

# Speech by Mary Ellen Synon

## Bruges Group International Conference 2013

Hello, good afternoon. First I want to thank the Bruges Group for inviting me to this conference, and to thank you all for coming.

I am delighted to be here, delighted in particular because it means I can share a platform with Richard North and Christopher Booker. These two men have been my heroes ever since I first read their book, *The Great Deception*.

Before I start, can I just tell you something about these two? Their book was published right at the time I had my first assignment from the Mail on Sunday to go to Brussels, and the book was causing a bit of a stir. So I picked up a copy on my way to the Eurostar.

By the time I pulled into the station at Brussels South, it wasn't so much the *Great Deception* as the *Book of Revelation*. I was overwhelmed. As far as I was concerned, St John the Divine was filing copy from Patmos.

So you can imagine how thrilled I was when I finally met Richard North today.

I was just as thrilled last year the first time I met Christopher Booker. I was sat next to him at a dinner party.

Now, I have a girl friend who some years ago was sat next to Clint Eastwood at a dinner party. She said to me several times: Top that.

The morning after my dinner with Christopher, I rang her and said: I just did.

So, there I was last week in Brussels, looking forward to sitting on a panel with St John the Divine and Clint Eastwood.

Then an email dropped in my inbox. It was from Christopher. He said was going to ring so we could decide how to do this panel. 'I think I should lead off,' he said, 'Richard can close, and you can be Miss Piggy in the middle.'

I was just coming to terms with that. Miss Piggy, I told myself, was a star, had style. It wasn't so bad.

Then a second email arrived from Christopher, saying he was sorry, he's phrased that email badly, and he really only meant I should be the bacon in the sandwich.

Anyway, I am delighted to be the bacon in the sandwich if it means there may be one or two of you here who have been readers of my Brussels blog in the Mail Online. Hello at last.

Now, this is quite a line-up of academics, authors and economists Robert Oulds has organised today, and of course I'm none of the above. I'm here because I've spent the last five years in Brussels covering the EU institutions. Or as I think of it, I've spent the last five years operating behind enemy lines.

Which means I have one advantage over the other speakers today: I've been *there*, while they've been *here*. And I've been *there* for years.

That means I've been at all night European Council meetings, off the record Eurocrat briefings, press conferences after the EcoFin – that's jargon for the council of economic and finance ministers.

But the most enlightening thing I've done over the years is turn up at the daily press briefing at the European Commission. I've listened day after day to some commissioner or his spokesman tell us journalists about how a new 'need' has been identified for 'citizens' which only EU 'action' can meet – and the word used on the commission podium is always 'citizens,' never people, never citizens of countries.

You see, the word 'country' is almost never used at the commission. About the only time you will come across the word 'country' in Brussels is when you are standing by the baggage carousel at arrivals at the airport. There is always at least one suitcase with a sticker that says: 'Europe is my country.' Exclamation mark.

No, in Brussels one says 'member state.' You may imagine it means the same thing as country or state, but 'member state' does not. Note that adjective. Member modifies state. Like 'wooden' modifies 'leg.' The noun stays the same, but the essence of the thing is gone.

In particular, no one at the podium, from commission president Barroso down, will ever speak of his own country. At the commission, any one in what used to be 28 sovereign states is only ever 'a citizen of Europe.'

Should any Eurocrat somehow find he is cornered into referring to his own country, he is trained to refer to it only as 'the country I know best.'

That is just one of the customs of the place I've learned in these last five years. Indeed, if I had not been obliged to wear a blue and yellow badge around my neck with the words 'Journaliste Irish Daily Mail' around my neck every moment I was in an EU building – quite a handicap in Brussels, that word 'Mail,' but I wouldn't have had it any other way – I might even have been taught the secret handshake.

Or at least I guess there must be a secret handshake. For sure there is something that allows certain journalists to be tapped from the Brussels press corps and offered a job on the gravy train itself. Yes indeed some of the people – or should I say citizens – working as reporters in Brussels today may be eurocrats tomorrow.

I know one journalist who went from broadcasting about the EU in July – you would recognised the reporter's name if I told you – to being a spokesperson earning lush pay and perks at the commission in August. Neat, that.

Anyway, I'm back in Britain now, which is where I ought to be, since this fight on the future of the EU is shifting to Britain.

The fight shifts to your referendum. I will start with how your referendum looks from Brussels.

First, David Cameron says that if a Conservative government is elected in 2015, there will be a referendum on EU membership by 2017.

I'd say you can be sure that means in 2017, not earlier, and specifically the second half of 2017. I'll explain why.

First, does anyone have any idea why Cameron chose 2017 in particular? Anyone?

Last month Nick Clegg said it's a date chosen by the Tories for internal party management, but if Clegg really believes that, he's been out of Brussels for too long.

The EU calendars will tell you that the second half of 2017 is when Britain will next hold the rotating six-month presidency of the Council of the European Union.

That means that in the second half of 2017, the prime minister or the chancellor or the home secretary or any one of a pack of Cabinet ministers – home secretary, education secretary, whichever is the minister who will have the right to chair any one of the ten configurations of the council – will be up on the podium and in front of the mics and cameras after every big EU meeting in the second half of 2017.

The rotating presidency means it is Buggins's turn in the chair at the meetings.

So for six months, British ministers will be appearing alongside whoever replaces Van Rompuy, Barroso and the rest. For six months, the prime minister and his senior cabinet ministers will be able to pose as if they were 'at the heart of Europe' – that meaningless phrase – and are influencing events, leading the EU, exactly at the time the referendum campaign is underway.

More, Cameron will be able to convene many EU meetings in Britain, not in Brussels. The six months will be one photo opportunity after another of Britain posing as the leader of the EU elite who have been summoned to the United Kingdom. But it will be just a pantomime, meant to deceive the British people, who don't know how the EU works – why should they, they have better things to do. Cameron will confuse the British people over the powers of the president of the European Council and non-existing powers of the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union.

And the pantomime will be played out during the referendum campaign.

If you have a referendum at all. Cameron may slip out of it exactly as he slipped out of a Lisbon Treaty referendum.

Still, I understand most of you believe that, if you get an in/out referendum, and the out vote wins, then -- hurrah! – free at last. You've won.

Don't kid yourselves. This is where I stop speaking as someone from Brussels and start speaking as someone from Ireland.

You need to remember the line from the former Russian dissident, Vladimir Bukovsky: these EU votes 'are a trick for idiots. The people have to vote in referendums until the people vote the way that is wanted. Then they have to stop voting.'

In the EU, a Yes vote is forever. A No vote is only every temporary. Trust me on this one, I'm Irish. I know. The EU has forced the Irish through this trick for idiots and more than once.

So it is naïve for any of you to think that if you get a vote in a referendum to leave the EU, then that is the battle won. It is not. It is just the end of the phony war.

What I am here to tell you today is that what was done to the Irish after they voted No to the Lisbon Treaty in 2008 will be done to the British if they vote No to the EU in 2017.

I'm going to give you details of how the Irish government and the EU elite worked together to overturn the democratic Irish rejection of the Lisbon Treaty. What they did to the Irish, a Cameron government and the EU elite will do to the British.

Here is what to expect. If you want to get your country out of the EU, you'd better come up with a strategy to overcome this.

First, of course, to overturn a referendum result, there must be in place a national government will to collaborate with the EU elite. I have seen no sign in Brussels that the elite are in any way worried over Cameron's talk of a referendum.

Of course they aren't worried. Cameron has been open in his willingness to collaborate with the EU forces. Some of you may recall that the prime minister admitted in an interview with the Spanish newspaper *El Pais* last April that he would not take Britain out of the EU just because a referendum result was a vote to get Out.

I'll remind you of the exchange. The reporter from *El Pais* asked Cameron, if in the case of a victory in the referendum for the Out vote: 'Would you be willing to leave the Union?'

Cameron's reply was: 'I would not.'

The interview was circulated at the European Commission. It was further confirmation to the EU elite that Cameron is one of them.

He is a collaborator.

Ireland had the same sort of EU collaborator in the former prime minister Brian Cowen, who was leader of the Irish government at the time of the Lisbon Treaty referendum.

I hope you will see from what I am about to tell you that for the sake of your country, you must work to make sure the Tories, if they are still led by Cameron, do not win the next election. A referendum under a Cameron majority government would be worse than no referendum at all.

Here is why.

Imagine the Out side, your side, wins the referendum. Imagine what happens after the result is announced. Cameron will face the banks of cameras outside Number 10 and say that the people have spoken and now his government will respect them, will listen to them, will '*understand*' the referendum result.

A day later Cameron will face the journalists again and adjust his phrasing slightly. He will say that his government *must learn what the British really meant by their Out vote*. Not that his government must obey the vote, no, must *understand* the vote.

A few weeks ago I was in the European Parliament and asked Nigel Farage about this danger. He is aware of it. He said that 'what we need is a big No. To win, they need only a small Yes, we need a big No. Otherwise the government might choose to *interpret* the vote.'

I think Farage is being too trusting if he imagines a government attempt to *interpret* the vote will only occur if the Out majority is narrow. I forecast it will happen no matter how large the margin.

The Irish rejected the Lisbon Treaty by a vote of 53.4% against, 46.6% in favour. The EU still told their collaborators in the Irish government it had to be over-turned.

So I'd say that even if your Out vote achieves a margin such as that, I'd forecast your prime minister, following the pattern the EU set for the Irish, will announce he must consider what the vote '*really means*.'

And you can stand outside Downing Street all you want and scream 'What it means is that we want out of the EU!' but a Cameron government will only say that they understand that this is 'an emotional issue' for you.

Meanwhile a statement will come from the president of the European Commission saying the commission respects the democratic decision of the British people. And meanwhile the UK Perm Rep, whoever he is in 2017, will be around at the commission explain just how the Foreign Office will get the colleagues – because in Brussels they are all colleagues – out of this one.

Then after careful consideration – what one Irish politician called *mature reflection* – Cameron will say he now understands what you, the British people, were saying by voting Out: he will say you are angry that the EU has not been reformed.

He will say that the Out vote was really a protest vote, because – and here comes the cliché – referendum votes are rarely about the question on the ballot paper.

If you were Irish, you would know the rest.

The Cameron government will commission an opinion poll to find out what the British people '*really*' meant by their vote.

Yes, the government will use taxpayer's money to pay a polling company to find out what the taxpayers meant when they voted to get Out of the EU.

Which is itself outrageous. But the Irish government did exactly that. The Government in effect said to their own electorate: 'You are far too stupid or reckless to be trusted with a ballot paper.'

Which is of course the attitude of the EU elite to voters, and why they are squeezing democracy out of every part of the EU. But that is another issue.

The Irish government commissioned a poll after the Irish voters rejected the Lisbon Treaty. The Cowen government said they wanted to find out the *real reason* the Irish people voted No to Lisbon.

It was all of course just a way to find an excuse to run the referendum again.

While this fraud, this collaboration between quislings in Dublin and the EU elite continued, the people, the voters, stood by powerless. As will you.

Here is how the government played it. Three months after the Lisbon referendum, two government ministers unveiled the results of the opinion poll which, they claimed, would explain why the Irish voted No.

They announced that the poll showed one third of the electorate believed the Lisbon Treaty would have introduced conscription into a European army.

Which was pretty jaw-dropping.

Now, this unveiling of the opinion poll took place in Dublin. I was in Brussels. So I will leave the description to my friend Richard Waghorne, who was then chief political writer for the Irish Daily Mail. He was at the unveiling.

Richard wrote: 'if a third of the country thought incorrectly that their sons and daughters might be conscripted by Brussels to fight Nicholas Sarkozy's wars, it is not a large leap of logic to argue that the country did not quite understand what it was doing when it rejected the treaty. It is a smaller step to suggest that it would be no harm if we had another go with the new advantage of having cleared up that particular point.'

Except Richard smelt a rat. When he started digging through the facts that the government ministers left out of the fat bundle of documents they had prepared for the press, he discovered how many of the people polled had mentioned conscription *unbidden*. In other words, without a prompt from the government-paid pollster.

The answer was a statistically insignificant 2%.

The figure given out by the government was a fraud.

So here is what happened in one line: what the Irish government did – and what you can expect a Cameron government to do – was present a fraudulent interpretation of their opinion poll findings.

The British people can expect the same kind of fraud if they succeed in voting to leave the EU. They will be patronised, and frightened, by government insistence that they did not know what they were doing.

They – *you* – will be told in effect that the British voters are too dense, too uneducated about the EU, too much under the influence of what the EU denounces as 'dangerous nationalism' to understand the implications of their own vote.

Cameron will announce he *understands* your Out vote, understand what it *really* means.

The EU institutions will make assurances about this being a matter for the British alone, but will also make statements meant to frighten the British people about the danger of leaving the EU.

Then the Cameron government will identify – by way of a taxpayer-funded opinion poll – two or three allegedly key issues as the reasons Britain voted to get out.

Brussels will reply with some statement which Cameron will accept as an assurance that the worries on these two or three issues can be '*addressed*' by an EU elite he will call '*our European partners*.'

'Addressed' of course is a word of no particular meaning.

But you will not go to the polling booths a second time as the Irish did.

Remember, Cameron has already admitted that even if the people vote Out, he will not be willing to take Britain out of the EU.

And no referendum can force him to.

Unlike in Ireland, a referendum here cannot over-ride parliament. To have a referendum vote ignored, all that is necessary is for Labour opposition, the LibDems or what's left of them, and the euro-loving wing of the Tories to vote with the Quisling Cameron to over-turn the referendum vote.

And there will be nothing the voters who delivered a majority Out vote will be able to do about it. Which is why it would be better for you to wait until the Conservative party has a leader who is actually a Conservative, and go for a referendum then. At least then there will be a chance of Out meaning Out.

So that is what I have to say to you, drawing on the Irish experience of how a quisling government and an anti-democratic EU elite can overturn a referendum result.

What you can do about it – well, that is up to you. You can either be disgraced as a nation, or you can fight. I am sorry to have to say it on the eve of your Remembrance Sunday, but I see little fight left in most British.

Good luck.