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"1992, European Integration and

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As the Single Market looms in 1992 so European Community governments struggle to prepare their economies, societies, and polities for the changes. Leading public opinion in their countries is a crucial part of those preparations. To this end each government is using all means available - political parties, interest groups, public service announcements and government publications of all sorts. Not least, of course, all governments are seeking to use mass media to orchestrate a supportive public opinion. Mass media institutions are not under direct government control but reach the largest numbers of voters directly and quickly. Television and radio networks of all kinds, key daily newspapers, journals of opinion are significant arenas in which political elites have little option but to compete to influence opinion.

Certainly in the UK mass media coverage seems likely to be important. Politicians have hardly ever believed otherwise while scholars are now more inclined than hitherto to agree. To understand the concerns of politicians, and the possible roles of mass media coverage of European integration some awareness of the literature on mass media and integration is necessary. The interrelationships of governments, mass media, and public opinion are a central concern of this paper.

#### 1. Mass Media

The literature is large and we need to focus in particular on questions of media effects and reporter-source relations. On effects, the triumph of the agenda-setting school after 1970 meant a return to earlier notions of the significance of media coverage. Mass media seem highly significant in the process of telling people not what to think, but "what to think about" and the less personal experience voters have of particular policies the more influential media coverage is likely to be in framing their concerns.<sup>1</sup> But what or who tells media "what to think about?" The literature on reporters and their sources has gone through something of a parallel metamorphosis to that on media effects. Sources, particularly governmental sources, are now seen as highly significant agenda-setters for reporters and editors who, it is clear, are both heavily reliant on "certified news". Governments have built up large media liaison capabilities and these are very important in framing the news agenda for mass media. Governments are not seen as reactive but rather proactive where news organisations are concerned. Government agencies have their own news agendas to "sell" and the prestige and means to effect the "sale", under normal circumstances.<sup>2</sup> Indeed it is possible to portray governmental systems as primarily information systems and ones in which central bureaucracies have for decades

actively sought to "sell" their actual and potential services to electorates who have not always had the costs fully explained to them. Ginsberg is one such student -for him the struggle to "sell" services has evolved into a never-ending struggle by governments to manage opinion and control public expectations. On a Ginsberg analysis, the European Community bureaucracy is repeating on a transnational scale what has already happened within member states.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. European Integration

The literature here is large and rapidly growing. The phases of development of the Community - a robust dialogue between supranational and national elite impulses - has been matched by theorizing about this dialogue. From neo-functional "back door" integration in the 1950s and '60s through the Gaullist recoil of the 1970s to present day instrumentalism Carole Webb detects a slow incorporation of transnational goals into the national goals of Community members.<sup>4</sup> Only much more slowly, however, has this been matched at the level of mass opinion in member states. Community matters have low salience and when salience increases it is usually a product of hostility to Community structures or policies. Attempts therefore to promote European integration, it seems, are unlikely to succeed unless that integration is incorporated into the goals of voters thinking of themselves sectionally - by gender, class, religion, even as Europeans - rather than territorially.<sup>5</sup> Only when political questions come to be perceived in non-national ways, but within the territorial boundaries of the Community, will European integration begin to be a reality. It must be added immediately that this is not even desirable in many eyes within Europe and, were it to happen, it is an open question whether present Community boundaries would be adequately reflective of such a transformation of loyalties and attachments.

## 3. Community News

Precisely for these reasons we must assume that national elites will seek to ensure that such a transformation takes place on their own terms and that, consequently, they will seek to mould media coverage of Community news and national public opinion. In the case of the UK since 1972 media institutions have made relatively little accommodation to Community membership. While the "quality press" - Financial Times, Times, Guardian, Telegraph and Independent - keep several full or part time reporters in Brussels, the "popular press" and radio and television have reverted to covering the Community from London, and mostly via their diplomatic desks - Euronews continues to be foreign news. Secondly,

member countries have in their capital cities British reporters who are expected to cover national and international news - including any Community dimension - from those locations. British news of Europe and the Community thus comes from British reporters in Brussels and other Community capitals supplemented by reporters working in London. Behind these, of course, lie the wire services - Reuters, AP, UPI - and reporters outside Western Europe who can and do contribute news angles on the Community and Europe generally.

It is clear therefore that the news of primary interest here may originate in one of several centres and be presented from a variety of perspectives. French fishermen blockading French ports in the Channel, to take an example, may be accurately presented by British media in several ways. Such news is news of and from France; it is domestic British news in terms of its consequences for British trade and travellers; it is Community news in terms of Community regulations that are being contested, and diplomatic news in that the Foreign Office in London handles formal British government responses and so on. Each angle offers interested parties a chance to attempt to mould the news. British government will certainly seek to show that it is discharging its responsibilities to its citizens and to Brussels, while claiming to "understand" problems of declining industries, rapid change and its social consequences and so on. Whatever message the government wishes to release, it will choose the appropriate mode. Mrs. Thatcher, in almost all cases, has the opportunity to use the Tory-leaning popular press against both the quality newspapers and television coverage; she also has the chance to use diplomatic and home-based journalists against those reporting from Brussels and Strasburg when it suits her to do so. All major actors seeking to influence the news flow have similar opportunities though, of course, few begin by being so potent in those respects.

#### 4. 1992 And All That

News of the approach to 1992 thus has to go through these structures if it originates outside the UK. Even for home produced Community news, however, it is likely that it will be correlated with news from Brussels, Strasburg and other parts of the Community since, for reporters and editors, it would be highly unprofessional not to do so.

What factors, then, do British journalists hold in mind when they consider news of the Community and its evolution, and what are the consequences of their assessment of those factors on news coverage?

There are, firstly, the daily changes in the professional world journalists inhabit. The decline in the public broadcasting ethic and the triumph of market orientations in government, advancing technology, and market opportunities on a transnational scale are producing expectations of more competition via many more radio, television and newspaper outlets. Competition between and within media, the growth of media conglomerates with transnational outlets and ambitions -these are going to shape news competition and create a new milieu for European and Community news.<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, reporters and editors expect a changing political context. Domestically reporters know that there must be a general election before 1992 and, depending on political fortunes, either or both Mrs Thatcher and Mr Kinnock might have left the scene. The Prime Minister's departure would particularly affect the way Community matters are perceived by reporters, leaders, and voters. Should both leaders remain, reporters will judge that one or other is seen to be in decline and presiding over a barely concealed struggle for the succession. Another scenario for journalists is the one which sees a coalescing of anti-Thatcher parties. Both are scenarios in which the Community dimension could again be very important.

Politics, thirdly, does not stop at either British or Community boundaries. Journalists know that the Socialist "tone" set by Jacques Delors is likely to be significant in how the Community is popularly perceived and not only in the UK. Moreover, reporters are well aware that the Community has an increasing stake in East-West, East-East, and North-South dialogues. Instability in Eastern Europe or American hostility are likely to be factors creating, simultaneously, Community divisions and solidarity.

Fourthly, and highly related, are economic factors. Economic slowdown or recession in the US could seriously affect the Community and exacerbate Transatlantic trading difficulties. Even without that particular scenario British journalists know that a British decision to join the EMS would have potentially profound consequences for British governments of whatever political stripe.



The news context for the next three years, it is clear, will be one in which journalists know that the Community dimension is likely to be growingly important. Reporters and editors expect government to work ever harder at the task of managing British opinion with proactive news policies so far as the Community is concerned. Economic or leadership crises would only strengthen this imperative as, indeed, would any East-West or North Atlantic crisis. Journalists know that the Community could become more significant as a hedge against instability or hostility in Europe or elsewhere. Reporters also understand that the Community and its news could become less significant if it were shown to be little use in crisis, to a "fair weather federation" marked by decreasing cohesion as national governments "renationalised" Community functions.

News, as we know, is not only a product of events interacting with news structures but also with editorial expectations and fears, in both of which official guidance and briefings play a large part. To judge by media coverage what seems to be the emphasis in official briefings on the Community and what particularly on 1992?

A range of media coverage reveals clearly that the dominant official concern seems to be to ensure that the British economy, and British companies in particular, are ready to compete within a huge market while facing ever increasing competition at home. Thus virtually all national newspapers reflect such briefings in large news stories comparing UK preparations with those elsewhere in the Community and, generally, not painting a complimentary picture. The Business News pages dwell on how foreign investment is coming into the UK to ensure foreign access to the European Market after 1992. Additionally the Single Market is being set in context of continuing ministerial arguments over UK membership of the EMS, an issue which, it is alleged, divides the Prime Minister from the Chancellor of the Exchequer. This question in turn is, from time to time, set in the even larger context of the creation within the Community of a central bank and a common currency both developments seen by journalists as highly sensitive, if not explosive, political questions.

For the UK and its current government the abolition of internal frontiers is held to raise serious questions about the movement of terrorists and drugs. Whereas virtually all member countries have both concerns none, seen from

London, are as acute as those felt by the UK. Mrs Thatcher, editors are aware, has committed her personal prestige to the struggle against the IRA and is adamant that frontier checks and allied measures must remain. The frontier question is clearly presented in briefings as deeply symbolic and very important. The Thatcher-encouraged Channel Tunnel - symbolising the breach in the sea walls - only reinforces the importance of frontier maintenance.

Such symbolism is directly connected to differences over Community foreign policies. Editors and reporters cannot fail to be aware of considerable differences of emphases among members. The UK is seen, and sees itself, as more "Atlanticist" than other members and more anxious to be cautious about relations with Eastern Europe, especially the USSR. Thus strains with France over WEU as a defence community - and a future alternative to NATO - are matched by strains with West Germany over bank loans, high technology sales and security leaks of all kinds to Eastern Europe. Looming ever greater are general differences over trading relations with the US during a period when the Bush Administration is being pressed by the Community to correct budget and trade deficits within a GATT framework. Further, the potential Austrian application to join the Community, and Hungarian and other East European requests for close association with it, are capable of creating divisions within the Community. Editors know only too well that the Single Market process is intensifying at a time when external relationships and landmarks are changing rapidly. The task of keeping audiences informed about various policies and their interrelationships in a Community and national context is daunting.

5. The Times and the 1992 Debate. September 1988 - March 1989

The tensions between the various inputs into the news process are visible certainly in the quality press. The following is a case study of these tensions as they were mirrored in the columns of The Times from September 1988 through to early March 1989. This covers the period from Mrs Thatcher's speech at Bruges through the furore over Sir John Hoskyns' speech to the Institute of Directors in March 1989. The Times is the daily newspaper most ready to identify itself with the Thatcher government and is usually popularly defined as such. It is, therefore, a newspaper Mrs Thatcher always wishes to carry with her and makes strenuous efforts to do so. In quantitative terms Community news in The Times rates at best

a daily item and a weekly editorial or article. The period under review begins and ends with the subject of European integration in general, and the Single Market in particular, at or near the centre of news concerns.

The Commission President, Jacques Delors, addressed the TUC Congress on September 8, 1988. The Times on that day had a piece by Michael Dynes from Brussels analysing the pressures within the Commission from socialist unions, parties, and governments aimed at giving it "worker appeal." Delors, despite some personal reservations,<sup>7</sup> came before the TUC declaring the centrality of worker concerns to the Community and the increasing centrality of the Community to member governments.<sup>8</sup> Europe, he said, could not be rebuilt on deregulation for "social dialogue and collective bargaining are essential pillars of our democratic society." On September 15 Nicholas Wood, a Political Correspondent, warned that Mrs Thatcher would give a considered reply to Delors on her European trip. Wood noted that European social democrats increasingly looked to the Community "as a bulwark against modern conservatism."<sup>9</sup> The same day's newspaper gave prominence to a piece by Professor Elie Kedourie of the LSE which not only was unfriendly to European federalists, but barely civil to some European states with their histories of the "politics of the impossible." For Kedourie "the solidarity which inspires courage and a stout heart comes from loyalty to a way of life, from attachments to institutions which inspire trust and affection. And where in the remote, impersonal, soulless bureaus of Brussels are they to be found?"<sup>10</sup>

The following week Mrs Thatcher answered Delors in a speech at the College of Europe at Bruges. Departing from the prepared text, allegedly cleared by her senior ministers, the Prime Minister roundly declared that "Utopia never comes because we know we should not like it if it did." She then went on to assert that Europe's future lay in "willing and active cooperation between independent sovereign states", and went on restate her known positions on the questions of national frontiers, VAT harmonization, the "social dimension", and the bureaucratisation of a regulated Community.<sup>11</sup> Such blunt speaking put European integration forcibly into the centre of the public agenda in member countries. The Times took its time to editorialise perhaps because, by excess, Mrs Thatcher had offended its sensibilities. When it did so the newspaper declared that "Mrs Thatcher went too far in attacking the nightmare of a European super-state since nothing of the kind has been proposed." Both Mrs Thatcher and Mr Delors had been

guilty of rhetorical flourishes. The newspaper sought to direct attention to the economic advantages of the abolition of frontier checks and ended by hoping that "the Prime Minister's powerfully expressed concerns do not stand in the way" of solving the problem of the Single Market.<sup>12</sup> The Times' embarrassment was clear not only with Mrs Thatcher and her style, but with the bringing up of the question of ultimate Community intentions. The editorial was the latest in a long line of British government utterances which pretended that the Treaty of Rome meant economic harmonisation not political unity and that public thinking about the latter could be postponed indefinitely.

The reverberations of the Thatcher-Delors dispute continued in member countries through the autumn, the Labour Party articulating its new-found willingness to identify with the Community. Not for nearly four months did the question come back to the forefront of The Times' concerns. On January 19, 1989 Ronald Butt, in a piece entitled "Conspiracy of Silence", attacked the absence of public debate over the implications of European federalism even in a year when European-wide Parliamentary elections were to take place. For Butt, neither the European nor the Westminster Parliament could protect British interests adequately in the face of the steady transfer to the Commission of important powers over a widening array of public policies. There was no case, he argued, for the avoidance of debate on such fundamental questions "But the federalists and quasi-federalists understand the opposition to them and prefer to advance by stealth." Politicians in France and Germany, whose positions were similar to Mrs Thatcher, "find it more convenient to snipe at her Europeanism than to define and disagree about their own."<sup>13</sup>

A week later Chancellor Lawson told the Royal Institute for Public Administration, according to The Times Business Editor, that economic and monetary union in Europe "is simply not on the agenda now, nor will it be for the foreseeable future."<sup>14</sup> Elsewhere in the same issue the Media Editor was reporting on the Mintel British Lifestyles Report that among younger adults (15-34 years of age), and the top socio-economic group (ABC 1), support for a united Europe was 72% of their sample though he added that support was predicated on the assumption that the UK would "continue to make its own decisions."<sup>15</sup> Four days later Richard Owen, the senior Brussels Correspondent, reviewed the arguments between the "pragmatists and the visionaries" on the Single Market and related

questions. Noting that, while Mrs Thatcher dissented from much of the received wisdom in Brussels - on frontiers, VAT harmonization, EMS, a central bank, and even defence matters - she had said firmly at Bruges that "Our destiny is in Europe, as part of the Community."<sup>16</sup> Michael Dynes, on the same page, reviewed the outlook for external trading partners of the Community and concluded that, since the Single Market would cause economic disruption within Europe, those who feared protectionism "are unlikely to be proved entirely wrong."<sup>17</sup>

The debates continued and at times acrimoniously. On February 14 The Times covered the robust exchanges in the Lords between Lords Young and Cockfield on questions of alleged fraud in Community finances. Why, Lord Cockfield wished to know, did the Government veto his 1986 proposals which would have given the Commission more power to investigate fraud? Lord Young refused to answer and petulantly ascribed to Lord Cockfield an ignorance of procedures in the Lords, a serious charge in so genteel a House.<sup>18</sup> Two days later Bailey Morris, the Business Correspondent, was reporting on the preparations being made for 1992 on Wall Street. Mergers on a huge scale, he argued, were the likely outcome but so too was increased direct investment in Europe.<sup>19</sup> On February 20 George Hill had a moderately large piece on the Government's failure to grasp the full implication of Community membership. He pointed out that whether it was equal pay for women, water privatisation, the length and weight of trucks, the Government had to realise that the Commission or the European Court had the final legal say and not London. William Newton-Dunn, Conservative MEP for Norwich, was quoted saying "There is no such thing as British sovereignty any more, only a myth Mrs Thatcher puts out when she wants to make a dramatic speech. We have to give up the myth and wake up to our share in the reality of European sovereignty."<sup>20</sup>

Through the rest of the month there were near daily pieces from the newspaper's specialist correspondents on, for example, beach pollution, agricultural surpluses, and frontier regulations.<sup>21</sup> On February 27 Michael Dynes in Brussels was writing on the arguments between members over regulations being formulated for European-wide satellite television.<sup>22</sup> Two days earlier a letter from Austin Arnold from Vaud in Switzerland put some of the 1992 problems in a nutshell.

"The debate in your correspondence columns concerning the future shape of Europe is being conducted mainly in terms of economics and politics. The cultural dimension receives little mention. However,

the degree to which ordinary people can identify with Europe, in addition to their own country, is likely to affect the willingness to co-operate in economic and political matters.

Surely it is time for the European Community to take some bold and imaginative steps to enhance the sense of a European identity. What about, for example, the creation of a European Open University along the lines of Britain's?"<sup>23</sup>

This was the immediate background to the speech by Sir John Hoskyns to the Institute of Directors on February 28. Addressing an audience which might be assumed to be strongly engaged by the Single Market, the ex-head of the Policy Unit at Number Ten launched a comprehensive, scathing attack on the underlying corporatist philosophy, and fraud-prone operations, of the Commission.<sup>24</sup> With an "incoherent" European Council, a "corrupt" European Civil Service, the Single Market would bring into being, he argued, a "collectivised, protectionist, over-regulated Utopia" - precisely what Mrs Thatcher had fought to undo at home. The following day The Times carried reports of a mixed reaction in his audience. Graham Searjeant, in the Business News, reviewed a selection of mostly favourable comments, while from Brussels Michael Dynes reported there was talk of a libel action against Hoskyns. Another piece by the Employment Affairs Correspondent, Tim Jones, surveyed the uniformly hostile reception given the speech by trade union leaders of all political preferences.<sup>25</sup> The newspaper editorialised in a fashion which rebuked Hoskyns but supported his demand that the government oppose the kind of Europe which he saw coming into being.<sup>26</sup> The following day The Times carried Mrs Thatcher's admission that she had not read the speech and her assertion that ministers were "fervent believers in the Single Market."<sup>27</sup> The tenor of the piece was that, while Mrs Thatcher had found the speech embarrassing, Lord Young had found it infuriating. Meanwhile The Times covered Sir John repeating his arguments before the German Chamber of Industry and Commerce. He asserted that there was "a doctrinal hysteria about Europe" and a hyper-sensitivity among Brussels civil servants to any criticism of their aims and methods.<sup>28</sup> The following day the newspaper reported attacks on Hoskyns by several ministers, including Lord Young and Sir Geoffrey Howe, and Sir Leon Brittan.<sup>29</sup> The debate went on with vigour over the next week. A speech by Lord Young in Glasgow on March 10 provoked The Times to editorialise on the "Two

Faces of 1992". Reviewing the arguments for and against the free market position on the Community's future, the newspaper ended by criticising Lord Young's assertions that 1992 had little to do with European integration.

"Lord Young is right to insist on the primacy of economic dynamism and open competition: the success of the single market depends on it. But there is no escaping political facts. It is precisely because, to many Europeans, 1992 is a step towards political integration and incorporates, in M Delors' words, concepts of "co-operation" and "solidarity", that Mrs Thatcher's speech in Bruges last September was important.

The Government should continue to press its case against corporatist regulation. It must persuade its partners to modify proposals where, to take worker-participation in management as an example, Britain has in the end no veto. But it is pointless to pretend that proposals which the Government does not like have nothing to do with single market; or that the form it takes, in turn, has nothing to do with the kind of Europe in which Britain must shape its future."<sup>30</sup>

### Conclusions

What conclusions may be drawn from this brief case study?

Firstly it seems clear that both the European Commission and European Parliament make themselves accessible to journalists and are determined to enter the "news process" in Britain. Both realise that it is important to combat national leaderships in their home bases and accept that those leaderships will reciprocate where possible. Hence Delors came to the TUC Congress, Mrs Thatcher went to Bruges, Hoskyns talked to the Institute of Directors but also to the German Chamber of Commerce.

Secondly, and in consequence, more and more specialist reporters thus are drawn in. Brussels news is no longer left to Brussels correspondents but is a product of a range of specialists who find increasingly that they must deal with a Community dimension. Labour, Business, Agriculture, Science, Political and Diplomatic correspondents - all become involved.

Thirdly the coverage presented is too complex to be easily labelled. The Times is Thatcherite in sympathy and, while it covers a range of responses to Europe, is usually ready to portray the Prime Minister as a vital protagonist for British interests. But what is also visible in its coverage is that it is ceasing to cover Community news as foreign news. Reporters like Richard Owen and Michael Dynes in Brussels project a rounded portrayal of Community affairs and the motivations of leaderships in other countries. Equally obviously London based reporters such as Robin Oakley and Nicholas Wood are not simply conduits for Number Ten views. If it is true to say that the newspaper is Thatcherite, it is equally true to say that its readers are given increasing amounts of information with which to make up their own minds. Community news has come to be treated as national news and thus susceptible to disagreements of a kind routinized in the national political arena. Hoskyns' robust language may be a measure of how far Community matters have begun to be reported without deference, ambiguity or in terms any different from normal British partisan discourse. The UK is nationalising Community news.

Fourthly, this may be nothing new. In imperial and post-imperial years British journalists have always covered domestic news with an eye on non-British matters. Compared to their American counterparts, for example, British newspapers historically published much more "foreign" news often, seemingly, to overlook domestic news.<sup>31</sup> In this sense Community news has taken the place of imperial or Commonwealth news. Crucial trans-national relationships are not new to British journalists or their audiences. Of course, the Community consists of binding obligations to some former enemies, none of whom would concede the UK first among equal status.

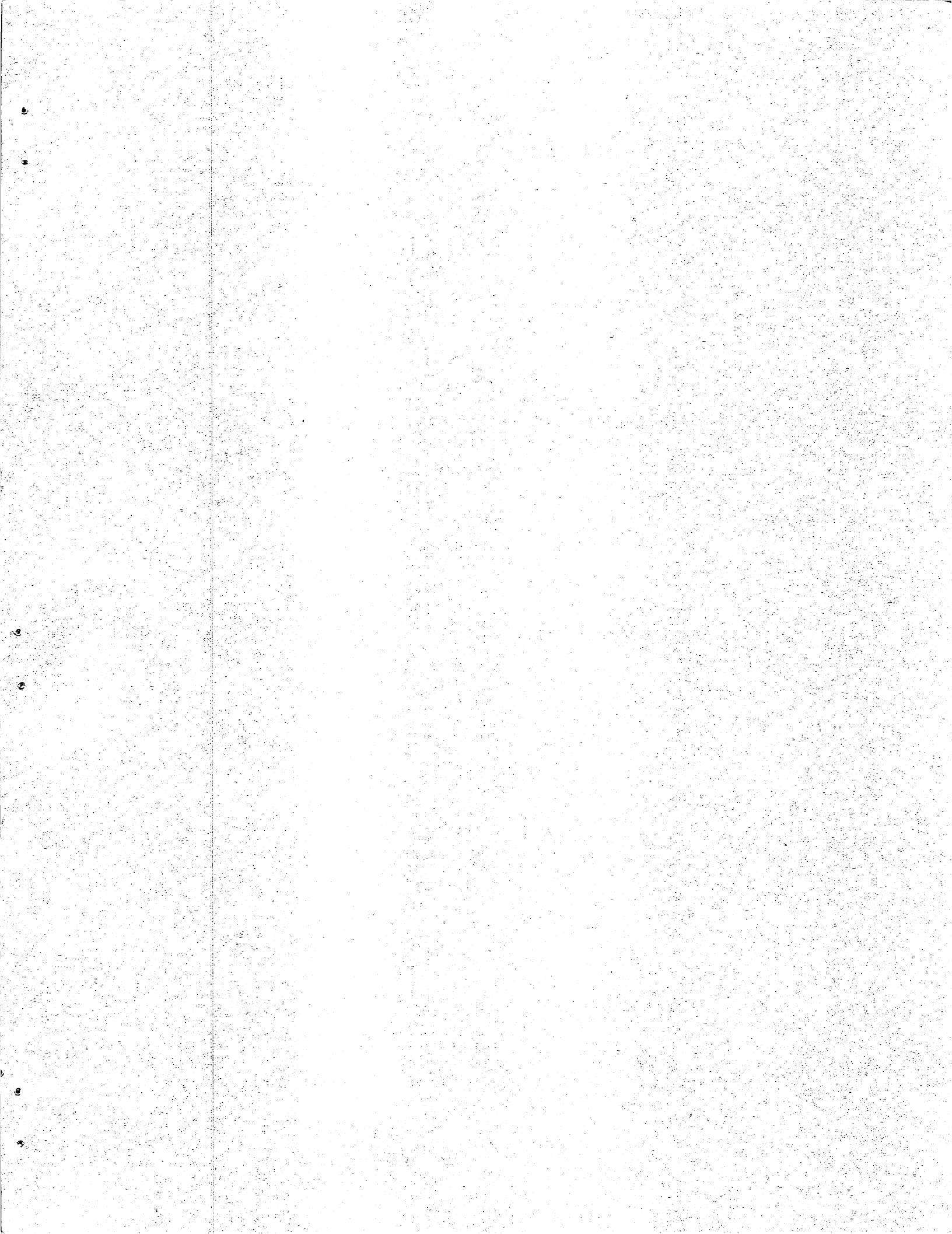
Precisely because of this, finally, the news coverage betrays British ambivalence toward European integration. Not only does the Community dimension intrude into the adversarial party politics of Britain but it does so in a context in which British leaders feel obliged to defend "national sovereignty" by pretending to a degree of autonomy they no longer have. In this, of course, they are different from the leaders of other Community members only in the degree to which they feel obliged.



### Footnotes

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29. Richard Evans, Philip Webster, and Colin Narbrough "Howe attacks 'Faint-hearted' Hoskyns", Ibid., March 4, 1989.
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