

# The Common Market: in or out—does it matter?

## What It's About

EUROPE 1945—a shattered continent after the second war within 30 years. Industries laid waste. Millions dead. American aid pouring in trying to create a bulwark against the Russian menace. What was the future for European capitalism, as it drifted into the latter half of the 20th Century? To continue as a bunch of warring states; as competitors in the process of making, buying and selling? Or could they not become one big family? The conception of the EEC—European Economic Community—Common Market was born and the Treaty of Rome, 1957 signed by France, Germany, Italy and the Benelux countries contained the following clause:— “To permit goods to travel freely without Customs Duties or quota restriction throughout the area of the six and *thus to permit manufacturers to invest on the scale that modern technology makes possible and necessary*” (our italics).

This is what it's about.

Capitalism—a system based upon class ownership of the means of wealth production and distribution must invest in order to survive. It needs a developing technology, it needs a growing market, and the European bunch, faced with competition from America, Russia etc. saw their Community, as the answer. It was a bold step and despite constant setbacks the foundations were laid and building commenced.

Great Britain, despite the pro-European utterances of Winston Churchill, did not join. She was lumbered with the Commonwealth and any deal with Europe had to relate to New Zealand lamb, Australian butter, Jamaican sugar etc. Harold MacMillan, Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Tory Government, even prior to the Rome Treaty had no doubts “. . . or we might ourselves join the Union; but this would involve abandoning the preferential system in the Commonwealth, and obviously if we had the choice of alternatives, we could not hesitate; we would choose the Commonwealth” (Llandudno, 12th October 1956).

So the British capitalists wanting the best of both worlds—the Commonwealth and a tariff agreement, formed with Switzerland, Portugal, Austria, Sweden, Denmark and Norway the European Free Trade Area (EFTA). This association was to negotiate trade terms with the Common Market. But why swim with the small fish when you can see larger fish in another pool, getting larger and threatening your existence? The Commonwealth and EFTA notwithstanding, Britain applied for membership of the EEC in 1963. The application was rejected largely due to the attitude of the French Government who wanted total commitment to a European policy—not an applicant with one foot in the Commonwealth and a certain reliance on America. “On Monday the General [de Gaulle] made it clear that he did not want Britain in, and that his reasons were political.” (*Observer* 19th January 1963). America incidentally, looked upon all these European proposals with suspicion.

But the British capitalists' appetite had been whetted. The plums in Europe seemed larger and juicier, so again application was made under the Heath Government in 1971. Suitable terms were negotiated and Great Britain became a member on January 1st, 1973.

Neither the politicians nor the capitalists were united on this move. Some said the terms were not good enough; some said whatever the terms we should not be in. The Labour Party in particular were split on the issue. In their Election Manifesto of February 1974. they said our continued membership would depend upon more suitable terms being agreed. After months of discussion and brinkmanship, Mr. Wilson was able to report to Parliament on 18th March, 1975. “The Government have decided to recommend to the British people that they should vote in favour of staying in the Community on the terms which I have described”. Many commentators questioned whether the now acceptable terms were fundamentally different from those originally agreed but this need not concern us. And so we are being allowed to vote in the Referendum—IN or OUT. But more on this later.

Much of the discussion on the Common Market centres around the economic aspect but the EEC also entails a political angle. If such an economic set-up is to function, then the political machinery must be geared accordingly. You can't have all these separate Governments taking decisions from a Nationalist viewpoint, ignoring the greater good. So individual sovereignty will have its wings clipped. The British Parliament will not be the sole master in its own house. The European Parliament will take decisions that often seem to cut across the interests of National States.

It was also agreed by the Community, that by 1980 there would be Monetary Union with a common currency and the harmonisation of National Budgets. According to Herr Scheel “. . . this is the most ambitious project ever tackled by the Community”.

In all the EEC was an exciting and demanding future for Capitalism. If only it wasn't such an awkward system to control and manage.

### **How is the Community making out?**

Eighteen years on is but a passing moment in the development of European capitalism. Many of the tariff duties have been disbanded. A greater volume of trade has taken place. A workers' Charter has been formulated even to the extent of agreement on “worker participation on Industrial Boards”. The politicians fall out from time to time; the Brussels administration grows and grows. Fine words are spoken about the future. And then, despite a number of advances, that awkward capitalist system starts throwing its weight about and spanners in the works. Butter; beef; wine; fish; fruit. All you might say part of the sinews of life. But not in the world of capitalism. These are commodities produced for sale with a view to profit. And capitalism in its normal anarchistic fashion has produced too much for the market.

You will remember the Butter Mountain. 152,000 surplus tons at the end of 1970. A definite policy was adopted to curtail production, involving the slaughter of thousands of cows. But this didn't get rid of the butter. It was costing a bomb to store. The old age pensioners with the price reduced coupons mopped up some of it. Some official thought of a brilliant idea to feed it back to the cows. Eventually they did a deal to sell it in bulk to Russia—a deal that cost the Community millions of pounds. And butter in Paris still costs 69p per lb.

French farmers, like all farmers, are constantly demanding higher prices for their produce. To prove the point, thousands of tons of fruit have been dumped on French roads over the past few years. And then we had the fascinating pictures of French fishermen likewise tipping their catches on the roads. English egg producers, claiming to be working at a loss, demonstrate against the importation of French eggs. Dried milk, an embarrassing surplus, is being rendered unfit for human consumption and processed into animal feed. And you all know about the beef. How it is much more profitable to put it into store and get the intervention price, whilst rump steak is £1.40 per lb. And now there is the Wine Lake. The Italians have so much that they want to sell it. But the French won't have it at any price—they've put up a barrier against Italian wine. They have too much of their own for comfort. We could go on and on.

Another point about the Common Market with its great resources was the demand for labour. In fact, when Britain entered the Community, lists of jobs in Europe were pinned up in the Labour Exchanges and great play was made of how labour would be more mobile. 'It's a nice thought that any of the 800,000 unemployed in this country could shove off over to the continent and get a job. Their journey might not be fruitful; the Common Market members over the Channel have an unemployed army of 4 million. Little is said of the many thousands of migrant workers in Europe who having played their part in the development of capitalism are now out on a limb.

During the oil crisis of 1973 it might be assumed that “the partners” would show a united front against the Arab oil producers. But national aspirations won out. All countries were falling over each other to do a deal with the Arabs.

Inflation; currency crises; restriction on production; unemployment etc., etc. These are the stock in trade of capitalism. The Common Market will never solve these problems. The EEC ship will constantly smash itself against the rocks of its own system—a problem-producing system.

### **The Referendum—In or Out**

For the first time in British History—a referendum. A device often used in other countries; Norway voted in such a manner to keep out. This vote, largely favoured by the anti-marketeters in the Labour Party, will resolve the decision for the Government. Mr. Wilson, when recommending the terms said “This is one of the most important parliamentary occasions in our history”. Not so. The British people are only being asked to endorse the continuation of capitalism, in or out, and they do this at every General Election. As yet, they continue to give this endorsement.

To remain in or get out has produced a weird assortment of protagonists. IN—Mr. Wilson and some members of his cabinet ally themselves with Mr. Heath, Maudling, the Liberal Party, the Confederation of British Industry, the Farmers’ Union and generally speaking ‘big business’. OUT—this includes an even weirder assortment. The Communist Party, Enoch Powell, Benn, Foot, Shore, the National Front and the TUC. A selection of the Ins and Outs is illuminating.

**IN.** “If we came out we would end as a country with nowhere to go.” (Lord Pritchard, President, Institute of Directors. *Times* 18th March 1975).

**OUT.** “I am really warning people in the West Midlands that the capacity of British Ministers to help industry to re-equip is going to be gravely affected by membership, and that is one of the reasons why I hope the British people will vote to withdraw.” (Wedgwood Benn, speaking at Birmingham. *Guardian* 22nd March 1975).

**IN.** “British withdrawal from the EEC would probably cause Lucas Industries to reduce its workforce by between 8,000 and 10,000 jobs.” (Bernard Scott, the Company’s Executive Chairman, *Guardian* 13th March 1975).

**OUT.** He told the French Chamber of Commerce in London that the TUC believed Britain should not be in a Market of which competition was the guiding principle. (Len Murray, Gen. Sec. TUC. *Evening Standard* 7th March 1975). (Perhaps Mr. Murray can enlighten us as to what is the “guiding principle” under which British capitalism works at the moment?)

**IN.** “I would not be involved in the Government if it has to take Britain out of the Common Market” Shirley Williams, Secretary for Prices and Consumer Protection. (*Guardian* 13th March 1975).

**OUT.** Pop Concerts, talks to Women’s Institute tea parties and trade union meetings and a galaxy of prominent speakers including playwright John Osborne, author Kingsley Amis and scientist Kit Pedlar will be used in the fight to pull Britain out of Europe. (Get Britain Out Referendum Campaign. *Evening Standard* 20th March 1975). (Pardon us if we are not altogether overwhelmed by the galaxy of prominent speakers.)

**IN.** Mobilise for a Socialist Europe. (Labour Committee for Europe. Advert. *Guardian* 17th February 1975). (Hardly we feel the reason why the CBI wants to keep in).

And so we could go on and on—one boring reason after another. How you will vote is your concern. We tell them to stuff their referendum. The real issue that the workers should tackle is Common Market or Common Ownership.

### **Where We Stand**

We and our sympathisers will vote. We shall register on our papers our commitment for Socialism. The question you are being asked to answer—In or Out—is of no concern to members of the working class. Whatever the outcome of the vote, Capitalism will continue. And continue it will until you and a majority like you take the revolutionary step of deciding to abolish capitalism in all its forms and to bring into being a new society.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN has only one object—Socialism, which briefly means the common ownership of the means of wealth production and distribution, democratically administered for the common good. The earth, with its untold riches would be harnessed and utilised for the benefit of all mankind. This means that human needs take priority and production centres around these. From each according to ability—to each according to need would be the guiding principle. Simply put, it means that all those sinews of life previously mentioned, and the thousand and one other things that mankind needs, would be produced to meet human satisfaction.

Socialism cannot operate in one country or in one continent. It is a worldwide concept to deal with worldwide problems. It cannot be established by any leader or so-called intellectual Left Wing group. Its very democratic nature demands that people will have to understand both the capitalist and the new society so that they play a full and responsible role in its administration. Its establishment will result from political action based upon understanding: a class-conscious act to take control of the reins of Government; then strip the capitalists of their power, their wealth, and found a new way of life.

Whilst we claim that Socialism alone can solve the basic economic problems that confront mankind, it is not a society just concerned with “belly problems”. Its new economic basis will give rise to a new set of social relationships. Man, no longer a wage slave or an appendage to a productive machine, will be able to utilise all his potential, to blossom as a full human being.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN offers itself as your instrument for the establishment of Socialism. We offer an understanding of capitalism and some concrete ideas on how Socialism will work. But we are not leaders. You join our Party on the basis of your Socialist knowledge. We would welcome you and what you have to contribute to the only question worthy of consideration—Common Ownership or Capitalism.

Away with all the trappings of capitalism—tariffs, customs duties, monetary union, competition, buying, selling etc. Vote for nothing but Common Ownership.

(May 1975)