

Welcome address for “Britain’s Choice, Europe’s Destiny”

A discussion evening hosted by PwC in Berlin on June 6, 2016

By Lutz Roschker, Partner

Good evening,

Welcome to Berlin, welcome to PwC, welcome to United Europe!

Today, we will talk about Continental Drift and its’ possible effects on the European Union.

I was never a big fan of starting off by quoting other people, particularly in cases where strong opinions are involved. Brexit is nevertheless a British decision and we can only advise as friends. However, for this to happen, it is necessary to put ourselves in the shoes of our British friends. And therefore, to set the scene for tonight's discussion, I hope I may be pardoned if I steal with pride two examples of "British Humour" presented last week by General Sir Adrian Bradshaw, the DSACEUR. It may help to explain the pros and cons of why Britain should leave or stay in the European Union.

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The first example is a short one. Sir Adrian praised the German hospitality, and he emphasised this appraisal is shared by most of his fellow Brits. The British are also eager to return this hospitality, whenever the Germans will come to the UK. Though I won't mention the war, avoiding this may be a main driver for the Brexit movement.

The second example deals with an Englishman moving to Scotland to some lonely place. After he lived there for a fortnight without any contact to the outer world he got a call from his neighbour, a Scotsman who wanted to invite him to a party. The Englishman was intrigued and his neighbour continued: "We'll have quite a few drinks". The Englishman said he was pleased after quite some time of abstinence as his neighbour continued: "We'll have quite some rough fighting too". The Englishman was not too keen on fighting but the prospect to socialise made him agree to this proposal. And the Scotsman carried on: "We'll have sex too". After a period of austereness this expectation made the Englishman happy and he asked the Scotsman for the dress code for such a special party. And the Scotsman replied: "Don't worry, it's just you and me." This anticipation certainly helps the defenders of UK staying in the European Union. As you can see it's never easy for the English to decide.

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From these examples, we learn that to decide on the future, it's always good to have a look back in history. Those who close their eyes to the past, are blind to the future.

And therefore, we should recall what Winston Churchill said in his famous speech in Zurich in 1946: “We must build a kind of United States of Europe... The structure of the United States of Europe, if

well and truly built, will be such as to make the material strength of a single state less important” and concluded that “Britain will have to play her full part as a member of the European family.”

Additionally, in August 1949, at the first meeting of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, Churchill delivered his speech in French, and said: “We are reunited here, in this new Assembly, not as representatives of our several countries or various political parties”. “Germany must be part of the European structure”.

Churchill shows something greater than our economic and political rationales. He speaks about unity as a moral, spiritual and social strength. And unity in diversity will spark integrity, particularly in “this noble continent, comprising on the whole the fairest and the most cultivated regions of the earth”. And further, unity is simple, as he would show at a meeting of a United Europe, a Europe united even earlier than ours, in 1947: “all the greatest things are simple, and many can be expressed in a single word: Freedom; Justice; Honour; Duty; Mercy; Hope; Unity. Turn your back to the horrors of the past and look to the future”.

It’s not difficult to understand we face a similar situation at PwC, with national independent firms that form a united, international organization with common rules and constitution; with your permission, a living proof of unity in diversity. This is one reason why PwC is clearly committed to supporting UK to remain in the EU.

At the same United Europe meeting in 1947, Churchill showed the deep roots of our union: “Two thousand years ago, the proudest boast was “I am a Roman citizen - *civis romanus sum*“, which inspired Kennedy to repeat this, in Berlin 1963, before he then said the famous words: “Today, in the world of freedom, the proudest boast is *"Ich bin ein Berliner!"*

I dare to say that today, in a world of diversity, the proudest boast to say is: “I am an European...”

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I continue to believe, distinguished guests, we can discuss, here or elsewhere, simple or sophisticated options.

One thing we should bear in mind, though, is that, at the end the day, the decision will be driven very much by emotions. And there is no other event that will fire more emotions this summer than the European Football Championships in France.

Our path is decided by one simple fact: will the English team be successfully competing in the tournament by the time the referendum is done?

And, on this note, please allow me to quote another Winston, Gary **Winston** Lineker: “Soccer is a game for 22 people that run around, play the ball, and one referee who makes a slew of mistakes, and in the end Germany always wins.”

But, for the sake of our unity, I suggest to modify this simple truth, only for this time, to: “in the end, England wins.”

Thank you!