

SPEECH TO THE BRUGES GROUP BY ALEXANDER DEANE

Thank you very much indeed for that generous introduction and may I thank the Bruges Group for having me to speak today at what is to my shame, my first Bruges Group event. I promise it shall not be my last.



A tough act to follow our Jon and can I say that we at Big Brother Watch wholeheartedly supported you Jon in your High Court case. I thought it was disgraceful that you were temporarily removed from the frontline of public life and I for one am delighted to see you back.

Let me tell you something I think you already know. The European Arrest Warrant is a travesty. It is accompanied by the European Investigation Order, a similar travesty. What those things do is let ill trained people from European countries arrest British people for trivial offences or crimes that aren't even against British law. This isn't just a

theory, this has happened to British people and to people resident in Britain.

And I just want to use my time with you today to tell you about a few of those people.

Patrick Reece-Edwards, the man from Dartford, he spent several weeks in jail in a British jail as the subject of a European Arrest Warrant after Polish prosecutors sought his extradition on charges of possessing a forged motor insurance certificate. The sort of thing that you wouldn't serve one day for in this country before you faced a trial.

Worse, Dimitrinka Atanasova, a Bulgarian legal secretary, fled that country to this country after threatening to expose her boss on charges of serious misconduct and I don't know about you, but I am proud of Britain's heritage of giving sucker and comfort to those who flee oppression. That's not how we treated her.

What happened in that case was that the very same Chief Prosecutor personally requested that she was sent back to Bulgaria on, you guessed it, a European Arrest Warrant.

Now a British Judge ruled that that was a trumped up charge, ill faith, bad faith charges nevertheless she spent months in Holloway Prison as the subject of a European Arrest Warrant. Crucially for her her case predated Bulgaria's EU membership and therefore their adoption of the European Arrest Warrant and so on a technicality she was let off the hook. But nevertheless her good fortune not the sort of thing that will happen to the next person that comes from that country or a

country like it. Their mistake or worse, their corruption and then our police go round and we put them in our prisons.

Can that be right ladies and gentlemen? I say to you it's not right.

I'll give you one more example and I'm happy to share these examples with anyone that wants them afterwards to reproduce them. A young man called Edmond Arapi is a waiter in Staffordshire and he was seized under a European Arrest Warrant issued by our friends the Italians after being sentenced in his absence to 16 years imprisonment for a murder in Genoa in 2004. Comprehensively proven by the British authorities he never left the country in 2004. He was being a waiter in Staffordshire I suppose, he was doing his job.

But nevertheless he spent considerable time in Wandsworth Prison before the Italians admitted it was a simple case of mistaken identity. Well how gracious of them to admit it.



Again, their mistake, we go round and nick the person concerned and put them in our prison. It is not racist to say that we have an extremely good justice system in this country and it is not matched by many of our European partners and it is a fiction and a damaging fiction at that to pretend that it is equal.

So as I say in each scenario the case is the same, someone in Britain wanted by a foreign power that country has made a mistake or worse, we arrest or imprison the person concerned.

Secondly, let's consider the European Investigation Order, which is intended to make it easier to gather evidence on another Member State's soil. I think it should be harder but the point of the EIO is to make it easier for foreign police to investigate what's going on in this country.

Among other things it grants foreign police the right, not the option, not the ability to apply, the right to carry out real time interception of communications in this country, to monitor your bank account, to demand your bodily samples, your DNA or your fingerprints or from any person in another European state or to order British Officers to go along and do any of those things for them, to conduct undercover surveillance operations on behalf of a European authority. Or pursue people, as I've said, for crimes not known in UK law like the Portuguese offence of criminal defamation – which I suppose would have got you on Jon when you wrongly lost your job – or indeed, whatever you think of this as an offence, holocaust denial.

I believe very strongly in freedom of speech, I believe the holocaust happened; I believe holocaust denial is repugnant, I nevertheless believe you've got a right to make that argument in a public space and then have that argument out. And I don't

believe that anyone mounting a discussion like that in the UK should be extradited or not even extradited just sent to Austria or Germany to face charges based on it.

As I say, the countries able to wield these new powers include states like Bulgaria, Romania and Greece, which has of course been the source of the worst example of the European Arrest Warrant yet, Andrew Symeou who I urge you to Google. I mean the case could not have been more absurd. Its like a classic bar school examination, a clean shaven man in blue shirt is mistaken for heavily bearded man in yellow shirt, five people say he didn't do it, those five people are marched into the police station, several heavy phone books later come out and say oh yes it was him after all, and that British citizen is on a plane out to Greece again and again on these ridiculous charges.

And I pay tribute to his Member of Parliament Nick De Bois who has really stood up for him in that to the extent that he can and how shameful it is that a British Member of Parliament can't do more in the face of that kind of behaviour from Europe.

It is not racist to point out the notion that such countries have justice systems of inequivalent quality to our own; it is farcical to pretend that they do.

And finally I tell you this on behalf of Big Brother Watch and I urge you please, come and have a look at our website, www.bigbrotherwatch.org.uk, that under the European Investigation Order, as pointed out by Fair Trials International, the police from say Spain would have the right to demand the ID of every British citizen who flew to Spain in the month that the offence took place and they could then force the United Kingdom to search our DNA database, which of course has more than a million innocent people on it. I use that term absolutely deliberately, guilty of no offence whatsoever, innocent of everything, and search that profile and send the Spanish police the profiles of anybody on the database who was in Spain at the time.

None of this requires sign off from a Judge, not only does the EIO allow UK police to start investigations and gather evidence on UK soil, but no judicial authority is required to verify whether there are reasonable grounds for believing that an offence has taken place.

In this country, I'm glad of the fact that the police cannot investigate on a whim. Now we may have issues with our police force in this country, you know a generation ago you thought the policeman was your friend, not everyone thinks that anymore, but nevertheless the police cannot investigate on a whim, they have to have reasonable grounds to investigate somebody.

But potentially a corrupt police officer in the South of Italy in the pay of the Mafia can come to the United Kingdom and obtain your DNA and bank balance without obtaining permission from a Judge. That in my opinion is bad for justice and its bad for what it's worth for the European Union. And for those reasons they should get rid of it altogether.

But finally let me say this to you, it's a real pleasure and privilege to be with you today. Take everything that I've just said, don't forget it but put it to one side. Don't give up. This is still a great country and there are many people who think as you and I do about this issue and issues like the ones that I've set out for you today. Our flag

still flies over that Parliament down the river from here and there are some people in that Parliament who believe as you and I do about these issues.

This is still a great country, this is still a great country, its worth fighting for. Please don't give up, join people like Jon and myself in the fight on these issues.