

British Communist Party Pamphlet against Britain's membership to the EEC (1962)

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Say "No" to the Common Market

by Ted Ainley

Tory Government representatives are at this moment negotiating for Britain to enter the Common Market. This would be a decision with the most far-reaching consequences for the British people. We believe that the people of Britain should reject membership of the Common Market for the following reasons:

1. It would have a disastrous effect on our wage prospects and living standards by making British workers compete with lower paid continental workers both in the home and overseas markets.
2. It would undermine British independence. The British Government and Parliament would be bound by political and military decisions made by a European majority.
3. It would hit hard at Britain's trade with its biggest and oldest markets in the Commonwealth.
4. British agriculture would have to adapt itself to Common Market methods. This would increase the cost of living for British families and ruin many farmers.
5. The Common Market has refused to accept full employment as one of its objectives.
6. Common Market rules would hamper a British Government in dealing with the balance of payments crises to which the economy is particularly prone.
7. The British Government and Parliament would be compelled to accept the decisions of the Common Market bodies as to how our social services should be "harmonised" with those of the continent.

Britain and European Wages

In spite of recent increases, wage levels and earnings in the Common Market are well below ours. They are likely to remain so unless our earnings are forced down to their level as a result of Britain's entry into the Common Market. From *The Times Review of Industry*, March 1962, we take the figures of the gross annual earnings for male workers in manufacturing industry:

West Germany	£611	13s	Italy	£359	9s
Belgium	£574	3s	France	£351	
Netherlands	£425	5s	United Kingdom	£763	13s

Our figure is higher than the German by £152 (nearly £3 a week), and more than twice as high as those of Italy and France. It is argued, however, that what continental workers lose in wages they make up in the higher social security contributions which the employers pay. This is not true:

	Wages		Employers' Contribution		Total
West Germany	£611	16s	£92	14s	£704 7s
Belgium	£574	3s	£97	10s	£671 13s
Netherlands	£425	5s	£63	8s	£488 13s
Italy	£359	9s	£132	19s	£492 8s
France	£351		£128	19s	£479 19s

the collective exploitation of the underdeveloped countries by the powerful finance capitalists of Europe.

European Preference

What is it that makes Australia, New Zealand and Canada so apprehensive of Britain's membership of the Common Market? Having enjoyed favourable trade terms for many years selling their goods to Britain, they now face the fact that Britain will be compelled by the Common Market rules to discriminate against them. They would be placed in the position of trying to sell their goods in the British market with heavy duties against them while similar goods from Europe would enter duty free.

West Germany, France, Holland, Italy would get preferential treatment while New Zealand's goods would be effectively barred. This particularly applies to what are called temperate foods (foods grown in temperate as distinct from tropical climates) and such foods represent 90 % of New Zealand's exports to Britain and 35 % of Australia's. These countries would be compelled to seek elsewhere for their trade.

India sends 27 1/2 % of her exports here. She is at present permitted to send, duty free, as much textiles as she can sell in Britain. In deference to the objections of the British textile manufacturers she voluntarily restricts the amount she actually sends. But if Britain joins the Common Market, India will have to pay heavy tariffs on all textiles sent here while European countries will be able to sell theirs duty free. Lancashire would gain nothing. India's cotton goods would be kept out while Italy's would flow in.

The Tories' attitude has been to say that they are aware of these problems and that Mr. Heath, with a team of experts, is in Brussels to negotiate on just such questions.

But these questions are fundamental to the Common Market and Mr. Edward Heath and all his experts will not alter that. The most they may be able to do is to slow down the process - to make more gradual the introduction of discriminating tariffs against Commonwealth countries so that we and they will not lose too much trade at one go. This, the Tories hope, will soften the blow to the Commonwealth countries and enable the government to appear before Parliament brandishing a sheaf of "concessions" which "reconcile" Common Market and Commonwealth interests. But neither the Tories nor anyone else can reconcile the irreconcilable - the choice has to be made between the Europe of Adenauer and de Gaulle and the interests of the British people and their Commonwealth associates.

Agriculture

It has been the policy of British Governments for many years to subsidise farmers in order to help British agriculture to develop and produce a large part of our food requirements. Consequently, prices for farm products have been generally lower in Britain than in the Common Market countries, and British farms have been able to supply about 50 % of our total food consumption.

The Common Market rules would not permit us to protect our farmers by subsidies. That would be regarded as unfair to the continental producers trying to sell in the British market. So the housewife would pay more for food and the cost of living would rise. A moderate estimate by Professor Meade⁽¹⁾ puts the increase at 2 1/2 % to 3 % of the cost of living; from 7/6 to 10/- a week per family.

Common Market supporters argue that though this is true it would probably be offset by a decline in prices of some manufactured goods as a result of foreign competition. This, however, is not such an attractive idea as we shall see in the next section.

While it is the view of experts that the main sections of our agriculture would not be adversely affected by the free entry of continental farm produce, it is regarded as certain that those engaged in horticulture would suffer and eventually be driven out of business.

Britain is the biggest market in the world for foreign farm produce and the EEC countries will bargain very hard to grab the lion's share of it at the expense of our own and Commonwealth farmers. As they stand at

present, the complicated rules for agriculture would appear to be specifically designed to penalise Britain and its present trading partners in order to subsidise inefficient German and other agricultural producers.

Employment

Common Market countries must, in stages, do away with tariffs on goods from each other. Britain would have to do the same. How would this affect us?

Britain is, generally speaking, a high-tariff country, charging heavy duties on a large number of imported goods so as to protect British manufacturers in the home market. Here are a few examples of our tariffs as compared with those now operating in the Common Market.

	Britain	Common Market	
Clothing	17 1/2 % to 33 1/2 %		16 %
Motors	30 %	23.2 %	
Electrical Generators		17 1/2 %	8.8 %
Cameras	50 %	14.4 %	

If, in the course of the next ten years all these tariffs were reduced to nothing, foreign manufacturers would be able to offer many goods in the British market at lower prices than their British competitors. Thus there would be an increase in the sales of foreign cars, clothing, electrical generators, cameras and all other goods where our tariffs are at present higher than those of the Common Market. It is true, of course, that this would bring down prices for the British consumer. But what would be the good of that when thousands of workers had lost their jobs, thrown out of employment as a result of foreign competition?

Not all industries would suffer equally and some might even gain. A great deal of guessing is being done by the "experts" as to which would lose, which gain, and which might break even. One thing is certain; the losses to British industry would outweigh the gains, and employment in many industries would be reduced. The Westminster Bank⁽²⁾ says:

The importance of the reductions in tariffs should not be minimised. It is not generally realised how high British tariffs are on imports of many manufactured goods.

The lowering and eventual abolition of the UK tariff between us and our fellow members will provide a very considerable stimulus to many continental manufacturers, and British industrialists in the sectors affected may have to face severe competition in what has hitherto been a well protected home market.

For example, most machinery bears a tariff of between 15 % and 30 %; precision instruments usually at least 25 %; most textiles between 17 1/2 % and 22 1/2 % plus a specific duty on the weight or yardage of the goods; paper products between 14 % and 20 %; most clothing between 17 1/2 % and 33 1/2 % and toys, 25 %.

Whatever the fate of particular industries and firms, competition in all industries will become more intense both on the home and the export markets. A dog-eat-dog fight will develop, resulting in speed-up for the workers and loss of jobs. Many small, medium-sized and even quite large businesses will go to the wall. Monopoly will grow and the take-over trend will increase. The monopolies and their financial backers however, seeing their positions threatened by continental rivals will tend to operate the modern business slogan "If you can't beat them, join them". Merging with the big trusts in Germany, Holland and France, they will form huge international trusts and cartels. These will seek to concentrate their production in those places where labour is cheapest and cost of production lowest. A general decline in employment will result.

The Common Market refuses to write into its aims the maintenance of full employment. The creation of unemployment on a large scale will enable the monopolists to depress wages all round, and to play off the

workers of one country against the others. We can already hear the British employers moaning: "We are being priced out of the market by high wages," and proceeding to try to drive wages down to continental levels which will also be on the down grade. This is what is meant by the "healthy stimulus of competition".

Balance of Payments Crises

The British economy has suffered from one balance of payments crisis after another. This means that its outgoings in gold and foreign currencies frequently exceed its income from abroad. This perennial problem arises mainly because of the policies pursued by the Tory government - excessive military, spending overseas and capital investment abroad. These crises happen and are likely to recur until an alternative policy is pursued.

One method of dealing with such a situation is government control to restrict imports. The Tories do not like such methods, but a Labour Government might, and any progressive government certainly would use import controls as an effective means of getting out of a serious difficulty.

Common Market rules would prohibit such action, and Britain would be denied the use of the most direct and straightforward method of solving its problem. Other methods, which the Tories have used, result in putting a brake on the economy and restricting the purchasing power of the people.

To make matters worse, the free movement of capital, written into the Common Market rules, would make it impossible for the government to check the flow of money out of the country in such a situation.

Social Services

Common Market countries are required to harmonise their systems of social services. The continental practice is to place the main burden of the cost of these services on the employers and the workers with the state making a smaller contribution. The following figures show how much was paid by each of the three parties out of every £1,000 spent on the social services in the Common Market countries and Britain in 1957:⁽³⁾

	Insured persons		Employers	State
Belgium	193	450	244	
France	153	599	155	
West Germany	234	403	266	
Italy	93	659	170	
Luxembourg	180	470	186	
Netherlands	398	395	117	
Britain	175	164	570	

The British worker paid about 13 % less than the average while the British employer paid not much more than a third of the average. On the other hand the state in Britain paid nearly two-and-a-half times the average by governments.

The working class has always held that non-contributory social insurance is the ideal to aim for and that a system where the major portion of the cost is borne by the state is much superior to that where the state pays only a small share. Tory policy has for some years been designed to try to bring about a radical change in British practice so as to pass the burden on to workers' and employers' contributions. But they know they will meet with strong resistance if they try to put such retrograde schemes into practice. Meanwhile they have been trying to alter the proportions paid by the state by introducing and increasing Health Service charges for prescriptions and appliances while at the same time increasing the contributions. The Common Market would give them an excuse for turning the clock back and increasing the burden on the workers.

For it would only be on to the workers, in effect. We have seen that the continental employers recoup themselves handsomely for the high contributions they have to make, by paying wages that are much lower

than in Britain.

Whether benefits are higher on the continent than here is hard to determine. Certainly if we got in benefits the same percentage of earnings as continental workers do, our benefits would be much higher than they are. They would go up also if Britain spent the same percentage of its national income as the Common Market countries do on social security benefits. But it is not by any means clear that either of those things is meant by "harmonisation".

In one very important aspect of social security we are far ahead of the continent - the National Health Service. Even after the Tories have done their worst to whittle it away, 70 % of it is free and 30 % is paid for by the patient. Originally it was 100 % free and that was the avowed intention of the Labour Government that introduced it. There is a strong demand by the workers that the charges imposed in the last twelve years should be done away with. That would bring Britain into line with the Socialist countries, as it was in 1948.

In each Common Market country, medical benefit is covered by a number of different schemes, each catering for only a limited section of the population, each having different rules, but all paying benefit only according to the number and amount of contributions paid. To depart from the principles of the NHS in Britain would be a very big step backward.

Common Market Means Foreign Domination

I have no wish to transfer political power from the British man in the street to Dr. Adenauer and President de Gaulle, or to link our national future to such unstable allies.

Anthony Greenwood, MP.

The aim of the Common Market is to bring about political unification of the member states. The aims of this political union are to strengthen the hold of the monopolists, to frustrate the advance of Socialism in Europe and to consolidate the military power of the so-called Western Alliance against the Socialist countries. This political union spells the death of British independence.

When one considers that, right at the centre of the Common Market, and the strongest economic and military power within it, is the Germany of Adenauer and Krupp, the scheme looks very much like an attempt on the part of the German ruling class to achieve by subtlety what both the Kaiser and Hitler failed to achieve by their two world wars - German domination of Europe.

The Rome Treaty requires all governments of the member states to operate similar economic policies and it gives to the Common Market organs the power to tell governments what policies they may, or may not pursue.

This would mean the complete undermining of the authority of Parliament, the replacement of great sections of British law by foreign law, and eventually the abolition of British independence.

The Rome Treaty provides for an Assembly, intended to be a kind of super-parliament, composed of 142 delegates from the parliaments of the member countries. This body has little real power and is nothing more than a debating chamber, but it would supersede in authority the British Parliament.

Next comes the Council of the Common Market which consists (at present) of one representative from each country but with different voting powers. The West German, French, and Italian delegates have four votes each, Holland and Belgium have two votes each and Luxembourg has one vote. So at present there are seventeen votes in all. This body is the nominal government of the Common Market.

Common Market Bureaucrats

Many of the decisions which the Council makes require what is called a "qualified" majority, that is, there must be at least twelve out of the seventeen in favour. But the Council does not choose for itself the

questions it will discuss. This is done by the Commission which is the really powerful body, the inner Cabinet of the Common Market. This nine-man Commission of which Professor Hallstein of West Germany is the secretary, has the power to take decisions on all matters that are considered to be Common Market policy. It tells governments what they must do and what they cannot do.

The Commission is not composed of elected representatives, it is appointed by the unanimous agreement of the member governments. The Commission is answerable to nobody. Any government that disagrees with its decisions can take the matter to the Council - but it will have to get twelve votes before the decision can be reversed. Alternatively, it can appeal against the legality of the decision to the so-called Court of Justice of the Common Market.

This Court of Justice, which sits in Luxembourg, is unlike other courts of law. It does not operate laws passed by parliaments, it is above such things. Its code of laws is contained in the provisions of the Treaty of Rome and its decisions exceed in authority those of all national law courts. To British people it has the added disadvantage that it operates in accordance with continental legal ideas which are very different from the British legal tradition.

The Treaty of Rome provides for the setting up of a number of other bodies including a Social Security Council, a European Bank and an investment trust to control investment policy, both in Europe and in the colonial and underdeveloped countries.

This whole set-up must be regarded as wholly unacceptable to the people of Britain. To join it would mean the surrender of democratic rights that have been fought for over centuries. It would mean joining a body with a ready-made undemocratic constitution which would override the power of parliament and people. It would place the British people under the heel of a foreign power and commit them to the military policies of that power.

The two most powerful governments in the Market - de Gaulle's and Adenauer's - are for a foreign policy on the basis of: no agreement with the Soviet Union on Berlin; the creation of independent European nuclear strength through the further build-up of French nuclear power, and through the granting of nuclear weapons to West Germany.

Before Britain gets in, Adenauer and de Gaulle will require assurances as to its attitude and support for their plans.

Tories and Liberals and the Common Market

When the Rome Treaty was being negotiated in 1957 the British Tory Government tried, for a long time, to get the "Six" to drop their scheme in favour of its own proposals for a European Free Trade Area comprising about seventeen countries but with more limited aims. It was strongly opposed to the common tariff, the control of economic policy, the free movement of labour and capital and the "super-state" apparatus. It declared that the Common Market rules conflict with relations with the countries of the Commonwealth and with Britain's basic economic and political interests.

The Liberals, on the other hand, came out in favour of the Common Market from the outset, made no criticism of it, and wanted Britain to join regardless of the effect this would have on the wages and conditions of our people or on our relations with the Commonwealth.

After the Market was launched the British Government went ahead with its own scheme for a rival bloc called the European Free Trade Association, consisting of a group of countries outside the Common Market, and often referred to as the "Seven".

In August 1961, over three years after the Common Market started, the government announced that it had decided to apply for membership.

What made the Tories so suddenly become enthusiastic? There are a number of reasons.

Last year the Tories' economic policy had got the country into great difficulties. There was a very serious balance of payments problem, and the government found itself appealing cap-in-hand for huge loans from the International Monetary Fund (which America virtually controls) and from a group of European bankers.

The total borrowed in these ways was over £800 million. It is widely believed that among the many secret strings attached to those loans was one which required the British Government to change its attitude to the Common Market.

The Tories, incapable of changing their economic policy to meet the challenge of the Common Market, were scared out of their wits at the thought of being exposed to what appeared, in effect, to be a ganging up of six commercially aggressive European states against them. So they capitulated to Kennedy, and agreed to apply to be allowed to join Adenauer's club.

They had come to the conclusion that big business stood to gain a great deal from a relative lowering of workers' standards. They also felt, of course, that their class interests committed them to the cold war and the struggle against socialism.

So they changed almost overnight. Not longer was the Commonwealth so important; national independence became an "outdated notion" and Europe was the "most dynamic part of the world", and they glowed with enthusiasm for the "unbounded possibilities" for trade that the Common Market would open up.

Without waiting a minute they started the "wage pause" and the restraint policy as part of their preparation for the "competitive jolt" which they said the Common Market would give to British industry.

The USA

Why is America so interested in Britain joining the Common Market? The US government aims to lead a solid bloc of capitalist states throughout the world in its war on communism, to prevent the rise of socialism anywhere and provide an even more profitable field for the investment of American dollars. To them the Common Market is the political counterpart of NATO.

One of the things American big business hates is the special arrangements that exist between Britain and the Commonwealth, because they hinder the US monopolists from moving in and taking over Britain's trade with Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

American investments in Europe are large, and even larger in Britain. From the point of view of the profitability of those investments the Common Market seems to the Americans to be a sound proposition. It is true that the Common Market discriminates against American exports just as it does against all countries outside the club, but America relies on her massive bargaining power to secure concessions that will ease the position. To that end President Kennedy sent his man Howard Peterson to Brussels to negotiate with the Common Market last January. Peterson secured a twenty per cent cut in duties on nearly all the goods America exports to the "Six" in return for a similar reduction on some goods America imports from them.

Many business interests in the United States are, however, extremely worried about the new pattern of cut-throat competition which the Common Market is bringing about, and the effect that this might have on America's exports and its balance of payments.

Labour and the Common Market

Up to the moment neither the Labour Party nor the TUC has officially adopted any policy on the Common Market. When the Tory government announced its intention to apply for membership the leaders of both these bodies dutifully supported the Tory move on the grounds that it would enable us to see what terms could be got from the "Six".

Many prominent Labour men and women trade union leaders are strongly opposed to Britain's entry into the Market; but the top right-wing leaders, though they continue to say they have not made up their minds, are clearly looking for an excuse to come out in favour and dragoon the Labour movement behind them.

Mr Gaitskell would, no doubt, have preferred to leave the matter entirely to Macmillan and his government. That is now out of the question. The issue has become one of burning interest throughout the Labour Party and the trade unions, and there is growing recognition among the rank and file of the danger to British wage standards and social conditions, to our trade with the Commonwealth and to our national independence.

Among the questions being raised very sharply are: could Britain advance to socialism within the framework of the Common Market? Could a Labour Government carry out a policy of nationalisation of big sections of British industry like steel, chemicals and engineering?

It has already been made clear in this pamphlet that the Rome Treaty requires all its signatory countries to pursue similar economic policies. A socialist economic policy would be in conflict with the anti-socialist monopolist policies pursued in West Germany and France today.

Nationalisation

While there is no clause in the Rome Treaty which specifically rules out nationalisation, it insists that nationalised industries must obey the Market rules about competition. It is a basic principle of the Rome Treaty that industries should compete with one another on equal terms. So nationalised industries would have to operate on terms decided by the private monopolies of the other member countries. This could well defeat the objective of such nationalisation.

The High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community has disallowed the Belgian Government's plan for semi-nationalisation of its coal mines. By a law passed last year the Belgian Government gave almost supreme powers over the mines to a new controlling authority, the Directoire.

It has now been told that this is a breach of its obligations under the Schuman Plan Treaty setting up the Community. This Treaty provides that the future prosperity of the coal industry is to be sought by free competition.

The Community says it is anxious to help the Belgian collieries, but not by letting Belgium flout her obligations to the other members of the "Six".

(Daily Telegraph May 7 1962)⁽⁴⁾

A Labour Government would not have a free hand in the development of the social services or in agriculture or in our export trade. No British Government would have the freedom by itself to enter into short or long-term trade arrangements with other countries outside the Common Market.

The Conservative Party welcomes an arrangement that would hamstring socialist policies and confine any future Labour Government within the narrow framework of the Common Market rules.

On the other hand, there is strong opposition to our entry into the Common Market by those businessmen interested in industries certain to lose, those whose trade ties are largely with Commonwealth countries, many farmers, and a whole host of "small" men who rightly fear that they are being sold down the river for the greater glory of the biggest sharks whose interests are paramount in the Conservative Party. Even in the City of London there have been protest meetings by those business circles, within earshot of the Bank of England, which oppose the Market.

Some people are being taken in by the sudden conversion of our Tories to "internationalism". "Is not the Common Market a step towards internationalism?" they ask. One might as well ask the same question about NATO or CENTO or the Organisation of American States. These are groupings for the furtherance of imperialist aims. They are the very opposite of the internationalism that socialism strives for. The Common Market is just such a ganging up but with political and economic as well as military objectives. Its aim is to

prevent the growth of genuine socialist internationalism. For the rank and file of the Labour movement it is of key importance that Britain should be free to pursue its own policies and that an elected government should be at liberty to carry out the programme on which it was elected, untrammelled by restrictions imposed from outside.

If the Tories drag Britain into the Common Market does that mean that we are stuck there for ever?

Until such time as the Common Market really acquires real supranational power, it is open to any country to withdraw. There is no power strong enough, as yet, to force Britain against its will, to remain a party to a treaty it wishes to renounce. On the other hand, the longer Britain remains in the Common Market and adapts the economy to its rules, the more difficult and painful will it be to withdraw.

The Labour movement should declare that it will renounce Tory signatures to the Common Market treaty as soon as it has won a parliamentary majority.

What is the Alternative?

One of the most serious questions now being discussed is the alternative to the Common Market. Some people have expressed the view that once it has come into existence Britain cannot afford to be left outside.

While one understands such fears, they are not really well grounded. It is true that Britain needs to have access to the markets of Europe, including those of the "Six"; but it is equally true that those countries need the British market. The threat of being squeezed out is being greatly exaggerated.

On the other hand, it is not enough to say "No" to the Common Market. It is most urgent for Britain to find an alternative economic policy to the ruinous one that has been carried out by the Tories this past dozen years.

What should such a policy be?

First, it should be recognised that though for special and temporary reasons, the markets of West Europe have been growing rapidly in the last few years, Europe is not the area which promises the biggest trade development in the long term. It is the socialist countries, the newly independent nations and the old Dominions that hold out the greatest trade prospects. Socialist countries will, for many years to come, want the products of British industries, if the political barriers to trade are lifted, in exchange for their own products.

The newly independent nations, including former British colonies like India, Ghana and Nigeria are eager to industrialise and need British plant, machine tools and vehicles. They are not getting them anything like fast enough. Tory policy is against the rapid industrialisation of these countries. It prefers to encourage private capitalist investment in industries like oil, rubber and copper mining, which provide large profits for big British and American business while leaving the exploited countries backward and poverty-stricken.

In order to encourage and take a full part in this development it would be necessary for Britain to offer favourable credit terms to its customers. This could be done only if we stopped wasting hundreds of millions every year on arms to maintain a cold war that is ruining the country.

Smash Down the Barriers

The real alternative to the Common Market is the carrying out by Britain of a truly independent political and economic line. By breaking free from the NATO alliance, by smashing down the barriers to trade with the most rapidly advancing sections of the world, by opening up trade with the Commonwealth on a much bigger scale, this country could stride forward. It has the skilled workers, the know-how and the basic equipment. What holds it back is the nineteenth century imperialist outlook of its ruling class, which is not interested in Britain's economic development but only in its own profit. Their surrender to the Common

Market marks the ultimate bankruptcy of their policy.

The people of Britain, wage and salary workers, farmers and small businessmen, must prevent the Tories dragging us into the Common Market.

Every trade union should record its opposition to Britain's entry into the Common Market. The result of such action would be rejection of the Tory proposal by both the TUC and Labour Party conferences. To bring this about requires the utmost discussion in the factories, the trade union branches, the Co-ops and in all organisations, so that the workers understand the danger.

(1) *U.K. Commonwealth and Common Market*, James E. Meade, Inst. of Economic Affairs, 1962

(2) *The Common Market and the United Kingdom*, Westminster Bank Ltd. Oct. 1961

(3) None of these figures add up to £1,000 because figures relating to non-national social insurance schemes are omitted. (*Source: International Labour Office.*)

(4) The European Coal and Steel Community is an earlier grouping of the "Six" countries which has now, along with "Euratom", been absorbed into the Common Market.