

Difficult negotiations

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As Lord Privy Seal, Edward Heath was responsible for European issues and was therefore put in charge of negotiating with the Six in Brussels. The negotiations were tough, because London, resting on its imperial laurels, demanded exemption from a number of Community regulations. For example, it had difficulty in accepting the Common Customs Tariff for fear that it would lose its privileged relationship with the Commonwealth countries.

Considerable progress was achieved over the summer of 1962, particularly in terms of Britain's gradual shift away from the concept of imperial preference. But the British kept coming back with more and more requests for derogations and exemptions. Harold Macmillan even launched a public awareness campaign in order to win over British public opinion. But, at a Conference of the Commonwealth Countries in September 1962, Canada and New Zealand voiced their opposition to the United Kingdom's acceding to the European Economic Community (EEC).

Germany, the Benelux countries and Italy were prepared to make substantial concessions. However, the negotiations on enlargement were adjourned following General de Gaulle's categorical veto on 14 January 1963.