

Heath lied to us – by Christopher Booker

This article is based on a speech delivered at an event in 2001 to mark the 12th anniversary of the founding of the Bruges Group. You can access the original [here](#).

“There are some in this country who fear that in going into Europe we shall in some way sacrifice independence and sovereignty. These fears, I need hardly say, are completely unjustified.”

Prime Minister Edward Heath, television broadcast on Britain's entry into the Common Market, January 1973

This country quite voluntarily surrendered the once seemingly immortal concept of the sovereignty of parliament and legislative freedom by membership of the European Union... as a once sovereign power, we have said we want to be bound by Community law.

Judge Bruce Morgan, judgement in Sunderland metrication case April 9, 2001

Preface

I am grateful to the Bruges Group for the chance to expand on a talk I gave to their 12th anniversary meeting in February 2001, and which I rather frivolously suggested might be entitled *“Having Made Our Bed, Must We Continue To Lie In It?”*

The starting point for my talk was the release under the 30-year rule last January of documents relating to Britain's application to join the Common Market in 1970. What these

papers revealed more starkly than ever before was just how deliberately the Heath Government and the Foreign Office set out to conceal from the British people the Common Market's true purpose. They were fully aware that it was intended to be merely the first step towards creating a politically united Europe, but they were determined to hide this away from view.

It may no longer be particularly shocking to see such clear evidence of a British Government's dishonesty over our relations with 'Europe', if only because this is something which has since become so familiar. Scarcely a day now goes by when British politicians and civil servants do not make statements relating to the European Union which can be shown to be based at best on concealment of the truth or even on direct falsehood.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the fundamental reason why our involvement with 'Europe' has introduced into our politics a culture of deceit which is quite new in our history, not least by obscuring the scale on which it is changing the entire way in which our country is now governed.

In the light of the European Union now making the final moves towards political integration, it is particularly urgent that the nature of this culture of concealment should be analysed and more widely understood.

The Strange Case of the Werner Report

It is not often a British Prime Minister remains active in politics long enough to be caught out by secret papers released under the 30-year rule from the time he was in office. But such was the case in January 2001 when the Public Record Office at Kew opened the files relating to Edward Heath's application to join the Common Market in 1970.

The most striking of these documents were those reflecting the

Heath Government's reaction to something called 'the Werner Report'. In 1969, the Council of Ministers had commissioned the Prime Minister of Luxembourg, Pierre Werner, to draw up a plan to move the Common Market forward to full economic and monetary union. As luck would have it, his confidential report began circulating in Brussels in October 1970, just as Britain's negotiations to enter the European Economic Community were getting under way.

In the British Foreign Office, as we can now see, the Werner Report rang fearful alarm bells. A secret briefing note to Mr. Heath from Con O'Neill, the senior civil servant responsible for Europe, explained that, if implemented, Werner's proposals would have enormous political repercussions. They envisaged "a process of fundamental political importance, implying progressive development towards a political union". The long-term objectives of economic and monetary union, it was made clear to Mr Heath, "are very far-reaching indeed", going "well beyond the full establishment of a Common Market". The Werner plan could lead to:

"the ultimate creation of a European federal state, with a single currency. All the basic instruments of national economic management (fiscal, monetary, incomes and regional policies) would ultimately be handed over to the central federal authorities. The Werner report suggests that this radical transformation of present Communities should be accomplished within a decade". (PRO/FCO 30/789)

Such a political and economic union, possibly also including a common defence policy, would thus involve a massive loss of national sovereignty, which would ultimately leave member states with somewhat less power "than the autonomy enjoyed by the states of the USA". But what alarmed the Foreign Office was not the contents of the Werner Report. Mr Heath and his ministers did not throw up their hands in horror and say "good heavens, we had no idea this was what the Common Market is about. We could not possibly accept such a thing". On the

contrary, when Geoffrey Rippon, the minister in charge of our negotiations, went to see M. Werner on October 27, the minutes of their discussion show that Rippon went out of his way to congratulate him on his report, which he said "well stated our common objectives". Privately, Her Majesty's Government had no objection to the political union Werner was proposing. (PRO/CAB 164/771)

The only real concern of Mr Heath and his colleagues was that this plan should not be talked about too openly in public, because this might so inflame public opinion that it would be much harder to persuade Parliament and the British people that it was in their interests to join what they were being assured was no more than a 'common market', intended to boost trade.

It was vital, Mr Rippon urged on M.Werner, that this goal of political and economic union should be achieved only in a "step by step approach", because "it was natural for people to be afraid of change" and "part of his problem in Britain was to reassure people that their fears were unjustified". When these documents were released 30 years later, this was confirmed by a retired Foreign Office official Sir Crispin Tickell, who had played an intimate part in Britain's Common Market negotiations as Geoffrey Rippon's private secretary and was present at the meeting with Werner. In a BBC interview Tickell frankly admitted that, although worries over Britain's loss of sovereignty had been "very much present in the mind of the negotiators", the line had been "the less they came out in the open the better". Here was chapter and verse to show how politicians and civil servants had been party to a quite deliberate attempt to hide from the British people what Britain's entry into the Common Market was letting them in for. So successful were they at burying the Werner Report, indeed, that when 30 years later the journalist Hugo Young came to compile This Blessed Plot, his lengthy and detailed history of Britain's relations with 'Europe', he did not even mention it.

But this curious glimpse of what was going on behind the scenes back in 1970 provides an apt starting point to explore one of the oddest things which has ever happened to British public life: the way in which our involvement with the "European project" has introduced an element of deliberate deceit into our politics which, in its depth and scale, has no historical parallel. To anyone who follows such matters in detail, nothing is more striking than the way, again and again, we see supporters of Britain's participation in this project apparently having to resort to obfuscation and subterfuge, both to disguise what the project is really about and to hide what they themselves are up to. And the fundamental reason for this culture of concealment is that there have always been two quite different perceptions as to the nature of this European project.

For 40 years British politicians have consistently tried to portray it to their fellow-citizens as little more than an economic arrangement: a kind of free-trading area primarily concerned with creating jobs and prosperity, which incidentally can help preserve the peace. On the continent, however, right back to the dreamtime of Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the 'European construction', as its supporters call it, was always seen as something very much more ambitious. However long it took, and however much it might be desirable not to come too much into the open about it, the real long-term aim of the project was always that the countries of western Europe should eventually come together in complete political and economic union. The setting up of a common market (which itself was never intended to be a free trade area but a highly regulated internal market protected against external competition by tariff barriers) was regarded as merely a first step along the way. And this is of course precisely what we have seen over the past 50 years, as the whole project has inched forward, step by step, treaty by treaty, directive by directive, always moving in the same direction towards that distant, never very clearly defined but

always utterly consistent goal.

The real problem for the British has been that, from the moment our politicians first decided in the 1960s and 1970s that we should join the project, they have never dared to admit openly to the British people that this was its true nature and purpose. And this has had two particularly damaging consequences.

The first is that, right from the start, it created that need for a culture of deceit, whereby our politicians and civil servants have consistently tried to downplay the significance of 'Europe', and to present it as something different from what it is. Apart from anything else, this has meant that every time the project has taken another step towards its ultimate goal, as that original "European Economic Community" first evolved in the 1980s into just the "European Community", then in the 1990s into the "European Union", Britain's politicians have at every stage along the way, had to go through that process with which we are now so wearily familiar: whereby first they express opposition to much of what their continental partners are proposing; then find themselves having to agree to more than they intended; and finally have to hide from the British people just how much they have given away.

The second, rather less obvious consequence has been the need to conceal the startling extent to which our ever-greater involvement in 'Europe' is now changing the way in which Britain is governed. Few features of our political scene have in recent years been more curious than the way our politicians and civil servants try to hide away how deeply our political system is now enmeshed with that of the European Union and how much of the legislation which rules our lives now derives from Brussels. All too often we see them announcing new policies or laws which they pretend are their own, only for it to emerge that they are merely passing on edicts from the EU. Again and again we see them having to conceal just how much of the power

to run our country has been given away to a new system of government which has no particular concern for the interests of the people of Britain.

But ultimately this culture of concealment, which is far more prevalent in Britain than in any other country in Europe, derives from that same basic act of deception: the pretence that the nature of the 'European project' is something different from what it is.

Mr Macmillan and 1961

The moment when our political leaders first took this fateful decision to conceal the real purpose of the European project from the British people was not, in fact, 1970 but ten years earlier when, in 1960, Harold Macmillan's Government began discussing the dramatic reversal of national policy which was to lead to our first abortive application to join the Common Market.

This we can see from an illuminating book published in 1995 by Lionel Bell, *The Throw That Failed*, based on studying the Cabinet papers which reflected those discussions in the months leading up to our application in the summer of 1961. What was striking about the documents Bell uncovered was just how frank Macmillan and his colleagues had been in private, even at that early stage, over where the Common Market was heading. They were in little doubt it was intended to be just a first step towards eventual political and economic union. Yet this, they decided, should be kept hidden from the British people, because otherwise it would not be acceptable. The Common Market had to be presented as no more than a trading arrangement.

Even before the Treaty of Rome had been signed in 1957, the Foreign Office had been briefed to the effect that its six

original signatories wanted:

"to achieve tighter European integration through the creation of European institutions with supranational powers, beginning in the economic field ... the underlying motive of the Six is, however, essentially political".
(PR0/F0 371/150360. Bell op.cit. p.1)

In the summer of 1960, when British entry was first being actively discussed behind closed doors, Sir Roderick Barclay, head of the UK delegation to the European Commission in Brussels, sent a dispatch to the Foreign Office stressing, in Mr Bell's words:

"that the aim of the Community was not merely harmonisation but the unification of policies in every field of the economic union, i.e. economic policy, social policy, commercial policy, tariff policy and fiscal policy. That this was not just pie in the sky needed to be made clear to the politicians". (based on PR0/F0 371/150363, Bell p.22)

When Edward Heath, Minister of State for Europe, visited Professor Hallstein, the President of the European Commission, in November 1960, his report on the meeting noted how Hallstein had emphasised that joining the Community was not just a matter of adopting a common tariff "which was the essential hallmark of any 'State' (and he regarded the EEC as a potential 'State')". It would be necessary, Hallstein insisted, for any new entrant to accept the principle that the EEC was intended to evolve into something much deeper, "some form of Federal State", which was what the Commission was working towards (PR0/F0 371/150369).

Particularly revealing in this context was the reply given in December 1960 by the Lord Chancellor, Lord Kilmuir, to a request from Mr Heath for comments on what would be the constitutional implications of signing the Treaty for Britain's sovereignty. Kilmuir responded that in several

respects the loss of sovereignty would be considerable: by Parliament; by the Crown in terms of treaty-making powers; and by the courts, which to an extent would become "subordinate" to the European Court of Justice (PR0/F0 371/150369, Bell pp.36-9).

On the making of laws, Kilmuir said it was clear that:

"the Council of Ministers would eventually (after the system of qualified majority voting had come into force) make regulations which would be binding on us even against our wishes ...it would in theory be possible for Parliament to enact at the outset legislation which would give automatic force of law to any existing or future regulations made by the appropriate organs of the Community. For Parliament to do this would go far beyond the most extensive delegation of powers, even in wartime, that we have ever experienced and I do not think there is any likelihood of this being acceptable to the House of Commons".

As for the subordination of Britain's courts to the European Court of Justice, Kilmuir wrote:

"I must emphasise that in my view the surrenders of sovereignty involved are serious ones, and I think that, as a matter of practical politics, it will not be easy to persuade Parliament or the British public to accept them. I am sure that it would be a great mistake to underestimate the force of the objections to them. But these objections should be brought out into the open now because, if we attempt to gloss over them at this stage, those who are opposed to the whole idea of joining the Community will certainly seize on them with more damaging effect later on."

These were pretty direct warnings. And when in the summer of 1961 the Cabinet finally considered whether to apply for

entry, Mr Macmillan opened the discussion by pointing out that the first question they needed to consider was that:

"...if we were to sign the Treaty of Rome we should have to accept its political objectives, and although we should be able to influence the political outcome we did not know what this would be."(Bell pp.59-62)

Macmillan conceded that a decision to go in would "raise great presentational difficulties". On the one hand, it would be important to convince the Six that "we genuinely supported the objectives of the Treaty". On the other:

"we should have to satisfy public opinion in this country that the implementation of the objectives of the Treaty would not require unacceptable social and other adjustments. The problems of public relations would be considerable."

Nevertheless the Cabinet ruled in favour. Mr Heath was sent off to Brussels to negotiate the terms of British entry. And when on October 10 he made his opening speech to the other member governments, he could not have been more fulsome in expressing Britain's desire "to become full, wholehearted and active members of the European Community in its widest sense, and to go forward with you in the building of a new Europe". (Bell p.73).

But when, two weeks later, his fellow Cabinet Minister Duncan Sandys followed him to Brussels and made a speech emphasising that the British Government recognised how the Treaty of Rome was not just an economic agreement but also had important "political content" (FO 371/158302), Heath became alarmed that he might be letting the cat out of the bag. As Bell discovered:

"He set officials urgently to work to check what Ministers had been saying in public and a line was developed of arguing that the Treaty contained no political obligations,

only implications. The United Kingdom would not regard itself as committed to any particular development or extensions of obligations simply by virtue of EEC membership".(based on M.Camps, Britain and the European Community 1955-63, cited in Bell p.74)

This was to remain the line until, in January 1963, President de Gaulle vetoed Macmillan's attempt to join. Although the Cabinet was well aware that the Common Market was ultimately a political project, involving considerable surrender of sovereignty, and was likely to develop much further in these respects in the future, this was not what the British people were to be told. All this was to be downplayed in favour of a pretence that the Common Market was little more than its name implied: a trading arrangement which would be good for Britain's economy. It was a line which was still to be the official orthodoxy four decades later. The seeds of the culture of deceit had been sown.

Mr Heath and 1970

By the time Mr Heath came to launch his own, successful application to 'enter Europe' in 1970, he was already well versed in how to pretend that it was something other than what it was. Over the next five years, up to the time of the referendum in 1975, Parliament and the British people were incessantly assured that entry into the Common Market was simply a matter of trade and jobs. In no way would the British way of life be changed or Britain's right to run her own affairs curtailed.

An oft-quoted line from Mr Heath's White Paper circulated to every household in the country in June 1971 promised, "*there is no question of Britain losing essential sovereignty*".

In a television broadcast to mark Britain's entry in January

1973, Heath said: "*there are some in this country who fear that in going into Europe we shall in some way sacrifice independence and sovereignty. These fears, I need hardly say, are completely unjustified.*"

Yet shortly after Parliament had approved British entry, word came from Paris that President Pompidou was proposing that member states should make a solemn commitment to "move irrevocably to economic and monetary union by 1980". This made a complete mockery of all the assurances given to Parliament that any plans for monetary union had been dropped. In a BBC documentary series *The Poisoned Chalice* in 1996, a former Foreign Office official Sir Roy Denman recalled the Foreign Secretary, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, looking askance at the news. He said to Heath "the House isn't going to like this". "But that" Denman recalled Heath replying, "is what it's all about". When Heath himself was asked by the BBC whether he could really have said such a thing, his only response, after an unsmiling pause, was "well, that's what it was about".

Another revealing measure of how deeply the culture of deceit had now set in was the curious story of the common fisheries policy, and the Heath Government's response to the crude ambush set up by the Six to ensure that, as part of their price of entry, the four applicant countries, Britain, Ireland, Denmark and Norway, would have to hand over to the Community their fishing waters, the richest in the world. (all documents cited on the CFP are from PRO files in FO 30/656-9)

On the very day the applications went in, June 30 1970, the Six hastily approved the principle that member-states should be given "equal access" to each other's fishing waters, under Brussels control. The point was that, because this had now become part of the *acquis communautaire*, the body of existing Community law, the applicant countries would have to accept it as a *fait accompli*. Within a few years, as everyone knew, national fishing waters were due to be extended out under international law to 200 miles. Because the waters belonging

to the four applicant states would then contain most of the fish in European waters, this would give the Six an astonishing prize.

In fact the Six knew their new fisheries policy was not even legal. Among the Foreign Office papers released in 2001 was an internal Council of Ministers document, dating from June 1970, which shows how desperate the Brussels lawyers had been to find some article in the Treaty of Rome which could be used to authorise such a policy. There was none. The policy therefore had no legal justification, and other papers show that the Foreign Office knew this too.

But so determined was Mr Heath not to offend his prospective new partners that he decided not to challenge them. Britain would simply accept the illegal new fisheries policy, even though this would mean handing over one of her greatest renewable natural assets and would spell disaster for a large part of her fishing fleet.

Gradually the British fishermen got some idea that they were about to be sacrificed, and in the closing months of 1970 various MPs for fishing constituencies wrote to ministers asking what on earth was going on. They were fobbed off with evasive replies. Indeed, as the recently released papers show, civil servants eventually worked out a careful form of words, intended to reassure the fishermen that "proper account would be taken of their interests".

But behind the scenes, as a Scottish Office memo put it on November 9, ministers were being told how important it was not to get drawn into detailed explanations of just what problems might lie ahead for the fishermen because, "in the wider UK context, they must be regarded as expendable".

The following year the White Paper promised that Britain would not sign an accession treaty until the Common Market's fisheries policy was changed, Geoffrey Rippon repeated this

promise to Parliament and to the Tory Party conference. But in November Mr Heath realised that time was running out. Unless he accepted the fishing policy as it stood, his plans for Britain's entry in January 1973 would have to be abandoned. He instructed Rippon to give way, and when Rippon was questioned about this in the House of Commons on December 13, he answered with a straight lie. He claimed Britain had retained complete control over the waters round her coastline, knowing that this was simply not true. So barefaced was this deceit over fishing rights that successive governments and fisheries ministers would continue to obfuscate the truth of what had been done for the next three decades.

In June 1975, the month when inflation hit 27 percent, its highest level in history, came the referendum. Surrounded by all the evidence of a major economic crisis, the British people voted by 2 to 1 to remain in a "Common Market" which the vast majority believed was intended to be no more than a free-trading arrangement. The supporters of the 'Yes' campaign, including the leaderships of all three political parties, did little to disillusion them. The message was that a 'yes' vote was all about protecting 'jobs and prosperity', offering the lifeline Britain's ailing economy required. As for any fears that there might be moves towards "an Economic and Monetary Union" and "fixed exchange rates for the pound", the Wilson Government's own leaflet to every household promised categorically "this threat has been removed".

Mrs Thatcher and 1985

Ten years later, when Britain's economy had begun to make that historic recovery which had nothing directly to do with being part of 'Europe', it was Mrs. Thatcher, curiously enough, who was put in the position of the British people, in believing that the Common Market's chief purpose was to promote and liberate trade. It was this which led her to fall for the

proposal that there should now be a further big push to turn it into something more like a genuine free-trading area.

Since, as she imagined, this was the Common Market's real aim, it could surely be achieved without any need for another treaty. But at the Milan summit in May 1985 she was rudely disabused. The powerful new troika at the head of what had become 'the European Community', President Mitterand, Chancellor Kohl and Jacques Delors, now President of the Commission, were keen to see another major leap forward to European integration. With the aid of the Italian Prime Minister, they set a clever ambush, insisting that what she was after could be achieved by only a new treaty, and calling for a snap vote. The reason they wanted this was because it could give Brussels a raft of new centralising powers not allowed for in the original Treaty, significantly extending both the areas of lawmaking to be handed over to Brussels and restrictions on national veto powers.

By the end of the year their treaty had been already signed and they had got all they wanted. Mrs Thatcher had been hoodwinked. And to disguise her frustration, she now felt she had to sell the Single European Act back home as if its main purpose really had been just to set up a 'Single Market', as she had told everyone, rather than to move towards a 'Single Europe' as its name implied. This confusion, alas, only helped to compound the deceits of her predecessors.

In fact one of the most significant points agreed at that same Milan summit had been the adoption of a document known as the Addenino Report, which in its own way was to do as much for European integration as any of the treaties. Pietro Addenino was an Italian MEP who had been commissioned, after the so-called "Solemn Declaration on European Union" at Stuttgart in 1983, to draw up a whole range of measures specifically designed to create what was called "a European identity".

These included giving the Community its own emblem and flag,

the "ring of stars" and its own anthem, Beethoven's "Ode To Joy", all of which were ceremonially unveiled. Other recommendations ranged from adopting a Community driving licence to sponsoring its own sports teams and cultural organisations. These were all deliberately intended to give 'Europe' the symbolic appurtenances of a nation state. And they were nodded through at that Milan summit by a roomful of people including Mrs Thatcher, whose officials, one may suspect, had no more given her a proper briefing on the real intentions of the Addenino Report than they had on the Single European Act.

But it was Mrs Thatcher's growing alarm at just how far and how fast the integrationist tide was now running which led her in 1988 to give that great Cassandra-like warning speech in whose memory the Bruges Group was founded. M. Delors was now speaking openly of how the President and his Commission would soon be the new "Government of Europe", the Council of Ministers its "Senate", the European Parliament its "House of Representatives", which within ten years would be enacting 80 percent of Europe's legislation: to all of which in 1989 Mrs Thatcher famously responded, "no, no, no".

Only a year later she was bundled out of the way, soon after she had in effect been blackmailed by her Chancellor Nigel Lawson and her Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe into accepting Britain's catastrophic entry into the ERM. This of course involved precisely that freezing of exchange rates which the British people had been promised in the 1975 referendum would never happen. We then saw Mrs Thatcher's successor going off to Maastricht, to face yet another treaty which was now quite unashamedly designed to transform the European Community by another giant step into the European Union.

From Major to Blair, Maastricht to Nice

Yet again in 1991 we saw a British Prime Minister caught out by the gulf between that cosy idea that “Europe” was just a trading arrangement and what it was really intended to become. Indeed, this time it was a “bridge too far,” because John Major realised at Maastricht that if he gave in completely to two of the main integrationist proposals on the table, economic and monetary union and the social chapter, he would risk serious rebellion from his own party back home.

At least on these two issues he was therefore grudgingly allowed his opt-outs, although that on economic and monetary union was not as complete as he liked to pretend, since Britain had an opt-out only from stage 3 of EMU, the single currency. Major had signed up to stages 1 and 2, handing over to Brussels a considerable measure of control over Britain’s economic policy. And a further large price he had to pay was in having to accept the foundations of common policies on foreign affairs, defence and justice, all of which opened the door to giving the EU several more of the crucial attributes of any fully-fledged state, in addition to having that crucially symbolic right to issue its own currency. In terms of the long-term plan to turn Europe into a political union, most of the crucial building blocks were now moving into place.

When Mr Blair went off to agree the next treaty at Amsterdam in 1997, inflated by the hubris of his election victory and his wish to be “at the heart of Europe”, he was a pushover for the next round of integration measures, which included his surrender of control over social policy that Mr Major had not dared give up in 1991. We then in 2001 saw the Nice Treaty cementing a few more important building-blocks into place, from the Charter of Fundamental Rights to institutional arrangements for the Rapid Reaction Force, which is only not a “European army”, because it is a European navy and a European

air force as well. Nice may not have achieved so much as many continental politicians once hoped. But of course it was also agreed that there should be yet another treaty in 2004, to take the process another step towards its ultimate conclusion.

What we now see, in short, is a European Union which has its own government, its own executive, parliament and supreme court; its own citizenship, passport, flag and anthem. It already has complete control over its own food resources, through the agricultural and fisheries policies. It is well on the way to having its own currency and economic policy and its own foreign and defence policies, backed by its own armed forces and the embryo of its own police force in Europol. It has taken the first steps towards creating its own common legal and judicial system. In other words, it has taken on almost all the essential attributes of a fully-sovereign state. Almost the only thing missing as the keystone to the whole structure is a fully-fledged constitution, and again that is planned for the next treaty conference in 2004.

But what else is missing? Quite simply, any admission from our own politicians in Britain that this is the reality of what we are now part of, and towards which they have stealthily, reluctantly, deceitfully been leading us for the best part of 40 years. It is the most remarkable political sleight of hand which has ever been practised on the British people: to lead them step by step into exchanging their own country and political system for another, totally different; and to pretend at every stage that none of it is really happening. And it is that fundamental dishonesty which in the end accounts for that ubiquitous culture of deceit which now permeates every corner of our dealings with the European project, like an all-pervading fog: so that not a day now goes by without almost everyone involved in the government of our country, from the most senior cabinet minister down to the most junior civil servant, making statements which are at best misleading and often demonstrably untrue.

The Price We Have Paid

In summarising the range of deceptions which have characterised Britain's relations with 'Europe', we may categorise these under three main headings.

1. The first has been the way British politicians have consistently misrepresented the nature and purpose of the 'European project'. Never more obviously than in recent years, there has been a startling contrast between what continental politicians are prepared to say about its real aim - the need to drive on to full political union – and the far more limited and woolly version sold by British politicians to their own people.

Even in the run-up to Nice in 2000, while continental leaders like Gerhard Schroeder, Joschka Fischer, Jacques Chirac and Lionel Jospin were making speech after speech calling for political integration, all we heard from Prime Minister Blair was a weak, waffly speech in Warsaw, trying to evade the issue by suggesting that Europe's future lay in more "intergovernmental co-operation". The Conservative's spokesman Francis Maude was even more implausibly evasive when, in a speech in Berlin, he persisted like other Tories before him in vague day dreams about building a 'flexible' Europe of independent nation states, a scenario simply not on offer.

In this respect successive generations of Europhile British politicians have put themselves in the position of being the true 'little Englanders', as they have continued to talk about 'Europe' in terms so far removed from those in which it is discussed by the politicians of any other country that they might come from another planet. But since privately they have been well aware that their continental partners had a wholly different view of 'the project', this in itself has amounted to a massive act of deception.

2. A second major area of deception has been the concealing from the British people of just how far control over their country's affairs has been handed over to this new system of government centred in Brussels. One former Tory minister privately admitted she had found nothing more disturbing about her time in office than the pressure from her officials, wherever possible, to hide the fact that policies she was advocating had originated from the European Union.

In April 2001, when the Sunderland greengrocer Steve Thoburn was charged with the criminal offence of selling a pound of bananas, the judge Bruce Morgan ruled that he had no choice in finding Mr Thoburn guilty because, when we went into the Common Market back in the 1970s, Parliament and the British people had:

"quite voluntarily surrendered the once seemingly immortal concept of the sovereignty of parliament."

When had we ever heard any of our politicians telling us so baldly that we had "voluntarily" handed over our sovereignty, even though this flatly contradicted everything the British people had actually been told in the 1970s about how they were not losing any of their sovereignty?

When in February 2001 Britain's countryside was hit by the barely credible foot-and-mouth disaster, the great puzzle was why was it being so catastrophically mishandled? Why in particular did it appear that every one of the recommendations of the official report the last time Britain had a major foot and mouth outbreak in the 60s was being so flagrantly ignored? Why was it taking so long to kill infected animals? Why were they not being immediately buried on the spot, as that report had insisted? Why the piles of rotting carcasses left in fields? Why the awful funeral pyres? None of this seemed to make any sense until it gradually emerged that the crisis was being run not under British law but in accordance with a series of European Union directives. This may not have excused

the way that, as so often before, the Ministry of Agriculture made such a shambles of implementing those directives. But the fact was we had handed over 'competence' on handling foot-and-mouth to Brussels. And again, not one of our politicians explained this – not even the Tory front bench spokesman Tim Yeo – because they wanted to preserve the illusion that Britain still retained the power to run its own affairs.

Just before the 2001 general election a curious public meeting was staged in Exeter, chaired by the local bishop. This so-called 'constitutional convention' was staged to create the impression that there was popular demand for an elected regional parliament for the 'south-west region' of England. It might have seemed curious that identical meetings were being planned in all the other seven regions of England. But of course it wasn't really curious, because this whole exercise of splitting up the United Kingdom into regions, each with its own little regional government and regional parliament, was all part of a grand plan, promoted by Brussels, to set up a so-called 'Europe of the Regions'.

Already this plan is much further advanced than most people realise. We have already seen the dividing up of Britain into 12 Euro-regions for the European Parliament; the setting up of the Scottish Parliament and assemblies for Wales, Northern Ireland and London; the creation of eight regional development agencies for the rest of England. The only major building block left to put into place is to set up elected assemblies for each of those eight English regions, which is why in 2001 we were being told that there was a spontaneous grass roots demand for such assemblies in every one of those regions.

But again none of our politicians has had the honesty to explain openly what is going on. Indeed so determined are the promoters of this grand design to deny that there is any connection between regionalisation and the EU that, as they demonstrated in Exeter, they will even shout down anyone who dares suggest such a thing. Was it not odd therefore that

there on the platform in Exeter was a senior official of the European Commission, sent over from Brussels by the EU's Regional Commissioner Michel Barnier? The truth is that, over on the continent, there is no secret that this is what the regionalisation policy is all about. Here in Britain, ironically, the only politician who has been remotely honest about it has been that great Europhile Michael Heseltine who, at a fringe meeting at a Tory conference in 1998 suddenly launched into an extraordinary outburst against the regionalisation plan. He was all in favour of European co-operation, he said, but this breaking up of Britain into Euro-regions was very much a step too far, and the stealthy way in which it was being brought in he described as "deeply sinister". (transcript from British Management Data Foundation).

It would be easy to cite countless more examples of how our British politicians and civil servants now quite routinely try to conceal the extent to which our lawmaking and forms of government are now becoming more and more taken over by this new system of government centred on Brussels. The result is that few people, except those directly affected, now have any idea just how much of our power to run our own country we have already given away.

The areas of policymaking handed over to Brussels now stretch right across the field of government, from agriculture and fisheries to much of our foreign policy. Whole tranches of the power to pass laws and decide policy have now been passed over to become what are known as Brussels 'competences'. And wherever such a competence has become part of what is known as 'the occupied field', we no longer have power in that particular area to decide our own policies or laws. That has passed out of our hands forever. What in fact has been taking place has been a transfer of power from Westminster and Whitehall to Brussels on a scale amounting to the greatest constitutional revolution in our history. But much of this has

remained buried from view because our politicians like to preserve the illusion that they are still in charge. The result is that remarkably few people now have any proper understanding of how the political system which rules our lives actually works.

3. The third major area of deception lies in the often quite comical compulsion of supporters of Britain's membership of the European Union to talk up the benefits we derive from membership. And where, as so often, our membership in fact damages British interests, this again must at all costs be suppressed or denied. This type of distortion has become so familiar that I will only mention one or two examples.

One is the grandiose claim that it is somehow the 'European Union' which has preserved 'the peace of Europe' since World War Two, when the chief cause of this has obviously been the NATO alliance and the presence of America in Western Europe through 40 years of Cold War; the very alliance which influential elements in the EU, motivated by anti-Americanism, are now trying so hard to undermine.

Another is the claim that we have somehow derived special benefits from trading with our continental neighbours which we could not have enjoyed without membership. The figures show that, although before we joined we had a small trading surplus with the original Six members, we have subsequently run up a cumulative trading deficit with our European partners amounting to more than £170 billion. In terms of the balance of trade, our membership has been hugely more beneficial to them than it has to us, and without the surpluses we earned from trading and investing elsewhere in the world, we should long since have gone bankrupt.

Linked to this is the claim we have constantly heard from such people as Robin Cook when Foreign Secretary, that "3.5 million British jobs now depend on trade with our European Union partners". The intended implication of this is that, if we did

not belong to the EU, those jobs might somehow disappear. What is interesting about this particular deceit is that we know precisely where it originated. That figure of 3.5 million jobs came from a report commissioned in 1999 by Britain in Europe from a reputable research organisation, the National Institute for Economic and Social Research.

What the report actually stated was something very different, It did estimate that 3.5 million UK jobs were linked to trade with the EU. But even if Britain were to leave the EU, it pointed out, few of those jobs would disappear, because we would continue trading with the EU much as we do now (and as do other non-EU countries, such as Norway and Switzerland). But no sooner did Britain in Europe receive the report than it put out a press release claiming that "British withdrawal would cost 3.5 million jobs". The NIESR's director, Dr Martin Weale, was so angry at this misuse of his report that he described Britain in Europe's behaviour as "pure Goebbels". But this did not prevent Robin Cook and Co. continuing to parrot a propaganda point which can still be heard from Europhiles to this day.

Another deceit beloved by pro-EU propagandists is to pretend that one of the advantages of membership is all the money Britain receives from Brussels in grants and subsidies. What they fail to explain, of course, is that all this money was handed over by British taxpayers in the first place, and that we have merely received part of our own money back (in 1999 roughly £1 for every £2 we paid in), What they also fail to explain is that many grants are only paid on condition that "matching funding" of 50 percent or more is provided by the UK government, so that for every £1 returned by Brussels the taxpayer can end up contributing £3. But all this is hidden away, and the grant is publicised as if it was simply another example of Brussels' largesse and of the benefits of belonging to the EU.

One could cite countless similar instances of the world of

mirrors our Europhiles now inhabit, but I will end on just one more, because it is one of the most fundamental of all. This is the deliberate way they invariably try to confuse the European Union with 'Europe', to suggest that anyone who is at home with the peoples and civilisation of Europe must automatically support the political project which has taken its name. Conversely, anyone who opposes the project must somehow be "anti-European", "xenophobic", a "Europhobe". Rarely was the self-deception implied in this sleight of hand more cruelly exposed than in the comment by Tony Blair during the Kosovo crisis of 1999 that this was a "tragedy taking place almost on the doorstep of Europe". What this revealed, of course, was the extent to which, for Mr Blair as for so many other 'Europhiles', the idea of 'Europe' had become just an abstract concept, identified with the EU, and almost wholly unconnected to the living reality of a continent whose centre is marked by a monument in a Warsaw park, more than 200 miles east of where the EU stops.

Epilogue

In all this sorry fog of deception and falsehood, there is one last vitally important issue which still remains to be decided, and it is the one on which everything else will in the end be seen to rest. If Britain is finally to be absorbed into this new country we are allowed to call anything but a "superstate", there is one crucial act of surrender we still have to make: that of our currency. Because the one thing without which a nation cannot be considered a nation is its money. So long as Britain fails to join the euro, it can never be fully part of this new nation with which in almost every other respect she is now so comprehensively enmeshed.

Mr Blair knows this only too well, which is why he is so desperate to get us in. He knows that, so long as Britain

remains outside the euro, we must remain half-in and half-out of this new state, in a way which, as 'Europe' moves ever closer to full political and economic union, must eventually become unworkable. It would be a contradiction so glaring that in the end this could only lead to the unravelling of our political involvement in Europe altogether. In that sense Mr Blair is right. But what does he do? He does exactly what Mr Heath and his colleagues did back in 1970. He publicly tries to make out that joining the euro is purely an economic decision, without any political or constitutional implications, when privately he knows only too well that the whole point of the euro is that, in terms of completing the European project, it is the ultimate political act. Just like Mr Heath, he pretends one thing when he knows another.

But of course in his own attempt at deception, Mr Blair is impaled on one very large hook. He is skewered by that commitment that he cannot take us into the single currency without the consent of the British people. After 30 years of stealthily surrendering our democracy, that is the point on which the bluff of all our politicians has finally been called. However much they may already have given away, the British people have a last unexpected chance to give their verdict. On that issue of whether or not we stay out of the euro, with or without a referendum, far more now hangs for the future of our country than most people have yet realised.

Christopher Booker, 2001.