

# ARCHDIOCESE OF GLASGOW

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## A NEW SCOTLAND IN THE NEW EUROPE ... CARDINAL WINNING'S SPEECH AT THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY MEETING IN BRUSSELS

Ladies and gentlemen,

For most of my adult life I have had to define my nationality, not so much as what I am, but rather what I am not.

In Rome just after the second world war "gli inglesi" was the generic term to describe just about all inhabitants of the British Isles.

Over the years I have stopped counting the times I have to correct a well-meaning but mistaken francophone who defines me as "Anglais".

Even Americans do it most notably in their classic form of introduction ...

"He's from Scotland, England!"

Well tonight let me say at the outset that I am here from Scotland, Europe!

Those words may sound somewhat forced, but I believe they sum up very well the sense of nationality and the sense of European-ness which is emerging in Scotland in these final days of the 20th century.

You see, the Europhobia, which characterises much of the British press finds little echo in Scotland.

The famed - and perhaps apocryphal - headline: "Heavy Fog Over Channel ... Continent Cut Off" appeared in the London Times, not the Glasgow Herald!

In Scotland in recent years there has been a growing realisation that our future as a nation is European.

Our culture, our laws, our language and literature, our trading links and our choice of holiday destination ... all of these betray the very real, profound and unbreakable links which bind Scotland to the Old Continent.

One of our most respected journalists, Magnus Linklater points out: "Scotland has had strong links with the countries of Europe. Whether it was supplying officers for the king's guard in France, mercenaries for Flanders, engineers for Poland, shipbuilders for Russia or whalers for Norway, the Scots have been confidently exporting manpower and expertise across the North Sea for more than 500 years."

And as I look round me tonight I can see that export of talent has not dried up!

It is said that the high number of Scottish names to be found in the Stockholm telephone directory is due to the fact that Gustavus Adolphus, king of Sweden boasted a bodyguard and an army corps composed entirely of Scots!

That might say more about my fellow Scots' preparedness to fight than their enthusiasm for the European ideal, but it does demonstrate that for centuries Scots have not seen national boundaries and borders as any great constraint.

But at the same time as we witness a growth in European sensitivity, Scotland is seeing a re-emergence of nationalism.

To the outside observer such trends might seem contradictory. But I don't believe that to be the case. Nationhood within Europe seems to be the combination which is proving attractive for growing numbers of our fellow citizens.

Last year's referendum in Scotland saw voters turn out to vote three to one in favour of the restoration of the Scottish Parliament which had not sat for almost three centuries.

Recent opinion polls have shown that the new parliament will be heavily dominated by two parties - the Labour Party and the Scottish National Party. For some in Europe this growth of nationalist sentiment may seem a little worrying.

But I should make it clear right from the outset that the nationalism in question has nothing in common with the aggressive and violent nationalism which has scarred the Balkans, nor does it mirror the loud-mouthed rhetoric of the Lega del Nord in Italy or the xenophobic propaganda of the Front National in France.

Democrats can be reassured that the emerging sense of nationhood and political nationalism in Scotland is unique in European terms. It is mature, respectful of democracy and international in outlook.

Why should this be so?

Quite simply because it is emerging in uniquely fortuitous circumstances.

What we are seeing is the re-birth of ancient nationhood in a cradle of modern democracy. An old-yet-new nation is taking its place once more on the world stage with its legal system, democratic institutions, respect for human rights, educational facilities and all the rest already in place.

Few other nations can have emerged onto the world stage in recent centuries in quite such auspicious circumstances.

Of course the new Scottish Parliament will not be fully sovereign. Westminster will remain the ultimate authority. But recent polls show an increasing open-ness among Scots to the possibility of full independence - probably around 10 years from now. Certainly younger voters seem to back this option.

As a Church living through this great whirlwind of change we have been involved in doing what Vatican II told us to do ... and that is reading the signs of the times and responding accordingly.

Of course, the Catholic Church in Scotland has been recognised as quite separate from the English or Irish hierarchies since its restoration in 1878. There is a separate Scottish Bishops Conference. We make our five-yearly visit to the Holy Father - the *ad Limina* visit as it is called - as Scottish bishops not as part of a larger delegation from the British Church. And so you might say that in purely ecclesiastical law the Church has been "ahead of the game" in terms of recognising Scotland's distinctiveness is concerned.

At the time of the referendum there was vast pressure on the Church to come down on one side or the other of the argument. We refused to do so.

The reason?

Quite simply this. Devolution is a question of free choice, based on pragmatism rather than dogma. And I felt it was a valuable lesson to both our own people and the rest of the country when as Scottish Bishops we re-iterated that Catholics were free to vote either way on the question of devolution,

As I said earlier the result saw an overwhelming support for the restoration of the Scottish Parliament. Looking back I can say I was personally well pleased with that result. Devolution as an idea fits well with the Catholic principle of subsidiarity which is central to much of Catholic Social teaching.

In recent years the Catholic Church in Scotland - which is stronger in proportion to the rest of the population than anywhere else in mainland Britain - has been involved in a series of high profile interventions aimed at humanising Scottish society, bringing it more into line with that "civilisation of love" to which the Pope constantly refers.

We have taken on a wide range of social service projects, bringing the Church into the front-line of caring for the vulnerable in society; we have launched a pro-life initiative aimed at offering real choice to women considering abortion; we have spoken out for the homeless and the unemployed and in our guidance to voters before the most recent general election we took the opportunity of summarising Catholic Social Teaching.

In all of this, I have to say, our voice has been heard loud and clear.

The press in our land is interested in the Church and what the Church has to say - sometimes that interest can be a curse, but it can also be a blessing as we use the modern means of communication to get our message out to people of all faiths and none.

As we prepare for a new start in Scotland, I see the devolution settlement with its potential for future independence as posing key questions rather than providing all the answers for both the Church and the European Union.

With regard to the Church itself, the re-establishment of our parliament gives us the chance to be in at the start, to help shape the ground rules, the standing orders, the customs and traditions of our new parliament.

We, as a Church, are currently in the process of appointing a full-time parliamentary officer to work with the new Scottish parliament - acting as a two way liaison between the Church and the Parliament and the Parliament and the Church.

In many ways this new post will seek to replicate the kind of structure you have here at COMECE where Monsignor Treanor does a splendid job as liaison man here in Brussels.

We would want to see the new parliament get off on the right note ... for example we would like to think that prayer will form part of the day's proceedings; we would be interested in chaplaincies for members and staff; we would want to be able to provide Mass for our Catholic people at or near the parliament site.

We would like to hope that we could encourage politicians and civil servants to appreciate a spiritual side to life and to take that into account as they work for the common good.

It was TS Eliot who said :

*"Endless invention, endless experiment  
Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;  
knowledge of speech, but not of silence;  
Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.  
All our knowledge brings us nearer to our ignorance,  
All our ignorance brings us nearer to death  
But nearness to death no nearer to God..."  
(Choruses from the Rock)*

That description could probably be applied to any of the member states of the European Union. It certainly has echoes in my experience as a bishop in Scotland over the last 25 years.

Secular humanism is rampant; materialism draws in, chews up and spits out our most vulnerable young people and the drug culture ensnares all too many.

Just before I left Scotland, a new survey revealed that Britain had the highest proportion of lone-parent families in Europe - 23 per cent of all families are now headed by a single parent. In parts of Scotland more than 50 per cent of children are born out of wedlock. That compares to just 15 per cent in France and Belgium, 11 per cent in Italy and 8 per cent in Spain.

With figures like that, I sometimes wonder whether mainland Europe would really want Britain to be playing a leading role. Certainly I feel we can learn much from other Europeans in our approach to family support.

We hope that as a Church we will be able to encourage the new Scottish parliamentarians to learn best practice from other nations in Europe, and to "see the whole picture". To consider the spiritual side of humanity as well as the physical. To recognise the inherent dignity of every human being, born or unborn under the law.

The social problems of today are really spiritual problems. As one modern spiritual writer put it "Today's problems are the problems of saints ... or rather lack of saints."

And so we as a Church face an enormous challenge in the new Scotland - a work of re-evangelising culture, and that is something about which we can learn a lot from our colleagues in other parts of Europe.

In particular we would hope to open up to many of our new parliamentarians the Church's hidden treasure - Catholic Social Teaching. Since Leo XIII penned the workers' charter *Rerum Novarum* in 1893, far too few people have become familiar with the great principles and precepts of that social teaching of the Popes.

We would hope to do something to put that right early in the new parliament.

I have solid grounds for hope that we may be pushing at an open door.

It's a little-recognised fact that in the same referendum at which Scots voted in favour of devolution, they also voted to give their new parliament tax-raising powers.

It must have been one of the only times in the history of democracy that an electorate turned out to support a move which could actually cost them money!

Just last week an opinion poll found that two thirds of Scots would be willing to pay more taxes to help the education system.

I see that ability of the Scottish voter to see past his own narrow self-interest and consider the needs of others to be a sign of great hope.

Pope John Paul says: "Man merits honour and love for himself and must be respected in his dignity. Thus, brothers must learn again to speak to each other as brothers, to respect each other, to understand each other, so that man himself may survive and grow in dignity, liberty, and honour."

The concern of our electorate for the weak, the young and those in need is for me a sign that all is not lost. In expressing preparedness to pay more to fund services for the needy, Scots electors have gone a long way to dispelling the myth that Western Europeans are ultimately interested only in themselves.

But I mentioned before that the new Scotland would provide a challenge to the rest of the European Union.

The reason is this. A devolved Scotland does not fit easily into the two categories recognised by the European Union - sovereign states and regions.

A devolved Scotland will have its own parliament, its own legal and educational system, its own religious system; everything up to and including its own football team.

In short it will be a member state in all but name.

That very separate identity marks Scotland out as distinct from the German Lander; the French Departements; the Spanish regions or the Padania so beloved of Signor Bossi!

Scotland's separate religious identity, sporting identity, legal system and educational system mean its has to be considered in a different way from Catalonia, Bavaria or the Basque Country.

And therein lies a problem for the legislators and officials of Europe.

Of course the problem with defining Scotland's identity would become even more fraught should the country decide to opt for full independence from the rest of the UK.

It is not the Church's role to pontificate on whether that would be an appropriate step to take or not. But the opinions polls show it as a distinct possibility.

Then Europe would be faced with, for the first time, a country coming to birth within a member state ... perhaps the Commission needs to get its thinking cap on now to solve that one if it ever arises!

I'm sure I should have every confidence in the creativity of our legislators to find a solution to whichever problem might crop up.

However we decide to govern our land and our continent, what matters in the future is that national borders should be seen as gateways to new sights, sounds and experiences, gateways to treasure troves of culture of tradition and of faith. Not as lines drawn in the sand - marks saying "so far and no further".

Let us hope that the border controls, the barricades and the barbed-wire of Europe pre-1989 are gone forever.

I want to end my talk to you tonight with a quote from Richard Hill, the author of a book called "We Europeans" whose time in Brussels led him to paint this wonderful picture of Europe .. a vision which I hope will inspire us to new efforts to grow together and put a soul into the Old Continent.

He says: "Let us preserve and cherish the essence of Europe, a heady blend that transcends frontiers and never ceases to surprise and delight.

"The magic of a hot August afternoon at Foz do Porto with the foghorns booming as the sea mist rolls up the gorge of the Douro.

"The incongruously autumnal colours of a Swedish spring in the Stockholm archipelago, with the gulls crying at midnight.

"The symphony of light, laden with wild flowers, of northern Greece."

"The vibrancy of a village street in Ireland's County Clare, busy with old men and jackdaws."

"The blue-green sky of a Spanish dawn in Valencia, with the wind rising gently off the Mediterranean."

"The impeccably English sight of Lincoln Cathedral rising out of a gold and silver flecked haze."

"The brilliance and gaiety of the Italian lakes as you sweep down from the Alps."

To all of that I would wish to add the sight of the sun setting over Dark Lochnagar and the sound of silence of an early spring morning in the valley of Glen Coe.

These additions can only help complete the essence and delightfulness of Europe ... a Europe that I hope many Scots will soon come to see as home - "Our common European home"