

# European Odyssey by Edward Spalton

## From Moderate Support to outright Opposition to the EU Project

I was a few years younger than this audience when I first heard about the institution which is now the European Union. I was on a school trip to Germany and the German boy, who was my host, asked "Have you heard about our Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft? It will guarantee our living standard".

Neither his English nor my German was up to translating the word, so an explanation had to wait until we got home. When I mentioned it, several other boys said that their hosts had asked exactly the same question. So it was obviously something they had been taught in school. It was 1958.

Our teacher explained that the word meant "economic community" and it had been created the previous year by a treaty between Germany, France, Italy and the Benelux countries. We talked about it for a while and thought it was a great idea that these former enemy countries were getting together to co-operate with each other and improve their lives. Most boys had fathers or uncles who had been in the war and it seemed a hopeful sign of future peace but we didn't think of it as something we in Britain would be joining.

"But remember" said our teacher "This shows a big difference between the traditions of England and Germany. You would not be taught a political opinion as fact like that in a British school".

Of course, when we came to our conclusion that the EU (then the EEC) was a good thing, we did so in total ignorance. We didn't know what the treaty contained, what institutions (if any) it set up and what its political objectives were. For many years people called it "The Common Market" and thought it

was a co-operative trade agreement between sovereign countries.

When I went to work in the Sixties I studied calf rearing and animal feed production techniques with a Dutch company with which our firm made a technology sharing agreement. The Dutch are quite like us and so were their farming and feed production but all their prices for foods were very much higher than ours – things like wheat, beef and milk powder. As an industrial country, Britain had a free trade policy for food with the whole world. The Dutch were in “The Common Market” and their prices were driven up by the high levies and customs duties imposed on food coming from outside Europe. This was the Common Agricultural Policy.

We started to pay these needlessly high prices from 1973 when we joined the “The Common Market”. In 1993 the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development said “an average family of four in Britain pays approximately an extra £940 a year as a result of artificially high agricultural prices. It will be more today. Just think how much that has come to over your lifetime. Your parents might well have been able to get you through university without a student loan, if they had been able to keep the money in their pockets.

It was this wicked waste of resources – the grain, butter and beef mountains caused by guaranteed high EU prices which first started me questioning the European project.

Those food mountains were dumped on the world market at well below the cost of production, putting many Third World farmers out of business and thus increasing the likelihood of famine as their countries were less able to feed themselves. The cost of that evil has also been borne by your parents’ taxes. Britain’s fishing fleet was destroyed at the same time and is now a shadow of its former self.

So what was the political programme driving this strange

policy? It certainly was not merely establishing a "Common Market" – not even one with the rules of a lunatic asylum. I now quote from Jean Monnet who has been called "The Father of Europe". Addressing the Washington Press Club on April 30 1952 he spoke of the European Coal and Steel Community, the forerunner of the all-embracing "Common Market". He said "In this challenging time we are naturally encountering difficulties. THEY ARE THE BIRTH PANGS ATTENDING THE CREATION OF A UNITED STATES OF EUROPE".

A German politician expressed his view rather more robustly in 1951. Dr. Seehofer, Minister of Commerce in Dr. Adenauer's government said "Will free Europe join Germany? Germany is the heart of Europe and the limbs must adjust to the heart, not the heart to the limbs". Germany has continued to be very successful in making the nascent European state to serve its requirements ever since.

"The Common Market", freer trade between member states and so on were all part of a gradual step-by-step process – abolishing the national democracies of Europe and making them into mere provinces under a single European government with no pretence of democratic accountability. Or consent. That was, is and ever more shall be the aim of the continuing process of European integration as the unelected Commission in Brussels and other institutions gather ever more power to themselves.

As early as 1947 Peter Thorneycroft, later Chancellor of the Exchequer and chairman of the Conservative party wrote in "Design for Europe"

***"No government dependent on a democratic vote could possibly agree in advance to the sacrifice that any adequate plan must involve. The British people must be led slowly and unconsciously into the abandonment of their traditional economic defences....They must not be asked".***

And that is how the EU project has always progressed, running

away by stealth from democratic responsibility to the people, to undemocratic institutions in Europe which remain in power whoever you vote for.

Here is a time line of deceit and arrogance by Edward Heath, the prime minister who took us in

*1970 THE LIE DIRECT "There will be no blueprint for a federal Europe"*

*1971 "There is no question of any erosion of essential national sovereignty"*

*"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".*

*1975 "There is no danger of a single currency".*

Yet on 1 November 1991 in an interview with Peter Sissons

*Sissons: "The single currency, the United States of Europe: was that on your mind when you took Britain in?"*

*Heath: "Of course, yes"*

The deceitfulness of politicians is not uniquely Conservative . Whose election manifesto do you think I am quoting here?

*"We'll protect British industry against unfair foreign competition"*

*"We'll negotiate a withdrawal from the EEC which has drained our natural resources and destroyed jobs". That was Tony Blair's manifesto in 1983. Gordon Brown's was the same.*

The EU has destroyed British jobs. The cumulative adverse balance of trade amounts to some £300 billion – so our most successful export to the EU has been British jobs – mostly skilled, hi tech, well-paid British jobs. In exchange we have

got shelf stacking and spanner and screwdriver work. This is why your job prospects are so poor today. .

The majority of laws passed by our Parliament today are required by the EU. The EU tells the government what laws it must make and the government whips its MPs to vote for them. So it looks democratic but it isn't. We and our interests do not come into it at all. No wonder the main parties all ratted on their promise of a referendum on the EU constitution, renamed the Lisbon treaty! Parliament is a marionette. We can vote to change who sits there but whilst we remain in the EU, it is not we the people but Brussels which pulls their strings.

Mark Leonard, a convinced Europhile explained the process very well under the heading "How the EU deceives its way to power"

*"Like an invisible hand, the EU operates through existing political structures... There are no European courts, legislatures or business regulations on display in London. The British House of Commons, British law courts and British civil servants are still there but they uphold and implement European law. By creating common standards that are implemented through national institutions, the EU can envelope countries without becoming a target for hostility"*

Does it matter? Mr. van Rompuy, Baroness Ashton, Senhor Barroso and the EU Commissioners are our real government for many of the major policies which affect us all – from world trade and climate change to the way our dustbins are collected and the permitted curvature of our cucumbers.

They may be the kindest, wisest people with only our best interests at heart. But if they or their successors are not endowed with wisdom and good judgement and they do not have Britain's best interests at heart, what then? They were not appointed democratically and we cannot get rid of them democratically – whoever we send to Parliament, whoever lives

in No 10 Downing Street – not as long as we remain locked inside the structures of the EU. So, if you have a form of government and policies which you cannot alter by voting, what have you got? Senhor Barroso calls it an “empire” and we are in one of its provinces.

He should know. He’s president of the EU Commission.

In exchange for giving up any real democracy by imperceptible stages , they promised us economic growth and stability. We haven’t got it, have we? Ask the people of Ireland and the people of Greece. We would be suffering as bad a fate as theirs – destruction of public services and unemployment on a scale far greater than anything we have here, if we too were shackled to the euro currency with an exchange rate and interest rate which did not suit our economy.

When the euro was founded, it was claimed it would be as sound as the Deutsche Mark and no country would be responsible for another country’s debt. Look at it now! We knew then that Greece and the other “Club Med” countries had lied about their finances to get in. So did the EU authorities. This tragedy for these countries is seen as an opportunity by the EU to bring in a single, Europe-wide economic and fiscal government which will be even more anti democratic. The present crisis was foreseen and intended. It is what the EU calls a “beneficial crisis” – for the advance of EU power, that is.

The countries of Europe, however they organise their relationships, amongst each other will always be important trading partners for Britain.

We can be on perfectly good, neighbourly terms with them without being part of a European state. We do not have to become a state of the union to trade with America, nor a province of China to trade with China. It is a big, wide world out there with economies offering far greater prospects than the sclerotic, over regulated economy of the EU, distorted and

tortured by the political imposition of an unworkable currency union. Even the EU commission admits that the cost of its regulation is over 5% of EU GDP whilst the claimed economic stimulus of the Single Market is said to be around 1-2%. So, even by its own figure the EU is a drag on all the economies of Europe, equivalent to the whole production of the economy of the Netherlands.

Exports to the countries of the EU account for about 10% of our GNP (although it is declining) and a roughly similar amount goes to the rest of the world (although that is increasing). The remaining 80% is purely domestic and internal. So we are bearing the huge dead weight of EU regulation on 90% of our economy quite needlessly for the sake of what we send to Europe.

The great selling point of the EU was security, prosperity and stability. That has proved to be an illusion. It hasn't worked, it doesn't work, it can't work.

For a timid, obscure, offshore province of an inward-looking, economically declining European Empire, the future is decidedly bleak. Benjamin Franklin wisely remarked that a country which tried to trade freedom for wealth would end up possessing neither and deservedly so.

There is a great, wide world out there, full of opportunity for a confident, free country, trading with the vibrant, rising economies of the developing world and renewing its links with the Commonwealth countries which were so shamefully treated when we joined the EU.

As we have seen, the EU will not bail us out. We are expected to bail it out.

Back around 1983 when Tony Blair committed himself to getting us out of the EU, Ken Clarke remarked "The great thing about Europe is that it makes most of Labour's policies illegal". That was Old Labour, of course. It is often forgotten that the

principle of market competition is built into the EU, into everything. That is why we have ruinous Private Finance Initiative in the NHS and elsewhere. According to the EU, the NHS is part of an EU market for health services, geared to the interests of corporate business. So is the Post Office and every other public institution.

Even that bastion of the free market, the United States does not have that written into its constitution. So Labour or any other government has no choice but to go along with privatisation. There is an unholy alliance between government and corporate capital, enforced by the EU. New Labour was the EU's obedient slave. As long as it was wedded to the EU it really had no choice but its enthusiasm for the corporate trough was decidedly unseemly.

This alliance of the power of the state (in this case the EU super state) to that of big business has a name – corporatism. It was how Mussolini defined fascism. Henry Wallace, the 33rd Vice President of the United States knew it well and described its aims thus in the 1940s

“Their final objective, towards which all their deceit is directed, is to capture political power so that, using the power of the state and the power of the market simultaneously, they may keep the common man in eternal subjection”.

Before we throw away more money (which we haven't got) into the insatiable, unappeasable maw of a nasty authoritarian state and crucifying currency system, we need to renew our own institutions, especially our Parliament as truly sovereign, responsible to us alone and worthy of respect. Then we can take our place in the world as a moderately sized, decent, independent democracy on good terms with everybody and at ease with ourselves.