



COMMON MARKET ISSUE



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British entry: the political implications

In his book "The Challenge of the Common Market," I. U. Kitzinger quoted a British cabinet minister as saying, shortly after Britain applied for membership, that the economic advantages of joining the Six "are so vast that they hardly bear thinking about." Now, however, Mr. Gaitskell believes that the economic advantages and disadvantages of membership to Britain are about fifty-fifty and there is an increasing number of people who agree with him. "A cool analysis of the gains and losses through entering Europe becomes daily more difficult", says the Manchester Guardian Weekly of October 18, and Lord Amory, speaking at Dalhousie on the same day conceded that the economic consequences to Britain are highly speculative. The recent Douglas amendment to Mr. Kennedy's Trade Liberalization Bill still further reduces the economic advantages to Britain.

ANY TERMS

Yet the resurgent British Liberal Party is willing to enter Europe apparently on almost any terms. Despite the dissatisfaction of the overseas Prime Ministers, on the grounds of inadequacy and vagueness, with the terms already negotiated, and despite some rumblings of protest within the Conservative Party, it is generally agreed that the British Government came out of the Llandudno Party Conference a few weeks ago determined to enter the Market on better terms if it can get them but on existing terms if it cannot. Although some people believe that the terms on which the Labour Party will accept entrance are impossibly high, the Labour Party has not rejected entrance in principle; it only insists that certain conditions be met as the price of British adherence.

Moreover, many members of the Labour Party are profoundly unhappy about the official policy adopted by the Party's September Conference. They fear, and with some reason, that the Party's attitude toward the Common Market will turn into almost certain defeat what would, in the absence of the Common Market issue, be almost certain victory in the next general election.

NOT CERTAIN
It is likely, therefore, though it is by no means certain, that Britain will soon become a member. And this is so despite the fact that the consequences for the Commonwealth are unpredictable and may be disastrous. It has been pointed out that the Commonwealth has survived the fact that only Britain and Canada belong to NATO and only Australia and New Zealand to the Anzus Pact; and the British Government professes to believe that the Commonwealth, having shown itself to be very adaptable in the past, will be able to adjust itself to British Membership in the European Economic Community.

But NATO and the Anzus Pact are primarily regional defence alliances and the fact that their adverse effect, if any, on the Commonwealth has proved to be slight, offers no real reassurance that the much more portentous event of British entry into Europe will be equally innocuous — especially if Britain lives up to the spirit of the obligation under the Treaty of Rome as she could — to promote the establishment of "an ever closer union". The Commonwealth might be able to survive the removal, for plausible reasons, of the economic underpinning of preferential or free entry of primary products into the British market. It is more doubtful whether it can survive, in any meaningful way, the close political integration of Britain into Europe. To some, the much-vaunted adaptability of the Commonwealth in the past looks in retrospect like a process of step-by-step adjustment toward a less meaningful existence and they fear that British entry into the Market will prove



to be the most significant step taken in that process.

Since, then, the economic advantages, if any, are small, and since the consequences to the Commonwealth may very well be extremely adverse, why is British entry likely?

POLITICAL

The reasons are almost entirely political. In the first place, the Common Market is there and is expected to remain there; it is strong and is expected to grow stronger; and the forces within it bearing it toward greater political unity are swelling. It is a hard, stubborn, inescapable, fact. The centuries-old British policy of preventing the domination of Europe by any single continental nation can now be carried out, as far as Western Europe is concerned, only within the Market. If France's confidence in her ability to dominate the Market be well founded, traditional British policy would require Britain to go in to check France. If, as is likely the case, French confidence derives more from her 'Folie de grandeur' and from certain real but temporary political and economic facts, rather than from a realistic assessment of the long-run possibilities, and if it is Western Germany, not France, that will soon be the dominant partner, the balance of power policy would require Britain to go in to check Germany.

In the past, competition for dominance in Europe was expressed through competing systems of alliance, largely external to one another, and Britain's balancing act consisted of throwing support to one or other of them. Today, the competition for dominance, if it takes place at all will take place within the tightly-knit Common Market. It may be unfortunate for Britain, but it is a fact, or so it seems, that she can now perform her balancing act only by permanent entry into "Europe."

In the past, however, the rise to dominance of a continental European power constituted a real threat to British security. Today, despite the enormous potentialities of the Common Market, with or without Britain, Western Europe is only a part of Europe, and the whole of Europe no longer cuts the figure it once did on the world stage. The threat to British existence and security does

not come from the military power of the Soviet bloc, from the tensions that exist because of that power, and from the possibilities that unsound and dangerous moves will be made in relation to the unresolved conflicts between the Soviet bloc and the West. British initiatives and restraints with respect to these conflicts since the war may not always have embodied perfect wisdom but Britain can hardly be blamed for not wanting to have little or no influence on the decisions taken by the West — decisions on which her own fate as well as that of the rest of the West depends.

CENTRAL REASON

This is the central reason why membership in the Common Market is considered essential by many Britons. Britain may have some fear of the eventual domination of the Common Market by Germany if she does not go in, but it is a fear of the influence that a Common Market so dominated will have on the policy of the West toward the Soviet Union. But even if the Market is not dominated by Germany, she fears the political influence of a "Europe" to which she does not belong. France currently shares German attitudes to many Cold War conflicts, notably so in the case of Berlin. Seen in this light, the old British policy of remaining aloof and attempting merely a balance of power no longer makes sense because dominance in Western Europe has already been achieved — if not by France or Germany individually, then by the Common Market countries collectively. And the further these countries move in the direction of closer political union, the easier it will be for them to speak with one voice on foreign policy.

The crucial question is, therefore, whether Britain will be more influential in the councils of the West within or without 'Europe'. Since the war, Britain has boasted of having a special or privileged position with the United States in the determination of western policy. There may have been something in this before 1958, when France was subject to extreme political instability, when the rapprochement between France and Germany had not gone as far as it now has, and when the Common Market had not shown its now undoubted strength. There may even have been something in

it as long as France was mired in the Algerian War. DeGaulle, for his own purposes, has accepted the existence of such a special position, has objected to it, and wants to put an end to it. But the prospect now is that "Europe" without Britain will soon become, if it has not already become, so strong economically, militarily, and politically, that Washington will have to listen to it more than it listens to Britain whether it wants to or not, and that talk of Britain's special position will become mere empty verbiage if it ever was anything else. Indeed, there is a possibility that "Europe" without Britain will become strong enough to constitute a "third force", capable of challenging the American leadership of the West and of initiating actions that would carry the approval of neither the United States nor Britain. Though the United States wants a united Europe for the sake of the economic, military and diplomatic strength of the West, it does not want that; and neither does Britain.

ACT AS LINK?

It is possible, of course, and it has been so argued, that by remaining aloof, Britain, could, even without occupying a privileged position, act as a link between an independent European "third force" and the United States and perform its balancing act between them. The consensus of opinion, both within and without Britain, seems to be that this is not likely and that outside "Europe" British influence will drastically decline. It is held that while she may not be able to take over the leadership of "Europe" if she enters, she will be better able within it than without to moderate its policies in the directions she deems desirable and to keep harmony between it and the United States. Since it is not to be expected that the other members of "Europe" will always unite against the British point of view on different aspects of world affairs, the British influence may often be decisive.

In addition to the economic and political factors, there are what Kitzinger calls the psychological and social factors. Despite the British reluctance to make whatever sacrifice of "sovereignty" membership involves, the challenge of the Common Market is to

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