

“EURO PA”

Article by Tom Spencer for visitors to his website, www.tomspencer.info.

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My working life has been split between politics, advertising and academic life. I have spent it inter alia campaigning for Guinness, Europe and the Conservative Party. These three are, in no particular order, unfashionable, fattening or expensive.

In the process of this career master's nightmare, I have accumulated a house full of posters and prints reflecting my belief in the power of the visual image. I have two favourites. A campaign picture of myself and Margaret Thatcher from 1989, where the body language reveals exactly how much we disliked each other. The other is a poster commissioned in 1974 for the Federation of Conservative Students by David Davis, which above the slogan “when the Left speak of freedom, remember Czechoslovakia” features a Soviet tank in Prague. I very much agree with the argument put forward in PR Week on 4th June by Stewart Goldstein on the power of the visual image. One remembers an image much more intensely than the arguments for which it stands. Yes Campaigners in the Referendum on the Constitutional Treaty need to keep this in the front of their minds. Detailed arguments alone will not prevail against tabloid prejudice.

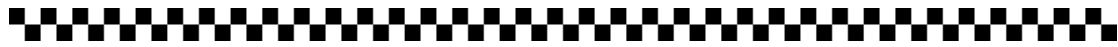
In my blue and yellow kitchen, above the blue and yellow china, there hangs a print given me by a Greek politician of Europa astride the Bull. This is a difficult myth about the foundation of Europe, given Zeus's Clintonesque intentions towards the fair Europa! Those who practice public affairs on behalf of the European cause need to drill down into the British consciousness to answer the emotional concerns which continue to make Britain the most euro-sceptic country in the European Union.

I was assistant to Sir Con O'Neill, Director of the Britain in Europe Referendum campaign in 1975. Con was an old Foreign Office hand and an avid bird watcher. The campaign adopted as its logo a Union Jack in the shape of a dove. I still recall his pain that the design adopted made it look more like an unhappy seagull. Students for a united Europe produced a poster with a Union Jack ostrich, head firmly in sand. The copy line remains central to the successor campaign of today - “Sovereignty: the whole of the illusion or a share in the reality?” The other great SUE poster was a black and white picture of Normandy graves and the words “Never Again”. Today the case for the European Union rests less on its success in consolidating peace between Europeans. For this generation Europe Union must be about the maintenance of European influence in an increasingly hostile world.

I and other MEPs in the first European Parliament borrowed the European flag from the Council of Europe and had it adopted as the logo of the European Union. It is a powerful symbol. Blue and gold were chosen as the colours of heaven. Twelve is the number of completion and harmony. For the same reason the stars are arranged in a circle. Whatever else the Yes campaigners do in the next two years, they must reclaim this symbol from UKIP's brilliant, negative use of it in their campaign poster "Say NO to European Union". A Union Jack thumbs up sign in the middle of the European stars perhaps?

Tom Spencer

Executive Director European Centre for Public Affairs and
Visiting Professor of Public Affairs, Brunel University.



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