**UK joins the EEC: the 1970s**

The United Kingdom has become a **fully-fledged** member of the European Economic Community.

Ireland and Denmark also joined Britain in becoming the newest members of the community, bringing the total number of member states to nine. At midnight last night a Union Jack flag was raised at the EEC's headquarters in Brussels to mark the occasion.

Celebrations were held in the city and one of Britain's new European Commissioners, George Thomson, joined revelers in a torch lit procession.

Prime Minister Edward Heath is optimistic that Britain's membership of the community will bring prosperity to the country. He said: "It is going to be a gradual development and obviously things are not going to happen overnight.

"But from the point of view of our everyday lives we will find there is a great cross-fertilization of knowledge and information, not only in business but in every other sphere.

"And this will enable us to be more efficient and more competitive in gaining more markets not only in Europe but in the rest of the world."

More than 1,000 Britons will relocate to Brussels over the coming months to take up their places as civil servants of the community. Britain will be given four votes within the council, which proposes policies on issues ranging from the environment to public health.

Membership applications by the UK to join the EEC were refused in 1963 and 1967 because the French President of the time Charles de Gaulle doubted the UK's political will.

It is understood, however, his real fear was that English would suddenly become the common language of the community

**http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/january/1/newsid\_2459000/2459167.stm**

**Margaret Thatcher’s relationship with the EU**

Margaret Thatcher's tussles over Europe and the UK's role in what is now the European Union were among the defining moments of her premiership. She passionately fought and won a number of battles against what she saw as the excessive powers of Brussels.

Europe also ultimately brought about Mrs Thatcher's downfall as prime minister, as her increasingly anti-EU views led the pro-Europeans in her party to move to oust her.

Yet Margaret Thatcher had not always been so vehemently opposed to European-wide initiatives.

In 1975, for instance, she played a key role in campaigning for the UK to remain in the European Community. And in 1978 she was arguing for consideration of a common European approach to defence. She had also criticised the then Labour government for failing to sign up to the exchange-rate mechanism (ERM).

Once in government, however, her patience with her colleagues on the continent quickly began to fray. In 1980, she called for the UK's contributions to the then EEC to be adjusted, warning that otherwise she would withhold VAT payments. "I want my money back!" she exclaimed.

The battle lasted four years and finally ended in victory for Thatcher but damaged relations with other EC countries.

In 1988 there came the controversial "**Bruges speech**".

"We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them re-imposed at a European level, with a European super-state exercising a new dominance from Brussels," Mrs Thatcher declared.

It delighted the right of her party but horrified those more well-inclined towards Europe.

All of this came against a backdrop of a government split over whether to join the ERM, which Mrs Thatcher eventually agreed to do in October 1990, little knowing that she was in the final days of her premiership.

In the same month, despite increasing divisions within her party over Europe, she came up with another soundbite. The then president of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, had called for the European Parliament to be the democratic body of the community, the commission to be the executive and the Council of Ministers to be the senate.

**"No. No. No," Thatcher famously told the Commons on 30 October 1990.**

It was too much for some. Two days later, the then deputy prime minister, Geoffrey Howe, quit the government and sparked the beginning of her downfall as prime minister.

His devastating Commons speech following his resignation prompted Michael Heseltine to challenge Mrs Thatcher's leadership. Within a few weeks, she was heading out of Downing Street.

**Thatcher and Delors: 1988**

