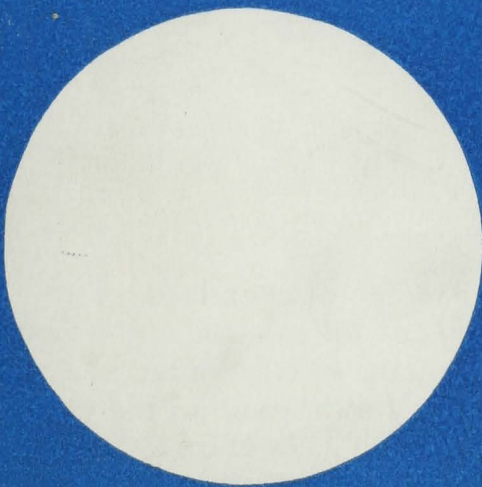


# Europe: what next?

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# 1. introduction

This pamphlet is written at a time when the second British application for membership of the European Economic Community (EEC), together with similar applications from Ireland, Denmark and Norway, is still technically "on the agenda" of the council of ministers of the community. But the President of France has publicly made it clear that he has several stringent conditions to be met by Britain before he will even countenance the opening of negotiations; since these conditions are practically impossible for Britain to meet, at least in the near future, and since evidently the community requires unanimity among its members on the issue of opening negotiations, it appears that the British application has proved abortive. The British Government, however, has refused to withdraw the application from the agenda of the council of ministers, where it continues to have a high priority for discussion; but the Government's immediate policy towards the EEC has yet to be made clear to the British public who, in many ways, are tending to lose their enthusiasm for the topic. Already there is growing discussion about possible alternative courses of action for Britain to follow, and this pamphlet attempts to review and assess those possibilities, on the assumption that Britain is denied full membership of EEC within the foreseeable future.

Within Britain there is still vocal controversy over the value for this country of EEC membership. The present pamphlet is in no way intended as a contribution to the debate for or against EEC membership, and neither of the authors wish to express any opinion here on the subject. Indeed, we hold dissimilar views on this great question. But we are both very conscious of the policy vacuum which appears to have existed in Britain in 1963 after the failure of the first round of negotiations for British membership of EEC, and we are concerned that the prolonged aimlessness of that period should not recur. We therefore see an urgent need for consideration of all constructive alternative policies to immediate EEC membership for Britain, and of the benefits likely to be gained from

those alternatives, in the light of the objectives claimed for full membership.

Of the various alternative strategies there is first the possibility of Britain's becoming an associated EEC member, either by herself or in the company of other countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), the "Outer Seven". Such associated status, "embodying reciprocal rights and obligations, joint actions and special procedures", is allowed for under article 238 of the Treaty of Rome, which is the constitution of EEC, but such an agreement must have the unanimous support of the EEC council of ministers.

Secondly, it has been suggested that for the present Britain should continue to act on the assumption that she will eventually be a full EEC member. There are two distinct variants of this policy, one involving harmonisation of British internal policies, for example, on agricultural support or purchase tax, with present and future EEC practice, and the other simply using every opportunity to keep the issue of British entry alive without committing Britain to irreversible changes in the meantime. Both these policies assume that Britain must eventually become a full EEC member on terms agreeable to the six. And each of these policies would make it essential for Britain in the meantime not to take any other initiatives which might make it more difficult for EEC membership eventually to be negotiated.

Related to, but distinct from, the policies of "harmonisation" and "keeping the issue alive" is the possibility of some intermediate arrangement being devised between the EEC or certain EEC members and the countries who have made application for membership. Suggestions for such an arrangement came from various sources on the continent during 1968, but the most publicised of these was the Benelux plan put forward by the governments of the three Low Countries. Other suggestions of this nature have come from Italy and from talks between the French and German leaders. It is not easy to generalise about all these proposals, and it is not at present clear how far they give

guarantees of full eventual EEC membership for the candidate countries. In the present confused atmosphere there is much that has to be explored further about these arrangements, and the prospects of their implementation may vary from time to time as discussions continue. Nonetheless, this kind of strategy is a serious one for Britain to consider, and must therefore be included in this list of alternative strategies to immediate EEC membership.

Fifthly, there are the various alternative strategies which would involve Britain more closely in the organisation of EFTA, which was itself born as an alternative to the free trade area closely related to the Common Market as originally intended by the architects of the Treaty of Rome. There are several ways in which EFTA could be developed, possibly by extending membership to other countries (perhaps to those of eastern Europe), possibly by adding new economic sections to the Stockholm Convention such as a common agricultural policy or a common external tariff, or possibly by increasing political cohesion within EFTA.

Finally, a much publicised alternative to membership of EEC would be the introduction of a North Atlantic Free Trade Area (NAFTA). This suggestion has appeared in several forms, but nearly always involves an economic grouping of all EFTA countries, the United States and Canada. Some variants of this strategy would include part or all of the Commonwealth, others the countries of EEC, and still others miscellaneous countries, geographically scattered, such as Japan.

These then are the six types of alternative policy to immediate British membership of EEC which we intend to consider, and in later sections each of them will be given more detailed description and discussion. We shall attempt some evaluation of the six strategies as they are described, and particularly in the conclusion, with the purpose of outlining practical and beneficial directions which Britain could now follow. The overriding factor on which these evaluations will be based is how far each alternative policy

can help secure for Britain the benefit which it is claimed membership would bring. Before these assessments can be made, we need to state the main advantages claimed for EEC membership.

### advantages claimed for membership of EEC

In the first place there is the overriding economic advantage which is envisaged as resulting from being part of the community. Essentially, the economic argument is that Britain must become part of a much larger, integrated economic unit unless her position relative to the major modern powers is to continue to decline. Only through being part of such an economic grouping can our industry find the major home markets that it needs to meet a steady expansion of output, and only by expanding the scope of our "internal" economy can the country become less vulnerable to any ill winds of world trade. The stimulus of competition within the wider free market could provide British industry with the necessary will to be far more enterprising and innovating than of late. As a corollary to this argument in favour of closer economic and industrial co-operation is the argument in favour of Britain's participation in a technological community, thereby enjoying advantages of modern technology which are possible only in larger economic blocs.

But the economic advantages of membership of an international grouping cannot be separated ultimately from the political factors which are also advanced in favour of Britain's membership of EEC. It is our conviction that the political arguments for joining EEC carry much more weight with the British Government than do the economic arguments. Indeed, if it is accepted that the balance of economic advantage and disadvantage could tilt either way, the political factors are likely to assume great importance, the more so because Britain's long desired economic recovery may make less vital the economic case for British entry. Participation in the community would inevitably involve yielding some of Britain's political sovereignty, i.e. the power

to decide for ourselves about important features of our national life. Many people believe that the trend to large, regional economic and political blocs in the world is inevitable, and indeed necessary, if our political institutions are to keep pace with the technical advances bringing different parts of the world constantly into closer communication. There are strongly held convictions, within Britain as elsewhere, that the nation-state is a dangerous unit from the past, and that the safety of the future depends on the breaking down of political barriers and the establishment of international authority and international co-operation. This internationalist argument leads many people in practical terms to the view that Britain should begin by relaxing the barriers between herself and her nearest neighbours, those of continental Europe; so they say that, with EEC already in existence, Britain's most effective contribution to international harmony would be to join the community and then seek to extend it farther. To some internationalists, EEC is therefore a first step along the road to world government.

These two main lines of argument, with their necessary corollaries in terms of technology, defence and culture, form the basic case put forward in favour of British membership of EEC. In this pamphlet we make no attempt to test the validity of these arguments or to discuss whether or not the advantages claimed for Britain would be so beneficial. Furthermore, we are not concerned here with the arguments which are used against British membership of EEC, however forceful and apposite those arguments may be. The economic and political claims made in favour of British membership of EEC have been briefly described here in order to serve as yardsticks by which the six possible alternative strategies can be evaluated.

## 2. alternatives based on EEC

### ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP OF EEC

During the press conference in December, 1967, when General de Gaulle announced his alleged "veto" of the second British application for EEC membership, he referred to the possibility of some form of association between Britain and EEC which would avoid what he considered to be the disruptive effects of British full membership. He did not elaborate further on this suggestion nor was it taken up officially anywhere else, largely because the immediate reaction of the British Government was to emphasise that Britain is interested only in full EEC membership or nothing at all.

In the light of more recent events, however, it has become apparent that Britain has little to gain, so far as EEC is concerned, from her attitude of "all or nothing", and it could be important to seek clarification and expansion of the French President's suggestion, if only to see exactly what he had in mind. Presumably such a form of association would involve other EFTA countries besides Britain, and there are signs that they are growing a little impatient with the British "all or nothing" attitude. They may even take initiative towards EEC by themselves if Britain continues to dally, or they may decide to pursue the aim of closer economic unity between themselves.

Moreover, when one turns in the Treaty of Rome to the section concerning association agreements, it is clear that wide flexibility is permissible on this question. For article 238 of the treaty contains the words: "The community may conclude with a third country, a union of states or an international organisation, agreements creating an association embodying reciprocal rights and obligations, joint actions and special procedures. Such agreements shall be concluded by the council acting by means of a unanimous vote and after consulting the assembly".

As Stanley Henig, MP, has pointed out, in the magazine *Encounter* (March 1968,

pp60-64), this article of the Rome Treaty "provides only the loosest framework, in which the detailed arrangements can be varied according to circumstances". One thing, however, is clear, namely that associate members have no voting rights in EEC affairs, and consequently have no say in the development of political cohesion within the community. Such an arrangement, if permanent, would secure none of the political benefits which would come with full British membership of EEC, and we are therefore bound to conclude that a policy of permanent associated status is not an attractive one for Britain.

However, as Mr. Henig goes on to say, it might be possible to negotiate an agreement of association which the Government hopes would lead eventually to full British membership of EEC, although of course new negotiations would have to be held at that stage. There is sufficient flexibility in article 238 for the inclusion in an association agreement of a promise that negotiations for full membership would be opened at a later stage. Such a promise might be sufficient to meet British requirements, but on the other hand it might still prove impossible for the French to support, and of course unanimity is essential in reaching any association agreement. Still, there could be no harm in exploring farther how the French would react to the principle of such an arrangement.

What is more, the flexibility of the article on association is its weakness as well as its strength, for it can lead to interminable manoeuvres and confusion in negotiations, as has happened in the talks with Austria, which have now gone on for three years and are no nearer settlement. On the other hand, Greece and Turkey are now fully fledged as EEC associate members, and may eventually become full members.

So much of the issue of British associate membership of EEC rests on imponderable factors that it is impossible to say at present what such membership might entail and where it might lead. In this situation Britain might do well to make

urther soundings as to what the details of an association agreement might be, particularly with regard to a promise for opening later negotiations on full membership. But it is clear that a permanent arrangement of only associate status would fall far short of what Britain has been trying to achieve in her two applications for full membership.

### keeping the issue alive"

Following the failure of the EEC Council of ministers in December 1967 to agree about proceeding with Britain's membership application, the Government has persistently used every means of keeping the issue of British entry to the EEC alive and a subject of discussion among the six. Whether or not this policy turns out to involve harmonisation of British domestic policies with present and future EEC practice, the policy assumes that ultimately the British application must succeed. Such a policy would be justified provided, among other things, that our chances of eventual success are good, where the importance of "eventual" depends on the time scale we are using. For the purposes of this discussion we mean by "eventual" no more than ten years ahead. On this time scale how should we rate our chances of entry? One obvious point is that, the more established the EEC becomes, the more it will become set in its ways with vested interests and the more difficulty it will find in making concessions to help Britain adapt her agricultural policy and foreign trade to the community systems. This is particularly true of alterations that would be needed in the community's agricultural policy to safeguard the position of British producers of pigmeat and milk, and to protect New Zealand lamb and dairy products and sugar from the Caribbean and Mauritius. We are assuming that a British government, particularly a Labour government, would insist on such safeguards before accepting entry into the EEC.

no less important point to consider is the position of the French President; his present unpopularity with those who ad-

vocate Britain's immediate membership of the EEC suggests that he is widely seen as the major obstacle in our path. But it is more likely that General de Gaulle's views on Britain and Europe are shared by his party generally than it is that his policy is likely to be reversed when he ceases to be President. It may be argued that this point is irrelevant since the President's successor may well be someone representative of the left in French politics and favourable to British entry, like M. Mitterand, although this seems less likely after the French election results of June 1968. However, it is impossible to tell how effective the Federation of the Left would be as a government, for it has so far been unable to agree on a common foreign policy and might therefore find difficulty in agreeing on a common attitude to the question of Britain's membership. We should also bear in mind that France under a different President might be in a weaker position on the European stage; Germany would then be even stronger within the EEC and might not necessarily wish to entertain the prospect of a rival such as Britain.

It is therefore not self evident that the departure of General de Gaulle will make British membership of the EEC a foregone conclusion. Indeed, whether or not the General remains in power, one further objection by France is that Britain is not fully "European" so long as she has close links with the USA and non-European defence commitments. In spite of last year's defence cuts, withdrawal from Singapore will not be completed until the end of 1971, by which time the Conservative opposition hopes to be in power, and they are committed to retaining our military presence in the Far East.

In any event Britain will still have obligations to SEATO and to CENTO. So far as our links with the USA are concerned, the Government has repeatedly avowed its belief in the North Atlantic partnership between the USA and Western Europe. Since most of our foreign and economic policy depends on the maintenance of such links, we do not envisage a British government breaking them as the price of British entry into EEC.

Again, there is likely to be continuing objection to Britain's membership on the grounds that Britain's methods of approach to problems are different from those in the EEC member states. One has only to look at our constitutional, legal and political structures to appreciate this point. Although the relative positions of Britain and the EEC in those respects may change in the next ten years there is no guarantee of their drawing more closely together and so this objection to British membership may remain.

All these factors may well continue throughout the next decade to give EEC members grounds for opposing Britain's admission. There is therefore no certainty of a successful outcome to a British policy of persistently seeking EEC membership, irrespective of what such a policy might involve for Britain in the meantime. Turning to consider the short term implications of such a policy, we see that they clearly fall into two categories, depending on whether or not the Government wishes to pursue a gradual harmonisation with EEC practices or not. (Other obvious policies, such as strengthening the British economy, which would remove one possible objection to British entry, are essential for Britain irrespective of policies towards Europe—although some pessimists suggest that the British economy cannot be genuinely strengthened unless Britain is part of a larger economic unit like EEC.) If harmonisation is to be attempted, the most obvious measures to be carried out will involve reconstructing agricultural support and trade and the system of indirect taxation. However, there is no benefit in making drastic changes to British agricultural and trading policies if there are to be no compensating advantages arising from EEC membership at the same time. When we examine other areas of our national life which are potentially in conflict with the implications of EEC membership, such as our system of common law and our immigration policy, the changes involved would be extremely radical and unlikely to be acceptable to the British people except perhaps as the key to a glorious future leading a united Europe.

Moreover the British Government's attitude to the idea of harmonising henceforth with the community way of life was set out clearly by the Foreign Secretary at the Western European Union meeting in January 1968, when he said that Britain could not accept the idea that it should take unilateral steps to adjust the British economy to the eventuality of EEC membership without knowing for certain that Britain would ultimately be admitted. But from the arguments given earlier we conclude that no such guarantee is likely to be forthcoming from EEC members so that these incompatible positions make the strategy of harmonisation unfeasible.

We therefore turn to consider what initiatives the British government could be taking in the interim period on the international scene which might facilitate eventual entry into EEC, initiatives which do not hinder Britain's freedom of action in other directions and do not impose any great sacrifice on Britain without advantage in return. The most likely fields of policy to be explored in this connection concern defence and technology. In the first place, the countries of western Europe, since the second world war, have had the common defence need of deterring totalitarian communism; this common need has been expressed in practical terms through the organisations of NATO and WEU. A more specifically European, and a more integrated supra-national defence organisation was attempted in the form of the European Defence Community, but progress with this was halted in 1954 when the French parliament failed to ratify the arrangement, chiefly because of the lack of British participation. The situation is now rather ironically reversed, with the hint on the part of the French that they might withdraw from NATO in 1969 when the binding parts of the original 1949 treaty expire, while the British Government, in the words of the Supplementary Defence White Paper of July 1968, maintain that: "In Defence, as in every other field, the first and fundamental assumption on which the Government believes that Britain must base her future policy is the need for closer unity in Europe."



to these ends the present British Government has earmarked a greater contribution towards the forces of NATO, namely "mobile task force" of men, ships and aircraft. There is, consequently, great hope for further British negotiations with members of EEC on these issues of collective defence requirements—quite apart from any considerations involved in the Treaty of Rome—and these contacts are very likely to help a rapport between Britain and Europe, thus facilitating possible future British entry to EEC. The only snag in this argument is that, just as France is the one EEC member out of step on the question of British membership of EEC, so too France is out of step on the questions of collective North Atlantic defence. That being the case, one wonders how far co-operation in defence, while very necessary and undable in itself, can help overcome the real stumbling blocks to British membership of EEC.

More hopeful progress has been achieved in the realm of technological co-operation between Britain and western European countries, although there remains virtually unbounded scope for future developments in this field. For one thing, common defence commitments are drawn up, then the physical means of procuring those commitments, i.e., the non-nuclear weapons which would make up the deterrent, will need to be produced and constantly developed in the light of new technological research. Consequently, defence co-operation could lead quite naturally to technological co-operation. But openings for joint technological ventures occur in many other fields of government policy, in civil aviation and other transport, in fuel and power (particularly in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and the building of nuclear reactor generators) and in telecommunications. Indeed, all the work of the British Ministry of Technology cries out for co-operation on an international scale. And, of course, so far as Western Europe is concerned, such co-operation could be bound to help foster better mutual understanding, in particular leading Britain into an easier relationship with EEC countries on which British EEC

membership could be more firmly based.

Whether this is enough to overcome the French problem is a matter almost wholly for conjecture. Indeed, it is quite likely that the French, seeing the advantages for themselves of technological co-operation with Britain, will continue with such a programme without any thought of its relevance to EEC. Similarly, from the British point of view it would be advantageous to enter into such co-operation even if we had definitely made up our minds not to seek EEC membership. Technological co-operation, and indeed new defence co-operation, while helpful in fostering contacts and rapport between Britain and EEC members, is therefore only peripheral to the issue of British EEC membership.

The policy of "keeping the issue alive without harmonisation" is therefore more a policy of attitudes rather than a programme of detailed practicalities. The success of the policy depends in large measure on the considerations described earlier, while the effect of any accompanying measures would be beneficial whether the overall policy is successful or not.

### other recent proposals

During January 1968 the three Benelux states produced a plan, subsequently approved at a WEU meeting, for a conference of all EEC members and the four candidate governments to discuss means of further co-operation outside the scope of the Treaty of Rome. The plan also envisaged consultations between as many western European states as possible on political issues. It is not yet clear which line would find more favour with Britain, the wider political approach or the narrower concentration on items of legal and technological co-operation. What is clear, however, is that the Benelux proposals represent the first recognition by any EEC members that economic and political divisions in western Europe can be healed only by goodwill on both sides. Until this plan was put forward, EEC countries appeared to take the view

that no form of co-operation outside the confines of the Treaty of Rome was worthwhile. The Benelux plan is therefore to be welcomed for the spirit it shows, although there is some danger that its effect will be lost in the welter of debate which has surrounded it and similar proposals since their enunciation.

One such set of proposals emanated from the meeting during February 1968, between the West German Chancellor and the French President, a meeting which disappointed those who were hoping that German pressure would force France to reconsider her opposition to immediate British membership of EEC. French economic weakness following their recent internal crisis may enable the West Germans to press them to accept a more promising attitude towards the candidate countries; although the French in their weakness may be even more reluctant to subject themselves to new international competition. The February meeting did, however, result in some clarification of the French attitude to an arrangement between the community and candidate countries, so that the Scandinavian states have been encouraged to discuss their own attitudes to such an arrangement. Britain's policy of seeking full EEC membership (or a guarantee of eventual membership) on an "all or nothing" basis could result in some EFTA members' making their own trading arrangements with the EEC without Britain, and so weakening EFTA.

With regard to all these proposals currently under discussion, the Government has nothing to lose by exploring, as far as possible, what exactly the proposals entail and what is their likelihood of success. However, none of these proposals is likely to be seriously entertained by the Government unless it offers the definite prospect of full EEC membership for Britain. In no way should Britain allow EEC members to keep her on a string.

### 3. possibilities involving EFTA

When we talk of EFTA as an alternative to full membership of EEC, we are not suggesting that the strengthening of EFTA will bring with it the same advantages as have been claimed for full membership of EEC. We are trying to point to ways in which EFTA could be strengthened so that the impact of those disadvantages stemming from Britain's exclusion from EEC is reduced. We shall therefore examine the basis on which EFTA operates, suggest possibilities for further development and attempt to evaluate them by comparison with the advantages claimed for EEC membership.

The nature and scope of EFTA are defined in the Convention of Stockholm, signed by Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom in January 1960. Article 1 sets out the objectives of the association which include *inter alia* a sustained expansion of economic activity in each member state, fair trading competition and the development and expansion of world trade. Article 30 adds that member states intend to pursue economic and financial policies so as to promote the objectives of the association. The main method chosen to achieve these objectives was the creation of a free trade area in industrial goods between the members. In March 1961 Finland signed an agreement with the association which, in effect, made her the eighth member.

EFTA is a free trade area of 100 million people, with no internal tariffs or quantitative restrictions on industrial products. In addition, the association recognises the importance of removing non-tariff barriers to trade which, following the Kennedy round, are likely to emerge as the major obstacles to further trade expansion. The association tries to prevent fiscal charges causing discrimination between home produced goods and those from other member states. To ensure fair competition for all EFTA producers, it is recognised that the association will have to examine such government policies as aids to domestic producers, buying policies of nationalised industries and legislation dealing with restrictive prac-

tices and trading specifications.

In the same way as EEC, EFTA has also been concerned that none of its members should discriminate against nationals of other members. In pursuance of this policy the association has stipulated that nationals of all member states should be treated equally with respect to the establishment and operation of economic enterprises in the interests of free competition. Moreover, unlike EEC, EFTA has, as a clear objective, the promotion of full employment (Article 2(a)); indeed, an appreciable rise in unemployment caused by increasing imports of a commodity from other members of EFTA is a factor allowing the member concerned to impose temporary quantitative restrictions.

On the question of trade with third countries, i.e. non-members, EFTA allows each member to fix its own tariffs, but in addition, the association has power to negotiate trade arrangements on behalf of all members; these can take the form of accession or association (Article 41). Furthermore, the effect of EFTA rules, i.e. the "process" criterion, is to allow many imports from third countries which are used in EFTA manufactured products to participate in the benefits of an industrial free trade area.

Equally important is the pragmatic approach adopted by the association to achieve its objectives. "It has remained a belief in EFTA that it is not fruitful to attempt to solve all possible problems in advance, rather than attempting to anticipate all future contingencies the writers of the convention were content to indicate the procedure by which problems could be dealt with as they arose and by which the association itself could be adapted to changing needs and circumstances" (T. Jantzen, *The operation of a free trade area*). This flexibility is seen, for example, in the operation of the EFTA Council: there is no fixed limit to the scope of its powers although its decisions are binding on member states. Decisions involving increased obligations for members must be unanimous; other decisions relating to complaints or the relaxation of obligations are by majority

vote. It should be emphasised, however, that the creation of a superstate is in no way an objective of EFTA; indeed, there is provision for member states to withdraw from the association by giving 12 months' notice. EFTA is based on a belief that the way to overcome economic nationalism is by free trade and co-operation instead of by building up a large supranational unit to which member states will ultimately be subordinate.

Having examined the basis on which EFTA operates, we now proceed to explore the possibilities of its further development. There appear to be three general areas for such exploration: one involving closer economic ties between members, including agricultural co-operation; the second involving greater political cohesion within the association; and the third involving stronger links with countries outside EFTA.

When considering closer economic ties between members, a significant possibility would be to give the market protection against competition from third countries by the adoption of a common external tariff as in EEC. This idea has not been acceptable to EFTA members so far because the concept of a customs union runs counter to the free trade objectives which were responsible for the inauguration of the association in 1960. It will be recalled that talks between non EEC and EEC members broke down prior to 1960, because the non EEC members were concerned far more with international trade expansion than with a common trading policy towards third countries. Against this background, proposals for a common external tariff for EFTA, even on industrial goods, are unlikely to meet approval unless there has been a fundamental change of heart by EFTA members on the question of a common trade policy towards the rest of the world. This might therefore be a matter for discussion within EFTA.

In such discussions, much would depend on the attitude of, and the lead given by, the British Government. To suggest copying the CET and its protective mechanism of various levies, as established by EEC,

could seriously prejudice the chances of continuing world trade expansion and is unlikely to be acceptable to EFTA members. We hope that any such discussions would take account of the tariff levels as they will stand after the Kennedy round reductions. It may be possible to fit a common external tariff, certainly for industrial products, at the lowest level within EFTA instead of at the arithmetic average of members' existing tariffs, as within EEC. This could be considered a further positive step towards international free trade.

Another possibility for strengthening EFTA economically would be to achieve closer co-operation on agricultural trade and development. Under Article 21 of the convention (which excludes agricultural goods from the free trade provisions) the council of EFTA does have power to amend both the article itself and also the list of products, mainly agricultural, which are exempt from the general provision relating to industrial goods. By taking either of these courses of action the council could declare a free trade area in agricultural goods; although such a drastic step is unlikely to take place in the foreseeable future. Under Article 22, furthermore, the members recognise that their agricultural policies are designed "(a) to promote increased productivity and the rational and economic development of production; (b) to provide a reasonable degree of market stability and adequate supplies to consumers at reasonable prices; and (c) to ensure an adequate standard of living to persons engaged in agriculture". They have to pay due regard to the interests of other members in the export of agricultural goods. One objective of the association is "to facilitate an expansion of (agricultural) trade which will provide reasonable reciprocity to member states whose economies depend to a great extent on exports of agricultural goods."

Another way of expanding agricultural trade within EFTA is by bilateral trading agreements between members. This method has been used on occasion to provide duty free access for agricultural exports to a particular member. Such

agreements remain in force for as long as the convention; many tariff provisions in them apply to other member states not parties to these agreements but exporting the goods in question. As a result of these measures and the general expansion in world trade there has been a steady growth of intra EFTA agricultural trade by 50 per cent from 1961 to 1966. However, this expansion has been slower than the expansion of trade in industrial goods, which probably shows the scope existing for further agricultural co-operation in the association.

Since 1964 there has been an annual review within EFTA of its trade in agricultural goods, with a view to securing further expansion. The successive reviews have been primarily concerned to elucidate the facts about agricultural policy and production in each member state, no easy task because of the variety and ingenuity of the methods used by governments to protect their farmers from the effects of overseas competition and to ensure them a reasonable standard of living. The 1967 review offered a cautious assessment of the situation, pointing out that the attainment of a better overall balance between production and consumption within EFTA would depend on the agricultural and import policies of member states like Britain, who are large importers of agricultural goods. Since pressure is growing within Britain for import saving policies in food, the only hope for a major expansion in EFTA agricultural trade would appear to be if Denmark agreed to take more industrial exports from Britain to remedy what is at present a very one sided balance of trade between the two countries.

It may be asked why EEC should have been able to adopt a common agricultural policy and yet EFTA has not done so. There are two main reasons for the situation. Firstly, EFTA is not nearly as self sufficient in agricultural production as is EEC. Moreover EFTA's pattern of agricultural production and trade is more diverse than that of EEC, a larger proportion of the association's imports and exports being with third countries. Secondly, it is recognised that to aim at agri-

cultural self sufficiency would disrupt traditional patterns of agricultural trade with third countries; this is what has happened as a result of the EEC system of variable import levies. Furthermore, a uniform price level for each commodity of agricultural production within EFTA (as the EEC has done) would encourage production expansion over and above the degree of self sufficiency desired. This would lead to the very problems of over production which are beginning to cause difficulties within EEC. The solution adopted there—massive export subsidies—merely injects these difficulties into world agricultural trade. International irresponsibility of this kind is not what we would wish to see emerge from any expansion in the agricultural trade of EFTA.

Where EFTA can help itself and the cause of world agricultural trade is by extending the concept of commodity agreements between members to embrace third countries dependent on agricultural exports to Europe. The idea of international commodity agreements is not new, but little has been done to put it into practice. However, after the comparative success of the Kennedy round in lowering tariffs on industrial goods, there is likely to be greater pressure by those countries exporting agricultural products at world market prices for some agreement on the regulation of this international trade. The 1968 UNCTAD meeting was concerned with this problem. It is within EFTA's power to take a lead at future conferences by offering to negotiate international commodity agreements for meat and dairy products, limiting or eliminating export subsidies, negotiating international prices and regularising food aid to underdeveloped countries; such a step might force the EEC also to consider revising its present archaic agricultural policies. If some kind of international order can be made out of the present jungle of international agricultural trade, EFTA will benefit by the increased earning power of underdeveloped countries leading to a general expansion of trade between rich and poor countries.

Having considered the economic possibilities of strengthening EFTA, we now

turn to the question of political developments within the association. EFTA is at present an economic association; it has no political content, nor is there any possibility of its developing into a super-state which many people, including the British Government, want from EEC membership. Within the association, however, there exist two groupings—namely the Nordic council and the meeting of EFTA parliamentarians—which provide some measure of political consultation and co-operation between certain member states.

There is nothing new about the idea of co-operation between the four Scandinavian states (Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland). In 1907 members of their parliaments set up the Northern Interparliamentary Union as a private organisation. Later moves to formalise the links between the states gained strength, and even before the second world war there was growing official recognition that the long experience of co-operation in the region should be embodied in a permanent organisation. There were setbacks during the war of 1939-45 and in the early stages of the cold war, mainly because of Finland's tortuous relationship with the USSR and because of the split over membership of NATO. Nevertheless the movement to political co-operation was renewed in those spheres where all four states had common interests. As an historian of the movement has put it: "... the age long relationships between Denmark and Norway and between Sweden and Finland, left indelible marks on the languages, government, legislation, administration of justice, social life and literature... Unbreakable bonds had been tied, similarities and conformities established. The spirit of solidarity created over long and important periods is still very much alive and constitutes a valuable foundation for the present day endeavours of Scandinavian co-operation" (F. Wendt, *The Nordic Council and co-operation in Scandinavia*). All four countries have a compassionate respect for human rights which underlies their modern and progressive social legislation. They have developed their democratic systems on similar lines

and have placed great emphasis on individual social security. They have also enjoyed political stability.

After the second world war there was growing co-operation at official level to deal with social problems, legislation, cultural affairs, communications and economic co-operation. In 1952 these arrangements were formalised when the Nordic Council was set up, Iceland also joining in. It consists of representatives of the five governments and MPs elected by the parliaments in proportion to party strengths. Its deliberations are recognised as sufficiently important for the prime ministers and foreign ministers regularly to attend its meetings, which are held annually, although ministerial meetings take place more often. The council can deal with any matters relating to two or more of the five countries. Its role is consultative but none the less valuable. Its working methods are similar to those employed in EFTA, the emphasis being on flexibility. It is a practical body for dealing with current problems, co-ordinating existing forms of Scandinavian co-operation and ensuring that the respective parliaments give more attention to such matters. A further development expected in the near future is the institution of a secretariat. The council has been able to negotiate a convention introducing a common labour market, enabling workers to take up jobs in the territory of any member, and a social security convention. Since 1966, EFTA and the Nordic Council have held meetings to review work they are both doing. An EFTA observer now attends the full meetings of the council and reports back to EFTA council.

The question for our consideration is whether Britain can and should join in this work, either by promoting links between herself and the Nordic Council or by taking steps to set up a similar type of body that would include all EFTA members, i.e., can the example of the Nordic Council be used as a basis for strengthening political cohesion within EFTA, and ultimately within Europe as a whole? We are of the opinion that this is a very real and desirable possibility, to

made easier because Britain has much in common with the Scandinavian countries, politically, socially and culturally. Whether Britain should initiate discussions with a view to her attending meetings of the Nordic Council and participating in the work of that body, or whether she should aim to set up a similar, but wider, body covering EFTA countries is a matter for diplomatic consultations. Because of close traditional ties enshrined in the Nordic Council, it seems easier for Britain to aim at setting up a new body. Such an organisation would have no shortage of tasks, for instance, in seeking closer co-ordination of policies of social welfare, employment and taxation. Co-operation of this kind would be valuable in itself, but is unlikely to provide a firm basis for future political unity.

The second political grouping within EFTA is the meeting of EFTA parliamentarians. This consists of MPs from EFTA states meeting regularly to review EFTA affairs and European integration. It is an unofficial forum for the exchange of views on European problems and could be the means for ensuring that much greater attention is given to EFTA affairs in the parliaments of the EFTA countries. At their meeting in September 1967 the parliamentarians agreed that co-operation within EFTA should be extended. If our suggestion for a development based on the Nordic Council or a similar body were adopted, the EFTA parliamentarians meeting might well become part of the new grouping.

We turn finally to consider ways of strengthening links between EFTA and other countries, both economically and politically. EFTA could expand in either of two ways; by the addition of new members or associates, or by merging the association into a larger free trade area. The question of new members comes down to the basic issue of trading and other relationships between Eastern and Western Europe, since there are few Western European countries which are not members of EFTA or EEC. If expansion of EFTA's market within Europe is desirable, it must come from the develop-

ment of links with eastern European states. Because EFTA is a flexible association, it has some chance of attracting eastern European states into its orbit. This could take the form of trading links leading to closer contact and the breaking-down of barriers between east and west Europe. Already negotiations are in progress for a trading agreement between EFTA and Yugoslavia. In addition EFTA could take the political lead by inviting members of eastern European parliaments to attend regular joint meetings with MPs from EFTA states. With the growing pressure for more democratic practices in eastern Europe the scope for co-operation between EFTA and some of those countries could be very wide and should certainly be explored.

## 4. a north Atlantic trade area

The other main general strategy which has been proposed as an alternative to immediate EEC membership for Britain is a free trade area straddling the North Atlantic ocean, an arrangement conveniently described as NAFTA. Most supporters of the idea of NAFTA include in this economic grouping the United States, Canada and all the countries of EFTA, so that in some respects the NAFTA strategy can be regarded as a development of EFTA.

The proposals for NAFTA resemble the present practice of EFTA insofar as they are entirely trade proposals and would create a loose economic association of the member states without that degree of political integration which is an essential part of the framework of EEC. But, of course, the NAFTA idea involves far more than just a European viewpoint—indeed some variants of the idea would embrace also Australia, New Zealand and Japan—and consequently the “third force” argument for closer European integration, namely that a united Europe would be a balancing force between the USA and USSR, forms no part of the case for NAFTA. On the contrary, in fact, any NAFTA arrangement would bring a large part of western Europe—sometimes the NAFTA concept is taken to embrace EEC also—far more closely into the American economic orbit than was the case even with the Marshall plan and lease lend.

It is therefore not surprising that many of the suggestions for NAFTA have originated from the United States, where it is seen as a further development of the various proposals for a free trade area between the United States and Canada. The most celebrated American exponent of the NAFTA concept is the liberal Republican Senator for New York State, Jacob Javits, who came out in strong support of a NAFTA arrangement in a Washington speech in August 1965, on which he elaborated in London the following November. A key sentence from Senator Javits' London speech is that he regarded this alternative policy for the United States as “a proposal for a treaty of free trade and economic co-operation with the UK, other EEC and EFTA nations,

Canada, New Zealand and Australia, and other industrialised countries of the OECD which agree to adhere to the new rules of trade of the free trade area.” Senator Javits envisaged a transitional period of twenty years in which the industrialised members of NAFTA would achieve free trade in manufactured goods, and in which associated developing countries would retain protection for new industries. He also suggested that, in view of Britain's recurrent economic difficulties, at first there should be special American financial support for Britain in the form of official encouragement to use long term private capital for British industrial modernisation.

Senator Javits' proposals had in fact been foreshadowed in 1962 by Senator Paul Douglas of Illinois and, on this side of the Atlantic, by James Meade, Professor of Political Economy of Cambridge University, who put forward this suggestion as a possible alternative to be pursued in the event of our first EEC application failing; and, in 1964, by Professor Bertil Ohlin, then leader of the Swedish opposition, who regarded it as a plan to be implemented should the Kennedy round negotiations end in deadlock. But their main proposals were clearly positive and can be regarded as forerunners of the more detailed ideas put forward by Senator Javits.

The same development has been continued on a far more detailed level by the Atlantic Trade Study Group set up in London as an independent and non-party group, sponsoring “a programme of studies on the implication for Britain of taking part in the open ended, Atlantic based, free trade area”. The first of these studies, carried out by Maxwell Stamp Associates and published in November 1967, is a general analysis of the background of the proposals for a NAFTA arrangement and of its implications for British industry. The appearance of this study has been publicised by a number of British politicians who have generally been antagonistic towards British membership of EEC, notably Douglas Jay, ex-President of the Board of Trade. Indeed an all party group of these politician



ended a conference during February 1958, held at the Centre for International Studies in New York University, to discuss NAFTA proposals and, no doubt, to discuss ideas on how steps might be taken to implement them. The venue for this event again emphasises that the predominant backing for the NAFTA idea comes from America.

The report of the Maxwell Stamp study contains a mass of economic and trade statistics comparing Britain, the United States, EFTA, EEC and other countries, on which are based projections as to what trade creating and trade diverting effects of NAFTA could be for Britain. While the study acknowledges that British industry in NAFTA would be brought more openly face to face with American competition, the effects of this are not always taken into account in the statistical forecasts, for example, when it is assumed (p. 4) that British trade with EFTA would not be directly affected by American competition in those countries. In the other sections of the report, there is a statistical breakdown for particular commodities, indicating the possible effects of EFTA on individual British industries. Of course the development of NAFTA would be highly likely to attract further American investment into this country, whether or not this were given official financial encouragement.

Before attempting to evaluate the NAFTA strategy as an alternative for Britain to mediate membership of EEC, we must first consider how far the development of EFTA is likely to "get off the ground" in any case. The willingness of Britain and other EFTA countries to enter a NAFTA scheme will depend very largely on the degree of success achieved by the proponents of NAFTA, although the present British Government has up to now rejected NAFTA as a viable alternative to EEC membership. It seems to us, however, that the first obstacle to the launching of NAFTA lies with the Americans themselves, for at the present time of world economic stringency the American people are not in a free trading mood, and even the recommendations of the Kennedy round of tariff cuts have had a

rough passage through Congress. It is difficult to say how far men like Senator Javits and ex-Senator Douglas carry influence in the appropriate political circles in the US, although it is clear that considerable support from American industry is behind them. Furthermore, the supporters of NAFTA almost all include the EEC countries as members, sooner or later, of the association, which no doubt is intended to give Britain and the other EFTA countries the impression that membership of NAFTA is not to be regarded as precluding membership of EEC. But it is very unlikely that the countries of EEC, constrained by the prevailing French anti-Anglo Saxon feeling and inspired by the "third force" theory, will want to have official trade links with the US within NAFTA. All these considerations then make the development of NAFTA, even in its initial stages, beset with difficulties.

Assuming that NAFTA came into existence, including at least the US, Canada, Britain and the other present members of EFTA, it would certainly be the largest free trading unit in the world, both in terms of population and gross production. Of course, some of the trading advantages to be obtained from NAFTA will result in any case from the Kennedy round. But Britain inside NAFTA would be part of an enormous market with incomparable opportunities for industrial expansion and modernisation. Whether these opportunities became practical possibilities or not would depend on how far British industry could meet and surpass the challenge of US competition in every part of that market, including Britain. More likely than not, British manufacturers would have to specialise in certain products for which we have the competitive advantage over the Americans, although these would include only few of the "glamour products" of modern technology. In the words of Lord Gladwyn, speaking in the House of Lords on 2 November, 1967: "As a broad generalisation we should find ourselves making the trouser buttons while the Americans made the computers. But would that matter, because we should be part of a large and prosperous community, and it might make us, collectively, a great force in the world."

The commanding heights of NAFTA's economy would largely be in American hands, which is clearly the reason for so much American support for the scheme. Moreover, it is wrong to assume that NAFTA would be a closely integrated and cohesive economic unit, at least for a very long time, as the distances between different parts of NAFTA would make it far more like the old British Empire than the developing EEC. In such a loose, scattered economic unit, it would be easy for divergencies between the standards of living in different parts of the association to grow rather than diminish. There would be little possibility of reversing such a tendency, short of destroying NAFTA, so long as NAFTA has no political content, and all the supporters of NAFTA are deliberately excluding from their proposals any means of political co-ordination.

Consequently, any political results which might arise from NAFTA would be caused only indirectly, from the growth of free trade and the removal of non-tariff trading discriminations within individual countries. In time, this might necessitate political negotiations within NAFTA on such problems as movement of labour or harmonisation of social security systems. But from its beginning, NAFTA would make each member nation less able to control its own economic policy. This might not be a serious disadvantage politically if the other members of NAFTA had similar political outlooks to our own, or if no member of NAFTA had predominant political power compared with the others, but with the US within NAFTA neither of these conditions would hold. Indeed, the whole of NAFTA would be under the influence of undiluted, American-style capitalism, overshadowing the characteristics of social democracy and public enterprise at present common to Britain and other EFTA countries. The scope of British political action is already largely dominated in practice by considerations of American policy, and NAFTA would inevitably exaggerate this tendency.

Apart from these indirect, and negative, political consequences of free trade

throughout NAFTA, the proposed scheme deliberately avoids all attempts to establish common political institutions covering member countries; NAFTA is conceived as an alternative to supranationalism. Short of Britain's becoming part of the US, this country would have no political representation at the centre of NAFTA, which could be nowhere but Washington. Because NAFTA would involve no formal political co-operation between member countries and no establishment of supranational institutions, it would be regarded by few internationalists as an important step of progress towards world government. The lack of political authority within NAFTA would cause difficulties if ever a link-up with EEC were attempted.

Furthermore, the fact that NAFTA would include the US would present an almost total barrier to closer links between NAFTA countries and eastern Europe; indeed, one wonders what would happen to the trading positions of Austria and Finland under NAFTA. In this way it appears that, far from being a unifying force between European nations, NAFTA would lead to an even more rigid division of Europe with nearly complete polarisation between American capitalism and Soviet collectivism. Nor, too, is it clear whether NAFTA would help bridge or widen the gulf between the developed and underdeveloped nations of the world and in some respects it could be regarded as a club of all the richer, industrialised western nations to the exclusion of others. Such an impression would be very difficult to dispel, even by the application of some of the suggestions on this point made by David Wall in a further Atlantic Trade Study pamphlet (*The third world challenge*, January 1968). Thus the political effects of NAFTA, as at present conceived, would be undesirable, both within the association and in its relationship with other nations, particularly those of eastern Europe and the Afro-Asian group.

There are numerous signs that NAFTA is going to be discussed widely in British political circles in the near future, for the Atlantic Trade Study Group, with



## 5. conclusions

Having considered the six general strategies which arise as possible alternatives to full and immediate British membership of EEC, we now tackle the question of what strategy ought now to be pursued by the British Government. In this we are more conscious of the feasibility of the respective strategies in terms of practical politics, both with regard to the attitudes of other governments and how far each strategy could be based on existing institutions and arrangements. Of the various possible strategies, four involve Britain's relationship with EEC countries, whereas the other two would require a deliberate move by Britain in a direction quite apart from EEC. These two sets of strategies are mutually exclusive, at least in the foreseeable future, so the Government must make an early choice (the earlier the better) between European policies which involve EEC and those which do not. Otherwise an atmosphere of public apathy and confusion will prevail, both within Britain and among our friends elsewhere, which will do nothing but harm to British interests.

At present it appears that the EEC countries still cannot agree on what arrangements they should aim to make with Britain and the other candidate countries; possibly the French feel that it is in their interests to keep Britain "indefinitely on a string". It may therefore be impossible for Britain to obtain, in the near future, the precise information which she needs to have if she is to pursue one of the policies leading to eventual full membership, or other formal arrangements, with EEC countries. However great may be the economic and political advantages to be gained by Britain from any of the four strategies involving EEC, it is pointless to continue with any of those strategies when any one of the six members of EEC is in long term opposition to us.

It seems indisputable that the present French government, even when faced with the economic problems arising from the troubles of the early summer of 1968, will continue to oppose British participation in any formal way with EEC for as long as President de Gaulle occupies the Elysee Palace; nor will official

French attitudes necessarily change when he has gone, for both on the right and left of French politics there are strong influences against British attachment to EEC. Unless there is some unexpected change in official French attitudes, all policies designed to lead Britain into full or associated membership of EEC are "non-starters". Any attempt to harmonise British policies with EEC practice would be foolhardy in the absence of a firm guarantee of eventual full British membership of EEC. Furthermore, most aspects of British-EEC co-operation outside the provisions of the Treaty of Rome can and should be pursued regardless of our overall European strategy. So we cannot see any benefit for Britain at this stage in continuing actively to pursue the goal of British EEC membership in view of the lasting intransigence of the French.

We do not, on the other hand, see great benefit for Britain at this stage in going ahead with plans for a NAFTA arrangement, for there would be great difficulty in getting NAFTA "off the ground", in starting from scratch with an organisation of unprecedented size and complexity. The initiative for NAFTA must necessarily come from the US government, which so far has shown no more than passing interest in the project, and we think it would be pointless for the Government to act until there is an official move by the new American administration.

The remaining alternative is for Britain to work for the further development and expansion of EFTA. This association has been in existence for eight years and has achieved most of what it set out originally to achieve; and EFTA's empirical approach to problems commends itself to us as a factor enabling further possible development along lines welcome to Britain, who shares with most other EFTA countries similar traditions of social democracy and egalitarianism. Suggestions for developing EFTA include co-ordinated trading policies with third countries, co-ordinated agricultural policies, stronger political links based on the Nordic Council and the EFTA parliamentarians' meeting, and the extension of EFTA member-





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