

O N BEHALF OF	THAR CEANN
Department of the Taoiseach, Dublin 2 Tel. (01) 689333.	Roinn an Taoisigh, Balle Átha Cliath 2. Tel. (01) 689333.

EMBARGO: 5.00 P. M., 19TH SEPTEMBER
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Address by An Taoiseach, Dr. Garret FitzGerald, T.D.,
at the Opening Ceremony of the Academic Year, 1983,
at the College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium, on
19th September, 1983.

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Since I last had the privilege of addressing the students and members of the College of Europe in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs in 1977 - though of course I have been here since in another temporary capacity, as Leader of the Opposition! - the relationship between Ireland and the College of Europe has developed, and I would like to think strengthened. Irish students have been coming to the College on a regular basis since 1967, (a process in which I was personally involved in the early years); and although not numerous, they have in almost every case, amply repaid the State for the amount of money that was spent on their scholarships. In many cases they have entered either the Public Service, industry or academic life, and have brought with them the unique experience which is summed up in a Diploma of European Studies,

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There is no doubt that the post-graduate training of the College has made a contribution to the development of Ireland's role as a member of the Community. Unfortunately, no association of former Bruges students exists in my country but, even from my own experience, I am aware of their contributions in many fields.

When the College first opened its doors in 1950, it was in response to the horrifying experience which Europe had just endured. This was a conflict from which Ireland was in many ways isolated. We suffered in some small ways but not to any extent comparable with any other country of Europe. The fact that Irish students were not among those at the College in the 50s and early 60s, is an example of the isolation of my country which lasted for most of the two immediate post-war decades. With the opening of Irish attitudes towards development in Europe and the real possibility of membership of the Community opening to us, it is significant that, at that stage, the decision was taken to send Irish students. Therefore the College has become, in some ways, a symbol of Ireland's deepening commitment to the Community ideals.

In developing this commitment and in the training which Irish students received in the practical expression of this commitment, I must, as Head of Government, express our

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gratitude to Rectors of the College. Firstly, to Professor Brugmans, who developed, to such a large extent the style of the College and who guided it through the first difficult days. Secondly, to Professor Lukazewski, who took over the reins at a time when the Community itself as well as the College came under threat. His extraordinary devotion to the students and to the ideals of the College, has maintained it as a significant force, in spite of immense financial difficulties, and in spite of an atmosphere within Europe that has at times been less than warm towards the ideals with which the College was founded.

We have moved, at different stages in the past twenty-five years, between periods of optimism and periods of pessimism about the degree of integration which it is possible to achieve in the Community, and the time-table within which this could be put into effect. Neither over-optimism nor over-pessimism, however, were or are justified by the facts. In particular, the degree of pessimism, and of near disillusionment, which prevails in the Community today would not stand up to objective examination. In a sense also, indeed somewhat paradoxically, neither is this the view from outside the Community of our performance - for the Community, or the Ten in the Political Co-operation context, are perceived from afar as increasingly acting as an entity in our external relations, despite a recent

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hiccup in relation to the development and expression of a common position of the Ten in condemnation of Soviet action in shooting down the South Korean airliner.

My country's position within the Community is, of course, unique in being the only one of the Ten not belonging to NATO. This, however, does not mean that we are ideologically indifferent, as we share with our Community partners the same basic democratic, political and economic values.

In so far as the Community is concerned, my country's position of military neutrality has posed no significant problems; on the contrary it has been useful, and has been seen by our partners as valuable in emphasising the distinction between NATO's defence and military role on the one hand and on the other, the EEC which is concerned solely with economic and social issues and has no role in the military sphere.

Another important factor has been our unique situation among the Ten of having experienced colonial occupation up to relatively recent times. This enables us, in the North/South context, to bring to bear on problems a strong sympathy and understanding with the need for a more equitable world economic order.

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Allow me to put one simple fact on the record immediately - The status quo in Europe today - however: inadequate and frustrating many of us may find it - is, in the perspective of the early post-war period, an astonishing achievement. Ten nations, soon to be twelve, have been brought together in a common commitment to democratic standards and to economic and social progress. There has been, likewise, a considerable evolution and rapprochement of our foreign policy insights, reactions and objectives with, on many occasions, united public initiatives in this field - and, on many other occasions, common assessment that may not, for one reason or another, have lent itself to public expression.

I have been forcibly struck, both at meetings I have attended, formerly of Foreign Ministers and latterly of Heads of Government, but also in the reports I read from week to week of Political Co-operation meetings at official level, by the almost instinctive way in which most, and often indeed all member governments tend to look at many world problems from a common viewpoint, which is quite distinct from - although of course in no way hostile to - that of the United States, and is consistently concerned with the maintenance of world peace, the peaceful settlement of disputes, and assistance to those in greatest distress throughout the world. I have been struck, indeed, by the sense of humanity (concern for human sufferings, deprivation of human rights etc.) which emerges from these

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private discussions and from the records of many meetings at Ministerial and official levels.

The fact that this is not always as evident in public utterances as it is to me, seeing it from inside the system, reflects inhibitions about the public expression of viewpoints that may in fact be widely held, lest such public expression create misunderstandings with other countries which may be directly involved in some issue in dispute, and therefore unlikely to take kindly to the expression of a viewpoint not expressly supportive of their position; it also reflects at times a difficulty in formulating in actual words an inchoate sense of a common approach to a particular problem.

I do not wish to overstress this element; and I know that on occasion the brutal realities of power politics and real politics intrude themselves into such deliberations. But I feel it right, nevertheless, to stress an aspect of political co-operation among the Ten which, perhaps because of the very nature of the exercise, is little known to, and therefore almost entirely unappreciated by the public of our countries.

There is, of course, another achievement, which of its nature means less to the new generation than to those like myself, or older, who can remember vividly the terrible events of the last War. War between the partners in this European enterprise is

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now inconceivable; and, paradoxically, the very fact that this does not seem an achievement to the new generation is the greatest measure of this achievement.

The Community's achievements are, therefore, considerable. We are a functioning economic and policy system and if we have the courage, and I believe we do, we can ensure that the next decade of the Community - the second generation Europe as Gaston Thorn would call it - will be as innovative, and as responsive to the pressing needs and aspirations of our peoples, as any of the earlier periods.

But what are these fundamental decisions that face us, and which we must take if we are to provide the Community with the instruments and capacity to - and here I quote from the Stuttgart European Council Conclusions "take broad action to ensure the relaunch of the European Community"?

The changes needed are essentially in three areas, financial institutional and policy development. In the case of finance, it is self-evident that no Community can progress and advance without adequate resources to fund its development. Indeed, no Community could even succeed in standing still, in maintaining the status quo, in such circumstances. The Commission Paper of last May on the future financing of the Community underlined this point, very succinctly, when it stated that what was at issue was "nothing less than the preservation of the normal operation of all the Community's policies".

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But there is a further and indeed more dangerous dimension. Europe will inevitably concentrate, and that exclusively, on national interests if the Community has neither the policies nor the strategies to respond relevantly and effectively to its growing economic and social difficulties. Further prevarication on this fundamental issue will put at risk our achievements to date, will have implications for the present precarious balance between nation-state and Community, and will very quickly lead on to the complete alienation of our young people from the European ideal. I might add that the continued paying of lip service to this ideal, without specific action in its pursuit, is not only dishonest, but is lessening the very legitimacy of the ideal itself.

As I referred a moment ago to the Commission's proposals on future financing, I believe it is only fair that I should pay tribute to the speed and thoroughness with which, earlier this year, the Commission produced these proposals. These proposals attempt, with some considerable success in my view, to strike a balance between interests and positions of Member States which in some cases are quite far removed from one another. And while, almost inevitably, they will pose some problems - of principle or otherwise - for all member States, my own included, they provide a basis for the achievement of what Foreign Minister Tindemans would probably call a "qualitative leap forward" in Europe. As such, they are receiving the most serious consideration by my government.

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I do not think I need dwell overlong this afternoon, before such a committed group of fellow-Europeans, on the urgent need for the development of existing and new policies in Europe, If we believe, as we did twenty-five years ago, that national action is no longer adequate or satisfactory, then we have an obligation to focus on the type and range of common and centrally administered policies that are required in the Community. I would earnestly wish to see - and it is to some degree already happening - the same national commitment, and indeed political priority, devoted to the pursuit of policy development at the European level as continues to be put into the essentially negative, although in some measure at least necessary, effort to adapt the CAP and to resolve the so-called budgetary imbalances issue.

In no other way will we be able to avoid the disillusionment of our youth and the continuing impotence of the Community faced with, to single out one area, the scandal of mass unemployment in Europe- Across the complete spectrum of economic, industrial and social activity, we need urgently to make a coherent assessment of the direction in which we wish the Community to move, and of the policies and financial resources needed to ensure that we attain this objective.

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This leads me on logically to what might be called the current institutional impasse in the Community. It is evident, for instance, that in recent years the Commission has lost authority in its relationship with the Council. This weakening of the role and stature of the Commission has been due in large part to the continuing dominance of the unanimity requirement in the Council's deliberations. As a result, and with in particular the Council failing to take decisions on many proposals, and indeed almost resigning itself to such failure on occasion, it is perhaps understandable that the Commission has been unduly influenced in framing its proposals by political considerations of what the Council would be likely to adopt. Early initiatives and decisions are essential therefore, in my view, on what might be called the restoration of actual as well as legal autonomy to the Commission and, even more important, on the central issue of the creation of a more effective decision-making capacity in the Community.

Here, perhaps, I could mention two ideas which we in Ireland put forward in the past and which we believe might still be helpful to some degree in the achievement of the above objectives. The first proposal concerned the appointment of the Commission. We suggested that the member governments, having agreed on a president designate, would invite the President to propose the other members of the Commission, which Parliament would then be asked to approve. At that stage, the

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member States would consider the proposed membership of the College with a view to reaching agreement on the appointment of those concerned.

The second element of our thinking concerned the use of procedures to facilitate qualified-majority voting in the Council on issues where vital national interests were not involved. In my capacity as President of the Council, I endeavoured to promote such procedures, as far as possible, during Ireland's first Presidency of the Council in 1975.

The procedure which I then adopted - despite the protests of one delegation which, however, eventually acquiesced in the procedure when it broke a deadlock which the delegation was particularly concerned to see resolved, was the following.:

At the out-set of each Council meeting I identified, with the aid of the Council Legal Services, the juridical character of the decisions required to be taken in respect of each item on the agenda, viz. decision by unanimity under the Treaty, decisions by qualified majority under the Treaty, or general orientations not falling juridically within the category of a formal decision of the Council.

Then, in respect of decisions requiring qualified majority decisions under the Treaty, (and I would have done the same with respect to simple majority decisions, had they arisen, but as far as I can recall they did not) I invited the delegations

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to state before the meeting began whether they would be likely to have difficulty about accepting a qualified majority decision in respect of any matter so to be decided under the rules of the Treaty. This placed States in a dilemma of having either to claim a vital national interest in advance in relation to a matter which might in practice be fairly trivial, and in respect of which at that stage they might calculate that a decision could be reached amicably without resort to a vote, or to refrain from so claiming, thus inhibiting them from raising the question of the Luxembourg compromise at a later point, and leaving the way more or less free for a decision by qualified majority when the matter arose.

Unfortunately, despite my effort to persuade our successors in the Presidency to persist with this method, it was dropped shortly afterwards. I have heard that several years ago another State taking on the Presidency considered re-introducing the "FitzGerald formula" - this was not in fact done. In recent times, however, the question of finding a means of minimising abuse of the so-called veto has again been considered.

I should, perhaps, add that the procedure I adopted did not, and was not intended to, deprive a member State of the capacity to call on the practice that originated with the Luxembourg compromise, in a case where there is a genuine vital national interest, identifiable and defensible as such. In such cases

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the unwritten agreement that the matter would **not** be forced **to** a vote, in which the country whose vital national interest was affected could be over-ruled, would still apply. But the vast bulk of the decision-making problems of the Community derive not from the practice of unanimity being called into play when a genuine vital national interest is at stake, but from the flagrant abuse of this procedure in cases which are clearly relatively trivial, **but** where Governments may, for example, find themselves under pressure from some interest group in their **own** country, or where they may seek to abuse this poker in order to force a package deal in a range of related - or even unrelated - issues.

I have to say that on the evidence of the inter-play of forces within the Council of Ministers in recent years, and **the** impact this has visibly had **on** the freedom of the Commission to make proposals free from the constraint of these pressures, I am not convinced that we have yet reached the point where the sense of mutual solidarity in the Community is sufficient to enable countries, and especially a small and vulnerable country such as **my own**, to abandon the possibility of holding up agreement on an issue that would affect a vital national interest - rare though the occasion may be when such a vital national interest is actually at stake.

The present restrictions on the CAP provide a specific, concrete example of such a vital national interest. Ireland's decision to join the Community just over ten years ago **was**

based on a balance of advantages and disadvantages. The benefits for agriculture, for instance, were perceived as offsetting the serious loss of jobs in industry, resulting from the opening up of our domestic market to stronger and more competitive industries in the Community, which has, in fact, cost us 40% of our pre-membership manufacturing employment. And this is precisely what has been happening to date. The Common Agricultural Policy began to provide a vitally important opportunity for Irish farmers to escape from their virtual exclusion from remunerative export markets, and their almost complete dependence on limited access to the UK market where, traditionally, a cheap food policy prevailed.

These historical constraints had seriously retarded the development of my country's agricultural potential and, as a result, because of the vital and central importance of the agricultural sector in Ireland, of the development of the Irish economy as a whole. This explains in large part why the level of agricultural development and production in Ireland, especially in the milk sector, is considerably below that of our partners on mainland Europe who have almost exactly similar soil and climatic conditions,

In brief, agriculture is infinitely more important to the economy of Ireland than to that of the Community as a whole. It provides direct employment for some 1.8% of the labour force compared with 8% in the Community generally. Moreover,

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industries based on agriculture account for over 20% of employment in manufacturing industry. Agricultural exports are a major catalyst for growth in our economy and generate about one-third of total export earnings. And the share of our GNP derived from milk production is five times greater than in the Community generally.

It is precisely at this crucial stage of our agricultural development, especially in the milk sector, that the movement to restructure the Common Agricultural Policy has gained very considerable momentum. My Government has **absolutely** no objection to the appropriate adaptation of the CAP, or indeed of any other Community policy. Indeed it is essential, whether at Community or national level, that policies be reviewed and assessed **on** an ongoing basis. We agree moreover that the whole question of structural surpluses, over the levels required for normal export trading, security and food aid, need to be examined in depth. We have indeed submitted detailed constructive and practical proposals on these and other areas of the CAP to the Commission and our partners. We **believe** that our proposals would fully meet the requirements set out in Stuttgart for the adaptation of agricultural policy in the Community.

I would like to emphasise publicly and forcefully today, however, that Irish agriculture, and especially its **milk** sector, must be afforded a reasonable opportunity to realise

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the comparative advantages which it has. To attempt to interfere with the operation of comparative advantage in this sector by introducing an artificial freezing of the present pattern of production, historically conditioned, as it has been in our case, by external forces, would be to create an unacceptable situation for the Irish Government and to alter fundamentally the entire economic balance accepted at the time of Ireland's accession to the Community.

It would be doubly unjust to do this in a context where the CAP has been the only effective Community instrument seeking, in pursuit of the Treaty objective, to begin to bridge the gap between Ireland and its more prosperous partners. In such circumstances, if an attempt were being made; to persist with a policy involving artificial interference with the working of supply and demand within the Community and the principle of comparative advantage upon which the Community's economic activities are based, my country would need to be able to reserve its right to defend itself against such a distortion of Community policies operating to the grave, indeed crippling disadvantage of one small and vulnerable member State. I use this as an example, very close, to me, of an area where the procedures of the Community are of life and death importance.

Passing from this issue of Council decision-making, I should like to refer briefly to the Resolution on European Union passed by the Parliament last week in Strasbourg which some commentators have, rightly I believe, referred to as the most

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important question to come before the Parliament since direct elections in 1979. I will not go into the details now except to emphasise the importance of this initiative in providing us Europeans with a suggested model for the Community's long-term goal of a European Union. As such, it can be expected to figure prominently in Community discussions from now on, particularly in the run-up to next year's elections to the Parliament. I should add that, regrettably, there is a tendency in some quarters to play down the importance and influence of the Parliament. Everyone will, however, agree that, in recent years, the Parliament has, using its budgetary powers, played a pivotal role in expanding the scope of Community action, particularly in increasing the size of the Regional and Social Funds and in focussing our thinking on the need for institutional change in Europe.

Perhaps it may be of interest to refer back to one other idea my country put forward in 1975 - at a period when we had less than three years experience of Community membership, but had seen for ourselves what it meant to undertake the Presidency of the Council. At that time the Community was contemplating moving to an economic and monetary union; since then we have moved to what perhaps might be regarded as an interim stage - the European Monetary System to which nine of the ten members of the Community now adhere.

In preparation for European Monetary Union, the Irish Government of the day expressed the view that the programme of

preparation for a European Monetary Union must include an approximate quantification of the scale of Community action that would be necessary to counteract the centripetal effects of the EMU and by narrowing the disparities in living standards between member States sufficiently to make the achievement of the EMU practical. I have to tell you that I regret that more has not been done in this direction.

It is true that the Commission undertakes an assessment of the economic situation in member States and makes critical comments on any elements of national policies which it sees as impeding progress towards a greater economic balance between member States and towards economic and monetary integration.

But I have to say that in reading its prescriptions addressed to member States, there sometimes seems to be a tendency for the Commission to be both more precise and more firm in what is said to smaller member States, and/or States in which restrictive action is called for, than in the case of larger member States and/or States in which more positive deflationary action is needed, if the economies of member States in the Community are to be brought into balance with each other so far as the economic policies are concerned. My country is willing not merely to accept criticism from the European Commission, but to accept a moral obligation to pursue policies recommended by the Commission on the basis of objective economic criteria - if the same acceptance can be secured from other member States. This applies more especially to those who may be required objectively, and on the basis of the Commission's assessment, to adopt compensating policies of a more expansionary character

Another matter raised in the Irish memorandum of 1975 which I think continues to have some topical relevance relates to the method of operation of the then recently established European Council. It was our belief that discussions on Community matters leading to decisions, or to orientations of decisions to be taken formally at a later stage in the Council at Ministerial level, should, as provided by the 1974 Paris Summit Communique, take place in accordance with the rules and provisions relating to the right of initiative of the Commission.

While my experience of European Councils was interrupted for some years, I have recently had occasion to renew my acquaintance with this particular form of Community activity. What I have seen recently has confirmed me in the view that the effective working of the European Councils, as a part of the process of Community decision-making, requires that the right of initiative of the Commission be clearly preserved before, during and after meetings of the European Council. Otherwise, there remains a clear danger that these meetings, whose juridical character within the Community legal structure has remained somewhat obscure, could have the effect of further weakening the role of the Commission, without putting in its place any structure of equal efficacy or with the same potentiality for acting in a neutral manner in the interest of the Community as a whole, rather than in the interests of certain countries, especially the larger ones.

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In the period ahead **my** Government, reflecting the commitment of the Irish people to the Community and its further development, **will** continue not merely to support the acquis communautaire. **We** will also provide the maximum support for the Institutions of the Community as established by the Treaties of Paris and Rome **subject** only to such modifications as may **be** unanimously agreed by the Member States to strengthen the operation of the Community, to expand its functions commensurate with the **needs of** our peoples whose interests can be served only by closer integration of their economies and by growing together in mutual trust and confidence. The challenge and the choices are now, as arguably never before, clearly and starkly before us. If we do not succeed, the Community as we know it could well go into irreversible decline. **I know** of **no** political leader in Europe who would wish to countenance this.

For **my** own part as a long-standing and deeply committed European, **I** will play the fullest **possible** part in the attempt to meet the Stuttgart objective, and thereafter to move beyond that **towards** a further stage of integration and co-operation within our Community.

I am privileged to have the opportunity of saying this here today, and **I** believe that what **I** have said is **consistent** with what **I** have spoken in this College on a number of occasions in the past over a period of several decades.

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No politician could possibly come to this College, with its living testimony to the richness of the traditions and ties that bind us in Europe, and say that he or she was other than totally committed to working actively in, and through, the Community for peace, for economic, industrial and social development, and for social justice in both the European and the wider world context.