

## PREFACE

The politics of Western Europe have been dominated by the theme of European unity since the end of the Second World War. Two bloody and fratricidal wars in the present century had bred a sense of remorse and recrimination among thinking Europeans and as an end-product of this European self-introspection was born the European Economic Community.

As a major European nation, Britain was invited by the initiators of the European Movement to play a leading part. But doubts and scepticism about the wisdom of linking its fortunes with Europe in such a radical way after keeping its distance from the continent for centuries kept away successive British Governments, Labour and Conservative. Britain was considered by its leaders and people to be too much of an internationalist, having special ties with the United States and the Commonwealth, to link its destiny exclusively with one continent.

However, this delusion of grandeur was shattered with the Suez debacle and various other constraints in the mid-1950s, and the country had to turn to Europe. The entry into the Common Market proved to be long and arduous thanks mainly to General De Gaulle's obstinacy.

The present study was embarked upon with this historical background in mind. My curiosity on the subject was generated during my long stay in Britain throughout most of the 1970s when the issue of membership of the European Community was one of the most intense controversies in that country. I was primarily motivated to ask myself these questions : Having finally succeeded in

securing entry into the Community how has Britain fared as a member ? What has been the impact on its domestic politics and the economy ? And how have the historic relationships with the Commonwealth and the United States, which had such powerful appeals to British hearts and minds, been affected ? What about the newly fashioned relationship with its partners in the Community? Has Britain been finally, as someone put it, 'Europeanized' ?

This study is a product of the research that was undertaken to try and answer these questions. It has been done with the help of the mass of primary and secondary source materials available on the subject in India, Britain and Belgium, and also with the help of extensive interviews with important personalities who were involved in shaping the relationship - both in Britain and the European Communities - during the period under review.

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