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MEMOIRS

## Memoirs as a source for research

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- Narrative writing in first person point of view about experiences of the author
- Space of time between event itself and its reflection by the author is important
- Primary sources, provide direct evidence
- Memoirs tell more about the authors thoughts and interpretations than about the event itself
- Limits in collecting material about certain events



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REYNOLDS

## Albert Reynolds (1932 – 2014)

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- Taoiseach of Ireland 1992 – 1994
- Fianna Fáil, The Republican Party
- Autobiography first published in 2009



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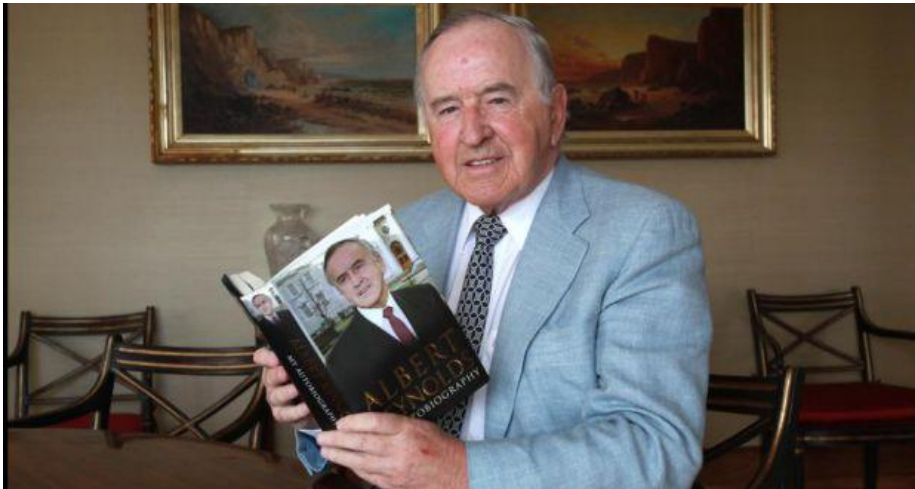
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REYNOLDS

## Autobiography

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- Tells his life story - from his childhood and first steps as a young businessman to his action-filled years in the political arena
- 'Give it as it was, tell it as it is, that is me.'  
- In his autobiography, he does just that.



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REYNOLDS

## View on Maastricht Treaty 1992

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- Discussion about Maastricht treaty and abortion law in Ireland at the same time
- Reynolds was scared that the people of Ireland would vote against Maastricht treaty like in Denmark
- Referendum took place on 18 June 1992 (68.7% in favour)



2 June, when the Danes voted by 50 per cent to 49 per cent to reject the Maastricht Treaty, the pressure grew even greater for me to postpone the 18 June vote. Even Jacques Delors, the Commission President, called in panic. The anti-Maastricht campaigners saw it as vindication of all their arguments, but I was convinced we could not afford to reject this opportunity of being part of the bigger European picture and I believed the majority of the Irish people were with me and would agree.

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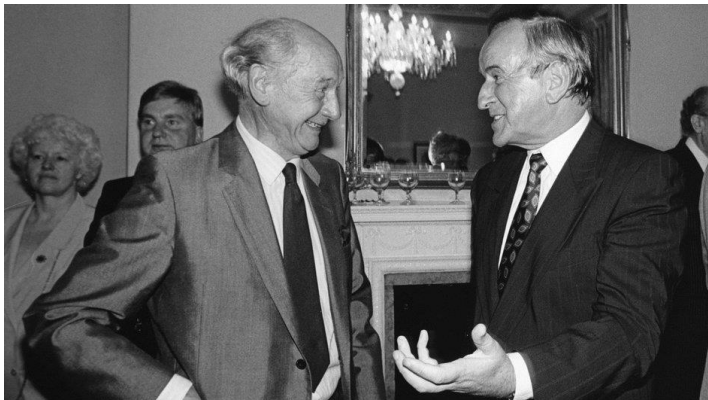
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REYNOLDS

## Expectations on European Union after Maastricht Treaty

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- Reynolds promised economic benefit for Ireland
- Opponents accused him of raising unrealistic expectations
- He had to stick to his view – after all he was right



'During the course of the referendum campaign earlier this year on the Maastricht Treaty, I said that our objective was to obtain about IR£6 billion over the five years to 1997, as implied by the original Commission proposals. Many people accused me of raising unreal expectations. From the Maastricht referendum campaign right through to the recent election the issue was used to denigrate my credibility.

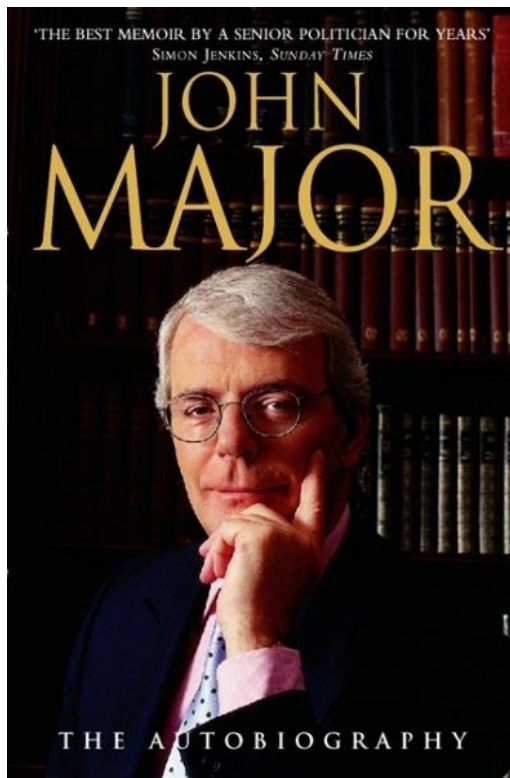
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MAJOR

## John Major

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Preceded by Margaret Thatcher: “She is a unifying force,’ I was told. **‘She unites all of us against her.’**“

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**„We know our bottom line. I‘m not shifting. The choice is theirs – we will say No if we have to.“**



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MAJOR

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„Mitterrand made it clear that he had reservations even about the small concessions offered to Britain by the Dutch presidency. ‘There are too many matters of principle at stake’, he began. ‘Watering down the text won’t work. “ [...] **He then spelled out his challenge:** Europe must commit itself to it [the Social Chapter], or France would vote against the treaty. He would publicly oppose a sham charter, he warned. **The gauntlet had been thrown down.**

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MAJOR

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„I had expected to gain the opt-out, but to have got it without any onerous conditions attached was indeed a prize. [...] **We had got our way,** and it was now certain there would be agreement on the treaty. [...] **It was the modern equivalent of a Roman triumph.**“

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MAJOR

## Conclusion

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- Major depicts the negotiations as a battle  
→ from his point of view, he succeeded in preventing “more“ Europe
- Reynolds was scared that the people of Ireland would vote against the Maastricht Treaty
- Reynolds was raising great expectations on Maastricht Treaty  
→ opportunity of being part of the bigger European picture

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## Sources

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- Reynolds, A. & Arlon, J. (2009). My autobiography. London: Transworld Ireland.
- Major, John (1999): *The Autobiography*, London: HarperCollinsPublishers.

# Thank you for your attention!

From History to Memory Culture: Narratives of the European Council Summits



**Maastricht, 5th February 2016**

Heidi Dujovic, Carolin Löprich, Helena Heberer, Christian Kurrle