

The European Problem

'I imagine that by about the turn of the century something like a United States of Socialist Europe will exist. A timid and conservative prefiguration of these United States is naturally the Common Market, for even conservative, bourgeois politicians are beginning to sense that the nation state, at least in Europe . . . has become an anachronism.'

Isaac Deutscher, interview,
New Left Review No. 47 (Jan-Feb 1968).

The following pages are mainly devoted to a study of how the British left struggled to come to terms with the Common Market, in the course of what was known (with a touch of derision) as the 'great debate' of 1971. But it should not be thought that either the problem, the left's reactions and answers, or the conclusions to be drawn from the whole episode are peculiar to Great Britain. In this sense, all that happened was that Britain had to face consciously and deal more rapidly with a dilemma which—by contrast—had 'dawned' much more gradually upon the political life of the six original member-states.

And this very acceleration of events created a conscious ‘problem’ and underlined the nature of the dilemma. In the later 1950s—it should be recalled—at the time of the Common Market’s formation, the combined pressures of Stalinism and the Cold War made it all too easy to avoid such difficult questions with stereotyped answers.

In the early 1970s, however, the British left is grappling with the difficulty at the very moment in which its character—that is, its character *as* a European problem—is becoming more evident everywhere. Those who doubt this should turn to Giorgio Amendola’s recent statement of the Italian Communist Party’s position on Europe, *I comunisti e l’Europa*, where it is maintained that ‘international integration is a reality with which one will have to come to terms’, and that the left can only respond adequately to this process by quickly transcending its ‘narrow national limits’. Or (perhaps still more significant, given its notoriously conservative source) the French Communist position outlined at practically the same time by J. Denis and J. Kanapa in *Pour ou contre l’Europe?*

These are theoretical indications of the way the wind is blowing. But of course practical politics too have imparted lessons in the same sense. The ‘great debate’, it is argued below, demonstrated how a ruling class can obtain its class aims by moving on to the ‘European’ terrain and simultaneously forcing (or perhaps simply allowing) the left to retreat back to the lost ground of nationalism and ‘national sovereignty’. Hardly six months after the provisional conclusion of the British debate, with the parliamentary vote of 28 October 1971, the French government attempted a closely analogous move with President Pompidou’s ‘European’ referendum of April 1972. This was, in the event, far less successful than the Heath government’s campaign. Pompidou proved that he was not de Gaulle, and could not aspire to use the referendum technique in the classical fashion. Nevertheless (as many commentators pointed out) his strategy by no means met the humiliating *échec* which it deserved, for the PCF still let itself be manoeuvred into the position of voting ‘No’ rather than abstaining. Gaullism avoided a moral *débâcle* and could claim a formal victory and pursue its chosen course of government. Fifteen years after the Treaty of Rome, in the country which had always been the heart of the Common Market, a bourgeois régime could still count on the great party of the left remaining within its ‘narrow national limits’.

Both theoretically and practically, therefore, the British debate about entry should be seen as posing a problem (though admittedly in an ‘extreme’ context with many peculiarities of its own) that has some validity for the Common Market as a whole. There is all too little space to pursue the theoretical implications of this problem here. But it should be noted that these concern both the history of marxist ideas about nationalism and internationalism and (perhaps more important) the real historical relationship between marxism and the nationalism which has characterized European history during the century now ending. The Common Market has begun, at least, to awaken marxism from its dogmatic slumbers in this vital area of thought.

I Britain and Europe: The New National Question

'The nation-state decays and disintegrates whether people are aware of it or not, no matter what their efforts to preserve it . . . The nation-states of the West have left their golden age far, very far, behind . . . Like any organism that has outlived its day, the nation-state can prolong its existence only by intensifying all the processes of its own degeneration'.

Isaac Deutscher *The Non-Jewish Jew* pp. 113–4.

In 1971 the British left was forced to define its position towards Europe in one short period of time. Although the question of British entry to the Common Market had dragged on intermittently for more than ten years, it was finally resolved in less than six months, between May and October 1971. In May—as *The Times* put it—suddenly everyone began to believe in entry. The meeting between Pompidou and Heath on 20–21 May demonstrated a dramatic change in the French position on Britain's application for entry: it became virtually certain that the latter would succeed. Five months and a few days later, the House of Commons voted approval of entry 'in principle' with a majority of 112 votes.

The left in Britain (and in the other countries negotiating for admission alongside it, Ireland, Denmark and Norway) faced a political problem quite distinct from that of the left in the original member nations. The Common Market was formed originally in a very pragmatic way, over a long period of time. It grew up, and the national lefts grew used to it as (at least most of the time) a marginal phenomenon.

Also, it was a phenomenon closely associated with others in their mind: the Cold War, the American presence in Europe, and the predominantly right-wing and Catholic governments of the post-1947 'Restoration' of capitalism. Nor should it be forgotten that the single most theatrical incident of early Europeanism, the rejection of the European Defence Community project by the French parliament in 1954, was a marked defeat for the bolder projects of integration.¹

In 1971, by contrast, left-wing movements of the new member-states confronted a relatively known quantity, a defined entity. The EEC had existed for 14 years. And in the rapidly altering international circumstances of the 1970s it was not so simply identifiable with Atlanticism and reaction as it had formerly been. Hence—or so one would have thought—it was more possible, and much more important, for them to achieve a *conscious* and theoretical understanding of the problem. That is, to ask and answer such questions as: what is 'Europe', in this sense? How is it related to the nation and national state-power? Does it

¹ There is a short account of the abortive (and somewhat neglected) EDC project in U. Kitzinger, *The European Common Market and Community* (1967), pp. 11–14, accompanied by extracts from the decisive speech against ratification by the French Radical Herriot (pp. 61–5), an incredible example of diseased Jacobinism. When the result was announced the entire opposition burst into the *Marseillaise*.

provide more, or less, favourable conditions of action for the left? Do our interests in regard to it coincide with those of the ruling class? or not?

In Britain, this happened to some extent, and in the most interesting way, in the course of 1971's debate about entry. The reaction of the British left to the issue certainly illustrated (or so it will be argued) the extraordinary dilemmas of a 'national' left when confronted with a profound strategic threat, a threat to its traditional essence, rather than the more tactical challenges upon which it normally lives.

In order to consider the phenomenon properly it is necessary to look at it concretely, in context. That 'context' is, of course, the nation, the national State, and the British ruling class. Just because the left in Great Britain as in all other European countries (though to varying degree) has become so identified with the nation-state's substance by long historical experience, its attitudes always derive much of their real meaning from that substance and experience. It may not always look as if this is so, if one takes words and policies at their face value; yet it always is so, in fact.

Look at the same problem from another angle. The political left's subjective self-awareness, its ideal aspiration, is usually couched in universalist terms: in terms of the most general or abstract (and so supra-national or inter-national) values and concepts. This is in the widest sense a European tradition of thought and action, springing from the Enlightenment.² And, of course, it is a European tradition which has in the 20th century turned into a world tradition, a universal habit. Yet it is not the case that these universal ideas have everywhere the same *real* meaning and application. Each national subjectivity may—so to speak—believe itself universal; but it is not, and indeed regarded 'objectively' such self-consciousness is often palpably false—the most important modern example, perhaps, of 'false consciousness' or ideology.

This is not to suggest that the universalizing impulse of the left is intrinsically misled or misleading. On the contrary, it is quite central and indispensable to its being. Without an active and expanding universal consciousness—a consciousness moving from the particular to the universal and sustaining a constant tension between the two—there can be neither radical nor revolutionary political life. But the conditions of such consciousness are another question, regarded realistically at any given moment of history. It is rarely easy to distinguish critically between the 'universal' and the 'particular' in actual instances.

² Perhaps the most telling study in this connection remains the first part of Friedrich Meinecke's *Cosmopolitanism and the National State* (1907, Eng. Trans. 1970), which shows the inextricable closeness of Enlightenment Traditions and even the most pronounced of 19th century nationalisms. When the latter had assumed the 'lunatic' form of nazism—the Zenith and Nadir of the nation-state, its apotheosis and its Black Mass, as Deutscher put it—this relationship was still not dissolved altogether. The essence of nazi 'insanity' remained a perverted 'global mission'—a diseased echo of 'internationalism' as it were.

In Europe, the source of rational universalism, it has become possibly harder than anywhere else. Here the 'particular' is the nation—but also what one author describes as 'the idea of national or racial uniqueness . . . the main plank of the crystallized counter-revolution' which ravaged the world in the last century.³ Europe was the source of the disastrous reaction against reason, as well as of the Enlightenment itself. It fell from the greatest height to the utmost and most despicable depth: from the universe of the *philosophes* to one of universal 'national narrowness' and the militant 'uniqueness' of imperialist murder and genocide. It would be optimistic indeed to imagine that it has fully recovered from the experience.

Consequently the problems and ideals of the left remain, in Britain as elsewhere, deeply entwined with a 'national' experience—what one might call the normal experience of separation, or 'capitalism-in-one-country'—whose categories are often taken for granted, instinctively or unconsciously. This is why one has to proceed patiently, and somewhat indirectly, locating the national syntax that determines much of the meaning of the left's language. In today's Europe, whether knowingly or not, every left wing is engaged on a struggle to 'disengage' from the inheritance of the long 'counter-revolution'. And no issue pin-points the strange dilemma more acutely than that of European integration.

The Ideological Function of The Great Debate

A week after returning from the decisive meeting with President Pompidou, Prime Minister Heath launched another campaign to win over public opinion in a TV interview. He needed to: different opinion polls were showing majorities of up to 70 per cent hostile to British entry to Europe. But so many campaigns had been undertaken already on this subject, and had lasted so long, that there were certain obvious difficulties. 'I think', he declared on this occasion, 'that to a certain extent people have become bored with the discussions about the Community.' Nonetheless, they were now to be roused from their boredom. 'This will be an historic decision,' he went on, 'I hope that we will be able to keep the debate on this matter on a high level.' The long-standing argument about the Common Market was to develop into what became known as 'the Great Debate'.

But the people had little intention of giving up their boredom. It was very noticeable how, from the very outset, ironic quotation-marks enclosed the term 'great debate' (with or without ironic capitals). There was certainly to be a debate in the six months following. Or more precisely, a continuation of the mild, somewhat stale and exasperated argument about the topic which had dragged on for years. The wrangle was aggravated and given a clearer party-political form when, in the course of the summer, the Labour Party decided officially to oppose entry. But it never at any moment approached 'greatness', or even excitement.

³ J. L. Talmon, 'Jews Between Revolution and Counter-Revolution' in *Israel Among the Nations* (1970), p. 49.

Part of the explanation for the nullity of 1971 is surely to be found in the very conception of a self-conscious national 'debate'. Nations do not really stage such 'debates' about matters of life and death. Conflicts are thrust upon them. The national soul does not decide genteelly to commune with itself. In genuine crises it is torn apart by dissensions.

There is no lack of examples of what a 'great debate' really means in the life of national societies. Perhaps the most evident case historically is the Dreyfus affair. However, just such a 'great debate' happened to be going on elsewhere in the world in 1971. The United States of America was—and still is—torn in two by the question of Vietnam and all its consequences for the country. Like the Dreyfus scandal this vast conflict has not only convulsed one nation, but spilled over to affect the rest of the world. As far as the left in Europe is concerned, for instance, how much of its new thought and action in the 1960s was a result of this fertilizing influence?

Even more relevant in this context is the last truly great debate which occurred in Great Britain itself. That is, Britain's own equivalent of the present crisis of US imperialism, the conflict which raged (in many different forms) from the mid-1890s down to 1914. That too was a profound and antagonistic dispute upon the nature and orientation of an empire, and its meaning for the quality of life in the domestic society at its centre. Like the American trauma it exacerbated class conflicts, divided and stimulated the intellectuals, and engendered a new left. In it the South African war occupied the place which the Indochina conflict does now for America. The many direct and indirect consequences of that 'debate' carried British society to the point of revolutionary tension and civil war, between 1910 and 1914. The way in which the conflict was resolved proved decisive for the later development of the nation (as will certainly be true for the United States now).

Since we are particularly concerned here with the theoretical positions of the left, it is worth recalling some of the ideas and movements thrown up by that era of fertile antagonism. It gave rise to both the political Labour Party and later to revolutionary syndicalism; it produced the Liberal governmental regime of 1906 and the programme of 'social liberalism' which was (as events turned out) quite decisive for the future strategy of the ruling class in this century; it stimulated (amongst a host of others) books like J. A. Hobson's *Imperialism* of 1902, one of the two most profoundly influential English political works of the century.⁴ *That* 'debate'—carried on by strikes, suffragettes, angry mobs, artists

⁴ The other was to be Keynes's *General Theory* of 1935. Although in some ways much more influential, since it offered a valuable panacea for capitalist ills, what in Keynes's writings can be compared to the magnificent second section of *Imperialism*, 'The Politics of Imperialism'? Perhaps the latter still offers the best introduction to the period from the point of view relevant here, together with L. T. Hobhouse's *Democracy and Reaction* (1904). Samuel Hynes's *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* (1968) provides a valuable general panorama of the development of ideas up to 1914. The best-known account of one part of the period is Dangerfield's *The Strange Death of Liberal England 1910–14* (1935, re-issued 1971). More recently in *The Quest for National Efficiency 1899–1914* (1971) G. R. Searle has studied the history of the era's most important political slogan.

and music-hall songs, as well as by editorialists and parliamentarians—propelled society forward willy-nilly and forced people to think new thoughts and act originally. It did effectively decide a future national ‘destiny’ in a number of different ways. These were not the ways that the ruling élite of around 1900 had decided, for the good reason that the ruling class itself had come to be split into two great and complex factions by the underlying dilemma of ‘right’ versus ‘left’ (or liberal) imperialism. That is, whether, the British Empire should respond to the German challenge by a ‘Prussianization’ of its own—‘National Efficiency’, economic protectionism, and militarism—or attempt to renovate its own more liberal and empirical traditions of free trade and civil consensus. How absurd it is to compare the pseudo-struggle of 1971 to any of these conflicts!

What was the cause of the extraordinary climate of futility and make believe surrounding Britain’s approach to Europe? It was certainly not—for instance—because real sources of conflict were lacking in British society. The *longueurs* of the 1971 great debate were punctuated by the roar of exploding gelignite and the rattle of machine-guns. In Ireland the Anglo-Scots parliamentary consensus was once more displaying some of its limitations. While the European storm roared around its tea cup, the Conservative industrial relations bill was advancing steadily through parliament, towards its aim of curbing the economic power of the trade unions and the working class. The act was necessary because of a serious sharpening of class struggle in Britain. As the previous Prime Minister had once declared: ‘We face the problem of an assertion of the power of the factory floor, a problem . . . which is growing throughout Europe, a problem to which no country has so far found the answer’.⁵ Here was the Heath ‘answer’, one aspect of a whole new aggressive ruling-class strategy (often described as ‘abrasive’) which tolerated, or even sought, a higher degree of conflict in politics.

It is true that Great Britain was less shaken by the great wave of change and dissent of the 1960s than most other countries in western Europe (except in its Northern Ireland province). Nonetheless, things had altered sensibly. 1971 occurred in a context of growing conflict, revealed in industrial relations, in the style and policies of the new government, in Ireland, in the decline and difficulty of the old left opposition (Labour and Communist) and the emergence of new left rivals. Although quite limited in comparison to, for example, the United States or the Italy of the same period, these changes took place against a background of unique national stability and consensus. Indeed there is a very marked contrast between the conditions of 1971 and the relative calm which prevailed at the time of Britain’s first entry attempt of 1961–2.

However, the debate on Europe did not enter into this trend towards conflict. It did not contribute—in spite of appearances—to the unfolding of the contradictions at work, and so to the positive disintegration of British conservatism. It did not express these vital conflicts of the social order—the sharpening class struggle, the death-throes of the quasi-colonial regime in Ulster, the general confrontation

⁵ Harold Wilson, Guildhall speech, 10 November 1969.

between political tradition and novelty—but stood apart from them. Far from acting as a solvent of national consensus, it considerably reinforced the latter's flagging vitality.

This is how the situation of the 'great debate' differed so totally from, for example, the Edwardian debate on empire mentioned above. In the latter case the 'ideological' issue of right-wing or Tory imperialism versus 'liberal' imperialism served as an effective lightning-conductor to real social conflict, as a means of political, emotional and intellectual polarization. That was why it 'mattered' in a way which quite precluded the boredom of 1971. It functioned as an element of fission, favouring the profound and fertile agitation of the period.⁶ And in turn that agitation of civil society imparted its vitality to the battle of ideas, creating the well-known intensity and variety of the period's thought and art.

The live dialectic of that era, when compared to the stultification of Great Britain's more recent moment of destiny, suggests an answer to the question we are considering. No ideal debate really 'stands apart' from basic social antagonisms—least of all, surely, in an over-organic national entity like Great Britain. If it fails to give voice to them, the chances are it is functioning in some way to stifle them. In that case, the deadly inertia of the 'great debate' must have come from its role as obstacle, or diversion, in the play of social forces. Paraded as a noble expression of national dispute, it must have worked in reality as repression—as reaffirmation of the national consensus, the sacramental unity. The aim of the national breast-heaving was only, in the end, to pull the national corsets tighter still.

Some sense of the likelihood of this may have been what created popular scepticism regarding the European argument from the beginning. People know very well they live in a land where all overt conflicts are forestalled, cushioned by commissions of inquiry, impartially arbitrated, smuggled out of sight, forgotten about, made jokes of, regarded with embarrassment, and—if the worst comes to the worst—deprecated and deeply regretted. How then could they believe in the genuineness of such an invitation to public combat?

The rulers made the suggestion because of their confidence in their power—in the strength of the 'consensus'. There could be a 'Great Debate', an exercise in national navel-scratching, just because there would be no great debate: things could be relied on not to get out of hand. The *spectacle* would not simply substitute for the reality, but also help prevent it happening. What is the nation, if not a bottomless box of tricks of just this sort? If one may compare the macrocosm to the microcosm, the British nation is like one of its own Royal Commissions in permanent *séance*: it translates trouble from the realm of the real to that of the official word, the ethereal, confident that the latter's magic will work back again to resolve (or at least help contain) any real disturbance.

⁶ Ch. VII of Bernard Semmel's *Imperialism and Social Reform: English Social-Imperial Thought, 1895-1914* (1960), 'The Two Imperialisms', gives the best short definition of the ideological side of the conflict.

II Ruling-class Europe: The Times and the Nation

The situation is a dynamic one, moving dialectically. Right now, we seem to be in the midst of a major revolution in international relationships as modern science establishes the technological basis for a major advance in the conquest of the material world and the beginnings of truly cosmopolitan production.'

Stephen Hymer, 'The Multinational Corporation and the Law of Uneven Development,' in *Economics and World Order from the 1970s to the 1990s*, ed. J. Bhagwati (1972).⁷

The general paradox of the in-existent 'great debate' was the setting for a number of other paradoxes. Where would one have expected to find the strongest resentment against entering the Common Market? Among the most nationalist sector of the bourgeoisie and the ruling groups, surely—the chief custodians of the nation and all it means, the descendants of Churchill and Disraeli, the men and the party of 1940. Yet here there was to be almost no opposition at all. Where would one have logically expected to find least resistance? Surely, in the 'progressive' party to the left, with its traditions of moral internationalism and its strong and ancient distrust of narrow right-wing chauvinism—all the more so since that same party, recently in power, had led another attempt to gain admittance to the Market. Yet Labour was to become the focus of national opposition to entry, and the outspoken voice of chauvinist self-interest against Heath's 'betrayal'.

Moving farther left beyond the Labour Party, the sense of paradox becomes even stronger. Britain's marxist and anarchist *groupuscules*, who together inherit the most vocal and uncompromising of all internationalist traditions, either supported Labour's standpoint or strove to out-do it. Perhaps the most stern opponent of all was the Communist Party of Great Britain. Not only was 'national sovereignty' defended from the left, it was defended most angrily by one sector of the 'marxist' left.

The Times and Europe

The source of this odd national logic must be sought in the European policy of the ruling class. Where better to start than with *The Times*? As the main focus of civil society's conscience, *The Times* helps form its 'official'—or State-oriented—world-view, the consciousness of the English 'establishment'. Its peculiar authoritativeness both reflects and helps maintain a certain kind of relationship between civil society and the State (the essence of the English polity). 'Without the kind of picture of the world the old *Times* used to give, the world it pictures

⁷ Hymer suggests that if one substitutes 'multinational corporation' for 'bourgeoisie' in the celebrated passage of the *Communist Manifesto* dealing with the capitalist economic revolution (from 'The need of a constantly expanding market . . .' down to 'lumped together into one nation, with one government, one code of laws, one national class-interest, one frontier and one customs-tariff', Marx-Engels *Selected Works*, one vol. edition 1968, pp. 38–9) the result is a reasonable portrait of the present.

cannot exist,' writes a contemporary critic of the paper's 'degeneration'.⁸

Between 28 April and 4 May 1971, *The Times* gave forth an interesting series of articles characteristically entitled 'The Prospect of Britain', in which editor Rees-Mogg offered the nation a philosophical survey of its present and future. The sermon's main point was unmistakable. From a responsible ruling-class point of view, the nation has no future at all outside Europe.

First of all he found it necessary to deal with the young, recently the cause of some excitement even in Great Britain. He calculated shrewdly that this *Zeitgeist* was now in weak enough shape to be put quickly on the canvas. The young romantics resent 'the middle generation, the middle-aged, middle-class generation, which dominates the life of the west'; they want poetry, love, fulfilment. 'They would like a world of expanded rather than contracted consciousness... They want to shatter the consciousness their fathers wanted to control,' he went on.⁹ Ignorant of 'the power of selfishness' and the dangers of real (as opposed to spiritual) revolution. 'They have a certain Shelley-like gentleness and sweetness about them'. So all is well. Reduced in this way to the category of bourgeois intellectual romanticism, the new wave of trouble-makers will—by implication—all turn into selfish mediocrities and *Times*-readers in due course.

Rees-Mogg believes that English civil society still retains enough of its distinctive capacity to absorb intellectual dissent. It has never been a merely capitalist society, consecrated to what he refers to as 'the monetary obsession'. Its 'voluntary tradition' is still strong he points out. Environmentalism offers much hope, in association with the deep-rooted romantic anti-industrialism so characteristic of the national intelligentsia in the past. Once reinforced by the new ecological world-fashion of the moment, the national obsession with village greens and rootedness may yet serve the ruling class well. English polity has always depended upon giving the intellectuals abundant useful work to do, in private or public charity, the universities, parliamentary-political life, or the formation of responsible public opinion through media (like *The Times*, *The Guardian*, or the BBC). Over-employment is the best antidote to the sort of ungrateful and spiteful speculation which

⁸ In the review *The Human World*, Vol. I, No. 1 (1970). *The Human World* is the organ of a despairing clique of academic arch-reactionaries devoted to the cult of Professor F. R. Leavis. It sees *The Times*'s descent into 'vulgarization' and 'thoughtless modernism' as a portent of British society's fall into democracy. Contraception, education, TV and the Beatles; and now even *The Times* is giving in. Is there no hope at all? In general, no socialist or truly liberal reader can fail to derive both satisfaction and entertainment from a study of this periodical, whose damp spiritual *cul-de-sac* represents, surely, the last gasp of elite conservative pseudo-humanism.

⁹ One suspects Rees-Mogg may have been launched along this track by Charles Reich's neo-christian tract *The Greening of America*, from which *The Times* had just published some extracts. This grisly mixture of protestant revivalism and Dale Carnegie stands in the same relationship to the young rebels of the 1960s as films like *The Graduate* or *Love Story*: by focusing on the positive, christian, spiritual side of things it discovers that the 'revolution' was in reality subjectivity, romantic yearning, a change of heart. As such it 'has a case'. Britain inaugurated the 1970s with its own notable contribution to this spiritualist counter-offensive, Bryan Forbes' *The Raging Moon* (1970), whose theme was a rebel couple confined to wheelchairs, condemned permanently, therefore, to impotent romantic rage at the way of the world.

an intelligentsia is (by its abstract, bookish formation) naturally heir to. Rees-Mogg is confident that the 'valid' elements in youthful rebellion can all be incorporated into this healthy, organic tradition and neutralized.¹⁰

But there are few other signs of hope on the national horizon. As befits a *Times* man and a moulder of London élite opinion, one senses that the editor's heart lies with the country-house and stately City rituals rather than with modern capitalist production. Nevertheless, the apparatus of 'civilization' which he treasures rests upon the latter in the last resort. And here the outlook is grim. 'The latest *Financial Times* survey of capital spending intentions is extremely depressing—the worst in four years . . .'¹¹ Rolls-Royce had just collapsed: 'It used to be said that Rolls-Royce was Britain; if we stay out of Europe, Britain will be Rolls-Royce.' After so much belletrist rumination upon changes of heart, 'how we talk to each other', romanticism to responsibility and so on, a distinct atmosphere of panic emerges here. While we minuet in the drawing-room the chateau's foundations may be sliding away beneath our very feet.

Nor is the panic wholly economic. Unlike so many others, Rees-Mogg remembers the last election—only two years ago—and the vile odours that emanated from it. It was dominated not by the question of European entry (scarcely discussed) but by extreme-right themes of 'law and order' and racism, and by the single personality of Enoch Powell. *The Times* was then one of the few organs which commented frankly upon the sour introspective nationalism of the moment: 'The parochialism of the election is quite extraordinary . . . It cannot be pretended that the tone of debate . . . suggests that we are experiencing anything but our most complacent hour.'¹² What if that odious insularity, that climate of resentment and bigotry, were to be farther aggravated by failure to get into Europe? Then, the industrial situation being what it is—'There would be at some point in the 1970s a choice between intense national discipline and gross national impoverishment. One may wonder who would be the man for that hour?' Continued isolation of the nation would create the right conditions for the arch-nationalist Powell, and for the racism and authoritarianism which the 1969–70 period had given a foretaste of.¹³ And the consequences of *that* for 'civilization' need no underlining.

¹⁰ He may well be wrong about this. A good deal of the new generation of subversives has undeniably succumbed to romanticism and to nature or crypto-christian cults. But it may live long enough to fight its way out. *The Times* itself has chronicled the steep rise in British graduate unemployment since the later 1960s.

¹¹ In their article, 'The Critical Condition of British Capital', A. Glyn and B. Sutcliffe give a striking portrait of the industrial sector's crisis: *New Left Review* No. 66 (March–April 1971). The analysis is amplified in their Penguin *British Capitalism, Workers and the Profits Squeeze* (1972).

¹² 'A Strange Absence of Debate', 6 June, 1970.

¹³ This trader in national resurrectionism and necrophilia has been forced back into the margins of political life since 1970, mainly by the unity of the ruling class over the European question. There, he occupies his time with the now out-moded currency-crankery of Milton Friedman's Chicago School, and fitful repetition of all his 1960s scare-stories. In June 1971 he could still imagine he would lead a gigantic national campaign against joining Europe: 'The British have woken up and got to their feet. They have rubbed their eyes and cleared their throats and got ready

Similar reflections clearly lie behind Rees-Mogg's support for the government elected at that time. It is emphatically not a government representing the liberal-conservative values which he cherishes. 'The tone of decisiveness is itself popular,' he notes, wincing visibly. In some ways the Heath regime evidently stands for that disintegration of civil society into mere bourgeois 'selfishness', which (elsewhere) he perceives as the great danger. The new prime minister stands for 'a decided philosophy of individualist laissez-faire . . . with a definite, if in some ways narrow, interpretation of the national interest'. Such a brusque eruption of naked bourgeois spirit into the sphere of government is an 'historic gamble': in other words, a last desperate attempt to solve the underlying economic problem, even at the cost of some sacrifice of national unity, precious and tactful continuity, the liberal patina of rule, and so on. But—again—the outcome of the gamble depends upon Europe.¹⁴

Thus, things have to be changed, so that they can go on being the same. The risks and sacrifices of Heath's 'abrasive' government will be justified if it joins the nation to Europe and restores a modicum of vitality to British industrial capitalism. It is time Great Britain stopped 'being itself (in Powell's archaic sense) in order to go on being itself at all. To preserve the real essence—'civilization', etc—a basic change of posture is needed, and in this some 'abrasion' may be inevitable.

However, governments come and go. While *The Times*, the ruling class and the civil society they dominate go on for ever. Rees-Mogg also looks forward (with distinctly more enthusiasm) to the time of national 'reconciliation' which ought to follow Heath's administration, when all the organic continuities and magical myths can be patched up again. Then—safely in the Common Market, the economic foundations repaired, readjusted to modern times—the essential nation should be in better shape than ever. Here, surely, is the task of the Labour Party: to restore the national *spirit* once the material body is healed: 'Only the Labour Party has remained in a moderate and central position . . . It would be ironic, but not altogether surprising if the later 1970s showed a Labour government quietly adjusting the nation to changes made by a radical Conservative government.' Such a Labour regime would preside over the indispensable 'change of manners'—over that spiritual moment which, alone, can continue and preserve what is previously described as 'the social harmony of the post-war development of Britain'.

In this quaint panorama Europe occupies the key place. If the object of such a ruling-class world-view is to indicate a strategic way forward

. . . to give their answer. There is something almost uncanny, something which makes the pulse beat a little quicker, in watching a whole nation instinctively cut through and thrust aside details, pretences, trivialities, and go to the heart of the matter . . . the one simple question: to be or not to be, to be ourselves or not to be ourselves. A national instinct has stirred and . . . taken shape and strength', etc, etc. *The Common Market—the Case Against*, J. Enoch Powell (1971), pp. 112–13. As well as these Hamletic vagaries, this volume contains the speeches at Turin, The Hague, Frankfurt, Lyons and Clacton-on-Sea with which he failed to re-launch the ship of destiny.

¹⁴ See especially the article 'Mr Heath's Historic Gamble', 30 April 1971.

amid the multiple contradictory pressures facing the 'Top People' Who read the paper, then moving towards the European Community is the only real choice. Empire and Commonwealth have gone; so has the special relationship to the American empire which replaced them, and—with the crisis of US economic imperialism—any idea of an Atlantic free-trade area. Six years of unbelievable stagnation and failure had led to the ascent of Powell and the vicious climate of 1969–70. 'In 1961', writes the editor, when entry to Europe was first contemplated, 'we were entering the rapids; now we can hear the rumble of the falls . . .' So ten years later the only way forward (or way out) is Europe.

The path appears as economic and political at the same time. As for 'culture', the situation is a little different. Since British bourgeois society's sole remaining asset seems to be its power to 'absorb' or bamboozle another generation of intellectuals, Europe is less urgent here. However, such admirable self-sufficiency at least does little to contradict the general perspective. At this point Rees-Mogg has only to reach for the same ample *schmaltz*-ladle as other Europeanist *idéologues*: 'There is also the even wider challenge . . . of the civilization of Europe. It is the civilization we share, rather than the technology we could create, which can harmonize a true patriotism of Britain with a true patriotism of Europe . . .' Shakespeare too has his part to play. 'Europe', as *The Times* conceives history, is also a spirit-corpus of essentially christian culture where the different dialects will all merge, eventually, into one single language of obscurantism.¹⁵

British Capitalism and Europe

The Time's resonant strains convey clearly the wide complex of motives pulsating (however incoherently) in élite breasts. In particular they display vividly the sense of growing frustration and littleness—almost of claustrophobia—felt by an ex-imperialist class whose range of action has been reduced practically to zero. However, they betray rather than directly discuss the large economic pressures which are also operative in determining this kind of general orientation.

Yet more understanding of these is obviously central to the problem we are considering: the remarkable unity of the ruling class over Europe. For example, in the analysis of Britain's industrial weakness referred to above (n. 11), Glyn and Sutcliffe are forced to ask why such chronic domestic difficulty has not given rise to the classic answer: protectionism. 'It would seem logical to strengthen the position of British capital . . . by more protectionism', they write, 'but protection would be in complete contradiction to the policy of entry to the Common Market,

¹⁵ This terrain is more tricky than *The Times* allows for here. To *The Human World* (to take the obvious example) this professorial spiritland where Tolstoy looks Rabelais straight in the eye and Dickens compares notes with Dante is a powerful reason for staying *out* of 'Europe'. Every *esprit de clocher* has its own version of 'internationalism' for comfort and defence. For this one we are 'in Europe' already, qua national culture-spirits, and could not possibly be more so. The Common Market—by contrast—is mere materialism, and Heath is 'a genuine Marxist' full of 'primal lust for power, disembarassed of any roots in a community'. See article on the great debate, 'The Great National Débâcle', *The Human World* No. 5 (Nov. 1971).

which would have precisely the opposite effect . . . It is very hard, therefore, to understand the Tory party's eagerness for the Common Market given the position of extreme weakness of British capital . . . For many of the smaller firms the Common Market means certain death.'¹⁶ Protectionism in this sense seems to be congruent with political and cultural nationalism—that is, with the climate of involution and near-racism which so recently made such a significant impact on the scene. Why is it then that—to the relief of Rees-Mogg and many others—this threat has retreated so markedly in the past two years? Certainly not because the situation of domestic industry improved noticeably in 1970–2.

However, the industrial-capitalist sector which has suffered so badly from sustained deflation and absence of investment in recent times represents only one part of the whole capitalist order in Great Britain. And it is the part which has traditionally played the most subordinate of roles in the formulation of overall politico-economic strategy. Any such general strategy has to be synthesized out of the various (often conflicting) interests at work within capitalism at one given moment. In Britain, the principal peculiarity of the system is that one such interest normally exercises overwhelming dominance over the rest. It has therefore usually laid down the 'strategy' of the moment with astonishingly little opposition. Indeed, so striking and permanent has its hegemony been that it has in effect governed the economic outlook of the State for the greater part of this century.

This 'interest' is, of course, that of the City, or of London-based finance-capital. Although in one sense describable as an 'interest' or 'sector' of the national capitalist order, in another these terms appear as misnomers for the City. The historical configuration of capitalism in Great Britain is such that this one area long ago developed an organic ascendancy over the others—becoming as it were the 'brain' or nervous system of the whole.¹⁷ In the City, the economic side of civil society found its unity, its distinctive system; through this unity it regulated the economic action of the State. In virtue of its international outlook and function, its original and inherent imperialism, this form of finance-capital also enjoyed a marked relative autonomy from the domestic economy. The dominant 'brain' of British capitalism stood independent from the very 'body' it controlled so easily, resting upon its great institutional strength and its world network of contacts.¹⁸ In

¹⁶ Glyn and Sutcliffe, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

¹⁷ The decisive moment of this ascendancy was, precisely, the triumph of the 'liberal imperialism' referred to above. The victory of the latter was also that of free trade and finance-capital over the protectionism and militarism of Joseph Chamberlain, a representative of the 'manufacturing interest' seriously menaced by Britain's new industrial competitors at that time.

¹⁸ In the most valuable of recent general outlines of the British economy, discussing the causes of the 'stop-go' cycle and the notorious post-war difficulties of the domestic economy, S. Pollard concludes: 'Above all . . . Britain was uniquely saddled with a complex of financial interests, the 'City', which were not directly dependent on the welfare of industry (as were financiers in other countries), and with an all-powerful Treasury with inadequate access either to economic science or to industry . . . (and) . . . totally subservient to the doctrines and appraisals of the City, transmitted by the Bank of England.' To this extraordinary hegemony, he notes, there corresponds the

the City, not only did the 'universal' rule over the particular, money-power over industrial power. When required, the former could sacrifice the latter to its own interest, sublimated as the 'national interest' (originally the gold standard, then the pound sterling).

So it is wrong to imagine 'capitalism' in Great Britain as an undifferentiated bloc, or as a multiplicity of interests vaguely dominated by the largest corporate units or monopolies. It shows rather a profound (and often contradictory) division into two major sectors: a relatively 'undynamic' industrialism with feeble political leadership, and an enormously over-grown financial élite with world-wide aspirations and the strongest influence upon the State.¹⁹ Historically, the former is of course in many ways the inheritance of the industrial revolution (from which something of its archaism and absent-minded mediocrity may derive); the latter represents the nerve of the later imperialist fortunes accumulated on the back of Britain's early industrial success—an accumulation destined, finally, to quite overshadow and weigh down the basis on which it had grown. This division presents a further curious aspect. The relative 'independence' of the sector dominated by finance-capital is so marked that it constitutes almost an 'off-shore island'—an abstract capital of Capital, so to speak, yet able to rule the real island around it from the one square mile of the historic City limits.²⁰

The City's Caution

It follows that a primary determinant of ruling economic strategy towards the Common Market must have been the City's attitude. Here, it is interesting to see how until recently there were substantial reser-

relative 'lack of drive from the productive sector' allowing consistent sacrifice of the latter to the City. *The Development of the British Economy, 1914–1967* (1968), pp. 483–4. See also (among recent discussions) Royden Harrison, 'Labour Government: Then and Now' *Political Quarterly* vol. 41 no. 1 (Jan–March 1970), p. 74; and Pollard, *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, No. 16(1968), pp. 33–41.

¹⁹ It is sometimes objected that such a diversion is impossible because of the 'interpenetration' of industrial and financial capital in modern conditions. But the particular sort of 'interpenetration' notable in Great Britain has, if anything, tended to aggravate the split. Some large industrial units are indeed allies of City cosmopolitanism, and also operate globally. Yet, points out Bob Rowthorn in a study of modern imperialism, 'the very *strength* of the cosmopolitan activities of British capital . . . has helped to undermine further its strictly domestic economy'. *New Left Review* No. 69 (Sept–Oct. 1971), p. 46. The great overseas interests of these (more 'dynamic') elements of industrial capitalism force them into the same stance as the City *vis-a-vis* the over-narrow home market, whenever the contradiction of interests becomes acute. Time and time again, the same author notes, they have acquiesced in policies of 'stability' rather than 'growth'.

²⁰ Writing in *The Banker* (Nov. 1970) J. Cooper, of the merchant bank Schroder Wagg, advised a 'cautious, agnostic view' of the Common Market, since its regulations might curtail the total liberty of finance-capital: 'The prosperity of the City's international business depends on the willingness of . . . the British authorities to treat the City as an "off-shore island" outside the controls imposed on domestic institutions . . . The City thus has a strong interest in seeing that whatever arrangements . . . are developed within the Common Market, it preserves the independent, "off-shore" position *vis-à-vis* those arrangements that it currently enjoys *vis-à-vis* the domestic monetary arrangements of Britain.' The City had to think more than twice before giving up such superb privilege to join a group of continental economies notorious for not allowing the banks to wring their necks every time exchange-value is threatened.

variations about entry. The point of such doubts was that the off-shore 'world role' could—at least for a time—be perceived as independent not only of Great Britain's home economy, but of a prospective European unit as well. The City had not simply survived the decline of Britain's sterling empire. It had gone on to forge a new central position for itself in the dollar-dominated economy of the 1960s. The combination of great 'institutional' strength and the inability of United States capitalism to create a financial centre effectively displacing the City from the world money-markets allowed London to recoup its fortunes. It moved from being the capital of Sterling to being the capital of the Euro-dollar.²¹ It had lost its own empire, true; yet the humiliation was compensated by the enviable post as chief broker to its rival, the dollar empire. Having landed on its feet once in a generation, would it not be tempting providence to risk abandoning this for the uncertain prospects of a continental monetary union?

Some such thought must, claims *The Economist*, have been what 'raised a number of voices in the City of London against the whole idea of joining Europe' early in 1971.²² Again, off-shore freedom was the vital preoccupation. London's strength (and standard of living) depended upon 'a unique alliance between word-of-mouth business and a liberal central banking regime'. The total liberty accorded by the government of the British nation-state 'allowed London to collar the bulk of Europe's Euro-dollar business. Membership of a restrictionist regime would kill this freedom, and with it London's edge . . . London has become the centre for mobile dollar funds precisely because it lies outside the restrictions put on financial markets in New York and Europe by their own authorities'. Why take any risk, even the slightest, of such a Liberty Hall being closed up? Naturally, London's great power and facilities would let it flourish inside the Common Market, even with a monetary union. But would it not be able to exploit such a union from outside just as well?

If the City had ardently desired to be inside the Common Market, there can be little doubt that Great Britain would have swallowed its political doubts and entered long ago. A way would have been found round de Gaulle's suspicions, and the problems of the declining Commonwealth and American special relationship. But as things were, the earlier approaches to Europe remained very much a part of British foreign policy: that is, embedded in a conservative tangle of pious delusions and grandiose immobilism. In a brilliant analysis of this late-imperial policy, Peter Nettle and David Shapiro point out that it consisted essentially in doing nothing, for the simple reason that a

²¹ 'The proportion of world official reserves held in sterling, which was about 23 per cent in 1948, stood at 8 per cent at the end of 1969, and is continuing to decline . . . It would be surprising if the share of world trade financed in sterling were now more than 15 per cent.' P. Oppenheimer, *The Banker* (Oct. 1970), p. 1049. Yet in spite of this apparently drastic decline, London's international business in fact increased hugely in the later 1960s: overseas earnings went up nearly two-and-a-half times between 1965 and 1969. In the above-mentioned article, Cooper attributes this to the fact that in the great expansion of international trade in the 1960s, 'institutional facilities . . . for the dollar's international rôle have not taken root in New York', so allowing the City to change rôles.

²² 'London's Invisible Gains from the EEC', 24 July 1971, p. 61.

declining and dependent power still obsessed by its separate greatness *could* do nothing to reverse the inexorable conditions of its fall.²³ Behind the grandiloquent, laboriously maintained facade sat an old invalid sinking ever deeper into his armchair. Churchill had imagined Britain's world rôle as the centre, the focus, of capitalist *Weltpolitik*: the island where the celebrated 'three circles' of action coincided—the Empire, the Anglo-American or North Atlantic condominium, and Europe. As real power evaporated after the war, this inevitably became mere global posturing. However, the 'concept of global responsibility' (as Nettl and Shapiro put it) remained 'very dear' to both governments and oppositions, and in relation to it the Common Market seemed quite a parochial question. Commenting on the 'great debate' surrounding the first half-hearted attempt to join (the term was used then too), the authors show how it came to a dead stop after de Gaulle's veto: 'The habit of reinsurance against failure, coupled with mythology, has failed to provide any stimulus to finding a real alternative to membership of the Community, let alone the formulation of counter-measures to force our way in. We have not really had any *alternative* foreign policy since the war . . .'

In the context of this ancient political imperialism the wish of some important elements of British capitalism to get into the Common Market had only a moderate weight.²⁴ It was enough to incline governments definitely towards Europe, but never enough to make them give the project the absolute priority and risk the sharp break with tradition which it required. After all, ruling classes normally want to have the best of as many worlds as possible at any given time, and sacrifice only what they have to. The British ruling class had had more than most. Its traditions of imperialist 'internationalism'—comporting a certain anti-European or at least a-European side—were strong. And throughout the 1960s these traditions were maintained in life, against all the odds and in spite of the growing difficulties of British industry, by the phoenix-like power of the City: London-based finance-capital, once the nerve of Britain's distinctive empire, proved by its very abstraction—its degree of alienation from national realities, as it were—astonishingly resistant to the decline. What other *material* reality was there, to support the incredible climate of complacency and involution which distinguished the last two years of the Wilson government and came to a head in the 1970 election?²⁵

²³ 'Institutions versus Realities—a British Approach', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. II, No.1(1963).

²⁴ *Britain in Europe* (1969) is the last of many measured statements by the Confederation of British Industries on the advantages of entry. City opinion just prior to the decisive moment is voiced in *The Pound into Europe* (1971), articles collected from *The Banker*, 1970–1. See also C. G. Tether, 'Business Community and EEC: the Truth', *Financial Times* (22 October 1971). Mr Tether remarks 'The truth is . . . that the great bulk of British trade and industry is incapable of feeling the kind of enthusiasm for entering the EEC that its top bodies have claimed . . .'

²⁵ As the position of the industrial sector degenerated, unemployment grew, and class conflict became more conscious and embittered, the City thrived. In 1971, finally, it enjoyed 'the best year in its history'. So it ought to have done. Wilson's government had pursued the traditional deflationary economic policy so favourable to the City with greater energy than ever before, bringing about that 'healthy surplus in the balance-of-payments' essential to it. This bank-book 'health' was indeed the profane secret of his parade of natural authority and antique wisdom at the 1970 election.

In itself, then, this picture does not convey a reason for the very strong impulse of unity which was to animate the ruling class over the Common Market issue in 1971. If anything it re-poses the question asked above: why, against the background of a capitalism suffering from such profound and paralysing contradictions—contradictions aggravated rather than appeased by the economic history of the period before 1971—was there not more dissent within the ruling class? Or at least some doubt and dissatisfaction, of a kind exploitable through the conventional middle-class reflexes of touchy nationalism (as Powell had clearly imagined there would be)? Above all at a widely publicized moment of ‘destiny’, ‘irrevocable choice’, and so on, where divergences should have grown sharper and more defined, rather than the reverse?

Out of Immobilism

Since the spring of 1971, in spite of its earlier incertitude, there has been scarcely a squeak of opposition or doubt about Europe from the City. The ‘off-shore island’ complex vanished—or at least was repressed in honour of the government’s decisive new strategy. The period of the debate about entry coincided, in fact, with this strong movement away from the old paralysis and uncertainty. What *force majeure* provided the basis for such a movement at the economic level, and helped Heath iron out all the potential contradictions of his ruling group with such success?

The moment of the Heath-Pompidou meeting was also that of the renewed dollar crisis. The whole capitalist monetary order plunged into disarray, far more seriously than on previous occasions. Subsequently, the debate on Europe was punctuated by Nixon’s desperate measures of 15 August; not long after its conclusion the dollar was devalued. Summing up the events of those six months, Pierre Mendès-France wrote: ‘Events have shown that the richest country in the world can no longer create means of payment and go on plunging into bottomless debt: beyond a certain point creditors become anxious, a crisis of confidence becomes inevitable, and the whole mechanism breaks down. This is what is happening now. In addition can it be any longer allowed that one national currency, administered by national authorities with national aims in mind, be the only international means of settlement—and that its ups and downs and mishaps go on affecting the fate of countries and peoples who have no way of influencing its management?’²⁶

His question points to the long-term implications of the crisis for London. If the dollar no longer stably represents the ‘general interest’ of the capitalist world, but appears as one ‘national interest’ among

²⁶ ‘Pour un nouvel aménagement monétaire international’, *Le Monde*, 12–13 December 1971. See also ‘Banks on the International Money and Capital Markets’, by R. H. Lutz, in *Banking in a Changing World*, Proceedings of the 24th International Banking Summer School, Chianciano, Italy, May 1971: ‘The banker in his international activity operates within a framework the fairness of which is determined not primarily by the banks themselves but rather by international politics... The future, it would seem, could hold even greater risks and dangers than the recent past...’ (p. 205).

others, then the City's rôle as servant of that general interest is automatically threatened. Its history in this century ought to have equipped it to understand this particular dilemma well enough. Having been itself the heart of the old gold standard system prior to 1914, it lost it through war and the inevitable development of the rivals to Great Britain's economic imperialism. There ensued a long period of monetary anarchy, where it struggled in vain to reconquer its old central function as 'banker to the world'. Was not something analogous now happening to America's dollar empire, opening another era of prolonged instability and crisis?

But within this newer financial 'general interest' London had retained a vital place. No longer the centre, it was still the most important epicentre. Hence its off-shore function in the Euro-dollar market obviously depended upon the continued viability of the system as a whole. No longer owning the great universal casino, it had stayed deeply involved in the business as head croupier. Here, the City's stance in the economic world had run exactly parallel to that of the Great-British state: increasing dependence upon a world-order which (from its traditional base) it was also quite powerless to affect or change. The dilemma of the national State was here that of its *raison d'être*, finance capital. In this topsy-turvy universe, the national interest was internationalism, or the cosmopolitan side of capitalism. This is why, as Bob Rowthorn has indicated, 'The economic policies of British governments have . . . been so highly sensitive to the advice of the international institutions of the capitalist world and of the largest imperial power, the United States . . . The international expansion of British big capital coupled with the contraction of the British state and the domestic economic base of British capitalism have between them . . . led to sections of the British bourgeoisie being effectively "denationalized" . . . The overseas strength of British big *capital* has compounded the debility of British *capitalism*.' Comparison with other capitalist powers (he concludes) shows how 'the British case demonstrates the perils of expansion via direct investment unsustainable by a sufficiently strong sponsoring state and home base'.²⁷

However, these perils had remained latent and tolerable, as long as US ascendancy remained strong. In 1971 it grew markedly weaker, at the very moment of the renewed British approach to the Common Market. Not only was the collapse a dramatic one; as almost every financial commentator pointed out at once, the chances of repairing the damage rapidly and permanently were very faint. Faced with this long-term threat, in what direction could British big capital turn to escape from its quite peculiarly exposed and precarious position?

In the new and harsher international climate its restricted home base and weak state protection might turn from a hindrance into a disaster. Yet little could be done about these, in themselves: British national

²⁷ Rowthorn, op. cit., pp. 46–7. The situation he outlines is, of course, the one behind the postures of diplomatic futility discussed by Nettle and Shapiro in their article referred to above. Great Britain was forced to be the 'good boy' of the western world and eschew policies of assertive nationalism precisely because of this economic dependence. 'The Pound' in its post-war wretchedness could afford nothing more glamorous.

economic policy since 1945 had been, indeed, one prolonged and painful commentary upon just how little could be done. What other possible answer was there but the Common Market?

This required a rapid acceleration of the hitherto dignified and portly 'imperial' approach to the matter. The gentlemanly perambulation turned into a run. While it will be long before the history of the change can be written, these considerations may help one to see how little ground there was for serious dissensions inside the economic ruling class in 1971. The great leap forward into Europe can hardly be 'explained' by these factors alone, but they may help explain the remarkable absence of serious material obstacles. When it came to the bit, the interests of finance capital and the industrial monopolies were possibly more positively and actively united than at any moment since before 1914 (save in time of war). As for the smaller fish mentioned above (who are still likely to go under in Europe) their power to intervene effectively or even to be a nuisance has long depended in British conditions mainly upon splits among the leaders. They represent the most subordinate and politically amorphous elements within the generally subordinate industrial sector of British capitalism. Whatever doubts they harbour they seem (as usual) to have done as they were told to by the *Financial Times* and the *Economist*.

Thus, in the final conjuncture of the 'great debate' economic pressures and the rapid alterations in world economics combined to fulfil (indeed over-fulfil) Mr Rees-Mogg's *Timesian* prospect. They provided the material preconditions for a rapid forward movement, a brisk acceleration out of the habitually sluggish tempo of British political affairs. Confronted with the impossibility of enlarging its own national base (i.e. of solving its own economic problem by pulling at its own bootstraps) British capitalism had to opt finally for the larger basis offered by Europe. In the new conditions, even the City's grand abstraction needed some 'national' economic reality for security. Since the Great-British one had proven its inadequacy, the Common Market would have to take its place—in spite of all the dangers and restrictive possibilities mentioned above. Needs must go where the Devil—in this case the faltering grip of US empire—drives.

Fuite en avant

The long history of British City-led capitalism's half-heartedness and doubt about Europe, when set in the longer perspective of British imperialism's 'maritime' (i.e. extra-European) tradition could easily lead to the conclusion that Britain will remain half-hearted and dubious once inside the European Community. But, because British capital took so long to arrive at this turning-point, it does not follow that the same dithering course will characterize it now the corner is turned. Far from being a permanent obstacle to European cohesion and projects of political unity, British capital and the British State may soon become actively favourable to them.

The first and most obvious of these reasons why is simply the great strength of London finance-capital and its institutions, in relation to the

Common Market. Commenting on the 1971 report on Europe by the British Committee on Invisible Exports, *The Economist* noted complacently that—'When London is measured against Europe's other capital markets, like is not being compared with like . . . The growth and preponderance of London this side of the Atlantic even ahead of Britain's joining Europe is dramatic. The growth of the City's earnings in recent years has been unprecedented . . . It is important to grasp this almost giant-pigmy relationship between London and its European fellows.'²⁸ Because this force held itself apart from Europe for so long in the cultivation of more traditional 'imperial' rôles, it would be mistaken to imagine this automatically continuing under the new circumstances. The 'new course' of the ruling class is far more likely to encourage headlong assault on the new 'home base'. The same *Economist* survey goes on to point out: 'A faster run-down of the Commonwealth link might (theoretically) hurt London's merchanting houses and commodity brokers . . . In fact the opposite is likely to happen if London becomes, as it already shows every sign of doing, the 'financial growth pole' of Europe'.

Speaking more specifically of the stock exchange, the current President of the French stock exchange commission Pierre Chatenet said recently that London's entry on to the European scene would constitute a potent motive to 'Europeanization'. 'Quantitatively speaking, the London stock exchange represents by itself as much capitalization as all the exchanges of the Six put together. Qualitatively speaking, the machinery and traditions of the London *bourse* have been well tried and tested and . . . London remains an international financial centre of the first order.' Admitting that the French exchange was no longer adequate to cope with new 'transnational' business, he went on to conclude: 'In this sense the entry of London into the European Community is a capital event, not only in virtue of the strictly financial weight it brings with it—which doubles the value of the European market—but also because it will impose a European solution on the problem of financial markets by obliging us to create a central market for all European transactions.'²⁹

London's stock exchange, its banking apparatus, its huge international insurance business, its commodity and gold markets—all these furnish a ready-made primacy within the area of the Ten, which it would be odd if the British financial élite did not now exploit to the utmost. The very 'political' difficulties referred to above supply a strong additional incentive in the same direction. In this sense, the logic of entry indicates that, once in, the only valid course is *fuite en avant*. Trying to soothe any banking breasts still experiencing qualms, *The Economist* told them how very 'flexible' and 'undogmatic' Europe would probably be, in pragmatic reality as distinct from political theory; all the more so, if they made their presence felt to the utmost. After all, Europe had been (the

²⁸ *How Entry into the Common Market may affect Britain's Invisible Earnings*, Committee on Invisible Exports (1971), summarized in *The Economist*, 24 July 1971, pp. 60–1.

²⁹ Interviewed in *30 Jours d'Europe*, No. 162, Jan. 1972. It is not surprising that that most aboriginal of gaullists, Christian Fouchet, should put at the head of a recent list of gloomy queries about France's destiny in the new enlarged Europe: 'Que pèsera la place financière de Paris en face de celle de Londres?' (*Le Monde*, 11 April 1972).

word of annointment) 'sensible' about the currency crisis: 'An almost British style of pragmatism now permeates Community thinking.' City critics of crass European a-priorism 'have been much reassured by the way in which the Six have chosen to deal with the latest crisis, and by their easy abandonment of the first dogmatic attempt at monetary union. By the time monetary union gets going . . . Britain will be inside. And, having the strongest financial centre in the enlarged Community, it will have a dominant say in what gets done'.³⁰ But obviously it can have that say only if it is not detached and indifferent but (with the active help of government and State) energetically present.

Two factors on the European side are likely to foster this presence. The first is that in its present state of development, financial integration is more advanced than in any other economic sector. Multinational developments in banking (in many of which London banks already participate) have been particularly intensive and far-reaching during the last two years. Thus, the area where British capital is most organized and capable is also the most immediately rewarding one in the integration process among the Ten.³¹ Secondly, since the dollar crisis there is clearly a stronger and more widespread conviction in Europe that the only possible formula for dealing with the crisis is a 'European' one. That is, a solution which will imply (in practice) the maintenance of a common European currency or unit-of-account against the dollar. This conviction lay behind the EEC decisions which re-launched the economic and monetary union plan in March 1972. In its turn, such a process of inter-government co-operation is bound to further assist the private financial sector's march towards integration.³²

Everything must change if it is to remain the same

Not only is London finance-capital well equipped to lead this march by its institutional structures and traditions; it is currently strengthening its domestic grip over the UK economy to help it in the task. In September 1971, as the grand national controversy limped towards the finishing post, the Heath government carried out a sweeping reform of banking regulations—a veritable 'banking revolution', as *The Economist* defined it. The aim of this (as of many other revolutions known to history) was 'freedom': in this particular case, total liberty for banks from the few pathetic rules which had previously hindered their activities. What

³⁰ *Economist*, 2 October and 24 July, 1971.

³¹ In *The New Europeans* (1962, revised ed. 1971) Anthony Sampson noted that 'The prophets of the promised new European unity are not so much the businessmen, as the bankers . . . For the Europe that is so far taking shape is a bankers' Europe. Their creed is not much questioned, and there is no comparable group of international trade unionists or even international socialists to criticize it.' (p. 158.)

³² This is perhaps the context in which the Heath government's apparent subservience to French leadership in 1971–2 ought to be seen. The dramatic change from Great Britain's role as bootblack-in-chief to the United States (especially cherished by the Labour Party leadership) to this new posture of French-style Europeanism, corresponds in some degree to this real nexus of interests. It was Germany, not Great Britain, which took up the most distinctly pro-American line in the earlier phase of the currency crisis. Heath welcomed the German retreat from that line at the Brandt-Pompidou meeting in February 1972 (Interview in *Le Monde*, 18 February), and under-wrote the March agreement on fixing parities in Europe and the formation of an EEC co-ordinating committee on economic policy.

regime would the revolution usher in? In *The Economist's* view, one where banking would have even greater control over British industry and the economy as a whole—that is, direct control through ownership and participation, rather than the indirect control it has exerted traditionally via government and the State. This may bring about in the long run a more 'Continental' pattern of economy in Britain. and is what should correspond at home to the abandonment of the older 'overseas' orientation of finance-capital, and its move into Europe. Occasions like this—which passed almost unnoticed outside the business press—reveal quite interestingly what British capitalism is really like, and how it rules. *The Economist* practically doubled up with ecstasy on the subject: 'What Britain is now doing is to set up a competitive mammon-will-reward-the-foremost banking system without any of America's anti-trust controls. The admirable new rule of jungle law opens at a time when there are a lot of hungry beasts stalking around . . . perhaps there are also rather a lot of sleepy sheep still on the pastures. There could conceivably be much blood and many astounded squeals, much redness on tooth and claw, as the hunt now starts from all sides for both new depositors and new methods of lending . . .'³³ Better still, this radical change—which 'could very well have a bigger eventual effect on British industry and British working habits than any other single economic reform since the war'—was *independent of parliamentary discussion and control*. It was scarcely mentioned in the House of Commons. 'No whit of it is parliamentary democracy . . . It has all been fixed up as a gentleman's agreement in private conclaves in the City. It would, however, be sensible if Parliament kept a watch over how it works out.' Yes of course, '*sensible*'.

It takes little effort to see how this kind of evolution in British capital's attitude towards its 'domestic' basis is related to the establishment of the new, wider basis in the Common Market. If the latter's essence economically (or part of it) is 'that big business outflanks national governments without coming under equivalent supranational control . . . obtaining freedom and wider markets, conditions which, in the competitive struggle, benefit the strong', then it is the Great-British State's duty to enter into the spirit of things.³⁴ Freedom (as one might say) is indivisible. What better way to support the City's 'say in what gets done' over the Channel than to promote the maximum of liberty and anti-restrictionism in Great Britain itself? In spite of all that has been said, by innumerable commentators ranging all the way from the Powellite right to the Communist left, on the historical gulf between the British and the 'Continental' ways of doing things, there is no real antagonism at all at this level between glorious island traditions and one aspect of the Common Market. These traditions were recently aptly defined as follows (the secret of stagnant British conservatism in a nutshell): 'The whole position and outlook derived from Britain's past has made for investment outflows together with supporting government foreign expenditures, to the detriment of the development of the domestic economy. This has meant, speaking in a rough-and-ready

³³ *Economist*, 'The Banking Revolution', 18 September 1971.

³⁴ This and the following, *Politics and Money*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (April-May 1971) pp. 22 & 25.

way, that the interests of the City have been put before the interests of industry; that is, the “parasitic” aspects of British imperialism have been intensified.’ Once they have shifted their locus sufficiently, from the old one linked to the sterling zone and ‘dollar imperialism’, to the new one associated with European integration, these aspects will be intensified still farther. London’s prominent place in the Eurodollar market may appear, then, as a ‘transition from the old to its new sphere of influence.’

The Times’s effort at ideological synthesis, we saw, amounted to recognizing that (in Prince Salina’s words in *Il Gattopardo*): ‘everything has to change a bit, if we want it all to stay as it is’. Europe represented the only concrete possibility for this kind of change. But the turning-point which Europe represents for the real dynamic of British capitalism is exactly parallel to this wish. The task of an effective ruling-class ideologist is not merely to ‘reflect’ existing fields of force in a static sense (which would really mean reflecting the past) but to ‘sound out’, to prospect a plausible future and synthesize some decent new clothes for a reality still emergent, naked, and not quite conscious of itself. Rees-Mogg did his work well, perhaps even better than he knew.

III Conservative Europe: Mr Heath's New Horizon

The Labour Government of 1945 . . . and Conservative Governments after them refused to join the European Community because they were still thinking in terms of Britain's history during the period of development of the nation state. Whilst the European countries concerned were moving on from the nation state because in their view it was inadequate to meet modern requirements' Edward Heath *Old World, New Horizons* (Harvard, 1967).

' "In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we now have the many-sided intercourse of nations and their mutual independence", Marx and Engels wrote in 1848. And it is only now, over 120 years later, that our politicians, realizing at last the "mutual independence of nations", try in their own awkward way to create that much-vaunted European International . . .' Isaac Deutscher, 'On Internationals and Internationalism,' in *Marxism in Our Time* (1972).

How, upon the basis described, was ruling class unity formed *politically*? This is always the key question. Visionary castles-in-Europe of bourgeois ideology are one thing (however necessary); the material conditions of ruling-class development are another. But the most important factor is the political action which unites these two, and creates an effective hegemony.³⁵

In one sense an answer to the question has to wait: the dominance of a class over the social order is always a feature *of* the social order as a whole. The classes and forces which let themselves be dominated also play a part in defining the system. In this case for instance (as we shall see) the Labour Party and the left were necessary to the ruling class's success politically. Without planning to they managed to connive at their own subordination and defeat. To see how hegemony operates is, in part, to understand nation-state collusion of this kind.

As far as Conservative initiative in forming this historical moment is concerned, however, certain important facts should be borne in mind. Very recently, no more than two years ago, the Conservative Party found itself in a state of apparently serious fission. When Heath won the 1970 election, virtually all political commentators forecast storms ahead for his government. A few days after the election the *Sunday Times* published a cartoon showing that surprising new political flower Edward Heath opening his petals to the sun of victory; but up the flower-stem there crawled a hungry caterpillar with the face of Powell. The electoral campaign had been marked by angry and open quarrels between Powell and the leadership. Many people, many Conservatives—and quite certainly Powell himself—believed that he had been the

³⁵ On the subject of the Heath government's general orientation, see the important article by Robin Blackburn, 'The Heath Government: a New Course for British Capitalism' in *NLR* no. 70 (Nov.-Dec. 1971).

most potent factor in Conservative success.³⁶ Had not his powerful personality, and his long campaign of racist ultra-nationalism, been the really effective force at work determining the vote—rather than Heath's colourless manner and policies?

Weakened by this vicious internal tension, the new government confronted a number of very awkward external problems. The Common Market lay in the background at first, and remained there some time. In the front line there stood the constant deterioration of the Irish situation. The rise of the Provisional IRA and the intransigence of the provincial protestant regime in Ulster were together pushing towards war. This—the oldest and most intractable problem of British imperial politics—looked like becoming a nightmare. And in fact the rot was allowed to continue for nearly two years.

In England and Scotland the condition of the home economy was (as noted already) extremely grave. The harsh deflation practised by the Labour government (and initially continued by Heath) had produced a slump in industrial production and massive unemployment. This was occurring, furthermore, in a period of rising working-class activity—that same 'assertion of the power of the factory floor' which had so exercised Wilson when he was in office. Labour's attempt to answer the assertion had failed totally in 1969 like everything else on its programme. But the new government was committed to much sterner action on the class front. By the genteel norms of post-1945 British consensus politics, it spoke a language of fire and sword, of 'tough' class interest and aggression. Hence, it seemed certain to face an escalation of class struggle as it pursued its chosen strategy of 'reforming' industrial relations (i.e. trying to suppress 'unofficial' strikes by legal means).

In short, it looked upon a superficial view as if the Heath government confronted a unique combination of difficulties: internal feuds, and external battles likely to make the feuds worse, all under the direction of a leader despised as a nonentity by a great part of the *Conservative* press up to June 1970. Scarcely the ideal formula for class unity and political advance. Nonetheless it is a fact that against this unpromising situation the new government rapidly achieved these very things, and that its most striking success in battle was the 'great debate' about Europe. How was this accomplished?

The New Unity

The short answer is that they did so by either neutralizing or diverting attention away from the disputes and dilemmas which menaced them; and the European policy was the essential instrument for doing this. It, and it alone, offered the 'way out' from the pit-falls which seemed to dominate the political landscape of 1970. It offered a valid *class* solution to the deteriorating complex of *national* problems. The cost of the

³⁶ A year later, at a dinner celebrating his 21st anniversary as MP for Wolverhampton, he again assured his constituents this was so. Without him Heath would be nowhere; and—he added— 'the Conservative Party knows that this is so'. (*The Times*, 8 May 1971.)

solution was, certainly, the sacrifice of some traditional baggage, the wish-bones and scarabs of an older 'Tory patriotism'. But novelty had become indispensable. And of course the Europeanist cause provided a few new ideological toys to make up for losing the old.

The essence of the formula was *movement* (or at least the semblance of it). Static or mechanistic analyses all too often fail to pick out this elusive key of successful political strategies. It relies upon the creation of a sense of forward motion and action, of new perspectives and conquests. When this is achieved, then even the gravest 'objective' difficulties may be confronted (or thrust to one side) relatively easily. We noticed how in 1971 certain economic preconditions had altered rapidly so as to favour a more determined 'leap forward' to Europe. The political realization of this required just such a new subjectivity within the governing élite.

Heath was greatly helped in forming it by two farther factors, one a very traditional aspect of the political ruling class, the other a matter of the conjuncture which preceded 1971. The tradition which counted was the central one of strong ruling-class unity and class consciousness. The historical conjuncture was the remarkable climate of frustration and enclosed futility generated by the six years of Labour rule from 1964 up to 1970—years in which every grand project had been still-born and even modest ambitions had come to nothing.

Little need be said here about the first of these. The British ruling class has powerful traditions of close politico-social cohesion, well grounded in the nation's social structure, echoed and safe-guarded in a large number of ways. Although the main political organ of these traditions, the Conservative Party, had lapsed into dissension while out of office, things changed as it re-assumed power. Through it, the ruling class functions more directly. The very fact of its sad lapse constituted, then, the strongest of reasons for closing ranks and re-affirming its deep instinct of unity. Commentators had become so riveted by Powell that they forgot, in their predictions of anarchy, how strong that political sense was.

The party's absolute need to move forward was compounded by the need to quickly achieve something—anything—which might contrast favourably with Labour's paralysis. Under those circumstances (one is tempted to say) almost any pretext, any specious goal or pretended triumph might have done. And in fact, the best possible one presented itself in 1971, less than a year after the election. The Conservative Party had won that election against all odds and expectations, through stubborn class sense and the weakness of its opponents. Now, the right issue emerged for rallying that class sense to the utmost and eclipsing Powell's internal challenge. Certain large-scale changes in international relations culminated (from this point of view) in the new French attitude to Britain's entry, and the Heath-Pompidou encounter in May. By swiftly capitalizing on this opportunity the Conservative ruling group was able to consolidate its grip on the party, and then—via the mechanisms of the 'great debate'—to reinforce the party's grip on the nation. Great Britain's way into Europe was, in this sense, the ruling class's way out of a hazardous political situation.

How easy it was! Powell's would-be great crusade against entry vanished in the sand. It was to have been his way of finally conquering the Tory Party; it turned into his exit-route to the margin of political life. When the lines of opposition were drawn after May, he found himself in the company of a few well-known eccentrics—the impotent, isolated fringe of the party's right wing. He had made the profound mistake of identifying the nation with his own ego (as all nationalist demagogues must do) at the very moment in which his class was forced to abandon the 'nation' in the old technicolor sense that means so much to his kind. Obsessed by the nation, he had fallen out of touch with class, and so disobeyed the fundamental law of politics.

All commentators had previously noted Powell's great appeal to the Conservative movement's local militants, its right-wing 'grass roots'. Yet the Conservative special party conference on Europe in July 1971 brought the spectacle of these very same militants—backwoods squires, retired business men, flogging colonels, flower-hatted ladies from the Women's Institutes—united in frenzied applause for Heath's historic 'success' in Brussels. There was scarcely a murmur of dissent.³⁷ A year before, how many of them had believed that Powellism was the predestined philosophy of the 1970s, the new message? In their hearts, how many of them still felt nagging doubt about the new course and pined for the Messiah from Wolverhampton? No matter: they had also felt the way the current was moving, in response to the most solid and determining interests of their class of people, and understood the need to move with it.

Consider the relationship between this movement and the two agonizing problems mentioned above, Ireland and class conflict. Rallying around the new cause with such enthusiasm could, of course do absolutely nothing to resolve the Irish question. The government had no idea at that time what to do, except send more troops and hope for the best, and it went on having no idea what to do. But the excitement, the vital sense of achievement and new horizons, the pseudo-struggle of the 'debate' on Europe—all these made it much easier to distract attention from the blood. Here too Powell had been deluded by his visionary patriot 'nation'. He imagined that the nationalist instincts of his class and party could be whipped up into support for those super-patriots, the Great-British protestants of Ulster. In fact—as the leaders of his

³⁷ Occasionally a nervous cadre would rise and ask in profoundly deferential tones whether the Prime Minister would not at least allow a 'free vote' in Parliament on the Common Market issue, for the sake of the embattled few whose 'conscience' told them to stand by island traditions. Each time some ladies from Worcestershire (seated not far from the author) exploded to their feet waving parasols and screaming: 'Sit down, y'fool, sit down! D'ye think ye can do anything y'like in this party?' The only moment of true drama occurred when an elderly eccentric interrupted a speech (whose European bearings were not quite clear) on the need for tougher treatment of delinquents. She shouted 'Mr Heath, you are a traitor to Great Britain!', and showered some leaflets down from the gallery. There was general laughter. Some idea of the perfervid confusion of the day (14th July, as it happened) may be got from the closing remarks of the chairwoman, a Mrs Unity Lester: how suitable it was, she cried, that they should meet on the anniversary of another of Europe's great historic events, the day the Bastille fell! (Was this really the party of William Pitt and the great counter-revolutionary alliance, or was one dreaming? No one laughed at *her*, at any rate).

party had realized—it was possible to count on large-scale popular indifference, irritation and incomprehension about Ireland.³⁸ Once, they might well have exploited such nationalism to contain the class struggle at home. Now they were engaged upon the more awkward task of *re-defining* the ‘national interest’, and trying to give it new dimension and meaning. Finding themselves followed in this course by the overwhelming majority of their class, they could therefore afford to continue trading on such indifference and confusion—to, in effect, ignore and thrust aside the problem. In terms of the new context opening up to Conservatism, their *class* interest is quite evidently in the pacific regulation of the Irish problem in a ‘European’ or Common Market framework.

While Ireland was put to one side and allowed to fester, like a wound no longer contagious in the new and healthier conditions of the move forward into Europe, the class conflict was itself quite directly ‘contained’ by that same movement. The point of such containment is of course always *political*. That is, to stop economic and social discontents from gathering momentum until they acquire a new or dangerous political form. In 1970–1, under the tide of inflation, the discontents were bad enough. Strikes persisted at a high level, and a considerable national campaign against the proposed new Industrial Relations Act seemed to be under way that winter. In this state of semi-siege, fighting an unpopular battle against the whole working class (while the home economic scene showed no sign of improvement, and unemployment still increased), the motives for tight class unity were obvious.

What the European question provided was the perfect catalyst of such unity, subjectively. Hard-pressed, in the middle of the game, the ruling class simply changed the rules to make quite sure they stayed on top. This is part of what ‘ruling class’ signifies. If the national ‘game’ is not theirs, then whose is it? Objectively, the strategy was to work out well: the opposition was forced into playing according to these rules—that is (as will be argued below) into a political campaign which did not express and articulate, but *betrayed* the reality of the class struggle. Such a fatal confusion and diversion, in turn, provided the Heath government with vital breathing-space for the best part of a year—from the spring of 1971 until the great miners’ strike of February and March 1972, their first serious defeat.

To understand farther the machinery of what occurred we must look, next, at the position of the Labour Party during the debate; and then at the variety of stances adopted by the left outside Labour. But to some extent the outline of the drama is clear already. The ruling class put class before nation: they re-defined that old scarecrow, ‘the national interest’, to suit a renewed and changing class interest. This move forward gave it new political *élan* and a desperately needed sense of achievement and purpose. And, at the same time, it left the opposition

³⁸ Here, the estimate of ex-Tory Minister Lord Boyle was probably accurate: ‘The prevailing opinion on this side of St. George’s Channel is that Ulster Protestants are just a special kind of Irishmen, who temporarily form part of the British nation.’ *The Round Table* (January 1971), p.135.

clinging to what was being left behind. In order to oppose, the left let itself be coerced into putting nation before class. While the Conservatives advanced to their new positions, socialism was left in occupation of the old trenches, among the fag-ends and old boots, defending 'national sovereignty'. That Powell should have been left behind playing with the wish-bones and scarabs, groaning the old songs of patriot destiny, was the appropriate humour of history, her ironic revenge on one who had stupidly and too often taken her name in vain. But that most of the left should have stood beside him, in the name of socialism and the working class, was an altogether different, and more serious, matter.

IV Labour and Europe: Class and Nation

'Under slogans like 'national self-determination' there lurks all the time a twisted and limited meaning. In a society based on classes, the nation as a uniform social-political whole simply does not exist . . . There is literally no social arena—from the strongest material relationship to the most subtle moral one—in which the possessing classes and a self-conscious proletariat could take one and the same position and figure as one undifferentiated national whole.'

Rosa Luxemburg, *The Question of Nationality and Autonomy* (1908).

The paradox of the national ruling class's anti-nationalism had, we have seen, a logic of class interest behind it. This logic let it cast off the more vulgar old clothes of nationalism at the right moment, and strengthen its real grip on national society by doing so. So for it, Europeanism and the Great Debating session of 1971 played more or less coherent parts in a strategy of power.

But what of the second wing of the paradox? The Labour Party and many other movements picked up those clothes and wore them. In spite of a strong and still lively tradition of ethical internationalism and high-mindedness towards 'narrow chauvinism', Labour defended national sovereignty and 'our' absolute 'right to control our own affairs' against the great ruling-class 'sell-out'. Abandoned by the right, nationalism was embraced by the great party of the 'left'.

The surprise of this paradox seems all the greater if one thinks back a few years. It was the same party and the same leadership which, while in power, had launched Great Britain's second attempt to enter the Common Market in 1967. When de Gaulle's opposition again blocked the way, indignation was as loud among Labourists as anywhere else. Two years later, not long before the election which turned him out of office, Wilson was still saying this had been a tragedy. He looked forward eagerly to the resumption of negotiations on entry. 'If through decisions not our own we are denied entry to Europe, it will be at a high price for Britain . . . it will be at a still higher price for Europe as a whole . . . (most) tragically in terms of the continued denial of the ability of Europe to express a powerful and united voice in the councils of the world.'³⁹ This was, of course, one of the reasons why Europe was so little discussed during the 1970 election: it was at that time largely taken for granted as a policy common to all parties.

Thus, not only did Labour profess the rhetoric of a liberal-cum-

³⁹ Speech at the Guildhall, 10 November 1969. The other party leaders also spoke in favour of entry at this event, the Lord Mayor's banquet (one of the leading dates in the City's social calendar). The European Movement is said to have gained £450,000 in donations after Mr Wilson's performance. (D. Spanier, *The Times*, 13 November, 1970). In later anti-Market attacks upon the sinister sources of the Movement's funds, this fact seems to have been mercifully overlooked.

socialist 'internationalism', it seemed committed to a concrete policy giving some (however limited) effect to these ideas. Yet from late 1970 onwards it withdrew from this 'bi-partisan' policy, slowly at first, then (during the period of the debate) with greater decisiveness. This movement of opinion and feeling in the party was strong enough to force Wilson himself and many other prominent leaders into following it. It gathered momentum until clear majorities of the mass membership, the leadership, and the parliamentary group were on 'anti-Market' positions and opposition to entry became official policy. And finally, in 1972, it went even as far as majority demands for a referendum on the question, although such a referendum has no place as a device of government in the British Constitution—and hitherto no party had outdone Labour in reverence for this nation-state totem. For Labourism—one must conclude—there was something in this movement more important than consistency, logic, party unity, or even the Constitution. What was it?

The question is only underlined by the fact that one sector of Labour opinion did not let itself be carried away on the tide. An important part of the leadership, led by Roy Jenkins and George Thompson and accounting (on some votes) for as much as a third of the parliamentary group, refused to abandon its 'pro-Market' stance. It would carry intransigence to the point of voting against the will of the majority (on 28 October) and, eventually, resigning from positions in the leadership when the referendum issue arose in April 1972. This split was immediately seen as the most serious in the Labour Party since the Bevanite turbulence of the 1950s. So, the same period of time that saw a powerful impulse of unity and consolidation at work in the Conservative Party, saw an almost equally powerful trend towards crisis and disruption at work inside Labourism. And yet the latter was supposed to be an 'answer' to the former.

The Jenkins-Thompson faction, in itself, presents no special problems here. Their ideas are similar to those of other pro-European social democrats and liberals on the Continent in simply following the new orientation of the ruling class.⁴⁰ Is this not what one expects social democrats and liberal reformers to do on the whole? Many simplistic theories about Labourism have indeed stated that this is all it amounts to: a second-rate 'alternative' mode of government for capitalism, useful in crises, inevitably subservient to the *general* class interests of the rulers. But if this were the whole truth, Labour would obviously never have abandoned Wilson's old bi-partisan approach. There would never have been a split on the issue—still less one where the great majority pursued what must (in these simplistic terms) be held the 'illogical' position and only a right-wing minority clung to the more principled lackeyism which had grasped the probable course of events and so could imagine a plausible future for itself. Labourism is not so simple.

⁴⁰ For a fuller statement of this point of view, see *Socialist Commentary*, August 1971, Alan Day, 'Socialists and European Unity', and September 1971, G. Thomson 'Socialism, Schisms, and the Common Market.' Perhaps the best statement of the group's economic position is D. Taverne, *Monetary and Economic Union in Europe* (1971).

Labour Nationalism

The novel political conjuncture was to provide, in fact, a revelation of Labour's much more complex function in the nation-state totality. The novelty suddenly precipitated by Heath's success at Brussels and its effects was just sufficient to—so to speak—prise things a little out of their customary mould; so it became more possible to see what that 'mould' consists of. As yet the real new developments implicit in this change are merely embryonic. The inertia of national habits so long enclosed in a circle of slow decline is very great. But even the first premonitory signs of a break with continuity have produced some interesting consequences.

Perhaps the most useful reference point for understanding the effects upon the Labour Party is certain events of 10 years ago, which (in retrospect) seem like a curtain-raiser to the drama of 1971. Then too the party was in opposition. It was also in serious trouble internally: for three years (1959 to 1962) there had been bitter and disruptive disputes about nuclear disarmament and Gaitskell's proposed revision of the party constitution. On a more theoretical plane the right-wing revisionists led by Anthony Crosland had clashed with both old and new lefts, in the long effort to find some way out of the stalemate which had fallen upon the movement after 1950. For the first time since before the war a mass movement, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, had offered some threat to Labour's hegemony from outside. The right-wing leaders had won over the nuclear question; the left had won a more ambiguous victory over the question of revising the constitution. But in 1962 it did not look at all as if the trouble was over: Gaitskell and his group were still regarded as traitors by the left, and the left as 'fundamentalist' (i.e. behind-the-times) trouble-makers by the right.

Yet it was in 1962 that Gaitskell was able to rally the party behind him in the most remarkable fashion. He was able, for the first time in many years, to forge a genuine sentiment of unity and purpose. This surmounted to some extent the stale, entrenched divisions in the party, and prepared the way for the enthusiasm and unity that were to accompany Wilson on his way to power in 1963 and 1964. Gaitskell himself died not long after the crucial party conference of 1962. But not before he had performed a vitally important service to the movement. How had he contrived to unite it so well, in such unpromising circumstances? The previous year the Macmillan Conservative government had made Britain's first application to join the Common Market. At first this question had simply added to the number of disagreements in the party. Then as now, while a significant sector of opinion remained stubbornly pro-European, a majority moved over to the anti-Market position. Popular on the left, this position was backed by the party's National Executive Committee in an eve-of-conference statement. The point of the latter was that Great Britain could still 'go it alone'; 'The prosperity of Britain rests far more on our ability to make intelligent use of our economic resources than it does on securing tariff-free access to the Six.'⁴¹ This was the statement which Gaitskell rose to defend at that year's conference in Brighton.

⁴¹ NEC statement, 29 September, 1962, quoted in *The Second Try: Labour and the EEC* (1968), ed. U. Kitzinger.

His speech was almost universally regarded as epoch-making. It welded the left and right wings together in a moment of emotional fervour, of reconciliation. The theme was simple: hostile opposition to the Common Market, and confidence in the British nation.⁴² Consider the longer sequence of events: for years the movement had been torn apart about internationalism and socialism, and its dilemmas in that direction seemed insurmountable. Yet Gaitskell did transcend them, by cleverly seizing on the new issue represented by Europe. Clearly he could do this only by touching on certain more fundamental chords which the different sides in the old disputes shared—on a bed-rock, something even more vital to Labourism than the Bomb and Clause 4. There can be no doubt what that bed-rock was: nationalism. Much needs to be said on the equivocations of this term, and (in particular) on the logic of its use which forced even Gaitskell to vest it with so much ‘internationalist’ or ‘wide world’ camouflage. But in general his technique and formula were both shamelessly simple and devastatingly effective: tear-jerking patriotism and invocation of the imperial relics.

Thus, unable to agree about socialism, Labour could re-establish harmony over nationalism. Even though a significant pro-Europe minority dissented from Gaitskell’s views in 1962, this division was (or seemed then) less serious and crippling than the older ones—less part of the movement’s essence, as it were. This indicates, surely, that in the real composition of that essence the nation was more important than ‘socialism’. Out of office, suffering from various crises, uncertain how to advance politically, the party could nevertheless fall back upon it. It could rediscover its nationalism, in an appropriate form—and with what striking results! The 1962 Conference chairman, Harold Wilson MP, must have learned much from what happened.⁴³

Five years later Mr Wilson’s government was itself applying for membership of the Common Market. His national technological revolution had come and gone again, without ever touching the ground. The great Labour National Plan to put the British house in order had evaporated without trace, and the nation was on its knees. But even the attempt to save matters by getting into Europe failed. Eight years later, after devaluation and rigid deflation, the nation was flat on its back, consoled in ignominy only by fetishistic contemplation of its balance-of-payments surplus. Devoid of real achievements Wilson had no choice but to present himself to the electorate as the guardian of order: Labour’s national revolution of 1964 carried it to a stance of dismal conservatism in 1970—‘conservatism’ in the simplest, meanest sense of preserving a wretched *status quo* for fear of something worse.⁴⁴

⁴² A larger analysis of this speech and the reactions to it was given in T. Nairn, ‘British Nationalism and the EEC’, *NLR* 69 (September–October 1971).

⁴³ His memoirs have not yet extended so far back. But it is hard to believe such events did not deeply impress a visionless sub-Machiavel like Wilson.

⁴⁴ This incredible climate of only two years ago was mirrored to perfection in the *New Statesman*’s election issue (19 June 1970). The editor, Paul Johnson, urged his readers to vote Labour exclusively as a ‘guarantee of this country’s internal stability and security . . . an absolute and cast-iron defence against adventurism’. The adventurer was of course Powell: his was ‘the ugly spirit which is being nourished in

After this extraordinary *débâcle*, the Labour Party again found itself in opposition. Again, it was in political stalemate with no convincing vision of progress. Having successively failed as the party of socialist renovation *and* as the party of national stability and anti-adventurism its problems of political orientation were—to say the least of it—profound. Again, its problematic condition was interrupted by a Conservative government's attempt to get into Europe—this time much more determinedly and successfully. And once more Labour reacted to this set of circumstances by resorting to nationalism—by vociferously identifying itself with the 'nation', so to speak, and posing as true defender of the 'national interest' betrayed by the ruling class.

The point is not that the political melodrama of 1971 was identical to that of 1961–2 and merely repeated the same political *motifs*. On the contrary, profound changes had occurred in the decade between, which gave it quite a different (and from a Labourist point of view, more ominous) sense. We shall look at these differences later. But for the moment, it is the coincidence of patterns which imposes itself and indicates the way forward: under certain conditions, the Labour Party stands forth in its true colours as a party of the nation and the (pretended) 'national interest' rather than anything else. What are these 'true colours'?

Class and Nation

The paradox of the question arises, naturally, from Labourism's claim to be something else: the party of a class. Is it primarily the political movement of the working class, or of the nation 'as a whole'? In a superficial sense the answer is of course 'both'. In just that sense, the official apologetics of Labourism have always held that there is no contradiction between being a class party and being a national party: the real interests of the class are essentially one with those of the nation. That is, society (in Britain at least) is essentially harmony, not conflict and contradiction, and politics the mechanics of this harmony. Labour's purpose in such a system is to give a democratic or popular inflection to the national being, to incline national interest in the direction of a majority class interest. Far from destroying the nation, this is guaranteed to improve its health.

But what a wealth of ambiguities lies in this answer! Labourism is really the history of this ambiguity, which we must try and unravel farther in order to understand its attitudes to Europe. Consider at greater length each of the two dimensions of Labour's being.

Britain . . . of unreason and violence'. As against this sort of thing, Labourism meant the traditional, civilized 'way we manage our affairs'. It meant Parliament and Constitution: 'To look down from the galleries on to a crowded House of Commons is to me a moving spectacle . . . it is the solid ranks of Labour men and women, sitting behind their ministers, which is to me ocular and indisputable proof that . . . somewhere in a chaotic world there will still be a major nation, of great influence and potentiality, to uphold civilized principles. This is the moral issue for the election.' Labour now stood for 'the steadiness of the great majority of ordinary people' (i.e. their conservative instincts) in this fortunate 'island of comparative calm' (i.e. of morgue-like stability where next to nothing had happened for a quarter of a century)—and so on. Mr Johnson did not find it necessary to insert a single word about what Labour would or should do, if returned to power.

Its characteristics as a class party are undeniable, and too well known to need more than a brief reference here.⁴⁵ It contains most of the trade unions within its federal organization, and relies on them for money. Its mass membership is working class, and most of its voting support is working class. Its very name is working class, reflecting those origins early in the century when it was indeed little more than the attempted 'independent' political expression of the trade unions in parliament.

Labour's 'national' dimension, on the other hand, is indicated by the fact that when in power it has invariably behaved like a national party. That is, it has consistently (and quite consciously) transcended its class character in honour of the national interest. The average Labour leader or minister (who is from an intellectual bourgeois background) is equipped with an average speech—the anthem of Labourism—where it is stressed that Labour is not the party of a 'sectional interest' but the *true* representative of the nation-as-a-whole against the 'sectional interest' of the rich and mighty. As such, is his party not equally competent (nay, more competent!) to govern in the national interest? Of course such nationalist emphasis may be seen as itself betraying uneasy consciousness of the movement's ineradicable class and sectional nature; it is necessary to insist constantly that Labour is not what it seems to be. In rather the same way, Labourist infatuation with parliament and constitution can be seen as arising from the need to be *plus royaliste que le Roi*. The Labour Party lays constant claim to the national essence, the Holy Ghost of Great Britain. We have the right to commingle our being with hers, they seem to say; we have as much right to her as anybody else; she ought to be ours every other day at least.

Take only one example of what this has meant in practice. Towards the end of his recent six-year reign—as we saw—Wilson had cast off progressively every last shred of political purpose and decency. His despicable government ended up as executor of the most traditional and conservative of economic policies, policies which may indeed have been 'national' in the ancestral-ghost sense (i.e. in the interests of finance capital) but had little to do with the real interests of the party's class basis. However, the emperor was not naked even then—not by any means. Underneath the political cast-offs, the soiled robes of great purpose, there lay a stout suit of national underwear. It was all Wilson had to wear. Yet he could wear it with such an air of wise authority and paternal-cum-national responsibility that (the most significant point)

⁴⁵ The clearest acknowledgement of this class nature comes from the marxist left. Marxists have rarely denied that Labourism is *primarily* the expression of the British proletariat, and has therefore (to that extent) to be supported. The most striking testimony to the stubbornness of this view was the 1970 election when—even after six years of bankruptcy and regression—the marxist parties still mostly urged their *cadres* to vote Labour again. The inevitable corollaries to this theory are of course (i) that since Labour never *acts* like a class party, like what it *is*, this is because it is betrayed all the time by the leadership, and (ii) such betrayal is possible only because of the 'backwardness' of the workers, their lack of political understanding, limited horizons, etc. The conclusion of the syllogism can only be (iii) that one should carry on trying to enlighten the workers through Labourism, voting support for it *in the meanwhile* (as 'patient education of the mass' proceeds etc).

the nation almost *was* convinced.⁴⁶ In action—in political reality as distinct from myth—the Labour Party has always been able to disregard and trample on its popular ‘class’ support—to treat its own real basis as unreal. But it can never for a single instant disregard the nation, the spirit-whore: when everything else fails, she is always there to fall back upon. In the end, a semblance of marriage to her is the only thing which counts—this unreality is, politically speaking, the key and enduring reality.

Hence, these two dimensions of the Labour being are certainly not equal. The ambiguity of Labourism does not enfold two equivalent poles, or modes of existence. It consists rather of the intimate subordination of one to the other. It stands not for class and nation—this is the ideological halo—but for class-in-nation; or more exactly, for nation-over-class. Labour is (to employ one of its own historic programme-words in a different sense) the *nationalization* of class. What it represents is not the class, in a sociological sense—the raw or material social reality of class—but the class *as* seduced by the nation. Sociologically, to a static or mechanical view of things, class may appear its essence. Politically, to a view which seeks the active and mutant nature of things, the nation is obviously more important. The Labour Party’s real basis may be a popular and proletarian mass; but a *political* movement, surely, is what it does—and what Labourism does is to translate that real mass into terms of the nation, to spiritualize it into the ‘national interest’. By enshrining the real in the unreal, it allows the unreal to govern the real—and hence, allows the real power behind that unreality, the profane secret of capital, to maintain its grip.

Mass and Leadership

This is not the place to try and trace in detail the mechanics of this alienation. However, one or two remarks on it are necessary to the argument that follows. It does not mean, for instance, that Labour’s political *modus operandi* is one of constantly reiterated or blatant chauvinism. On the contrary, the English mode of relationship between state and society prescribes that the nation be ‘taken for granted’ most of the time: usually it ought to have the repressed, almost underground tonality of English romantic music, felt more than heard. It is only in emergencies that this low-key dignity turns into the Union Jack, into that distinctly *cocardier* note which for example, Gaitskell, evoked in 1962. In particular, emergencies where the nation has to be *defended*: it is defence which reconciles nationalism with the moral imperative of English civil society and so legitimates it, letting it emerge with a

⁴⁶ It may have been forgotten how profound was the impression produced by Wilson’s charade of 1969–70. Even many conservative writers and commentators could not help feeling, for a time, that perhaps indeed Labour *was* the new ‘ruling party’, the ‘normal’ party, the establishment. That doyen of Tory journalism Peregrine Worsthorne, for example, asked ‘Who Are Our Masters Now?’ (*Sunday Telegraph*, 30 April 1970), and concluded dolefully: ‘There has been a reversal of roles . . . it is Labour men who now seem accustomed to the exercise of power, at least relatively, and Tory measures that strike the public as radical and disturbing’. Hence the Tories are bound to lose the next election. (They won, in fact, because many workers did not believe in the Wilson Apotheosis and many solid bourgeois did not believe their own political commentators.)

strength all the more striking because of the normal repression. It is wrong to conclude from the 'episodic' appearance of such left-wing nationalism that it is simply a transient malady—a deviation from the healthy norm. Such episodes of crisis ought rather to be seen as defining the true norm—the inner nature so often concealed by the opacity of everyday routine and inert customs.

The Labour Party mediates class and nation in virtue of certain internal characteristics—characteristics that have a distinct bearing upon the formulation of its outlook on Europe. The most important of these is clearly the relationship between the party's leadership and hierarchy, and its mass following. It is wrong to conceive of this as primarily a class-political relationship—that is, a stubborn belief that Labour serves the interests of the working class, that it is 'ours' as distinct from 'theirs', and so on. If this was all there was to it, there would really be no alternative to concluding that around half the population of the country consisted of irredeemable idiots.⁴⁷ How else could the movement have survived its innumerable fiascos and outrageous betrayals of working-class interests, never mind the prolonged calamity of 1964 to 1970? In reality belief in Labourism does not stand alone, in a fashion which would let it be rationally regarded, 'tested' or 'disproved' in this way. It is associated at the deepest level with something else, something positive and far more powerful—the true nerve of the relationship in question. This is, of course, belief in the nation, in British society or 'the British way', with its habitual accoutrements of parliament, constitution, monarchy, a certain national-political style of conduct and leadership, and so on. The 'faith' which has proved so unshakable is faith in Labourism *as* one integral part of this larger magic ensemble—as the only 'practicable' or possible form of class action in relation to it.⁴⁸ It is exactly upon this nerve that the Labour leadership has to press, when real trouble threatens. When crisis forces the leaders to summon up the true party spirit, the sacred inner flame of unity stronger than 'our many quarrels', this turns out to be no stranger: what is it but the great nation, self-conscious in a cloth cap? The party did not overcome its lacerations of the later 1950s, or resist its humiliations of the later 1960s, or rally its forces in 1971, by evoking issues of class, or a strengthened class-consciousness. Just the opposite: each time it fell back upon its love-affair with the nation. The various *motifs* of this

⁴⁷ As, in effect, do those Marxists who stick to the theory mentioned above and 'explain' Labourism in terms of mass 'backwardness', 'limitations', and other negative categories. The lonely merit of such an explanation is that it enables those who have made the diagnosis to present themselves in salvationist style as bearers of the cure (i.e. doses of guaranteed pure concentrate of 'class consciousness').

⁴⁸ This popular belief has a merit which critics have been naturally reluctant to concede: that of being true. So far from being incorrigible 'backwardness' or blindness, the idea of Labourism's validity and inevitability is *in itself* perfectly rational—as long as the national-state structure it leans upon and feeds off is taken for granted. From the beginning Labourism assumed the character of a carefully sought symbiosis with that structure—(see, e.g. Ralph Miliband's *Parliamentary Socialism*, 1961, new revised ed. 1972). Within this subordination of class to nation, the locus of illusion is the latter, not the former, category. If one *accepts* the nation (as nearly all Labour militants and voters have done) then Labourism is never 'betrayal' at bottom—however much it betrays!—but a reasonable compromise which often disappoints yet upholds the larger (national-religious) truth.

(hopefully not endless) romance were gone through again in the great debate: national sovereignty, the defence of 'our democracy', 'general election *now!*', the Constitution, foreign anarchy, 'where is your *mandate!*', the prerogatives of parliament, etc, etc.

In short, the mediating bond between the party as a whole and the nation-state is the same as that between the party direction and its mass following. Political homogeneity in this way transcends the diversity of civil society, its class heterogeneity. Labourism constitutes, perhaps, the most important element in this astonishing homogeneity of modern Britain. In effect, the most dangerous seam of civil society, the division between the classes, runs through it rather than outside it and is constantly 'healed' politically (i.e. kept closed) by the very structure and world-view of the party. It is in this perspective that the perennial 'problem' of the party's bourgeois leadership must be seen. One finds in the movement's history and daily life a constant puzzlement—which often turns into indignation, and then to vulgar anti-intellectualism—that such a densely working-class entity should be so entirely dominated by a 'middle-class' leading group. But what matters about them is not that they come from a bourgeois background. For obvious reasons modern worker parties are almost bound to have bourgeois intellectuals in their leadership. Whether they turn out to be like Rosa Luxemburg or like Roy Jenkins is determined by a great variety of factors. The Labour intellectual leadership, however, has since the 1920s clearly been a *national* formation—consisting not simply of middle-class brains but of an intelligentsia formed in the most traditional and conservative way, products of the ancient universities and schools.⁴⁹ This is why it has been accepted—indeed, most of the time actively encouraged, save when a little anti-intellectualism was in order to bolster morale—by the party's great proletarian pillars, the trade union chiefs. Attlee, Gaitskell, Dalton, Wilson *et al.* were not supported because they were 'middle class', but because of their 'know-how', their complex of capacities for political leadership. 'Know-how' in this sense is not theoretical ability, charismatic magnetism, or Borgia-like political cunning—still less of course is its closeness to the people, familiarity with their traditions, and so on. It is, rather, familiarity with the national essence—the practical knowledge of how 'things are done', how they are said, how authority is won and kept, the speech and habits of a national governing *élite*. It is the nation—here as elsewhere—which works across and through apparent class heterogeneity to establish an underlying unity.

⁴⁹ The point is often obscured by the obsessive English tendency to scrutinise society exclusively in terms of 'class', rather than in terms of 'nation'—sociologically, as it were, rather than politically, from the point of view of civil society rather than of the State and the totality. 'Class' in this sense is in reality the inwardness, the false self-consciousness, of the *national* being. How else explain that a society so politically united, and from the outside so much at one, yet appears to itself as incorrigibly divided? 'Class' in the sense which rides the English intelligentsia so hard is a conservative and national folk-category with (often) a marxist coloration. The neurotic-obsessive side of the preoccupation arises from the impossibility of achieving personal or cultural liberation from 'class', thus determined, within its given national framework.

Left and Right

This process by which internal party hegemony reproduces national hegemony bears directly upon the main 'political' distinction inside Labourism: that is, the division between 'left' and 'right'. There is a good deal in the language and orthodox rhetoric of the Labour-left which seems to mark it out as more definitely the political voice of class than the party at large. It represents the ideological 'soul' of the movement, its emotion and enthusiasm, as against the grey moderation of the right-wing leadership. It stands for the movement's socialist impulse, the fervour of an essentially popular ethico-religious tradition. And the impression is sometimes strengthened by its adoption of a vaguely *marxisant* terminology where the class struggle figures prominently in at least a verbal sense.

Yet this impression is misleading. The Labour-left almost never stands for class *against* nation, for that material reality of which Labourism is the mystical shell. Were it so, the Labour Party could not exist in its actual form, and would certainly never have survived its trials of the past 20 years without a serious split. In its own way the left wing forms an integral part of the 'mystical shell', of Labour's system of estrangement. Moreover its function is arguably in the last resort more important than any other—if only because, in all mass or popular politics, 'soul' or political vision and enthusiasm must be the heart of the matter. How is this socialist 'soul' related to the nation and the State?

Labourism as a whole—as we noticed—aspires to mystic marriage with the nation, and does so via a leadership homogeneous with the traditions of the ruling class, through a solution of continuity with the particular form assumed by bourgeois hegemony in Great Britain. This of course entails the familiar grovelling self-abasement of Labour leaders before national idols, the lickspittle veneration of every old ruling-class memento and pug-mark. But nationalism has still other depths than this to fall back upon. It is a part of every self-respecting nation-state spirit to have a popular dimension, a mass psychology to some degree independent of the existing nation-state institutions and 'higher' culture. The most rooted conviction of this popular nationalism is often that it, and it alone, represents the *true* nation—the enduring, uncorrupted national soul which has constantly to stand up against betrayal from above. This national sentiment is capable of being more or less 'socialist', or at least egalitarian, and of rejecting (or at least viewing critically) the kind of high-church Establishment ritualism which the Labour right favours. But it does so necessarily from a still 'national' point of view, not a class one: from the angle of the social, workers' nation as it were, rather than the politico-legal nation that has fallen too much under the influence of the wrong people.

Just what degree of opposition such popular nationalism can offer to more official brands depends on many different factors. It depends, for example, upon the character of popular political traditions and their relationship to the history of the nation—that is, upon the role played by 'the people', the masses, in this particular history, and how they remember that role. But what does popular nationalism remember in

Great Britain, in this sense? It remembers a prolonged and crushing *class* defeat, and many *national* triumphs. It bears with it as tradition a multiform bodily reaction to that defeat—the profound subjective adaptation corresponding to the *Christian* nature of the British left. This reaction, in turn, has been enfolded by a number of great nationalist victories.

These victorious pressures were those of the most successful nation-state of the 19th century, which went from its triumph over the French Revolution and Napoleon—an experience coinciding with the infancy of the new class—to the imperialist hegemony of 1880–1914. Not only the oldest and most settled of Europe's national entities, therefore, but one that grew in power and national self-consciousness throughout the period of the working class's political formation. It was impossible in these circumstances that such a new social stratum should not be 'nationalized' at a profound level.

From the 1820s to the 1840s, and again in the stormy period before 1914, radical movements combining strong class sense and internationalism did challenge the mainstream represented (eventually) by the Labour Party. But such challenges were unequal to the great historical forces arrayed against them. Class contestation cannot be eliminated even by all-conquering nationalism; however it can be 'contained' or neutralized over considerable periods of time. In Great Britain, the ideology available for this long defensive war of containment was naturally a Christian one. Just as in France Jacobinism constituted the main popular inheritance of revolutionary attitudes, so in England this lasting inheritance was a dissident Christianity. England's own revolution had been a religious one, preceding the Enlightenment, and militant protestantism had long been the principal tradition of opposition and protest within bourgeois society—the great spring of political life in England', as the liberal philosopher T. H. Green called it.⁵⁰

The new urban masses were forced therefore to adapt to the nation-state in two ways: positively, in the form of a deep acceptance of nationalism, and negatively in the form of the only available code of resistance and protest against this fate. The 'great spring' of ethical conscience, that profound moralism 'nursed in antagonism to the powers of this world' ever since the revolutions, established new roots in the social conditions of another century. Now, the powers of this world were represented by the omnipotent bourgeois nation in its march towards imperialism and war—by the new national leviathan which encompassed both State and Church, and sucked all social forces into its service. Antagonism to these powers lay in the negative, stubborn demand of conscience for what Green called 'an outward world, a system of law, custom, and ordinance, answering to itself. Originally

⁵⁰ T. H. Green, *Works* (1885–8), vol. III, 'Lectures on the English Revolution'. See also Elie Halévy, *Histoire du peuple anglais au XIX^e siècle*, vol I.; *The Birth of Methodism in England* (1971), ed. Semmel, with a long introduction describing the history of the 'Halévy thesis' at the hands of its critics. See also T. Nairn 'The English Working Class' in *Ideology in Social Science*, ed. R. Blackburn (1972).

this outward world had been the kingdom of Christ; it became socialism—that famous ‘British Socialism’, at once Christian and national, which has always been recognized as the peculiar property of Labourism.

It is precisely this dialectic of nationalism and Christianity which one finds animating the left-wing ‘soul’ of Labourism. It stands for the true nation, against the consistent betrayal and corruption of the powers of the world—the ‘official’ nation of State and ruling élite. It expresses that unquiet and resolute conscience—perpetually disappointed by the world, yet perpetually resurgent against defeat in virtue of its very other-worldliness—which has always been the ‘left’ horizon of the English bourgeois *Weltanschauung*.⁵¹ The true or real nation, in other words, is a Christian inwardness. This is what the proletariat is heir to. Wherever it ventures outside corporate class existence to seek political existence, this is the soul that guides it. While Labour’s right wing surrenders to the way of the world, its left wing remains true to the way of the spirit. The former is the nation of Mammon and force, of capitalism and the State; the latter is the nation of spiritual equality and community, of commanding moral principle and righteous example.

The way in which the left’s subordination is confirmed by the right-left division can now be seen. For just as ‘class’ and ‘nation’ are not *equal* dimensions of Labour’s being, which the party balances against each other in its policies, so the ideological forces of nationalism and Christianity are never equal in effect. The Christian soul cannot really counter-balance the nation-state in these political scales. Like its ‘class character’, this is a pious delusion essential to the specific alienation which Labourism represents. To function *as* the instrument of national class repression, it has to appear an organ of class, and to appear soulful sometimes.

Labour’s Soul

The true contrast between Labour’s devotion to the nation and its Christianity is between an extremely potent ideal force and a very feeble one. The ethical soul is undeniably a resistant phenomenon, but such resistance and adaptability arise from its very abstraction, from its capacity to be many different things to the different historical classes of the world. Its longevity, its great appeal to successive strata of English civil society, comes out of its incomparable character as a vehicle of political defeat: its power to clothe the inwardness of withdrawal and retreat with a spiritual will, an emotional aspiration for a *revanche* of the righteous—a kind of moral dignity never quite eclipsed by the sentimentalism and rhetoric. Yet the form of such a world-view confirms defeat and subordination even as it voices the perennial wish to escape from that condition: it underwrites the tragic reality, by the very ‘ideal’

⁵¹ At the July 1971 Labour conference on Europe, a moment for invoking past heroes if ever there was one, only one was in fact invoked. Michael Foot, the present parliamentary leader of the Labour left, referred to the Puritan hero of the 1630s, John Hampden, as representing the appropriate spirit of the anti-Market battle. The same spirit has, of course, informed Mr Foot’s passionate defence of parliament and the British Constitution against the European ‘sell-out’.

fashion of its reaction to that reality. Its 'religious' nature (laicized as 'ethical socialism' or not) consigns reality to the way of the world, by the very way in which it conceives that reality and itself—exactly as, in the Labour Party's historical *praxis* the left has consigned power to the right, not accidentally but inevitably. It could not wield power, and remain itself. Its political function is to protest, and remind power of the ideal (the beyond) which it should serve and not betray. By performing this moral function, it provides power with an indispensable alibi, with the aroma of vision and ideology it needs to go on exercising any political spell.

The nation, on the other hand, the 'national interest' which alone gives focus and structure to the right-wing leadership's pragmatism, represents a very strong and concrete ideal force. It stands for Great Britain's victory over the French Revolution and Napoleon, for the prolonged social and political counter-revolution which accompanied industrialization, for the defeat of Chartism, for the popular imperialism of 1900 . . . for the whole complex of ideas and institutions that found expression, for example, in Gaitskell's litany of 1962, culminating in '1940' and 'Commonwealth'. Nationalism in Great Britain is so heavily weighed down by bourgeois triumphs that nothing else has a chance *in practice*. It is so massively conservative that all opposition to it which stays couched in national terms is doomed from the outset. But this is exactly the dilemma of the Labour-left's opposition. It opposes the right not in the name of a class but in the name of the true nation, the good old cause; under pressure, however, this highly principled soul speedily collapses into the mere nation, the nationality everyone knows from history-books. One begins by defending British socialism; before the audience can draw breath, one is defending the sacred prerogatives of Parliament, national sovereignty, the Constitution, 1940, decent British imperialism, and all the rest. The ghostly form of the Christian nation comes down to earth under stress. But the earth is crass bourgeois nationalism. What else could it be? The nation of the Saints was swept away forever in 1660, at the very dawn of modern political times, too long ago to be employed effectively even by a Michael Foot. And disasters like 1926 or 1848 can hardly be the source of a valid counter-myth of the nation.

So, one may say that while Labour seems (and indeed must seem) to stand for class against nation, it represents in reality the ascendancy of nation and the State over class. In analogous fashion, while at a deeper level the left seems to oppose the right-wing leadership in the name of class socialism, in reality it too sustains that leadership—and so, in its own particular way, the nation and the State.⁵² The whole structure of

⁵² This is why that traditional marxist interpretation of Labourism referred to above (n. 45) must be mistrusted—and why it is surprising that marxists took it seriously for so long. The 'betrayal' which is crucial to the theory is, of course, a structural fact, and not a moral problem (i.e. a problem of rotten leaders, replacing them with sounder stuff, roundly denouncing them, etc). The Labour Party is national to the core, not rotten to the core. It suffers from excess of healthy patriotism, not the leadership of degenerate swine; it is hopelessly national, not led by hopeless traitors. More generally, the character of Labourism is such that study of the way it hangs together is only with difficulty separable from wider sociological problem of consensus—a subject on which, as one recent writer comments, 'Present sociological

the movement represents a complex estrangement of 'class' by 'nation': a process through which a class *both* affirms its own being politically *and* consistently loses that being by the very way in which the affirmation is made—via the deep-rooted national-political 'rules' secreted after a long conservative history. The political affirmation of a social class within a nation-state framework *is* the nationalization of that class. How could it be otherwise? The European-based nation-state is easily the strongest socio-political structure known to history, and the popular classes of modern industrial society were forced to grow up into that structure. It pre-existed them, and went on during the era of their formation to attain the imperialist apogee of its strength. The class struggle therefore assumed that extremely unequal form which is (so to speak) registered in the character of Labourism, as of many other working-class and socialist institutions in Europe.

writings offer no coherent answer'. Speaking of the working class, the author remarks in the same valuable article: 'For the reason why working-class people do "accept" (in whatever sense) their lot and do not have consistent deviant ideologies, we must look back to the historical incorporation of working-class political and industrial movements in the 19th and 20th centuries within existing structures.' Michael Mann, 'The Social Cohesion of Liberal Democracy', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 35 No. 3 (June 1970).

V Labour's Alibi: National Internationalism

'The new waves of nationalism in the western labour movement . . . are in a sense only a continuation of the same nationalism that came to the top in 1914. Qualitatively there is not much difference between the nationalism of social-democratic parties today and their social-patriotism of 1914.'

Isaac Deutscher, 'On Internationals and Internationalism' *Marxism in Our Time* (1972).

Labour mediates class and nation by imposing the primacy of the nation. Yet it does so in a way which (verbally at least) is strikingly at odds with this historic role. Both in 1962 and in 1971 one of the most prominent features of Labour's defence of the nation against the Common Market was a strongly professed *internationalism*. What is the real sense of this paradoxical rhetoric? How is such 'internationalism' related in function to the Labour Party's evident place as a pillar of the national scheme of things? These questions are not only important for an understanding of Labour's 1971 gyrations—they indicate something of the real complexity which may attach to the apparently simple notion of 'internationalism.'

Gaitskell could find no more effective way to end his 1962 speech than by denouncing 'narrow nationalism' in Europe. In other words the Common Market countries groping towards some new transnational entity were by definition condemned to nationalism—while Great Britain, busy guarding her national sovereignty against the process, was somehow intrinsically 'international' in nature and outlook. That was the point of his eulogy of the Commonwealth, and the 'ties and links which run across the whole world'. They signified a different, un-narrow, wide-world destiny—a generous and moral universalism, as it were, untainted by continental egoism and mere self-interest.

Ten years later the theme was being pressed more strongly than ever. In June 1971, for instance, *Tribune* produced a special Common Market issue where the editor Richard Clements wrote: '*Tribune* has explained all through the years why we believe that the consequences of entry into the EEC will be disastrous for Britain and damaging to the concept of a wider co-operation among all the nations of the world, both developed and under-developed.' He saw the two things as quite naturally united. A few weeks later *Tribune* published an article by the left-Labour MP F. Judd called 'Phoney Internationalism: That's the Common Market Policy towards Under-Developed Nations'. What then is real, non-phoney internationalism? 'It is the convictions and the will of those who lead them which provide the substance of . . . living communities,' wrote Mr Judd, 'Just as I fear for the future of creative, participant democracy in the prevailing atmosphere of paternalistic Western European politics, so I fear that, despite the protests of sincere and well-meaning colleagues in our party, the main driving-force for EEC enlargement is an old-fashioned and frustrated nationalism as irrelevant to the age in which we live as it is possible to be.' And he goes on to

contrast the 'narrow regional integration' of the Common Market with wider and 'more meaningful international forums such as OECD, GATT and UNCTAD, or the multi-racial, intercontinental and realistically heterogeneous groupings of both the new Commonwealth and the United Nations itself'.⁵³

What is the cause of the disgraceful nationalism of Europe? One did not have to look far in any of the Labourist perorations of 1971 for the answer: France. Behind the Cobdenite rhetoric there rankled an ancient national rivalry. The Common Market is dominated by France, and the French are narrow nationalists. The most vociferous exponent of this view, Peter Shore, denounced entry as a French plot, 'a victory for France . . . and a great defeat for us'. In a *New Statesman* article 'Into the French Trap' (11 June 1971), he emphasized the 'full and ruinous contribution . . . the immense cash payment' which the Heath government had been lured into making. Cunning Jules the Frenchman spent many years elaborating this ruse, as a result of which the British taxpayer will have to subsidize his poor peasantry. 'It speaks volumes about the French meaning of a "Community"', concluded Mr Shore, 'and gives some indication of the "Community Spirit" that we could expect to meet on other problems if we became a member, that they should prepare this trap for Britain even before the negotiations began.'

Great Britain, on the other hand, is the world authority on community spirit. Its inner harmony demonstrates this expertise, as does its history of charity abroad. Great Britain is 'outward-looking', French-inspired Europe is 'inward-looking'. Great Britain's place is the whole world, the globe; nothing else is suitable. 'The choice for Britain is clear,' wrote Shore in 1971, 'either we maintain . . . our close and valued associations overseas and join with others in shaping those world policies and institutions needed . . . not just by the people of one half of a continent but by all mankind, or we choose against the strong current of our interests and sentiments to enter the European Community.'⁵⁴ From Labour's point of view, imperialism consisted essentially in 'granting to 700 million people the great prize of self-government'—an unbeatable record in internationalist community spirit, surely? How could one half of one continent ever offer enough scope for this Jesus among the nations?

Closely associated with this conception are two others: firstly, the United Kingdom's wide-world *Weltanschauung* is naturally better for the world's poor, for the under-developed, than the grasping egoism of Europe's Bounderbys. We are by historical disposition world-oriented and charitable; the Continent has to be constantly warned against its

⁵³ *Tribune* 2 July 1971. In the article quoted above Nettle and Shapiro point to the magic importance accorded sets of initials by Great Britain's post-war rulers: 'belonging' to innumerable bodies became a consolation for real impotence. British official thought soon became unable to sort out reality from appearance in things like WEU, NATO, EFTA, the Council of Europe, and so on. In his pamphlet *The Case Against Entry* (September 1971), Peter Shore argues that without EEC 'Britain is a full member of virtually all the large and powerful organizations that exist in the world today . . . We have our position in the Commonwealth and . . . the General Assembly of the UN . . . NATO and numerous other alliances covering a large part of the globe'.

⁵⁴ *The Case Against Entry*, p. 18.

own disposition to be 'inward-looking' (self-centred). Secondly, this expansive internationalism is linked to world free trade—that great historical cause of the British bourgeoisie—and to the post-war attempts to encourage international trade like the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the Kennedy Round, and so on. Again, this appears as a natural (almost instinctive) British posture, while Continentals are suspect of being protectionist. The imperial inheritance of the Commonwealth, the 'maritime view', generosity to the world's poor and free trade all go to form a moral amalgam which—by all the evidence—appeals very strongly to Labourist sensibility, and especially to the left.

For the left wing, a particularly acrid flavour is added to the plot to drag Great Britain into Europe: narrow nationalism, inward-looking protective policies, egoistic concern with one's own 'welfare and advancement'—all this amounts to an image of *capitalism*. Richard Clements further recalled his paper's opposition to the plot, in the *Tribune* article mentioned above: 'In 1961 . . . we wrote that to join EEC would be to turn our backs on the Commonwealth, to abdicate our independent role in world affairs . . . and to postpone the introduction of further measures of socialism . . . The Common Market is not a cornucopia of opportunities. It is a baited trap . . . If Macmillan and the Conservatives had got Britain pinned down and immobilized into the capitalist-orientated EEC, then their task in Britain would have been easier.'⁵⁵ It can hardly be news even to the most godly conscience on the left that Great Britain was *the* original capitalist nation-state, and the leader of European imperialism in the 19th century. Yet somehow it is made to appear today as less 'capitalist-orientated' than the countries of continental Europe. Therefore entering Europe will mean the loss of this potential for socialism or even social revolution. From a foreign (or any extra-national) point of view this might seem simply ridiculous. Representatives of the most politically successful capitalist society in history—where the bourgeoisie has been immovably in the saddle for over three hundred years—denouncing the 'capitalist conspiracy' afoot in their relatively precarious continental neighbours! From the left's peculiar nationalist angle, however, it is a necessary belief. Is this not the whole point of the 'nation' as instrument of estrangement? It can be all things to all men in it, a balloon which can be inflated with magic potentiality in any desired direction—the romantic source (as a notion)

⁵⁵ In a letter to *New Left Review* (No. 70, November–December 1971) Clements accused me of baseless spite against *Tribune* and the Labour left, because I had remarked (ironically) that in their view EEC appeared as a 'cold-war, capitalist conspiracy, . . . in striking contrast to the neutral and socialist Britain we have enjoyed since 1945'. Clements emphasized that his party did not think Britain was *actually* like that, but *potentially* like it: its position was that 'if the gadarene rush towards the Market was stopped it would pose for the British people questions which would almost certainly have a socialist answer'. If one retreats in this way from the plane of actuality to that of potentiality, then the problem becomes: what actual evidence is there *for* such a potential? What in British politics or recent history could lead one to believe that continuing 'splendid isolation' would ('almost certainly') lead to the attainment (at last) of a 'British Socialism'? The Labour Party's achievements of 1964–70? The force represented by *Tribune* and the left (which failed to inflect Labour policy one millimetre leftwards in six years)? The Communist Party of Great Britain? The truth is that the Orwellian left has to believe in such a potency (the 'true nation', etc) because it is national first, and socialist afterwards.

of every imaginable social wish. Through its sorcery of confusion Vimy Ridge is reconciled with socialist conscience, Churchillian traditions with 'Clause 4', the City's dominion with the class struggle, the relics of empire with socialism, and the dismal capitalist present with an imminent socialist future.

Labour and Imperialism

The curious contradiction of this British socialist stance is a nationalism which expresses itself in internationalist language—with a strong accent of moralism that dismisses Europe as both 'capitalist' and the home of *Staatsräson* and *Realpolitik*. In part, the high ethical tone gives one immediate clue to the paradox. We noticed the significance of Christian moralism in the ideal formation of the left-wing nation, the nation of the liberal intelligentsia and the political working class. For the latter, the element of spiritual universalism in that inheritance implies that the true nation *must* be more than merely a nation. The Anglo-Scots nation bears within its essence a universal message—its moral-religious mission.⁵⁶ Such a nation is naturally, effortlessly, 'international' in outlook. The guarantee and proof of this character is its superior morality before God—a morality historically realized, one should add, in the superior structure of English civil society and its relative dominance of the State (in contrast to the continental State's dominance of civil society).

Hence there arises an intimate dialectic between the objective reality of the nation—as one territorial entity among others, on an historical basis as contingent as any other—and its subjective culture, the collective psychology of its self-projection upon the outside world. The former is particular, the latter is universal (or at least 'universalizing'). It is extremely difficult for any cultural sector or class within the nation to escape that would-be universal form. As long as the nation-state endures and retains some cultural vitality, it remains the natural 'language' of aspiration, a basic political world-view entertained largely unconsciously—and often *most* unconsciously when the national culture is at its most self-consciously *non*-national, when it lays easy claim to an international validity. Vulgar chauvinism is easily seen through and dismissed. But much of the real vitality and cultural strength of a nation always lies in a very un-vulgar chauvinism, where a particular history has been sublimated into universalist pretence by long historical processes.

The nationalism of the left disposes it particularly to acceptance of these universalist pretensions. As the party of ideal and principle it quite naturally unites the true (potential) nation to them. Then the real nation—the one that exists in sad particularity, deformed by capitalism, under

⁵⁶ The mechanism is exactly similar to that by which the French nation incorporated the message of Enlightenment Reason, through the vital experiences of the Revolution and Jacobinism: the mission here had a quite different and more advanced content, but the same 'national-internationalist' form. On national missions, see F. Chabod, *L'Idea di nazione* (1961) p. 82 ff. Chabod later points out how romanticized national 'missions' turned into the justification for imperialism and 'primacy' became the ideology of conquest and war.

the thumb of its ruling class, etc— somehow recedes into insignificance. One can be opposed to *it* (and especially to its deplorable ‘narrow chauvinism’, betrayals, corruptions, etc) in the name of this grander truth. As if one could escape from nation-state culture so easily! As if these universals did not still bear upon them the hairy imprint of national bias and instinctive prejudices! The left-wing nationalist is like Dr Jekyll: a pure being, too good to be true, who believes himself utterly distinct from the ugly Mr Hyde who has run beserk and drunk with blood through the pages of history. Yet with only a little detachment can one not in fact see the hairy paws clutching nervously at the starched cuffs, and hear the heart thudding impatiently beneath the good Doctor’s tight waistcoat.⁵⁷

As well as these general factors, two very important historical experiences farther predispose the Labour Party left towards this sublimated nationalism. The first was that its infancy coincided with the definitive victory of ‘liberal imperialism’ over the more right-wing variety which had asserted itself in the 1890s and reached a climax in the South African War of 1900–1902. Liberal imperialism represented the central free trade traditions of the English bourgeoisie. It clung, therefore, to the moral internationalism of Cobden and Bright, to their abstract liberal belief in ‘freedom’ at home and abroad and the simpler and less doctrinaire view of empire which fitted such old beliefs.

Great Britain’s version of ‘social imperialism’ had a strong liberal inflection and was linked to a fairly piecemeal empiricism, both philosophically and politically. All these characteristics were to constitute basic guide-lines of national development throughout the half-century which followed.

The new political Labour movement was carried forward from the nadir of 1900 upon this tide. It advanced in company with the liberal renaissance, and was itself inevitably formed by the general conditions of the period—that is, of an authentic ‘founding period’ in the course of which ‘visibly or invisibly, lines are set which determine the whole course of future developments’.⁵⁸ One of these lines was the ideology of liberal imperialism. The working class was politically integrated into the nation at the moment when the latter was most confused with empire, and when ‘empire’ had the most effective ideological camouflage at its disposal. British greatness—unlike French or Prussian greatness—was naturally world-wide, Sunday-suited, and unselfish. The national mission had become the mission of empire. The *true* nation had expanded into the *true* (or liberal) imperial system. The nation-state in which the workers were finding a place politically was not just one embattled territorial unit fighting with the others for a place in the sun; from the outset, it appeared as a greater, spiritual,

⁵⁷ George Orwell’s *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius* (1941) is the true *locus classicus* of modern British left-wing nationalism in this sense, recording as it does the ‘return’ of a left-wing intellectual to healthy patriotism and his demand for a socialism based on it (‘The suet puddings and the red pillar-boxes . . .’ etc). Orwell formulated in it the unforgettable slogan of British national-socialism: ‘No real revolutionary has ever been an internationalist.’

⁵⁸ Hans-Ulrich Wehler, ‘Bismarck’s Imperialism 1862–1890’, *Past and Present* No. 48 (August 1970), p. 150.

multi-racial, intercontinental, realistically heterogeneous something-or-other—a ‘meaningful international forum’ in Judd’s words.

From the outset, consequently, Labourist nationalism took on this strong ‘internationalist’ coloration. The latter proved the perfect moral legitimization of national sentiment: it set the seal of conscience upon that pragmatic acceptance of the old nation-state to which Labour was borne by its close alliance with the Liberal Party, and its evolutionist philosophy. It gave rise to a certain habit of thought, a customary—almost automatic—outlook, in which particular terms and ideas (like ‘outward-looking’) assumed a sacred or unchallengeable resonance. This general outlook (or ‘world-view’) then survived the decline and disappearance of the real apparatus of empire and British power, as one among many of the ‘post-imperial’ phenomena of British society. Fifty years after the peak of that power, it could still make the whole of western Europe, with its vast population and resources, appear ‘narrow’ and ‘too small’.

This is an internationalism with much the same virtues and faults as the underlying moral-christian world-view from which it stems historically: the same strength and stubbornness, and the same crippling other-worldliness. It is surely clear that its special rootedness in Labourism arose from the fact of imperialism. That is, from the fact that at the relevant period Great Britain’s ‘national’ interests were indeed world-wide: they were identified with the Gold Standard, the Pound Sterling, the Royal Navy, and global possessions—the material ‘internationalism’ which provided the basis for left-liberal and Labourist moral ‘internationalism’. The latter has not been valueless, obviously (one need only think, in recent history, of its function in relation to CND in the 1950s). But it is both limited and treacherous politically. Above all, it has much less in common than appears with the traditions of marxist internationalism which constitute the most precious inheritance of the European working class.

The second vital historical experience which ‘fixed’ Labour in its peculiar nationalism was that of 1945 to 1948. This was, in a sense, the continuation and the conclusion of the first. From 1905 to 1914 the Labour Party had taken its first steps nationally in close association with the Liberal Party, as the latter laid the foundations of social imperialism. By 1945 Labourism had completely taken the place of Liberalism in the national political spectrum; and in the years following, it was able to complete the old programme launched in Edwardian times (with few modifications). It was now called the Welfare State. But it represented essentially the same policy of a social liberalism designed, through the agency of an expanded State, to integrate the working class more adequately into national life—a national life, one must remember, still located firmly in an imperialist context.

During the earlier, formative, moment Labourism had been (so to speak) in apprenticeship to Liberalism; in the second, it had *become* Liberalism.⁵⁹ The great ‘working-class’ party had taken over the con-

⁵⁹ Why does anyone think that the last two Labour leaders, Gaitskell and Wilson, have been Simon-pure Liberals—and that the most serious new contender for leadership, Jenkins, is not merely a Liberal but an ardent historian of Liberalism?

tent of social-liberalism and made it its own. The way in which this happened was politically decisive, amounting almost to a second 'founding period'. The point was, of course, that now the working class was the agent of its own integration: it was able to nationalize itself. The only really successful alienation is self-alienation. In 1945 the Labour Party became (as its leaders tirelessly proclaimed, and have never since ceased to prove) a national and responsible party, a 'party of government'. At last, it measured up to the nation, was worthy of it. Marriage replaced the somewhat primitive and furtive *liaisons* of the '20s and '30s. In this way, the full admission of the working class into the political nation appeared (and to some extent really was) its own achievement. And on the other hand, if through Labourism the class had become worthy of the nation, had not the nation (likewise) shown itself worthy of all the democratic-evolutionist hopes placed in it? It had said 'Yes'. The national 'British way' appeared vindicated.

It would not have been vindicated in the same fashion if a Liberal or Coalition government had enacted much of the same legislation. What mattered from the point of view of political psychology—the popular attitudes which have sustained Labourism ever since—was that the people's party, the left, did it. It was this which so profoundly reinforced the left's nationalism, and renovated all the myths still powerful in 1971. In another sense too the moment was all-important. For it came immediately after the great national victory of the Second World War, while 1940 and the years of 'war-time socialism' were fresh experiences. It was due, as a matter of fact, to the mighty social upheavals of the war and not to the political campaigns or propaganda conducted by the party. But this is to say that it was organically connected to another powerful myth, one even more potent and meaningful—by far the most important popular myth of contemporary Britain. This was the recollection of popular national resistance to nazism, and of the colossal mobilization of energy which followed between 1940 and 1945. It was out of this archetypal nationalist triumph that Labour's moment of real authority had come, still warm with its heat and bright with its reflected colours. Is it surprising if, ever since, the Labour Party has turned aside from its grey liberalism and faded Christianity at times of crisis and sought to find again these true colours of nationality?

The crucial renaissance of nationalism also sustained the 'internationalist' false consciousness we have been examining. The great popular-national victory was also the reaffirmation of the 'world role', the universal presence and responsibilities. In fact, no aspect of British left ideology received a stronger boost from events than this, precisely because of the dominance of the joint Anglo-American philosophy of political de-colonization. In the nature of things, it was Great Britain which had to give effect to it. Hence to the 'Welfare State' internally there corresponded the transition from empire to 'Commonwealth' externally; in Gaitskell's 1962 speech both are presented as Labour achievements (the dual trophies of left-wing nationalism). Objectively this transition may have been one part of the formation of US-based global neo-imperialism; subjectively, it manifested itself to Labour as the enactment of Ramsay MacDonald's Ten Commandments and Morality's universal sway.

Nationalism and the US Empire

If more evidence is needed here of the true nature of this nationalist 'internationalism', it can surely be found in one very striking aspect of the left's recent history. Whether and in what sense the Common Market stands for a 'capitalist conspiracy' of narrow nationalists or an Iron Heel of monopolists is a peculiarly debatable question. What really cannot be questioned at all is that there is a great—the greatest—capitalist power in close alliance with the British nation-state; that this power has exercised a virtual stranglehold over Britain's foreign policy (including the policy of Labour governments) for a quarter of a century; that both its military and its economic grip on Great Britain are very extensive, perfectly visible, and (especially recently) painfully felt; and that for nearly a decade this power has been waging imperialist war in the most blatant contradiction of any spirit of ethical internationalism.

And yet the Labour Party has never found it possible to take up the kind of fervent stand against *that* power which it has twice taken up against the relatively weak and ambiguous European capitalism of the EEC. The point is not that the Labour left wing has failed to contest US imperialism in the pages of *Tribune* and elsewhere. It has consistently criticized NATO and demanded British neutrality or independence in the Cold War, just as it participated actively in CND. But at no moment did it even seem likely that the party at large would unite with its 'soul' on this issue. One part of Labourism certainly resented the humiliations of the 'special relationship'—but it was never remotely possible that such resentment would inspire a *majority* crusade against the 'sell-out' (i.e. against the most distinctly 'capitalist-orientated' nation on earth!) on *nationalist* grounds. British 'national sovereignty' was in fact bludgeoned and trampled flat for 20 years, most notably when Labour was in office from 1964 to 1970. Why did this never arouse the massive, compulsive protests of 1971, cries of betrayal, anguish at loss of birth-right, outraged national-popular anger at foreign plots, and so on? In 1971 and early 1972 hot and righteous rage was expressed by Labour's anti-Market majority against the pro-Market minority which had arrogantly refused to heed the will and sentiments of the masses: the men were arrant élitists and traitors, to both party and nation. But what of that pro-American élite which had tranquilly controlled the party (and sometimes the nation too) for so many years? What of the wretched lackeys of NATO esconced upon the innumerable front organizations of Atlanticism, comfortable in their mid-century anti-communism, responsibly silent about Vietnam, who had after all actually *done*, time and time again, what the pro-EEC faction was merely hoping to do: betray the nation's independence?

It was suggested above that mere denunciation of perennial leadership 'betrayal' was a kind of theoretical error, since the 'fault' lay actually in the underlying structure of Labourism—in the basic geology of its relationship to the nation, so to speak, rather than in right-wing villainy. The same remark may be made here. For the fact is that the American relationship and the style and rhetoric of US empire do not have the same relationship to the structure of British nationalism as 'Europe' does. Consequently the internationalist guise of that national feeling

cannot be made to apply to them in the same way. The ideology's real incidence is variable, it is not what it seems. In the one case it relates positively to a traditional mass feeling, so that on occasion a vital political current flows between the Labour leaders, the Labour left, and the party's rank and file (as in 1962 and 1971). In the other case it remains the staunch moral protest of a minority, impotent to move the organization as a whole. In the one case it goes with the particular motion and configuration of British left-nationalism; in the other, it goes against it. Why is this?

There is little space to explore the reasons here. However, one or two things may be worth mentioning. Of these the most important is probably the remarkable basic similarity of the Old British and new American imperialism. The two most distinctive features of the American empire, Gareth Stedman Jones has pointed out, are 'Its *non-territorial* character . . . its non-possession of a formal colonial empire (and) its possession of a *formally anti-imperialist* ideology' sustained by an ideology of 'freedom'.⁶⁰ This has led to 'The *invisibility* of American imperialism when compared with the territorial colonialism of European countries'. The British imperial system was, of course, both territorial and formally colonialist at the end of the 19th century. But its essential economic character was much closer to the American model than those phenomena suggested. This was exactly what had lain behind the victory of 'liberal imperialism' in 1906, and the long retreat of the following half-century towards progressively more 'informal' structures—the transition from Empire to Commonwealth and Sterling Area. Labourism and the national left developed to their present forms in conjunction with this transition, and had to cope with it through an 'internationalist' ideology.

The effectiveness of this ideology, in turn, made the character of US 'Open Door' imperialism relatively invisible. Its ethical internationalism, anti-militarism (or even pacifism), and its close link with economic free trade, all brought it surprisingly close, for example, to Woodrow Wilson's version of America's global interest. As Truman said much later, 'The Open Door policy is not imperialism, it is free trade'.⁶¹ It is

⁶⁰ 'The Specificity of US Imperialism', *New Left Review* No. 60 (March–April 1970) pp. 61–3.

⁶¹ G. Stedman Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 86. One is constantly struck, for example, by the similarity of language and concept between the British left and Kennedy's global offensive of the Grand Design era. 'Britain', wrote court chronicler Arthur Schlesinger Jr., 'with its world obligations, could keep the EEC from becoming a high-tariff, inward-looking, white man's club' (*A Thousand Days*, 1967, p. 772). That was its precise function in the Grand Design of US empire, and why—as de Gaulle knew—Kennedy supported British entry to EEC so actively. 'Outward-looking' was a key adjective of US empire as well as of *Tribune's* editorial pages. The empire needed all the 'wider co-operation', 'meaningful international forums', 'non-exclusive associations', etc, it could lay its hands on. As imperial roving ambassador Walter Lipmann candidly observed: 'The US needs this large liberal trading area if it is to expand its trade and thus . . . earn the hard money to finance its commitments overseas' (*Western Unity and the Common Market*, 1962, p. 38). Vietnam, for example. But, thunders Lipmann, 'If the EEC becomes a closed, restrictive and exclusive society . . . the US can always use the big stick and threaten to take away its troops. To be 'inward-looking' is a major crime in the perspective of US empire, as well as in that of Peter Shore or Douglas Jay. *Western Unity and the Common Market* is a document of

of course, just this 'invisibility' (by which European pimples stand out in indignant relief while US boils are taken for granted) which has to be explained.

In this historical context, it is not at all surprising that there has been much objective collusion (quite unintended by the Labour left and similar groups) between certain characteristic British and American political attitudes. A long 20th-century national experience (of which the Second World War was perhaps the most vital episode) has quite naturally modelled popular nationalism in this fashion, and produced the 'blind spot' in question. In all its attitudes, left as well as right, a thoroughly national entity like Labourism has to take account of such a formation. What is indicated is not necessarily hypocrisy but a profound and sometimes unconscious adaptation to national reality. The old left's 'internationalism' was certainly not a mere facade or smoke-screen for chauvinism; yet its true political sense—its capacity to arouse really deep popular feeling, and hence its periodic utility to Labourism—was largely a function of nationalism. After all, the rooted conviction that only the whole wide world will serve as a natural sphere of action for one's nation is, itself, the frankest expression of an immensely inflated national ego.

the utmost imperial conceit. Yet comparison with an aboriginal 'anti-Market' tract like Jay's *The Truth About the Common Market* (published about the same time) shows astonishing identity of views. In fact, Jay argued simply that Britain's true national interest lay with Kennedy's Trade Expansion Bill rather than with EEC. Looked at in this light, much of the old 'anti-European' argument was clearly a form of false consciousness which fitted snugly into and served the commanding imperialist mystifications of the day.

VI The Labour Crisis: Nation Before Class

It has happened more than once in history that, when the revolution was not strong enough to solve those historical problems ripe for solution, reaction has itself been forced to try and resolve them.

L. Trotsky, *Disarmament and the United States of Europe* (1929)

What we must try to see next is how these features of the Labour Party were mobilized in the particular fashion of 1971, with the particular intensity that characterized the great 'anti-Market' campaign. Consider again the circumstances of early 1971. The Labour Party had just emerged from a long and demoralizing experience of government. This failure had not been wholly its fault. In part, it simply reflected the general decline and impotence of the old European nation-state, in a world at once more closely interdependent and dominated by the great nations outside Europe. However, such general historical causes were not clearly registered in the party's still nationalist world-view, and it was bound to suffer badly from the effects of failure. By any standards the fall from the large hopes and excitement of 1964 to the dismal conservatism and apathy of 1970 had been a long one. How could it fail to affect the movement—and above all, to affect Labour's deep idealism, its sustaining emotions?

Yet just on this point one is confronted by a puzzling fact. The ordinary reaction of deeply wounded idealism is indignation, anger—in a political movement, anger above all at betrayal. This is normally accompanied by a search for culprits and errors, and demands for reformulation of the creed—in other words, by disputes, heightened factionalism, and a clash of ideas. The history of the Labour Party itself after the defeat of 1951 is a record of vigorous feuds of this kind. Surely then the grim disenchantments of the 1960s and the bitter defeat of 1970 ought to have revived them in a form even more acute?

Nothing of the sort happened. The Labour Party behaved as if stunned, in the latter part of 1970 and the beginning of 1971. There was no wave of political recriminations, no political soul-searching.⁶² 'An interesting thing didn't happen in 1970,' wrote Mervyn Jones in May 1971. 'After the defeat of 1951 and again after the lost election of 1959 . . . the Labour Party occupied itself with inquiry, explanation and recrimination. But in 1970 not a dog barked.'⁶³ To all appearances, ideological vitality had drained away from the movement. The old left-versus-right conflict had been in many ways both limited and ambiguous; but now even this seemed diminished. No serious ideological challenge was offered to the leadership group; and Wilson's personal pre-eminence

⁶² Such reflection on 1964–70 as has emerged to date (from Lord George-Brown, Lord Wigg and others) has been on the level of mindless gossip and paltry paranoia established by Mr Wilson's own *Personal Record*.

⁶³ *New Statesman*, May, 1971. See also four articles by M. Dean, 'Is Labour Dying?' *Guardian*, January 1971.

was not, in spite of the bankruptcy it now stood for, even implicitly contested for more than a year.

This corpse-like inertia did not reflect any corresponding immobility in civil society. Far from it. As we saw before, the class discontent which had marked the end of Labour's period in office continued to grow. All political commentators remarked on this new and more violent, social climate. It was a scene where unpredictable novelties seemed likely to dominate. The acute inflationary spiral obviously presented a new degree of threat to the whole working class. The miners' strike of early 1972 was won partly by the employment of new and more aggressive picketing tactics on a national scale. By its nature the new Industrial Relations Bill posed strikingly different and complex problems to the trade unions—it threatened to alter some of the basic 'rules' of the British class war itself. While the Labour Party slumbered, evidently unable to summon up energy for a decent internal quarrel, its social basis was shaking dangerously beneath it. To its blatant lack of any new social vision there corresponded in reality the emergence of urgent new social and political demands.

Another factor should be added to the picture of this odd disparity. It appears certain that in 1971 the Labour Party was in any case constitutionally far less able to respond effectively to new pressures from its old class basis. In comparing 1962–4 to 1971 previously, we noted that the strong similarities in Labour's nationalist reactions at these two dates did not preclude very important differences. The ideological apathy and disorientation of 1970–1 is, of course, one such difference. But behind it there lies another one—a sort of deep sea-change at work in the foundations of Labourism. What this long-term change will mean in the eventual fate of the Labour Party is still quite unclear; however, it was already contributing something to the particular configurations of 1971.

In a most important recent study of Labourism's 'grass roots', Barry Hindess concluded that the past decade witnessed 'an absolute decline in voting and in other forms of orthodox political activity' and an equal decline in 'the close association between party and social class'.⁶⁴ Consequently there has been 'a progressive disappearance of the class polarization of formal politics'. What he calls ironically 'the decline and fall of social democracy' in Great Britain has led to a growing divorce between 'class' in the traditional sense and political life. The working class has been gradually alienated from Labourism, and Labourism has become gradually more 'middle class' in its active personnel and attitudes. 'Class has been taken, or rather forced, out of politics . . .', goes in Hindess. Formerly, 'the apparent class nature of politics had, for very many people, effectively eliminated the problem of voting choice: one voted for the appropriate party often without even needing to consider the particular policies offered.' This was in fact 'the great stabilizing factor in British politics throughout this century—at least since the disintegration of the once powerful Liberal

⁶⁴ *The Decline of Working Class Politics* (1971), especially Chs. 7 and 8, 'The Changing Face of Politics', and 'Conclusions'.

Party'. Now, the automatic element of stabilization represented by 'class' is disintegrating. There is taking place 'a breakdown of the social control which the Labour Party has been able to exercise over such a large section of the population' (although of course the change is still hidden by the persistence of old forms and labels, especially at national level).

In the light of considerations like these there is no exaggeration in speaking of a Labour crisis. In 1970–1 Labourism was suffering from defeat and deep political disorientation, and coping very badly with the situation. And its ominous incapacity to find renewal ideologically was demonstrated against the background of rapidly falling membership and militancy, and the marked trend towards *embourgeoisement* which Hindess picks out.⁶⁵ This was the state in which the party confronted the 'great debate': a declining empire of national socialism, lifeless at the top and increasingly unsure of its old social basis. And at the same time as the old stable foundation of 'class' (i.e. the defensive and conservative side of class-consciousness) was crumbling away, new tremors from the real class struggle agitated the entire movement from below.

Nation Before Class

As we saw, Labourism mediates between nation and class, and does so by establishing the general ascendancy of nation over class. However, the laws of this mediation are not simple or uniform. They vary from time to time, according to the condition of the class struggle, and to whether or not the party is in office. There is a constant tension between the class basis and the national function. In order to fulfil the latter, the Labour Party has to attend to the former at times—and with greatest zeal, obviously, when 'the natives are restless' and the class struggle threatens to erupt. Yet here—that is, in the whole period from 1970 to the present—it at once confronts a grave dilemma. To align itself with every strike, support every factory occupation and each minor incident in the struggle against the Industrial Relations Bill, would bring the accusation of being 'merely a class party': of irresponsibility, fostering anarchy against the law of the land and so on. This is an impossible choice for Labourism. It would mean endangering the party's hold on moderate opinion and its alliance with the predominantly conservative leaderships of the trade union movement. It would imply embracing the class struggle, instead of striving to 'integrate' it with the form of the State; tearing the fabric of national society, instead of holding it intact at all costs. But, fortunately for Labour, there is another way. It is perfectly possible to sustain a fulsome rhetoric of sympathy with class *and* counteract the risks of this stance with even greater emphasis upon the nation—upon the party's patriotism and its

⁶⁵ It is certainly not without significance in this context that the only new tendency in such Labour 're-thinking' as did take place after 1970 was a marked *populism* (Crosland, Gyford, Haseler, and others). This was founded upon alarm that Labour had become too 'liberal' and 'middle class' in outlook—and hence must return to being a 'class party'. On Hindess's analysis, the alarm was well-founded. Since the concept of 'class' being defended was essentially conservative folklore, it was of course logical that 'back to class' should emerge here as the slogan of a reactionary, right-wing populism.

seamless devotion to national sovereignty and the accompanying paraphernalia.

To some extent this problem is solved automatically when Labour is actually in power at the time. Then, the rules of mediation are different. Labourism has become temporarily the custodian of the Crown Jewels. Having achieved union with the divine essence, it can afford to be more matter-of-fact about her—not quite as matter-of-fact as the owners, maybe, but at least less stertorously patriotic. For the time being, the whole weight of the State and national tradition ('law of the land', etc) is naturally imposed upon the class struggle, and all rebellion is at once labelled as 'betrayal' of both party and nation. It is always *unfair* to damage the prospects of the party which is *doing its best* in the interests *of the nation as a whole*, and against *great odds*. From that position, the question of the Common Market looked very different. 'To the British government, whether Conservative or Labour,' one commentator has written, 'the '60s taught a simple and decisive lesson. The only alternative to Europe was isolation, and to a political Establishment made up of the responsible and ambitious of both parties at Westminster this would have meant accepting the end of any significant international role for Britain. In office both parties were unwilling to agree to any such thing'.⁶⁶ In office, the Labour Party moved quite naturally from the anti-Europeanism of 1962–4 to Wilson's own attempt to enter EEC: it was, all things considered, the responsible and sensible thing to do, in the *national* interest.

In 1971, things began to look different. The party had been abruptly and humiliatingly evicted from its 'natural ruling party' dream to its old familiar voyeurism *vis-à-vis* the nation. It had floundered inertly for nearly a year. It was under growing pressure from below to oppose the government in every possible way, while every indication available to it showed that Europe was no longer a popular issue—especially among its own following, where it was clear that nearly all trade unions would be against entry. Given this combination of circumstances, it was only natural for Labour to slide back again to the stance of 1962. The necessities of opposition are different from those of power.

Consider the advantages of the switch. It meant that the movement had a 'cause' again—in effect, the noisy debate about the Common Market *took the place* of the political and ideological disputes which had failed to emerge after 1970. It occupied the vacuum. There was not a single new notion about socialism in the air; but there was still the nation. United with her, the national interest demanded Europe; after the divorce, it was again possible to imagine her raped, betrayed, sold out, dishonoured. Possible, and overwhelmingly tempting—for the long political

⁶⁶ Alan Watson, *Europe at Risk* (1972), p. 139. Nobody who has studied the background of Labour's application can doubt for a moment (in spite of the frenzied disclaimers issued in 1971–2) that, had Wilson won a small majority in 1970 and been in power when the French attitude changed in May 1971, he would have presented British entry as a mighty triumph for himself and his party. One may suspect too that the campaign to win over public opinion to the idea (attacked by Labour in 1971 as a scandalous misuse of public funds etc.) would have been far bigger and more noisy than it was under Heath.

experience of Labourism had showed that no subject was so capable of mobilizing emotion, uniting enemies, and distracting attention from social realities. Threatened by the raw, turbulent reality of the class struggle, Labourism could easily contain and canalize if only a 'national' form for it was found—if, that is, the mounting unrest and the fight against the Industrial Relations Bill could be assimilated to the fight against the Common Market, as vaguely 'the same thing'. Then, Labour could appear again (after the sadness of 1964–70) as the party of both class *and* nation.⁶⁷ Its traditional mode of mystification would revive; new political life would flow into the wilting organism.

Labour's Resurrection

The chance was too good to miss, for a majority of the Labour leadership. And this badly-needed new popularity was so easily obtained!—basically, simply by falling back upon the conventional posture of indignant patriotism and righteous defence of the inheritance. Thus, from the spring of 1971 onwards, the Labour corpse was suddenly up and about again. In June 1970 it had looked ready for the undertaker; by July 1971 it was palpitating with new vigour, its pallor had given way to the unhealthy flush of rediscovered nationalism. For a year the old fellow had seemed incapable even of an intelligent interest in his own fate; then suddenly he was out of bed, bellowing about the threat to his kippers, his beer and his parliament.

There were two disadvantages to the shift. One was, of course, the blatant inconsistency involved in the same leaders following the new line. This had to be covered up somehow, and it was done by inflating the problem of 'the terms of entry' into a gigantic enigma. The terms which would have been 'favourable' (when Labour was in charge of things, etc) had become suddenly 'unfavourable' since the Tory Munichers and sell-outers pursued exactly the same policy.⁶⁸ The second and more grave inconvenience was that Wilson and most of his colleagues knew only too well the embarrassment which such a grotesque reversal might bring them in future. If they returned to office again in 1973 or 1974, it would almost certainly be to a nation com-

⁶⁷ Thus, e.g. those most conscious of Labour's loss of its old class basis and appeal were most insistent that the Common Market *was* a true class issue—Labour's right-wing populists, like Stephen Haseler: 'Essentially it is a class division that is building up on . . . the Common Market . . . In fact of all the single-issue controversies of this century it is quite possible that the Common Market question is the most amenable to a class interpretation.' Hence, to fight entry to Europe was to assert that 'Britain remains predominantly a working-class country resistant to technical change', and so regain political appeal to this 'country'. (*Tribune*, 18 June 1971.)

⁶⁸ Hence that prodigious outbreak of brow-furrowing and mouth-pursing which struck Labourism like a tidal wave in 1971. Politicians who in office had been consistently unable to estimate the balance of payments correctly to within £100m now knew what the price of butter would be in five years time. Sleepless nights passed over the ledgers of Great Britain Ltd showed how (contrary to the hopes of the previous managers) 'the price is too high' nowadays. Patriotic instinct and high-minded care for under-developed brothers coincided, suddenly and suspiciously, with ruthless arithmetic and the cult of 'hard facts'. However, one hard fact was that the former Labour Common Market negotiator George Thompson declared in July 1971 that in his view no better terms could have been obtained by a Labour government, and that (by the standards of 1967) they were entirely acceptable.

mitted to the Common Market. The 'national interest' of the City and the business class would, by that time, make withdrawal unthinkable. So they would have to switch back again somehow, leaving behind them a veritable minefield of easy political attacks and satirical jokes. Prime Minister Wilson had already a mighty reputation for evasiveness and opportunism before 1971. Is this why he hesitated for so long, in the spring and early summer of 1971, before finally coming 'off the fence' about Europe—and so consecrating that reputation for good?

However, political memories are short; or so they must have hoped (basing themselves, doubtless, upon recollections of the party's dizzying changes of direction between 1964 and 1970). And the short-term advantages were overwhelming. It was seen what they were at the July special conference called to debate the whole question.

The most loudly applauded speech at that gathering was made by Peter Shore, the author of *The Case Against Entry*. He stated that the terms of entry were 'appallingly bad' for the people of Great Britain, and rehearsed the (by then familiar) theory of the French Plot. All this entailed we would have to pay out to Europe 'more than we paid out in two world wars'. The government did not dare tell the truth about what was happening: it involved a 'gross deceit' that might lead to a 'great national disaster'. But fortunately the Labour Party still had the chance to stay the tide of 'national defeatism' sweeping us into Europe and prevent this 'act of madness'. Shore's strain of patriot paranoia proved effective. He got a prolonged ovation, and a later speaker was not ashamed to describe his speech as 'Churchillian'. (There is, as a matter of fact, a living orator to whom his style and intonation often approached quite closely—e.g. the insistence on 'disaster' and 'madness'—J. Enoch Powell.)

Before this high point, Clive Jenkins had treated the conference to his own (similar) version of gospel. He had invited it to look severely upon the 'harsh realities' of the question. Great Britain was moving towards union with one small fraction of Europe; *be* wanted to look towards the wide world, the world as a whole. Then followed a portrait of the pitiable European parish-pump: a hot-bed of reaction and instability. France had been near civil war scarcely three years before. Italy was in a state of near-anarchy, and menaced by a right-wing *coup d'état* . . . why should Britain imperil its tradition by joining societies like these?⁶⁹ And anyway, the Common Market was capitalist: the big corporations wanted us to join, and how can what is good for capitalism be good for ordinary folk? 'We can look after ourselves,' concluded Jenkins. The British people would rather manage its own affairs than be managed by 'the Brussels bureaucracy'. Was the Labour Committee for Europe part of the capitalist conspiracy against the folk?, he added: let it publish its

⁶⁹ It might have been objected (but was not) that the French 'civil war' arose out of the greatest workers' strike in European history, and that Italian 'anarchy' was associated with the strong working-class militancy of 1968 to 1970, and that Mr Jenkins found it worth while to hold a joint meeting with French trade union colleagues in the course of 1971, to exchange views and compare experiences. But these harsh realities were irrelevant to the Labour-patriot style.

accounts and show how the poisoned tentacles of Fiat and the Deutsche Bank had reached into the Labour Party itself.

Nearly all the elements noted above were present in Mr Jenkins' brief and much-applauded speech: nationalism, its wide-world halo, the moral and conservative content actually ascribed to Britain's superiority, the idea of conspiracy, the notion that 'capitalism' and 'bureaucracy' are somehow continental and alien to the ways of the British *Volk*, and the suggestion of betrayal from above. The usual inconsequential glee of his performance contrasted strongly with Mr Shore's stately fustian, and, for example, with the simplistic bluntness of Jack Jones of the Transport and General Workers Union.⁷⁰ But such contrasts served only to emphasize the common message.

The point is not that pro-Common Market speakers were lacking. There were plenty of them, but they were speaking against the tide. Nor did the conference arrive at any irrevocable or binding decision on the party, in spite of its strong anti-Europe majority: the party managers had seen to that (and Mr Wilson had not yet 'officially' decided to oppose entry). But it certainly infused a new sense of meaning and importance into Labourism—a sense signally absent since the expiry of 'Wilsonism' five years before. The tide at work was one which united the class struggle, the material anxieties of the working class, the political fight against Toryism, and the defence of 'our nation' into one political impulse: as if preserving national 'independence', evicting Conservatism from office, winning the trade union battle against inflation, and advancing to some kind of British Socialism (unspecified) were all the same thing. Social and class struggle, and certain traditional left-wing hopes were being—so to speak—re-endowed with national form and dignity. Appropriate emotion flowed where, until recently, there had been a desert of apathy and bewilderment. Somehow it all felt right.

The real 'Conspiracy'

On the basis of this feeling, Labourism could become itself once more. By leaning leftwards, it won back the enthusiasm of the left wing in the party and the trade unions: its old soul gave out a few spasms, at least. And by agitating the Union Jack at the same time, it converted this dangerous energy into what seemed (at the time) the safest and most exploitable form. The left-wing nation was back on its two club feet again. The working class was nationalizing itself anew. 'Unity' was re-established, in that curious sense characteristic of Labourism, where the proletarian unity of trade union and class is subtly confused with, and sublimated into, the quite different and mystified 'unity' of the nation. Things were in their proper order again: upside down: nation before class.

⁷⁰ At a T & GWU meeting held just previously, only 4 delegates out of 900 had voted in favour of entering Europe. Mr Jones deserved a prize for the most radically ambiguous anti-European argument of the year: the employees of the Imperial War Graves Commission were members of his union, he said, and they had to be paid a lot extra because of the higher cost of living in France.

This hastily rediscovered unity was to prove, in fact, both transient and treacherous. The flush would soon die away. The pro-Europe group in the party did not decline into the protesting impotence expected of Labour opposition. Before long, it was challenging Wilson's leadership. However, while the second childhood lasted it allowed some old totems to be aired. Ex-minister James Callaghan, for example, treated party and nation to his recipe for an alternative to the Common Market in early July. It was simple. All the British had to do was 'run the economy flat out for five years', sacrificing everything else to national industrial growth (teeth-gritting, belt-pulling-in, etc). We can look after ourselves: independence secured, overseas links retained, our very own socialism safeguarded. What was this but the etiolated spectre of national socialism, the spirit of 1964 risen Dracula-like from the tomb and flapping its useless wings again? The man had spent six years in office as part of a government whose sole historic achievement had been to prove the futility of the recipe. Yet here he was solemnly dusting cobwebs off the thing and dangling it happily in front of the public. It was as if a British general had crawled on to Dover beach after the Dunkirk rout in 1940 and gasped out his new-found strategy for winning the war: another British Expeditionary Force! If Callaghan had been covered in ridicule or greeted with proper rage from the ranks of his own party the incident would not have mattered. The climate was quite different; nobody even laughed. From the left, it simply looked like one ex-minister an inch or two in front of the rest (Wedgwood Benn, Healey, Crosland, etc) in the great race to grasp time's forelock and lead that movement of the future, the campaign against the Common Market. With nationalism back in its proper party place, almost anyone could get away with almost anything.

The point is not just that the movement was mistaken, and represented in reality a mere cul-de-sac where the Labour Party would chew its own tail for a year or so, while Conservatism got more firmly in the saddle. Labour's fervent reaffirmation of class-in-nation was neither more nor less 'wrong' than it had been in the past. It is not that it 'betrayed' the class struggle proceeding at that time so urgently, by distracting the political attention and vital emotions of so many militants on to hopeless nationalist scarecrows. The important thing is not simply that it re-injected a short fever of life into sclerotic conventions and gave an utterly discredited party leadership a new lease of life. All these things were, of course, true. But the main point—in terms of the analysis traced out above—is perhaps that Labourism could not help doing this. It was in its nature to act in this way. That was why it felt so right, and so 'inevitable', to so many people; that was why the entire episode worked politically, to the extent that it did. In the wilderness of 1970 to 1971 the Labour Party was groping around in the dark, looking for a sign; May 1971 brought the sign, in the shape of the Heath-Pompidou *entente* and the 'great debate'; Labourism could be itself once more. It had been (as it remains) paralysed by the social struggle; but it could be revived by the *national* pseudo-struggle. It cannot attack the nation via the class struggle; but it certainly can (and in 1971, did) attack the class struggle via the nation.

Consider the events from another and wider point of view. It was sug-

gested above that something of the phoniness and inertia of the great debate about Europe must have come from its function as an obstacle or diversion, in relation to the living struggles and tensions of British society. Now, in examining the Labour Party's contribution to it, we have been able to see how that function was possible. It was through the Labour Party's reaction to events—through its relapse into nationalism—that most of the diversion in fact occurred. Conservatism itself, in spite of its remarkable degree of political unity and the other characteristics we noted, could not have achieved this. It was too unpopular, too nakedly involved in the social struggle, and too concerned with the basic changes of British capitalism's 'new course'. However, it was not alone, not 'by itself'. Such is the essential meaning of a national-class hegemony. In the latter, political-party Conservatism and its specific ideology are only parts of a larger functional system of conservatism or conservation and within this system different elements may be in conflict and opposition, but also support and assist each other at a deeper level through devotion to the totality and to the particular role they have created for themselves inside it. This sort of collusion is (obviously) nothing to do with 'conspiracies'. Or at least, if a conspiracy is involved, it is the one represented at UNO and usually bearing the label 'United Kingdom'. One cannot help observing that, in 1971, the Labour Party behaved precisely in the way most calculated to stifle emerging social strife and class 'anarchy', to award the Heath government an invaluable respite by co-operating in a kind of national pantomime-battle, and to strengthen the national and social fibres being tested by a difficult moment of history. But of course nothing is ever 'calculated' in that sense. Subjectively, Labourism was simply striving to regain some lost ground and cope with its own profound crisis, in the only way it knew how—the way provided by a long and profoundly national historical experience. Labourism wished to return to being itself again. But precisely—being 'itself' means putting the nation first, standing up for certain values which, although they may carry an intonation of 'socialism' or 'class' yet reveal themselves under pressure as those of the national experience.

A National Logic

We saw earlier what a paradoxical character the 'great debate' assumed. The great 'national' party put class before nation, while the 'class' party put nation before class. But just as there was a logic to the ruling class's new course, so there was one to the Labour Party's response. The paradox was only apparent, and underneath it lay a logic which was—in the widest sense—that of a characteristically national political system.

Nationalism appeared the right or 'normal' posture of a ruling class—above all in Great Britain, perhaps, where a long history of close national unity culminated so recently in the Churchillian triumphs of 1940–5. But the appearance corresponds to reality no longer. Nor was that correspondence ever a necessary one. The political history of European ruling classes in the 19th and 20th centuries shows wide variations in their attitude towards the nation and the ideology of national power. For example, after the fall of Napoleon and the Vienna

settlement most continental ruling classes remained for a generation mistrustful of or even hostile to the new force of nationalism. They still half-identified it with Jacobinism, democracy, and revolution. To conserve their power they preferred to count on the Church and the restored social hierarchies of Metternich's *anciens régimes*. Only after the revolutions of 1848 and the wars of the following decades was it understood what great new possibilities lay concealed in the spirit of nationalism triumphant, and how easily that spirit could be mobilized against democracy and the class struggle. In the age of imperialism then dawning, ruling classes became ultra-nationalist everywhere they could (and if they could not—as in the multi-national empires of eastern Europe—they were doomed to extinction).

Once again, one might say, European ruling classes are 'changing the form' of their domination. They are emerging from the century in which nationalism was all-important to them and, in vastly changed circumstances, seeking a post-nationalist hegemony to conserve their power. There is too little space here to discuss the vast contradictions and uncertainties of this process. Is it akin to Europe's last era of 'supra-nationalism', the Restoration and Holy Alliance of 1815–48? Or does it represent something more like the formation of one of the modern nation-states out of the provinces and petty principalities formerly occupying its territory (e.g. Italy or Germany)? Or is it something wholly new and unprecedented?

However these questions are answered, we have been able to glimpse something of what the change means in the case of one national ruling class—a change of skin all the more striking because of that class's past political successes, and because it is the last major bourgeoisie of western Europe to opt for it. Until well past mid-century it clung determinedly to its national and imperial glories, and the old political traditions associated with them, stubbornly refusing to merge its fortunes as a class with continental capitalism. The lateness of its change, and the relative suddenness with which it has been enacted, expose clearly the political problems and dilemmas involved. The very rapidity and success of the move underline the point: the ruling class could do what it liked with the nation, precisely because it was *not* 'necessary' to it any longer. It had served for a time as the mystic shell of property and the incantation of the State; but whereas property and the State are essential, it is not.

On the other hand, while the owners had decided that nationalism should be 'phased out', the owned were hardly in the same position. They had been the political victims of the nation-state, not its beneficiaries. The political mould being abandoned was one in which the class struggle had been forced into a national form and compressed into strong over-identity with the nation-state and all its accessories. The class struggle, is, of course, as 'essential' to a bourgeois social order as property or the State—and its *long-term* identification with the nation or nationalism is not more necessary. However, its immediate or short-term relation to them is quite different. Precisely because it *was* the great social force being repressed and because this repression proved so successful and lasted for so long, it cannot possibly abandon its existing

form so easily. It has therefore been driven to defend that form, everywhere, against the ruling class. In the world of the *Communist Manifesto*, 1848, and Marx's 1st International, the class struggle threatened to assume an international form, and was resisted and stifled by the national forms of bourgeois power. Now, after the era of European national imperialism, the class struggle has everywhere been fixed in these national limits—in forms where it has acquired great inertia and the natural conservatism of hard-won reforms. Bourgeois power, therefore, can afford to leave it there as it seeks new international or multi-national forms. It does so very cautiously, amid great confusion and contradiction. But it does so in response to profound economic and political imperatives laid down by the evolution of the whole world order, and there can be no doubt that the tendency is crucial, and irreversible. In this movement outwards to new political and State horizons, the principal asset of the western European bourgeoisies is a simple one: the absence of the left. They have a great margin of manoeuvre at their disposal, simply because the class struggle in Europe long ago lost any concrete international dimension. They are able to pose, for a time, questions to which the socialist and communist left simply have no answer, as long as they remain penned (both politically and culturally) inside the old frontiers: no answer, that is, except futile opposition, evasion of the issue, or a harmless rhetoric of abstract internationalism.

This is exactly what the ruling class of Great Britain was able to do in 1971. This is why its so-called 'great debate' about Europe was an asinine and humiliating *dialogue des sourds*, which in the end served its purposes very well. No one should be deceived, in this respect, by the many peculiarities of the British political system and its situation in 1971. If one looks rather to the underlying structure of the political dilemma which that year brought, then Great Britain appears as a typical European nation—and as one where the particular course of events only helped to clarify and underline a quite general problem. Many of the ideas and reactions we have looked at were 'particular' in the sense of national; but the reality they were brought to bear upon was not. The essential *décalage* between the two sides in the great debate—between ruling-class strategy and the left's national response—was produced by a general trend of historical development, and as a mainstream of European history this must be considered comparable to that which prevailed between 1848 and Europe's imperialist *fin-de-siècle*. Only then the development was away from a European order towards nationalism *à l'outrance*, while now it works in the opposite direction, away from national power and ideology and towards the naissant European order represented by the Common Market.

In the pursuit of its new course the ruling class achieved a badly needed coherence of purpose and political sentiment and provoked a serious schism within the opposition, so that ruling-class unity was soon contrasted by left-wing feuds and bitterness. The point is not that 'unity' (and still less the sort of unity Labourism stands for historically) is always desirable and 'disunity' is always evil. However, this particular split was forced upon Labourism quite unwittingly and unwillingly, and in a fashion which is bound to be maximally disadvantageous to

the *left* (both inside the Labour Party and outside it). It resulted, in fact, in the formation of a new leadership for the social-democratic right wing—around Jenkins and Thompson—and in a general strengthening of that faction's fibre and spirit⁷¹. Thus, Labour's nationalist opposition simply accelerated the *prise de conscience* of a future 'Europeanist' élite—so that the only group to inherit anything of political value from the episode is (as one would expect) that already standing on European terrain.

Thus, Labour's sad and self-destructive role in the great debate corresponded to an underlying historical logic, as much as did that of ruling-class Conservatism. Only, it was a logic of the past—of the nation and the national interest as traditionally conceived, of the self-contained political system within which Labourism had grown up and evolved all its most characteristic reflexes. The ruling class had at last moved away from these traditions a little: that is, towards a world where national 'sovereignty' will be openly relegated to the shelf of archaisms, and the British Constitution and Westminster Parliament no longer be the First Wonder of the Universe. But the engine of Labourism continued to revolve in the void, impelled by yesterday's laws, betraying the class struggle according to the well-tried principles of nationalist polity. Such was its too well-trained nature.

But what of the extra-Labour left—the British revolutionary movements and the socialist intelligentsia? The fact is that these forces moved in harmony with the Labour Party on this issue, and supported its stand. In this way a left-wing political bloc was constituted in the nation, from which only the decidedly 'right-wing' social democrats of Labour's pro-Market group were excluded. Nearly all the national marxists were part of that bloc, in spite of their supposedly harder and more intellectually articulate traditions of class internationalism. Clearly most of the factors we have considered cannot apply in the same way to the intellectuals and least of all to marxist intellectuals committed to a theory one of whose claims is a grander, more complex, vision of history—an historical understanding capable of creating and supporting a certain distance from (and so a certain judgement of) the events and passions of the political moment. So what logic moved them in 1971 to add their near-unanimous voice to the wrong side of the 'great debate'?

⁷¹ In general, the Common Market schism is only partly between 'left' and 'right' in the classical Labourist sense. Far too many right-wing and centrist leaders joined the anti-Market movement for this to be an adequate explanation. It corresponds more closely to a split between old 'party men' (with a strong phalanx of opportunists and right-wing populists around them) and 'new men' of bourgeois origin less dependent on the party machine and the Old Labourist spirit. This corresponds exactly to the trends analysed by Hindess, above. The 'old faithfuls' (both right and left) of Labour national-socialism and those who thought they still needed the old cow for career motives were on one side—except for a few pensioners like Lord George-Brown—while the *nouvelle vague* of middle-class professionals (much closer in both appearance and spirit to continental social-democracy) stood on the other.

VII The Intellectuals: *Gemeinschaft* and the Iron Heel

'An integration of Europe, whatever its precise form . . . (has) reason on its side; but the natural human egotisms of interest and emotion; of locality, class and occupation; of regional loyalties and national pride, will rally to resist it.'

R. H. Tawney, *The Western Political Tradition* (1949)

'Constructeurs de l'Europe, ne vous y trompez pas: tous les sectaires du pittoresque sont contre vous.'

Julien Benda, *Discours à la nation européenne* (1931)

1971 was also a year in which there prevailed a distinct common mood within the left-wing intelligentsia. At no time after May could one fail to be aware of the existence of such a climate. It was definitely *de rigueur* to be anti-Market. The fact tended to be taken for granted. As we shall see even the revolutionary left participated in this consensus, apparently sharing some common instinct with the Labour left and the CPGB. The European question became, quite naturally, one of the critical ways (as far as the events of the moment were concerned, *the* critical way) of defining the sense of 'left' in Britain. Innumerable articles and editorial statements helped this self-definition on its way. But it is doubtful to what extent the extra-Labour left's basic position was formed by these. Rather, they seemed to emanate from and reflect it in various ways, helping to define farther a mind already made up.

There are difficulties in trying to define a climate. However, the 'typical' position of the unattached, independent left on the topic was perhaps something like this: 'Of course, one doesn't want to be nationalistic, but . . .' what *is* the point of encouraging the formation of still another Super-State? Wouldn't such a New Leviathan be even farther away from people and community than what we have already? Bigness is bad, as it were. Whether the problem was viewed in an optic of 'class' or not seemed to make little difference: the new super-state would be an enemy equally of working-class organization and of local or 'community' ('grass-roots') action. It may one day be armed with nuclear weapons, and so 'a threat to peace'. And of course it would be nakedly 'capitalist' in outlook: why support a huge monopoly-capitalist cartel created in the interests of big business and banks? Possibly the most general consensus view was simply that Europe—whether construed as State, capitalism, 'bureaucracy', 'technocracy', or power and world influence—stood for the wrong general political direction. It meant a movement towards the big and abstract, the 'impersonal', whereas politics ought to be moving towards the concrete and local: person, community or class. Was it not this sense, more than any other factor, which joined in common opposition the editorialists of the *New Statesman*, unattached socialists, traditional marxists, anarchists, communitarians, pacifists, undergrounders, and other elements of the intellectual left?

What was the source, the true *raison d'être* of this common view?

One may be reasonably certain that it did not come directly from well-known intellectual statements of 'the case against', like Professor Kaldor's.⁷²

Reliable prophecies of doom and professorial statements on the madness to come were in demand in 1971. On the left, the thirst for gloom was such as to transform academic rambling into an inspired vision of national apocalypse. What was the reason for this mildly lunatic character of the anti-Market movement?

The Iron Heel

We noticed above that one of the most common—and strangest—ideas found in the Labour-left anti-Market movement was that of Europe's being somehow more *capitalist* in nature than Great Britain and the British State. The Common Market nations are either more capitalist than Britain, or they are capitalist in a more sinister sense; while the Community's Brussels institutions represent the bureaucratic heart of darkness. It would hardly be correct to call this a theory: a 'theory' of the Common Market, in a marxist (or any other) sense would be worked out through some dialectical and polemical process of study, critique, assertion, and counter-assertion, and so on. There is—to the best of the author's knowledge—only one theory of the

⁷² 1971 saw no serious tract comparable to that written by Michael Barratt Brown and John Hughes in 1961, *Britain's Crisis and the Common Market*. Nor is this surprising. For the nub of their eloquent argument was that socialists should stay out of Europe to give British 'socialist planning' another chance: it hinged upon the possibility of a new left-inclined Labour government trying to implement a national-socialist economic programme. And of course, in 1964, one did. Seven years later, faith of this order was confined to a few straitjackets and the editorial *équipe* of Crossman's *New Statesman*. It was possible to parrot some of the slogans and ideas of *Britain's Crisis* in 1971—but not to restore the intellectual conviction and moral vigour which had animated them. Instead, the scene was dominated largely by one article of Professor Kaldor's, 'The Truth About the Dynamic Effects'. This appeared in the *New Statesman* (12 March), and later copies were distributed by the Common Market Safeguards Campaign along with a number of its *Bulletin* containing the famous warnings about 'The Threat to British Food and Drink' ('The end of British beer as we know it', 'British sausages would have to change', etc) and a Gothic-script 'Petition to the Queen's most Excellent Majesty' urging her to intervene personally in the situation. The article concluded its sombre publishing history within the covers of *Destiny or Delusion* (July 1971), an essay-collection which, in retrospect, looms like some extinct volcano over the instant-dross publishing landscape of the Great Debate. But then, some low comedy attached to the Professor's study from the outset. It had been composed, in fact, as a comment on the White Paper of February 1970—part of the *Labour* government's preparations for another entry attempt. In a more rational world—one may feel—to have been an architect of the Wilsonian economic programme would have been enough to spell out a man's cultural oblivion. Yet the sleep of reason was such that Kaldor's article became what one journalist called 'the Anti-Common Market White Paper'. I have had to omit a longer analysis of it here for reasons of space; but the decision was eased by the belief that, in any case, very few people must actually have read the essay (still less wrestled through its Appendices). Had they done so, they would surely have noticed that it was not a political argument against joining the Common Market at all; that it presented no alternative, economic or political, to doing so; that even its narrowly economic arguments ('We shall be the Northern Ireland of Europe', etc) were soggy with ambiguities; and that there was not a syllable of socialist thought in it.

Common Market in this sense.⁷³ What one has to do with is rather an 'ideal type', elaborated with little dialectical critique. According to it the Common Market is in essence a capitalist conspiracy whose form inclines to bureaucracy and 'technocracy': the beginning of the capitalist dictatorship described in Jack London's *The Iron Heel*, as it were—the direct reign of pure capital, divested of its old mediating illusions like parliament, religion, the nation, and so forth. In the left-wing side of the great debate, this idea was (at least implicitly) counterposed to another: the ideal type of what must be defended against the Iron Heel—that is, (approximately) what we have already, the more comfortable and indirect reign of capital through old friends like Parliament, Oxford and Cambridge, the Labour Party, the Royal National Horse Show, Professors Kaldor and Balogh, *The Times*, and many others.

Nowhere is this dichotomy of ideal types spelt out more plainly than in the pamphlet *The Common Market: Why Britain Should Not Join*, by the Secretary-General of the Communist Party of Great Britain, John Gollan. For Gollan, Community Europe is 'the monopolists' dream and the monopolists' creation' (p. 14). It is ruled by grim abstractions very different from the homely visages we hold dear: 'The supranational apparatus and directing bodies of the Common Market are in effect a gigantic bureaucracy over and above the national governments with the elected Parliaments exercising no control whatsoever . . .' (p. 6).⁷⁴ An instrument of the trusts, the Common Market is 'anti-planning, anti-socialist, anti-working class' (p. 1). There is no use talking about possible evolution of the Strasbourg parliament—of the sort Amendola looks forward to, in *I comunisti e l'Europa*—because, in such a federal assembly, the British population would be merely represented in the same proportion as the Italians, the Dutch, etc. 'as one sixth of the population of 300 millions involved'. Simply not good enough. 'We would be virtually sunk without trace', Gollan concludes dolefully. In contrast to this fate of hapless anonymity in the continental horde, we have, at the moment, our own parliament. Under the heading 'Parliament No Longer Supreme', Mr Gollan does not hesitate to quote the last of the Old Whigs, that crowning authority on the British Constitution, Sir Ivor Jennings: 'The cornerstone of Britain's political constitution is the sovereignty of Parliament. Sir Ivor Jennings has said, "the supremacy of Parliament is the constitution" . . . The pro-marketeters are prepared to sacrifice British sovereignty to enter the Market . . . For them profit comes before country. This is something, which when fully grasped, the British people, we are sure, will never tolerate' (p. 20). Without our Constitution—the most successful device of social conservatism known to European history—it stands to reason that our Socialism is doomed: 'British control of the economic life of Britain . . . would virtually cease to exist. In other words the type of economic counter programme

⁷³ Perhaps the most useful introduction to this is Ernst B. Haas's *The Uniting of Europe*; it is essential to read the Preface to the second edition (1968) first of all. The book contains a bibliography of other contributions to this eminently bourgeois-academic theory, 'functional integrationism'.

⁷⁴ In 1971, the employees of the Common Market Commission were approximately one fifteenth of the number working in one British Ministry, the Department of Health and Social Security.

now demanded by the left would be impossible once we were in the Common Market'.⁷⁵

There is little space here to discuss Gollan's picture of doom. But there is little that could be said anyway. What he writes about the Common Market is either simply wrong (and based upon lack of elementary study of its history) or else platitudinous. For example, the conception of the relationship of Common Market institutions to the economic basis of European capitalism is wrong, in the sense of preposterously mechanical and misleading; the idea that a Dr. Mabuse-like clique directs operations on behalf of the 'super trusts' in Brussels is farcical. On the other hand, it is not mistaken but truistic to assert that the Common Market is capitalist in nature. How could a union of six or ten capitalist national states be anything else? That the European Community is in some sense an emanation of European bourgeois society, and at once product and servant of the European capitalist system, really goes without saying. So does the fact that it is (like the Great-British State and Constitution) 'anti-planning, anti-socialist, anti-working class'.

But then, what seems to be the rational question for any socialist less than permanently thunderstruck by the revolutionary possibilities of the British parliamentary system is: which of these two sets of capitalist conditions, the national or the Common Market, offers the best future environment for revolutionary thought and activity? One cannot say that Gollan fails to answer the question. It never crosses the mental horizons of his pamphlet even to ask it seriously. He contents himself with stating that 'The advance to socialism . . . would be very much more difficult in the Common Market of the trusts' (p. 2). Since the advance to socialism—as envisaged by his party's own philosophy—has proved to be not difficult but impossible in the Great Britain of the banks, here is black comedy indeed. He was speaking—one should not forget—after the disorderly retreat from any semblance of socialism in 1964–70, and after the electoral annihilation of his party in June 1970. Yet his contention is that, bad as things may sometimes look, there is a sort of hope and socialist potential built-in to the British national arena. Where?

How does this kind of faith differ from the general left-wing or popular nationalism mentioned previously—with its unshakeable (because irrational) conviction of the quasi-magic potential of 'our' nation and our own folk-ways? The Communist Party of Great Britain conducted a campaign of shameless and outrageous chauvinism as its contribution to the grand debate, through pamphlets, the

⁷⁵ The reference is of course to the Communist Party's manifesto *The British Road to Socialism*, which has been the guideline of party activity for nearly twenty years. See Bill Warren's 'The Programme of the CPGB—a Critique' in NLR NO 63 (Sept-Oct 1970). The author observes that two of the three cornerstones of the document's strategy tie it firmly to the main body of labour's evolutionist 'national-socialism': 'The conception of Labour-Communist unity, with the left having won power in the Labour Party, as the political-institutional basis . . . and the conception of a *parliamentary transition* to socialism as the key to the seizure of state power by the working class' (p. 28). This is why Sir Ivor Jennings has his rightful place in the world-view of British Communism.

Morning Star, and numerous meetings. Like Labourism, it could not resist the momentary mass unpopularity of the Common Market; but unlike Labourism it had no pro-Market faction, and could commit any excess it pleased. The historic function of the main marxist group in Great Britain was, obviously to lead the mass movement.⁷⁶ Scripture sanctioned the aim, as did the more practical need to make up ground lost in the 1970 shipwreck and conceal the gangrene of *The British Road to Socialism*.

In this sense, the situation of the Communist Party was basically not unlike that of the Labour Party. In the political cactus land, the lost kingdom of 1971, these fossil relics of British Socialism could only lean unwillingly together—as so often in the past—groping jointly for a little life amid the dregs of nationalism. Both were engaged on surviving the end of the geological era which had nourished them. And for both, the law of survival entailed the absolute necessity of *not* distinguishing the right from the wrong in the ‘mass movement’ then in course. That movement comprised (and confused together in the way one would expect) an economic class struggle against the offensive of British capital, against inflation, unemployment, and the industrial relations act; and a deep-rooted nationalistic resentment, only recently stirred up and envenomed during the years of Powell’s ascendancy. What counted for the national and institutional left was to sanctify that confusion at all costs; to pretend that the class struggle rightly took the form of defending the nation against Conservative betrayal of it; and so to regain some control over, and suck a little more life out of, the mass movement in course. In the event, ‘national’ marxism proved to have almost as much interest in the lie as national social-democracy.

Yet few left intellectuals are really attracted by Gollan’s creaking Stalinism, any more than they are by Professor Kaldor’s doubtful wrestle with the National Account-Book. These nonetheless furnished useful alibis (of marxism and economic science respectively) for a collective project already in existence. What that was may be gathered—paradoxically—from a curious *lacuna* in the positions of Gollan, Kaldor, and most other anti-Europeanist tracts.

While these harped constantly on the theme of parliament and sacred

⁷⁶ The justificatory texts are those which have always ‘supported’ the GPGB’s strategy of alliance with Labourism: e.g. ‘The Communists . . . are, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others’. They ‘have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole’ and ‘fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class’, etc. (*Communist Manifesto*, sects. II and IV). If the immediate general interest happens to be *national sovereignty*, then one had better be advanced and resolute about it. What of that awkward qualification which Marx made the *first* distinguishing mark of the Communist, in relation to the other ‘working-class parties’, namely: ‘In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality’? Easy! The common interest of the entire proletariat is peace—or what Gollan calls *All-European Co-operation*, east-west trade, the All-European Security Conference, and so on. This is (exactly as in *I communisti e l’Europa*) Soviet foreign policy, still seen after all these years as a force and interest ‘independent of all nationality’.

political traditions, they said little about *culture*. The British 'way of life' was mentioned a good deal. But (Westminster apart) it tended to be concretized as butter and kippers rather than as Renan's 'âme spirituelle'. To anyone acquainted with weaker or more precarious cultures, this absence could not fail to appear odd. Compare (e.g.) the British position to that of the Irish left as represented by Anthony Coughlan's *The Common Market: Why Ireland Should not Join* (1970, re-edited 1971). Coughlan's section on the European menace to Ireland's distinctive cultural inheritance—to its 'will to survive as a cultural entity'—found little echo on the British left.⁷⁷

It would probably be wrong to ascribe such decent reticence to mere philistinism. It was due less to doubts about the cultural problematic than to the British intelligentsia's superb lack of doubt on the subject. Criticizing the notion that inside Europe national-cultural 'identity' will be a valid substitute for independence, Mr Coughlan snaps—'A nation which is independent does not have to worry about its identity. Its identity is clear for all to see because its institutions, policies and cultural values are its own and not those of other nations . . .' But in Great Britain—or in *England* at least—intellectuals rarely fall into this sort of touchy defensiveness. They take for granted an extremely strong national-cultural 'identity'. It is easy for them to merge this personality quite naturally with the country's 'way of life' and its traditional forms of State and hegemony: the magic continuum extends effortlessly from the Queen and Sir Ivor Jennings down to the vexed problem of the sausage. They can scarcely imagine the uncertainty of intellectuals who, because they stand upon an ambiguous or disintegrating national basis, are forced to compensate for their alienation. Such a well-founded nationalism of the spirit is normally so much stronger than the various regional or social-class dialects located within it, that it has little need of self-consciousness. It is not a substitute for an insecure or half-dead national life-style. It is rarely the effort to escape from, or wage a running battle against, the prevalent 'way of life'.

On the whole, it belongs within the national house, and feels instinctively that there is something unnecessary—something 'in bad taste', even a little dangerous—in fussing self-consciously over threats to the family's cultural heirlooms.⁷⁸ The 'left' of the intellectual

⁷⁷ All the arts, for Coughlan, are 'distinctively national' in form, content and inspiration, and there is no 'European culture' apart from them. The Iron Heel's aim is to stamp out these well-guarded parterres of national flora. Culture and socialism will die together. 'With national cultures wilting, the tawdry products of the international entertainments industry would have a free field', broods the author, 'to the rootless technocrats and business interests who are the chief exponents of European integration, these things are outdated and dangerous; but they are the roots of Europe's culture. Those who value culture will seek to nourish and foster those roots' (p. 30). For both culture and socialism therefore, the vital slogan of today is: Leave our *roots* alone!

⁷⁸ Two valuable recent studies have sought to analyse the weaknesses of this conservative national culture, Perry Anderson's 'Components of the National Culture', NLR No. 50 (July–Aug 1968), and T. Eagleton's *Exiles and Emigrés* (1970). Both show how it lacks a self-critical 'centre' and has been sustained to an astonishing degree by cultural immigrants. Of course these 'weaknesses' are the inverse of its

spectrum, as 1971 showed, tends to treasure this solid, organic identity even more than outright conservatives. As soon as it is threatened they drop the usual family feuds and retreat instinctively inside it, without wasting time on continental commiserations over *Kulturgeschichte*. They require no proof, or even argument, that it all hangs together as one, that there truly is a 'community' stretching from the House of Lords to the British breakfast, and taking in Dickens and D. H. Lawrence on the way. Their underlying dependence comes to the fore. With the whole historic fabric threatened, was this a time to be burning holes in the carpet or scribbling on the walls?

This very comprehensive and solid cultural nationalism may be popular and (in England's historical circumstances) even natural to the left. It is not, however, a 'left-wing' phenomenon in the sense of having any special or logical rapport with socialism. To appreciate this, one need only look at the other end of the spectrum, the national-cultural right. On 2 November 1971, some days after the vote on Common Market entry, a cry of despair found its way into the correspondence page of *The Times*. It was from no other than Professor F. R. Leavis himself, the father of the Cambridge School, the inspirer of a great deal of the modern nation's cultural *Weltanschauung*. The pretext of the Professor's letter was the fashionable issue of pollution, which *The Times* (in common with everyone else) had chosen to be responsibly alarmed about at the time. Why worry about the poisonous effluvia of the modern economy, asked Leavis, when so few are willing to face the real problem? The trouble with civilization is not factory waste, but factories; not the aberrations and faults of the modern economy, but economic growth itself. 'When we others . . . point out that, pollution apart, to make economic growth an end in itself is self-defeating and leads to disaster', he moaned (referring of course to fellow-members of the Human-World commune), 'we know that we shall not get even from you the recognition that a serious consideration has been raised'. Where does the Common Market fit into this darkening perspective? 'In a civilization in which economic growth is universally treated as an end in itself . . . any national identity worth preserving is rapidly disappearing—a process that "entering Europe" will beyond question accelerate. No one suggests that Europe is going to generate in compensation any kind of "identity" that the United States hasn't . . .' The Common Market, like the USA, stands for the triumph of the Professor's old enemy, Utilitarianism. It represents the death of 'culture'. Anonymous, impersonal, materialistic, Common Market Europe is appreciably closer to the direct rule of pure capital, divorced from all human considerations. It will complete the prostitution of

strength. The absence of critical centre and distanced consciousness reflects the absence of an 'intelligentsia' in the classical sense; but this traditional absentee is only the negative-image of the intellectual class's integration, of its powerful *presence* within the body of conservative society. It has tended to be 'fully employed' by this body in a number of organic functions. Thus, even when intellectually ridiculous or fifty years behind the times (choking over sociology in the 1960s, e.g.), it remains strong in the political-national sense relevant here. It was of course this strength of a rooted and hegemonic conservative tradition which attracted intellectual *déracinés* in the first place and drew them into its service (on this subject Lady Namier's recent *Life* of Sir Lewis Namier provides valuable insight).

leisure by phoney mass-produced ‘culture’, and destroy ‘that widespread creativity which maintains a living culture and with it the significance necessary to human life’. There may be some chance that society will cure pollution, notes the Professor in conclusion; there is very little that it will reform its own degenerate nature: ‘We others know that *our* cause, though not less vital, is more desperate . . .’

Thus, here too we find national identity naturally linked to ‘creativity’, ‘living culture’, ‘human’ standards, ‘significance’, and anti-material or anti-economic values. For Coughlan and other left-nationalists the customs-post still holds out a little hope; Dr Leavis is less optimistic—his cultural studies have convinced him the sickness is here already, the world of human beings already an embattled remnant. But these are no more than nuances of disaccord. There is a basic consensus which perceives nation and culture as—so to speak—natural partners opposed to the disastrous spread of capitalist internationalism (or at least, of an economic and so faceless or ‘inhuman’ cosmopolitan order). On the one side, ‘roots’ and an organic and meaningful culture; on the other, what J. B. Priestley has called ‘these big smoothed-out blocks of standardised living’, more motorways but less significance, a mere administration of things. At one point Coughlan remarks that opposition to the Common Market *ought* to embrace both left and right, both socialists and conservatives (p. 8, op. cit.). One sees what he means.

Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft

‘It seems to be the fashion amongst progressives and radicals, not to speak of Labour Party opportunists, to oppose Britain’s entry to the Common Market’, wrote a diarist in the anarchist paper *Freedom* in July 1971.⁷⁹ Some help may be found in defining this fashion from one of the classics of sociological thought, Ferdinand Tönnies’ *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*. This study first appeared in 1887; but its central idea (one recent English commentator has noted) remains a seminal one, ‘*still* as important, both theoretically, and as an indicator of practical social problems, as it ever was’.⁸⁰

Tönnies was concerned to define and contrast two ‘ideal types’ of human society. Society typified by *Gemeinschaft* or community is natural human society, founded upon the ties of family, kinship, shared labour and territory. It is based on ‘naturally rooted’ relationships, which issue in instinctively accepted common customs and traditions, and are voiced in a natural language or ‘mother-tongue’. Natural community is in this sense the village, the society of a stable

⁷⁹ Vol 32, no 22, 17 July. The writer, Bill Dwyer, was sounding a rare note of warning against the fashion—*Freedom* itself had printed a leading piece in the same issue denouncing the Common Market as ‘just another dirty trick played upon the workers by those in “authority”’ and joined Labour’s opportunists in demanding a ‘popular referendum’ on the question.

⁸⁰ R. Fletcher, *The Making of Sociology* (1971) vol. 2, p. 28. An English translation of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* appeared in 1957, as *Community and Association* (trans. C. Loomis).

neighbourhood—at most, that of a small town. It is rural rather than urban. It is (like the family) not necessarily democratic, and relies on common experience and shared values to balance its inequalities. It rests upon ‘natural will’ (*Wesenwille*) expressive of real human nature, and laws ‘in which human beings are related to each other as natural members of a whole’. *Gemeinschaft* stands (so to speak) for the concrete and personal, the ‘fully human’, as against the abstract and impersonal; for habit and instinct, as against artifice and calculation; for the close, the familiar, the inherited, as against the remote, the intrusive novelty, the alien way of life; for the tribe, as against the metropolis.

The other great category, *Gesellschaft*, represents the antithesis of intimate natural community. It is unnatural, artificial ‘society’, founded upon commerce, egotism, and the law of contract. Tönnies was much influenced by Hobbes, and his depiction of *Gesellschaft* is like Hobbes’ state of the ‘war of each against all’: it is the society of restless individuals who have torn themselves out of the organic mould—‘severed the umbilical cord uniting them with their fellow man’, in Marx’s phrase—and are governed by ambition and the profit-motive rather than by custom and piety.⁸¹ Society in this sense means the ‘impersonality’ of great cities and enterprises, the abstract equality of law, the ‘indifference’ of the State and bureaucracy. It is founded not upon the ‘natural will’ of human beings, but on ‘rational will’ (*Willkür*), deliberate choice and calculation, the instrumentality of means and ends. *Gesellschaft* is associated with the development of science, of modern technology, and of the mass media—whereas *Gemeinschaft* or community was associated with art, the natural flowering of the imagination, and a ‘culture’ rooted in real experience. Summing up the contrast of these ideal types Fletcher writes: ‘Whereas “communities” were well-defined, unique, specific; and contained the inherent logic of wanting to *conserve* their own loved traditions, to *defend* their own established boundaries (in every sense: geographical, cultural, etc.); these mercantile, contractual relationships of *Gesellschaft* which had to follow interest in terms of abstract calculations of quantities, prices, etc., contained an inherent logic of “universality”. Their dimensions were global and all-embracing. The “extent of the market” knew no bounds other than those of the competitive possibilities of factors of production and consumer’s demand. The “global” extent of *Gesellschaft* was thus, quite strictly, the making of the entire world into a “market” of calculated associations; a market which transcended and cut across all *Gemeinschaft* unities within it . . .’⁸²

Tönnies was careful to point out that his categories were ideal abstractions, and not simple historical portraits: to some extent, all the societies we know anything of are *both* *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. Yet no one who reads his work carefully could be deceived. They are not mere ahistorical yardsticks for measuring real societies; it is quite clear that on the whole *Gemeinschaft* represented the more ‘natural’ society of the past and *Gesellschaft* the modern, capitalist

⁸¹ *Capital* Ch. 1, Section 4.

⁸² Fletcher, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

society which was everywhere destroying the past. Tönnies believed that the latter category was coming to predominate over the former, even to destroy it (as in the German industrial revolution which constituted the immediate background of his thought). *Gesellschaft* for him has a content quite similar to Hegel's category of 'civil society', and to Marx's 'bourgeois society'.⁸³ The future lay with it, in a transformation of the whole world, at once rational and deadly, where abstract and material 'progress' was accompanied by human and cultural loss or impoverishment. If ever the more humanly satisfying social order of *Gemeinschaft* is to arise again, it can only (and doubtfully) be created as socialism, somewhere on the far side of this vast transformation. In this sense, the romantic pessimism of the conception is as unmistakable as its 'historical' character. The ultimate aim of the bourgeois society and State, wrote Tönnies, is 'to abolish the multiplicity of states and substitute for it a single world republic, coextensive with the world market, which would be ruled by thinkers, scholars, and writers and could dispense with means of coercion other than those of a psychological nature . . . The existence of natural states (communities) is but a temporary limitation of boundaryless *Gesellschaft*'.⁸⁴ One has only to substitute 'bureaucrats' or 'technocrats' for 'thinkers, scholars and writers', to obtain a recognizable picture of Gollan's Iron Heel, Leavis's Utilitarianism, Coughlan's international tawdriness, or Priestley's 'smoothed-out blocks'. The fate of culture in the world market-cum-republic is a grim one. 'The entire culture', wrote Tönnies, 'has been transformed into a civilization of state and *Gesellschaft*, and this transformation means the doom of culture itself if none of its scattered seeds remain alive and again bring forth the essence and idea of *Gemeinschaft*, thus secretly fostering a new culture amidst the decaying one . . .'⁸⁵

Commenting upon Tönnies and his place in German history, Ralf Dahrendorf has underlined the reactionary sense of this 'untranslatable dichotomy' and its 'cultural pessimism'. The romanticism of *Gemeinschaft* at once idealizes and suspends history, and implicitly condemns modernity *en bloc* (even science and technology, those dubious by-products of bourgeois rationality). 'He who tries to stop social change will soon be overwhelmed by it . . . the social-psychological law according to which pressure from without produces solidarity within was abused for the creation of an unreal world . . . Possibly the success of the German ideology of social classlessness and national community consisted less in the power of conviction it carried than in its advocates' ability to distract people's interest from the immediate, real, and acutely threatening and turn it to the more distant and obscure. Thus society and its classes disappeared behind the nation and the

⁸³ See Hegel, *Philosophy of Right* (Knox trans), p. 189, 354; Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (trans & ed. O'Malley, 1970), Intro, p. xlvi, and (e.g.) pp. 76–80. More generally, Tönnies' distinction is only one of many such banal dichotomies to be found in sociology from Comte to Talcott Parsons.

⁸⁴ *Community and Association*, pp. 256–7.

⁸⁵ *Community and Association*, p. 270.

fictitious community of its people'.⁸⁶ The successes of the German ideology of national community are indeed well known. Yet Dahren-dorf is surely wrong in attributing these ideas to 'the folklore of German self-consciousness' alone. They belong (albeit in different forms) to the English ideology as well as to the German one.⁸⁷ As a matter of fact, they seem to be endemic to romanticism as a general mode of sensibility and thought. Since romanticism—by its inclination towards the concrete and particular—became naturally allied to the development of 19th century nationalism, and so divided into a number of distinct cultures, its main themes have been enormously diversified and disguised. Nevertheless, something like the twin categories of Tönnies certainly came into the world with the romanticism of the later 18th century, and has haunted European culture ever since.

The politically crucial point is the identification of romantic *Gemeinschaft* with the nation. This, surely, is the shared terrain of the left and right wing oppositions to Europe. The 1971 Anti-Common Market campaign furnished a perfect example of surviving ability to 'distract people's interest from the immediate, real, and acutely threatening' and to make 'society and its classes disappear behind the nation and the fictitious community of its people'. And the crux of the operation lay in a still strong residual tendency to identify nation and natural community. That is, even though most of the time intellectuals on the left perceive their desired *Gemeinschaft* as e.g.—the working class, the labour movement, the marxist *groupuscule*, the 'underground', the rural commune or the ecology movement, it was still both feasible and necessary to fall back upon the nation in an emergency. Most of the time the nation appears as *Gesellschaft*, the enemy of their ideal (as the capitalist State, the 'rationalizer', bureaucracy, the fuzz, etc). Then abruptly, when threatened, when its sovereignty is about to be ceded and a new and wider perspective opens up, it is imagined as *Gemeinschaft* again. The known evil, eclipsed in fantasy by a greater one, becomes almost a friend. One had better defend the old fellow after all. Twenty years are passed in fulminating indignation against the heartless British State, its money-grubbing rulers, the nauseous materialism

⁸⁶ *Society and Democracy in Germany* (1967) pp. 127–31. A different interpretation, seeking to refurbish the more abstract and obscurantist aspects of Tönnies from the point of view of American academic sociology, will be found in the introduction to his essays *On Sociology: Pure, Applied and Empirical* ed. W. Cahnman and R. Heberle (1971).

⁸⁷ For example, that most influential of modern left-wing cultural essays, Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society* (1958), is in certain respects simply a socialist revision and representation of Tönnies' theses. Its very title is almost a translation of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (in some ways a better one than Loomis's 'Community and Association'). It surveys the 'scattered seeds' of English *Gemeinschaft* culture and seeks to show how a 'new culture' has in fact been both secretly and openly fostered against the tide of *Gesellschaft*. Compared to Tönnies, it is both class-conscious and sturdily optimistic in outlook; yet Williams' socialist optimism has constantly to wrestle against the inherent 'cultural pessimism' of the romantic categories which he employs (a struggle embodied in the very style of his book and its successor, *The Long Revolution*). Thus, nearly three-quarters of a century after Tönnies, in another part of Europe, national left-wing romantics like Williams and Edward Thompson still struggle to escape from their own version of this conservative 'folklore of self-consciousness'.

of the age, etc.; then, suddenly, one is defending them all passionately against the 'sell-out'. Somehow or other, when one gets right down to it, the Great-British nation-state seems at least *more* propitious to whichever *Gemeinschaft* one holds dear than a European Iron Heel would be.

In the course of this dazing backward plunge, one could hardly help noticing with amazement how—e.g.—the central organs of British 'culture' and 'way of life' were abruptly transfigured. During the 1960s there had appeared a growing flood of books and articles devoted to criticism of the British Parliament and the British Constitution. Ideas and proposals for reforming them were so numerous and varied that it is difficult to list them satisfactorily. From the point of view of even the mildest liberalism they had begun to seem undemocratic, full of faults, out of tune with the times. Under the Wilson government, as the deathly pallor which had begun to creep over them assumed a greenish tinge, the need for 'revitalizing' democracy and restoring popular 'confidence in Parliament' became a commonplace. Yet in the anti-European crusade, as by a miracle, they rose in glory from the dead. In 1970 the doctors shook their heads: as with the Labour Party, the morgue looked like the next stop. By mid-1971, as Michael Foot's battle for British freedoms reached its peak, they were apparently restored to Gladstonian vigour. The palsied, disintegrating organs of class dictatorship were resurrected as 'our Parliament', 'our right to decide our own affairs', the staff of the people, the hard-won rights of Free-born Englishmen, and so forth. *Tribune* and the *Morning Star* vibrated with new-found faith in the British Way. The problem of reforming bourgeois misrule in Great Britain had turned out, in fact, to be extremely simple. As far as a large part of the left is concerned, all one has to do is threaten to take it away (or slightly diminish its authority).

As soon as this happens, a national *Volksgemeinschaft* is at least partially recreated. Discussing the origins of modern nationalism in the ideas of Rousseau and the French Revolution, Eric Hobsbawm has pointed out how (in what was then a novel sense)—"The "nation", which is the sovereign people, cannot tolerate intermediate and sectional interests and corporations between itself and its members. But by implication this very elimination of other centres of loyalty makes the relation of loyalty of citizens to "nation" the only valid, and therefore the strongest, of his emotional-political commitments. It is the content of the "civic religion" which the community needs. There is no difference between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, because the only valid *Gemeinschaft* is the *Gesellschaft*, organised as the polity . . ."⁸⁸ Modern nations were built up by the transference of older regional and group loyalties to this new, all-powerful centre. At the same time—in the same movement—the spirit of once universal religions was (so to speak) brought down to earth, in the shape of the new civic or civil 'religion' of the nation-state.

⁸⁸ 'Some Reflections on Nationalism', in *Imagination and Precision in the Social Sciences*, essays in honour of J. P. Nettl (1972).

The most striking and lucid example of this movement in action was perhaps the great 'federation movement' of the French Revolution in 1789–90, when the different regions of the *ancien régime* spontaneously-assembled to swear allegiance (in religious style) to the new, re-born nation.⁸⁹ The aim of the process was not to eliminate or destroy all other loyalties (whether more particular or more universal in nature), but to subordinate them all to this, the *most* valid and fundamental commitment. Nationalism could not (in a literal sense) take the place of these other communities, although at crisis-moments in a nation's history it almost does. More normally its function is that of the 'community' which underlies and sustains all others: even when hidden from view, or quite taken for granted, it remains determining *en dernière instance*. Ultimately, it remains the 'secret' of an effectively working nation-state, because it is the structure through which *Gesellschaft* (mere society, the 'impersonal' State) becomes *Gemeinschaft* for its subjects or citizens.

In this context it is worth quoting some words by the most important theorist of European historical nationalism, Friedrich Meinecke. Writing two decades after Tönnies, in the flood-tide of imperialism, Meinecke (himself an outspoken German nationalist) also described the 'nation-building' process vividly: 'If the full consciousness of a great national community is once awakened and raised to an intense longing for national realization, then this longing is like a flood that pours itself into everything it can fill and is not satisfied until everything is nationalized that is at all capable of nationalization . . .'⁹⁰ Meinecke too observes that this implies a direct or immediate relationship between citizens and the new 'community': 'This process is basically a great extension of the individual personality and its sphere of life. The human being needs the community to sustain him and to receive his contributions in turn. The more autonomous, the more individualized he himself becomes, the larger the spheres of his receptivity and influence can be . . . and of all the great spheres of life that a man can enter, there is probably none that speaks so directly to the whole man as the nation, none that carries him so strongly, none that renders so faithfully his entire natural and intellectual being, none that can so readily be or become both macroanthropos and fully realized individual'. Referring to the individualism which accompanied the cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment era just before the rise of modern nation-states, he goes on to note that this was a precondition of the latter: 'It is no coincidence that an era of individualistic strivings for freedom immediately preceded the era of modern national thought. The nation drank the blood of free personalities, as it were, to attain personality itself . . . everything the free and creative personality did served the nation by making its total life richer and more individual . . .'

Looking at Labourism we saw how the nation structure does not obliterate all conflict (which would require a perpetual frenzy of chauvinism), but resolves and 'defuses' it through a characteristic

⁸⁹ Carlton Hayes, *The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism* (1948) pp. 36–7.

⁹⁰ *Cosmopolitanism and the National State* (1907, Eng. trans. 1970) pp. 14–17.

process of alienation. Within this process, different visions of the nation ('left' and 'right', populist and conservative) constantly conflict, and are as regularly resolved—in the case of Great Britain's well-oiled bourgeois machinery—by victories for conservatism. Meinecke points out how the national 'personality' *has* to reproduce itself in this fashion: 'Within the nation itself different concepts of the nation come into conflict with each other, and each of them alone claims to represent the nation truly and properly. The fact that part of the nation unselfconsciously and sincerely regards itself as the core and essence of the entire nation is rooted in the very character of national life itself . . . In a certain sense the nation is always *pars pro toto* by nature, but it cannot, of course, do without the totality, any more than the head can do without the body'. With the development of the class struggle, the conflict sharpens and 'there is no end of doubt and struggle over that point'. The modern national state cannot aspire to 'nullify these contradictions and reduce the national culture to one level', but it can and must 'achieve a unified position in certain basic matters . . . a peace of God, as it were, for certain days of the national year'.

Much was said above about the ways in which the Great-British macroanthropos 'drinks the blood' of the left and the class and labour movements, and about the Anglican 'peace of God' kept in being by its vampirism. Meinecke's account omits many vital determinants of the nation-building process—it leaves out, for example, those economic and class factors which would stand at the centre of any marxist theory of the transition from 'cosmopolitanism to the national state'. Yet this is only to say that it is couched in the authentic, romantic terminology of nationalism itself. As such, in spite of faults, it conveys the most vivid historical impression of the rising tide of European nationalism, of how in its affirmation modern national consciousness drew life out of and subordinated all other *Gemeinschaften* to itself.

In the course of this rise, the nation triumphed over these other 'communities', religious, local, class, regional and professional: it carried them along with it—simultaneously transforming and edulcorating them—as their new and dominant condition of existence. To do so, it had also to triumph over the intellectuals (the process Benda was to refer to as 'la trahison des clercs'). What, in this perspective, is the significance of the left-wing *Volksgemeinschaft*, the 'national community' of the left concretized so dramatically by the move to enter Europe?

It is, surely, a characteristic episode of the *retreating* tide of European nationalism in our own day. As that tide advanced from the era of the French Revolution until its barbaric débâcle in fascism, national culture ousted the rational or religious universalism that formerly held sway, and made itself into the normal medium of political life. Now, as the tide recedes, the nature of that dominance becomes clearer in retrospect. It leaves stranded and exposed to the air those forms which it formerly covered. But how different is this out-going from the majestic rise Meinecke describes! The flood which poured in so irresistibly and 'nationalized everything' in the 19th century retreats slowly, reluctantly, amidst endless hesitation and incertitude. Its day is over; since the departure of de Gaulle in 1969, nothing has

broken its pattern of grey on grey. No comparable new force or passion has emerged to take its place, to hasten its end in Europe. And in this dim period of transition and uncertainty, much of its surviving strength derives—paradoxically—from those very movements and ideal forces which, formerly, it had to struggle so hard to assimilate and ‘nationalize’. It took generations of repression and conditioning to nationalize the working class and the intellectuals; but in the end this mobilization proved so successful that they now cling, almost instinctively, to the modes of thought and action that have become customary and fundamental. They have become, as it were, over-adapted to the conditions of the nation-state and nationalism.

The mediaeval English King Canute is supposed to have tried to halt the incoming tide by royal command; the modern English left (like many others in Europe) has tried to arrest the falling tide of national power and sovereignty, by appeal to the past and ‘popular struggle’. The process of decline was going on all the time, in fact, in the increasing stagnation and powerlessness of the 1950s and 60s. Yet just because it is so slow and uncertain—so negative in character—it was not experienced as much of a threat. Only the sudden ebb, the relatively dramatic tug of the waters which accompanied the British efforts at entry to the EEC, produced a clear sensation of what was occurring.

The sensation was, on each occasion, mainly one of loss (or even of impending doom) and not one of liberation. It was felt that the natural element was being taken away. Not only was the underlying ‘illusion of the epoch’ still strong—it was most resistant (in spite of their many alibis and disclaimers) in those social and political sectors once most alien to it. Instead of heaving a sigh of relief, and thinking that (at long last) the suffocating tutelage of the nation—in the 20th century an almost unmitigated disaster for the social revolution in Europe—might be near its end, they chose to ‘defend’ the fictitious nation-state *Gemeinschaft*. Instead of feeling that at last history might be moving in their sense again, they found it more natural to clutch at the familiar ‘personality’ of the nation and contrast its visage with an apocalyptic European *Gesellschaft*. Far from thinking that they were gaining a new freedom of movement, they imagined that their ‘roots’ were being cut. ‘Give us our roots’: is this slogan of crippling conservatism to remain a leitmotiv of socialist thought in the 1970s?

The aim of this argument is not to condemn these attitudes without understanding. Such condemnation could only be founded on abstract ‘anti-nationalism’, on an empty moralism that would be little more than the crude antithesis of the phenomena under review. It would be like (to take one example from hundreds) Leonard Woolf’s judgment in his introduction to Julius Braunthal’s *The Paradox of Nationalism* (1946). Braunthal saw the paradox of nationalism as lying in its uncanny fusion of noble creativity with destructive (and self-destructive) futility. But Woolf was hardly willing to allow it even this dimension of paradox. ‘The paradox has almost vanished from nationalism’, he wrote, ‘Any good that there may have been in it in the middle of last century has long ago been drained out of it by hatred, cupidity, brutality and war

. . . Nineteenth-century nationalism was born an anachronism, for it introduced into Europe the most violent centrifugal forces at the very moment when the logic of facts, the scientific, social, and economic development of the world made the centripetal action of internationalism necessary, if civilization was to endure . . .’ But if this is true, and nationalism was an ‘anachronism’ even in 1848, then the whole century that followed must appear as some sort of absurd mistake. This is a world in which (as it were) the 18th century ought never to have ended, and ‘irrational’ romanticism and nationalism ought never to have showed their heads. If they had (and have) *no* justification whatever, no historical *raison d’être*, then no inevitability, and so no tragedy, attaches to them. They represent not the Janus faces of a half-rational civilization, able to achieve progress only at near-intolerable cost, but—a regrettable surrender to unreasonable emotions like hatred and cupidity! This type of judgment expresses less the rational spirit of Enlightenment man (as that spirit actually existed historically) than a sort of latter-day caricature of it. Its internationalism is abstract, in the sense of deliberately (almost disdainfully) detached from a hopelessly self-contradictory reality.

Nevertheless—while avoiding any position of this kind—there is a point that must be made here. It concerns marxism in general, and the attitude of most British marxists towards the Common Market in particular. If one looks back to the earlier history of marxism, to all the great exponents of that tradition from Marx himself down to Trotsky, Luxemburg, Lenin and Gramsci, one finds that they incline invariably towards ‘the inherent logic of universality’.⁹¹ They are (so to speak) theorists of *Gesellschaft*, not of *Gemeinschaft*. Nowhere in Europe is there a stronger tradition of contempt for folk-piety, cosy parochialism, tribal rootedness and well-watered custom—for ‘the world of human nest-warmth . . . founded on the “will of nature”’, as Dahrendorf calls it.⁹² This applied both to the real, original ‘organic communities’ which modern society upset and to the later factitious organism of the imperialist nation-states, with their pretence of being ‘communities’ of blood and custom. It applied equally to the idealized, village and the romanticized nation. Socialism, for all these thinkers, was not an enclave against the spread of *Gesellschaft*. It was not founded upon a local or regional or communal resistance to the advance of industries and markets, the rise of conurbations, and the triumph of science and technology. On the contrary, they assumed—even took for granted—that *only* these phenomena made socialism possible. Nor was this simply because the ‘material abundance’ of an industrialized society was required for the ending of class divisions, and for the political and cultural experiments of freedom. They also thought that the development of science-based industry could alone generate the

⁹¹ On this basic point it is necessary to distinguish these names from that of Lukács. His *History and Class Consciousness*, (1923, Eng. trans. 1970) and the line of thought descending from it through the Frankfurt school and Marcuse to certain ideas of the American New Left and the French *mouvement de mai* 1968, represents a late-romantic version of marxism much closer to Tönnies’ own perspective. See L. Colletti, *Il marxismo e Hegel* (1969), p. 341; also Gareth Stedman Jones, ‘The Marxism of the Early Lukács’, *NLR* No. 70, (Nov-Dec 1971).

⁹² Dahrendorf, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

social forces capable of breaking through to such a different order of things. Far from depending upon a reaction of 'human nature' or wounded corporate custom *against* modernity, socialism was imagined as deriving in essence from the altered humanity produced by modernity itself—that is, from new men, in new social classes, equipped with new needs and wishes. Classical marxism was aware of the cost of such 'progress' and its double-edged nature, but did not allow this awareness to impel it into either a romantic humanism or mere ruthlessness about the 'inevitable march' of economic history (where is the immense culture-shock of industrialism more passionately described than in *Capital*?). In fact—or so its main protagonists believed—marxism's virtue as a rational and dialectical system consisted in its power to both avoid and transcend easy, one-dimensional alternatives like these. It was capable of viewing things realistically, historically, and as a whole.

In this light, the warm embrace of national *Gemeinschaft* by British marxists (and similar episodes in the past in France and Italy) looks odd, to say the least of it. However comical, it was not wholly surprising or out of character for a typical representative of the national-left intelligentsia like Kenneth Tynan to believe that the main peril of entering the Common Market would be the 'enormous, possibly irreparable harm' this would bring to British Socialism. He continued (referring to Labour's pro-Common Market faction): 'It is sad that a wing of the party so rich in historians should not have reflected that the Common Market in its fullest state of development will be the most blatant historical vulgarity since the Thousand Year Reich . . . Hitler failed to realise the dream. The Market could come close to fulfilling it for him'. The message of recent history (vividly illustrated by the cases of Ireland and Great Britain, one imagines?) is that small countries are 'flexible and capable of change' while big ones like the USA and the USSR (and China?) are 'musclebound dinosaurs', inherently conservative and resistant to change. Inside Europe's 'capitalist fortress' the British would lose forever their 'freedom to choose the socialist path'.⁹³ There does, however, remain something surprising in the sight of parties and movements which claim descent from marxism joining in a chorus like this. As far as the principal marxist party, the CPGB, is concerned, this position is at least superficially explicable in terms of its long-standing strategy of seeking alliance with Labourism along the 'British road to socialism'. National sovereignty and community are obvious preconditions of any national path towards socialism. But what of the other marxist groups' most of them (after all) bitterly hostile to the CPGB and its claims to be the inheritor of marxist truth?

⁹³ Letter in *The Times*, 27 July 1971.

VIII The Marxist Nation: Buridan's Ass

'Socialists must be internationalists even if their working classes are not; socialists must also understand the nationalism of the masses, but only in the way in which a doctor understands the weakness or the illness of his patient. Socialists should be aware of that nationalism, but, like nurses, they should wash their hands twenty times over whenever they approach an area of the Labour movement infected by it'.

Isaac Deutscher, *On Internationals and Internationalism in Marxism in our Time* (1972)

In 1971, almost as large a *rassemblement* of popular forces as one could wish for came together to oppose the Common Market. It included most of the trade unions, most of the working class, most of the Labour Party, the CPGB, the anarchists, the underground, the pacifists, the marxist *groupuscules*, and most of the 'unorganized' left-wing intelligentsia. What more could one ask for? Not only was nearly everybody in it: for once the left could count on harnessing the well-known potency of inter-class nationalism. Why should not the marxists function as 'vanguard' to this considerable *bloc* of forces, leading and radicalizing it according to the traditional formula?

However, there was something profoundly amiss in this situation. None of the marxist movements opted out of or opposed the anti-Market crusade. Yet none of them—with the possible exception of the CP—looked happy inside it. On every hand one found doubts, qualifications, and reservations. There are few political movements in Great Britain less given over to doubt and introspection than the trotskyist Socialist Labour League. During the great debate, however, its organ the *Workers Press* noticeably underplayed this theme. It was awarded a lowly place in the news, in comparison with Bangladesh or the Clyde shipyard occupations. It was certainly necessary to oppose entry—but only as part of the general struggle against the Heath government' and for the right motives. It was (i.e.) no less necessary to avoid petty-bourgeois chauvinism and narrow nationalism in the campaign.

Similar positions were taken up in a number of different accents by other marxist groups. As with *Workers Press*, the reason for opposition was both general hostility to the 'class government' of Toryism, and solidarity with the working class (well known to be strongly against the move). This note of *ouvrieriste* class solidarity was probably sounded most strongly in the maoist *The Worker*. The line of the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) expressed 'the strong views of workers and their families all over the country . . . who have not been consulted about any of these steps to get Britain into an Economic Community established to strengthen European monopoly-capitalism against the workers of Europe. They need consult no one in the steps *they* will take to wreck the whole conception!' Here classism was so rhetorically pronounced as to drown out other considerations. Obviously, theoretical problems of nationalism do not impinge much upon a world where the workers *are* the nation in

The Worker's uncompromising sense (illustrated, in the same paper, by numerous references to China and Albania).

But groups with a more highly developed nervous system than the SLL and the CPB(M-L) could not cope so easily with the ancient, uncomfortable dilemma lying only a little way under the surface. The problem was that of a mass movement which was intensely and blatantly nationalist and yet had a definitely 'class' content and character. It was—in short—like Labourism itself. Long socio-political experience had fused the two things together, in the *praxis* of a national left. How could one climb into this seamless garment without being stifled by it? How could one 'support' the crusade—in all its onward rush, its heat and emotion, its natural polarization of everyone into a simple 'for' or 'against'—and salve one's conscience with a few modest coughs of doubt? Imagine a spectator at a particularly bloody rugby match, who 'supported' his side with the same patriotic cries as everyone else, but broke off occasionally to say sternly: 'Not so much chauvinist frenzy down there, please! We can do without these excesses of petty-bourgeois aggression!' The position of marxists vis-à-vis the anti-Europe movement was worse than this. They were supposed to be actually playing, and to issue their reprimands, therefore, from the heart of the scrum. Indeed, as a theoretical 'vanguard' their aim was to *lead* the game in the very front line of the scrum—alternately striving, as it were, to touch down at the goalpost of National Sovereignty and to tell their striving fellow-players 'Down with petty bourgeois nationalism and flag-waving chauvinists !'⁹⁴

On the one hand—continued *Red Mole*—'Entry into the Common Market is opposed to both the immediate and the long-term class interests of the labour movement'. But on the other hand there was the disgusting way in which these interests were, in fact, being fought for: 'Michael Foot's bleatings about sovereignty', 'Eric Heffer's "socialism in one country"', and the sad fact that 'The multitude of views on the so-called "left" of the Labour Party . . . lack any scrap of socialist internationalism, or any policy for fighting against the Tories and European capitalists'. From one point of view, 'The EEC is a capitalist solution to capitalist problems' and will strengthen the ruling class. But from another—not less evident and cogent in the summer of 1971—'chauvinism is a vicious enemy which must be destroyed'. The unity re-forged by the anti-Market crusade could only be 'unity between . . . a rotten gang of career labour aristocrats and politicians in the Labour Party and trade unions, and the mass of trade unionists who are pressing their leaders for action.' Joseph admitted: 'This is a unity which holds no future for the working class, and one which must be rejected and fought against'.⁹⁵ In the IMG at least, one had both to participate in the movement *and* fight against it.

⁹⁴ Ben Joseph, *The Red Mole*, vol. 2 No. 10 (1 June 1971) & No. 14 (14 August 1971), respectively. *Red Mole* is the organ of the (trotskyist) International Marxist Group, associated (as distinct from the SLL) with the French *Ligue Communiste*, the Belgian *Ligue Révolutionnaire des Travailleurs*, and other sections of the Fourth International.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, plus editorial (unsigned), August 14 1971, 'Labour and the Common Market'.

These two minds were reconciled, verbally, by appeal to a principle: socialist internationalism. 'Workers in their millions are now discussing the many involved questions', wrote the editorialist, 'Revolutionaries can insert into these discussions the two arguments: for working-class unity against capitalist unity; and for the strategy of a red Europe against the capitalist EEC'. Since working-class unity of a sort was actually obtained over the issue, more weight attached to the second of these causes. 'The extension of the struggle against the anti-working-class policies of the Tory government onto an international level is the foundation of a socialist answer' to these involved questions, said Joseph. Or again: 'Every obstacle the workers can place in the way of the ruling class—by defeating the trade union legislation, the attempt to cut back wages, and the cuts in living standards; by throwing this Tory government out of office; by building international working-class co-operation based on a perspective of joint struggle against European capital; by giving life to a truly revolutionary socialist international—is not only a major step towards overthrowing capitalism in Britain, but also a step towards realising that victory in the Socialist United States of Europe . . .'

Yet the employment of such a principle here has a strange, even a suspicious, ring to it. In the first place, it is singularly abstract. 'We need to create living links between workers' struggles in the countries of Western Europe. We need to link up the political struggle of the vanguard for socialist policies on an all-European scale . . . This means building the international revolutionary vanguard', stated the editorial already quoted. Perhaps; but then, this was true in 1970 as well, or in 1870 for that matter. For political groups like the IMG or the SLL it obviously belongs to the category of timeless truths. This is well known; so is the fact that very little concrete reality corresponds to the abstraction—that real contacts and living links, meaningful exchanges, are few and far between.

So what was the point in repeating the principle so loudly, with such exaggerated emphasis, in this context? If it has no particular relevance or application here, then the rise in decibels looks dangerously like an empty rhetoric of diversion. The reader is, as it were, rescued from the paralysing contradiction implied in the preceding arguments—but only by the safest of marxist truisms. He is uplifted from the hopeless stalemate and confusion which threatened—but only by a somewhat trite *image d'Epinal* of red-fingered dawn. The political 'position' is of course—in the Leninist tradition—absolutely 'clear and inflexible'; unfortunately, it happens also to be nearly meaningless, and is being used to guide attention away from a basic stance which is anything but clear and coherent. Whether as distraction, as inspiration, or as consolation, the 'Socialist United States of Europe' tells one nothing about what to do with the grubby, vulgar, hopelessly bourgeois confection which not only has the sauce to exist but actually stands there on the doorstep, now, waiting to take us over.

Suspicion that something is deeply wrong in this use of 'socialist internationalism' is confirmed by another odd feature of *Red Mole's* stance. One can scarcely help noticing an absentee from Joseph's list of

'obstacles'. At that time—as Labour Party and other nationalists recognized clearly enough—the most serious obstacle to Conservative plans would have been the failure of the Common Market negotiations. The situation would have been bad enough if Labour (failing to defeat parliamentary ratification of the accord) had committed itself to subsequent withdrawal from the EEC. A demand for something like this seemed implied by many remarks in these articles—the denunciation of Wilson's leadership for failing to put up a real fight, for merely 'immobilising the labour movement' on the issue, and so on. Yet it is oddly absent from this concluding list of exhortations. Could this be because the writer was unable quite to follow the logic of his position through?

Farther on in the same number of *Red Mole* there was an article by Ernest Mandel with the title 'Britain Enters the Common Market'. Mandel is of course one of the foremost representatives of the Fourth International to which the British IMG adheres. He concluded his article by observing that for socialists the most important factor in assessing the situation must be 'the dynamic of the class struggle'. Even if it enters the Common Market, an organized and militant working-class movement like the British one will be well able to compensate for any immediate, short-term material losses (due to food-prices rises, etc). 'Joining the Common Market', he goes on, 'far from reducing "economic" class struggles, would exacerbate them. The naïve confidence of this same working class in the efficacy of parliamentary reforms and the electoral process would receive a second healthy shock, on the heels of the shock inflicted on it by its experience with the Wilson governments. In this way, its political radicalization would be reinforced . . . a growing understanding of the necessity to struggle for workers' control and workers' councils would thus gradually emerge. The social crisis would thus little by little evolve towards a revolutionary outcome. The efforts of big capital to make the British bourgeoisie participate in the construction of "its" capitalist Europe would in that case end with the intensified participation of the British working class in the struggle for "our" Europe—the red Europe of the workers, a socialist Europe'.⁹⁶ Again, a red dawn lies at the end of the argument. But there is more relationship between premises and conclusion here, and a higher degree of cogency. And—most surprising of all—what it suggests is almost the opposite of the considerations quoted above.

Entering Europe had been described as opposed to both the immediate and the long-term class interests of the labour movement; Mandel states that the immediate factors are unimportant, and that the long-term clash of interests is (at least) very doubtful. A comparison between Great Britain now and France as it was on the eve of its entry underlines his point. French workers did indeed suffer a major defeat in the first year or so of the Common Market. But they were exposed, at the same time, to the major political convulsion of the Algerian war,

⁹⁶ *Red Mole*, Vol 2, No. 14, August 1971, p. 5. Mandel is the author of *Europe versus America? Contradictions of Imperialism* (1970), the most important marxist study of Common Market economics so far published.

the sordid collapse of the IVth Republic, and the reborn nationalist glories of Gaullism. Nothing like these conditions obtains in Britain now. As the events of later 1971 and early 1972 have shown, the British working class is not (in spite of the considerable political setback represented by the anti-Market campaign) basically demoralized or disoriented. On the other hand, it is still mainly Labourist. It is in this connection that Mandel's 'long term' prognostication appears most striking. He thinks that the class struggle will be more acute inside Europe, and that in the novel context the labour movement's ancient faith in Westminster might evaporate at last—leading to greater class self-reliance, and 'political radicalization'. It is difficult indeed to see why this should be in any way 'opposed to the long-term interests' of workers, if the general political perspective of the IMG (and similar groups) is taken seriously. On the contrary: it has something of the air of a recipe for the most cherished aim of revolutionary politics in Britain. Is he not suggesting that under Common Market conditions the struggle against the national magic of Parliamentarism and Labourism will be easier, and the general political aim that much more attainable?

If so, it must be quite definitely in the long-term interest of marxists to enter the EEC. And if that is true it was a blunder to take part in the anti-Market crusade, or lend the slightest sanction to it as a valid form of the political class struggle. What was required was not support qualified by stern warnings about chauvinist 'excesses', but opposition. The prime necessity of opposition in this sense was of course a distinction between the realities of the class struggle going on in Britain, and the totally false consciousness and political formulae being imposed upon it by the Labour-led defence of the 'national sovereignty' totem-pole. The marxist left found itself tagging along, somewhat shame-facedly, in this last mad dance around the totem—holding out one hand to the sweaty grip of Labour-CPGB chauvinism, as it were, while it wagged the forefinger of the other in the air and cried 'Down with all this narrow nationalism!' But, if its real longer-term interest is in seeing that totem-pole in the dust for good, then why should it have been there at all?⁹⁷

These may seem hard conclusions. But consider them from another angle. The question posed by *Red Mole's* dilemma was that of the apparent lack of real relationship between it and the principle of socialist internationalism—consequently, the principle itself emerged as sacred, and abstract, as an escape-route into piety. Yet even this path into the skies cannot be trodden safely; the spiritual footsteps there tripped up a few pages farther on by Mandel's suggestion that there may, after all, be a perfectly *concrete* relationship between 'socialist

⁹⁷ There may be some who perceive in this argument a shameless addiction to the logical principle of identity and non-contradiction. Nodding acquaintance with the neo-christian metaphysics of Hegel's *Logic* (or that quaint derivation from it 'dialectical materialism') may have led them to believe that *true* logic is whatever permits one to contradict oneself with a clear conscience. There is little space here to discuss the theory of logic. I can only record the conviction that this is as much true dialectic as the 'True Socialism' Marx discussed in *The German Ideology* was true socialism.

internationalism' and the problem. The relationship, namely, of being straightforwardly favourable to entering Europe, and straightforwardly opposed to the whole wretched Labour-Communist crusade in defence of the flag. The dilemma was in that case not simply insoluble. It did not just arouse sensations of paralytic *angst* and double-bind (feelings the very reverse of what leninist strategy should inspire, surely?): it was rendered 'insoluble' in the very act of being created, by the preposterous first step of 'supporting' (even partially, even half-heartedly, even in two minds) a mass campaign of quicksand xenophobia. Naturally, if one sticks a foot in it then socialist honour must make one pull the other way at once and whistle the *Internationale* with all the breath one has left. But then—why was one's foot (or even a finger) there in the first place?

Misplaced Voluntarism

Because that was the direction in which the 'real movement' moved, then and there? And an elementary duty of marxists is to remain in touch with it, the better to influence it? This is an honourable motive which it would be mistaken to describe it as mere 'opportunism' (of the sort that figured so noticeably in many Labour Party conversions and silences during 1971). Nevertheless, it was misapplied in this context. There is an even more elemental duty, which was certainly the crux of the matter. That is, the duty of producing—or doing one's best to produce—a reasonably correct analysis of what the total historical situation really was, and of what (therefore) the political 'problem' actually consisted in. An important activist's delusion has always been that this moment is the easy one, and that the 'difficult' political moment is the stage which follows—stern action, militancy, applying one's shoulder to the wheel of history, etc. Yet one need only glance at the two great questions preoccupying the left in 1971 to appreciate the perils of this view. Both in the case of the Common Market and in the case of Ireland, it was in fact *extremely difficult* to understand and evaluate what was happening—not superficially that is, but with the depth and historical perspective which marxism demands—let alone decide whom to 'support', or which direction to push in. If, however, one skipped lightly across this difficulty (with a helping hand from theology, or blind instinct, or both) then it was all too easy in both situations to find a cause to support and a direction to push in. It was—one might say—fatally easy.

Such misplaced voluntarism is of course related to the fear of isolation in a merely 'intellectual' world. Over-identity with party and, through the party, with the ultimate collective reality of class is the traditional antidote to such anxiety. But—without going into general questions of political psychology here—it ought to be clear that there is no *real* escape from isolation in this way. Isolation is not, in fact, the worst fate which revolutionary marxists have to be afraid of. Their history is strewn with fates far worse than that. Writing in the darkness of 1915, Rosa Luxemburg mused on the 'political ineffectuality' associated with opposition to the war, and recalled other bitter episodes from the socialist past. She quoted at length from Wilhelm Liebknecht: "It is never easy to swim against the current", said the older Liebknecht,

“And when the stream rushes on with the rapidity and the power of a Niagara it does not become easier. Our older comrades still remember the hatred of that year of greatest national shame, under the socialist exception laws of 1878 . . . the socialist had been in the eyes of the masses a traitor and an enemy. Such outbreaks of the “popular soul” are astounding, stunning, crushing in their elemental fury. One feels powerless, as before a higher power . . . It is like an epidemic, in the people, in the air, everywhere. The outbreak of 1878 cannot, however, be compared with the outbreak in 1870. This hurricane of human passions, breaking, bending, destroying all that stands in its way . . . By the side of this elemental force of liberated spirits stood the most complete mechanism of the art of murder the world had hitherto seen; and all in the wildest activity . . . At such a time, what is the will and the strength of the individual? Especially when one feels that one represents a tiny minority, that one possesses no firm support in the people itself? . . . So it was no small thing at that time to swim against the current. But what is to be done, must be done. And so we gritted our teeth in the face of the inevitable . . .” Luxemburg had just then undergone the still more terrifying ordeal of 1914. On Liebknecht’s recollections she comments that afterwards, ‘for forty years social democracy lived upon the moral strength with which it had opposed a world of enemies’. At the outbreak of war it had been their desperate, almost suicidal task to show that ‘that which had been everything in their lives, the international’, was more than merely ‘the figment of a dream’. ‘The voice of our party’, she continued, ‘would have acted as a wet blanket upon the chauvinist intoxication of the masses. It would have preserved the intelligent proletariat from delirium. . .’⁹⁸

The point is not (of course) that the happenings of 1971 are comparable in historical importance or in tragedy to those mentioned by Luxemburg. They were no more than a faint shadow of such famous ‘outbreaks of the popular soul’ during the epoch of European nationalism. Nevertheless, they *were* a shadow—a shadow of that same reality, and they shared (even at many removes) something of its shame and its hysteria. It was quite wrong to think that, because most of the working class and its organizations had become involved in the anti-Market movement, there was any marxist duty to join in (or at least half-sanction it with equivocations). That depended upon whether the movement was right, or wrong. Upon whether, from the point of view of ‘the dynamic of the class struggle’, it furthered or impeded, clarified or confused that struggle. It is not—not in the very least—an argument for passivity or abstract intellectualism to say that marxists should quietly ask questions like these, and answer them with more than rhetoric and a few battered quotes from Lenin, before ‘supporting’ movements or indeed striking any attitude about them.

The ‘isolation’ which characterizes the revolutionary marxist left in Europe is not an accident caused by this or that act of ‘betrayal’,

⁹⁸ ‘The Junius Pamphlet: The Crisis in German Social Democracy’, *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks* (1970) pp. 317–8; See also J. P. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg*, vol. 2, Ch. XIV, pp. 601–9.

not even by a whole century of betrayals. And it cannot be undone by fulmination or by 'inserting' a little finger here and a little thought there—least of all into a movement which represented a mere reactionary and backward eddy away from the socio-historical mainstream. That isolation is a function of the existence of great national parties, parties like Labour or the French and Italian Communist Parties. These grew up as products of the long, painful adaptation of the working class to the conditions of the modern nation-state in Europe. Now, as the climate and environment gradually alter, they remain standing like dinosaurs—partly resisting change with their bureaucratic armour and slow brains, partly trying feebly to adapt. The 'Anti-Market' campaign was one episode in this process. For the reasons we saw, Labourism badly needed it in order to recover a little terrain. In that sense—therefore—each muted gesture of enthusiasm or encouragement for the campaign was in reality a gesture of assistance to Labour and to what the old brontosaurus *essentially* stands for (even if accompanied by gibes at Wilson and the leadership). It was a way of perpetuating the basic political condition of the very tragic 'isolation' which marxists desire, more than anything else, to escape from. As a political tactic it was not merely humiliating but profoundly self-contradictory as well.

Within the variegated chorus of the National Left, the marxist groups which inserted themselves did not play a rôle of vanguard. They were, as a matter of record, saved from being camp-followers by a certain degree of intelligent half-heartedness. Healthy political neurosis saved them from sliding all the way down the Gaderene slope, along with so many of the left intelligentsia. A sound marxist instinct preserved them from incorporation into this 'real movement' backwards. But only just: honour was saved, mainly, by looking two ways at once and saying two different things at once.

Buridan's Ass

Why was the position of Buridan's ass—transfixed to immobility in between its two equally tempting bales of straw—the best that marxism could do on such an important historical issue as this? No less than in the case of Labourism, to dismiss a dilemma like this as a 'betrayal' or a 'sell-out' (whether of marxism or of the nation) would be only intellectual abdication. What matters is not condemnation, but the certainty that this attitude too must have arisen from deep-laid necessities. The nature of these may become clearer if we turn to look at the reactions of another marxist group to 1971.

The International Socialism group—another descendant of trotskyism—had a considerable history of debate about the Common Market behind it when the anti-Market crusade arrived. The question had been aired intermittently for ten years in the pages of its theoretical journal.

The first editorial to tackle it was in late 1961, at the time of the initial British application to join EEC. It was quite markedly favourable to the move. After a scathing criticism of *Tribune's* left-wing nationalism, it declared that European integration was both 'inevitable' (in the same sense in which monopoly concentration is inevitable, and indeed

'normal') and likely to assist the positive development of the class struggle: 'If in the long run Europeanization hastens this process, as it surely will, cartel Europe will have laid, as surely, the basis for the United States of Socialist Europe. For revolutionary socialists in Britain there is no greater aim. We should be the first to clasp hands across *La Manche* . . .'

The writer conceded that the first impact of entry might be brutal. But to oppose it simply because it might make things 'more difficult' is 'tantamount to protesting that a cosh has studs'. He ended: 'For us the move to Europe extends the scope of the class struggle in which we are directly involved; it worsens its conditions for the present. But it makes ultimate victory more secure'.⁹⁹

This is (presumably) the stance which instinctively seemed right to begin with, and in accord with the group's honourable name. If so, instinct was soon corrected. A number of leading IS supporters must have dissented strongly, for in succeeding issues of the journal protests appeared. Lenin was loudly invoked. The majority line conveyed by editorials moved distinctly away from the original 'pro' position to one of non-committal. In No. 11 (Winter 1962) a letter to readers by Peter Sedgewick recounted something of the internecine disputes which had been going on. He found an easy target in the economic 'inevitabilism' of the earlier line: monopolies may be inevitable, but since when has it been asked of socialists to 'support' them? As for the safer if less dignified stance of non-committal to which the majority had retreated, he remarked: 'It seems to me that it is not the issue "For or Against EEC" that is an irrelevancy to the working class, but rather the pretence that it is not an issue. And an analysis of the EEC which still treats it as a straight economic question rather than a most mixed politico-strategico-economic move, is out of this world . . . IS had chosen to 'sit on the fence' about the Common Market, he pointed out. Its duty was to assume a clear position and oppose entry.¹⁰⁰

Five years later, it was still seated on the fence (or, astride Buridan's ass). With the second entry attempt in 1967, the whole dilemma re-presented itself. In the meantime events had of course strengthened one aspect of the anti-nationalist view important to the party's image, as John Palmer pointed out in a defence of the majority line: 'There can be no positive class or socialist response based upon the defence of "our" State, "our" right to plan "our" sovereignty—they are not "ours", and the mere experience of how little the Labour movement runs this country when a Labour Government sits in Whitehall is surely vivid enough a lesson in that respect . . .' But this thought did not produce a return to the first position. It simply reinforced the group's now permanently split personality on the topic. Palmer concluded with a standard appeal for the United States of Socialist Europe, as Sedgewick did not fail to underline with irony in a second 'Note of Dissent': 'The fact is that "The United States of Socialist

⁹⁹ *International Socialism*, No. 6 (Autumn 1961) pp. 2–3.

¹⁰⁰ See also editorial of No. 8 (Spring 1962); John Fairhead, 'Polemic: the Common Market', No. 7 (Winter 1961); editorial, No. 11; John Palmer, No. 12 (Spring 1963).

Europe” sticks out like a sore thumb among our other demands. It is a bureaucratic-utopian piety, a typical instance of the pie-in-the-sky “blackboard socialism” that this journal has exposed so effectively at other times. Opposition to the Common Market . . . remains the only possible stance for Socialists’.¹⁰¹ In spite of the majority’s dithering over imponderables, ‘*We know* that Britain’s accession to Cartel Europe will tend to strengthen the ruling class’. There was no risk in being allied to the nationalists of the left, he argued—had not marxists been allied with them on other issues like nuclear disarmament and opposition to incomes policy?

When 1971 arrived, IS’s stance did move some distance in the direction Sedgewick had argued for. *International Socialism* published a much more extensive study of the Common Market by Chris Harman, which came to the flat conclusion that ‘a number of interrelated reasons make it imperative for us to oppose entry’. These reasons were that entry would hit the workers; that it would strengthen a capitalist system no longer in any way progressive, in a world where ‘the preconditions for socialism exist’ already; that a European military force is to be feared; and that ‘feeding the flames of opposition to the Market’ would help defeat a hated Conservative régime. Of course all this was still linked to uncompromising demands for the Socialist United States of Europe. The vicious ‘ideological illusions’ of chauvinism and national sovereignty were still to be steadfastly opposed. ‘But’—the article concluded—‘if we are unable to get a majority for our clear and consistent positions, we have to vote against the government Common Market strategy in the only way possible—by voting with the CP and the Labour left while making our reservations known’. It looked as if IS had indeed descended from its fence—or at any rate decided which bale of straw it *would* make for, *if* it was unable to swing over the majority of the British left to its own schizophrenia of long standing. This was the position reflected in the movement’s weekly *Socialist Worker* during the summer of 1971.¹⁰²

Previously, positions of pro-entry or stately ‘non-committal’ had been countered by demands for frank opposition. Now that the group had committed itself, a protest came from the other direction. The same number of *International Socialism* carried an interesting ‘Rejoinder’ by Ian Birchall (who had previously published the paper’s most serious analysis of Common Market affairs: ‘The Common Market and the Working Class’, in No. 27, Winter 1966–7). As regards the ‘general feeling’ behind the anti-Market campaign, of which Harman had made a good deal, Birchall commented aptly: ‘It is equally true that, for

¹⁰¹ *International Socialism* No. 28 (Spring 1967) pp. 2–3.

¹⁰² *International Socialism* No. 49 (Autumn 1971); *Socialist Worker*, 10 and 24 July, 1971. The *Socialist Worker*’s campaign provoked a worried letter from Germany (10 July), pointing out that ‘To call for the support of anti-Common Market resolutions is to encourage nationalism and the illusions spread by the Labour left’, and that this nationalistic form was ‘canalizing mass discontent into safe channels . . . to make fine speeches about internationalism and then vote with the anti-marketeters is to fall into their trap’. Failure to get into Europe would not in reality be a working-class victory, the correspondent went on, but a victory for Powellism and popular ‘social chauvinism’.

example, hostility to foreign workers in Britain derives from a form of class consciousness—concern to defend employment and conditions . . . We have to *relate* to these forms of distorted class consciousness; we certainly do not *adapt* to them'. For example, if a socialist saw a workers' demonstration protesting against coloured immigrants, it would certainly be a catastrophic error to 'join in,' and then at the same time wag one's forefinger sternly about the perils of racism. How could one 'relate' except by *opposing*? It goes without saying that a socialist's opposition should be different in nature from that of—e.g.—a liberal's. But it can only differ by being *more* total, and *more* intransigent, because founded upon a better understanding of the causes of the phenomenon, and inspired by a larger vision of how to cope with it. Nothing else is good enough.

is should not have abandoned its previous stance of non-committal, Birchall argued (he reproduced excerpts from old editorials at the head of his article, as an ironic reminder). The result could only be confusion and futility: 'There is a danger that within the revolutionary left, the fake "great debate" of bourgeois politics will be mirrored by our own "little debate"—opposition versus abstention. This would be a pity, and a waste of opportunity to fight for what is significant and unique in our own policies. . .' Given the 'present state of forces', and the real isolation of marxism, the only concrete result of joining in would be a paraplegic 'united front' with Labourism and the CPGB, devoted to fostering nationalist fantasies. What then is 'significant and unique' about 'our own policies'? Here—inevitably—the writer was forced back upon the rhetoric of socialist internationalism and the usual programme of developing contacts and cultivating more international awareness. Equally inevitably, the policy culminates in the United Socialist States of Europe, and the whole argument acquired precisely that intonation which Sedgewick had earlier caricatured as 'blackboard socialism'. 'Such a programme may not get much of a hearing during the slogan-shouting of the "great debate"', Birchall concluded modestly, 'but it will still be meaningful when the rest of the opposition has rolled up its union jacks and admitted defeat'.¹⁰³

Thus was the marxist 'little debate' concluded in 1971. Before going on to consider its general import in the context of the 'great debate', however, there is one aspect which detaches itself so prominently from the foregoing that it demands immediate comment. In the wrestling-match with fate conducted by both *Red Mole* and *International Socialism*, much of the contest revolves around a void. This was, of course, any *concrete* sense of what 'internationalism' means or can be made to mean, politically and ideologically. Internationalism was at once crucial to the dilemma—since it determined their marxist aversion to the nationalism of Labour and the CP—and yet quite remote and abstract. What was *felt* as essential, as the very soul of socialist honour and uprightness, is nevertheless (and somehow inevitably) translated at once into 'bureaucratic-utopian piety' until it sounds like a sermon from a progressive Anglican bishop. In other words, the void

¹⁰³ Ibid, pp. 18–20.

results in an evident contradiction; and argument on the subject revolves endlessly and sterilely about this inescapable contradiction.

What explanation was offered of this determining contradiction? As good as none. In the *Red Mole* article quoted from above, Ben Joseph wrote: 'It is not the objective conditions that have been responsible for a lack of socialist internationalism in Europe but a failure on the part of the bureaucratically led labour movement to live up to its responsibilities'.¹⁰⁴ Thus, we are back with treacherous leaders again. The source of the trouble is not 'objective' but 'subjective': it lies in the corrupt will and inept ideas of *les responsables*. They betray the whole European labour movement just as they have always betrayed the Labour Party. The conclusion (what else could it be?) is that it is urgently necessary to construct a new international revolutionary vanguard, one better able to deal with those 'responsibilities'. Whether it will hold high the flag of IMG and the IVth International, or that of International Socialism or one of the other competitors, is possibly of less significance here. What matters is that it will be (in perfectly idealistic fashion) grounded in the new and better *will* and ideas of someone or other.

But if abdication like this is to be avoided, then where must one look for an explanation? The conditions responsible for the lack of concrete socialist internationalism in Europe are not only 'objective', they go to the very foundations of the whole socialist experience of the last century. They are located at the heart of that experience. They concern the real experience of the masses, and not the supposed 'betrayal' of some (or even all) of their leaders. They concern the mainstream of marxism's historical development, and not a perplexing local difficulty in 'applying' its principles to the problems of 1971. The local contradiction, in fact, descends from—and is but a belated expression of—a dilemma which originated in the 19th century as marxism, a truly and concretely inter-national body of ideas, was gradually forced to adapt to the world of nations and nationalisms. For long that world of the European nation-state (and the profound extra-European transformation to which it gave birth) was apprehended as permanent. So, therefore, were the difficulties and deformations suffered by Marx's heritage in its painful and contradictory adaptation to that world. Only now perhaps, as those nation-states perish and give way to something else, does it become more possible to examine such difficulties objectively. Possible—and necessary: for of course this theoretical problem, like others before it in the history of marxism, is no merely academic one but arises out of practical reality. It arises, precisely, out of the practical dilemmas and paradoxes which marxism—as in 1971 in Great Britain—must confront and yet cannot satisfactorily master. The question, as always, has been posed by a profoundly changed and changing material reality; the answer, as far as marxists are concerned, can only come from a patient examination of that reality, and of the intellectual instruments with which it is approached.

¹⁰⁴ 'British Capitalism and Europe', vol. 2, No. 10, 1 June 1971.

I Can't Register

In the 1960s no figure was more respected by and influential upon the British intellectual left than Raymond Williams. In his characteristic answer to the *Encounter* symposium on 'Going into Europe' he said: 'I'm sorry, but if you are taking a poll on the apparently existing choices—to go "into Europe" or to stay "out of the Common Market"—I can't register. . .' He opposed the EEC as a form of capitalist integration and 'modernization'—but equally, he opposed the phoney alternative of continued national 'independence' or 'sovereignty' as being little more than 'a familiar kind of Labour fantasy'. The real, historical choice (he continued) lay between joining Europe on Common Market terms, or an increasing subordination to United States capitalism. 'One or other of these roads will be taken' and the socialist left which Williams acknowledges will not take the choice—it will simply have to bear the consequences, day by day. For this reason, he maintained, it would be foolish for socialists to take up any position on the choice and so be 'trapped into the terms of other people's arguments'.¹⁰⁵

But the terms are *not*—on Mr Williams' own admission—those of 'other people's arguments'. The particular words and ideas chosen by the Heath government, Roy Jenkins, or the EEC's propagandists may (and indeed certainly do) travesty what is at stake. Nobody would suggest that socialists or marxists should fall into their mental world in tackling the question. The ideologies of that world, however, are reflecting a reality. And it is with the real terms of choice which this history has engendered that the left has, willy nilly, to be concerned. That is (e.g.) with the vertiginous decline in real power and independence of the European nation-state, to which British experience in the 1960s bore eloquent testimony; with the hegemony of American capitalism to which Williams refers, and the impact of its current crises; with the growing reality of capitalist integration in western Europe; and so on. This complex of problems was finally forced upon Great Britain in 1971, in the uncomfortable shape of the decision 'for or against' entering the Common Market. And while socialists could refuse to register as between Roy Jenkins' Europeanism and Michael Foot's nationalism, they could not really refuse to register about the historical turning-point behind such displays.

Raymond Williams' position of 'a plague on both your houses!' is made even more odd by the justifications he attached to it. 'I can see marginally greater opportunities for some of the developments I hope to help make happen if the Market choice is the one that is made', he added at

¹⁰⁵ In this symposium *Encounter* again invited the intellectual establishment to 'state its views' on Europe (rather in the spirit in which Sunday papers ask intellectuals to vote for their favourite books of the year at Christmas time). A yawn was written into the very title of this new opinion-poll: 'Going into Europe—*Again?*' The yawn was continued through most of the contributions (with the marked exception of Williams') since most of the elite was clearly satisfied by the long years of turgid cliché and pious boredom which had taken the place of 'debate' on the subject. A majority of this anti-left intelligentsia was in favour of entry. See *Encounter* Dec. 1962, Jan., Feb. and March 1963; June, July and Aug. 1971.

once, 'There would be a better basis for the now urgently necessary international trade unionism, and a noticeably better basis for breaking some of the locks in English culture on which the present political hegemony depends. As British socialists we have more in common with our Italian and Scandinavian and French and German comrades than with any other active movements, mainly because of common traditions of political and working-class organization. . . .' Remarks like these create a sense of giddiness in the reader comparable to that aroused by the analysis of Ernest Mandel quoted above. If advantages of this kind—which seem, in the context of the political stalemate prevailing in Britain, to be far from 'marginal'—belong with the Common Market, then 'why should one be opposed, or even doubtful? Especially when the alternative of growing subordination to US imperialism possesses none of them, in Williams' view?

He does refer in passing to that other perspective mentioned several times before—the conception, dear among others to Kenneth Tynan and the editor of *Tribune*, that a Great Britain left in isolation would fall into crisis, and that such a crisis would somehow produce a national socialist revolution. But he plainly has no faith in this weird version of *la politique du pire*. 'To fall back on limited ideas of what can be done on our own in Britain is to miss the whole problem', he commented, 'The best feature of the new socialist movements of the 1960s was the combination of ideas of direct democracy, in social groupings much smaller than the old nation-state, and of an active and flexible and frontier-crossing internationalism'.

The combination of shrewdness, profundity, and mild generosity towards opponents in this judgment is typical of its author. But as so often he is too kind towards ideological enemies. Had these prophets of national-socialist apocalypse forgotten the years before 1970, when Labour was in office, when the great issue of the time was restricting coloured immigration to Great Britain, and Powell's star was so visibly in the ascendant? Had they forgotten the sour stink of an inward-turned and impotent nationalism, and its sickening decomposition towards racism? Had they quite forgotten the Labour Party's feeble response to that process, and its uneasy retreat from that (as from every other) challenge? Many hard things can be said about the Common Market debate of 1971: it was superficial, dull, conservative in both tone and inspiration, and quite unworthy of its object. However, it was not actually *debased*. It was trivial and economic for the most part; but it did not actually *defile* everyone who touched it. And for that reason, the bitter fact is—although most commentators on the left found this easy to overlook—that it represented a considerable raising of the standard of political discussion in Great Britain. Let anyone who doubts this turn back through the records of the 1970 election campaign, or the newspaper archives of the period that led up to it. In comparison to that moment of corrupt stupefaction, the 'great debate' was to represent almost a measure of enlightenment and rationality. Through it the nation at least looked concretely outward again towards a new horizon, and away from its own soiled navel. In spite of all its hypocrisies and ambiguities, it could hardly help rising well above the era of the *grande peur* of immigration, of inert

Labourist conservatism and frantic Conservative cries for blind laissez-faire and 'law and order'.

To this odd forgetfulness of the recent past, there corresponded an odd lack of imagination concerning possible futures. In the course of 1971 the left was able—at last!—to obtain a rhetorical identification with at least part of the substance of the country's nationalism. It almost instantly forgot the profoundly and historically conservative nature of that substance—a nature attested by the entire history of British imperialism, as well as by the painful experiences of yesterday. Yet who can doubt that, if Great Britain were to be excluded from Europe and thrust back into the isolation of the 1960s, this nature would be swiftly revealed again and exploited by its true masters? If the ruling class and its creatures had no alternative but to turn back and inwards, towards the surviving traditions of a purely national destiny, they would have to make the best of it. As a precondition they would effortlessly reappropriate their own property of nation-state culture and *Gemeinschaft*. Powell would return to claim his own. And in that case the left would turn out to have been no more than the sorcerer's apprentice who had temporarily harnessed the unclean spirits, only to be overwhelmed by them. What sort of 'crisis' would this be? How would it 'pose for the British people economic questions which would almost certainly have a socialist answer'? (to quote again from the fevered nationalist imagination of *Tribune's*, editor).

Raymond Williams concluded his thoughts on the great choice by saying: 'In the hard years immediately ahead . . . we shall indeed be thinking about and working in Europe, but about and in a different Europe from any the orthodox campaigns now see or propose. . . .' Is this not—one can scarcely resist the thought—the United States of Socialist Europe again, albeit in more tentative and nebulous form? Another Europe, at any rate, distinct from and opposed to the bourgeois or social-democratic Europe of Brussels and the European Movement. Raymond Williams, in this context, must be seen as an outstanding contemporary (perhaps the greatest) representative of a *national* culture: he represents the most valiant and unremitting effort to formulate a valid left-wing *Weltanschauung* out of the materials of national culture, through a kind of organic development of one rich nation-state heritage. All the more striking, therefore, is the coincidence between his conclusion and that of the marxists considered above. Marxism is (or is supposed to be, as everybody knows) an international culture, drawing its force and inspiration not from one but from the comparison and synthesis of many national experiences. Yet both the theorist of national community and the international marxists end up, by a *force majeure* concealed somewhere in their position, with this 'Red Europe'—with an abstract Europe, not yet in existence, to be constructed by the left, whose main discernible characteristic is that it *is not* and has nothing in common with the vulgar shopkeeper's atrocity Great Britain is about to join.

Consider again the profile of this general left-wing stance. Its basic dilemma is that of a felt equidistance between the alternatives of simple left-wing nationalism and the Common Market—that sole and

unpalatable way of transcending nationalism which the existing historical situation seems to present. Whether expressed as the tergiversations of Buridan's ass or as Williams' 'I can't register', it is relieved in the end by the purely theoretical and idealist 'third way' of the European socialist future—by a *spiritual* transcendence, so to speak, whose prime feature and definition is polar opposition to the *material* reality creeping so dismally into existence at the hands of President Pompidou, Mr Heath, Prime Minister Werner and the rest. Whether or not (as notably in the case of International Socialism) equidistance tended to give way to compromise with nationalism in the heat and dust of the anti-Market movement, the dilemma was little changed. For if the repellent quality (the negative charge) of one of the alternatives diminished a little for tactical-political reasons, it was also compensated for by even greater emphasis upon internationalism, the vanguard-to-be's transcendence of the present, etc. This mobilizing myth of the future has (by definition) no association with the dead, reactionary realities of the EEC. Once, Harman pointed out in his *International Socialism* essay, revolutionaries did support 'progressive' ventures of the bourgeoisie: 'Marx, for instance, gave support to the movement for German unity . . . But he did so in a period in which capitalism as a system was still struggling for supremacy against older forms of class society, and in the process preparing the preconditions for socialism. Today, however, these preconditions exist. Rationalization of the system means strengthening it at a time when . . . revolutionary change alone offers mankind any future'. And Birchall, even while criticizing Harman's position, in his own way quite strongly confirmed this essential diagnosis by declaring ' . . . that the Common Market is historically progressive, because it lays the basis for socialist internationalism . . . has never been the position of any of the genuine left'.

It is of course this diagnosis which renders the paralytic dilemma insoluble (save by a rhetorical *fuite en avanti*). One should note also, for the fact is certainly not without some significance, that this is the point which gives these marxist views—in spite of their professed contempt for the CPGB and the Labour-left—a very solid measure of agreement with Gollan's Iron Heel apparition and the general left-nationalist bugaboo of a European capitalism worse than the British sort. Differing as they do so widely on the meaning to be attached to internationalism, they nonetheless coincide suspiciously on the meaning of the Common Market for internationalism: none whatever. What is the nature of this consensus extending so astonishingly from Michael Foot, via John Gollan and Raymond Williams, to the outposts of IMG and IS? Is it plain common sense, or a shared prejudice?

Most common sense *is* shared prejudice. It would be difficult to find a better example of this truth than the present one. Firstly, such wide monochrome unanimity is in itself suspicious—above all (one would have thought) from that marxist point of view which looks for the contradictory and active side of things. Free trade, the agrarian and industrial revolutions, the formation of nation-states—all these are judged, in spite of their cruel and inhuman aspects, to have been also 'progressive' by nature. They were (and are, to the extent to which they are still going on) part of the development of that *Gesellschaft*

which gave rise to the labour and revolutionary movements, and upon whose development these depend. The European Common Market is a partial return to free trade after the era of national protectionism and autarchy, a continuation of the agrarian and industrial revolutions, and a tentative successor to the increasingly anachronistic nation-states of western Europe. Why then should it be judged in some basically different fashion? Why should the new form of all these profoundly contradictory phenomena not be deemed worthy (so to speak) of a single important contradiction? For Harman (and perhaps even for Birchall) time and contradiction have come to a stop in Europe: nothing worth while is left except the revolution. Capitalism has produced all the preconditions and bases for this revolution, and for internationalism: it has nothing more to offer. From this moment of history forward, everything depends, totally, upon the will-power of a new 'revolutionary vanguard'.

The error involved here is not a question of precise political or moral judgment, of deciding just how to apply labels like 'reactionary' or 'progressive' to the EEC. It is more fundamental than that. It consists in an ideological pre-empting of the issue, a kind of *a priori* relegation of an emergent and major historical phenomenon to one monochrome category. What it does is (approximately) to perceive the Common Market not as a development of 'capitalism' or 'bourgeois society'—like, say, industrialism, or parliamentarism, or early colonialism—but as a reaction against or a 'disease' of capitalism, like high imperialism or fascism. It is not a new development or 'stage' in late bourgeois society in Europe, but a (purely reactionary) attempt by European capital to save its own skin—which can consequently, be abstractly distanced and counterposed to 'our' Europe, the socialist *internationale*, the reality where all will be (in Williams' words) 'different' from what is now seen and proposed. The Common Market's Europe is not a reaction (however slow, hesitant, and self-contradictory) against and *away from* fascism and the epoch of imperialist savagery by the bourgeoisie; it is more like a sort of etherialized fascism, minus the uniforms, the anti-semitism, the *Führer*, the party dictatorship, and other old folklore. Comparatively few anti-Marketees openly employed this analogy (like Tynan in the letter mentioned above). This may be because it is more suited to moments of rhetorical hysteria than to rational argumentation. But it did surface occasionally; it is very near the surface in Gollan's vision of the Iron Heel and the Labour-left's perturbation about an 'inward-looking', ultra-capitalist, 'undemocratic', 'narrow nationalist' Europe; while the logic of even the marxist arguments described above seems to imply a *tacit* version of the same thing.¹⁰⁶

Capitalist *Gesellschaft* has, *in all essentials*, run its course. Hence, no new generation of difficult or fundamental adjustment lies ahead. Since

¹⁰⁶ It is presumably the subliminal operation of this category which explains a perplexing aspect of the anti-Market crusade: the way in which it was so repeatedly held (often by the same people) that the European Community is *both* an embryo totalitarian peril *and* an almost inexistent futility. Normally—as it were—it is a *dread menace to our freedoms*; but each time the member countries fall out over some

there is no new reality (in the relevant sense), there is no urgent need to decipher its meaning, to distinguish its 'progressive' aspect from its conservative or reactionary aspects, to see in which ways it helps 'our side' and in which ways it hinders it. Dialectical application is not required: for there is no new and contradictory social reality out there for it to work on. The old categories will do well enough. 'We know that Britain's accession to Cartel Europe will strengthen the ruling class', as Peter Sedgewick wrote. Hence, *we know* all we really need to know: that is, we know we have to combat it, as in integral bloc subsumed under one mental category (in the first place, by staying out of it!).

We know, indeed, that the Common Market is intended to strengthen the sinews and the world-position of European capitalism and its various ruling classes. What we do not know—and on the basis of this kind of analysis, cannot ever know—is whether, or in what ways, it may *also* strengthen the position and enlarge the real possibilities of the European working classes and European social revolutionaries. Yet, from the point of view of 'the dynamic of the class struggle', it is surely this question which is vital. Naturally, the makers and the propagandists of Community Europe never intended their construction to have such a consequence. But since when was the evolution of capitalist reality governed wholly by the 'intentions' of its political rulers? An odd, monolithic fatalism seems to underscore the left's attitude at this point. *We know* it all in advance, so to speak, and it can all be written off as bad, hopeless. The slaves on the old plantation hear that their masters are about to merge it with others in the neighbourhood, to form a more viable (but as yet indeterminate) consortium. They should inquire (one might think) whether the new enterprise—forced on the masters by unkind circumstance, after all—has some redeeming features from their own point of view. Might it not at least rescue them from the old rut of head-patting paternalism and familial idiocy? Not a bit of it! *They know* that under the new régime the beatings and lynchings will be worse and they will have even less chance of burning the mansion down than now. The slave-and-cotton economy has in all essentials run its course, and now—in its maturity—already offers all possible preconditions of emancipation. . .

The most vital historical questions, from the point of view of the class struggle, are not answered by the arguments considered above:

trivial issue (as they do nearly every week), it is immediately patent that the *whole thing is a farce* which is in course of disintegrating anyway—so why bother joining it? What such ludicrously incompatible ideas have in common is of course that both are forms of *exorcism*—and so can be entertained successively (or even simultaneously) by the same mind anxious above all to keep an ideological equilibrium undisturbed. It is curious and interesting, also, to see how (in spite of the doses of Stalinism and old-left nationalism so prominent in the mixture) this aspect of anti-Marketism rejoins the well-known Frankfurt School ideology of modern capitalist society, as found in certain works of (e.g.) Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse, which have tended to identify *all* later or contemporary developments of capitalism as potentially totalitarian (and hence to be totally *negated* by the revolution *en bloc*). On this, see G. Therborn, 'The Frankfurt School', *New Left Review* No. 63 (Sept-Oct 1970).

they are ideologically precluded. Yet the oddity—the absurdity, even—of the ideological position leaps to the eye. For example, how can it reasonably be maintained, in one and the same argument, *both* that ‘all the preconditions of socialism exist’ *and* that, in a major European country in 1971, the great mass of the working class and nearly all its important organizations and spokesmen were carried away by a frankly nationalistic crusade to defend ‘national sovereignty’? The contradiction is merely rendered more glaring by a laboured insistence on the ‘illusions’ of sovereignty, socialism-in-one-country, and so on. For if these are all illusions, then it follows that most workers are still profoundly victims of their false consciousness. And how then can it be pretended that the preconditions for an international socialism already exist? It is, surely, one precondition of such a socialism (and, incidentally, of the formation of a true ‘international vanguard’) that such illusions should have lost their grip, and that class consciousness should have become *decisively* more important than national consciousness.

Consider what is really the same point from another angle. If it is true that European capitalism has ended its ‘progressive’ career entirely, and already produced all the conditions of its own real transcendence, then it follows that the existing order of nations and national consciousness—the pre-Common Market order everyone is familiar with—is adequate, from a socialist point of view. But if that is true, then national struggles are (and can remain) the crucial factor: as Chris Harman put it, ‘national peculiarities still determine the tempo of the class struggle . . . the key demands relate to class power in particular countries’.¹⁰⁷ And if that is true, then the nationalists of the left are quite correct: Anthony Wedgwood Benn and the Communist Party of Great Britain are to be congratulated on their logic, and supported in their struggle. For it is not possible to see how, in such a world, the cause of international socialism could be better assisted than by a ‘national’ revolution—or if the nation should prove too strong to allow a revolution, by a ‘national path to socialism’! We should, clearly, put up with the preconditions which history has allowed us, and make the best of them. We should do so even if it means an undignified recourse to ‘chauvinism’. Where, in that case (as Peter Sedgewick also asked) is the harm in an alliance with flag-wavers?

The question of alliances may, indeed, be taken as a central and indicative one in this knot of ambiguous attitudes. In one sense it might be thought quite secondary; for when such a complex historical problematic as the Common Market is narrowed down to a simplistic political choice of ‘for or against’, weird bedfellows are hard to avoid. It would be as absurd to condemn a pro-Common Market socialist for being, in this sense, an ‘ally’ of the Bundesbank, ICI or the European Movement, as it would to condemn anti-Marketeters for being allied to Powell, the Monday Club, or the patriot scoundrels of the Labour front bench. One cannot help who happens to be standing

¹⁰⁷ *International Socialism*, No. 49 (Autumn 1971), p. 18.

somewhere alongside of one, in this kind of line-up. But beyond the superficial question of alignments, there is a deeper, more real question—a question of ‘alliance’ in a more valid sense. This hinges upon the real balance of forces present in the issue, and upon the real (conscious or unconscious) relationship linking those aligned: what one might call, in a Hegelian phrase, the ‘inner connection of dispositions’ prevailing among them. Are they indeed related quite contingently, standing along the same line for (possibly) quite different and independent motives? Or is there a subterranean force of cohesion, a uniting principle of solidarity there as well?

If one looks at the pro- and anti-Market alignments in the light of these questions, then the shadows fall somewhat differently. For while it is hard to see any genuine cohesion between the pro-Market left and the forces of the State or big capital, it is—on the contrary—all too easy to perceive an immensely powerful principle of union on the other side. It was, as a matter of fact, so hard to impugn the motives of the pro-Marketeters that Clive Jenkins had to resort to the hoariest device known to man or socialist: saying that their hands were in the till. What else could a poor nationalist do? Socialists are not to be commonly observed in Trafalgar Square, the Champs Elysées, or Piazza del Popolo waving a starry blue flag nobody would even recognize, visibly in transports of European chauvinism. If asked the last time they saw a socialist (or for that matter a capitalist) breathless with emotion over the future of Europe, most people on the left would have to think quite hard. Hence, it is necessary to say they are (directly or indirectly) in the pay of FIAT or British Leyland, or else that they are vulgar bourgeois careerists who see a personal future in Europe.

But on the other side, naturally, such improbable conspiratorial diagnoses are quite superfluous: everybody knows what the force of gravity is which is operating there, and everybody is aware of its strength. It is the entire force of a profound and many-faceted national culture and consciousness, active upon many levels of personality and ideology, and rooted in over a century of predominantly national experience and struggles. The two forces in the issue are not, in any real political sense, equal—not for the left, not on the terrain where it had to face up to the choice. One was almost laughably more powerful and effective than the other.

The real question of ‘alliance’ is surely governed by this fact. Where did the true risk of alignment lie? In a temporary parallelism of views with the Heath government, Roy Jenkins, big business, and other enemies—a coincidence which *in the long run*, if argued and explained in a rational manner, no one but a wilful lunatic could have misunderstood? In an alignment like that (e.g.) among Marx, Engels, Lassalle and Bismarck on the unity of Germany in the 19th century? Or in coincidence with the enveloping tide of regressive nationalist illusion set in motion—part consciously, part instinctively—on the left and the diehard right? In a conjunctural and short-lived symmetry with the feeble, ambiguous, relatively powerless bourgeois ideology of ‘Europeanism’—or in a return to ‘alliance’ with the womb, with the

strongest, blindest, most tenacious of all political ideologies? There was little risk in any imputed 'alliance' with the former, by what Ian Birchall would call the 'genuine left', for the simple reason that no such relationship was wanted, possible, or even conceivable. But there was every risk in an 'alliance' with the latter, since this alignment—if genuine—could not help being subordination, surrender to a vastly superior collective power which wanted, indeed confidently demanded, that every segment of the 'genuine left' join in its chorus. The situation is not at all like those others which Sedgewick refers to, the alliance over nuclear disarmament or incomes policy. These were particular issues of policy, however important. Whereas this is a question about the very form of political life and action, now and in future, a question of a far profounder—and so far more exacting—character.

If the former choice appeared impossibly difficult (and was in fact made by next to nobody) this is, as we have seen, because it seemed impossible to think that the ruling classes, capitalism itself, could be—even quite unintentionally, half-blindly—evolving in a partly 'progressive' fashion. It was unthinkable that capitalism itself should be producing certain conditions of a concrete 'internationalism'—accomplishing, that is, for its own purposes and in its own way the sacred, exclusive, long-held aim of socialism. *We know* that this cannot be so. Is it wrong to detect a note of complacency in this certainty? And in the complacency, the reflection of a prolonged era of vital stagnation and too great fixity of horizons, where problems of this anguishing kind never had to be asked? Is there not also a trace of fossilized marxism about it, of the mechanical imposition of hardened categories—even by those who have *politically* quite rejected the world of Stalinism and dialectical-materialist dogma? And then, underneath the fossil categories—shielded by them as it were—a certain amount of carefully-tended *sacro egoismo* of party or group, consecrated to a mission against the world, but at the same time protecting that mission from the world?

IX Beyond the Nation

'In general, the protective system of our day is conservative, while the free trade system is destructive. It breaks up old nationalities and pushes the antagonism of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie to the extreme point. In a word, the free trade system hastens the social revolution. It is in this revolutionary sense alone, gentlemen, that I vote in favour of free trade . . .'

Karl Marx, *On the Question of Free Trade* (1848)¹⁰⁸

In the 'Great Debate' revolutionary socialists groped for phrases that could condemn international capitalism, evoke a United States of Europe, and appeal immediately to the British working class all at the same time. Behind this evident unease lay an attitude, half assumption and half wish: that there is no new national question. How can there be when the nation concerned is so old? But it is precisely the decline of the European nation which has created the new problem.

Capitalist forces of production long ago outstripped the confines of nation-states. Imperialism and inter-imperialist conflicts have dominated the history of capitalist Europe for that reason. Now, partly to defend themselves against other imperialisms and partly to reassert the global importance they still strive for, the major capitalist countries in Europe are compelled to sink their differences. Similar but conflicting international roles and nationalistic hostilities will be exchanged, they fondly hope, for a *Europe des patries* with unified home affairs and a single policy *vis-a-vis* the rest of the world.

Nevertheless, over the Common Market, as over Ulster, the left found itself faced by situations in which nationalism had become the dominant *motif*. In both, although for different reasons and with different results, archaic responses swallowed up contemporary questions. And in both, the left—above all the marxist left—found it extremely difficult to distinguish one from another and see where its future interests lay.

In part this is because the conflict at the heart of the contemporary national question is one between new content and old forms: the new socio-economic content of the contemporary class struggle squeezed out by the very evolution of capitalist society, and the chronically shrunken national institutions inherited from the past. This disparity has been there a long time. But it was particularly and dangerously acute in Britain in 1971 as the ruling class moved more decidedly on to a new course.

¹⁰⁸ Barratt Brown and Hughes, in the pamphlet referred to above (p. 78) used some words from this same speech of Marx's as preface and justification: 'To call cosmopolitan exploitation universal brotherhood is an idea that could only be engendered in the brain of the bourgeoisie'. The implication seemed to be that the Common Market is today's 'cosmopolitan exploitation', and that Marx would have opposed it. If so, it is necessary to point out that he in fact always preferred and defended the cosmopolitanism of the 'free trade system', nowhere more clearly than in this address—though naturally without subscribing to its ideological disguise of 'universal brotherhood' (which a good deal of today's puerile Europeanist propaganda repeats).

This situation contrasted sharply with the familiar issues of national politics and national liberation from colonial regimes: not least in the fact (however hard for socialists to interpret or even admit) that it created a certain *objective* coincidence of interests as between the revolutionary left and advanced elements within the ruling class. For both—and indeed far more for revolutionaries—old national forms blocked their potential development. For the Labour Party, the opposite was true.

The Great Debate brought into question the ideology and institutions of the nation. These are essential to reformism—whether in capitulation to the ‘national interest’ over wage bargains, or in collaboration over imperialist alliances—and it remains essential for the revolutionary left to delineate itself *as sharply as possible* from social chauvinism. The arguments above have attempted to show that, by its prevalently national-traditionalist orientation, the left wing of the nation-state’s political establishment defended both itself *and the establishment as a whole*. Through their defence, the old forms retained or reaffirmed their grip over the disturbing new content. It was time for things to change. This prevented them from changing too much, from drifting ‘out of hand’—it made for continuity, for the containment of rending social pressures inside the nations familiar political structures. The fact that Labour did this was not surprising, even though it meant its leaders standing on their heads. The Labour Party fulfilled its *raison d’être* most exactly. It channelled working-class hostility into futile ‘opposition’ to the government and at the same time isolated it from revolutionary politics. For the revolutionary left however entry into the Common Market increases the chances of effective political opposition to capitalism because it weakens the traditional hegemony of the ruling class. There is no threat that workers will regard the EEC as anything but a capitalist enterprise. Support for entry can only increase the tempo of revolutionary politics, and farther diminish the role of social democracy. Opposition to entry, on the contrary, while it may appear to oppose the ruling class down the line, in fact provides it with a rearguard action which will allow it to take the ‘nation’, battered but securely in one piece, into the Common Market with them. While there was a coincidence of antagonistic political interests between the revolutionary left and the ruling class over entry, the type of opposition to entry which has dominated the labour movement has been directly in the interests of the ruling class themselves.

‘One may declare oneself an enemy of the constitutional regime without declaring oneself a friend of the ancien regime . . .’ Marx pointed out in the text on *Free Trade* referred to above.¹⁰⁹ Socialists had of course to criticize and see beyond the world of free trade and the bourgeois-democratic constitutionalism of 1789 or 1848—just as, today, they should be able to denounce and see farther than the sort of united Ireland or united Europe which the bourgeois regimes

¹⁰⁹ The address on ‘Free Trade’ (a speech made to the Brussels Democratic Association in January 1848) is usually reprinted as an appendix to *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847)—see e.g. the currently available edition of the latter by International Publishers (New York, 1971).

of Heath, Lynch and Pompidou are working towards. But it does not follow that one must remain, or become again, a friend of the declining nation-state or its moribund nationalism. Still less does it follow that one should ever *prefer* it politically where such a choice is given. On the contrary, a *revolutionary* left—a left not irredeemably entangled in the structures and illusions of the ‘ancien regime’—must always choose in the other sense. Its interests drive it towards the future, not the past. In its perennial choice between evils, the guiding slogan has in this sense to be: ‘Better the Devil one does *not* know . . .’

It knows the demons of the nation-state and nationalism only too well, after all. The modern left in Europe is indeed largely the by-product of the great social process in which, during the last century, these nation-states mobilized and educated the new masses of the industrial revolution. Yet even as it uplifted them in this way and established a general culture level, nationalism imposed a profoundly reactionary stamp upon the whole process. Even as it benefited from the transformation and gave birth to the mass organizations of modern times, the left was forced away from its original goal, the European social revolution. The reactionary aspects of Europe’s modern wave of ‘nation-building’ became more and more dominant from the era of high imperialism onwards; and the goal to which they led the historical process was not the social revolution but the ‘total war’ of 1942 to 1945, not a new age of humanity but the near-destruction of that revolution’s most priceless inheritance, in the shape of the European-Jewish culture which Coughlan believes never to have existed. It may be understandable that after this secular process the left remains instinctively attached to its nation-state mould—especially in the context of the post-1945 restoration of Europe’s old politics, and above all in Britain, which for a quarter of a century has suffered uniquely from the stranglehold of an over-organic continuity with the past. But it is scarcely defensible.

Especially as it has not even any tactical justification. For one of the more encouraging aspects and perhaps the most striking phenomena of all in the complex of events was the underlying *weakness* of the mass psychology which the nationalist reactions now have to rely upon. Residual mass nationalism is still important enough to be mobilized by Labour and manipulated in the way we saw—within, one should not forget, perhaps the most conservative nation-state context in Europe. But at no time did it seem likely that this movement would become uncontrollable—that it would develop into a genuine mass action to prevent the ‘betrayal’ at any price, governed by the sort of popular hysteria and demagogic leadership which (e.g.) Powell was only too anxious to provide. The tame or ‘phony’ character of what took place depended precisely upon this unlikelihood. Even more striking, the impact of the Irish crisis upon popular attitudes was visibly far less than it would have been a generation ago. Outside the living anachronism of Ulster, there was extraordinarily little of that reaction of outraged chauvinism and wild vengeance-seeking which the past history of Anglo-Irish relations had made so familiar. In both Great Britain and the Irish Republic the masses remained concerned but (by old nationalist standards) *relatively* passive and indifferent.

In other words, the nationalism of the Labour Party and the anti-Market campaign although still powerful is a declining asset. The tide has fallen a long way. As the history of Powellism has shown, in conditions of isolation and paralysis, where 'national narrowness' and archaic political forms have persisted too long, it may be forced to rise again. Its pathological possibilities are by no means exhausted, given the right circumstances. But without these circumstances (in Britain's case, e.g., a grim battle for national and economic survival outside the Common Market) it is now relatively weak and—presumably—will continue to waste away.

By contrast the Common Market—Europe's newest 'constitutional regime'—represents a new phase in the development of bourgeois society in Europe. To vote in favour of that regime 'in a revolutionary sense alone' does not imply surrender to or alliance with the left's enemies. It means exactly the opposite. It signifies recognizing and meeting them as enemies, for what they are, upon the terrain of reality and the future. It implies a stronger and more direct opposition to them, because an opposition unfettered by the archaic delusions of Europe's *anciens régimes*. In 1971 the British left did choose to oppose by retreating determinedly within these delusions—indeed, by making of them a fortress against a Europe imagined as sheer capitalism fostered by sheer bureaucracy. But what did it gain by this tactic? Did it in the smallest degree help the growth of a clearer class consciousness, or give a more articulate general expression to the working-class *malaise* of the moment? Did it move one millimetre towards that renovation and reorganization of the socialist left which is so long overdue in the country? Or did it simply provide a little deodorant to cover the smell of decaying Labourist and nationalist tradition?

Within the left—it should also be said—marxism's stake in this development is a special one. For even in degradation, even in a fossilised state, it represents and preserves the true nerve of a European culture. If the culture and the politics of Brussels are so nerveless, this is largely because the left, and above all the marxist left, have been absent from their history. We saw earlier both how marxist internationalism is preserved like a holy relic and invoked at moments of idealism, and how little corresponds to this abstraction on the level of the concrete. But how can this void be filled, how can a concrete internationalism be re-formed, except in a European context? Europe is not the world, say certain imperialists-in-reverse for whom nothing less than the whole globe is enough. Perhaps not, but it never was and does not have to be, in order to be preferable to the politics of the individual nation-state and the culture of nationalism. Marxism's Jewish grandeur was created almost entirely *against* the rising tide of that culture, by exiles, émigrés and cosmopolitan refugees, and the phoney *Volksgemeinschaften* of the imperialist nation-states has always been anathema to it. 'National' marxism has always been a joke in doubtful taste. It is difficult to imagine it rediscovering much of that grandeur, that dimension of concrete internationalism, except in a contexts like that furnished by the Common Market for Western Europe.

Who Gained ?

Finally, one need only ask who gained from the 'Great Debate' and who lost as a result of it.

The Conservative party and government gained much from it, clearly. The Common Market success signified a recovery of nerve and a badly-needed sense of achievement: it enabled them to rally their political basis in the middle classes very effectively—while of course the 'new horizon' also usefully distracted popular attention from problems it was unable to solve (Ireland, inflation, the economic class struggle, etc). But the Labour Party too benefited from its impact. Through its phoney 'opposition' it—and those other sectors of the traditional left-wing establishment who joined in—rediscovered a little *raison d'être*, an appearance of purpose and animation. By defending the nation, they defended themselves—staving off, if only for a time, their own bankruptcy and decline.

On the other hand, it was the real social struggle of the period which was the loser. From the later days of the Labour government up to the present, the *class* struggle of British society has displayed an almost uninterrupted vitality. There is little room here to analyze this process. And it would certainly not be part of any such analysis to deny the many deeply conservative and contradictory aspects of such struggles—their frequent parochialism, their defences of privilege, their chaos and absence of perspective. Nevertheless, the dominant impression they produce is surely a different one. It is one of increasing confidence and self-activity, and of a sharper intolerance of traditional injustices. Whether in the Pilkington strike of 1970, the Clyde shipyard work-in, the engineering workers' occupations, the miners' strikes of 1971–2, or the more recent dockers' disputes, this spirit was in evidence. It was frequently expressed in a pressure for new forms and tactics of struggle, and directed (at least in the first instance) against traditional structures of leadership.

Yet such pressures have not found the new political forms which they need. The prolonged ferment has been contained inside the conventional structures. The latter now possess (as we saw in the case of the Labour Party) relatively few inner resources: they have been enfeebled by a long process of erosion. But they are still perfectly capable of exploiting the conjunctural opportunities which present themselves, in order to 'counter-attack' and re-establish what they can of their authority. Economically, the new Industrial Relations Act has furnished an occasion of this kind. Politically, it was the Common Market controversy which did so. And of the two the second was more valuable—and so seized upon with greater avidity—because it was the safest, the most intrinsically conservative issue available. The industrial legislation conflict (in spite of its potential as a mobilizer of traditional Labourist opinion for the next elections) remains dangerous, even explosive; whereas the debate about Europe both revolved upon familiar (not to say boring) terrain and offered access to the safest political bet of all, injured nationalist sentiment.

There was, in other words, a profound difference between the *real* conflict at work and the *apparent* conflict that figured in parliament and the press. The real conflict moved, blindly and in utter confusion, towards a disruption of the status quo; the apparent conflict around scarecrows like national sovereignty and the White Cliffs was moving, in spite of its pretensions, to repair and sustain the same status quo in the name of the 'nation'. The real material conflict had pushed Britain's national capitalism towards bankruptcy in the previous years; it continually challenged and undermined the leadership of the trade union movement; its disenchantment with Labour had prepared the way for the electoral defeat of 1970. The apparent, spiritual conflict over the Englishman's Parliament and our community folkways took some of the heat off capitalism; it gave the union leaders a common flag to brandish; and it prepared the way for Labour's return to power in future elections. The invalid was made a new man by his quick communion in the whorehouse of national traditions. And no one need have the slightest doubt (nor should have done even at the Great Debate's wilting climax) that, when the moment is right, the Labour Party, the TUC, and the Communist Party *will* trail along into the European Community in the footsteps of the ruling class and the Jenkinsites. What else can they do? They will proceed, however, in better conservative order and with better traditional morale as a result of their spurious exercises over the body and soul of 'national sovereignty'.

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