this is to be considered only a ‘middle period’, and by the end of the 1980s – and the end of her tenure as Prime Minister – her relationship with the Continent had soured once again as she bitterly fought against the ‘even closer integration’ supported by the other Members.

There are a number of different theories that try to explain why her behaviour towards Europe became so erratic; particularly of note is a theory proposed by John Campbell in his biography ‘The Iron Lady’. According to him, even when her relations with Europe were at their best *‘she set in hand no long-term thinking about the future of Europe or Britain’s place in it’*⁷⁷. She simply dismissed – even explicitly so during a Franco-British Council in Avignon on 30 November 1984 – that the United States of Europe could exist the same way the United States of America did. And consequently she expected that the future she envisaged for

⁷⁶ J. Campbell (2012), p.286.

⁷⁷ Ibidem.

Europe, that of a loose cooperation forum between independent sovereign nations, would be the only logical outcome for the EEC.

Campbell writes, that ‘as a result, from lack of imaginative empathy with other views and lack of her usual thorough homework, she failed to take seriously the fact that most other European governments had a quite different conception of how Europe should develop. They had given a good deal more thought to how to achieve their goal than she ever did to how she might prevent it.’²³ He continues by saying that ‘She knew what she thought, and she knew what the rest of the Community ought to think, too, if they knew what was best for them’⁷⁸.

This means that she was unprepared to deal with Europe and its leaders, both national and communitarian. Margaret Thatcher was terribly British, and she tended to think the same way many British people have thought since even before the birth of the Empire. They had always considered the ‘British way’ to be the ‘best way’ of them all. And consequently in Europe she had always been two steps behind the others; unable to take the lead and do anything but react angrily. Ultimately Europe was one of the major arguments that brought her down.

The Bruges speech of September 1988 did not turn as positive as it was initially envisaged. And even if with this speech contained a lot of positive points, among with was her statement that British future was in Europe as part of the Community, it nevertheless remained and was remembered as her most famous and celebrated attack against Europe.

This speech was the real turning point, and it started the final move of the Conservatives away from Europe, moulding the Party and giving it the anti-Europeanistic direction it took from the 1990s onwards.

With Bruges they ceased to be ‘the Party of Europe’ in the internal British politics, and they moved, over a longer period of time, sometimes unhappily, sometimes happily, with fractures inside the Party and, with lunges and hiccups, to a position that we now define as ‘Eurosceptic’. The term itself was invented during and was a product of the Bruges speech.

⁷⁸ J. Campbell (2012), p.413

These events marked a deep division inside the Party, and paved the way for a conflict that would destroy the relationship between the Prime Minister and her Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe. This would, in turn, end her government in a little more than two years. Howe had, in fact, been the initial architect of the Bruges speech, the one who pushed Mrs Thatcher to make a ‘positive speech’ on Europe. The results were, however, vastly different from what he expected, and neither he, nor Thatcher or her government ever recovered from it.

On the other hand the Bruges speech had a beneficial effect for the Labour Party, as they were able to present for the first time, either by healing or concealing, a unified front over the issue of Europe. This would, in turn, prepare the ground for a new form of Labour’s government – aptly named *New Labour* – who would be free to shape the United Kingdom’s European policy for nearly a decade under the premiership of Tony Blair.

And for all her certainty that Europe should ‘*speak with a single voice*’ and ‘*work more closely*’⁷⁹, on things best done together rather than alone the fact remained that her aggressiveness and self-righteousness – and even how it was spun by the media – served only the purpose of distancing potential likeminded allies – who, like her, would rather have a less supranational Europe – and anger the rest of the Member States.

The media, and in particular the newspapers, managed to capture even more the antagonism that the Prime Minister felt towards Europe in those moments. She was not unhappy with that, rather the contrary and had no compulsions to hide her hostility towards federalism, even stating in her memoirs that had she been an Italian, she too might have preferred to be ruled by Brussels, but in Britain the mood was different and she had no wish to stand by while democracy was eroded and centralization and bureaucracy forged a new order in Europe⁸⁰.

However, the Bruges speech presented one major problem, it was a formidable message that strongly critiqued the direction the Europe was taking but it did not offer an alternative solution or a substitutive policy. And while its impact on the evolution of the European Community important but ultimately minor, its effect

⁷⁹ M. Thatcher (1988 Septmber 20 Tuesday), *Speech to the College of Europe ("The Bruges Speech")*, Bruges Belfrey, Bruges.

⁸⁰ M. Thatcher (1993).

inside the UK, and in particular in the Conservative Party, was comparable to that of an atomic bomb:

‘In the short term it split the party, releasing in the grassroots a vein of suppressed hostility to the Community which had been building up for years and now burst out unchecked with the leader’s undisguised approval, while at the same time infuriating most of the Cabinet and Party hierarchy.’⁸¹

This situation triggered a process that inevitably led to Geoffrey Howe’s resignation from the post of Foreign Secretary and the Government, and in November 1990, to the withdrawal of Party’s support in Parliament that brought her last government to an end, marking thus the end of fundamental political era for Britain. Moreover the bitterer and more aggressive she became in her dealings with Europe the more she alienated the traditionally pro-European Tory élites, whose commitment to the UK’s role in the EEC had remained undiminished since the path had been paved by Harold Macmillan and Edward Heath.

Consequently it is impossible to deny that one of the main reasons that led to downfall of the last Thatcher government is rooted in her European policies. And her lack of a cogent and coherent vision, coupled with numerous problems with her strategies and a general underestimation of the will and strength of the EEC and its leaders are at the root of her downfall.

Even her closest collaborators had many difficulties in analysing and interpreting the evolution of her views on Europe. According to Douglas Hurd, who had been both Minister for Europe and Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, she moved from an initial vague enthusiasm for the EEC to total hostility⁸² in her last years in Office.

Whereas according to Geoffrey Howe with her Bruges speech Margaret Thatcher had finally been able to directly express her distaste and antipathy for with

⁸¹ J. Campbell (2012), p.417

⁸² D. Hurd (2003), p.244

the European policies that she had to accept and support when member of the Heath Cabinet⁸³.

Europe was her weakest point, and while she had long emphasized her pro-European feelings – mostly in order to mark even more the division with the Labour Party – her policies on the matter reveal that looking for some consistent form of ‘*real Thatcherism*’ underlying the acts of political expediency is nigh impossible as

‘The position of both Thatcher and of other Thatcherites changed, [and] these changes were linked to the way in which the whole political spectrum, in terms of world alliances as well as British parties, changed⁸⁴’.

In short it was her attitude towards Europe that created inside the Conservative Party enough turmoil to break things apart. And it was precisely this turmoil the element that caused the malfunctioning of the well-oiled machine of Thatcherism. Europe had brought her to her downfall without ever losing an election.

And ultimately it was still Europe that caused a rift inside her Party by reawakening the long dormant anti-Europeanism of the grassroots while alienating the traditionally pro-Europeanist élites. Thus the shift from the ‘*Party of Europe*’ to the ‘*Party of Euro-sceptics*’ became irreversible.

2.3 More Europe against Communism: Thatcher and Western Europe

‘After all, no Western nation has to build a wall round itself to keep its people in⁸⁵.’

Having analysed the evolution and the discrepancies of both the Tories and Margaret Thatcher with regards of EEC, it is nonetheless important to remark that some

⁸³ G. Howe (1994), p.538

⁸⁴ R. Vinen (2009), p.233

⁸⁵ M. Thatcher (10 October 1975) *Speech to Conservative Party Conference*

relevant elements that were at the beginning of the whole European discourse feature not only their internal market but also their outside protection.

And while the enthusiasm that brought a part of the Conservatives to push for closer ties with Continental Europe was rooted in their enthusiasm for greater and better forms of capitalism, it is nevertheless important to point out how security – both traditional and economical – featured heavily in bringing Britain closer to Europe.

This all with the tacit support and assent of the United States. For the US government, in fact, both economic unity and security of Western Europe were primary interests, for a stronger and more unified Western Europe would strengthen the capitalist alliance against the common enemy, Communism, then embodied by the superpower of the USSR.

And so, in order to better understand the initial general climate – and its future modifications – that was one of the least recognized bases of the common European project, one cannot be exempted from analysing one of the most defining features of almost all the second half of the 1900s: Communism. And even if by the start of the 1990s neither defence, nor Communism or the Soviet Union were nowhere near the top priorities that the EEC was facing, the fact remains that, for a long period of time, the defence and security of Western Europe were one of the focal points of the Cold War order.

Furthermore it is undeniable that Britain's net weight for what regards the defence of Western Europe is almost unparalleled. Britain had, in fact, been in the front lines claiming a position of leadership for what regards both the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) – the intergovernmental military alliance based on the system of collective defence and established with the 1949's North Atlantic Treaty – and the WEU (Western European Union) – the international organisation and military alliance established by seven European nations, the Western Bloc and NATO members, allied with the United States.

Additionally Britain's influence in this stretched further and, in fact, worth mentioning is also the idea, launched by Winston Churchill in 1950 in Strasbourg, of a European Army whose task would regard both the containment of the Soviet threat and a safe environment with which to proceed with German rearmament. Thus

common defence had featured heavily in the first years of the European project, even if – at least for what regards the European framework – the project had not been able to be successfully completed.

And while some in Britain were of the idea that joining other European Countries in their project would have the consequence of having ‘*Soviet tanks rolling across the plains of West Germany towards the channel ports*⁸⁶’, many others had been sure – even before the birth of NATO – that in order to halt the advancement of Communism of the necessity, the best solution would be to achieve a system of defence⁸⁷, meaning some kind of union, preferably military, among the Western Nations. This meant that the Tories were willing to reach some sort of military federation if this was made with the aim of defence against the Soviet Union⁸⁸.

However – as it was a necessary precondition for the continued Atlanticist presence in Europe and even if by its very structure it required a pooling of sovereignty – the primacy of NATO was, for the Britons, undisputed and undeniable. And no Tory had been able, whether in the 1950s or the 1990s, to accept a purely European structure, be it an army or a simple deterrent, that was, however linked, not integral to NATO⁸⁹.

As a matter of fact Britons in general, and Conservatives in particular, have always preferred – if not outright pushed for – intergovernmental solutions rather than supranational ones and this is perfectly exemplified by the fact that the UK has always tried to work with its European allies – and in particular when Charles de Gaulle’s France abandoned NATO in pursuit of nuclear independence – in the *fora* of NATO or WEU rather than simply accepting, as per German and French wishes, a purely European supranational institution, or even worse yet, a European army.

This is particularly true even when speaking about Margaret Thatcher and her governments. She had, in fact, assumed the control of the Party – and a few scant years later of the government – in the middle of the 1970s, a period which saw a seeming increase in the power, and consequently of the threat, of the Soviet Union,

⁸⁶ CPA; Report of ACML meeting (7 November 1962), Reporting Hichingbrooke Speech, (CC0500/31/3) in N. J. Crowson (2007), p.79

⁸⁷ S. Ball (1999), pp. 573-4, *Entry for 16 February 1949*

⁸⁸ E. Furson (1980).

⁸⁹ N. J. Crowson (2007)

which was now extending its power and vision towards the Third World Countries of both Africa and South East Asia.

In those years, among the Conservatives, meetings often included, among other such claims, many a discussion on the West and its perceived weaknesses, which were fuelled by the seemingly linked components of subversion at the internal level and threat at the foreign one.

And thus, according to what Richard Vinen wrote in his book *'Thatcher's Britain, The Politics and Social Upheaval of the 1980s'* this seeming increase of Soviet Power, along with the perceived weakening of a West, threatened by both internal and external forces, was one of the chief factors that had Britain, the Conservative and even Margaret Thatcher turn towards their natural allies, amongst which the most numerous were Western European Countries, that for the most part were members of the European Communities.

Among such Nations West Germany was still, obviously, on the very first line of the Cold War in Europe, and even if Margaret Thatcher supported only nominally, and even then just barely, the idea of a German reunification she was fully aware that the Federal Republic of Germany was an integral part of the defence against the Soviet Union. And as such, encouraging for both military and intellectual defence against the impingement of the Communists, she behaved during a speech to the German Christian Democrat Party (CDU) at Hanover in 1976, declaring that even though:

'It was very understandable that, once the tensions of the so-called Cold War were relaxed, the peoples of the West greeted the idea of detente with relief [...] the might of the USSR increases every year. [...] We must add deterrence and defence to detente. [...] We should not be timid or uncertain in proclaiming our values. We must build a world in which freedom is on the offensive. It has to be remembered, too, that no single Western state [...] can stand alone against the power of Russia, nor alone can stem the spread of Communist influence around the world. In this great endeavour we must all stand together. Our alliance,

not only military but intellectual and spiritual, is our indispensable shield⁹⁰.

And as such she remarked a couple of years later with a strongly positive pro-Europeanist interview to the German newspaper *Hamburger Abendblatt* in which she stated right up front that while the economic aspect of the European Economic Community was a preponderant element of the institution, fundamental was also its political aspect as *'the main inspiration behind the European ideal was political rather than economic⁹¹'*.

The creation of the EEC had finally brought lasting peace in the Continent with democratic election of a European parliament, albeit with limited powers, rather than the start of the umpteenth full out war such as it had happened with regular intervals for the previous two centuries. As things stood there was, in her opinion, however one major threat to their freedom *'from within and outside [their] own boundaries'* and it was their duty to make *'clear to all that Euro-Communism [was] a contradiction in terms⁹²'*.

This article highlights not only the positivity with which she viewed the European Communities during the first years at the helm of her Party, but it also stresses out the importance that she gave to the EEC as an institution whose purpose was to both counterbalance and fight Communism. And much of her initial pro-European sentiments came, in fact, from the vision of a Europe united against the Soviet threat.

These sentiments were reinforced during the period of time that goes from the late 1970s to the early 1980s. The Cold War *'got colder'* and even if Mrs Thatcher was in the middle of her fight with EEC for the British rebate her pro-European position did not waver in the slightest. Rather, her government's response was to seek stronger links with its natural *'Western allies'*, which were, for the most part, other European countries many of which were among the members of the European Communities.

⁹⁰ M. Thatcher (25 May 1976 Hanover), Speech to CDU

⁹¹ M. Thatcher (13 May 1978), Interview for the *Hamburger Abendblatt*

⁹² Ibidem.

However Thatcher's attitude changed dramatically during the second half of the 1980s. Her relations with Europe were soured by a number of different things, and although she had never been a thoroughly convinced supporter of European integration her attitude nonetheless gradually became more and more contrary as the 1980s went by.

This change was determined by a number of rather diverse factors, economic, political, internal and external, inside the European Communities and outside of it. One of the most discussed of such examples is money – the chip on her shoulder during the early 1980s – another is the U-turn of both the trade unions and the Labour Party in their stance towards Europe. Another one yet could be attributed to her miscalculation in the power the EEC would come to have over things she felt were best left to national powers, or even the new and more '*social*' dimension that Europe would start developing during the 80s.

There is, however, one additional cause at the basis of the slow deterioration of the relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Community, one that has perhaps been less expanded upon, the changes in the Communist world. And even if the link between the crumble of the Communist bloc and the worsening of the relations between the UK and the EEC might seem tentative at best, Vinen proved, in his brilliant analysis⁹³, that this relationship did indeed exist and that its weight in Thatcher's decisions and behaviours had been – albeit convolutedly – quite important.

And while the start of the 1980s had seen a seeming increase of power for the Communist bloc the second half of this decade highlighted its undeniable and unstoppable erosion. In the meanwhile Britain's relations with the USSR had been mollified also thanks to the presence of Mikhail Gorbachev, who had become the new the newest general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party and with whom Mrs Thatcher had quite an amicable relationship, so much that Hurd in his *Memoirs* bafflingly relayed that, according to many a diplomat, Britain had become '*more pro-Russian than the Russians*⁹⁴'.

⁹³ R. Vinen (2009), pp.236-40

⁹⁴ D. Hurd (2003) p.383

Consequently at this point in time better relations with the USSR meant, for Margaret Thatcher, that all the emphasis she had put on Europe seen as a bastion of anti-Communism lost their momentum. As a matter of fact when the Soviet Union underwent a series of reforms, improved its relationship with the United Kingdom and – more importantly – ceased being a threat, then the unity of the Western European bloc started mattering less and less.

Moreover Thatcher knew that these changes in the Communist bloc had opened up a path for the birth of a new kind of Europe, one that could that could look – as it would come to be after the end of the Communist era – ‘*on Warsaw, Prague and Budapest as great European cities*⁹⁵’.

Ultimately it is impossible to deny that the existence – or lack thereof – of the Communist bloc, its evolution, fortification and ultimately its fall from grace and its end added another decisive element in the layered and very much complicated relation between the United Kingdom, Margaret Thatcher, the European Community and its Member States.

⁹⁵ Margaret Thatcher (1988 September 20 Tuesday), *Speech to the College of Europe ("The Bruges Speech")*, Bruges Belfrey, Bruges

Chapter 3: Why did the attitude change in the 80s?

The aim of this third chapter is to analyse the major critical points in the EEC-UK relations during the 1980s. By paying close attention to these three sources of conflict it is, in fact, possible to get a clearer picture on the whys and the hows that led to the progressive worsening of the relationship between Britain and the Continent during the latter part of the 80s.

The penultimate decade of the century had started with a major dispute between the UK and the Community on the issue of British budgetary contribution. This first critical point was instrumental in the measure in which it definitively set the tone – that of belligerence and intransigence – that Thatcher would thereafter use with regards of her European colleagues. Additionally by the end of this conflict the relationship between Margaret Thatcher and Europe had soured irrevocably.

The '*Bloody British Question*' was indeed pivoting around a topic that was of fundamental importance for the Prime Minister: money. And the consequences of the successful rebate would set the tone for the future relationship between the United Kingdom and the Continent for years to come. Moreover as the battle for the rebate set the tones of the future relations between Britain and Europe it would also pave the way for the change of position inside the Conservative Party.

She would win this battle, but the price she would pay for it would be onerous. Eventually she would be 'betrayed' and ousted as a Party Leader and while her Party would tear itself in two on the matter of Europe, the EEC would progressively move away from her ideals and become more and more 'Social'. Furthermore this success ended up generating great clamour in a consistent part of the British media, which, thanks to her tones and victories would become more hostile towards Europe as time went on.

Another fundamental aspect of the '*Anti-Euro Thatcher*' is her vision of the European Community as an institution that was sliding further and further towards a social model that was based on much of what she had fought against in internal British politics since she had become Prime Minister. She would grudgingly sing the

Single European Act, but she categorically refused to take part in the signing of the Social Charter, a solemn declaratory statement that highlighted the fundamental social rights of workers.

This evolution towards a more social identity of the EEC was the second point of criticality of the 1980s. Margaret Thatcher had, in fact, a precise politico-economic vision for her Country and for Europe and nothing that went in this new direction was part of it. For her Europe should have been an intergovernmental project based on free market and not some sort of bastardized embryo of a federal state. Furthermore the introduction of this new 'social dimension' in Europe helped swaying both Labour and the trade unions, historically the anti-Europeanistic counterbalance to a pro-European Conservative Party, towards Europe. And even if these changes were perfectly in line with the principles set by the Treaty of Rome they were nevertheless neither wanted nor accepted by Mrs Thatcher and the only result they beheld was to increase the Prime Minister's Eurosceptic sentiments.

The third critical element that was pivotal in Thatcher's change of attitude towards the EEC was the German reunification. Soviet power was slowly eroding and in this climate many of Thatcher's concerns were brought to the front. Among them of the utmost importance was the future of the European order and the place that the United Kingdom would have in it. Thatcher was worried that a united Germany, with the help of France, would monopolize Europe and become its 'heavy weight' – not only politically but also economically – taking away a place that, in her mind, should have been Britain's by right.

With this in mind it was no wonder that the reunification of Germany was considered to be one of the most pressing and critical issues of the whole decade. By introducing such a big change in this one area all the variables that had stabilized the situation would mutate and Mrs Thatcher was justifiably against the idea of finding out what would Britain's place be in this new equilibrium that was being created.

The elements that would lead to her resigning were, however, already set in motion and Margaret Thatcher would announce, on Thursday 22 November of 1990, that she would not take part to the second ballot for the election of the leader of the Conservative Party. In this scenario Europe was just a part, albeit a very important one, of a wider set of problems that had afflicted the Tory led governments of the last

years. Additionally even public opinion had turned against her and thus she was forced, without ever losing an election, to stand down from both premiership and party leadership.

Ultimately it is impossible to deny that the Iron Lady, for all she was one of the most polarizing figures of the entirety of the 20th century, contributed in shaping the politics and structure of both her Country and Europe. She pulled Britain away from the stagnation of the 1970s and helped ushering the Community into the 90s and, eventually, to its biggest changes.

3.1 Problems with the Community budget: Money and Contribution

'We are not asking for a penny piece of Community money for Britain. What we are asking is for a very large amount of our own money back, over and above what we contribute to the Community, which is covered by our receipts from the Community'⁹⁶.

As we have seen the 1980s are a fundamental decade in the relationship between the Conservative Party and the European Communities. It was during the 80s that the relations between the conservative British government and the Continental institution progressively worsened although not in a linear way but with hiccups, stops and lunges.

Having analysed the prodromes that were at the basis of this worsening of the relations between Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and her European colleagues it is of fundamental importance to take note of, and describe the first instance of serious disagreement between the newly elected head of the government and the Continent: the '*Bloody Question*' of Britain's contribution to the budget of the Community, which would eventually be won by Margaret Thatcher resulting in a

⁹⁶ M. Thatcher (30 November 1979) *Press Conference after Dublin European Council*

rebate which was successfully addressed during the Fontainebleau European Council in June 1984. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had successfully negotiated the UK Rebate which was adopted in the May 1985 European Council decision and has been in place hereafter.

Since it was introduced in 1984, the British rebate has always been one of the most controversial and delicate issues in the Euro-British relations. And, while other Member States have in times of utmost necessity been granted temporary reductions in their contributions to the Community budget, the United Kingdom is the only Country that had a permanent rebate.

Before the start of the 1980s, the main source of budget revenues was the so-called Traditional Own Resources, which were made up by common custom duties and on levies on sugar and in agriculture. In 1980, in order to cover the increasing costs faced by the European Communities, Member States were asked to give to Europe a fraction of their annual Value Added Tax (VAT) in order to finance the Community budget. As a consequence, the United Kingdom even after becoming the third poorest member of the EEC due to lack of economic growth, became a large contributor to the budget.

In those years, close to 70%⁹⁷ of the budget was spent on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and Britain, whose agricultural sector was comparatively smaller than that of other Member States, did not manage to get a comparatively big advantage on the money distributed from the CAP. As a result, the UK ended up in a situation in which Europe had become, at least economically speaking, more of an hindrance than a benefit.

It is no secret that the Thatcher government believed – and this time with good reason – that the British's contribution to the Community budget was unreasonably and disproportionately high, most especially since, at the time, Britain had become quite a bit poorer than what it had been when it had entered in the EEC during the early 1970s.

⁹⁷ G. Vernasca (6 June 2016) *The UK's EU rebate – explained*, The Conversation UK in partnership with the University of Essex. For a more thorough and detailed explanation of the reasons and the mechanisms of the British Rebate please visit 'The Conversation' at the link: <http://theconversation.com/the-uks-eu-rebate-explained-58019>

The United Kingdom of the late '70s and of the early '80s was, in fact, quite a bit poorer than both France and Germany. And thus, if by 1980 the Country was paying a yearly contribution to the Community that gave away 1.000 million pounds more than it got back, it was no wonder that the Thatcher administration was prepared to fight tooth and nail on it.

And a greater part of the strength and efforts of her first years at the government was spent negotiating – oftentimes in a way that was best described, as per the words of the then President of the European Commission, as shrilly⁹⁸ – a rebate on her Country's contribution.

The term 'rebate' – which can be safely substituted with the terms 'correction' or 'abatement' – is the ad hoc mechanism that is applied to lower the UK's contribution to the EU budget, by reimbursing 66% of the country's budgetary imbalance (the difference between payments and receipts).

The battle for British's contribution, other than pivoting around a topic, such as money, that is immensely difficult and delicate, brought with it numerous intended – and unintended – consequences, which would set the tone for the future relationship between the United Kingdom and the Continent. It was, in fact, the battle for the rebate the element which helped setting up the tone of the future relations between Britain and Europe and which paved the way for the change of position of the Conservative Party.

This is a battle that Mrs Thatcher took entirely upon herself to fight. She was rather certain, as a matter of fact, that her Foreign Office would not be up to the task, as both it and its officials – who had the detestable, in her opinion, tendency to '*go native*' when sent to Brussels – would rather compromise and follow the Community praxis than fight for what she perceived to be national interest.

Moreover the battle for the Community budget not only combined numerous elements, such as the defence of British interests and economic stability, near and dear the personal inclinations of Margaret Thatcher but they also provided a safe and understandable issue easily comprehensible for all British voters. This meant, as they clearly understood, that their Prime Minister was fighting to dismantle a situation that was objectively wrong.

⁹⁸ R. Jenkins (1989), p.466

As it was, in fact, no one could deny that at the time the contributions that Britain was paying were decidedly exaggerated, given both the worsening of the economic situation that the country had underwent in the previous ten years and the opposite economic improvement that happened in both France and Germany where the standard of living had long since surpassed that of Britain.

As a matter of fact it did not matter if the average voter was not in the know of all functioning of the Community Institutions or of the minutiae that the structure and function of EEC and its members implied, the important thing was to know that the Prime Minister was fighting tooth and nail in order to stop paying the unfair amount of money that was decided upon when the UK entered the EEC.

Of course this does not mean that there was a malicious sentiment at the basis of the original terms that were negotiated by Edward Heath when Britain entered in the Community in 1971 – and not properly resolved in 1974 and 1975 when Callaghan's Labour government decided to renegotiate and call for a referendum. The truth is that there simply was a genuine problem because in the decade that separated Ted Heath's negotiation from Thatcher's battle for a rebate British economy had fallen substantially behind that of the other European Member States.

The greatest imbalance at the base of the problems linked with Britain's contribution was that, other than a general decrease in its economic growth in comparisons with other Member States, the United Kingdom continued to import from outside the European Community way more than any other EEC Country. This, of course, meant more levies and import taxes, which certainly did not help with the improvement of the economy.

Additionally there was an ulterior problem that contributed in worsening the situation for Britain, one that was intimately linked to one of the most fundamental aspects of the early communitarian institutions: agriculture. If compared with its other European counterparts – and especially with France, the main proponent of a common European policy on agriculture – Britain's farming and agricultural sector resulted being substantially smaller. Accordingly this meant that the United Kingdom derived much less, in terms of benefits, from one of the most fundamental and characteristic elements of the early European Community, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

And, consequently, what in 1971 had been considered, for one of the richest members, to be a just amount to pay was regarded nary ten years later, as a disproportionately high sum. This, of course, was recognized not only in London, but also in Brussels. And for all that the Labour's government presided by James Callaghan had tried to renegotiate it, the fact remained that Labour was at the time considered too critical of Europe, and any effort made to change the situation was hindered by this perceived hostility.

It was certainly not too much of a stretch to think that a government presided by a Conservative, who at that time were decidedly the more pro-Europeanistic, would have an easier time in renegotiating an evidently unjust term. And, as things stood, the new government of Margaret Thatcher did indeed manage to achieve a satisfactory settlement. However things evolved from what was perceived to be simple and easy renegotiation to an almost outright battle, one that lasted for the better part of five years.

Mistakes were made – on both sides of the argument – and the results helped in augmenting the hostility and dislike between the Communitarian Institutions and Party that had always been considered pro-European. The battle for the rebate was instrumental in the setting up of Thatcher's style of premiership: a style that was both aggressive and intransigent and who saw the Community as a battlefield rather than a place for leaders to sit, debate and reach compromise.

And the end of this conflict irrevocably soured the relationship between Margaret Thatcher and Europe and its institutions, and not even her decidedly more pro-Europeanistic middle period – during which she signed the Single European Act (SEA) – had been enough to help with its recovery.

Thus, what initially should have been a normal exercise of the traditional processes of Community bargaining became an all-out confrontation in which an irremovable Thatcher clashed with uncaring Giscard d'Estaing and a detached Helmut Schmidt. All for the purpose of reaching an equitable adjustment that, at least according to the Foreign Office, would have been considered sufficient with a rebate of about two-thirds⁹⁹.

⁹⁹ I. Gilmour (1992), p.289 Gilmour, I. (1992) *Dancing with Dogma: Britain under Thatcherism*, London, Simon & Schuster.

And as much as the situation could have been simple – and entirely separated from the political discourse – it was, on both the sides of the Channel, the stubbornness and the pig-headedness of the different heads of government – and in particular British Thatcher, German Schmidt and French d’Estaing – that resulted in the irrational elevation of an entirely non-political issue into a political trial and collision¹⁰⁰. All this was intended as a show of power, for the sake of muscling through their respective internal political situations.

And while her task was without a shadow of doubt just – and justifiable – the way with which she faced the argument was, as many tend to say, in many ways admirable, but nevertheless close to disastrous. And as she reminded Helmut Schmidt, in 1979 during a dinner in his honour at number 10 of Downing Street, there would be no ‘*soft touch*¹⁰¹’ in the Community from her or her government.

This discourse and her following attitude during the totality of the European meetings – in which she fought long and hard in order to have the question for the British rebate treated and resolved not as a part of a wider package, as was the custom of the Community, but as a single independent issue – resulted in a number of negative consequences that, as already stated, would mould the future of the relationship between the Iron Lady and Brussels.

First and foremost her intransigence and abrasive attitude perfectly showcased her inexperience and her lack of awareness in understanding what the Community was and how it worked. The idea of the Community was, in fact, based on the idea of Member States pooling resources. These resources effectively belonged to the Community and were to be used by the European Commission for the good of the Community and not for the good of single Countries.

From the moment the money were given to the Community they stopped ‘belonging’ to a single Country and could not therefore simply be given ‘back’. Furthermore the idea that one of the EEC Member States could keep a profit-and-loss balance on what it gave and was given back was ‘*strictly non-communitaire*¹⁰²’, and her behaving exactly like so highlighted even more her lack of understanding of all things European.

¹⁰⁰ J. Campbell (2009?), p.144

¹⁰¹ M. Thatcher (10 May 1979)

¹⁰² J, Campbell (2009?), p.145

Moreover she managed to alienate not only a good portion of her allies – such as Roy Jenkins, the British president of the Commission – but also those governments that had been ready and willing to help Britain, while expecting some flexibility on the side of a number of other important issues the most important of which was the European Monetary System, which of course as a tantamount testament of Mrs Thatcher she flatly refused.

She was too shrill and querulous; however she was not the sole actress whose will exacerbated the situation; Giscard d'Estaing and Schmidt – both consumed politicians, expert European statesmen and both in office since 1974 – went out of their way to complicate the matter, while ostensibly and continuously underestimating her¹⁰³. And for all she was aggressive and intransigent they had not taken into account her might and her stubbornness.

More than once she was offered rebates that the Foreign Office would have found more than satisfactory, but Mrs Thatcher refused them all. Leading Ian Gilmour, who from 4th May 1979 to 11th September 1981 had been Lord Privy Seal in her government, to declare that *'her objection [...] was to the fact of the agreements, not its terms. [...] That was not because [they] had succeeded [in securing a deal] where she had failed'* – even though with the Fontainebleau council of June 1984 she would reach a final deal that she found satisfactory enough – *'it was because, to her, the grievance was more valuable than its solution'*.¹⁰⁴

It took five years, several noes, more stubbornness than Europe and its leader expected and a change of leadership in both France and Germany – where François Mitterrand and Helmut Kohl respectively substituted Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in France and Helmut Schmidt in West Germany – before a settlement she considered satisfactory was achieved.

This *'Bloody British Question'* had poisoned and paralyzed progress inside the Community for more than five years, and while this led to the birth, thanks to the tabloids, of the collective image of

'Maggie swinging her handbag and standing up for Britain against the wiles of Brussels' it also secured *'that [her] jingoistic rhetoric, gleefully*

¹⁰³ Ibidem, p.146

¹⁰⁴ I. Gilmour (1992), p.292-5

amplified by the 'Sun' and the 'Daily Mail', set a tone of popular prejudice, hostile to the Community and all its works, which endured long after the budget problem was resolved¹⁰⁵.

In any ways the battle for the EEC's budget set the tone of both, in general, her style of premiership and, in particular, the tone her future relations with Europe and its Member States. It was with this battle that the Conservative's pro-Europeanistic stance, traced by the governments of both Macmillan and Heath, started to waver. Within ten years this would lead to a deep split inside the Party and to the end of her tenure as a Prime Minister.

She had won the battle, but the price would be steep: her Party would break apart as she lost her place of primacy and leadership in a Community that would turn more and more towards social dimensions that were alien to her thinking. While on the other hand the clamour of a great part of the media, which were steadily becoming more hostile towards Europe, did little to endear the people to the Community that Britain had entered into voluntarily, and with the acquiescence of Margaret Thatcher herself.

3.2 Europe: A bastion for Unions and Statism

What we should grasp, however, from the lessons of European history is that, first, there is nothing necessarily benevolent about programmes of European integration; second, the desire to achieve grand utopian plans often poses a grave threat to freedom; and third, European unity has been tried before, and the outcome was far from happy.¹⁰⁶

Another fundamental aspect of the 'Anti-Euro Thatcher' that, for the purpose of this work, is of the utmost importance to take into account is her vision of the European Community as an institution that was sliding further and further towards a

¹⁰⁵ J. Campbell (2009?), p.149-50

¹⁰⁶ M. Thatcher (2002) p.327

social model that was based on much of what she had fought against in internal British politics when she had become Prime Minister.

The style and principles of Thatcher's politics was, without any shadow of doubt, markedly on the mould of what would come to be called '*Thatcherism*', which is to say a tendency to favour and fight for free market, deregulation and, of course, less State interference. Some of her most ferocious battles were not on foreign politics but rather in internal politics. Among them possibly one of her most celebrated and renowned victories is the one linked to the change of the internal British labour markets.

Among her many legacies, one of her biggest accomplishments that will certainly be remembered is her fight in the transformation of British labour markets and even more so for the British labour union movement. As a matter of fact, when Madam Thatcher became Prime Minister in 1979, in the United Kingdom, labour unions were decidedly powerful – way more they would ever be from there on. Conversely labour markets were rigid, not at all flexible and in many ways uncompetitive, and this was one of the chief motives that had led British economy to a seeming stagnation. By the time Margaret Thatcher left office – not altogether happily – in 1990, the trade union movement had lost a significant amount of their power and influence.

But why and how does this situation tie with Europe and the EEC? There are, in fact, a number of angles with which to read and analyse this relationship. The most important ties into the matter of internal transformation – at least from her perspective – of the whole European project. As it has been said Europe, during the second part of the 1980s would become more 'social' in the sense that many a mechanism would be put in place in order to shape the embryo of a form of supranational continental state.

Margaret Thatcher, in the interest of her politico-economic vision of her Country and of Europe, or even more so simply by the virtue of being British, was absolutely not willing to move towards that direction.

Europe was best off being an intergovernmental project based on free market and certainly not on some sort of bastardized version of a proto-state. Britons, and mainly Englishmen, had historically always been wary of each and every tentative of

European unification, from Charlemagne to Adolf Hitler. And, for all that this was a radically different project, one that was agreed upon and even wanted by the Member States, a super-state that gave directions from Brussels was something that most Britons – barring those who ‘*went native*’ when sent to Brussels – would not be willing to accept.

This is precisely why even after being extremely favourable and proactive towards the idea of Single Market – and after having signed the Single European Act – any further project that called for more integration was met from her part with distrust and hostility.

She wanted the Single Market because it would undoubtedly benefit her Country; anything else was seen as an impingement of national identity and internal interests. Going as far as claiming that she had been deceived or even willingly tricked with the Single European Act¹⁰⁷ as it would prove to be a skipping stone towards a more harmonized social dimension and a shared monetary harmonization first, and, ultimately, to the Maastricht Treaty of 1992.

In the making of the Single European Act, and more in general in the framework of European politics of the middle-to-late 80s, Margaret Thatcher had met a new and worthy rival, one whose ideas would be at the basis of the renewed process of European integration, Jacques Delors, the new President of the European Commission a man who was both a Frenchman and a socialist.

And while, speaking of Frenchmen, she appeared quite susceptible to the ‘*Gallic charm*’¹⁰⁸, of socialist French President François Mitterrand – not so towards his predecessor Giscard d’Estaing – the same could not be said in the case of Jacques Delors.

The new President of the European Commission took office in 1975 and in just a short amount of time managed to bring the project of the Single Market to a completion. And when it turned out that a sufficient agreement could not be reached on the topics of common defence, institutional reforms and a single currency he directed his efforts towards what we call now the ‘four freedoms’ – freedom of movement of goods, services, capital and people.

¹⁰⁷ M. Thatcher (1996) *The Poisoned Chalice*, Interview by BBC.

¹⁰⁸ J. Campbell (2009), p.146

Thatcher supported it as it went along with her vision of Europe as a free trade area, which pivoted around the Single Market. What she did not take into account is that, while her idea of Europe was based on her own political and economical beliefs, what the other Member States had in mind was quite different, and they had never concealed their inclinations. For Mrs Thatcher the Single Market was the final of the puzzle, for everybody else it was just a part of a wider process of European integration.

She had not understood that for all it was based on various projects of deregulation and other policies near and dear her own inclinations, in order for it to work, the Single Market had to have at its basis also an harmonization of the different Countries' regulations and this would inevitably impinge on what had always been considered a prerogative of national governments.

The signing of the Single European Act ties into her positions – and concerns – for the Single Market. And in order to reach the finalization of the Single Market, she realized she would necessarily have to acquiesce on other matters. This she would come to regret bitterly.

Delors devised the project for the Single European Act in order to carry on with the process of European integration and in it were provisions meant to increase the powers of both the European Commission and of the European Parliament by introducing to other areas the process of weighted majority voting and as Margaret Thatcher *'was afraid that the completion of the Single Market would be held up by other countries exercising their national vetoes, [she] positively bullied her partners to accept majority voting in this area'*¹⁰⁹.

And even if the right to national vetoes was preserved for fundamentally important areas such as border controls or customs and indeed anything else – as per the Luxembourg Compromise – any Member Country regarded as vital, the fact remains that *'Mrs Thatcher 'gave away' more sovereignty in 1985 than Heath in 1973 or Major in 1992'*¹¹⁰.

And even if, in 1996, she would declare she had been deceived, many scholars and former colleagues found this difficult to believe and are of the idea that

¹⁰⁹ Ibidem, p.289.

¹¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 290.

either, as David Williamson – Secretary General of the Community from 1987 – believed, she took a calculated risk on the matter, or that her inexperience in matters of foreign affairs blinded her on something that no one had made a secret of and believing she would be able to control something that would have been *de facto* impossible for her to control.

What Margaret Thatcher did not anticipate was that the Single European Act would be used to support a number of very ambitious policies among which was the social policy. However, as per the directives given by the SEA, many of these social policies were to be voted upon with a qualified majority voting and they would later converge in what would come to be called Social Charter.

The European Social Charter was a solemn declaration adopted, by eleven out of twelve EEC Member States, on 10 December 1989 at a summit in Strasbourg. The only government that did not sign it was the British government presided by Margaret Thatcher. She effectively refused to sign it and, rather, the Charter was dubbed as the ‘*European Socialist Charter*¹¹¹’, as it embodied, in their eyes, all that she and her government had fought against, the free market logic with which she had reformed the totality of British labour law policy, since her election as a Prime Minister in 1979. She, as a firm believer of economic liberalism and minimal regulatory legislation in both economic and social affairs, had fought for the deregulation of employment standard legislations and for the deconstruction of British collective labour laws.

This Charter had the aim of removing regional imbalances in social matters and ensuring a fair economic competition between firms operating and belonging to different Member States. Additionally it also worked as a means to create a form of social consensus that would be able to prepare and protect corporations and workers alike in the future Single Market.

It consisted of some 30 articles dealing with topics ranging from freedom of movement of workers, to the setting of equitable wages, a decent standard of living, an adequate social protection and social security benefits. Furthermore it dealt with measures regarding workers participation in the processes of decision-making,

¹¹¹ K. Ewing (1990), p.107

freedom of association and of collective bargaining, equal treatment for women and the right to strike.

In truth, the Social Charter was nothing more than a declaratory statement that highlighted the fundamental social rights of workers. And even if its signing was met with much fanfare truth was that in no way would the Social Charter be binding for its signatories. And as a matter of fact it could be very well considered only a declaration of intents and most certainly not a binding agreement.

Nevertheless Mrs Thatcher flat out refused to endorse the document and she alone did not sign it. What, on the other hand, would have been binding for all Member States, Great Britain included, was the far-reaching action programme that would necessarily have to accompany it in order for the provisions mandated by the Charter to be implemented and which would consequently contain different mandates working on varying level of intrusiveness and impinging on British national sovereignty.

They included a profusion of safety and health regulations; there were rules seeking to restrict the use of what was described as atypical work, measures that would regulate collective dismissals, provisions for having written contracts of employment, prohibition of child labour, constraints on the employment of pregnant workers, the regulation of working hours, and a requirement that workers sent to another Country would receive the host Country's terms and conditions of employment. Additionally the implementation of European Works Councils would try to increase worker participation¹¹².

This, of course, could not be acceptable for Margaret Thatcher who was not only incredibly firm in the protection and defence of national powers – seeing each and every impingement as a personal offence – but she also had fought a long and hard battle against the British trade unions in order to decrease the power they had over the British labour market.

Consequently the European Social Charter was in itself something that challenged Thatcher's Conservative policies and even more generally her entire set of beliefs on the functioning of free-market, and it would have been impossible for

¹¹² K. Ewing (1990), p.107

her to fall in line with something that disregarded both her socio-economical beliefs and the consistency of the policies introduced by her government.

Furthermore she had already made clear on her position on the matter, stating, during the Bruges speech and in her most celebrated attack on Europe and its institutions:

‘That a State-controlled economy is a recipe for low growth and that free enterprise within a framework of law brings better results’. Moreover if their aim was to open up Europe to enterprises ‘that [meant] action to free markets, action to widen choice, action to reduce government intervention. [Their] aim should not be more and more detailed regulation from the centre: it should be to deregulate and to remove the constraints on trade [...] If [they were] to have a European Company Statute, it should contain the minimum regulations. And certainly [...] Britain would fight attempts to introduce collectivism and corporatism at the European level—although what people wish to do in their own countries is a matter for them.’¹¹³

She was well aware that Europe was moving in a direction that was different from what she wanted, and what she thought would be best for her Country, Europe was becoming decidedly too much: too big, too socialist, too intrusive, too comprehensive, too stifling.

Europe as a free-trade area based on the Single Market and on intergovernmental cooperation as she had initially believed – or most likely blinded herself into believing as many suggest she has – it would come to be was proving to be something radically different in reality and the form it was taking was not acceptable for her.

This change of Europe, even though it was not a change but a natural progression towards the guidelines set with the Treaty of Rome, was one of the other main elements that contributed to strengthening her Eurosceptic stance and it, tied to Labour and the trade union’s change of position regarding the whole European

¹¹³ M. Thatcher (1988), Speech to the College of Europe ("The Bruges Speech")

project and their favourable response to the introduction of the Social Charter managed to harden even more her positions.

Of course this ‘Socialist revolution’ is just one of the many different elements that brought more and more disorder in the scenario of European politics. There were, in fact, other matters that greatly complicated the climate in the general international arena, and they brought a number of other destabilizing elements that hardened even more Thatcher’s positions.

First and foremost there were the problems deriving from the issue of the German reunification after the fall of the Berlin Wall. These issues affected both economics and politics not only in the broader sense of the Cold War order, but even the equilibrium of the EEC itself, and, in the mind of one Margaret Thatcher they also posed a very real problem for the position of Britain in the balance of powers of the European Community.

3.3 Germany, The German reunification (and the Deutschemark)

‘Margaret Thatcher always gave me headaches.’¹¹⁴

No analysis on the difficulty of the relations between Britain and Europe at the end of the 1980s would be complete without mentioning the problems linked to Germany, German reunification and the impact this all had on the Continent in general and on the United Kingdom in particular. The reunification of Germany had, as a matter of fact, been without a shadow of doubt the thorniest question that Europe had faced until that moment.

With Soviet power slowly but surely waning the Cold War was sluggishly coming to its as inevitable as unexpected end. And it was in this scenario that the issue of German reunification came once more to the forefront. This climate brought forth many concerns for Mrs Thatcher, and as a consequence – for it was in her nature – it also brought forth those most combative and intransigent stances for

¹¹⁴ "Kohl lambasts 'ice-cold' Thatcher" (3 November 2005) BBC News, quotation taken from H. Kohl (2005) *Erinnerungen. 1982–1990*.

which marked her as one of the most polarizing figures of the second half of the 20th century.

As a matter of fact, and as it is noted by many scholars¹¹⁵, she had already faced many a problem with her concept and approach to ‘Europe’ since the beginning of her eleven-years long premiership. She disliked both the tone and style of European politics and could not stand the compromises on which it was based upon. Furthermore she regarded both France and Germany, as being hostile to her wishes and demands and, in her most Eurosceptic moments, she believed them to be trying to run the European project as an exclusive Franco-German alliance that had the aim of marginalizing the United Kingdom¹¹⁶.

And after fighting and winning, during the first years of her premiership, an enormous battle over Britain’s contribution to the European Community, which was, for her, almost the perfect issue as the problem suited her angular mind and her instinct for aggression, being very black and white and with a winner and a loser¹¹⁷. It was inevitable for her – as it was in her character – to take more and more confrontational stances, most often using the paradigm of ‘us’ (the British) versus ‘them’ (the Europeans)¹¹⁸.

Consequently, the matter of German reunification followed the theme of Thatcher’s increasingly caustic attitude towards the European Economic and Monetary Union project (EMU), a project she had ferociously resisted. In this climate Germany and its reunification became, by her own admission, her biggest failure in foreign policy¹¹⁹.

There is to say that some of her most fundamental set of beliefs derived from the environment in which she grew up, and she had grown up during the Second World War, when Germany had been the most detested enemy and the source of all evil and this line of reasoning, though perhaps not willingly, remained imprinted in her psyche.

¹¹⁵ J. Campbell (2009) and also J.W. Young (1989)

¹¹⁶ S. B. Dyson (2009), p.44

¹¹⁷ J.W. Young (1989), p.313

¹¹⁸ J. Campbell (2009)

¹¹⁹ M. Thatcher (1992), p. 813

As Dyson reflects, she had always relied on a very ‘black-and-white’ way of thinking. She felt she knew what the German national character was, and, even if irrationally, this belief was so deeply entrenched in her mind that even with the obvious evidence that modern Germany was nothing alike Third Reich she found it difficult to objectively assess the situation. And even if she was not alone in her apprehension her way of looking at the situation ‘*played a very significant role in her policy stance on this issue, and her wider interactions with the integrationist Europe of her era*¹²⁰’.

And, in a situation in which she already had troubles with Europe and the Community, the more concrete the possibility of a reunified Germany became the more she was alarmed. Following Sharp’s line of reasoning what she had was more a general “*an anti-German disposition*¹²¹” rather than a completely and coherently thought out strategy.

Consequently it is no wonder that this section starts with a quote from German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, taken by his book ‘*Erinnerungen 1982-1990*’ (Memoirs 1982-1990). His relationship with the British Prime Minister had, in fact, always firmly erred on the side of ‘complicated’. And just as he claims that ‘*Margaret Thatcher always gave him headaches*’ in very same book he affirms, quite frankly, that her role in the process of German reunification had been ‘*unfriendly, [and] even dangerous*¹²²’.

This is, of course no wonder, for many inside and outside Europe – be they governments or simple people – looked at the possibility of German reunification with quite a bit of apprehension. Some, like the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir were quite vocal and firm in their dislike for the prospect of a German reunification; others, like Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti preferred some form of slithery sarcasm by stating, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, that ‘*[he] loved Germany so much that [he] preferred to see two of them*¹²³’.

¹²⁰ S. B. Dyson (2009), p.45

¹²¹ P. Sharp (1997), p. 223

¹²² H. Kohl (2005), p.59

¹²³ Andreotti was referring to what French Writer François Mauriac said. Mauriac, at the beginning of the Cold War, had, in fact, written ‘*J’aime tellement l’Allemagne que je préfère qu’il y en ait deux*’, quote taken by ‘*Allemagne, histoire d’une ambition*’, Le Monde diplomatique « Manière de voir » #116, avril - mai 2011.

In this scenario many in Europe were concerned about the future of Germany and just as many of the governments of Western Europe preferred to be firmly for the possibility of a reunification, provided that it actually did not happen. Britain was among those governments and definitely the most vocal in rising its concerns on the matter.

Before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Mrs Margaret Thatcher had, in fact, told President Mikhail Gorbachev, during an extraordinary frank meeting with Mr Gorbachev in Moscow in 1989, that neither the United Kingdom nor Western Europe were terribly keen on the issue of German reunification, and even more so she wanted the Soviet leader to do what he could to stop it.

She told Gorbachev, in no uncertain, terms that “[*they did not*] want a united Germany,” and that “[*this would lead to a change to post-war borders, and [they could not] allow that because such a development would undermine the stability of the whole international situation and could endanger our security*”¹²⁴.”

And although she was forthcoming on the idea of East German democracy, it could happen only if the Warsaw Pact remained in place. Moreover Thatcher was also worried that a quick reunification might weaken Gorbachev excessively.

Thatcher found herself stuck in a conundrum: greater freedom and more democracy in Eastern Europe were welcome, as they moved in a direction that was in line with her thinking; however, on the other hand, she did not appreciate the fact that as the situation changed, more and more political instability – both inside the European Community and the international arena – was brought forth.

Consequently in light of a possible future reunification of Germany not only she was worried that Gorbachev – a man with whom she could ‘*do business with*’¹²⁵, – would be weakened in his political position but she was also worried about what an eventual German unity would comport in her view of Britain’s and Germany’s respective roles in Europe’s past and future when Germany might want to become a link between East and West.

¹²⁴ Commentary, The Times (2009) German unification: “*Thatcher told Gorbachev Britain did not want German unification*” (documents from Gorbachev Archive) [“Britain & Western Europe are not interested in the unification of Germany”]

¹²⁵ M. Thatcher (1984) TV Interview for BBC (“I like Mr Gorbachev. We can do business together”)

Moreover there was also the concrete risk that a united and economically powerful Germany might end up dominating both Eastern and Central Europe¹²⁶. Consequently as Margaret Thatcher told U.S. President Bush, there would necessarily have to be some sort of international framework to “*balance German dominance in Europe*”¹²⁷.

However the Prime Minister had not been as furiously opposed to unification as her words indicated. Part of it was due to factors linked with British position in world politics: as a Western Power, member of both NATO and the EEC, it was constrained by the limitations imposed by international and European politics. At least nominally every member of the European Communities or of the Atlantic Alliance had to support German reunification – and she had said so herself in the mid 1980s – even if, in truth, many would hope to never see the day.

Moreover everything was tied to the position of Britain itself in world politics and a reunification would necessarily imply a shake-up of European political and security order. Germany could potentially become too powerful and it could take away Britain’s role in the Community.

Actually she was not alone in her worry as even French President François Mitterrand who had always been one of Kohl closest partners ‘*had told her that, if [they] were not careful, Germany would win in peace what she had failed to achieve in war*’¹²⁸.

This encompassed not only the area of politics but also that of economics. Economically speaking a unified Germany had the potential to become – as many argue it has – ‘The Country’ in the EEC. With a stronger Germany came a stronger deutschemark, the German currency, and this would endanger even more Britain’s position of primacy in the Community, especially since the introduction of the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM).

The ERM was part of the wider European Monetary System (EMS) an arrangement established in 1979 that was created when, after the end of the Bretton Woods system, most of the EEC members decided to link their currencies in order to prevent them from fluctuating too much in relations to one another. The Exchange

¹²⁶ P. Salmon et al. (2010)

¹²⁷ Ibidem, pp. 311

¹²⁸ Ibidem, p. 312

Rate Mechanism served to achieve monetary stability in Europe by reducing the exchange rate variability.

The ERM used the very strong West German deutschemark as its standard and all other Member States were expected to stabilize their respective currencies' exchange rates to it. Thatcher had initially been adamant against joining the ERM as she believed, just as her policies of deregulation indicated, in floating rather than fixed exchange rates.

However, eventually she had to heel and accept it when, Howe and Lawson, two extremely important members of her Cabinet, came to No. 10 of Downing Street on July 1988 and issued an ultimatum in which they affirmed that if Britain did not join the ERM they would resign¹²⁹. Grudgingly she had to accept and in a communiqué she stated that Britain would make the provisions to join the European Exchange Rate Mechanism.

In light of this it was no wonder that the reunification of Germany held such profound connotations. By introducing such a big change in this one area all the variables that had stabilized the situation would mutate and Mrs Thatcher was justifiably against the idea of finding out what would Britain's place be in this new equilibrium that was being created.

3.4 The End of an Era

*'... The first eleven and a half years have not been so bad – and with regard to a twilight, please remember that there are 24 hours in a day.'*¹³⁰
*'You've done enough, old girl. You've done your share. For God's sake, don't go on any longer'*¹³¹

As The Guardian writes *'Margaret Thatcher's resignation as British prime minister provoked tears in Washington and consternation in Moscow'*¹³². It was the

¹²⁹ E.A. Reitan (2003), pp.86-7

¹³⁰ M. Thatcher (21 November 1990), HC Stmt: [CSCE Summit], Response to Paddy Ashdown, House of Commons statement on the CSCE Summit

¹³¹ Denis Thatcher, as revealed by Lord Wakeham in an interview by BBC
<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-34673606>

end of an era but not, as many writers say, the end of the Thatcherism, for it continued to influence a large part of British politics and people and still does so today.

On the morning of Thursday 22 November of 1990, at just after half-past nine, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher announced to the Cabinet, after fifteen years as the Leader of the Conservative Party and eleven years at the government, that she would not take part to the second ballot for the election of the leader of the Conservative Party. Her communiqué was brief, her anger was fierce and her betrayal was bitter and she left with tears in her eyes although not without managing to land the umpteenth laser-hot quip on Europe in which she simply stated that *'a single currency [was] about the politics of Europe [and] about a federal Europe by the back door'*¹³³.

Her time as Prime Minister was over but she had never lost an election nor she had lost any bid for Party leadership since her victory in 1975. She had felt betrayed rather than defeated but her years at the Government had left a mark that nothing and no one could delete, a mark that still influences the policies, behaviours and ideas of Great Britain – and indeed of many aspects of Europe and perhaps the world – to this day.

Many were the factors that brought her to her downfall and Europe was only one of them but one that nevertheless had a great impact in the destabilization of the internal order and structure of the Party. Changes inside the Community and changes inside the internal British politics had contributed even more in the exacerbation of the underlying problems that had long since afflicted the relationship between Europe and the Tories. For example problems with the EEC were at the base of some important resignations, such as Nigel Lawson's in 1989 or George Howe's in 1990, in her Cabinet.

In particular the 'last blow', which signed Mrs Thatcher downfall, was Sir Geoffrey Howe's resignation from the position of Deputy Prime Minister, on 1 November 1990. Howe had been one of the oldest and strongest supporters but her policies on Europe had managed to chip away bit by bit his support until he was

¹³² A. Travis (30 December) 2016, Margaret Thatcher's resignation shocked politicians in US and USSR, files show, The Guardian.

¹³³ M. Thatcher (22 November 1990) HC S: [Confidence in Her Majesty's Government]

forced to resign. And it was two weeks later that, during a speech in the House of Commons, he claimed that *'[he] no longer believed it possible to resolve that conflict from within [the] Government'*. And thus, by resigning, *'[he did] what [he] believed to be right for [his] party and [his] country. The time had come for others to consider their own response to the tragic conflict of loyalties with which [he had] wrestled for perhaps too long¹³⁴'*.

However Europe was just a small part of a wider set of problems that had afflicted the Tory led governments of the last years of the 1980s. By the start of 1990 a new wave of opposition to her policies had steadily grown bigger and stronger. Not only, in fact, the issues of European integration had split her Party in two belligerent factions, but there were now different problems on internal issues as well.

Local government taxation, her Government's mishandling of economy, the setting of new and higher interest rates, and reforms of the National Health Service (NHS) had managed to weaken her enough for her leadership to be officially challenged by her former cabinet colleague Michael Heseltine who managed to get enough votes to trigger a second ballot in which she decided, after a sleepless night of careful consideration, she would not take part in. She would, instead, support John Major, her eventual successor, as he fought and won the leadership contest first and the 1992 general elections second.

Ultimately we can say that after a long and hard fought struggle for leadership within the Conservative Party Margaret Thatcher was forced to resign in November 1990 after her Party and, indeed, public opinion turned against her, but she had stood down and had not been defeated.

For all the good and the misgivings one could have for Dame Margaret Thatcher, the Iron Lady, it is impossible to deny that she had always been and will always be an extremely polarizing figure, in politics, policies, views and ideas. By quite a consistent number of Britons she is regarded as almost a saviour, the Prime Minister who, by the introduction of a number of strong and ambitious policies, pulled Britain away from the stagnation of the 1970s.

¹³⁴ G. Howe (13 November 1990) House of Commons Hansard Debates, Publications and Records, column 465

Others yet detest her and see her as the one responsible for the dismantling of the British Welfare State. The old popular adage of ‘you either love it or hate it’ could not be more correct in the case of Margaret Thatcher, many loved her and just as many detested her. However what no one can deny is that Britain, who in the 70s was widely regarded as ‘The Sick Man of Europe’, faced the 1990s as a stronger and more florid economy.

And if it is true that Europe in the 1990s was radically different than the Europe of the last years of the 1970s the same can be said of the United Kingdom, and much of its merits – and its demerits – are ascribable to the figure of Margaret Thatcher. And as Richard Vinen rightfully remarks, her personal defeat was not a defeat for her policies and, most especially, her legacy. Overthrowing her did not mean overthrowing her policies and that, perhaps, was the greatest sign that indicated that after all Thatcherism had succeeded¹³⁵.

¹³⁵ R. Vinen (2009), pp. 272-3

Chapter 4: Euroscepticism and the Role of British Media

This fourth chapter analyses the impact that the media's portrayal of Europe had in the change of perception of the British population and how, as the depictions of the EEC slowly but steadily got worse, so did the general opinion and demeanour of the greatest majority of the Britons. In this case the term 'media' encompasses more than the simple traditional press embodied by the traditional broadsheet newspapers, for it also refers to the role of the television which encircles both news and lighter hearted forms of entertainment such as variety shows, political satire and, more importantly, sitcoms.

In the current scenario Eurosceptic media are twice as numerous as their counterparts, but in the 1960s and 1970s the situation was reversed and neutral or pro-European press represented, with some small exceptions, the biggest section of the media. However, from the 1980s onwards numerous emotive campaigns, working alongside the steadily Eurosceptic positions taken by Thatcher's Tory Government, played on historical prejudices and managed to believably represent Europe either as a hostile foreign power or as bargaining forum presided by a Franco-German coalition to the detriment of the interest of the United Kingdom.

Consequently, with this in mind, it is easy to see how the growth and strengthening of Eurosceptic media managed to paint Europe in a more and more negative light in the eyes of the Britons, who not only remained one of the nations whose link with its own national identity was the strongest but who also gleaned the greatest majority of information about Europe from those very same media.

For the purpose of a more objective analysis with the aim of demonstrating this change of position of the press it has been decided to analyse the portrayal of Europe in a number of different articles, ranging in time from 1961's decision to seek an entry in the EEC to 1988's Bruges Speech, and taken by a Centre-Left newspaper, *The Guardian* and a Centre-Right one, *The Times*. It comes out that 1979 Britain's most important newspapers, even if they were not overtly enthusiastic, were

all in favour of the EEC. Contrariwise a decade later much of the press was developing a more sceptical outlook on Europe.

For what regards the analysis of the articles perception of Europe in the case of *The Guardian* who, while giving space to its internal Eurosceptic voices, evolved mostly on a pro-Europeanistic line starting from a very neutral position neither overtly in favour nor against Europe and developing during the course of the 1980s in a wider acquiescence and appreciation for the European project, especially after the birth of that newer ‘social’ model of Europe that was pivotal in the Left’s change of stances on European policies. Conversely in the case of *The Times* – and of other Conservative press – the positions on Europe moved in the exact opposite direction, with some strong pro-European position during the late 1970s and early 1980s followed by the development of stronger Eurosceptic stances during the course of the 1980s.

Moreover, as pointed out by the analysis of some passages of the cult sitcom *Yes Minister*, loved by both politicians and average citizens, television had also a great impact in the impression of Europe and the formation of a European identity in Britain. However, as time passed by, the messages sent by the televisions either glossed on the issue or plainly set to discourage the development of this European identity.

Therefore it goes well beyond any doubt to say that television – its news but also its more light hearted programmes – was instrumental in leading the British public, who was *per se* not widely familiar with the EEC and its institutions, to see the Europe as a ridiculous and quite useless organization, in which Member States did little but fight all the time, create unwanted legislation while working to obstruct and depower the United Kingdom.

Consequently it stands that there is an obvious causality between the wider spread stances taken by the press, which filtered and broadcasted great majority of the information that arrived to the general British public, and the progressive deterioration of the perception of the EEC. And so the media’s Euroscepticism helped strengthening Britons’ dislike for Europe, which was in turn exacerbated by Thatcher’s growing anti-Europeanistic rhetoric. The results were the birth of modern Britain, bastion of all things Eurosceptic.

4.1 British Media: Euroscepticism Against the Current, Newspapers and Printed Press

*'The British Nation is unique in this respect: they are the only people who like to be told how bad things are, who like to be told the worst.'*¹³⁶

As it has already been said, there is another peculiar characteristic of the British Nation that led to the conversion, especially among the voters of the Conservative Party, from pro-Europeanism to Euroscepticism: the British media. By media we intend not only those embodied by the most traditional forms, such as the newspapers, but also a number of different TV programmes, whose satirical components managed to attract a decidedly wider audience.

One of the most significant factors in this change of attitude was the the press, which as time went on moved towards a strongly Eurosceptic position. With regards to the single currency many among the newspaper expressed their strong opposition. The traditionally Conservative *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Mail*, were against it, but so were *The Sun* and *The Times*, which, in the international arena is the most diffused newspaper.

Not only newspapers themselves, but also their proprietors, editors, and even important journalists took this stance. And as noted by Crowson, in the construction of the myth that saw Europe as the origin of all evil, history was not important, the telling was¹³⁷. All in all, it could be very well considered, as noted by Stephens citing an interview on BBC Radio 4 in April 1996¹³⁸, that Conservative press was, without nigh an exception, edited by the harshest wing of the Eurosceptics.

Comparatively, during the 90s and the early 2000s, the pro-European press was half the dimension of the Eurosceptic one. Of course this had not always been the case, for during the 1960s and the 1970s the positions were quite different and the true, and only, real Eurosceptic newspaper was *The Daily Express* – as still

¹³⁶ Winston Churchill

¹³⁷ N. J. Crowson (2007) p.185

¹³⁸ *Today interview*, BBC Radio 4, 25 April 1996, cited in P. Stephens (1996), p.330

remains to this day, being the main supporter and financial backer of the UK Independence Party (UKIP). Conversely *The Times* had, even if not wholeheartedly, moved to support a British entry from the beginning of 1961.

And even during the 60s *The Daily Express* was fervent in its opposition to Europe, leveraging its readers with the support of an emotive campaign playing upon the ‘latent prejudices¹³⁹’ of the Europeans as the dirty, undemocratic Catholics – suffice to say that the term ‘Papist’ has long been an insult among the British – although, even if Europe can be considered the project of Christian Democrats, many among the Six founders were either, like Germany, split between Catholicism and Protestantism, or almost wholly Protestant like The Netherlands.

Nevertheless The Express’ position on Europe remained, with some minor exception in time, mostly unchanged, and, from the time of de Gaulle’s veto in 1963 – when the newspaper exultantly titled ‘*Glory, Glory Hallelujah! It’s all over*¹⁴⁰’, – to its most recent articles *The Daily Express* remained patently anti European. Truth to be told however, there was one major fundamental problem in the dialectic between the anti and pro Europe during the 60s and the 70s, and indeed a part of the 80s.

And although a good portion of the British press was in favour to an entry and to Europe in general, due to the very nature of the printed press and, indeed, of the subjects treated in the arguments that it gleaned the attention of only part of the most educated élites. Indeed, as already previously mentioned, any argument on Europe was mostly discarded by the wider part of the audience.

Moreover, if we were to analyse the situation during the 1960s and the 1970s, it was not the pro-European segment of the society, but indeed the Eurosceptics who were concerned with not having enough covering for their anti-Europeanistic position in both the traditional press and the TV, particularly the BBC (British Broadcasting Channel). And even if there were part of the smaller local newspapers that took an anti-European tone, the bulk of the media remained, at the time, decidedly pro-Europe.

Furthermore by the time 1975 and the referendum rolled around it was revealed that the antis had a most definite lack both representation and support for

¹³⁹ N. J. Crowson (2007) p.186

¹⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

their arguments. On the other hand by the time Mrs Thatcher government gained enough traction in her premiership and won a rebate the position of the greatest part of the media was completely reversed. And so by the time the 1990s rolled around the situation was completely reversed, with the bulk of the most important and widespread media either Eurosceptic or tepid on the subject.

And even as of today the depiction of the harshest Eurosceptic positions are to be found in the British press, particularly those of the right-wing persuasion, and *The Daily Telegraph*, *the Sun* and *The Daily Mail*, all traditionally part of the Conservative sphere of influence, are decidedly on Eurosceptic positions. However, what for the most part shaped the citizens' negative perception of Europe is the fact that these newspapers almost never present an alternative pro-European voice to counterbalance their negative arguments.

This is of course not to say that there are no counterarguments that try to balance and challenge the main Eurosceptic positions. And as the most anti-European position find, nowadays, their biggest expression inside the right-wing press, they find some sort of counterbalance in other newspapers of either Labour, centrist or independent positions, such as *The Observer*, *The Independent* and *The Guardian*. However, the influence of the Eurosceptic media extends far beyond that as it tends to widely influence the ground on which broader debates about Europe take place and the way with which they are faced in the wider part of the more pro-European press¹⁴¹.

Britain remained traditionally one of the States in which the national sentiments prevailed over any type whatsoever of European sentiments and many studies¹⁴² throughout the years indicate that the media had much to do with it, the strong sense of national identity coincided with less identification and support of Europe. A number of more studies have proven¹⁴³ that anti-European sentiments tended to coincide with an aversion to those that were perceived as outsiders, or foreign and thus the sentiments of nationalism, which have always been quite strong

¹⁴¹ B. Hawkins (2012), pp. 561-577.

¹⁴² L. Hooghe, L. and G. Marks (2005) pp. 419-43.

¹⁴³ For example R. Azrout, J. Van Spanje, C. De Vreese, (2010) or L. Hooghe, G. Marks, (2005) and L. Hooghe, G. Marks, (2009)

in Britain, tended to exasperate the question, even moreso as the media and the press, in order to further their anti-Europeanist agenda, tended to play on these nationalist sentiments.

For what regards the right-wing press there are, according to what Benjamin Hawkins found out and reported in his 2012 article *Nation, Separation and Threat: An Analysis of British Media Discourses on the European Union Treaty Reform Process*¹⁴⁴, two main frameworks with which Europe can be seen with the lenses of Euroscepticism: a foreign power and a bargaining forum. In the first case Europe acts the part of the foreign invisor bent to overpower and threaten the stability and integrity of the United Kingdom, in the second case, the forum, Europe is yet again seen as a threat, where France and Germany are once again seen as the ‘enemies’, two states that formed some sort of Franco-German coalition to the detriment of the interest of the United Kingdom.

The more left-leaning pro-Europeanistic press – which includes titles like *The Guardian* and *The Observer* – on the other hand, tends to try and challenge the Eurosceptic narrative and has come to see Europe as something that enabled the coming of an as-of-yet unprecedented period of peace, based on stability, democracy and shared prosperity. But while this more left-leaning press tends to incorporate inside its discourse some Eurosceptic voices, the same cannot be said for the right-wing press where there is an almost total lack of pro-Europeanistic voices.

Consequently it is not difficult to imagine, even moreso given the fact that the majority of British people tend to familiarise themselves with Europe through the lenses of the press, that these many years of anti-European propaganda have contributed in both the souring of the relationship between Britain and the Continent and also in the more and more negative perceptions that British citizens developed with regards to Europe.

To this it must, of course, be added the role played by the Television, who, in turn, also became steadily more antagonistic towards Europe, and consequently bringing along a wider variety of the less educated part of Great Britain, who did not concern themselves with too-serious analytical analyses that were explained in the less accessible part of the press.

¹⁴⁴ B. Hawkins (2012), pp. 561-577.

As already mentioned, in fact, television was indeed important in the shaping of the relationship and moreover the perception that the British had with regards to Europe. Much emphasis was indeed given on the symbolic content of news about the EEC. Especially important was the portrayal and identification of the material benefits or, indeed, the losses that Britain would face or gain in its membership of the European Communities.

As it turns out, even with regards of the television, a multitude of mixed signals were given on Europe. And certainly what has already been mentioned with regards of the press, such as the fact that during the 1960s and 1970s much of the media seemed to hold a favourable position towards Europe, could be also well applied in the case of the television. Much of the media were, in fact, decidedly pro-Europeanistic and this would reflect without doubt in the favourable results of the 1975 referendum, for which the anti-Europeanistic propaganda did not find overmuch space in either the traditional press or in the television.

Consequently, both platforms of information can be, without a shadow of doubt, considered instrumental in making or breaking – as it would be the case during the latter years of the Thatcher premiership – of Britain's good opinion of the EEC and indeed also for the development in the of an European identity – which in Britain for the most part was not all that successful – and a form of European solidarity.

The press can be thus considered one of the most important players in the British change of attitude, and while it mostly remained pro-Europe during the 60s and the 70s, the coming of the 80s with the Thatcher governments – and particularly her attitude towards Europe – and her victory in the battle for the rebate contributed in turning the pro-European Britain, especially in the case of the Conservatives and its electoral base, towards decidedly more antagonistic positions.

4.2 British Media: an Analysis of Newspaper Articles for The Guardian and The Times

*'Hacker: Don't tell me about the press. I know exactly who reads the papers. The Daily Mirror is read by people who think they run the country; The Guardian is read by people who think they ought to run the country; The Times is read by the people who actually do run the country; the Daily Mail is read by the wives of the people who run the country; the Financial Times is read by people who own the country; the Morning Star is read by people who think the country ought to be run by another country, and the Daily Telegraph is read by people who think it is.'*¹⁴⁵

For what regards a more thorough analysis of the impact that the media, and in particular the printed press, had on the British people's perception of Europe there will be an accurate analysis of the portrayal of some of the most fundamental moments in the relationship between Great Britain and the European Communities, such as the process of negotiation and the vetoes, the entry, the referendum and, of course, the Bruges speech.

With reference to the newspapers that have been chosen to undergo such an analysis, having until now mainly used Conservative-friendly bibliography, it has been decided to use for the most part a source that is not party affiliated or, indeed, generally right-leaning. The bulk of this evaluation will be, in fact, mainly derived from the newspaper *The Guardian* with some additions from the newspaper that is most widely recognized and diffused outside Great Britain: *The Times*.

While the latter has a mostly Centre-Right and Conservative orientation, the first is situated on the Centre-Left. *The Guardian*, known from its founding in 1821 to 1959 as the Manchester Guardian, is a daily British newspaper of mainly Centre-Left orientation and vehicular of the middle-class expressions. *The Guardian* is an independent newspaper, owned by The Scott Trust Limited, a trust that was created in order 'to secure the financial and editorial independence of *The Guardian* in perpetuity and to safeguard the journalistic freedom and liberal values of *The*

¹⁴⁵ Yes, Prime Minister (23rd December 1987) – Series 2 Episode 4 – A Conflict of Interests

*Guardian free from commercial or political interference*¹⁴⁶. Although it is often assumed that *The Guardian* is only expression of the Labour Party, it has on the other hand, throughout its years, supported all three main political parties¹⁴⁷ – Conservative, Labour and the Liberals.

The Times, on the other hand, was born in 1785 with the title of The Daily Universal Register and became known with its current name in 1788. Although being of mainly Centre-right orientation it does not automatically endorse the Tories, having more than once decided to remain detached. Furthermore *The Times* is not only the most diffused newspaper among the British élites but also it is the most widely recognized and respected periodical outside Great Britain.

Both these newspapers have thus been chosen in order to give the widest and most comprehensive vision possible not focusing only on Party-line perceptions, but instead trying to give the most complete framework with both Centre-Right and Centre-Left positions that nevertheless come from sources that have proven themselves as functioning even outside Party affiliation.

The next part of this Chapter will, consequently, be dedicated to a through analysis of some of the most impactful moments in the relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Communities in the perspective of both these newspapers, with main contributions from *The Guardian* and occasional remarks from *The Times*.

‘*Britain Will ask to Join EEC - Our Duty to Europe*¹⁴⁸’, so wrote Parliamentary correspondent Norman Shrapnel on the first page of *The Guardian* on August 1st 1961 after Prime Minister Harold Macmillan had just announced his intention of applying for membership in the EEC.

In this first foray with the Communities *The Guardian* did not see fit to take a strong position in one sense or the other – neither decidedly in favour but nor strongly against it – but rather decided to report, in the most satirical way possible, of the ins and the outs of Macmillan’s decision – by carefully pointing out that he was

¹⁴⁶ The Guardian - The Scott Trust: values and history (26 July 2015)

¹⁴⁷ The Guardian – Political Affiliation (17 November 2008)

¹⁴⁸ Britain will ask to Join EEC - Our Duty to Europe, Norman Shrapnel (1 August 1961), *The Guardian*, Front Page.

'not confident but hopeful of entry' – along with the most fervent protests of Tory backbenchers and, indeed, also from parts of the Labour Party.



¹⁴⁹ Macmillan was – probably very aptly – described as a *'weary looking father-figure'* who *'at last held out his hand [...] and offered to try to lead the Commons and the Country into Europe, if he [could] find the way'*. Shrapnel remarked, quoting Tory MP Mr Gilbert Longden, that there was *'much kicking and screaming'*

although not only from the side of Labour but, indeed, also from the Conservative side of the House of Commons. Nevertheless the PM remarked that it would be in their interest, but also their duty, *'to add to Europe's strength'* in the struggle for freedom as they could do much, and offer much to Europe and against *'the enormous monolithic strength of the Soviet power'*.

Much of the Article consisted in a way-by-way account of the various protests, upheavals, and various kicking, screaming and general mayhem that exploded in the Commons after Macmillan's announcement, all, of course, with the most distinguishable humorous British attitude. But for all the satirization and caricature that characterize Shrapnel's piece it also points out, without a measure of uncertainty, that for all it would be remembered as a memorable day and

'as sensational as anyone could hope to avoid. Yet how could it have been avoided? There was Europe economic or political or however you chose to see it. [T]here were a lot of people who, in spite of the Liberals and Mr Longden and many others who had been converted long before Mr Macmillan saw the light, were not at all sure they wanted to go.'

¹⁴⁹ William Papas, Vignette (1 August 1961), The Guardian, Front Page.

There was still much emphasis on the ‘*very great risks*’ that a failure in could comport. But, nevertheless, in case of failure they would still continue to *cling* to their obligations, both external and internal even in the light of eventual major changes in Great Britain’s commitments and the foreign policy. Here the position of *The Guardian* is, for lack of a better term, guarded humorous but cautious and very much ambiguous for the expression ‘see the light’ might have been interpreted, if the reader so chose, either as another humorous barb or as a confirmation that Europe could and would be seen as a concrete possibility for the future.

On January 30 1963, not even 18 months after Macmillan’s announcement, President de Gaulle vetoed British accession for the first time on 29th January 1963. The following day much of *The Guardian*’s front-page was dedicated to Europe. French refusal, Germany, Italy and Benelux’s disappointment and a strong quote from Macmillan asserting that they ‘*shall deal with it*’. Political correspondent Francis Boyd¹⁵⁰ – in an article aptly names ‘the agony of reappraisal’ – describes the situation and pans out different alternatives that could follow after the veto.

However, for the first time, *The Guardian* chose to fall on this side of criticism, but this does not mean that Europe was strongly criticized as the burnt of the critiques fell mostly on Macmillan’s government rather than on the EEC. For the first time, writes Boyd, the government could be forced to admit that the basis on which the decision to take accession was taken was rather more political than economic, as both Macmillan and Heath – then at the head of the European delegation – staunchly affirmed.

These events, continues the author, could bring two possible consequences: the maintenance of all pre-existing links with Western Europe due to political necessities – in the frame of the Cold War – and the economic inducement that Britain needed in order to restore its economic competitiveness that would need to be undertaken by domestic inducements rather than the Common Market. Much space is also given, in Leonard Beaton’s article *France Excludes Britain from the Market*¹⁵¹, to the dismayed reactions of the other Five countries.

¹⁵⁰ The Agony of Reappraisal, Francis Boyd (30 January 1963), *The Guardian*, pp.1-2.

¹⁵¹ France excludes Britain from the Market, Leonard Beaton (30 January 1963), *The Guardian*, p.1, p.9, p.13

Much emphasis is thus given on France's role as the ultimate responsible. Beaton underlines in bold letter both '*the Five bitter regret*' and Heath's reaction: '*Mr Heath blames one man for [the] failure*'. Yet again German regret is conveyed by the '*hopes for a fresh start*', but *The Guardian* is cautious for, even if some in the community believe Britain to be ready to join while others – namely France – do not, '*such decision of world importance as the British application for membership should not lead to quibbling*'. Nevertheless, as reporting the words of the West German Vice-Chancellor '*this is not the end; we shall meet again*'.

A little over four years later a new veto was imposed, yet again by France, on the accession of Great Britain. On November 28 1967 *The Times* wrote '*de Gaulle rules out early negotiations with Britain*¹⁵²', but it is in the following day that by the pen of their political correspondent¹⁵³ *The Times* highlights Mr Heath and PM Wilson's – for once in agreement – responses.

Nevertheless Britain's application would stay in – no matter the vehement protests of Labour backbenchers – and in the meantime, with no possible realistic hope in the near future Britain would try and strengthen its relationship with the Five while '*defeating the French in the Six's internal argument during the months and years ahead*'. At that time, for all that Britain was just fresh from another veto; the position of *The Times* was not harsh, or indeed against, Europe.

And the tones used in a piece written by the political correspondent are much tamer than what could be expected. Just as in the case of the previous articles written by *The Guardian* the approach the press had with regards to Europe, even after de Gaulle's noes, is quite impartial, neither for nor particularly against an entry.

What both newspaper agreed upon, however, is that when finally Britain managed to enter in the European Economic Communities on the 1st of January 1973 there was not much fanfare to be seen, quite the contrary, as the first day in Europe passed almost as if unnoticed. '*We're in but without the fireworks*¹⁵⁴' wrote *The*

¹⁵² de Gaulle rules out early negotiations with Britain, Charles Hargrove (28 November 1967), *The Times*, p.1.

¹⁵³ Mr Wilson waits to reply on veto, from *Time's* political correspondent (29 November 1967), *The Times*, p.1.

¹⁵⁴ We're in – but without the fireworks, David McKie and Dennis Barker (1st January 1973), *The Guardian*, p.1.

Guardian, while *The Times*, in a smaller article¹⁵⁵ down by the bottom of the page – and away from the big title¹⁵⁶ describing both the squabbling among Parties and their leaders and Mr Heath’s joy – focused on the plans to meet the challenge of a new frontier.

The Times describes the entry almost as if it was an afterthought, unnoticed, a ‘*thief in the night*’, but Britain, continues Heren, ‘*could now look forward to a European year, a European decade and – who knows? – a European century*’. The picture painted by *The Times* is not unflattering it describes the EEC as a *Terra Incognita*, not as a static structure or something based on the Eurocrats and their institutions, but as ‘*a Community of Countries, of peoples with their own personal and national aspirations, strengths and weaknesses, come together for mutual benefit*’.

In this light Europe is painted in almost a flattering light still maintaining, however, the peculiar British characteristic of seeing Europe from a very different perspective than those of the federalists. Europe is, yes, a Community of Countries, but each and every one of them is different and they have come together for mutual benefit and not, for a idealistic federal vision of the future. *The Times* is positive but not too positive, pro-Europeanistic but decidedly without any sort of federalist inclinations.

On the other hand *The Guardian*, as exemplified by McKie and Barker, still stresses the almost unnoticed way in which Britain entered Europe – *without the fireworks* – but, rather, it offers a the widest possible account of all the reactions, both positive and negative that this entry managed to bring forth from not only politicians but also from Unions. And comments like ‘*a great adventure*’, ‘*a unique new year*’ were followed by proclaims of ‘*shameful betrayal*’ and ‘*blackest day in history*’. But the approach of *The Guardian* is more cautious than that of *The Times* and the article ends with the following closure:

¹⁵⁵ The Times in Europe: plans to meet the challenge of a new frontier, Louis Heren (1st January 1973), *The Times*, p.1.

¹⁵⁶ Party Leaders in eve-of-entry clash on Britain’s future in Europe – Mr Heath sees exciting, prosperous era ahead, George Clark – Political Staff – (1st January 1973), *The Times*, p.1.

‘Girls from each of the Nine will compete for the Miss TV Europe title on Thursday. But it will take perhaps rather more than this to tip the British public into making up its mind decisively on whether the EEC is really a rising sun or only an amalgam of extinct volcanoes. As the Opinion Research Centre poll shows, opinion is well in line with the ambiguity of the whole proceedings so far - almost exactly fifty-fifty.’

Two-and-a-half years later, in 1975, when, in the referendum for the continued membership, the ‘Yes’ won by a considerable margin, *The Guardian* titled *Twin crisis clouds Europhoria*¹⁵⁷, *Anatomy of a landslide*¹⁵⁸, while *The Times* opened with *Britain says yes to Europe by 2-to-1 vote*¹⁵⁹. Both articles report the success of the Yes campaign, which brought the pro-Europeans to win by a much wider margin than what was expected.

‘The pro-Market margin was a wider one that has ever swept any Government in our history’; *The Guardian* began with this opening statement and then proceeded to illustrate how the Country had voted, emphasising the margin by which the ‘Yes’ had won. As it stands, however, it also describes the problems that the Labour’s government, presided by Mr Wilson who had campaigned for a Yes while the majority of his party stood for the No, would be facing in the near future. Europhoria was clouded by the problems his Government and Party would be confronting as well as the difficult economic situation the whole Country was going to face.

The tones are definitely pro-Europeanistic, but not overtly so and *The Guardian* still endeavoured to maintain its objectiveness as much as it possibly could. It pointed out the end of the uncertainty between Britain and its partners¹⁶⁰ but it could not resist a underhanded barb to the Conservatives by stating that, even if it was reported that most Conservatives supporters were in their hearts opposed to a continued membership, if that was in fact so, in the light of the results of the

¹⁵⁷ Twin crisis clouds Europhoria – Now Mr Wilson has to tackle Left, I. Aitken, (7 June 1975), *The Guardian*, p.1

¹⁵⁸ Anatomy of a landslide, D. McKie (7 June 1975), *The Guardian*, p.1

¹⁵⁹ Britain says yes to Europe by 2-to-1 vote – End to 14 years of argument, Mr Wilson says, D. Wood (7 June 1975), *The Times*, pp.1-2.

¹⁶⁰ Convincing margins end Partners’ uncertainty, R. Norton-Taylor (7 June 1975), *The Guardian*, p.1

referendum, *'the way they disguised it in [the] vote amounted to a masterly feat of legerdemain'*.

On the other hand *The Times* was decidedly more enthusiastic in its support for the EEC and the success of the referendum. By comparing both front pages it is somewhat easy to point out how more positive the 'big title' of *The Times* is; *'Britain says yes to Europe by 2-to-1 vote'* is certainly more outward-looking than *'Twin crisis clouds Europhoria – Now Mr Wilson has to tackle Left'* which, by comparison, seems to concentrate more on the inward impacts that the vote would have on the Labour's government rather than the unexpected margin by which the 'Yes' campaign had won.

According to *The Times* the United Kingdom was in Europe *'finally for good'*, wrote Political Editor Mr David Wood, and continued by quoting Wilson and asserting that *'it was a free vote, without constraint, following a free democratic campaign conducted [...] without rancour'*. Much space is also given to the congratulatory and exultant tones of Tory opposition leader Margaret Thatcher who, still far away from the clear anti-Europeanist positions of a decade or so later, commented: *'the message of the referendum to the Government is that the people have looked at the really [important] issues [...] they have looked at what really counts and they have voted in that way. It is really telling.'* However not everything is seen with some rose-tinted glasses, as the article clearly points out, there were still many issues that were to be considered because:

'The 'Yes' verdict resolves some questions but creates others. Had there been a 'No' vote, Parliament would have spent the next two years legislating itself out of the EEC. 'Yes' means that the status quo is confirmed: no legislation is needed. The only imminent decision that needs to be taken concerns the nomination of a Labour delegation to the European Parliament, where 18 seats remain to be filled'.

All in all both newspapers report the outcome of the referendum in a positive light, both tellingly using the term 'landslide' their approach is nonetheless quite different, and in fact while *The Times* is more overtly positive and approving of the

outcome, *The Guardian* prefers to adopt a more careful and neutral stance that is reflected by the concerns for internal Labour Party consequences.

This is quite surprising for in the following years the attitudes that these two newspapers, especially in the case of *The Times*, had towards Europe would change radically. And while *The Guardian* would remain mostly pro-Europeanistic, even if not bereft of many anti-Europeanistic voices in its columns, *The Times* would steadily move more and more towards a negative perception, and consequently very critical positions, of EEC and Europe in general.

Some argue this change was a direct consequence of the change of ownership that happened in 1981, when control passed from Roy Thomson to News UK, a subsidiary organ of News Corp run by Rupert Murdoch, others instead affirm that this change of position was a consequence of the policies, visions and approaches that Margaret Thatcher used since the beginning of her battle for the Rebate. Quite more probably both visions are right and it was a commingling of these two elements that brought forth a change of attitude in *The Times*.

On September 21 1998, one day after the acclaimed Bruges Speech, *European Thatcherism*¹⁶¹, the Leading Article on the Front Page of *The Times*, described a PM who ventured in a hostile territory when describing her vision of Europe. She was likened to a missionary coming to a tribe that was only half-converted and that while it understood that unity in a competitive world was advantageous, it still needed guidance on pretty much everything else.

However, while Mrs Thatcher had spoken about Britain as a Nation that was fully European – and one who did much in the betterment of the Community benefited who looked with optimism at the future of the European cooperation – her Community was not like the one envisaged by her partners. It encompassed more than the – then – 12 Member States and also it included Countries that were under the rule of the Warsaw Pact. A Community ‘*with more historical resonance, that was bound by civilized values and the rule of law*’ and bound together by the States’ willingness and voluntary cooperation, ‘a group of self-interested states joined by the recognition that in certain areas like economic affairs and defence’ with which they would be able to face the ‘*giants of the outside world*’.

¹⁶¹ European Thatcherism; Leading Article (21 September 1998), *The Times*.

But the more pleasing aspects that were used to describe Europe disguised a more profound criticism, and the EEC, for all that Britain affirmed that its future was in the Community, was seen yet again with the lenses of Thatcherism. It ought to be a Community founded on deregulation, on the principles of individualism while at the same time being economically efficient. Still, stresses *The Times*, the principles of national identity and national frontiers were to remain firmly one of the basis upon which the EEC was built.

The vision of Europe that Thatcher had was radically different from that of Germany and France, it was grander, in the perspective of both geography and historical reach, but smaller and not federalist in term of what could, according to her view, be realistically achieved. Nevertheless, when asked why the vision of the future of Mrs Thatcher diverged so drastically from that of other Member States *The Times* trenchantly replied that the reason was to be found somewhere between crude and objective realism and Thatcher's temperament.

As a matter of fact, she embodied a vision of Europe that was very common among the Britons. They, in fact, saw Europe, and consequently British people in Europe, with the perspective of the time before the Great War. '*She saw a whole Continent, where others saw man-made groupings of nations*'. She was more honest, not idealistic like other European nations, and she recognized that the final objective of a real and concrete European Unity was not at all plausible and she worked in the reality and not with ideals.

Conversely the stance adopted by *The Guardian* is much more critical towards Margaret Thatcher and her EEC policy and assumptions. In his article Hugo Young¹⁶² affirms that while the Government had run a long propagandistic campaign based solely on the concept of business whose aim was to sing the praises of the EEC.

The truth was that this expensive and useless campaign was, for the most part, preaching to those already converted to pro-Europeanism, while making sure that those who were not converted would fall all the faster into the bandwagon of anti-Europeanism. This, however, was not an act perpetrated by Little England – that

¹⁶² Commentary: The leader mixes the messages, H. Young (22 September 1988), *The Guardian*.

part of the country who was anti-Europe – but it was an action that was to be wholly attributed to what the author defines as ‘*European Britain*’.

Britain was more European than in 1973 and the transformation was not to be solely attributed to business and even ‘*without the intervention of any Brussels bureaucrat or other unsightly excrescence of corporate statism*’ the nation became more and more European as time passed. Labour moved towards Europe and so did, according to *The Guardian*, the public opinion. Britain had ceased to be a world unto its own, but this did not mean that Brussels destroyed Britain, rather the contrary, as the UK’s entry in the EEC served the purpose of teaching a ‘*distinctly unpromising pupil the limits and the attractions of what belonging to Europe might mean*’.

The decidedly pro-Europeanistic tone of *The Guardian* are highlighted in the next part of the article where a strong critique, going as far as accusing her of straight up demagoguery, to the static and anti-EEC positions expressed by Mrs Thatcher took up the remaining part of the article. Enter now, however, a different instructor, our leader. With her lecture in Bruges, states Young, she set up to put a stop to the European road, and even when asserting Britain’s European nature she moved to freeze the Community in the state it was then rather than try and going forward.

She claimed, continues the author, to want to preserve national customs and identities while her true aim was to avoid any type of loss of sovereignty. Rather than some sort of British political game it was a show of her personal strength, rife with unrevised personal prejudices stemming forth from her vision of a newer and stronger Britain, a vision that, for *The Guardian*, was evolving into an extremely dangerous attitude and whose consequences might nullify British’s aspiration to ‘lead’ Europe to its future. And at the closing of its Young, with possibly one of the harshest attacks on Thatcher, remarked:

‘The leader’s effect on her own people [was] more troubling. Her speech must [have] thrown them into confusion. They were slowly learning to become good Europeans, and finding it a painless, even agreeable, experience. Only as a full-hearted participant in Europe could Britain hope to maximise her influence in the world. That was what a majority began at last to understand. But one woman’s vision said otherwise’.

And so the 1980s end in a very different way from that in which they had begun. This was true not only for European and world politics, but also for the position of the press. In 1979 the majority of the important newspapers were in favour, maybe not overtly enthusiastically but certainly not negatively, of the European Communities, ten years later things had changed and much of the press was steadily developing a more and more negative outlook on Europe. Twenty or thirty years later the situation was even worse and much of the press was markedly Eurosceptic.

There were, of course, exceptions such as in the case of *The Guardian* who started from a very neutral and independent position neither overtly in favour nor against Europe and developed overtime, maybe due and thanks to its independent and Centre-Left political positions, a new appreciation for the European project during the 1980s and creation of a more 'social' model of Europe while still giving some representation to its internal Eurosceptic voices.

Conversely as it is pointed out by the case of *The Times* – and indeed of all the other Conservative and Centre-right press – the positions moved in the opposite direction. The late 1970s and early 1980s were marked by a decidedly pro-Europeanistic tendency but as time went by they acquired more and more Eurosceptic positions without giving, in turn, enough space to their internal pro-European voices.

Consequently it is not difficult to point out the fact that the more their stance on Europe hardened the more British peoples' perception of the EEC soured especially since the great majority of the information that arrived to the general British public were filtered by these newspapers. And so the Euroscepticism of the press, alongside that of the television, helped strengthening Britons' dislike for Europe, and this in turn was exacerbated by Thatcher's – wanted or unwanted – anti-Europeanistic rhetoric. The results were the birth of modern Britain, bastion of all things Eurosceptic.

4.3 British Television from the ‘Common Market’ to the ‘Eurosausage’: British People’s perception of Europe

Bernard: “They can’t stop us eating the British sausage, can they?”

Hacker: “No, but they can stop us calling it a sausage. Apparently it’s got to be called the Emulsified High-Fat Offal Tube¹⁶³.”

As already mentioned more than one time television had also a great impact in the perception that the British people had of Europe, and the formation of a European identity in Britain. When analysing much of the coverage, especially the one broadcasted by the BBC, we find out that, as time passed by, the messages sent by the televisions were either totally absent or they were plainly set to discourage the development of this European identity.

According to theoretical literature¹⁶⁴ the development of forms of political identity are helped by perception of civic rights, material benefits and the formation of a ‘us’ mentality. Consequently the creation of a form of European political identity could have been reinforced if Europe was perceived as something that was part of Britain rather than something external to it.

British culture and heritage and the sentiments of nationhood were stressed and so was the fight between economic gains and losses. However, the messages of the television were substantially different from those diffused by the press; here, in fact, Europe is definitely more satirized and the efforts for harmonization and the production of European law are often used as the butts of cleverly wicked jokes.

Television, in fact, vehicles information at a much faster pace and is more efficient and diffused among the plurality of the social strata. Consequently it was much easier for TV programmes, rather than broadsheet newspapers, to influence the public and now thanks to the television even those people who were not part of the cultured or the élites could easily gain access to information regarding Europe.

¹⁶³ Yes Minister (17 December 1984) – Special Episode – Party Games

¹⁶⁴ Gavin, T. (2000), pp. 367-9.

As things stand British public is mostly dependent for its perception of Europe on information given by the media, consequently Britons' perception of European affairs depends much on how television 'spins the tale'. And when we analyse how TVs cover European news we find out that it tends to concentrate on economic losses and problems rather than benefits.

News that feature fights are much more common than anything that features intra-European solidarity and by highlighting the clashes and diverging economic interests the concept of Europe as a common denominator to which all EEC Countries belong falls flat. Furthermore this does not apply only to broadcasting news but also for sitcoms and variety shows that built around barbs on Europe and the EEC some of their most renown and beloved jokes.

This is most certainly the case of *Yes Minister* – and its sequel *Yes, Prime Minister* – a much beloved and award-winning satirical British sitcom, written by Jonathan Lynn and Sir Antony Jay, and made up of a total of 38 half-an-hour episodes that were transmitted from 1980 to 1984 and from 1986 to 1988. The series follows the ministerial career of the Right Honourable Jim Hacker, Minister of the fictional Department of Administrative Affairs during the first seasons and Prime Minister during the latter ones. Hacker struggled to enact effective legislations and coherent departmental changes and was opposed by the world of British Civil Service and by his Permanent Secretary, Sir Humphrey Appleby.

The series satirizes the entirety of British politics, from the Civil Service to the Government, but always omitting the name of any party substituting 'Conservative' and 'Labour' simply 'the Party', 'the Opposition' and 'the Government'.

And, as written by Lynn himself on his site, the series has been cited many times by both textbooks and political scientists for its spot-on depiction of the relationship between politicians and civil servants in British politics and administration. The series was highly rated by people, critics and politicians alike and was also the favourite TV programme of the then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Yes Minister who told *The Daily Telegraph* that '*its clearly-observed*

*portrayal of what goes on in the corridors of power has given me hours of pure joy*¹⁶⁵.

Yes Minister's satire however, for all that it was hinged on a critique of Britain's politics, did not spare Europe and the EEC some of the most famous, funniest and accurate barbs, among which the chief is the concept of *The Eurosausage*. When, during the last episode, Jim Hacker found himself in need of some kind of public policy victory in order to show himself as a defender of British's sovereignty with the aim of becoming Prime Minister, he decided to embark in a fight to defeat the much disliked Euro-bureaucrats.

And this was done by protecting the integrity of the '*Great British Sausage*' from EEC Commissioner Maurice's attempt of creating a standardized version *Eurosausage*, and '*by the end of next year [they would be forced to wave] goodbye to the good old British sausage and [...] accept some foreign muck like salami or bratwurst or something in its place*¹⁶⁶'.

This passage is most telling for it spoke and pandered to one of the most ingrained perceptions that the Britons had of Europe, which is to say a Community that purposefully came up with the most ridiculous and useless ideas in order to irritate the British. By the end of the episode, the problem was solved by a simple negotiation with Commissioner Maurice. But rather than announcing it Hacker, who still needed to find some edge in order to become PM, pretended – in manner not unlike that of Margaret Thatcher – to have a show down with the Commissioner, and this, incidentally, landed him the position of Prime Minister.

There are many other such examples that mark down this particular vision of Europe, for example the depiction of an average Common Market official as someone who had '*the organizing ability of the Italians, the flexibility of the Germans, the modesty of the French, the imagination of the Belgians, the generosity of the Dutch and the intelligence of the Irish*¹⁶⁷'. Or a marked scheme of the British, who, still having the same five century old objective of foreign policy objective of creating a disunited Europe, and who entered into the EEC with the aim of breaking the whole thing up when doing it from the outside did not work.

¹⁶⁵ P. Cornell, D. Martin, K. Topping (1993), pp. 113–6.

¹⁶⁶ *Yes Minister* (17 December 1984) – Special Episode – Party Games

¹⁶⁷ *Yes Minister* (23 March 1981) – Season 2 Episode 5 – The Devil You Know

This attitude, once again, exemplifies very well what the perception of Europe in the United Kingdom was, and as this sitcom influenced very many among both politicians and average citizens, it goes well beyond any doubt to say that television – its news but also its more light hearted programmes and of which *Yes Minister* is only its most famous example – was instrumental in leading the British public, who was not overtly familiar with Europe and its institutions, to see the EEC as an outlandish, almost-ridiculous amalgam of countries who often fought among themselves and legislated on the silliest and most useless things.

Conclusions

The relationship between the United Kingdom and Europe has been neither easy nor linear, and had been one of the major points of friction in the history of Continental relations long before the birth of the EEC. From their entrance in 1973, to the first successful referendum of 1975 and finally to the referendum of June 2016 that decided for a '*Brexit*' and the exit of the United Kingdom from what has become the European Union. It alternated periods of enthusiasm to periods of scepticism in a series of ups and downs that reflected the image of a Country that could not quite find its proper place in Europe. It had taken them three times to finally be accepted in the EEC and when they finally did, they got in almost silently, on their tiptoes.

Their dedication to the European project has been questioned time and time again and their efforts to steer the Community towards aims and objectives that better suited Britain have been alternatively considered a blessing or a nightmare. Among the British political ruling class Europe has always been a factor of division for both the Conservatives and the Labours. And the way in which citizens reacted to Europe consisted, as everything else in this relationship, in a series of highs and lows that were influenced by the international framework, the historical period, the actions and reactions of their own political élites and the perception and broadcasting of their internal press and television which contributed much with its alternating periods of pro-Europeanism and Euroscepticism in the making and breaking of a European identity in Britain.

And in order to understand the development of the path taken by Britain – culminating in its decision to put a stop to its participation in the European project – one must carefully analyse what in the first instance had brought the United Kingdom in Europe and what were the elements that made them re-evaluate their positions. Misunderstandings and historical prejudices that have long been part of the peculiar British's national identity have certainly played their part but so had the numerous internal changes Europe had undergone during the 1980s. However things are much more complicated and the scenarios that brought this change forth are wide and multi-faceted and incorporated elements of internal British politics and

Communitarian policies and politics; this, of course, all inside the framework of a changing international order that was witnessing the Cold War coming to its inevitable end.

The bulk of this work consists in analysing the matter from the perspective of the Conservatives. This is so for a number of reasons; chief among them is the fact that, for many years before becoming the bastion of Euroscepticism, the Conservative Party had been the pro-European Party in Britain, moreover some of the most important moments in Britain's relation with the EEC, such as the first application, the entrance, and indeed the entirety of the 1980s, happened during Tory Governments, and even the transformation of Britain into a Eurosceptic nation occurred under a Conservative Government.

Conservatives have always been ambiguous to Europe even when they embodied both 'The Party of the Nation' and 'The Party of Europe, internal dissent on this topic was altogether very common and the anti-Marketees were many, especially among the backbenchers. And even during its most pro-Europeanistic years the vision that Tories had for Europe – all but in very rare exceptions such as that of Edward Heath – was very far from the federalist ideals that many in the Continent had. Europe was to be a loose intergovernmental institution made of sovereign nations and not a supranational federal state. They would fight for the Common Market but abhorred anything that could curtail their own sovereignty and dismantle their national identity.

Nevertheless pro-Europeanism has been a staple for a great many years in the Conservative Party and while there have always been dissenters the Party had been firmly on the side of Europe for many years. They warmed up to Europe for a series of reasons such as economic floridity and additional protection in the framework of the Cold War. And even if they had been Europeanist for convenience the fact remains that it was the Conservatives that brought the UK in the EEC.

Additionally, for a long time, the Conservatives were pro-Europeanist in the measure in which Labours were Eurosceptics; for many years, in fact, Europe was one more element in the dialectic of the two main Parties with one being generally in favour of the EEC while the other – with due exceptions as it is important to remember that the second application had been made by Mr Wilson's Labour

Government – was against membership. Things started changing during the 1980s and with the development of a more ‘social’ model of Europe Labour’s perception – alongside that of the Trade Unions – of the EEC mutated and consequently one of the reasons that made the Conservatives pro-European fizzled out. This added to Margaret Thatcher’s, the new Conservative PM, aggressive and intransigent attitude towards Europe during her battle for a Rebate managed to paint the EEC in a more and more negative light as years went by.

Furthermore changes in the international arena also contributed in the undermining of Tory’s European commitments. The end of the Cold War, the crumbling of the Soviet Bloc and the reunification of Germany – which was now a distinct possibility rather than some far-off impossible scenario – highlighted the changes in both world and European politics, consequently Thatcher’s Conservative Government suddenly started seeing Europe less like a system of protection against Communist and more like a hostile territory in which a Franco-German alliance was working in order to undermine Britain’s position.

Another terribly important element in the British change of attitude is the role that the media, both the television and the traditional press – especially the one embodied by Conservative and Centre-Right newspapers – had in painting Europe in a negative light by underlining the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ mentality, by stressing sentiments linked to British national identity and pointing out the inefficiencies and economical drawbacks that EEC’s membership entailed for their Country.

Centre-left newspapers like *The Guardian*, moving in line with the evolution of the Left’s pro Europeanistic tendencies, went from an initial neutral and ambivalent position with regards to the EEC to a more vocal adherence to its guiding principles and strongly critiqued, as opposed to Conservative press, Thatcher’s Bruges Speech. On the other hand, Centre-Right newspapers like *The Times*, moved from an initial pro-Europeanistic positions of the 1960s and 1970s to stronger critiques to the EEC during the latter years of Thatcher’s premiership onwards.

Media’s influence in the perception of Europe is also evident when analysing television programmes, even more so since, not being very knowledgeable about the EEC, media were the main instrument with which British people familiarized with Europe. In the news covering on the EEC was usually relegated to the negative

impacts, and even sitcoms never spared Europe from the butts of their more barbed jokes whereas the EEC was identified as Community that purposefully came up with the most ridiculous and useless ideas in order to irritate the British.

This attitude is very well exemplified by the sitcom, loved by Margaret Thatcher and cited by both political scientist and textbooks, *Yes Minister* which portrayed the EEC – by using the metaphors of the *Eurosausage* and the *Great British Sausage* – as an outlandish grouping of countries fighting among themselves and legislating on useless things while attempting to strip Britain of its treasured national identity.

Consequently in light of all this it is not difficult to point out that the developing of the progressively negative vision of Europe in Britain is a result of a number of different factors, such as changes inside the UK, in the international arena and in the Community itself, and actors, such as the progressive antipathy with which PM Thatcher saw Europe and the negative portrayals the media were broadcasting to the Nation. Ultimately it is certainly possible to say that while the relationship between the United Kingdom and Europe has never been an easy one many have done their utmost best not to help this relationship blossom.

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Appendix A: Newspaper Front Pages



THE GUARDIAN

Manchester Tuesday August 1 1961

NUMBER PLATE TOP BEARS
E20
SIMPSON'S
SIMPSON'S LTD, MANCHESTER 1

BRITAIN WILL ASK TO JOIN EEC

Mr Macmillan "not confident, but hopeful" of entry

OUR DUTY TO EUROPE

By NORMAN BRADSHAW, our Parliamentary Correspondent
Mr Macmillan, a weary-looking Labour figure, at last held his first press conference since he became Prime Minister. He was not only confident but hopeful of entry into the EEC.

The Prime Minister's statement on the EEC was a landmark in British history. It was the first time that a British Prime Minister had announced that his country would apply for membership of the European Economic Community.

The Prime Minister's statement was a landmark in British history. It was the first time that a British Prime Minister had announced that his country would apply for membership of the European Economic Community.

Farmers expect to be consulted

Ready to examine all suggestions

By STANLEY BAKER, our Agriculture Correspondent
The Prime Minister has promised that the Government will consult farmers on all suggestions for changes to the Common Agricultural Policy.

FOOTBALL COACH IMPRISONED

Transfers across Iron Curtain

A football coach has been imprisoned in the Soviet Union for transferring players across the Iron Curtain.

WATER FOR CYPRUS BARR

CUT OFF AGAIN

The water supply to the Cyprus Barr has been cut off again.

Labour may not vote

NOTION ON LINE WITH EUROPE

By FRANCIS BROWN, our Political Correspondent
The Government will ask the House of Commons to support the application for membership of the European Economic Community.

The Government will ask the House of Commons to support the application for membership of the European Economic Community.

School building plans affected by "squeeze"

The Government will examine all suggestions for changes to the Common Agricultural Policy.

The Government will examine all suggestions for changes to the Common Agricultural Policy.

STRONGER NATO FORCE NEEDED

US-East agreement

The Prime Minister has announced that a stronger NATO force is needed.

TEACHERS' PAY

Nothing extra before autumn?

Teachers' pay will not be increased before the autumn.



"Seven" to discuss merger with Common Market

DANES FOLLOW BRITAIN'S EXAMPLE

From RICHARD SCOTT, our European Correspondent
The Prime Minister's statement announcing Britain's intention to apply for membership of the European Economic Community has immediately provoked similar reactions in each of the six other nations.

Two more lives attempting to save others

A rescue attempt by two men in the sea.

A rescue attempt by two men in the sea.

Mr Nabarro needs sign

Mr Nabarro needs a sign.

Mr Nabarro needs a sign.

On Other Pages

On other pages: The Prime Minister's statement, the EEC, the Common Agricultural Policy, the Iron Curtain, NATO, teachers' pay, and the Cyprus Barr.

MR ST CLAIR ARRIVES

Boycott by Labour

Mr St Clair has arrived in London and is being boycotted by Labour.

Mr St Clair has arrived in London and is being boycotted by Labour.

Tomorrow's paper

Tomorrow's paper will contain news of the EEC and the Iron Curtain.

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ANCE EXCLUDES BRITAIN FROM THE MARKET

Mr Heath blames one man for failure

FIVE'S BITTER REGRET

From LEONARD SUTTON

Britain was today formally refused entry into the European Economic Community. The Foreign Secretary, Lord Heath, said the French Government was determined to veto the British application for membership.

The Foreign Secretary said he was sorry the Government had failed to get the application for membership accepted. He said the Government had done all it could to get the application accepted.

Mr Heath said the Government had done all it could to get the application accepted. He said the Government had done all it could to get the application accepted.

The Government had done all it could to get the application accepted. He said the Government had done all it could to get the application accepted.

German hope for fresh start Britain keeps relations open

THEY ADD... PRICES... BUSKLY... the City asks...

vision puts de Gaulle defensive

French Ambassador... Paris... de Gaulle... defensive...

The agony of reappraisal

“WE SHALL DEAL WITH IT”

By HEATHER BRUCE and Donald Thompson

Britain has been asked to reconsider her application for membership of the European Economic Community. The French Government is determined to veto the British application for membership. The British Government has done all it can to get the application accepted.

German hope for fresh start

Britain keeps relations open

Toey dissidents put forward an alternative

By an Parliamentary Staff

Mr Stewart refuses nomination

By an Parliamentary Staff

On other pages



Mr Heath (second from left) with Mr Heath, Mr Heath and Mr Heath in French territory.

RTB quick to buy shares

WHITEHEAD'S UP TO 60 ON DAY

By an Parliamentary Staff

RAF CAMBERA DISAPPEARS

Rescue search over the sea

By an Parliamentary Staff

THIS WAS MY LIFE

Vassall gives evidence

By an Parliamentary Staff

No "back door" move to Government

By an Parliamentary Staff

Mr Stewart refuses nomination

By an Parliamentary Staff

On other pages

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WHY DUPLEXTRA SAFES GIVE EVEN GREATER SECURITY

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GAULLE RULES OUT EARLY NEGOTIATIONS WITH BRITAIN

De Gaulle's
policy
with
Britain

General de Gaulle has ruled out early negotiations with Britain on the subject of the Common Market. He said that the Government of the United Kingdom must first make a decision on whether it is prepared to accept the terms of the Common Market. He said that the Government must also make a decision on whether it is prepared to accept the terms of the Common Market. He said that the Government must also make a decision on whether it is prepared to accept the terms of the Common Market.

Call for return to gold standard

General de Gaulle made a plain statement that France was not prepared to accept the terms of the Common Market. He said that the Government must first make a decision on whether it is prepared to accept the terms of the Common Market. He said that the Government must also make a decision on whether it is prepared to accept the terms of the Common Market.

He said that France was not to blame for the financial crisis, which followed the devaluation of sterling, and urged the world to return to the gold standard. He accused the United States of exporting "dollar surpluses" to Europe.

1,100 LISTEN TO VOICE OF DOOM

More than 1,100 people gathered in London to hear a recording of General de Gaulle's speech. The recording was played in a hall in London. The recording was played in a hall in London. The recording was played in a hall in London.

Moment of truth for Common Market

The moment of truth for the Common Market has arrived. The member states must now decide whether they are prepared to accept the terms of the Common Market. The moment of truth for the Common Market has arrived. The member states must now decide whether they are prepared to accept the terms of the Common Market.

Mr Brown
in talks

Bank head held

The head of the Bank of England has been held. The head of the Bank of England has been held. The head of the Bank of England has been held.

Judges clear editor in contempt case

Judges have cleared an editor in a contempt case. The editor has been cleared of contempt. The editor has been cleared of contempt. The editor has been cleared of contempt.



General de Gaulle speaking at a press conference in Paris, France, 29th October 1967.

49 schools closed by dispute

Forty-nine schools have been closed due to a dispute. The schools have been closed. The schools have been closed. The schools have been closed.

TURKS AGREE ON CYPRUS PEACE

Turks have agreed on a plan for Cyprus peace. The plan has been agreed. The plan has been agreed. The plan has been agreed.

Johnson may be seeking summit

Mr Johnson may be seeking a summit. The summit has been sought. The summit has been sought. The summit has been sought.

Bank head held

The head of the Bank of England has been held. The head of the Bank of England has been held. The head of the Bank of England has been held.

£103m defence cut next year

Mr Healey gives details of the defence cut. The cut has been announced. The cut has been announced. The cut has been announced.

'Silliest' rail strike still threatens

The rail strike is still a threat. The strike is still a threat. The strike is still a threat. The strike is still a threat.

Table with financial data and market news.

TIO PEPE advertisement featuring a wine bottle and the text 'One of many', 'GONZALEZ BYASS'.

Coronet Wines... CHRISTMAS PRICE LIST 1967

Mystery of missing chief

The News Team... a stream of people called the premises in Wallingford yesterday in search of Christmas wine...

Amplified

Wines was started in... directors in Shoreham months ago the company to Walthamstow...

on all

London Ruston, managing... Sandeman's subsidiary... Labin, said they had...

bon President dies at 65

Nov. 28.—President Leon... Gibson in central Africa, Paris today...

171

THREAT TO ALL BRITISH RAIL SERVICES

Drivers decide on stronger action

Locomotive men's leaders decided yesterday to instruct all their members to work to rule and ban rest-day working from midnight on Sunday...

CABINET MAY CONSIDER EMERGENCY POWERS

By MICHAEL THOMAS, Labour Staff

Mr. Gutter, Minister of Labour, is expected to report to the Cabinet on the situation tomorrow... Emergency powers are being considered...

Safety fears

By agreeing with the National Union of Railwaysmen to abolish the 1965 agreement to abolish the 1965 agreement...

Mr Wilson waits to reply on veto

By OUR POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

Mr. Wilson and Mr. Heath stood on the same ground when questions were pressed in the Commons yesterday...

Links with France

Mr. Wilson, who was back to his post in the despatch box, would countenance none of this...



Sir Humphrey Trevelyan, the British High Commissioner, waves farewell to Aden yesterday...

Setback for peace hope on Cyprus

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT ATHENS, NOV. 28

There was a sudden aggravation of the Greek-Turkish crisis on Cyprus today...



Map of Cyprus showing the division between Greek and Turkish areas.

in manner, through agreement, or negatively. In case no agreement is reached...

Ultimatum denied

The Greek Foreign Minister said later...

Johnson official resigns

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT WASHINGTON, NOV. 28

The reported resignation of Mr. McNamara, the Defence Secretary, is the only loss the Johnson Administration has suffered...

Cartoon P.4. End of Triumvirate P.8

NUT SALARY DISPUTE OVER

BY OUR EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT

The salary dispute between the National Union of Teachers and the local authority associations is over...

Safeguards sought

Agreement has also been reached to "bring to an end" compulsory school meals duties...

Vaccination plan in farm epidemic

BY A STAFF REPORTER

The Government is preparing a vaccination programme as a possible defence against foot-and-mouth disease...

Protest on 'drugged' attachés

Moscow, Nov. 28.—A British and an American military attaché were drugged and robbed of their papers on November 17 at Khabarovsk...

The two Governments had lodged an official protest with Soviet authorities on November 21...

Aden treaty of cession agreed

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT GENEVA, NOV. 28

Agreement between the British Government and National Liberation Front delegations on a treaty of cession for South Arabia was announced by Qahtan as-Shabi...

Status ignored

The next day, Colonel Spahr and Brigadier Harper returned to Moscow and underwent a medical examination...

ON OTHER PAGES

Table listing other pages: A. M. Rendell: How Cyprus... Louis Riel: End of the... Science Report... Cumberland: a special report... Arts... News... Cars and... Drivers... Court... Countdown... Engagements... Home news... Law Report... Letters... Obituary... Overseas news...

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GARRARD The Crown Jewellers

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Party leaders in eye-of-entry clash on Britain's future in Europe

Party leaders clashed yesterday over what United Kingdom Labour leader James Callaghan said was the future of the British people.

Mr Harold Wilson, Leader of the Opposition said Britain must "remain a free country" and within the support of the British people. Mr Heath, the Liberal leader, said Labour could take pride in their continued support for European unity.

An opinion poll taken on the eve of entry has indicated that Britons are almost equally divided about becoming European. Thirty-eight per cent said they were happy to do so, 30 per cent were reluctant, and 27 per cent were "don't know".

Mr Heath sees exciting, prosperous era ahead

Mr Heath said that the Liberal Party was committed to a policy of free trade and free movement of people. He said that the Liberal Party was committed to a policy of free trade and free movement of people. He said that the Liberal Party was committed to a policy of free trade and free movement of people.



Mr Heath, Leader of the Opposition, says Britain must remain a free country.

Mr Heath said that the Liberal Party was committed to a policy of free trade and free movement of people. He said that the Liberal Party was committed to a policy of free trade and free movement of people.

Phil indicates non-racial equal right in opinion

Phil indicated that he was in favour of non-racial equality. He said that he was in favour of non-racial equality.

The Times in Europe; plans to meet the challenge of a new frontier

The Times in Europe plans to meet the challenge of a new frontier. The newspaper is committed to a policy of free trade and free movement of people.

New cases of disease in two countries

New cases of disease were reported in two countries. The disease is a form of malaria.

Britain ignores Mintoff threat and pays agreed rental

Britain ignores Mintoff's threat and pays agreed rental. The British government has decided to pay the agreed rental.

Eire police arrest Mr Martin McGuinness

Eire police arrested Mr Martin McGuinness. He is a member of the Provisional IRA.

Workers for European unity are honoured: New Year list contains fewer Australian names

Workers for European unity are honoured in the New Year list. The list contains fewer Australian names.



Three of the honorees in the New Year list.

Both sides see victory in Hanoi bombing halt

Both sides see victory in the Hanoi bombing halt. The North Vietnamese and the US both claim a victory.

Students die in fall from cliff

Students died in a fall from a cliff. The incident occurred in a school in the UK.

Uganda in state of alert as Britons fly out

Uganda is in a state of alert as Britons fly out. The situation is tense in the region.

The rest of the news

The rest of the news includes reports on various international events and local news.

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Two die on the toss of a coin

TWO CAMBRIDGE students, Peter Goddard and Thomas O'Connell, who decided to celebrate a founding holiday in Cornwall after tossing a coin, fell to their deaths from a cliff yesterday. It happened on the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Cornish Mining Society, in which from Lanteglos, near a landing ground for steamships.

The body of Mr Goddard, aged 19, of Finch and Fox Park, Epsom, was recovered by lifeguards. Police said that Mr O'Connell, aged 18, of Rose Villa, Glasnevin, Somerset, was missing, believed drowned.

They had been in Cornwall for four days, with two other Cambridge students, Peter, 18, and Nicholas, 18. They should have returned home early yesterday, but the weather was fine, so they tossed a coin and decided to stay for one more night after lunch.

Sheltering

THE FLEETWOOD teacher Mrs. Vinnels moved into Plymouth in the Farne Islands yesterday after battling some police officers' navigation equipment. The teacher was described by her son as 'Finn', but there were no telephone, between 21 and 23 British travellers are sheltering in the Farne from rain.



Eye of Triumph: Mr George Thomson (left), one of Britain's two European Community members, with Mr Dennis Gandy—who became a Community of Nations in today's history—celebrating entry into Europe at a torchlight rally in London last night.

We're in—but without the fireworks

By DAVID MCKIE and DENNIS BARKER

Britain passed peacefully into Europe at midnight last night without any special celebrations. It was difficult to tell that anything of importance had occurred, and a date which will be entered in the history books as long as histories of Britain are written, was taken by most people as a matter of course.

The principal party political figures maintained their familiar postures of hope and optimism or brooding despair. Mr Heath was starting back from Ottawa, where he had gone for the funeral of Mr Lester Pearson, at about the time that Britain, along with Denmark and Ireland, officially became members of the European Community.

In a spate of pre-recorded interviews, he expressed his own hope and satisfaction at the successful outcome of the long march towards Europe which he had himself been so closely associated for so long.

Yesterday the usual optimism was on the March, by Deputy Secretary General for the EEC, suggested that 28 per cent were happy about entering on what Mr Heath reported, in an evening broadcast, while 39 per cent would prefer to get off. Twenty-three per cent had no opinion at all.

into Europe 4
Leading article 12
Terry Colman, interview 14
Schomann 12
Anthony Powell 12

the preparatory work of the British people that Britain should not be a member on present terms is better."

The Tory, who doubts about entry, said that the net one centime members from the other nations was not too strong to counter the serious questions raised about British entry. The scepticists that had called for had not been satisfied.

The official optimism was not touched in time for the promised hour of destiny. The Government, Father for Britain, in which some other

Alone in the heart of a city...

By PETER HARVEY

Barbara Napton, spinner, aged 85, lives in the heart of a crowded and busy council estate.

Her next neighbour was surrounded by hundreds of others, most surrounded by whole families. The women were busy with children and incessant loading for the nearby shopping centre in the heart of Portsmouth.

But Barbara Napton had been dead for two months and some time when they found her on Saturday night. They had to dig over a year of letters on the doorstep to get into the house. And then they had to look at Miss Napton's television set—it had been sitting away without a break for ten months and one day.

In Liverpool on Christmas Eve they found the remains of Miss Napton, aged 85. Her living had been empty for at least three months. She checked no more telephone bills in Portsmouth. She was without food and had tried to eat a piece of cardboard.

Surrounded

Back in Portsmouth again, twelve months ago, welfare workers broke into a small house—less than a mile from Miss Napton's home—and found the body of the elderly woman.

THE TIMES

Eight countries
eric
world cup

Britain says 'Yes' to Europe by 2-1 vote

In a two-to-one majority, the people of Britain have voted 'Yes' to continued membership of the EEC. Long before all 68 results had been declared in the United Kingdom's first national referendum, leading opponents of the European Community had conceded victory to proponents and by 6 o'clock last night the question was beyond question. Even in Northern

Ireland, where a decisive "No" vote had been expected, the "Yes" votes were narrowly ahead. But Shetland voted against the EEC. At 6.30 pm the Prime Minister said from the steps of 10 Downing Street: "The verdict has been given by a vote with a bigger majority than has been received by any government in a general election. Nobody in Britain or the wider world

should have any doubt about its meaning." Mrs Thatcher, the Tory leader, commented that the massive "Yes" vote could not have come about without a massive Conservative "Yes". Two pro-EEC Labour MPs, Mr William Hamilton and Mr Frederick Willey, called on all anti-Market ministers, including seven in the Cabinet, to resign.

Puzzle over speed of express train in death crash

By John Croner
The Easton Glasgow sleeper crashing through the station was being pulled by a motor car which killed seven people including two children and injured 40, happened on a stretch of track where a temporary 30 mph speed limit was in force.
But there were indications last night that the train may have been travelling much faster than that when it left the rails at Trent Valley station Nuneaton, Warwickshire.
Mr Frank Young, British Rail's divisional manager at Stoke on Trent, told a press conference yesterday that the track running through the station was being reworked and that there was a temporary 30 mph speed limit on the track with the new line.
He added that express trains frequently attained speeds between 80 mph and 100 mph but that for a quarter of a mile before the station through it while repairs were made. The repairs had been in progress since May 21. He said Mr Young felt that the train was travelling at a speed of 100 mph when it struck the London-based railman, certainly knew about the work. Quite apart from the note in his working instructions and warning signs on the line a mile before Nuneaton, Mr McKay had apparently driven on the line on Wednesday and Thursday.
He would also have read the social notes giving warning of the track repairs, before he left Easton. His second man would have been equally informed, Mr Young said.
Several passengers said that the train was travelling quite fast. Mr James Farnham, a manager of the Movies pop group, said: "I think it was going faster than 20 mph." All the members of the group were injured and taken to hospital.
The train was carrying 100 passengers, including Mr McKay, who was killed. Other passengers, including Mrs McKay, were injured. Mr McKay was taken to hospital and died of his injuries.
The train was carrying 100 passengers, including Mr McKay, who was killed. Other passengers, including Mrs McKay, were injured. Mr McKay was taken to hospital and died of his injuries.

End to 14 years of argument, Mr Wilson says

David Wood
The people said "Yes" to the United Kingdom's membership of the EEC in the first national referendum. Mr Wilson said that the question that the British people asked in the referendum was not whether to join the EEC but whether to continue to be a part of it. He said that the referendum was a vote on the future of the United Kingdom and that the people had spoken clearly. He said that the referendum was a vote on the future of the United Kingdom and that the people had spoken clearly. He said that the referendum was a vote on the future of the United Kingdom and that the people had spoken clearly.

UNITED KINGDOM	
Yes	17,334,386 (67.3%)
No	8,427,988 (32.7%)
Majority	8,906,398 (34.6%)
Turnout	65%
Services	234,131
Spoilt	65,566
Electorate	41,079,269

ENGLAND	
Yes	16,107,277
No	6,812,002
Majority	9,295,275
Turnout	66.7%

SCOTLAND	
Yes	1,287,991
No	905,954
Majority	382,037
Turnout	47.4%

WALES	
Yes	869,135
No	472,071
Majority	397,064
Turnout	66.7%

N IRELAND	
Yes	259,251
No	237,911
Majority	21,340
Turnout	47.4%

London's referendum votes being counted at Earl's Court



More batches are arriving in supermarket trolleys

UC will end boycott of EEC institutions

Paul Routledge
The union involvement in EEC will be strengthened by participation in European institutions after the referendum. The union will end its boycott of EEC institutions. The union will end its boycott of EEC institutions. The union will end its boycott of EEC institutions.

Mr Healey aims at pay rise norm of under 15%

By Peter Jay
The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr Healey, is concerned to ease the Cabinet and the country's attention on the next phase of his economic strategy. He is aiming for a pay rise norm of under 15%.

Multirac rugby in Cape To

From Michael Knorr
The United States has gained Israel's agreement to send a ship with cargo for Israel through the Suez Canal. The United States has gained Israel's agreement to send a ship with cargo for Israel through the Suez Canal.

Israelis to delay using Canal

From Our Own Correspondent
The United States has gained Israel's agreement to send a ship with cargo for Israel through the Suez Canal. The United States has gained Israel's agreement to send a ship with cargo for Israel through the Suez Canal.

Government spending up by 44%

Debate next week on Stonehouse motion
The House of Commons is certain to proceed on Thursday with a motion to freeze the money and power of anybody ever suspected of being harmful to the economy. Portuguese working abroad and tourism are now being the source of revenue they once were.

Lisbon has powers to freeze money

The Portuguese military Government yesterday assumed powers enabling it to freeze the money and power of anybody ever suspected of being harmful to the economy. Portuguese working abroad and tourism are now being the source of revenue they once were.

Piggott's record

Lester Piggott equaled Fred Archer's record of 21 classic victories yesterday when he won his first classic for three years on Juliette Marry in the Oaks at Epsom.

Book of the Year, 1975

The M&G Year Book offers you a comp breakdown of every M&G Unit Trust, Port Pension and Savings Scheme. It is designed as a reference book for professional financial advisers, but it is also available to the serious investor. Send for your free copy now. No salesman will call.

Rail strike talks

British Rail yesterday accepted the 2.5 per cent arbitration pay award for rail staff but rejected the award, to talks from the National Union of Railwaymen. The settlement is unlikely as the board has not offered extra cash.

Arms dealers paid

A Senate subcommittee said in Washington yesterday that members of the House of Representatives had accepted "questionable payments" from arms dealers and aircraft manufacturers in the company's own investigation indicated that \$450,000 had been provided for two Saudi Arabian generals.

Royalty in Moscow

Grand Duke Jean of Luxembourg is the second reigning European monarch to visit the Soviet Union since the 1921 revolution. His visit, coming only days after that of Queen Margrethe of Denmark, is a new development in the Soviet Union.

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Twin crisis clouds Europhoria

How we voted

YES	17,378,581	67.2 pc
NO	8,470,073	32.8 pc
Majority:	8,908,508	
	YES	NO
England	68.7 pc	31.3 pc
Scotland	58.4 pc	41.6 pc
Wales	64.8 pc	35.2 pc
N. Ireland	52.1 pc	47.9 pc

■ In relation to the total electorate of 40,000,000, the Yes votes were 68.4 pc, and No votes 31.6 pc. The total turnout was 64 pc. The election turnout was 23,672,000 (including postal voters). Service voters cast more than 100,000, out of an estimated 200,000 to 400,000 voters.

Anatomy of a landslide

By DAVID MCKIE, Political Staff

The pro-Labour margin was a wider one than has ever swept any Government home in our history, as Mr Wilson characteristically pointed out yesterday.

It was only the offshore islands which stood aside. Mr J. Calverley's Southdown, which he decided to keep in his own hands in the day of a possible election, provided the first No vote of the day in mid-afternoon. And last night another No came from the Channel Islands.

But even so, the other shored islands of the anti-Marketiers all came out more or less unanimously in favour of continued membership. Northern Ireland did so only by a narrow margin on the one hand, which led to a law of the 100,000—47 per cent, but before that the mighty region of Newry, containing half Scotland's workers, would also vote No. And the Channel Islands, which have been a No vote since the 1950s, were also split 50-50—led by a substantial majority to No.

That was a fair reward for the Government, which had to face, out of four of five of the circumstances, decided in very narrow terms, with no head-wind. The indifference of the House of Commons that the vote should be by counties has now enabled the Government to demonstrate beyond doubt that England and Scotland have made an historical choice.

The most pro-Labour areas last October were Mid-Glamorgan, South Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear, Luton, West of Scotland, Cleveland and Merseyside. It was exactly those counties which showed least enthusiasm for Europe in the referendum vote.

In some cases the doublets, which Mr Wilson did not play at home, it was one of the 100,000—47 per cent, but on the day they vote fell short of the numbers who showed the European vote was less than 50 per cent.

To that extent, the results may have mirrored Mr Wilson's historic estimate only for one area of Britain, where he took a show of hands on Europe and found it overwhelming for staying in. "You are showing your social origins," he said. "The nation showed something of its social origins in the way it voted on Thursday." But it still showed that it was substantially and decisively ready to accept the case of Mr Wilson's opponents.

There was not much sign however of the phenomenon detected by Mr Edward de Launay, who said earlier in the week that most, perhaps most, Conservative supporters were in their hearts, opposed to continued membership. If that is so, the way they supported it in this vote amounts to a remarkably high level of hypocrisy.

Now Wilson has to tackle Left

By IAN AITKEN, Political Correspondent

The champagne corks of the pro-Marketiers were still popping last night as Mr Wilson returned to Downing Street to face a double crisis involving not only the menacing economic situation but also the continuing unity of his Government and his party.

The belatedness was nevertheless a unique and historic triumph for a Prime Minister who had steered the country over the heads of a majority in his own party. He celebrated it with a brief statement declaring the furling end of the 14-year controversy over Europe and calling on the anti-Marketiers to join wholeheartedly in working inside Europe to solve the economic crisis.

Shortly afterwards a group of the dissenting Ministers who fought hard but unsuccessfully to win a No majority in the referendum declared formally that they accepted the democratic verdict of the people. But they went on to emphasise their continuing view that Britain's grave economic problems could only be solved by the "full implementation of Labour's manifesto, approved which we call on the entire Labour movement to unite."

The form of this statement, however the appeal to unity, applied the demand for loyalty to official Labour policy, clearly underlining the stance of the position that now faces Mr Wilson as the political front, with a split from the overwhelming difficulties of the economic situation.

It was further underlined last night when anti-wing Labour MP's raised loud calls for the immediate resignation or dismissal of the defeated anti-Marketiers, and including trade union leaders and backbenchers but lack with parliamentary members behind our form of stabilisation of the state.

The Prime Minister is expected to spend part of the weekend brooding on the issue of the so-called doublets, but has long been thought to be planning on the day they vote fall short of the numbers who showed the European vote was less than 50 per cent.

But it was becoming increasingly clear last night that Mr Wilson's task will be to hold the "doublet" voters by the referendum campaign, rather than to open them up to the opposition which he will have to face before he can reach the difficult task of reconciling the two branches of the pro-Marketiers with the traditional opposition of the Labour and trade union movement.

The betting was that he would do his utmost to avoid a showdown with the Left over membership at a time when he is going to have to deal with the impact of the trade union leadership in such a way as to ensure to curb wages.

Euroguide

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Results back

There were even some Ministers who professed to believe that Mr Wilson might decide to propose his resignation to the cabinet, and the more likely course, now regarded as more in keeping with Mr Wilson's earlier attitude, is that there will be a small group of anti-Marketiers who will not resign.

However, there is little doubt that most of the Prime Minister's most senior advisers are determined that Mr Wilson should be shifted from the Department of Industry, even if he remains a key man in the Cabinet. They have been expressing three possible paths for him—Home and Social Security, Price and Consumer Affairs, and Education—the kind of department which would put the dual responsibility of taking him away from a job involving direct administrative contact with the EEC while retaining the prestige of senior office.

But even this modest half-point of shift for the pro-Marketiers would undoubtedly stimulate bitter protests from the left, which is already showing signs of repudiating the leadership of Mr Wilson as the backbone of the Government's negotiating strategy in the early 1970s. It is the party's election manifesto.

The sharpest such warning came yesterday from Mr Jack Jones, general secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union. He said on BBC television that the trade union movement had the

greatest confidence in Mr Wilson. The EEC might welcome and would like him to stay where he is. "Any movement of Mr Wilson away from the post of Secretary of State for Industry will be felt as a grave affront to the trade union movement. It is vital, if we are going to maintain a degree of industrial unity, that he stays where he is," he said.

Following EEC are expected to issue a similar warning on Monday, when the striking Yorkshire group needs to consider the situation created by the resulting detail of the anti-Marketiers' case. Several leading members were determined last night to put their attitude clearly on the record before Mr Wilson makes up his mind.

However, it is not thought that either Sir John, the Trade Secretary, or Mr Foot, the

Then to back page, col. 1



"We thank Mr. Wilson for his weather-waiting—you, it hasn't altered the state of the struggle."

Convincing margin ends partners' uncertainty

From RICHARD NOTGTON-TAYLOR, Brussels, June 6

The EEC tonight welcomed the result of the referendum in Britain. "Yes" vote. A convincing result was never doubted here, but Britain's partners were worried mainly that the margin would not be convincing, thereby leading to a further period of uncertainty.

Another widespread reaction here is that Britain will continue to play a leading role in the EEC, and will be able to "sell and see" attitude in the EEC Council of Ministers. President will discuss on Britain to adopt a more constructive approach towards the whole range of policy discussion.

There is also speculation that the Government will consider setting an import quota

agreement along the lines of the successful Italian initiative last summer, as well as exploring for an EEC-backed bank. The European Commission responsible for Agriculture, in Luxembourg, would not of his way to try to assist that Britain would get a sympathetic response from her partners in any serious attempt at removing individual countries from the European Framework. Mrs. Pöhlmann, head of the EEC's people, have demonstrated their previous common spirit. He stated his view in Labour's presence in Strasbourg — with the Socialist group bringing the largest single block in the Parliament.

Prime Minister, M. Thielmann, said he hoped that Britain would participate actively in the forthcoming debate on how the EEC should progress towards European union.

The atmosphere here, however, is far from optimistic. Britain's partners are well aware of the extent of the economic problems facing the country and the continuing doubts in the Labour Party. They are not expecting any immediate transformation in Britain's attitude towards the Community.

Appendix B: Articles Extracts

We're in - but without the fireworks

By David McKie and Dennis Barker

Monday 1 January 1973

guardian.co.uk

Britain passed peacefully into Europe at midnight last night without any special celebration. It was difficult to tell that anything of importance had occurred, and a date which will be entered in the history books as long as histories of Britain are written, was taken by most people as a matter of course.

The principal party political figures maintained their familiar postures of hope and optimism or head-shaking despair. Mr Heath was starting back from Ottawa, where he had gone for the funeral of Mr Lester Pearson, at about the time that Britain, along with Denmark and Ireland, officially became members of the European Community.

In a spate of pre-recorded interviews, he expressed his own hope and satisfaction at the successful outcome of the long march towards Europe with which he had himself been so closely associated for so long.

Yesterday the latest opinion poll on the Market, by Opinion Research Centre for the BBC, suggested that 38 per cent were happy about embarking on what Mr Heath depicted as an exciting adventure, while 39 per cent would prefer to get off. Twenty three per cent had no opinion at all.

But the worry on the effect on prices continues. The Consumer's Union announced it will hold a regular weekly check on food prices, and the Farmers' Union said that during the last five years while the price review procedure lasts the major preoccupation of farmers would be commercial organisation.

Pragmatism

Mr Heath believed that enthusiasm for the market existed predominantly among the young. Elsewhere he detected no more than good old British pragmatism. He had been impressed by people he had met who did not expect immediate benefit for themselves but looked forward to a better life for their children and grandchildren.

"I think in their phlegmatic and pragmatic way the British are now waiting for action and as we in the Community together take action, then I think more and more they will respond to it. "Of course whenever there is change people have fears and it may be particularly characteristic of the British that they are

conservative by nature which has stood us very well in many difficult times, and so they fear change particularly. But they are also very practical and when they see the need for it they face up to it.

"If you allow yourself to be bedevilled by your fears, you are paralyzed by them. The only future lies in energetically seizing opportunities."

Mr Wilson, however, saw nothing to celebrate when we were going in without that fullhearted consent of the British people, which Mr Heath had made a condition of entry and when the price of admission was "utterly crippling." He defended the Labour decision not to attend the European Assembly. The real power lay not there but with the Council of Ministers and the only place to try to exert influence on them was through the British Parliament.

The Market would be an issue in the next election, but only one of several others would be prices, housing, jobs, "and very conceivably big aspects of foreign policy, like Vietnam, if this tragedy continues." Labour would be pledged to renegotiation and this would be followed by consultation with the people, either through a referendum or a further election.

Labour's most notable dissenter, Mr Roy Jenkins, wanted to see Britain pressing for greater changes in the Community, especially changes to improve the distribution of wealth, the amenities of life, Community aid to the Third World and the democratisation of European institutions. Mr Enoch Powell, the Conservative's best known rebel, said: 'The new year merely marks the commencement of a further and more vigorous phase of the campaign to ensure that in the matter of Britain and the European Community, the preponderant wish of the British people that Britain should not be a member on present terms is heeded.' The TUC, long dubious about entry, said that 'the one conspicuous omission from the celebrations was any real attempt to answer the serious questions raised about British entry. The safeguards they had called for had not been obtained. The official pageantry was not launched in time for the hour of destiny. The Government's Fanfare for Europe, in which among other attractions, an Irish folk group will perform in Lincoln's Inn and Lord Montagu's motor cars go to Brussels, does not begin until Wednesday.

Fulsome

But praise from friends of the Market reached new heights of fulsomeness. Mr George Thomson, one of Britain's two Common Market Commissioners, said: "This is a unique new year. What dictators have failed to do by force, democracies are undertaking by peaceful consent. Twenty-five years from now, if we build the right foundations in 1973, our children will enjoy a richer quality of life than could have been conceivable had we remained separate. And the voice of European

civilisation, so muted since the Second World War, will be able to speak in a united way that can contribute decisively to a more peaceful and prosperous world."

The other Commissioner, Sir Christopher Soames, added to this Gladstonian note by talking of "a great adventure" and a European union which, with its own "personality, strength, and sense of purpose", would have a major impact on world affairs. On the other side, Mr Richard Briginshaw general secretary of NATSOPA, the print worker's union, was confident that the British people would long remember January 1, 1973 as "the blackest day in the calendar of their history." Wars and international conflict had at least left us with our basic national sovereignty and independence but that had now gone.

The Campaign For British Freedom said in a pamphlet that it was all a "shameful betrayal" and (in heavy type) that the British were not going to accept it. The Union Movement, child of Sir Oswald Mosley and supporter of European unity discovered in a statement that the terms were the wrong ones. The European movement staged a torchlight procession through London to Mr George Thomson in Whitehall Place, who was handed a new year's message to take to Brussels civic leaders of nine capital cities of the EEC began girding their loins for their conference in London in the new year on the problems of urban government: Westminster Abbey prepared itself for a Day of Prayer to the New Europe today and at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, an estimated 10 million flowers were being put up in the auditorium for the Fanfare for Europe programme.

Mr Henry Plumb, president of the National Farmers' Union said that British farmers would be welcomed into Europe because they would take with them experience in how to look after their interests. The procedure of the price review would last another five years and the "major preoccupation" of farmers during that time would commercial organisation, and the development of production and marketing potential. Tactfully, he did not mention horticulture. Fishermen were not so much celebrating the new year as drowning their sorrows. South Coast fishermen took the opportunity of sending telegrams to their MPs asking for restriction on the size and numbers of Continental boats - especially French ones - because overfishing by Continental boats, especially the French, had already led to a shortage of fish.

Today thousands of balloons will be set off in Snowdonia by young people, and there will certainly be special postage stamps with the interlocking hands motif on sale later in the week. Girls from each of the Nine will compete for the Miss TV Europe title on Thursday. But it will take perhaps rather more than this to tip the British public into making up its mind decisively on whether the EEC is really a rising sun or only an amalgam of extinct volcanoes. As the Opinion Research Centre poll shows, opinion is well in line with the ambiguity of the whole proceedings so far - almost exactly fifty-fifty.

Commentary: The leader mixes the message

BYLINE: By HUGO YOUNG

LENGTH: 1179 words

For most of this year, the Government has been running a propaganda campaign which extols the virtues and urges the necessity of the European Community as a part of every thinking businessman's life. We have been getting the message about 1992 and the single market from Mr Alan Sugar, Sir John Harvey-Jones and other faces new to the advertising hoarding and the 60-second commercial. It has been an expensive campaign, even by the profligate standards of a government which decided some time ago that marketing men are better at selling its policies than ministers will ever be. The Department of Trade & Industry told me yesterday that its cost so far was Pounds 9m.

This substantial effort is, in part, preaching to the converted and, in another part, inviting the unconverted to climb aboard a fast-moving bandwagon. It is an artefact not of Little England but of European Britain. When it began, ministers pointed to the campaign, a larger and earlier one than any being attempted in other EC countries, as proof that Britain was in the vanguard of 1992 and the single European market.

It ran, furthermore, with the grain of the nation. The forces of nature and of markets have made Britain a far more European country than it was in 1973 when we joined the Community. For years, the vast majority of British business has been European business. In industry, commerce and finance, Europe is not one dimension of the whole but automatically defines the nature of the enterprise.

Nor is this steady transformation of attitudes the sole property of the business elite. Again through market forces, and without the intervention of any Brussels bureaucrat or other unsightly excrescence of corporate statism, we are all Europeans now. In the lifetime of this government alone, there has been a relentless transformation of the public mind. Travel and sport are daily experiences which have helped place the British among the least insular people in Europe.

Political developments have reinforced this natural evolution. The anti-EC cause no longer has any significance preachers in Britain, and those who still mount the pulpit rarely attract an audience. The Labour Party has ceased to make the Community a political issue, and is well on the way to becoming properly European. The TUC has announced its conversion, for the least elevated of reasons - but any reasons are enough if they serve to drag heads from the sand.

These slow, large shifts, happening under different geological pressures, do not reflect necessity alone. They surely have quite a lot to do with the observable fact that the British way of life has been changed hardly at all by 15 years of consorting with the rest of western Europe. Few of the horrors paraded at elections and referenda in the early 1970s have come to pass. Britishness has survived, warts and all, just as the essential character of France, Germany and every other member state has proved utterly immune to the dilutions of the collective.

We live with the compromises required of any advanced industrial state operating in a complex, international world. We are not an island sufficient unto itself. But Brussels has not destroyed Britain or any particle of it. Instead,

membership of the Community has taught a distinctly unpromising pupil the limits and the attractions of what belonging to Europe might mean.

Enter now, however, a different instructor, our leader. We have edged our way cautiously but emphatically down the European road, but she wants to put a stop to it. This was quite plainly the meaning of her lecture in Bruges. Although it was sweetened with historical references to Britain's intrinsically European nature, these deceived no one. Mrs Thatcher, while not wanting to put the clock back, explained why it must not move forward. The Community, it seems, must be frozen where it now is, and suddenly 1992 begins no longer to look like something on which a prudent government department would spend Pounds 9m.

Our leader sought to set back the Europeanising of Britain as much by her language as by her policy conclusions. Indeed, more so. She erected straw men well designed to reawaken the very nightmares which fifteen years' experience have actually laid to rest. What must be avoided at all costs, she said, was a United States of Europe, and with it all policies which might liquidate national customs and identity, replacing these precious commodities with 'some sort of identikit European personality'.

So far is this from the realm of the possible that it must be accounted little better than demagoguery, intended to ignite tribal instincts which have been quietly but benignly receding. No significant European leader talks any more about complete political federation. It is a fantasy which is not on the agenda of M Jacques Delors or Lord Cockfield. One reason why it is a fantasy is precisely that national identity is incapable of being submerged to the extent that federation demands. Nobody with any historical sense could seriously propagate the idea that a European Bank and the lowering of national frontiers would commence the extinction of the identity of nations.

What our leader, who is not entirely ignorant of history, really fears is not loss of identity but loss of sovereignty. That has always been at the bottom of her case against joining the EMS. The British way of life, a concept with wide appeal, is tendentiously aligned with British government sovereignty, in which rather fewer people are interested. Mrs Thatcher in the end puts the sovereignty of Thatcherism above every other consideration, including the fulfilment of 1992 itself.

This is a very personal choice. Bruges was a wholly presidential utterance. No doubt it has passive supporters in the Cabinet, but not among the handful of heavyweights; in any case, they don't seem to have been consulted. This is not part of some subtle British game, in which Mrs Thatcher's caustic will be washed away with soft soap from another minister. It was a show of personal strength, expressing an unrevised personal prejudice, which she trusts will be accepted as a declaration of intent by the new, strong Britain.

The Europeans will have their own answer to that. Once again it is likely to consist of excluding Britain from a project of convergence to which they are committed. Britain's opposition can make for delay and difficulties, and can also, of course, nullify and British aspirations to 'lead' Europe - aspirations which the Thatcher Government, remarkable to say, does imagine itself to have fulfilled by its conduct over the budget and the CAP.

But the leader's effect on her own people is more troubling. Her speech must throw them into confusion. They were slowly learning to become good Europeans, and finding it a painless, even agreeable, experience. Only as a full-hearted participant in Europe could Britain hope to maximise her influence in the world. That was what a majority began at last to understand. But one woman's vision said otherwise.

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European Thatcherism; Leading Article

SECTION: Issue 63192.

LENGTH: 607 words

The Prime Minister went to the College of Europe in Bruges yesterday and took her message about Britain and Europe to what could be seen as hostile territory. She came as a missionary to a half-converted tribe a tribe that had understood the advantages of unity in a competitive world, but needed guidance about much else.

To her credit, Mrs Thatcher spoke of the British as full-blooded Europeans who had both benefited by their European identity and done much to contribute to the better aspects of it. That she dwelt on the good things of Europe was a welcome and appropriate introduction to her address, as was the optimism with which she spoke of future European co-operation.

Yet the Europe of which the Prime Minister spoke was not quite the Europe of which our partners speak. It was not, or not only, the 12-member European Community. Nor was it just a Community expanded to take in more members. It was a wider Europe that encompassed its lost part the states now incorporated into the Warsaw Pact and one with more historical resonance, that was bound by civilized values and the rule of law. It was not only an economic and political entity, but needed a common defence as well.

Mrs Thatcher's Europe is also a community brought together by voluntary co-operation. It is a group of self-interested states joined by the recognition that in certain areas like economic affairs and defence they will be better equipped to face the giants of the outside world.

For the rest, it is a thoroughly Thatcherite Europe: inspired by the ideals of enterprise and individualism; deregulated, economically efficient and non-interventionist. National identity remains firmly in place, as do national frontiers. The proposed central bank is considered unnecessary; the common accounting unit, the Ecu, should be more widely used. There is nothing wrong in any of this. Our partners can well be reminded that unless the Community is built on sound economic foundations and is capable of defending itself, its very existence let alone its prosperity may be endangered. She is right, too, to insist that the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy is a priority, and that the Community should not be complacent despite the reforms already set in train.

Her argument that a more united Europe should mean less regulation and less centralization, is unimpeachable. So is her insistence that in many areas exchange controls, deregulation of airfares Britain is ahead of many European countries.

Yet our partners in the European Community will surely sense that along with all the Prime Minister's undoubted commitment to Europe, her Europe and theirs are distinct. Hers is both a grander vision in geographical and historical breadth and a more limited one in terms of what in her view can realistically be achieved.

France, Germany and other countries which consider themselves the core of the European Community will be wondering why Europe, rather than the Community, was Mrs Thatcher's unit of calculation for the future. They may also wonder why their vision of eventual political and economic harmony, if not unity, was not addressed more directly.

The answer probably lies somewhere between personal temperament and objective realism. Mrs Thatcher, like many in Britain, is a European as Britons were Europeans before the First World War. She sees a whole Continent, where others see man-made groupings of nations. At the same time, she recognizes that full European unity may not be a practicable objective. She is honest where our partners are idealistic. Their point is that there is a place for ideals.

Tories of Europe: The Iron Lady, Europe and the role of the Media.

Abstract

Introduction

The aim of this work is to analyse the long and often troubled relationship between Europe and the United Kingdom, paying particular attention to that part of the Country embodied by the Conservative Party. This association has never been particularly easy and has oftentimes been fraught with obstacles, misunderstandings and misdirection in a series of ups and downs that culminated with June 2016's *Brexit* Referendum with which Britons decided to exit from the European Union. During its forty years long partnership periods of enthusiasm followed periods of scepticism with the perception of Europe going from negative to positive and back again and thus reflecting the image of a Country that has never been quite able to find its proper place in Europe.

Inside the Conservative Party dedication to the European cause has often been a factor of dissent and harsh disputes. And as everything else in this relationship even the way in which citizens reacted to Europe has been a source of division, turning around depending on the historical period, the actions and reactions of political Parties and the way in which the media painted Europe by playing up historical prejudices and reaffirming Britain's national identity against the foreign power of European bureaucrats.

The bulk of this change happened during the 1980s and Margaret Thatcher's premiership. Things, however, more complicated and this turning reflected a multifaceted scenario that was influenced by internal politics, the Labour-Conservative dialectic, the international framework of the Cold War and changes inside the Community itself. The greater part of this work will consist in an analysis of this relationship from the perspective of the Conservative Party, which for many years had been considered the '*Party of Europe*' as well as the '*Party of the Nation*'.

Tories were at the government when Britain made its first application; they were at the Government when the UK entered into the EEC, campaigned for 'Yes' in the 1975 Referendum, and were at the Government during the whole decade of the 1980s fighting the battle for the Rebate under their leader Margaret Thatcher and battling against more integration and a more 'social' model of Europe.

They have always been ambiguous in their positions regarding Europe and for all that the Conservative Party was considered the pro-Europe Party there have always been internal dissent and anti-Marketees, especially among the backbenchers. Tories would fight for the Common Market but would also fight anything that could diminish their national identity and reduce their own sovereignty. Nevertheless they had chosen the path of pro-Europeanism, and they did so for a number of reasons among which economic prosperity and common defence against Communists were some of the most important ones. Additionally, Europe has been also used as a tool for Parties' dialectic and the Conservatives have been pro-Europeanist in the measure in which Labours have been anti-Europeanist.

Things had started changing during the 1980s when a more 'social' model of Europe brought Labour to a change of policy. Furthermore Thatcher's aggressive and intransigent attitude during her battle for Rebate, and her more censoring comments from mid-80s onward, managed to progressively paint the EEC in a more negative light as years passed. Of the utmost importance in the development of this Eurosceptic perception was the attitude of the media, the television and the newspapers, especially Conservative and Centre-Right ones. They showcased Europe's economical drawbacks, painted Europe as a foreign power, stressed sentiments of Britain's national identity and did not contribute much in the creation of a European identity.

An analysis will be made on different articles from two different newspaper, the Centre-left *The Guardian* and the Centre-Right *The Times* in order to see how their vision of Europe developed. This vision had gone from either a mostly positive or ambivalent attitude to either support, in the from of a strong critique to the anti-Europeanistic position taken by Thatcher during the Bruges Speech as it was in the case of *The Guardian*, or to the more critic stance taken by The Times. The element of media's influence was showcased also by the television and Britons, historically not very knowledgeable in matters of the EEC found their biggest source of information on the topic in the TV. Covering of Europe in the news treated for the most part the negative impacts especially those concerning the economy.

Even lighter hearted shows like sitcoms like the very popular and acclaimed Yes Minister – cited by both political scientists and textbooks for its accurate portrayal of the Country – saw Europe as a target for jokes and heavy handed satire in which the Community was seen as a perplexing bungled mess, as exemplified by the fight between the *Eurosausage* and the *Great British Sausage*, and whose aim was to come up with ridiculous ideas and legislate on useless things while attempting to strip Britain of its treasured national identity. Ultimately while the relationship between the EEC and the UK has never been an easy one, changes inside the Country, in the Community, in the international arena and the progressive antipathy with which the ruling Party and the media saw Europe certainly did not make this relationship any easier.

Chapter 1: The United Kingdom, the Tories and Europe: from the mid-40s to the mid-70s

This first chapter serves as a historical introduction that describes and explains the situation and the relationship between the United Kingdom, and in particular the part of the Country embodied by the Conservative Party with Europe and the European Economic Community (EEC). This relationship has always been a peculiar one as the preconceptions and the prejudices of the Britons – who however are not the only ones with long standing bias towards those coming from the other side of the Channel – came long before the establishment of those institutions that would later become the European Union.

It is particularly interesting to see how the Conservative's attitude towards Europe changed overtime. The idea of Europe as we know it today was, in fact, born from a desire for 'ever closer' relationships among the European Countries after the end of World War II. Britain, however, had not initially been part of this design as in those years it could still count on its position of being one of the Great Powers. Moreover the UK, traditionally, had always been more linked, both culturally and economically, to the Countries of the Commonwealth. This position, however, had changed overtime: 1956 and the Suez Canal Crisis had officially stripped Britain of the title of Great Power and, thanks to the process of Decolonization, the Empire had started to crumble away.

It was this climate that changed British's stance on Europe and brought the Conservatives – after vain attempts of counterbalancing the newly established EEC's power with a European Free Trade Association (EFTA) – to launch an application to join the Six in the European Communities. The Tories had become the pro-European Party of Britain. Although this does not mean that the Party was uniformly pro-Europe as there were many – even among the MPs, and especially among the backbenchers – that were decidedly against any type of European project. Many among the electorate were also not interested or even against a British's accession to the EEC. However, as things stood, the Conservative Party was in those years for all intents and purposed *The Party of Europe*.

The Tories, which were now both the Party of Europe and the Party of the Nation were pushing for entering in the EEC, not for any idealistic pro-integration objectives but for economical and practical purposes. Historical necessity – and a good dose of miscommunication and underestimation – pushed the Tories, which were then at the Government, to launch an application in 1961. However, this application, and the following one made by a Labour's

government in 1967, were rejected by a veto of the then French President Charles de Gaulle who saw in the UK too strong a menace for the French's leading role in the Community, too risky a outlet for further American interference in Europe and a danger for a set of common policies – such as the agricultural one – which were very important for his Country and the Community.

In Britain in the meanwhile Tory leaders had changed, and all of them, with some being more so than others, had been pro-Europe. Even the party members, and the electorate in general – although not by the wide margin one would expect – had become more amenable to the idea of joining other European Countries in the Community. And with the election of Edward Heath – the truest and most convinced pro-Europeanist of the Tories, a third, and last, application was launched. This time it was a success, and from the 1st of January 1973 the United Kingdom officially became part of the EEC.

Nonetheless things changed again and just a few years after he got elected and brought the UK in Europe, Heath had to give up his place away, of Prime Minister to a Labour-led government presided by Harold Wilson, and of Party leader to Margaret Thatcher. With this new election the Labour government had promised a renegotiation of the terms of accession and a subsequent referendum – the first whatsoever in British history – with which the British people would decide whether to remain in the EEC or not.

The Conservative Party of Margaret Thatcher actively campaigned for a 'Yes' to the EEC in the referendum, with leaflets, speeches and meetings and, when in June 1975 the 'Yes' won with a two-to-one majority, all doubts that the Conservatives sided against the will of the people were swept away. The 1975 referendum not only consecrated British's place in Europe but at the same time it cemented Margaret Thatcher's role as the leader of the Conservatives and paved the way for the start of that process which, in the space of little more than a decade, moved the Tories from a position of pro-Europeanism to one of strong Euro-scepticism; all in the mould of what would come to be known as Thatcherism.

Chapter 2: Europe in Britain (and Britain in Europe)

The second chapter describes some of the most characteristic aspects of Britain as a member of the EEC while concentrating on the analysis of the peculiarities and the points of friction that the United Kingdom developed from the end of the 1970s. This chapter, in fact, serves as a basis to understand the change of attitude – and the internal splits and divisions – that would happen inside the broader part of the Conservative Party during the latter part of the 1980s.

Its implications are far-reaching and way more complicated than what could be expected at first glance and only a thorough analysis of the internal situation – of both the Party and of the Country in general – corroborated with a research of the external situation and its pressures could help us understand why this change happened, and why it happened as it has. What were the modifications and happenstances that led the Tory government under the guide of Margaret Thatcher to radically re-evaluate its position with regards of the EEC.

Britain has always been a world unto itself, not only for its rather obvious geographical position but also – and rather more importantly – for its political structure. And as this analysis hinges on Britain – and what makes Britain unique – it would be, in fact, rather opportune to note that the British parties are extremely peculiar derivations of the society that generated them and that neither of the two principal political forces of the Country shared much with other traditional political parties of Continental Europe, be they Christian Democracies or Socialist Parties.

It can be said that much of the positions taken by the Conservative Party in the ‘*battle for Europe*’ had depended on the stance adopted by its direct opposition, the Labour Party. Labour – and the trade unions to which the party was linked – had traditionally been a great deal more sceptical of the European project. However the 1980s saw in the Continent a progressive shift towards a more and more social dimension of the European institutions that led to a ‘*Europeanization*’ of the Labour Party, emphasised by the signing of the Social Charter a document that was one of the milestones that helped turning towards Europe a sizable part of the anti-EEC Labour. Conversely the Conservative Party started to become more and more adverse to Europe as its powers became more permeable and impinged upon what the Government, and Margaret Thatcher, regarded as national sovereignty and internal matters.

Ultimately these changing attitudes were a consequence of internal British changes in leadership and position. However, they also point out a change in European policies and priorities, which from mid-80s onwards, started including a more social dimension. And as its policies changed and the very concept of European integration progressed so did the attitude of both the Labour and the Conservatives. Additionally as much as can be said on the relationship between Europe the Tories, many a scholar still interrogate themselves on the evolution of Mrs Thatcher position towards Europe; whether her dislike has always been present, if well concealed, or if it were the changes in Europe itself that turned her away from the project. In any case, as things stand, it is impossible to deny that her attitude towards Europe was one of the main elements that created in her Party a cleavage big enough to make her government fall. Ultimately it was Europe that brought her to her knees without ever losing an election.

However it is also important to point out that of all the elements that took part in the shaping of the relationship between Europe and the United Kingdom external elements were just as important as internal ones. Consequently in order to better understand all the features of this multifaceted relationship one cannot be exempted from analysing one of the most defining features of the second half of the last century, Communism. The relationship with the Communist world was, in fact, a pivotal element in the dialectic between Europe and Great Britain. And as the Communist threat grew bigger the more Britain got closer to its allies, cementing its ties with other European Countries in an anti-Communist key. Conversely, when the USSR ceased to be threat then the unity of the Western European bloc – and of Europe in general – started mattering less and less.

Chapter 3: Why did the attitude change in the 80s?

The aim of the third chapter is to analyse the major critical points in the EEC-UK relations during the 1980s. By paying close attention to the three main sources of conflict it is, in fact, possible to get a clearer picture on the *whys* and the *hows* that led to the progressive worsening of the relationship between Britain and the Continent during the latter part of the 80s.

The penultimate decade of the century had started with a major dispute between the UK and the Community on the issue of British budgetary contribution. This first critical point was instrumental in the measure in which it definitively set the tone – that of belligerence and intransigence – that Thatcher would thereafter use with regards of her European colleagues. Additionally by the end of this conflict the relationship between Margaret Thatcher and Europe had soured irrevocably. The '*Bloody British Question*' was indeed pivoting around a topic that was of fundamental importance for the Prime Minister: money. And the consequences of the successful rebate would set the tone for the future relationship between the UK and the Europe for years to come. Moreover as the battle for the rebate set the tones of the future relations between Britain and Europe it would also pave the way for the change of position inside the Conservative Party.

She would win this battle, but the price she would pay for it would be onerous. Eventually she would be 'betrayed' and ousted as a Party Leader and while her Party would tear itself in two on the matter of Europe, the EEC would progressively move away from her ideals and become more and more 'Social'. Furthermore this success ended up generating great

clamour in a consistent part of the British media, which, thanks to her tones and victories would become more hostile towards Europe as time went on.

Another fundamental aspect of the '*Anti-Euro Thatcher*' is her vision of the European Community as an institution that was sliding further and further towards a social model that was based on much of what she had fought against in internal British politics since she had become Prime Minister. She would grudgingly sign the Single European Act, but she categorically refused to take part in the signing of the Social Charter, a solemn declaratory statement that highlighted the fundamental social rights of workers.

This evolution towards a more social identity of the EEC was the second point of criticality of the 1980s. Margaret Thatcher had, in fact, a precise politico-economic vision for her Country and for Europe and nothing that went in this new direction was part of it. For her Europe should have been an intergovernmental project based on free market and not some sort of bastardized embryo of a federal state. Furthermore the introduction of this new 'social dimension' in Europe helped swaying both Labour and the trade unions, historically the anti-Europeanistic counterbalance to a pro-European Conservative Party, towards Europe. And even if these changes were perfectly in line with the principles set by the Treaty of Rome they were nevertheless neither wanted nor accepted by Mrs Thatcher and the only result they beheld was to increase the Prime Minister's Eurosceptic sentiments.

The third critical element that was pivotal in Thatcher's change of attitude towards the EEC was the German reunification. Soviet power was slowly being eroded and, in this climate, many of Thatcher's concerns were brought to the front. Among them of the utmost importance was the future of the European order and the place that the United Kingdom would have in it. Thatcher was worried that a united Germany, with the help of France, would monopolize Europe and become its 'heavy weight' – not only politically but also economically – taking away a place that, in her mind, should have been Britain's by right. With this in mind it was no wonder that the reunification of Germany was considered to be one of the most pressing and critical issues of the whole decade. By introducing such a big change in this one area all the variables that had stabilized the situation would mutate and Mrs Thatcher was justifiably against the idea of finding out what would Britain's place be in this new equilibrium that was being created.

The elements that would lead to her resigning had, however, already been set in motion and Margaret Thatcher would announce, on Thursday 22 November of 1990, that she would not take part to the second ballot for the election of the leader of the Conservative Party. In this scenario Europe was just a part, albeit a very important one, of a wider set of problems that had afflicted the Tory led governments of the last years. Additionally even public opinion had turned against her and thus she was forced, without ever losing an election, to stand down from both

premiership and party leadership. Ultimately it is impossible to deny that the Iron Lady, being one of the most polarizing figures of the 20th century, contributed much in the shaping of the politics and structure of both her Country and Europe. She pulled Britain away from the stagnation of the 1970s and helped ushering the Community into the 90s and, eventually, to its biggest changes.

Chapter 4: Euroscepticism and the Role of British Media

The fourth chapter analyses the impact that the media's portrayal of Europe had in the change of perception of the British population and how, as the depictions of the EEC slowly but steadily got worse, so did the general opinion and demeanour of the greatest majority of the Britons. In this case the term 'media' encompasses more than the simple press embodied by the traditional broadsheet newspapers, it also refers to the role of the television, both news and lighter hearted forms of entertainment such as variety shows, political satire and, more importantly, sitcoms.

In the current scenario Eurosceptic media are twice as numerous as their counterparts, but in the 1960s and 1970s the situation was reversed and neutral or pro-European press represented, with some small exceptions, the biggest section of the media. However, from the 1980s onwards numerous emotive campaigns, working alongside the steadily Eurosceptic positions taken by Thatcher's Tory Government, played on historical prejudices and managed to believably represent Europe either as a hostile foreign power or as bargaining forum presided by a Franco-German coalition to the detriment of the interest of the United Kingdom. Consequently, with this in mind, it is easy to see how the growth and strengthening of Eurosceptic media managed to paint Europe in a more and more negative light in the eyes of the Britons, who not only remained one of the nations whose link with its own national identity was the strongest but who also gleaned the greatest majority of information about Europe from those very same media.

For the purpose of a more objective analysis with the aim of demonstrating this change of position of the press it has been decided to analyse the portrayal of Europe in a number of different articles taken by the Centre-Left newspaper *The Guardian* and the Centre-Right *The Times*, ranging in time from 1961's decision to seek an entry in the EEC, to the first and second vetoes, to the entry on January 1st 1973, to the 1975 referendum and finally to the 1988's Bruges Speech. It comes out that in 1979 Britain's most important newspapers, even if not overtly

enthusiastic, were all in favour of the EEC. Contrariwise a decade later much of the press was developing a more sceptical outlook on Europe.

For what regards the analysis of the articles perception of Europe *The Guardian*, while giving space to its internal Eurosceptic voices, evolved mostly on a pro-Europeanistic line starting from a very neutral position neither overtly in favour nor against Europe and developing during the course of the 1980s in a wider acquiescence and appreciation for the European project, especially after the birth of that newer ‘social’ model of Europe that was pivotal in the Left’s change of stances on European policies. Conversely in the case of *The Times* – and of other Conservative press – the positions on Europe moved in the exact opposite direction, with some strong pro-European position during the late 1970s and early 1980s followed by the development of stronger Eurosceptic stances during the course of the 1980s.

Moreover, as pointed out by the analysis of some passages of the cult sitcom *Yes Minister*, loved by both politicians and average citizens, television had also a great impact in the impression of Europe and the formation of a European identity in Britain. However, as time passed by, the messages sent by the televisions either glossed on the issue or plainly set to discourage the development of this European identity. Therefore it goes well beyond any doubt to say that television – with its news but also its more light hearted programmes – was instrumental in leading the British public, who was *per se* not widely familiar with the EEC and its institutions, to see Europe as a ridiculous and quite useless organization, in which Member States did little but fight all the time, create unwanted legislation while working to obstruct and depower the United Kingdom.

Consequently it stands that there is an obvious causality between the wider spread stances taken by the press, which filtered and broadcasted great majority of the information that arrived to the general British public, and the progressive deterioration of the perception of the EEC. And so the media’s Euroscepticism helped strengthening Britons’ dislike for Europe, which was in turn exacerbated by Thatcher’s growing anti-Europeanistic rhetoric. The results were the birth of modern Britain, bastion of all things Eurosceptic.

Conclusions

The relationship between the United Kingdom and Europe has been neither easy nor linear, and had been one of the major points of friction in the history of Continental relations long before the birth of the EEC. From their entrance in 1973, to the first successful referendum of 1975 and

finally to the referendum of June 2016 that decided for a '*Brexit*' and the exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union. It alternated periods of enthusiasm to periods of scepticism in a series of ups and downs that reflected the image of a Country that could not quite find its proper place in Europe. It had taken them three tires to finally be accepted in the EEC and when they finally did, they got in almost silently, on their tiptoes.

Their dedication to the European project has been questioned time and time again and their efforts to steer the Community towards aims and objectives that better suited Britain have been alternatively considered a blessing or a nightmare. Among the British political ruling class Europe has always been a factor of division for both the Conservatives and the Labours. And the way in which citizens reacted to Europe consisted, as everything else in this relationship, in a series of highs and lows that were influenced by the international framework, the historical period, the actions and reactions of their own political élites and the perception and broadcasting of their internal press and television which contributed much with its alternating periods of pro-Europeanism and Euroscepticism in the making and breaking of a European identity in Britain.

And in order to understand the development of the path taken by Britain – culminating in its decision to put a stop to its participation in the European project – one must carefully analyse what in the first instance had brought the United Kingdom in Europe and what were the elements that made them re-evaluate their positions. Misunderstandings and historical prejudices that have long been part of the peculiar British's national identity have certainly played their part but so had the numerous internal changes Europe had undergone during the 1980s. However things are much more complicated and the scenarios that brought this change forth are wide and multi-faceted and incorporated elements of internal British politics and Communitarian policies and politics; this, of course, all inside the framework of a changing international order that was witnessing the Cold War coming to its inevitable end.

The bulk of this work consisted in analysing the matter from the perspective of the Conservatives. This is so for a number of reasons; chief among them is the fact that, for many years before becoming the bastion of Euroscepticism, the Conservative Party had been the pro-European Party in Britain, moreover some of the most important moments in Britain's relation with the EEC, such as the first application, the entrance, and indeed the entirety of the 1980s, happened during Tory Governments, and even the transformation of Britain into a Eurosceptic nation occurred under a Conservative Government. Conservatives have always been ambiguous to Europe even when they embodied both 'The Party of the Nation' and 'The Party of Europe, internal dissent on this topic was altogether very common and the anti-Marketeters were many, especially among the backbenchers. And even during its most pro-Europeanistic years the vision that Tories had for Europe – all but in very rare exceptions such as that of Edward Heath – was

very far from the federalist ideals that many in the Continent had. Europe was to be a loose intergovernmental institution made of sovereign nations and not a supranational federal state. They would fight for the Common Market but abhorred anything that could curtail their own sovereignty and dismantle their national identity.

Nevertheless pro-Europeanism has been a staple element in the Conservative Party for a great many years and while there have always been dissenters, the Party had been firmly on the side of Europe for many years. They warmed up to Europe for a series of reasons such as economic floridity and additional protection in the framework of the Cold War. And even if they had been Europeanist for convenience the fact remains that it was the Conservatives that brought the UK in the EEC.

Additionally, for a long time, the Conservatives were pro-Europeanist in the measure in which Labours were Eurosceptics; for many years, in fact, Europe was one more element in the dialectic of the two main Parties with one being generally in favour of the EEC while the other – with due exceptions as it is important to remember that the second application had been made by Mr Wilson's Labour Government – was against membership. Things started changing during the 1980s, and with the development of a more 'social' model of Europe Labour's perception – alongside that of the Trade Unions – of the EEC mutated and consequently one of the reasons that made the Conservatives pro-European fizzled out. This added to Margaret Thatcher's aggressive and intransigent attitude towards Europe during her battle for a Rebate managed to paint the EEC in a more and more negative light as years went by.

Furthermore changes in the international arena also contributed in the undermining of Tory's European commitments. The end of the Cold War, the crumbling of the Soviet Bloc and the reunification of Germany highlighted the changes in both world and European politics. Consequently Thatcher's Conservative Government suddenly started seeing Europe less like a system of protection against Communist and more like a hostile territory in which a Franco-German alliance was working in order to undermine Britain's position.

Another terribly important element in the British change of attitude is the role that the media, both the television and the traditional press – especially the one embodied by Conservative and Centre-Right newspapers – had in painting Europe in a negative light by underlining the 'us' versus 'them' mentality, by stressing sentiments linked to British national identity and by pointing out the inefficiencies and economical drawbacks that EEC's membership entailed for their Country.

Centre-left newspapers like *The Guardian*, moving in line with the evolution of the Left's pro Europeanistic tendencies, went from an initial neutral and ambivalent position with regards to the EEC to a more vocal adherence to its guiding principles and strongly critiqued, as opposed

to Conservative press, Thatcher's Bruges Speech. On the other hand, Centre-Right newspapers like *The Times*, moved from an initial pro-Europeanistic positions of the 1960s and 1970s to stronger critiques to the EEC from the latter years of Thatcher's premiership and onwards.

Media's influence in the perception of Europe is also evident when analysing television programmes, even more so since, not being very knowledgeable about the EEC, media were the main instrument with which British people familiarized themselves with Europe. In the news, covering on the EEC was usually relegated to the negative impacts, and even sitcoms never spared Europe from the butts of their more barbed jokes whereas the EEC was identified as Community that purposefully came up with the most ridiculous and useless ideas in order to irritate the British.

This attitude is very well exemplified by the sitcom *Yes Minister*, loved by Margaret Thatcher and cited by both political scientist and textbooks, which portrayed the EEC – by using the metaphors of the *Eurosausage* and the *Great British Sausage* – as an outlandish grouping of countries fighting among themselves and legislating on useless things while attempting to strip Britain of its treasured national identity.

Consequently in light of all this it is not difficult to point out that the developing of the progressively negative vision of Europe in Britain is a result of a number of different factors, such as changes inside the UK, in the international arena and in the Community itself, and of actors, such as the progressive antipathy with which PM Thatcher saw Europe and the negative portrayals the media were broadcasting to the Nation. Ultimately it is certainly possible to say that, while the relationship between the United Kingdom and Europe has never been an easy one, many have done their utmost best not to help this relationship blossom.