

Textaufgabe II

BRITAIN'S FRENCH CONNECTION

By any pragmatic standard, the chunnel¹ agreement came into being 95 years too late. On Feb. 4, 1891, the London Financial News reported that "no great engineering or financial difficulties stand in the way [of the then current tunnel proposal].

5 The opposition of the British Government is the one insuperable obstacle." At that juncture, the British general staff was convinced a tunnel could be used by a Continental invader to elude the guns of the Royal Navy. A few decades earlier, Lord Palmerston² had put the case even more broadly. Of the chunnel
10 project proposed in the 1840s, he observed: "It requires us to spend money to shorten a distance which we regard as already too short."

Palmerston had a point. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, Britain's island status gave the country important political and economic advantages. Protected by what Shakespeare
15 called "this ditch," the English could stand aloof from Continental wars, accelerate an Industrial Revolution and crisscross the seas as colonizers, merchants and policemen to the world. It was arrogant, but not entirely wrong, for them to regard English culture as predominant. And while it was a gross slur³, it
20 was understandable that ordinary Englishmen should believe that "wogs" (undesirable foreigners) start at Calais. From a British point of view, there was much to be said for staying as remote from Europe as possible.

25 None of those conditions holds today. Even at the height of Victorian imperialism, Britain was already losing its competitive advantage to the United States and Germany. Britain's remoteness served the nation well in World War II, but it would offer no asylum in a nuclear conflict. Decolonization has shrunk its international role. The once proud British economy creaks under the
30 weight of 3 million unemployed. And with their European neigh-

bors, the British run the risk of falling hopelessly behind in the technological race with the United States and Japan.

In the end, Thatcher recognized the inevitability of a closer
35 link with France, as have the 70 percent of her countrymen when they say they favor a chunnel. But the conversion was reluctant at best. "The European idea is not yet much developed in England," understates Theodore Zeldin, the Oxford historian of France.

40 The chunnel will work no miracles. For generations hence, the English will remain convinced that the hard-working and status-conscious French are lazy and carefree. The French will cling to the certainty that the mild and sensuous Brits are arrogant and cold. In fact, the chunnel may even exacerbate⁴
45 misunderstandings at first, especially if the British stick to their plan to run the new Paris-London trains out of Waterloo station, named for the most humiliating defeat in French military history.

But the longer-term effect is bound to be beneficial. If nothing else, 40,000 French and British workmen will find jobs and
50 will work together for the next seven years. Franco-British trade will get a shot in the arm. And a psychological barrier will crumble. Familiarity may not breed immediate respect, but at least the French and the British can no longer fall back on geographical separation as a reason for their misunderstandings.
55 And no British paper will ever again be able to headline: FOG OVER THE CHANNEL, CONTINENT ISOLATED.

From: *Newsweek*, February 3, 1986

1) chunnel: Channel tunnel

2) Lord Palmerston (1784 - 1865): British politician and statesman

3) slur: defamation, an unjust and insulting attitude/comment

4) exacerbate: make worse

WORKSHEET: Britain's French Connectionmaximum number of
points attainable

I. Questions on the text

Read all the questions first, then answer them
in the given order. Use your own words as far
as is appropriate.

1. Sum up the reasons why the chunnel was not
built earlier. 20
2. What developments caused the British to change
their attitude? 20
3. Explain the meaning of "the conversion was
reluctant at best" (lines 36/37). Do not use
the underlined words. 10
4. What effects does the writer believe the chunnel
will have on Franco-British relations? 20
5. What British attitude is suggested by the news-
paper headline: FOG OVER THE CHANNEL, CONTINENT
ISOLATED (lines 56/57)? 10

II. Composition

Choose o n e of the following topics.
Write about 120 to 150 words.

1. "The United States of Europe" — necessity or
dream? 40
2. Working in another European country is expected
to become easier from 1993. What advantages or
disadvantages do you see in this?

III. Translation

Translate the following text into German:

40

PLEASE TURN OVER

160

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Hinweis

zu den

TEXTAUFGABEN

in den Fächern

Englisch, Französisch, Russisch

Aus technischen Gründen sind die Arbeitsblätter nicht in die jeweilige Textvorlage eingelegt, sondern in gleicher Anzahl und Nummernfolge beige packt. Es wird daher gebeten, bei der Ausgabe der Textvorlagen und zugehörigen Arbeitsblätter an die Prüflinge - auch im Hinblick auf die Auswahlmöglichkeit zwischen Textaufgabe I und Textaufgabe II - besondere Sorgfalt walten zu lassen.

Prosperous years of expanding trade followed the launching of the EEC, and its success as a prescription for the problems of Western Europe seemed assured; but the experiences of the seventies were not happy ones for the Community and in the face of a deepening world recession that threatened the stability of the US dollar member nations returned to older national attitudes. To the evident distress of proponents¹ of a federal Europe, a European answer to common problems rarely emerged. As the Community entered the eighties there was lacking that confidence with which different leaders had entered the previous decade. Far from progressing, the Community had stumbled through the seventies, uncertain, and unwilling to experiment with policies of closer unity. The growth towards greater cohesion was taking longer than had been imagined. In judging the seventies, and making full allowance for economic adversity, our grandchildren may well question the clarity of our vision and the depth of our commitment to a New Europe.

From: R. Ben Jones, *The Making of Contemporary Europe* (1980)

1) proponent: someone who supports a cause or theory