



Written by [Steve Bonta](#) on December 27, 2023

Jacques Delors, Architect of the European Union, Dies at 98

The architect of the European Union is dead. [Jacques Delors](#), president of the European Commission (EC), the predecessor of the European Union, from 1985 to 1995, died Wednesday at age 98. Just as another Gallic visionary 1200 years ago, the Emperor Charlemagne, is credited with being the father of Europe, so Delors is considered to be the father of the European Union, as well as of the eurozone.

There, however, the similarity ends. [Charlemagne](#), a semi-literate but devout Christian ruler with a desire to recreate the glories of Roman civilization, joined with Pope Leo III to create the Holy Roman Empire, and also promoted literacy and the arts during the Carolingian Renaissance, a movement that did much to establish Europe as a unified Christian civilization and paved the way of the Age of Faith of the high Middle Ages. Delors, a French socialist, was nothing if not the embodiment of modern secular statism, committed to the political program of a single postwar European state his entire life. Widely admired for presiding over the creation of the [European superstate](#), complete with open borders, a parliament, a single currency, and a customs union, Delors was also implacably hostile to nationalism and to populism. He spent much of his declining years warning of the alleged dangers of both, especially in the wake of Brexit.

His hostility to British independence dated back to his fraught relationship with Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s. A staunch opponent of socialism and of continental integration, Thatcher—in stark contrast to the pro-EU opposition leader Neil Kinnock—never missed a chance to criticize Delors and what was then widely regarded as a radical program. The decades since, of course, have witnessed an ebb in Thatcherian conservatism even as the power and reach of the EU has grown on the continent.

Although euroskepticism has declined in some quarters, the EU has seen in recent years a robust countermovement favoring national sovereignty and traditional European values over the radical



Jacques Delors in 2007 (AP Images)



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integrationism and secularism typical of eurocrats like Delors and his current successor, Ursula von der Leyen (who eulogized Delors as a “visionary who made our Europe stronger”). Italy, Hungary, the Netherlands, and Sweden, among other EU members, have moved decisively to the right, meaning away from the post-Christian, pan-European model favored by eurocrats like Delors and globalists in general. While Delors’ EU is still very much a force to be reckoned with, it is still unclear which vision of Europe’s future will hold sway 50 or 100 years from now. Should the EU ultimately falter and national sovereignty be restored, 21st Century Europe may yet turn away from socialist bondage and usher in yet another Renaissance and Age of Faith.

Charlemagne, were he aware, would surely be pleased at such an outcome.



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