

'Europe des patries?' from The Irish Times (24 January 1972)

Caption: On 24 January 1972, the day after Ireland signed the Treaty of Accession to the European Communities, the Irish daily The Irish Times wonders in what Europe the country enters.

Source: The Irish Times. 24.01.1972, n° 11. Dublin. "Europe des patries?", p. 11.

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http://www.cvce.eu/obj/europe_des_patries_from_the_irish_times_24_january_1972-en-4eed7556-6bf3-4890-a56b-8e854f47ec8c.html

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Europe des patries?

And now, what kind of Europe? In the weeks and months before the referendum, Irish men and women will be invited to consider what, for good or ill, Europe can do for Ireland.

Some facts are inescapable. Ireland is part of Europe geographically, culturally and historically. More recent history has distorted our natural relationships, and put the attempts at cultural revival in the last 50 years at a great, almost insuperable disadvantage.

We have been drawn, against our will, into a sphere of influence, where *our* decisions, *our* interests, are often not paramount. Even today, if Britain fails to join the Common Market, the alternatives for us are limited.

There are few who consider that we could enter alone and abandon the British market; fewer again who can make a convincing case for our cutting away from Europe and Britain, and orienting the country to new and untested markets in other parts of the world.

Only a well fed idealist could claim that such a course was open to us. The problem is to mix idealism with practical concern for the future of the country.

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It is argued that joining Europe means exchanging one imperialism for another, and that Ireland, in the Common Market, would be less free than she is now to decide her future.

Inside the Common Market, it is true, the whole nature of nationality will be revised. The rules of the E.E.C. lay down a framework for economic development. These may be good or bad for Ireland in particular instances, but as they come into effect, they will remove one real disadvantage under which we labour: the unpredictable influences which govern our economy now, which would be bound to persist, because they are international. There is no panacea in strict internal control, or a declaration of total economic independence.

In one sense, nationality is restricted; but in another, Ireland will be able to look forward to an era of greater challenge, and of greater potential achievement.

If the ground rules for economic developments are set out, it will be possible for the Government to put its mind to a range of questions which at present appear to defy control, questions of urban development, the location of industry, and above all, pollution questions which, in Europe itself, are becoming more and more relevant.

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One of the greatest burdens which the country has borne is the lack of agreement on the real goals of national policy. Making jobs, stopping emigration, expanding the schools and universities, developing economic infrastructures, are all vital objectives in themselves, and no one seriously quarrels with them.

But on the equally vital issues of the kind of Ireland we want to see, there is a *laissez faire* lack of concern that is destroying certain parts of our cultural heritage and giving birth to a loose kind of mid Atlantic behaviourism. It is as if in reacting against the influence of our nearest neighbour, anything else is acceptable.

Before the trees of Europe get obscured by the forest of the national debate on membership of the Common Market, it would be as well to consider the extent to which Europe itself has become Europeanised. To the man in the street in Paris, Frankfurt or Rome, the E.E.C. means as much – or as little as – the Free Trade Agreement with Britain to the man in Dublin or Cork. If he is in exports, he is aware of it, if he is not, it

does not touch his daily life.

Indeed, it would be reasonable to ask whether full integration of Europe can ever be more than an ideal, the Common Market does not yet extend to equalisation of wage rate, social services or pricing machinery. There is no common trade-union policy. Many Socialists are contemplating the advantages offered by combining on a European scale, but have no elaborate policies.