

Roy Jenkins

From London to Rome

THE DEBATE about Britain's relations with Europe, after being kept under the carpet for years, burst upon the public only in the few months before Mr. Macmillan's announcement of negotiations with the Six. But it was a somewhat partial bursting out. Parliament, in particular, played practically no part in the process. This is because the question, almost uniquely for an issue of central political importance, has split both parties in about equal proportions, and neither of the front benches (who between them control most parliamentary time) like open discussion in these circumstances. Apart from three hours on a private member's motion there was no Commons debate between July, 1960, and July, 1961.

Perhaps as a result of this political confusion the passions of the public have not yet been greatly involved. Anyone who tried to organise a mass march either for or against the Common Market would, I suspect, get a very poor response. But informative meetings on the subject are now a good deal better attended than are those on most others. And there is suddenly a lot of private talk. Curiosity rather than commitment remains the dominant mood of the public, however.

Where, then, has the debate been conducted? The answer, principally, is in the press. The abdication of Parliament, combined with first the ignorance and then the caution of the public, means that the newspapers have had an unusual opportunity to make the running on a major issue of policy. And they have almost all responded to the opportunity at least to the extent of taking up firmly committed positions. A year ago only the papers of the moderate left—the *Guardian*, the *Observer*, and the still extant *News Chronicle*—were firmly for Britain's membership of the Common Market. Since then

they have been joined by two powerful allies from the Right, the *Daily Mail* and (a little slower into the column) the *Daily Telegraph*. Against this, on the Right, must be balanced the vast increase in the shrillness of the opposition of the *Daily Express*, and the growing tendency of *The Times* to end its inconclusive leaders by stressing the dangers rather than the advantages of going into Europe.

ON THE LEFT, however, the increase of support for going in has been overwhelming. Apart from the *Daily Worker* only the "gnarled old imperialists" of the *New Statesman* are now standing out. The *Guardian* has remained firm and clear throughout, and the *Observer* exhibited only the slightest trace of a temporary wobble a few months ago. But the striking change has been the addition of the mass circulation, firmly pro-Labour papers to these radical, quality journals. Before the *Daily Herald* passed under the control of the *Mirror* group in March it had been cautious on the issue, but no more so than its stable mate-to-be, the *Daily Mirror*. Since May, however, the two papers have reinforced each other in a sustained and powerfully presented pro-Europe campaign. How great has been its effect upon Left-wing opinion in this country is difficult to say, although the fact that most Labour voters (and, indeed, most Conservative voters) have seen the issue presented in these or similar terms must have had something to do with the surprisingly favourable results of the Gallup Poll's questions about the electorate's willingness to surrender some sovereignty.

PERHAPS more significant than the effect of the newspaper debate upon public opinion, however, has been the fact that it has enabled

the main lines of the controversy and the underlying attitudes of those on either side to be clearly seen. What emerges increasingly is that it is really a dispute, not about trade statistics or the articles of the Treaty of Rome, but about Britain's whole rôle in the world.

Those in favour of our going in believe that our greatest domestic danger is that of a drab, complacent, narrow insularity, and our greatest international danger that of exaggerating our power and expecting the rest of the world to accept us at our own, rather inflated, valuation.

Those against our entry are divided about what they think of the present pattern and quality of life in Britain, but they are united in believing that in so far as it needs improvement this can be achieved by our own unaided efforts, without much fertilisation from abroad. And they are united too in believing that Britain possesses stores of wisdom or power denied to other European countries and that it is our duty not to merge these with our neighbours but to use them for some form of world leadership, whether this be exercised on a basis of force or on a basis of moral leadership. In this respect the old Suez group and the unilateralists are perfectly natural allies against the Common Market. Lord Hinchinbrooke and Mr. Michael Foot both see the world, for their different purposes, as something which necessarily has its centre in Britain and which is longing to be led by us.

Naturally both of these schools of thought are great upholders of the Commonwealth argument against entry into Europe. Lord Hinchinbrooke may think of the Commonwealth more in terms of Sir Roy Welensky and Mr. Foot more in terms of Mr. Nkrumah, but with the aid of a little rose-tinting in their spectacles they are both able to unite in seeing it as something which underpins the economic and political strength of Britain. So, indeed, do many other people who take a much less extreme position than Mr. Foot and Lord Hinchinbrooke, and there can be little doubt that the Commonwealth objection—encouraged by the Government's extraordinarily inept plan for the missions of the three ministers—has in the past few months become both the most powerful and the most widely held.

It is an objection based on a mixture of false premise and false choice. The false premise is that the Commonwealth is capable of offering Britain the same advantages, from an alternative source, as those which Europe offers. What

Europe offers us economically is the stimulus of becoming part of a very large, unified, dynamic, and highly competitive market. This would not result in a great and sudden switch of our export trade from the Commonwealth to Europe, although no doubt the shift in this direction, which has in any event been noticeable for several years past, might be somewhat accentuated. But the important result to look for is that on the basis of this wider market and the greater specialisation and adaptability which should go with it, we might recover our sagging competitive position and improve our export performance, not only in Europe but in third markets and in the Commonwealth itself. Once we had done this we would have broken through the core of our present difficulties—our inability to sustain any period of expansion without ruining our balance of payments; and we might have some hope of providing what the new Commonwealth really needs—a reliable source of long-term capital and an expanding market for its products, foodstuffs, raw materials and the simpler manufactured goods.

The Commonwealth markets themselves, however, offer us no prospect of achieving the essential break-through. In the first place they have shown none of the capacity for rapid growth which Europe has consistently displayed over the past decade. Secondly, and more importantly, the Commonwealth is in no sense of the word a unified market. Both the old white Commonwealth and the new coloured Commonwealth are determined—probably quite rightly at their stage of development—to build up their own industries behind the protection of a tariff wall. This goes as much for Canada and for Australia as for Ghana or Malaya. The last thing that any of these countries would think of doing is allowing a free run for United Kingdom manufactured goods in their territories. A proposal for a Commonwealth customs union is out of the question for the simple but adequate reason that it would receive no support in the Commonwealth.

THIS IS THE FALSE CHOICE ASPECT of the economic argument. The danger is that some of the Commonwealth governments, preoccupied by impending elections and more firmly in favour of self-determination for themselves than for the mother country, may for the moment try to obscure the falsity of the choice. But it will only be over the next few crucial months. Were we to remain out of Europe and to become some-

thing of an economic backwater as a result—a fate towards which we in any event show only too strong a national tendency—there can be no doubt that the economic disintegration of the Commonwealth would be greatly accelerated. Whatever sentimental arguments may be used during the months of negotiation they will count for nothing if by 1970 we are still a sluggish, crisis-ridden country incapable of providing the development funds which are required of us. The other members of the Commonwealth will be much more inclined to turn their backs on us and to go their own ways than if we are in Europe, but prosperous and dynamic. The future of the Commonwealth is likely to be far more damaged by the Government deciding we cannot afford Mr. Julius Nyerere's £8 million than by any number of articles of the Treaty of Rome.

THE POLITICAL ASPECTS of the Commonwealth objection are largely symmetrical with the economic ones. Here again we have the false premise and the false choice.

The false premise is that the Commonwealth has real political unity today. It is a loose consultative grouping of immense value, but there is hardly a single major issue in world politics upon which a united Commonwealth line could easily be evolved. The false choice lies in the suggestion that, if the medium-sized nation state is outdated, we might solve this problem by merging some of our sovereignty with the Commonwealth rather than with Europe. The objections to this are threefold. *First* there is the fact that, even if the will were present, the Commonwealth, principally perhaps for geographical reasons, but also for ethnic, religious, and economic ones, would be a most unsuitable unit for even the loosest form of confederation. *Second*, the will is not present. Most Commonwealth nations have gained their sovereignty much too recently to contemplate surrendering any effective part of it. They would be as loath to accept such an arrangement as they would be to accept a Commonwealth customs union. *Third*, a real pooling of sovereignty with the Commonwealth would pose far greater problems than a similar arrangement with Europe. One has only to consider, on the one hand, the difficulty of population weighting arrangements with India and, on the other, what the most violent advocates of imperial unity in the Beaverbrook press, convulsed as they are at present by the dangers of importing the low living standards of Southern Italy, would say if a merging of

our institutions and way of life with those of Nigeria or Jamaica were to become a real possibility.

Commonwealth unity or European unity is therefore a false antithesis, and those who say they want the former rather than the latter are really saying that they want to stay as we are. This, of course, may be a tenable position, although not a very inspiring one. A long-term desire to cling to our little corner of sovereignty may be the true wish of many people, but it is certainly not compatible with the traditional if sometimes rather theoretical internationalism of the left, or with the pursuit of world government which is now the declared ultimate aim of both the two major parties. A world authority will certainly not be created overnight, and it is most unlikely ever to be created if we shy away with horror from any practical surrender of sovereignty.

THERE is also a special dilemma which the left is creating for itself. This is the dilemma between its general internationalist approach and its fear that any surrender of sovereignty would inhibit the creation of "socialism in one country." This is argued with particular force in relation to Europe (with plenty of anti-Adenauer and anti-de Gaulle undertones), but it is a difficulty which would also arise if we were to enter most imaginable groupings wider than, or outside, Europe. Atlantic Union would certainly not make the problem any easier. Nor would a tie-up with those new heroes of the extreme Left, Mr. Diefenbaker, Mr. Menzies, and Mr. Holyoake. Even within the puny unit of E.F.T.A. (the particular embarrassment of Dr. Salazar apart) the Scandinavian Prime Ministers would certainly prove rather cool on Clause Four and similar issues for the taste of Mr. Foot and his associates. The fact is that a belief that we must at all costs preserve our right to do what we want with our own (whether for socialist or imperialist or simple xenophobic reasons) necessarily implies an isolationist, contracting-out attitude to the world, totally at variance with the internationalist tradition of the Left.

LOOKED AT IN MORE PRACTICAL and more specifically European terms, would joining the Six be likely to inhibit the rate of social progress in this country? Only those who are still living in the world of 1949 could answer with a firm yes, for no one who has observed the world of the

fifties can believe that Britain is a less Tory nation than the dominant powers of the E.E.C. For rapidity of economic growth (France, Germany, and Italy), for the fullest of full employment (Germany and France), for highly successful nationalised industries (France), for a model system of economic planning (France), and for a most imaginative and generous system of retirement benefits (Germany), the Six have far more to show the Left than anything which this country has achieved for years past.

There are some, however, who would dismiss all this as being unimportant compared with the political image which Western Europe presents to the world, and with which we must on no account get ourselves besmirched. The France of Algeria and Bizerta, this argument runs, the Belgium of the Congo, the Germany of intransigent irredentism, are all countries close association with which will damage our standing, particularly in Africa and Asia. It would weaken our capacity to lead and influence the emergent nations. The first objection to this argument is that it is intolerably and typically pharisaical, based on the complacent belief that we are not as other men are, and that if we rub our hands sufficiently unctuously no one will notice the dirt of Suez or of Cyprus. Secondly, it is based upon the central fallacy of what may be called the new imperialism—the view that everyone is waiting for a lead from us. This is only marginally less dangerous than the old imperialist view that everyone liked being dominated by us.

Thirdly, it assumes that if we do not approve of all the policies of the Western European governments our right course is to turn our back on the Channel and hope for the best. Such a view is surely compounded of historical and geographical myopia in about equal proportions. Britain's ability to contract out of Western Europe came to an end at the beginning of August forty-seven years ago, and everything which has happened since then has made detachment less and not more possible. The continuation of Franco-German friendship, the maintenance of stable democratic régimes in the

Six, the adoption by their governments of liberal colonial policies and moderate cold-war attitudes are all major British interests. But they are far more likely to be promoted by our exercising influence within Europe than by our standing sullenly and self-righteously on the side-lines.

Furthermore, it is not merely within Europe that our influence will depend upon our participation. Were we to remain out, what is likely to be the value, in a decade's time, of our "special relationship" with the United States? The exclusiveness of this relationship is clearly already far more attractive to London than to Washington. The last desire of the American Government is that we should remain out of Europe in order to keep ourselves "only unto them," and few things could be more fruitless than a relationship in which one partner—and the weaker one—remains ostentatiously faithful against the express wishes of the other. There can be little doubt that if we pursued this course we would make it certain that by 1970 the main axis of Western power ran from Washington to Brussels (as the capital of the Six) while we ourselves became peripheral and unimportant.

THE CHOICE which faces us, however, involves more than our future influence in NATO, and more than our future rate of economic growth.

Britain, at present, is suffering from a general ineffectiveness of performance and from a national mood which is half misplaced complacency and half a growing lack of self-confidence. As a result we could easily go into a drab decline, turning in upon ourselves, blaming the world for our own misfortunes, occasionally deceiving ourselves with dreams of a grandeur which impresses nobody else, and behaving generally like a soured and rejected elderly female relation who is living a provincial life in straitened circumstances and disliking it very much indeed.

The adventure of going into Europe is from almost every point of view the best prophylactic against this dismal development.

Harold Pinter

The Examination

WHEN WE BEGAN, I allowed him intervals. He expressed no desire for these, nor any objection. And so I took it upon myself to adjudge their allotment and duration. They were not consistent, but took alternation with what I must call the progress of our talks. With the chalk I kept I marked the proposed times upon the blackboard, before the beginning of a session, for him to examine, and to offer any criticism if he felt so moved. But he made no objection, nor, during our talks, expressed any desire for a break in the proceedings. However, as I suspected they might benefit both of us, I allowed him intervals.

The intervals themselves, when they occurred, at whatever juncture, at whatever crucial point, preceded by whatever deadlock, were passed, naturally, in silence. It was not uncommon for them to be both preceded and followed by an equal silence, but this is not to say that on such occasions their purpose was offended. Frequently his disposition would be such that little could be achieved by insistence, or by persuasion. When Kullus was disposed to silence I invariably acquiesced, and prided myself on those occasions with tactical acumen. But I did not regard these silences as intervals, for they were not, and neither, I think, did Kullus so regard them. For if Kullus fell silent, he did not cease to participate in our examination. Never, at any time, had I reason to doubt his active participation, through word and through silence, between interval and interval, and I recognised what I took to be his devotion as actual and unequivocal, besides, as it seemed to me, obligatory. And so the

nature of our silence within the frame of our examination, and the nature of our silence outside the frame of our examination, were entirely opposed.

Upon my announcement of an interval Kullus would change, or act in such a manner as would suggest change. His behaviour, on these occasions, was not consistent, nor, I am convinced, was it initiated by motives of resentment or enmity, although I suspect Kullus was aware of my watchfulness. Not that I made any pretence to be otherwise. I was obliged to remark, and, if possible, to verify, any ostensible change in his manner, whether it was outside the frame of our examination or not. And it is upon this point that I could be accused of error. For gradually it appeared that these intervals proceeded according to his terms. And where both allotment and duration had rested with me, and had become my imposition, they now proceeded according to his dictates, and became his imposition.

For he journeyed from silence to silence, and I had no course but to follow. Kullus's silence, where he was entitled to silence, was compounded of numerous characteristics, the which I duly noted. But I could not always follow his courses, and where I could not follow, I was no longer his dominant.

KULLUS's predilection for windows was not assumed. At every interval, he retired to the window, and began from its vantage, as from a source. On approaching initially when the break was stated, he paid no attention to the aspect beyond, either in day-time or in night-time. And only in his