

## **Bono's speech at the European People's Party Congress in Dublin, 7<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

Thanks, Secretary General, and thanks to our host Enda... our Taoiseach, though you speak immodestly about our country, you are a modest man yourself.

They don't teach you modesty at rockstar school. My wife sent me to modesty school, and I'm fine now, in fact I'm better than most people at it.

There is, truth be told, a kind of braggadocio at the centre of the Irish psyche... You could call it small-island syndrome, small rock-star syndrome... but Irish people, we write ourselves into every story.

I'm sitting there in Nashville with the great Johnny Cash telling him the Irish invented country music. It's not true.

An Irish kid working in a bar, is telling you that we have more Nobel laureates per head of population than anywhere else ... it's not true.

The Taxi driver today that brought you from Paris, Lisbon, Brussels or Berlin will tell you that the Irish saved civilization itself in the Middle Ages. That might be true.

We genuinely believe the United States of America is our colony.

U2 were just at the Oscars failing to wrestle a little gold man out of the hands of a Disney character... and someone, I think it was The Edge pointed, out that the little gold statuettes were designed by a man from Roscommon called Austin Cedric Gibbons... Irish. It's true -- google it.

But we do write ourselves into every story.

Like the European story.

It's hard to imagine Ireland could easily *not* have joined the EEC, but the Taoiseach then in 1972, Jack Lynch, was proven right in his prediction that an Ireland in Europe would mean a better Ireland AND a better Europe.

And you know, I think Ireland can be even more useful as Europe goes forward. It needs storytellers, and we are a nation of them. We are good at anthems too if we've got a clear top line melody --- which with Europe hasn't always been the case.

We do get around... as island people we are very aware of our neighbours ..not just our own, but Europe's -- especially Europe's giant next door neighbour: Africa. And that might be important, as the population of that magnificent continent will hit 2 billion by 2050.

I'm proud that Irish aid budgets have roughly stayed the course despite the duress here these past few years...80 percent of our people hurting the hardest in the middle of the financial crisis supported maintaining our aid levels. That makes me very proud to be Irish.

The Irish have an easy solidarity with the world's poorest... because not that long ago we were them, and were it not for good leadership - a lot of it in this room - recently we could have been again.

We've got our Taoiseach and our finance minister, among others, to thank for that.

I find it hard to tell the Taoiseach to his face of my gratitude as he has told me to mine that he prefers Bruce Springsteen to U2.

I've explained to the man from Mayo that we're a long way from New Jersey, sir...

He just looks at me and says: Bruce's people were from Mullingar, Bono; did you know Bruce Springsteen was personally instructed by Irish nuns... google it!!!

Anyhow I may be hurt, but deep down I understand -- as he understands when I thank the Tánaiste Eamonn Gilmore for his role in getting us through our financial woes.

And not only him. I now want to use a word that is, to this audience, the equivalent of letting off a stink bomb: that word... is "coalition."

Because it really has taken a lot of collaboration and compromise to get from there to here... and we have to credit the Labour Party (and President Higgins) for their part in this recovery. Real leadership that has cost them real votes.

Again, it may not make me popular round here, but I have to say it—Europe too has heroes on both sides of the aisle. Chancellor Merkel, President Barroso, President Van Rompuy, Enda Kenny, yes; but also, President Hollande, Prime Minister Thorning-Schmidt...and the man who I have found to be a tireless worker on behalf of the world's poor and a great European , Martin Schultz.

No-one else is going to say that in this building, right?

In a moment I'm going to find my microphone's cut off...

So before it is, I also want to give an enormous gigantic big up to the Irish people who, a) were screwed; and b) fought back with dignity. Irish people don't bruise easily, but we don't like the feeling of being bullied. But when the public sector

had to pay for the arrogance of private sector stupidity we got both bullied and bruised. And that was not fair.

In the end, we're coming through, and I'd love to say it was the Troika; but I think, frankly, it was to spite the Troika.

*The way we see it, the Irish people bailed the Irish people out.*

Capitalism can be a great thing - I should know -- and it's taken more people out of poverty than any other system.... but let's not bow down to it, let's not make it a golden calf. While it might not be immoral, it most certainly is a-moral.

It's a bit of a beast, and needs us to wrestle it, beat it into shape -- give it instructions so it serves our values, rather than the other way round.

This is much like Europe itself, still taking shape, this European experiment. And here you are in the petri dish, in the Convention Centre of Spencer Dock....defining, designing ...divining. European purpose, European possibilities—none of these things are automatic. Europe is what we bring to it. It is the values we infuse it with... It is what we make it.

So what will we make it?

Nearly two hundred years since Victor Hugo foresaw a United States of Europe in which I quote "wild tumult is transformed into order, and animosity into love".

Sounds a bit hippy. But I like the word love being used. I love Europe.

For all our achievements, nearly 60 years after the Treaty of Rome, Europe is an economic entity that still needs to become a social entity.

Europe is a thought that still needs to become a feeling.

That's right, Europe is a thought that needs to become a feeling.

Now, this is the point when right-minded—or, er, centre-right minded—politicians start squirming in their seats. Oh my god, the rock star is going to talk about *his* feelings... he's probably going to ask us to hug each other or something awful ... one big European group hug. Started by the Irish, resisted by the British, paid for by the Germans.

But look, you lot that write the treaties and sign them know better than anyone that treaties are not enough. These are the things that organize us—but they are not the things that define us.

Our relationships are what define us.

And relationships are the stuff of emotion, are they not. And I want just for a second to allow myself to get emotional about project Europe. Even just the fact it still exists. Because 12 months ago, that didn't look so certain, did it? The euro and all that.

I am still extremely grateful it exists, and want to thank you all for holding on to it so tightly.

Europe is a thought that needs to become a feeling.

When Americans talk about their United States, they get all misty eyed, they get emotional. Hell, when the *Irish* talk about the United States, *we* get misty eyed.

Do we think that way about Europe? And if not why not?

There are 54 countries on the continent of Africa and the people who live in them call themselves Africans. How many of us call ourselves Europeans?

I think more of us would if we were united not just by bonds of interest, but by bonds of affection... if we cared more about each other's pain... would we do something more to help each other?

For example -- when we see young people, nearly a quarter of them out of work, fighting for their economic future, what happens? Yes, you guys discuss it... you've got Prime Minister Rajoy, just this week, urging the EU to make structural reforms that will create liquidity in the Spanish economy... maybe you will.

But beyond that, where's the family's response? Where's our Europe-wide campaign to spotlight Spain, encourage others to take their holidays there, to buy Spanish goods, listen to Spanish music... Have U2 make a flamenco album... Maybe not.

I can tell you what we do in Ireland, there is a word for it, *meitheal*. It means that the people of the village, the group, help one another out, and they help most when the work is the hardest. In my experience, most Europeans are like that. We discover who we are in service to our neighbours.

Chancellor Merkel, you said in 2007: "We do not really need to give a soul to Europe—it already has one." Well Chancellor, I agree, but maybe you agree we find it tough to show.

I'd argue that the soul of Europe is most visible when we're facing outward.

When we're facing inward, *we're* Irish, *you're* German, *you're* French... we're us, you're them... Of course, we're not always going to agree. That's democracy.

But facing outward, that's when we become one: that's when we're *EUROPE*... *Manly* Europe (in a gender-neutral kind of way)... in Spanish leather, pointy Italian shoes, an English tailored suit, a French shirt, driving a German car, with an Irish sense of the rules of the road. We see traffic lights as advice.

But seriously when we unite around something bigger than ourselves, like for example the Eurovision Song Contest... ok, no ... the champions league... no.... even better, when we behave like champions in Brussels ...like last year, when the Parliament, President Barroso, many of you here, and our own Minister Richard Bruton did something remarkable.

You passed an anti corruption law--- requiring oil and gas companies to make public what they pay for mining rights – so that in poorer countries more of the wealth under the ground ends up in the hands of those that live above it.

And now you are working on an anti-money laundering law. – one that demands shell companies and trusts tell us who actually owns them – so corrupt monies cannot be hidden away.

There's a transparency revolution happening, and Europe is at the forefront of it. Call it daylight. Without it, you can't fight the corruption that keeps the poor poor, and you can't fight the secrecy that keeps the corrupt rich.

If anyone wants to see how it plays out when you've got no transparency, you might ask our Ukrainian friends. We've all heard about Yanukovich – he's *not* Irish by the way – did you read about his vast opulent mansion, which even a rock star might find... a bit *excessive*. You may have read Global Witness and a Ukrainian NGO are reporting that this place was part-owned by an anonymous UK shell company—perfectly legal, and perfectly corrupt.

When Europe stops and exposes corruption... Europe reveals its soul.

We know there are other opportunities, and even in this election year, these don't have to be partisan issues. Things like a financial transaction tax, which could be used to fight extreme poverty and help unemployed young people in Europe and in Africa. This stuff is not left or right. It's not Irish or French-ish.

Neither are these African issues, or Middle Eastern. They are human issues, and you—as you stand, and when you serve—can make clear we see these as Europe's concern. And I might add that the G8 next year could be exactly the right place to make that case. 2015 is a big year in the fight against extreme poverty, the redesigning of the New Millennium Development goals...the so called Sustainable Development goals are a very big deal... Chancellor Merkel, you are just the right woman to lead this. You say it better than I can but an "Ok"

Soziale Markt-wirt-schaft" would show the soul you so strongly believe in. For you non-German speakers that's (whispering) eco-social-market-economy.

**So to close...**

Actually Community, not bollox community. Real neighbourliness -- not people bound together by red tape speaking Euro babble. Maybe this still sounds *soft* to you. Irish blarney.

But it isn't. It's hard... it's hard in concept and execution.

Let's remember where the idea of One Europe really came from: out of war, out of what Churchill in 1946 called "the tragedy of Europe." The alternative, he said, to "tearing each other to pieces," was "to re-create the European Family, or as much of it as we can, and provide it with a structure under which it can dwell in peace, in safety, and in freedom."

Aren't those still the stakes today?

After all, the rise of extreme nationalism is happening again, and don't mean nationalism as in "I'm proud to be Irish." Which I am.

You know the kind of nationalism I mean. The ugly kind. The primal hate. Especially when times are tough, we see Europeans turning against migrants, turning against Roma, turning against immigrants... searching for scapegoats. Sometimes it's a Jewish scapegoat... Sometimes a Roma one. Sometimes African, sometimes gay... Nationalism isn't choosy. It's an equal opportunity hater.

But make no mistake: its real victim is the idea behind Europe.

See, nationalism depends on the idea of purity.

And Europe depends on this idea of plurality.

But I want to argue, "Europe" cannot be just a *logical* alternative to nationalism, it must become an impassioned one—an affair of the heart as well as the head.

Our plurality... needs to show itself with purpose.

Like that gaelic word, *meiheal*.

We hear that ideal... by many different names... from the young European activists who are telling us—telling you, to be specific—to stand by the poorest of the poor. Activists like the Youth Ambassadors of the ONE Campaign who, Chancellor, you met with this time last year... there's now 4 million of them

around the world... so wherever you go, you'll be hearing from them on your campaign trail...

We hear that ideal from the activists who risked—and in some cases lost—their lives in Maidan, Independence Square, in Kiev. One of those activists, I read, made a handwritten sign that said, "[Europe Starts With You.](#)"

And she stood alone, this young woman, I believe her name is Anastasiia, with her sign beside the monument. This was back in dark cold November. Before the violence. Before the crowds had started to build.

"Europe Starts With You." That's what she wrote, that was her challenge to her fellow Ukrainians. But the challenge is not just theirs—it is ours.

In that speech of 1946, Winston Churchill looked back at the collapse of the League of Nations—that well-intentioned instrument that failed to keep the peace. "The League of Nations," the great man said, "did not fail because of its principles or conceptions. It failed because these principles were deserted by those States who had brought it into being."

Nearly seven decades later, we know Europe is strong. And Europe can be stronger still.

Our principles will not fail us. But in the spirit of Sir Winston, let us not fail our principles.

Because the world needs Europe. And Europe starts with us.

Thank you.

# # #