British entry: Labour’s nemesis

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7 into the seventies
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1. a community of interests?

By January 1973, despite the speculations of parliamentary anti-marketeers, the United Kingdom will be a full member of the European Economic Community (EEC). There are, as a consequence of this, several fundamental issues to be faced before any further debate begins. What are the present realities of the community? What policy problems have these realities produced for the Labour movement? The EEC is to be a unified market of some 250 million souls. In its enlarged state it will account for 40p of every £1 spent in international trade. Even as the limited six, total exports exceeded $45,000 million, greater than the export volume of the United States. To this is now added a further group of four nations, with the special trading position of Great Britain adding considerably to this commercial strength. In many ways the enlarged community will have no economic rival.

Community propaganda, which is largely responsible for the early propagation of established myths about the nature of community development and purpose, is based on principles about community ideals that either cannot be accepted by the left or cannot be equated with what has actually developed. These principles include: to end for ever the conflicts which so long divided the nations of western Europe; to restore Europe's (sic) economic and political stability so that she can play a rôle in the world commensurate with her economic strength and cultural heritage; to co-operate in promoting balanced economic development in the community; and so on (see European Community: the facts, May 1971 page 3). The list goes on to include “to improve by joint action the working conditions and living standards of the people of Europe” (again blurring the clear distinction between the community and the remainder of the continent) and to “speed up technological progress.” All very recognisable ideals. All very much what the general public in applicant countries have been encouraged to believe in. In large part these ideals are close to realism; but in fundamental respects only those elements inimical to the interests of the Labour movement and the fragmented community it seeks to represent are achieving the kinds of success that are collectively promised as the “goals of European integration.” In general terms the dynamic of the European community (and it will be more so with enlargement under a Conservative government) is diametrically opposed to the long term interests of the mass of the population of that community.

Community development indicates that the guiding principles of community action that figure so prominently in the propaganda of the myriad institutions that have an interest in generating integration on the community pattern are either antagonistic to the needs of all but bureaucrats and financiers, contrary to what even the Labour Party conceives of as internationalism, or simply unattainable given the momentum of integration and the political and diplomatic strains that this momentum produces. The economic dynamic of the community is already clearly moving in the direction of supra-national monopoly capitalism, in which one more stage in the process of raising capital beyond all control of community forces is being completed. Inherent in the ideology of functional integration is the steady attrition of political power and the maximisation of private power at the level of multi-national, and hence supra-national, control.

The political developments related to community existence and to enlargement are inevitably producing stresses that challenge, at their base, propaganda promises about “ending the conflicts of western Europe.” The new brand of nationalism that is enshrined in the avowed objective of returning to western Europe the rôle due to her (“commensurate with her economic strength and cultural heritage”) offers nothing, to Europe as a whole nor to the international community nor to the British Labour Party, more than a sterile exercise in economic and political re-assertion worthy of the days of Hegel. The fact that supra-nationalism, because of the divisions already apparent in the politics of the six, will never materialise, simply raises the spectre of a vicarious enjoyment of the powers that enlargement and integration
brings through the return of open nationalism to the systems of the individual member states. This process has already overtaken the British Labour movement which, through failure to analyse and comprehend the defects in its own policy outlook, is now left with only the husk of a jingoism worthy of Churchill in his worst hour. This tract remains committed to the ideal of a Europe working as one for the collective good. It regrets the overwhelming extent to which poor thinking and false loyalties have produced a situation, only months before this Conservative government, with its parliamentary obstacle course behind it, will take its supporters into the European community, where the Labour Party can do nothing but step clumsily backwards and cry wolf.

It is all so reminiscent of the original failures of 1950, when the Coal and Steel Community emerged from continental conservatism and from the failure of parties of the left everywhere to take a relevant stand. Central to this pamphlet is the belief that the conceptual inadequacies of the Labour leadership have made it impossible for the party ever to have a relevant and workable policy on European integration without fundamental and critical changes in the outlook of the party. Emerson once said, “consistency is the hobgoblin of small men.” There has been a kind of circular consistency in the post-war development of Labour thinking on western Europe, with the radius of that circle determined by political opportunism in preference to principle or firmly held objectives. It has carried Labour politicians across the entire spectrum of political philosophy, from Europeanism to unbelievable populist chauvinism. The point to make is not that Labour policy is now, in the year before entry, in need of change to adapt to the exigencies of entry. The point to make is that now Labour has no policy on Europe at all.
2. what is the common market?

The Gaullist rejection of British applications, because it was confused with the politics of the right in the eyes of Labour spokesmen, never received the consideration it deserved. The fundamental element of Charles de Gaulle's refusal to contemplate British membership was his realisation that British entry was contradictory to the idea of the economic community. The essence of his argument, one which gathered strength as the months and years of market consolidation mounted, was that the developed nature of the EEC could not accommodate a new entrant with interests (domestic, international, financial) heavy enough to produce continuing confrontations within the organs of the community; confrontations that would, inevitably, lead to the forming of divisive alliances, or to bargain striking aimed at achieving decisions. Most community members acknowledged this fact, but preferred the French government to attract the odium for exposing it. The general agreement to facilitate British entry that emerged during 1969 and 1970 flowed from the realisation that the economic balance within the six had changed drastically and in such a way that only through enlargement could a re-assessment and restructuring of market forces be made possible. This did not, it should be remembered, lead to a relaxation of the very severe bargaining demands made by the six in entry negotiations. The common agricultural policy (CAP), for example, which a growing body of academic and political opinion sees as a failing system, was defended, buttressed and finally pushed through unchanged, as a condition of enlargement.

This series of confrontations will continue to occur and will complicate relations between a Conservative government and the community; it will make relations impossible between any Labour government and the community. There are two reasons for this prognosis. In the first place, the community's first 14 years of life have produced a balance of political and social forces that is too profoundly opposed to the objectives of a Labour government. In the second place, the British Labour Party has never proved itself capable of developing a socialist analysis of the development of the community, and has never been able to think in terms of a socialist Europe. These two factors alone make the task of a Labour government in an enlarged community one of self destruction; in any struggle on political dogma the community would win every time.

The phrase "common market" is a misnomer when applied to the EEC. The term "common" suggests distribution in a balanced pattern; "market" suggests competition and unfettered movement. Together they represent the glittering objective of liberal, 19th century economic theory: liberalised trade and free movement of goods and capital.

The first years of community operation, in fact, have laid the foundations of a system based on monopoly and concentrated wealth and power. Capital and economic power have flourished unchecked; institutions have failed to adapt to or meet this challenge. Conservative thinking has encouraged this trend; Labour politicians have unwittingly supported it. The dynamics of the community have produced dominant economic sectors that thrive on their own success. The momentum and balance of official community actions further stimulate these developments in certain crucial respects. National protectionism emerges in the guise of national monopolies or trans-national corporate unification in which both consumer and producer are neglected as figures in the equation of concern.

The founding European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), built from 1952 in an effort to unify the military and economic power that stemmed from heavy industry and to divert national protectionism into international state capitalism, never prevented the formation of cartels and monopolies in the production of coal and steel. For example, even as late as November 1969, after pressure from the Bonn government, the Brussels commission approved the merger of 23 Ruhr collieries to form a vast privately owned complex, Ruhrkohle AG, with an annual production of 90 million tons a year, about one half of total British output. The highly
charged competitive atmosphere that prompted this West German move towards greater concentration is now, however, moving into an even more aggressive phase. A recent analysis of ECSC Forward Planning concluded "the steel makers are off on another spending spree that is throwing a shadow of massive overcapacity across the mid-seventies." (Richard K. Shepherd, European Community, May 1970). In 1969 EEC investment in steel was greater than $1850 million, five times the 1966 total. The commission has little real power to prevent what it considers excessive investment, even though, over the next five years, it foresees over production and therefore redundancies, backbiting and disguised price cutting (reverse black markets in steel are not uncommon in the EEC).

The only weapon the commission has is its control of the European Investment Bank, through which it can deny loans to prospective investors. The International Iron and Steel Institute, in a current estimate of future problems, put world production ahead of world demand by at least 20 million tons annually over the next five years. The spectre of national vulnerability to outside steel producers already produces protectionist reflexes. More fundamentally, the existence of a nationalised British coal and steel industry will be brought into question. Articles 66 and 67 of the Treaty of Paris that founded the coal and steel community specifically challenge the notion of industrial concentrations (public or private) enjoying apparently dominant positions in an enlarged community. The operative official phrase refers to concentrations "used for purposes contrary to the objectives of the treaty (of Paris)" and this militates against British nationalised concerns in two important respects. On the one hand, the treaty of Paris deals only with coal and steel, and therefore has no relevance to other industrial and commercial monopolies. The weight of these Paris treaty prescriptions, therefore, falls only on coal and steel. The remainder of EEC institutions and regulations have not been competent to prevent the growth of other concentrations and monopolies. On the other hand, the fact that British coal and steel are nationalised, under a public corporation, means that the line of challenge from the community (from the council of ministers, from the commission) will be political, aimed at governments at the highest level. Nationalised industries for this reason, are significantly more vulnerable to attack by community pressures than are private monopolies, many of which are trans-national or American owned with very obscure structures of control and decision making power. Although the community has officially agreed that the National Coal Board and the British Steel Corporation are not incompatible with community rules, nobody can ignore the competitive pressures that are building up in this field, especially in the wake of the new economic restrictionism introduced by the US government.

The rapid improvement in the market position of oil and natural gas, which was a significant factor in the decisions of the West German government to champion the forming of the Ruhrköhle combine, and the threat of dumping of Japanese steel on European markets, are certain to lead to an excessively competitive atmosphere, one which will be exacerbated as the recession that looms on the near horizon of community activity gathers speed. The essentially political nature of British coal and steel production will inevitably lead to political pressure accumulating at the doors of any British administration seeking to invest heavily in one or the other nationalised industry, or attempts to take the kind of administrative or planning decision for which nationalisation per se is specifically designed. Significantly, British steel is not dependent on the European Investments Bank. When the commission weakness in this respect (in that it cannot withhold finance because it would not be giving it) is realised, the pressures on British governments will increase.

In contrast to this apparent vulnerability of the nationalised sector in an enlarged community, the dynamic of the market since its earliest days has been towards the concentration of private capital. Much
of this process of concentration has been encouraged by the impetus of community action. In the field of technology, for example, the recent (Aigran) report, drawn up by experts, suggested more than 40 specific areas for inter-state collaboration: hovercrafts, telecommunications, computers, and so on. It is highly symbolic, too, that the early pro-entry views of the last Labour government hinged on dreams of vast, co-ordinated technological institutions. Yet it is this consideration that produces the momentum towards concentration of industrial power. The resolution of the council of science ministers of the six in October 1967, having dwelt on the need for "scientific and technological progress," concluded in emphasising with full voice the importance of formulating a European company status, a decision that encourages the development of community wide industrial monoliths.

This momentum is further accelerated by such schemes as the Colonna plan of March 1970: an ambitious memorandum of the commission on industrial policy, which further ingrained the notion of European inter-state capitalism, even though its effect was limited. There were five main points: a simple market should be further pursued through the elimination of purely technical friction (techniques, measurements, and so on) and the opening of public contracts to all producers; laws and taxes should be totally unified; European scale mergers should be positively encouraged; industrial change should be speeded up; and contact should be maintained with other governments over the implementation of these policies. National mergers within a single member state of the community, the kind of concentration favoured and urged by the old Industrial Re-organisation Corporation in Britain, are rejected as attacks on the idea of the European company.

The atmosphere of panic that has invaded the boardrooms of large industrial concerns in Europe and in this country as a result of this general broadcasting of future community developments has produced a mounting volume of mergers and cartelisation. In a recent commission report on the electrical industry, for example, the formation of two or three enormous community combinations was even actively urged. Community governments were openly requested not to obstruct supra-national mergers in pursuit of this amalgamation objective. At about the same time, June 1970, the council of ministers adopted a commission proposal preventing national governments from developing independent policies for the distribution of investment in transport industries. The Dunlop/Pirelli merger ("the largest trans-national merger since 1929"), creating a vast trans-national complex with an annual turnover in excess of $2200 million, sets the pattern for manufacturing monopolies.

In the more obscure fields of banking and finance, where influence is all the more crucial because of its indirectness, this pattern has been repeated. In January 1971, three very large European banks (Credit Lyonnais of France, the Commerzbank of West Germany, and Italy's Banco di Roma) completed an agreement to combine their resources and develop a united front on financial matters. The resultant concentration represents one of the most formidable financial institutions in the world: combined assets total $21,000 million, deposits exceed $18,000 million. It is easily the largest banking organisation in Europe. Community regulations intended to prevent such a combination through legal and technical requirements were simply circumvented by agreement to a "co-operation and specialisation" arrangement. Moreover, the fact that the Italian and French banks are publicly run did nothing to obstruct negotiations with the privately owned West German bank. Competitive alliances have been struck at the beginning of a process of rationalisation in European banking that will eventually produce an oligopolistic fraternity of financial giants.

The Midland Bank recently helped form the European Banks' International Company, embracing the Deutsche Bank and Belgian and Dutch concerns. A third large combination, the Société Financière Européenne (SFE), covering banks from all member states in the community and hold-
ing deposits of over $70,000 million, has been formed over the past few years. An explicit function of these gigantic banking conglomerations has been the financing of the new multi-national companies that have slowly emerged, companies that rely on quite different financing practices from traditional industrial groups. The most essential new services offered by these multi-national banks are those specifically called for by this new Eurocompany phenomenon: factoring, leasing, multi-currency loans, advice and participation, through direct bank investments, in cross national mergers and take overs. SFF, in particular, sees itself as a source of long range funds for multinational company investment.

All of this makes one look with a dismayed smile at article 61 of the Rome treaty: "the liberalisation of banking and insurance services connected with movements of capital shall be effected in harmony with the progressive liberalisation of the movement of capital." "Liberalisation" is coming increasingly to mean the consolidation of wealth and capital in large institutionalised structures. The system of institutionalised capitalism that has overtaken simple factory capitalism, through the growth of financial and productive empires (insurance, banking mergers, absorption and take overs by large manufacturing units) has moved openly onto the plane of western European co-operation. At this level the one central element is the one that has attracted least attention: the supranationalising of this conglomeration process has raised all financial and industrial giants beyond the ambit of political control. No institution in the EEC is equipped to deal with the questions of commercial power raised by European mergers and trans-national agreements. The contradiction inherent in the community dynamic (that merger and concentration are the only methods available for the achievement of community objectives of high production and greater cost efficiency, and yet the community ethos apparently rejects the concept of concentrated industrial power) is one that neither major party in this country has been able to overcome.

To accept the notion of concentration of private capital is instinctive to Conservative thinking; most members of the Labour Party have implicitly accepted the same general suppositions through an underdeveloped assessment of the need for technological and productive advances. As Colin Crouch concluded, concerning Labour's approach to the whole question of the power of the modern corporation in Politics in a technological society (Young Fabian pamphlet no. 23) "the response of socialism to these developments has been as ambiguous as its response to bureaucratic administration." How is it, otherwise, that Anthony Wedgwood Benn can say, in The new politics (Fabian tract, no. 402, p. 7) "for technology also releases forces that simultaneously permit and encourage decentralisation, diversity and the further development of the human personality," after he himself agrees (ibid, p. 1) that Labour had accepted the idea of community membership because it offered the possibility of an "escape from its economic straitjacket?" He could only have been suggesting, no matter how reluctantly, that "merger with the six," as he calls it, increased the prospects of "technological freedom," whatever that may mean. If this is The new politics, it is the politics of misplaced optimism!

"People," Benn concluded, "who want to change the community in which they live, the conditions under which they work, and the world in which their children will grow up, are now everywhere engaged in a struggle to get the power that will allow them to do all these things." Apart from this assertion being generally quite untrue, the whole tenor of The new politics appears, whether or not the Labour shadow cabinet eventually opted to oppose British membership of EEC, to have positively encouraged the belief that the community was a channel for this "technological realism" that could guarantee both economic well being and a vague kind of individual improvement that carries no dangers of economic supré-exploitation. This is typical of the ambiguity that overtook Labour thinking on the nature and promises of the EEC, an ambiguity that has left deep divisions and
internal contradictions within the party. The whole progress of the European community, in the economic sphere, has been towards concentration of capital, with no counterbalancing development of assertive institutions, and Labour strategists have failed either to identify the problems or to act to solve them. Trade union reaction has been slow; indeed, the first ever meeting of major European unions in the motor industry, called to discuss collective strategy, took place only in December 1969, more than ten years after the founding of the market. They were powerless to prevent the American management of Ford, almost two years later, using the threat of transferring expansion plans to Ford of West Germany, in order to try to break a strike at Dagenham. The most that unions can apparently hope for is a measure of co-determination in any European multi-national company structure that will eventually emerge, on the lines of co-determination in the coal and steel community and in German industry. This is the practice enshrined in developed community practice. Yet German co-determination has had no effect on the control of production itself; co-determination remains a method of regulating hours, employment and conditions, and of minimising political action.

The ownership and control of capital remains unaffected. The European Confederation of Free Trade Unions, at its conference in October 1970, heard its general secretary say: “we see no reason why the cost of eventual rationalisation should fall on the workers’ shoulders in the form of redundancies.” Yet they have no means, political intervention apart, of influencing company decisions taken at a multi-national level. Multi-national companies invariably rely on world wide profit levels as a foundation for new investment decisions; decisions on national operations fall into this framework. Not only can this lead to disinvestment or diversion of investment, with redundancy the result, it is also largely overlooked by trade unions in their bargaining approaches to these companies. As Louis Turner showed, in Politics and the multi-national company (Fabian research series, no. 279) unions are yet to realise that multi-national companies must be attacked multi-nationally, on global terms. The commission of the community is yet to produce legislation geared to protecting unions in a market of multi-nationals.

The concept of worker control through participation on the co-determination pattern is a myth. The representation of employees on most West German supervisory boards, for example (the backbone of German co-determination) simply ranges shop floor opinion, as far as this can be voiced through institutionalised representatives of long standing who have been remote from the daily problems of factory employment for several years, against shareholders and management views in a minority of two to one. Labour relations have been better in West Germany than in this country because the economy has been able to deliver the goods in terms of wages and conditions; moreover, prophesies of increased labour resistance in West Germany have become commonplace in recent months. The situation should not automatically be seen as a paragon of enlightened trade union-management techniques. In France the “participation” schemes in industry brought in under the fifth republic stand as an exercise in political legerdemain; participation in terms of profit sharing, introduced in 1967, had given a mere 2,500,000 French workers a total of £10 each by the beginning of 1971. Companies involved in profit sharing, on a clearly minute scale, benefit from tax relief for their expenditure. Again, the control of capital and the context of decision making has not been affected. It remains a technique of political management; but even then, British unions have not even reached this stage.

How much more complex is the problem of dealing with international companies with distributed management and obscure centres of decision making power? Commission drafts for a law on European companies have missed the point at issue; subsidiaries of US companies, for example, will be allowed, under proposed laws, to take advantage of community rules on company incorporation. A French sub-
sidiary of IBM, for instance, could link up with a British branch of IBM and call itself a European company, enjoying the benefits of this status, including the ability to operate freely in all states of an enlarged community. Current plans for harmonisation of taxes in the community, especially the commission plan published in January 1969, allows subsidiaries to transfer profits to parent companies in neighbouring EEC states in order to take advantage of friendlier taxation rates in the latter. The net effect in this respect will be to encourage “Euro-companies” to set up parent headquarters in those EEC states where taxes are most favourable towards profits. There are many ways in which a harmonised tax system could be circumvented so as to create an attractive tax climate and thereby generate competitive investment that would unbalance the investment pattern in the community as a whole. At the moment price regulations for coal and steel, for example, are openly avoided through a technique known as “fidelity discounts,” which make possible lower prices for large customers. Of all aspects of economic management, taxation is the most vulnerable to abuse. Harmonisation of taxation, monetary union (if ever these objectives are realised) will never prevent the further consolidation of economic power in the hands of internationalised capital, and will not prevent the steady concentration of economic wealth in those areas of the community where capital earnings are greatest. This is already very much in evidence in the EEC as a whole. Investment from foreign sources is concentrating in the heartland of Germany and Benelux, France and Italy are attracting well below their proportionate potential (see, for example, Wayland Kennet and others: Sovereignty and the multi-national company, Fabian tract no. 409, p. 11).

The whole momentum of the EEC is towards this very end; regional stimulation by member governments is obstructed, free movement of labour and capital is an avowed aim. All this is inherent in the formal mechanisms and operational realities of the community. It is precisely the informal, secretive and indirect nature of the understanding that motivates business and finance that will form the basis of a potentially overpowering movement of control from governments to Euro-company boardrooms. The step from nationality to supra-nationality in economics misses out a crucial point within the context of western European integration; the institutions of EEC are not equipped, were never intended to be so, to deal with the political aspect of supra-national capital. With enlargement, and with the greater complication of the institutional problems that this will bring, the situation will become ever more intractable.

The popular criticism that “the EEC is a market for car manufacturers,” for one example, is based on precisely these points. Cross national mergers and understandings, have multiplied since the market began. The political equation, moreover, without the clear provision of such an equation in either the Rome treaties or in subsequent implementing decisions, has increasingly been based itself upon direct relations between industry and the Brussels commission. The immense power enjoyed by the commission itself (power only distorted by the commission’s growing operational problems) has produced a clear awareness that close contact with commission officials is an important part of company planning at the European level. Fiat, for example, have used the EEC as a springboard for a massive expansion. The company maintains a strong bureau in Brussels, the sole function of which is to keep abreast of commission thinking on regulations and policy concerning motor manufacturers. No doubt the Fiat bureau keeps the commission fully informed of Fiat views. It is hardly surprising, perhaps, that Fiat enjoyed an incredibly 355 per cent expansion in output between 1958 and 1970. German motor production grew by 168 per cent in comparison, that of France by 151 per cent.

In fact, the politics of economic nationalism that have always governed the development of European integration, are now taking on a new lease of life as general friction within the existing community of six is increased by the additional stresses and competition that en-
largement will produce. This dynamic of national self protection, antagonistic to the ideal of balanced community development, will produce mounting protectionism and disguised, irregular national encouragement to specific investment intended to stimulate national industrial concentration quite contrary to community principles. The public statements of the French prime minister, Chaban-Delmas, in February 1971, that “it was necessary to encourage multi-national corporations to make of France one of their principal centres of development in Europe” typifies the kind of approach that governments linked closely to organised business will increasingly adopt as they realise that community operation seriously challenges government power to determine national investment levels. When used by parties on the left this same argument is rejected by the protagonists of international finance, those who are internationalist only until profit margins begin to fall.

It is calculated that by the eighties, two or three hundred multi-national groups will totally dominate international trade, and will control around 75 per cent of social wealth in the western world. (See Dubois and Ramadier. “Vie des multinationales et luttes syndicales internationales.” Politique d’aujourd’hui, December 1971.) Agreements between these same corporations will further tighten their collective grip on the development of industry and on related political power. Around 85 per cent of these multi-nationals will be of US origin. The rate of growth of these multi-nationals. European groups included, will be approximately 12 per cent annually; the national growth rates of western economies stretch only between 3 and 5 per cent annually. Inherent in this internationalised structure of capital, therefore, is a steady expansion in its relative strength, rapidly overtaking the national product of many European states. Even now General Motors’ sales exceed the GNP of Belgium and Switzerland; Ford’s are parallel to the total national produce of Turkey. Even at the European level, Shell and Unilever both exceed Portugal in terms of output.

This is no longer simply a question of fashionable anti-Americanism, of writing best selling books, which, like The American challenge, not only misrepresent the nature of the problem but provide no assistance in plotting courses of action. It is a question of realising that capitalism now stands, in western Europe, on the threshold of a qualitatively different era, one in which the nature of political power will change significantly. The groundwork of preparation for an international system based on supra-national economic power (American overseas investment, and in Europe supra-national integration in the hands of governments of big business) has been laid, and the prospect of seeing an enlarged European Community add conclusive weight to this process, through conscious decisions and ideological dedication now looms very large. The fact that the Euro-American economic relationship will be one of intensifying competition and conflict at both official and business level, rather than of co-operation, merely guarantees that multi-national strategies will be the more cut throat and insensitive.

The descriptive and analytical tale is endless; factual data abounds and increases. The European community has reached such a stage of development that the entry of a Labour Government would entail either searing confrontation (over a period of two or three years) on issues of fundamentals, or rejection of any appendix of socialist thought that at present exists. Entry with a Conservative government will be a disaster, in that the present operation of that community is a manifestation of practical beliefs upon which Conservatism has flourished for generations. No Conservative government is capable of questioning, and therefore changing, the general momentum and direction of economic development at the European level. More pertinently, the general state of thought within the Labour movement makes impossible the task of developing a basic critique of community operation. Because co-ordinated policies on the left (anywhere on the left) have never materialised at the community level, those developments inherent in uncontrolled capitalism have become inevitable.
The adhesion of the United Kingdom to the European Economic Community is now, but for the ritual of parliamentary approval, a fact. The moment has come to move attention to the implications of this new European configuration, and to the question of the nature of the new framework that will now increasingly determine this country's development.

In the address delivered before the United Nations by the French foreign minister, Maurice Schumann, in September 1971, we were told, in the wake of successful entry negotiations, that Europe, because of economic integration and political cooperation, is becoming "a community of hope." It has already become, in so many ways, a community of myth and illusion. Failure to recognise this fact will place increasing strain on the operation of that enlarged community and, worse, obscure the second fact that the development of that enlarged entity is rapidly becoming anti-thetical both to the aims of some of its early founders and to the realities of socialist objectives. Europe is dying, no matter what the analytical starting point employed. From outside, American pressures to eliminate the protectionist implications of enlargement, and American fears of the potential strength of a unity in western Europe that American governments have officially encouraged for a generation, will combine over the next few years to produce a significant change in the climate of Atlantic relations.

From within, political change within the member states of the community, both concerning domestic policy and at the level of foreign policy objectives, will add considerable stresses to the functioning of a new community of ten that will increasingly confront the serious adjustment problems that this very enlargement will generate.

In particular, political change in France, the key member of the community, threatens to raise new questions of cohesion concerning the management of community operations.

The European Community was a child of the cold war. It was also a child of French diplomacy. The failure of us policy makers to comprehend the complexities of European politics, and the failure of the post-war Labour government, led by Ernest Bevin at the Foreign Office, by Stafford Cripps at the Treasury, by Harold Wilson at the Board of Trade, to gauge the strength of political movements in western Europe that favoured a commitment by a Labour government then and there to the task of restructuring western Europe, opened the doors to French initiative. This triptych of American bewilderment, British myopia and French economic expansionism has governed the nature of western European relations since 1950.

The Coal and Steel Community, the basis of the original western Europe of the six, was launched in 1950 in a spirit of anti-Soviet self protection and national re-assertion. It sealed the development of Europe within strictly defined structures, and thrived on internal conflicts and contradictions. The progress of "integration" fed on the pattern of confrontation in Europe between east and west and between neighbour and neighbour in the west. While this pattern of relationships remained central to the development of European life the "integrationist" forces were afforded nourishment. Integration flourish on the notions of defence and threat.

"Europe" has always been a psychological idea. The essence of Robert Schuman's proposal for a pooling of coal and steel resources, made in May 1950, was the psychological shock that it would produce. The secrecy surrounding the development of the scheme, the careful timing of its announcement, the public relations work that accompanied it, were calculated to guarantee the maximum emotional and intellectual reaction. This objective of creating a sudden psychological reaction was brought nearer still by the climate of tension that governed European politics at that time. The outbreak of war in Korea in the following month, therefore, added to the hysteria of defensive lament in western Europe, and gave further stimulus to French plans for inter-state collaboration. The French timing could not have been more fortuitous.
Nevertheless, the origins of this integration were nursed by a persistent undercurrent of international crisis, an undercurrent that added the crucial element of political imperative that kept up the momentum of western European initiative; but this political component has changed considerably in the last ten years. West Germany has recovered its economic pre-eminence, a development integration was designed to control rather than frustrate. More significantly, however, Bonn has now moved into the ascendant in terms of economic sovereignty: 1968, the year of Bonn’s rejection of French demands for a revaluation of the mark, witnessed the beginning of West German economic wilfulness; 1971, the year of Herr Brandt’s visit to the Russian leadership in Crimea, marked the end of the western European system erected by the French in 1950. In May of that year, The Economist had concluded a searching examination of the failure by Paris to contain the revival of West Germany with the words: “It is clear that the French have lost the day.” In the wake of the Schuman initiative, which coincided with the survey by The Economist as if the French foreign ministry had been stung into frenzied action by the words of the journal, the same publication continued, in its next edition: “The Schuman plan came at a crucial point in the post-war history of the Rhur.” This single fact can never be sufficiently stressed.

The structure of the six, under attack from the laboured machinations of successive British governments since its inception (with only vague propositions to offer as alternatives) has become irrelevant to the purposes for which it was created. Because it was only marginally relevant by 1969, and even less so by 1970 and 1971, the French, led by President Pompidou, decided to change radically the way in which it functioned. The six were to become the nine or ten. It is convenient that this change in the parameters coincided with the death of General de Gaulle, for it will sustain for the future the illusion that de Gaulle represented a strange aberration in the history of French politics, and that de Gaulle’s rejection of British overtures was the gesture of a cantankerous embittered old man. It will obscure the clear fact that de Gaulle voiced the attitudes of important sections of the French establishment, and that President Pompidou and the ruling UDF movement represent much the same people. It is the external realities of the situation that have changed rather than the complexion of the French decision making elite (see The New France: Heirs on Trial by James Bellini, Young Fabian pamphlet no. 21).

This is why the political geography of western European politics has changed drastically over the last three years, why the British refusal to recognise changed circumstances in Europe will add one more complicating factor to the development of western European relations after enlargement. The Conservative government appears to have misplaced a decade of political change. This can be the only explanation of Edward Heath’s remarkable speech to West German leaders during his visit to Bonn early in 1971 in the early days of pump priming before negotiations for entry were successfully concluded. A failure in those negotiations, predicted Heath before a prestigious Bonn audience, would represent an important victory for the Soviet Union. What could have been the purpose of this strange remark? To browbeat the West Germans? But they never wavered in their support for British membership. Moscow could only have its basic hostility reinforced.

The only possible effect on Paris would have been to add doubt over British entry, since Paris has earnestly been laying the foundation of a strong Franco-Russian entente for many months; increasing French misgiving was even less desirable at that juncture. Why, then, this clumsy exercise in exhumation of the vocabulary of the ‘fifties, to be followed only a few months later by election of 105 Soviet officials on charges of espionage?

It all points to the most depressing conclusion; that this unfathomable aspect of British policy has been designed partly to placate those highly placed pessimists in Washington who have developed very cold feet about uniting western Europe.
4. towards a future of American hostility

Governments in the United States have never, since 1947, been able to square the circle of western European integration. This bewilderment and anxiety has persisted. In February 1970, President Nixon affirmed the official US stand on enlargement: "The economic price of a truly unified Europe is outweighed by the gain in the political vitality of the west as a whole" (a viewpoint, incidentally, that dredges up the phraseology of Ernest Bevin’s cold war, and fits into the pattern alluded to by Edward Heath in his Bonn speech). Behind this outward American calm there fester, however, a deepening sore that will, in time, powerfully colour the whole relationship between the two western blocs. The "economic price" that President Nixon refers to has come to represent, after studied reappraisal by Washington experts, and especially after the monetary upheavals of 1971, a developing nightmare for the proponents of dollar supremacy.

Ambivalence over integration in Europe has remained the staple of state department thinking on North Atlantic affairs. Ambivalence reigned in 1950; it predominates today. Thus, while the relatively new president was offering the press the platitudes of diplomacy in February 1970, J. Robert Schaeftel, the US representative in Brussels, was telling experts (in Bonn, oddly enough) of profound American misgivings about future dealings with the European Economic Community. There was growing official concern, he said, over the widening circle of special agreements between the community and both developed and underdeveloped countries. These agreements, continued Schaeftel, contravened GATT regulations. In Congress and in American industry, he added, protectionist pressures were intensifying. In January 1971, as if to inaugurate that decisive year with suitable expressions of unease, Philip Trezise, assistant secretary of state for economic affairs, came to Brussels to apprise EEC civil servants of his government's concern. The response of the French was, predictably, to turn American criticism on their authors. US policy, said foreign minister Maurice Schumann, aims at penetrating the sacred agricultural sector while running down American trade with the underdeveloped world. The community as a whole agrees with the French view. In fact, the commission in Brussels transmitted an official memorandum to Washington in October 1970, placing on record its "deep concern over protectionist trends in Congress." Commission member Ralph Dahrendorf, in fact, conferred lengthily with American officials, himself armed with a secret list of politically sensitive American export commodities lined up by the EEC for potential retaliation.

Commission reports repeatedly decry the enormous trade surplus the United States (despite her overall massive deficit) has run up with the six; this now stands at an annual volume of around $2.5 billion. Washington officials counter attack with heavy criticism of European monopoly in trade with Africa and Mediterranean markets, fostered by the mechanisms of the Yaoundé conventions and by association agreements. The US secretary for agriculture complains incessantly about community protectionism in farm products. All are valid criticisms and most still persist. The acrimony deepens. To add further dimension, 1970 was very significant in a different respect. British trade with the EEC leapt by 15 per cent, making British trade with Europe as a whole predominant for the first time ever.

All that Washington can see is a future of an increasingly powerful western Europe indulging in a disguised post-imperial economic colonialism in which the United States is denied its old role. This realisation has affected the four corners of American thinking. On trade the rising tide of self protection eliminated obstacles which would have prevented President Nixon introducing the surcharges and restrictions of August 1971. On defence matters a vociferous and influential group led by Senators Fulbright and Symington demands increased military contributions from prosperous community governments. At a time when military spending has been relegated to a secondary level of priorities. As if to deepen the intense irritation and gloom that has overtaken Washington in the last few months, when Professor Richard Cooper of Yale addressed the
joint committee of Congress recently, he left congressmen with this uncomfortable thought: “today the European community has by far the largest trade with the rest of the world, and by historical precedent the mantle of leadership should pass to it.”

The future of relations between the United States and an enlarged community will clearly be, therefore, one of severe antagonism and frustration. The monetary developments of 1971 have been both a cause of this growing enmity and a consequence of its manifestations. With the worsening of this situation will come a disintegration, rather than an apparently predictable hardening, of the community view. Instead of viewing the current crisis as an opportunity for fundamental rethinking, governments in western Europe decided to see it as a test of their own particular political and economic resilience. West Germany was reluctant to incur American hostility; France was unwilling to sacrifice the pleasure drawn from visions of Washington’s panic in the interests of a restructur- ing of western European monetary mechanisms. The British government was left holding the remnants of its sterling role. Prospects for harmonisation in the enlarged community were reduced to zero; the fears of underdeveloped countries that are now, because of community policies since 1957, heavily dependent on growing, stable trade with the community were treated as irrelevant irritants. All that has persisted has been the economic nationalism of member governments. Nothing, in fact, has really changed, and with continuing American ambivalence towards Europe in the future, nothing will.

Even after the readjustments to parities, involving a complex devaluation of the dollar and the Pompidou-Brandt deal, the desired currency stability did not materialise. US spokesmen called for accompanying revaluations of “guilty” currencies, and trade concessions from reluctant trading allies that would return a glow to the sunken cheeks of their economy. Secretary of the treasury Connally referred obliquely to discussions of a “dollar bloc” designed to re-establish American power in a world of sophisticated mercantilism. This American obsession with the protectionism enshrined in community operations will continue to underpin Washington’s outlook on western Europe after enlargement, even to the extent of seeking bilateral arrangements with member governments to the detriment of community cohesion. The agreements the administration concluded with the six in February 1972, for example, included a privileged deal on grain involving Italy, much to the displeasure of the chief market supplier of grain, France. This kind of bilateral arrangement, though agreed through hard bargaining at community level, will increasingly disrupt the smooth functioning of the market as each member government discovers some new area of potential bilateral negotiation.

Within the community a false optimism has resulted from the monetary rescue operations that were thought to solve the problems highlighted during the various crises of 1971. With complicated adjustments made in parities, and with measures taken to restore balance in international payments, the way was clear, it was widely felt, for a return to original plans for monetary consolidation at the European level. The Werner plan, the hallowed scheme for monetary integration, was dusted off and returned to the agenda; but this optimism obscured the latent antagonisms amongst the six on monetary questions that came to the fore at the height of the 1971 crisis, that remain a constant factor in community politics, and that will deepen, as new members, some with strong ideas of their own, join that community in 1973. A second major confrontation between the French and the Germans, building on the one dominating the currency breakdown of 1971, has already developed on the question of dollar holdings. Technicalities apart, financial traditions guarantee continued confrontations on new questions as they emerge during the process of monetary harmonisation. It will be this inherent incompatibility of outlook amongst the six, one magnified after enlargement, that will make it improbable that this plan will ever be more than so much paperwork.
5. enlargement: prelude to disintegration

Whether the UK joins the community, therefore, or remains outside, the contradictions in North Atlantic trade have become more open and damaging. British entry will not remove them, but will add one more complicating factor to the manner in which the European of the ten will respond to challenges or appeals from the United States. With British membership, and with the ambitions of the City of London to dominate the financial activities of the market, the desire of the Treasury to perpetuate the rôle of sterling as both bargaining counter and shibboleth of monetary greatness, the efforts of future Labour governments to circumvent regulations penalising regional assistance and investment and obstructing national corrective policies, the climate within the community will simply be further soured, and the problem of dealing with the exigencies of US reactions made profoundly more intractable.

These complex and unanswerable questions, which collectively guarantee that the progress of Western European integration will definitely halted, spring from the developments that have made up the history of the community since its birth in 1958. The conclusion that the progress of integration, in its original sense, has begun to end, therefore, must be forcefully enunciated.

Integration has slowed, and will eventually cease, because of the interaction of two phenomena. The intensity of internal dispute over monetary policy has only exposed yet another area of the latent disjunctions in members’ views on monetary, and other, questions that can only be exposed when either the development of the community reaches a point of fundamental change or serious crisis, such as that over agricultural management, for example, that produced the breakdown of 1965 in which the French government paralysed the functioning of the community for over six months. The topic then was agriculture but the issue was that of the power of central institutions. The French government rejected the notion of an emasculated council of ministers, and, for all but basic purposes, the central institutions of the market ground to a halt until, in 1966, the deadlock was relieved by compromise. Similarly, with the 1971 monetary dispute within the market too much time was spent in lambasting the French for being their pedantic and obstinate worst over policies for revising international monetary mechanism. As Denis Healey, for example, wrote quite recently (The Sunday Times, 21 November, 1971): “there is no chance of making progress ... unless France can agree with the rest of the common market on its negotiating posture (on international monetary reform).”

This attitude, however, overlooks the fact that Belgian and Dutch banks adopted an identical stand to that of Paris, independently, before the French had even made public their own attitude on currency levels and exchange devices. To emphasise French intransigency and foolishness, the life blood of British journalistic practice these days, is to ignore the essential fact that French attitudes invariably reflect a body of community opinion of great importance. The recent attempts to paint French policy over monetary questions as an isolated exercise in petulance does the discussion about integration and its prospects no service at all, and obscures the fact that the potential for inter-governmental dispute within the community, because of enlargement and because of the changed economic climate, is probably greater than ever before.

In the second place, no attention seems to have been given to the impact of enlargement on the conceptual struggles that have formed a backdrop to the process of Western European integration over the last three decades. That process has been both complex and unbalanced, and has produced an integrated community of potentially grotesque distortion in favour of capital and undistributed power; but that same process has relied, throughout, on the need for definition and defence of concepts that “incompletion” has persistently generated. The arguments about the nature of European integration, about its demands and requirements, about its promises and problems, about “what is Europe?” have thrived on the fact that
western Europe has been split into parts and has, for 21 years, been engaged in a diplomatic saraband. Now, for those who had already arrived at an acceptable definition of Europe, the great debate is about to close. Britain and the six are about to become as one. A unification of a kind acceptable to most of those who have discussed the structure of western European integration (one embracing the present six and the applicant countries) is about to be realised. With this limited unification completed, almost certainly by January 1973, the impetus towards further definition and discussion will disappear.

We will be left with discussions by others about either the failings of this unified structure, or about techniques of disunification as elaborated by those seeking to disrupt or destroy the community structure. The debate about European integration, having reached the goals of its earliest proponents, will move into reverse gear under the control of its opponents. This process will be exaggerated by the pressures resulting from the increasing friction and disagreement that enlargement will inevitably produce, and by the tendency to transfer blame for growing economic problems (themselves probably attributed to community practice, especially in declining regions or in member countries with governments of the left) from national policies to community operation. The discussion of integration is coming to an end. The world of Jean Monnet and Paul Henri Spaak, the disciples of functional integration, is coming to an end. What will replace it will not be an attempt to redefine the notions and redesign the structures of European co-operation, the real task of the European left; but the sterile negativism of Enoch Powell and Hugh Dalton and of all those in the Labour movement who today see the European debate only in terms of the progress of their own political careers.

**French instability: return to an unreliable pattern**

Significantly, the European Common Market was formally established in the very year when basic constitutional and political change overtook its pivotal member. In 1958 the French fourth republic gave up and died, and the system and men of Charles de Gaulle took over. For this reason the France that has dominated the market from its foundation was a France upon which had been imposed an artificial stability and a limited new strength. For ten years the name of de Gaulle came to be synonymous with discussions not only of French policy but, increasingly, of common market development. It was an act of peculiar fate. If the May 1958 coup had been six months earlier and de Gaulle's intervention made operative in late 1957, perhaps France would never have become a full member of the community, with all the implications that hindsight leads us to suppose. In any event, France is changing, and the extent to which change in France affects the medium term prospects of the community is not adequately realised even by those who keep a watchful eye on European developments. Between 1958 and 1968, the formative, infant years of the market, France was reassertive, stable and economically strong. French views, magnified by the very mechanisms of the market (especially in agriculture) that gave the French voice prominence, came to be very much the determining factor at points of critical change in market functioning. French views and practices have become an institutionalised aspect of community operation.

In addition to this, the particular political and diplomatic circumstances of enlargement (a shift in the pattern of economic power in western Europe, most significantly as regards the relationship between West Germany and France) have made a new *entente cordiale*, an Anglo-French conservative alliance, a prime component in the running of the enlarged community. It is for these two reasons, the prominent French role in market affairs and the diplomatic dependence on the French, apparently accepted by Edward Heath, that the immediate future of French internal political life becomes overridingly important. It has become essential that we come to terms with the kind of France that will develop over the next five years, and it is for this reason that forecasts of
French instability and domestic confusion become all the more important. For the truth is that 1973, the year of British entry, will also be the year in which French politics may begin a return to the traditions of chaos and collapse that acquired the reputation of normality during the 'forties and 'fifties.

The fifth republic's honeymoon, quite clearly, is over. The general has gone and the constitutional and political framework that he sanctified, and which helps explain the energy and bouyancy of France during the first ten critical years of the development of the six as an integrated market, now has a changed political environment in which to work. The pressures that will be produced by this confrontation of Gaullist political structure and new political forces, encourage doubts about the capacity of French governments to follow a consistent line in the years ahead.

The post-1958 stability, which seemed to rest on Gaullist constitutional manipulation and de Gaulle's own political stature, underwrote the policies followed with such success at the international level. In the general elections of 1962 the Gaullist UDF became the first party of independent majority power in French history. This majority status was improved in 1967 and in June 1968, when conservatives rallied to the régime after the student/worker disturbances. Today, three quarters of the seats in the French parliament are held by Gaullist supporters. However, the 1958 constitution only guaranteed stability when linked directly to Gaullist power. The president of the republic was Charles de Gaulle; the prime minister was a “placeman”; the assembly was Gaullist. A crucial element in this structure of stability was the tacit alliance de Gaulle forged with French communists, who saw in Gaullist foreign policy (loosening of the western alliance, departure from NATO, diplomatic moves towards the Soviet bloc and towards China, official support for anti-American wars in Asia) sufficient grounds for watering down political demands on the domestic front. All things were possible with the kind of constitutional and political balance which existed under the presidency of de Gaulle; strong president, subservient premier (ensured through the appointment of non-political figures such as Maurice Couve de Murville) and muted, sycophantic assembly.

After de Gaulle's departure in 1969 analysts everywhere concluded that nothing had really changed. Pompidou was de Gaulle's man; everything would be fine. In the last six months the foundations of this argument have been swept away. As a result, the near future of the fifth republic is becoming a topic of profound speculation.

In the first place, a serious constitutional contradiction was built into the 1958 constitution, and it is becoming an issue of mounting interest. The 1958 changes introduced strong presidential government along lines preached by de Gaulle and his lieutenants for years. Michael Débré, the present minister for national defence, took a leading part in drafting the new constitution, which deliberately shifted the centre of gravity of executive power away from the prime minister and parliament onto a non-elected president. Since de Gaulle chose to become president rather than prime minister (a choice open to him) the balance was not redressed, but rather tipped even further away from prime ministerial jurisdiction. In 1962 the presidential office became even more prestigious with the introduction of direct universal elections of presidents.

With de Gaulle as president, competition for status between president and prime minister never materialised; but de Gaulle's firm hold on office only disguised the fact that a basically prime ministerial régime had been given a strong executive president. In the United States, in West Germany, in Great Britain, there is a defined and recognised structure of power. Control remains with the US president, German chancellor or British prime minister, with no competing second office. In France, where constitutional pundits christened the fifth republic "a semi-presidential régime" without realising that this was cause for concern rather than for satisfaction, the position of prime
minister is awkwardly ambiguous, and with the disappearance of Charles de Gaulle this ambiguity is beginning to surface. President Pompidou is losing the popular following that, even after May 1968, Charles de Gaulle enjoyed.

He lacks the historical and charismatic glamour that made the general acceptable even when his policies and acts lost favour. The ruling UDR have been clamouring for a real leader, a problem President Pompidou can only ever solve by "appointing" some leading Gaullist of proven worth (Chaban-Delmas, for instance, had an impressive resistance record); but any emergent UDR leader can only be a direct challenge to Pompidou's own position. This dilemma can never be overcome; for a French president to assume the leadership of any party, even a Gaullist party, the heart of de Gaulle's constitutional legacy must be jettisoned. The president must remain above politics. Yet by rejecting that political leadership, Pompidou inevitably sacrifices an important fraction of the support he will desperately need if he is to swing the 1976 presidential election and maintain a Gaullist continuity.

More important, however, is the fact that next year, the year of British entry, is also general election year in France. It is these parliamentary elections that could weaken the assembly support that hitherto has protected President Pompidou from disaster. If this parliamentary cornerstone of presidential power (and no fifth republic president has yet had to contend with an openly hostile assembly) is removed, it will result in the disappearance of the central element in the present equation of French stability, the freedom of the president to appoint a premier that parliament tolerates. A three cornered struggle will develop between president, prime minister and parliament that never existed under the governments of de Gaulle. If the UDR majority is eliminated in the elections of 1973, this tenuous relationship will collapse and the French government will be pushed into a new kind of suspended animation dependent upon shifting conditions of the centre and right.

There are some signs that the elections, and the campaigns preceding them, will produce considerable change in the distribution of power in the national assembly. To begin with, the UDR majority itself is adjusting with difficulty to the strains imposed by de Gaulle's death. The movement is undergoing a crisis of redefinition, both of dogma and of objectives. There is a growing list of defecting members, alienated in this process: Pouchet, Vendroux and Jeanneney are prominent amongst them. Electoral bargaining will claim more of the less committed UDR adherents during 1972.

More critically, a profound change has overtaken the official policy of the French Communist Party. During the era of de Gaulle the party maintained an alliance of convenience with the government, allowing it maximum freedom on foreign policy, an alliance so soporific doctrinally that by 1968 the communists could offer nothing concrete or relevant to capitalise on student/worker demonstrations. They had become, it seemed, a member of the governing coalition. In the last few months all this has changed. In attacks on, first, the UDR and then the president himself, communist leaders signalled abandonment of an arrangement that had come to be a component of government stability. As the recent UDR congress closed, Georges Marchais, secretary general of the French Communist Party, at a rally of party faithful, opened up. "The UDR," he said, "is already passé . . . a totalitarian party, a party of big business."

Apart from this being, in some respects, the truth, it clearly manifested an official policy decision, for only weeks later this highly critical tone moved against the president himself, for the first time in a decade. At a party politburo session Pompidou's performance in foreign affairs was officially condemned. Central to communist disillusionment is the belief that de Gaulle's policies are being reversed: SEC enlargement, acceptance of new US offensives in Vietnam, flashy supersonic visits to President Nixon. Communist statements refer to it as a policy of "re-Atlanticisation," of returning to the pre-1958 outlook on Atlantic rela-
tions. Domestic, economic and social policy have now been brought within the range of this communist criticism, exposing the whole area of the government’s programme. Put into an electoral context this shift by French communists (one discouraged by Moscow, but persisted with) is of primary importance. Since late 1970 they have officially endorsed a new unprecedented programme of “popular and democratic union.” Negotiation continues with the socialist leadership. Above all, French communists seek a return to parliamentary power, and to a strength in the assembly more in keeping with the 5 million votes they regularly attract. Through the peculiar operation of the 1958 constitution this massive electoral support gave them only ten seats in 1958. By 1968 it was still only 34. With the emergence of a new and surprisingly strong extreme left fraternity, the party feels even more desperately the need to mend fences with political neighbours. Attacking Gaullists and Gaullism is an attractive starting point.

This is the political picture that now more closely represents the state of French politics. It is this prognosis of intensifying instability that must govern judgments not only about the immediate future of the French system that has survived for 14 years but about the prospects for western European development that now, more than ever, is tied to the contribution of the French. Bad government in France will offer less consolation than unsympathetic government, and in the western European integrated community that we are now being compelled to join, bad government in France can only turn reluctant and bitter toleration of membership under a Conservative government into a permanent nightmare. Yet it could so easily be the case.

Recent developments, the referendum exercise and the British royal visit to France, only serve to emphasise the contradictions inherent in French constitutional operation. The logic behind the referendum decision was the need to split the consolidating alliance of the left wing groups. This, in fact, has been achieved, with communists and socialists disagreeing on market policies; but it obscures a central point that follows from the argument about French constitutional dilemmas. The referendum was used by President Pompidou to re-establish the political strength of the majority, thus illustrating the fact that a Gaullist president finds it impossible to stay aloof from political intervention when his supporting Gaullist majority is threatened. It points to the growing problem of the UDF in maintaining popular support, and it points to the impossibility of the French president’s rising above a semi-political (one could say opportunist) status requiring periodic political interventions in the best tradition of de Gaulle. President Pompidou’s enthusiasm for a British royal visit, moreover, only adds to the confusion, representing as it does his desire to be seen as a regal head of state in a political system that still demands that he be more than an apolitical constitutional monarch if stability is to endure.
For two related reasons the Labour Party enters 1972 and 1973, and therefore enters the European community, with no policy on western Europe at all. At the fundamental level, Labour's approach to the question of British integration into western Europe has been tortuous, erratic and, in basic terms, totally incoherent. That approach, if indeed it can be called an approach at all, was a product of a total failure on the party's side to come to terms with the nature of European integration and attempt a structured and tenable analysis of its implications. The only judgment that fits this fundamental collapse of Labour thinking is one borrowed from Arthur Schlesinger's apology for US escalatory policies in Vietnam; the whole episode developed into a struggle between high principled enlightenment and an enveloping quagmire of incomprehensible political and social circumstances.

At the sophisticated level, the realisation by the makers of Labour's policies during 1970 and 1971 that they had to develop a strategy of sorts, produced an uncompromising stand on Labour's part in favour of what a very recent writer termed "the chauvinism of British Labour." The desperate search by the Labour leadership for an alternative to its originally avowed intent to join the Six, which became politically poisonous after it had been echoed and usurped by a Conservative government, took it into the refuge of all politicians in their final hour, that of nationalism and jingoism. The whole weight of Labour thinking has been deliberately and openly shifted to the platform of opportunistic populism which lurks expectantly in the shadows of public life ready to come to the aid of all parties in search of policies. Even a brief examination of the utterances of Labour leaders over the last two or three years will show the bankruptcy of their collective attitudes to the question of joining the community, as reflected in a pattern of contradictions in individual views and incomplete analysis of the issues involved.

This last phase of Labour's development begins late in 1969, immediately prior to the Hague summit of leaders of the EEC, when the Labour government backed by the foreign office, decided that forthright speech was needed to accelerate the process then under way within the EEC itself towards full acceptance of British entry. In an article written by George Thomson, then in charge of policy on entry negotiations, Labour's commitment to entry was spelt out in the clearest, simplest and most unambiguous terms in such a way as to remove the prospect of any later change of course. "We looked very carefully at the alternatives (that is after the 1966 general election) and came to the conclusion that none offered the same attractions as the course the government decided to take—a clear, unqualified application for full membership of the European communities under article 237 of the EEC treaty..." (European community, November 1969). George Thomson followed this statement of total commitment with words fitting to ram home the contradictions then creeping into the policy of his government: "that should remove one not very precise but nevertheless invidious criticism of Britain—that we are not really 'European.' I hope that this ghost is now well and truly laid. We have kept faith with Europe in this difficult period. We shall not change our policy now." In this rider, and in the words that accompanied it, we were shown the two competing strands in Labour's approach to Europe. On one side there was a doctrinaire acceptance of the western European option, notwithstanding the unpalatable elements that largely comprised that option, which were recognised as existing and which eventually became the pretext for Labour's reversal of attitude. On the other there were hints of an incipient jingoist backlash that was later to become the base of Labour's policy. Thomson, to begin with, spoke in terms of national consciousness ("invidious criticism of Britain") as if to say that the Labour government had finally transformed itself from a party of class to a society for national self protection, with the interests of capital and finance (then falling over themselves to storm down the gates to Brussels) at its head. Then, to allay remaining doubts about Labour's choice in favour of economic and political expansionism (which in contemporary European terms implies collective national
reassertion under the guise of integration), he continued: “the only way we Europeans can have the kind of world wide influence and resume the kind of responsibilities—in a moral, not a neo-colonial sense—that we have thrived on in the past is through real union.”

It was this profession to be acting in the name of Britain, rather than in the name of political or economic objectives, that laid the groundwork for the later reversal away from entry and into the arms of consensus chauvinism. The party, every Labour leader said, was acting for the nation. “The atmosphere in Britain will change overnight once we have a clear indication of the willingness to renegotiate seriously,” said George Brown late in 1969. Labour’s whole strategy had become solely political, one tied to the idea of national unity and national reassertion through integration, and this strategy was etched into practically every major policy statement made in the months following.

At a gathering in January 1970, Harold Wilson put his official seal on this policy of pursuing a political road into Europe at the head of an eager and united nation. “The government wished to confine them (the negotiations) to the few important questions which had to be resolved before it could take the decision to join the community. Once these had been settled Britain would be prepared to leave minor questions over for discussion and solutions under the rules of the community . . . .”

Not only was this an affirmation of the unqualified line on entry that George Thomson had already developed, it was also further evidence of the purely political nature of the Labour government’s outlook. The economic and social questions that were subsequently, in the name of national self protection, to become the backbone of Labour’s rejection of entry were pushed cursorily and, once considered, pushed permanently aside: “pre-occupation with agricultural policy and the price of food,” continued Harold Wilson wearily, “should not distract attention from what European economic integration could mean in the field of industrial policy.” At the very same press meeting the then Labour foreign secretary, Michael Stewart, endorsed the viewpoint of his prime minister. “The United Kingdom government,” he said, “unequivocally accepted the political implications of the Rome treaty.” In further support of the line on collective European reassertion earlier offered by George Thomson, Michael Stewart went on to say: “we believe that Europe (which had long ago it seemed become synonymous with the geographical boundaries of the six) can emerge as a community expressing its own point of view and exercising its influence in world affairs . . . it is the conception of this European potential which, above all, aroused our desire to join the communities.”

Labour policy, in the clearest possible fashion, had moved onto the plane of economic and political nationalism cast in a new framework of integrational cooperation. The commitment to “Europe” had been made on the basest grounds of a will for national assertion, an assertion from which all, we were advised, would benefit. Inherent in this stand, however, were three elements which, while temporarily unifying forces, would eventually form the background for Labour’s decline into conceptual chaos. The common market strategy adopted by the government during 1969 and 1970 fell into three parts. The political commitment meant that those favouring entry on economic and technological grounds (the growth school and the Jenkins faction) were joined by those who did not share these views but nevertheless embraced them within the framework of political tactics.

The political commitment therefore unified two latently opposed wings in the party. In the second place, because the approach of the Wilson government was nationalistic within a new European context, a retreat by that government from the European implications of its policies (that is, through eventual rejection of the idea of entry on Conservative terms) left it with a developed chauvinism without a home. All this meant Labour’s returning to the bastion of a limited nationalism, and it was this retreat that produced the
jingoistic exercises that became, during 1971, the substitute for reasoned speeches of opposition. It was as if the party had re-read the older writings of its leaders and had unearthed the kind of attitudes exemplified in an essay published by Denis Healey 20 years ago, again by a Labour member only recently returned to opposition status: “the fact is that the nation state is by far the most important entity in world affairs. Nationalism is the one force strong enough to defeat all comers.” (“Power Politics and the Labour Party,” New Fabian Essays 1952)

Incidentally, the rejection by the Labour leadership of “Euro-nationalism” at this late hour has also destroyed the basis of the coalition that had hitherto linked the technocratic wing, which favoured entry for economic reasons, with that section of the party that saw only the political implications of entry, and chose to make them sufficient grounds for seeking British membership.

This disunifying development allied with the third element to complete the process of total disintegration, for in the third place the original Labour attitude of favouring entry had been based on a glossing over of economic and social questions as a means of reaching a political conclusion. This fact is attested to in plain terms by leadership speeches throughout the latter part of the last Labour administration. Harold Wilson’s statement of January 1970 is an illuminating example of this line; but, because economic and social questions were largely ignored at this stage, the party found no opportunity for developing a coherent and relevant analysis of socio-economic realities in the European community. In the absence of any coherent basis for rejection of British entry on economic grounds, gaps in the economic critique of the Labour Party were filled with the ballast of nationalist reflexes. The result was an opposition strategy of deep inconsistency and confusion. Above all, apart from a pitiful chaos in the strategy of opposition, the Labour Party used the springboard of nationalist self-protection as a launching site for an attack on the economic implications of enlargement; the chauvinistic thread in Labour’s policy became the foundation for a bitter assault on the economic front. The outcome was disastrous. Since the nationalistic element was transformed into an economic critique, that element has merely been put into hibernation, ready to reappear as required. Thus the issue of national protection per se was not settled, it merely changed temporarily into an issue of economics. It remains, in this sense, a latent factor in Labour policy and remains a flaw in fundamental attitudes. The question of a political commitment to Europe was left untouched. Moreover, since the economic reflex action of the Labour leadership flowed, not from rational and comprehensive assessment but from an urgent need for justification of resistance, it represented a contradiction of practically every official policy point made on negotiations during 1969 and 1970.

The germ of this contradiction was made visible at the party conference in 1969, but was repressed because the leadership had decided in favour of a political commitment to western Europe, not least in the interests of magnified western European power. The official release of the national executive at the conference put it thus: “The next decade offers a real prospect of wider European unity; and the political and economic institutions of Europe must continue to develop in keeping with this trend . . . A Labour government should be at the forefront of those who want to use increased European strength in the battle against world poverty. What is more, western European unity will enable us to reach more effectively across the frontiers to those in eastern Europe who show themselves ready to build a more democratic society . . .” Ignoring the clumsy attempt to meet French predilections for the pursuit of closer contacts with eastern Europe, and the reference to aid policy which, on any grounds, had already become the joke of Labour’s manifesto promises, the executive statement was an unqualified acceptance of the political notion of a united Europe. Nevertheless, in evidence of the latent contradictions within the party ranks, that were to produce a collapse in policy during 1971,
that same national executive recommended at the same conference the adoption of a resolution emanating from Jack Jones of the Transport and General Workers' Union that demanded, in the strongest terms, safeguards "for Britain's balance of payments, cost of living, national health and social security systems and the power of independent decisions in economic planning and foreign policy," a resolution, in other words, that accepted as a point of first principle an uncompromising rejection of British entry.

It was to precisely these issues that the leadership was to turn when searching for a basis for rejection in 1971. Consequently, a string of first rate reversals of the old party line have emerged. At the party conference in October 1971 these reversals were sanctified. What had happened to Harold Wilson's refusal to develop a "pre-occupation with agricultural policy?" Jim Callaghan told conference: "I should like to indicate what will be the points of argument. What will need to be reopened will be the test questions . . . Do you accept the common agricultural policy? Mr. Heath said 'Yes'. We say 'No.'" And so on. Not only a rejection of deliberately phrased previous commitments by a Labour prime minister, a Labour foreign secretary and senior Labour ministers, but a subconscious reiteration of a national posture defied by Churchill as moderator of the English speaking peoples. To complete the picture the orthodox arguments of the economist opponents were dusted off and brought into play. Significantly, the major victims of this stunning reversal of policy (Harold Wilson and Roy Jenkins, for symmetrical reasons) chose not to speak in the conference debate.

The legacy of these contradictions and failings is a complete absence of any policy on western European integration. From this point there are only two conceivable developments: the maintenance of the state of political siege that has characterised Labour's outlook since it abandoned its policy favouring British entry, with chaos and bankruptcy the result, or efforts to build a coherent pro-

gramme of real relevance to prevailing issues in the field of European integration. Many commentaries have described the failures of European social democratic parties to achieve any degree of continued influence, and place much emphasis on the need for redoubled efforts to the end of achieving greater social democratic solidarity. Despite the spirit of optimism that pervades these various analyses, however, the only conclusion that withstands criticism, is one pointing to no prospect at all of any meaningful co-ordination of social democrat policies within an enlarged western European framework.

Overridingly, the basic defects in the policy hitherto developed by the Labour Party have left it with a shell of patriotic appeal and crude populism that can only give pleasure to the forces of the right. Secondly, economic analysis within the Labour movement has produced two opposed elements of thought: total rejection of the notion of integration, enshrined for example in the resolution presented by Jack Jones, and in contrast acceptance of the arguments on economic benefits propounded and propagated by the delegates of conservatism and private capital. The growth argument put forward by Labour's proponents of entry, for example, could have been lifted unceremoniously from a recent Bow Group pamphlet, Our Future in Europe, in which a sterile mound of statistics is substituted for real analysis of the workings of the community, and is an argument, in any event, which is challenged by a host of academic opinion from Professor Kaldor at the committed end to Professor M. M. Postan amongst the ranks of those with no political axe to help grind (see M. M. Postan: An Economic History of Western Europe, 1945-64 p. 20).

On a third front, the development of thought amongst the social democratic parties of integrated Europe has taken them further away from the collaboration to which analysts would have them move. One could almost say "so much for social democratic co-operation" after reading the following excerpt from a recently published book by Willy Brandt: "Everyone knows where I stand. I am a
social democrat but I am against any hard and fast formula which for that reason alone is harmful. What is at issue is whether European co-operation takes in all democratic forces. It must not be dependent in its functioning on a change of government in one country or another.” (A peace policy for Europe, 1969).

So much, in any case, for the prospect of a social democratic Europe through social democratic unity, except by accident. In a different way, the social democratic parties elsewhere in the community stand at total variance with central elements of Labour thinking. If it is possible at all to pin down a social democratic entity in French politics, for example, in the form of Francois Mitterand of the French socialist party, its outlook clashes fundamentally with a now entrenched tenet of Labour thinking, that on monetary unity.

“Do you agree to work for an economic and monetary union?” Jim Callaghan had continued, in his question and answer speech at the 1971 Brighton conference. “Mr. Heath said ‘Yes.’ The Labour movement says ‘No!’” Yet Francois Mitterand, at a conference of the movement of the European left held near Paris in February 1971, had reaffirmed French socialist attachment to the idea of full monetary union through the Werner plan, and added sentiments on supra-nationality that could have been tailor made for producing maximum detrimental affect amongst the Labour leadership: “Europe without a common currency will remain a Europe of the dollar and, without supranational powers, the Europe of Yalta.”

The exercise could be continued ad nauseam. The point, however, holds. The Labour Party has moved even further away from any thought of intra-community party collaboration in a remarkable repeat performance of its actions, in 1949 and 1950, when Hugh Dalton was telling European social democrats to their faces that European party unity came a poor second to domestic party necessity. It entered 1972 under the banner of “Labour Powellism.”

With the decision of the National Executive of the Labour Party (NEC) to endorse the call for a referendum on market entry, not only has Labour been deeply divided at precisely that point in time when unity is of paramount importance, but the contradictions and dilemmas inherent for Labour in the whole question of entry are grotesquely compounded.

It matters little, in comparison, that the putsch that eased approval of the referendum call, reversed a party line held consistently for several years, or that consequently Labour succeeded in making a referendum call a substitute for policy, despite the fact that a 1971 Opinion Research Centre report indicated that 55 per cent of its sample did not even know what a referendum was. It may be insignificant that little was said until the announcement of a referendum by President Pompidou, despite the fact that the fifth republic, referenda and all, was long hailed as a paragon of authoritarianism by many of those now seeking to employ its constitutional mechanisms. What does matter is that Labour’s demand for a referendum, rather than uniting the party only consolidates its appeal to the leaven of cultural self-protectionism that has long stalked advocates of internationalism and that has been, since 1970, the backbone of anti-market feeling.

The core of the referendum argument can be found in Anthony Wedgwood Benn’s recent pamphlet The new politics: a socialist renaissance (Fabian tract no. 402), which represents an opening shot in the struggle over Labour's European stance. After reading it some may feel that it is not new at all; that we had heard it all before. When one reads Bentham's Fragment on government, published in 1776, however, the ancestry of The new politics becomes discernible. Jeremy Bentham was an innovator with modern counterparts, an 18th century theorist seeking to emulate the work of Newton in the sciences by bringing technology into politics, the technology that spurred British industrialisation and laid the basis for the new politics that followed the drafting of the 1832 reform bill. Bentham aimed at producing Newtonian theories of social and political action, a relevant observation, for in the Fragment
one can clearly see the lineage of the new 
new politics that now weighs heavily on 
Labour’s strategies. One only needs to 
read the reference to referenda to see the 
parallel: “In Great Britain . . . suppose 
it were deemed necessary to make an 
alteration in the Act of Union. If an 
article stipulated in favour of England 
there would be no difficulty; so that there 
were a majority among the English mem-
biers, without reckoning the Scotch. The 
only difficulty would be with an article 
stipulated in favour of Scotland; on 
account, to wit, of the small number 
of the Scotch members in comparison 
with the English. In such a case it would 
be highly expedient, to avoid irritating 
the whole body of the nation, to take some 
method for making the establishment of 
the law depend upon their sentiments” 
(J. Bentham. Fragment on government, 
1891, p. 225).

Undoubtedly, the essence of Benthamism, 
the utilitarian model, was belief in the 
political magic of numbers. The “felicis-
cus calculus” (the greatest happiness of the 
greatest number) was for Bentham the 
soundest basis for moral and political 
choice; if maximum overall happiness 
was derived from an option then it was 
morally and politically acceptable, be it 
porographic indulgence, tax evasion or 
rejection of the common market. All this 
not to accuse The new politics of empty 
plagiarism; indeed, revival of the utili-
tarian model may be its express aim. But 
if this is so then the analysis must be 
extended, and some logical implications of 
The new politics exposed. These implica-
tions, in fact, are institutionalised when 
were part of the entry issue. Anti-
marketeers have leant heavily on the 
theme of sovereignty, a concept now 
almost meaningless in international affairs. 
But it seems illogical to defend parlia-
mentary power through a second chal-
lenge to it from “direct decision making” 
(Wedgwood Benn, op. cit. p. 23). Creating 
this challenge was the express aim of de 
Gaulle in entrenching the referendum in 
his 1958 constitution. If this is the inten-
tion of the referendum factions then they 
should state it unequivocably; they have 
not done so and have merely added 
additional complication to the debate about 

Europe. Even The new politics hedged its 
bets, after pushing the referendum clause, 
by concluding: “National governments 
must retain supreme responsibility for the 
nation’s fortunes . . . and be the custodian 
of its national culture and identity” (Benn 
op. cit. p. 25). If there is a difference 
between this and the case against refer-
enda then the subtlety is elusive.

Above all, however, when it is realised 
that the whole thrust of The new politics 
is towards political ideals that the EEC, 
more than any other international entity, 
may make permanently unattainable; 
“renegotiation of the social contract” 
(ibid. p. 11) a move, that is, towards 
the global village rather than into the supra-
national curtailment, then an acceptance 
of the philosophy of The new politics, 
and of the referendum call that runs 
ider to it, is, in the clearest terms also a 
rejection of the very principle of British 
entry.

Victory for The new politics may mean a 
rejection of internationalism in any form; 
may nevertheless provide a momentous 
new beginning. But if a socialist recon-
naisance, and the new strategies that 
should follow it, are to be based on the 
counting of heads, inside Europe or 
without, then let us all be aware of that 

fact.
young fabian group

The Young Fabian Group exists to give socialists not over 30 years of age an opportunity to carry out research, discussion and propaganda. It aims to help its members publish the results of their research, and so make a more effective contribution to the work of the Labour movement. It therefore welcomes all those who have a thoughtful and radical approach to political matters.

The group is autonomous, electing its own committee. It co-operates closely with the Fabian Society which gives financial and clerical help. But the group is responsible for its own policy and activity, subject to the constitutional rule that it can have no declared political policy beyond that implied by its commitment to democratic socialism.

The group publishes pamphlets written by its members, arranges fortnightly meetings in London, and holds day and weekend schools.

Enquiries about membership should be sent to the Secretary, Young Fabian Group, 11 Dartmouth Street, London, SW1H 9BN; telephone 01-930 3077.

James Bellini is an ex-officio member of the Young Fabian Group executive committee and convener of its foreign policy study group. He read law and European history at St. John's College, Cambridge, where he graduated in 1966. At the London School of Economics and Political Science he specialised at doctoral level in French foreign policy. A frequent contributor to EEC publications, his special fields are post-war French politics and the problem of German re-unification. He has also assisted in writing a history of war correspondents. Author of Young Fabian pamphlet no. 21, The new France: heirs on trial, he is now a lecturer in international politics at the University of Birmingham.

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