Chapter 3

THE LABOUR'S CONVERSION TO MEMBERSHIP OF THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY


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Chapter 3

The Labour's Conversion to Membership of the European Economic Community

The Labour Party won the 1964 Election by a slender overall majority of 5. It was this threadbare majority which constrained the Labour Government led by Harold Wilson from taking major policy initiatives for the next two years. Moreover, another serious limitation that haunted the Labour Government of 1964-70, even after winning the 1966 Election by a comfortable majority was the balance of payments deficit and the weak sterling. It is no exaggeration to say that no single aspect of the Labour Government went unaffected and uninfluenced by the continually weakening of the pound. And no less was the Common Market issue.

The Common Market, which ceased to be a public issue soon after the 1963 French veto, was almost a non-issue even in the 1964 electoral campaign. Both the major parties deliberately de-emphasized the issue for fear of inflaming the rival camps within their respective parties.

Even after the election, the issue hardly mattered for the Labour Government quite for a considerable period. It was mainly because the new Government stepped into power with different foreign policy priorities in which the Common
Market was the least favoured issue. Closely resembling the post-war Attlee Government in foreign policy, the Labour Government of Harold Wilson too attached greater importance to the 'special relationship' with America, followed by the Commonwealth and then to Europe. Although "in his Bevanite period, he had made a number of speeches critical of American policy, such attitudes found no reflection in his more recent statements. From Kennedy's election, Wilson's comments on the United States were almost wholly favourable."

Not only in the field of foreign policy, but even in the style of leadership, Wilson, an arch pragmatist, imitated Attlee, who in fact was Wilson's political hero. Wilson was never an enthusiast of the Common Market and the British membership of it. Though, never a declared anti-marketeer himself, he entertained the same doubts and suspicions about Common Market as the anti-marketeers. As a pro-market enthusiast and Deputy Leader of the PLP, George Brown alleged, "Harold Wilson at that time (1962) was very active in public in leading the anti-marketeers in the Party." In fact, by 1964 Wilson began to move to a position of opposition to Common Market. He encouraged

two known anti-marketeers in the party, to establish the "Wider Europe Group"; an anti-market association. Several of Wilson's Common Market speeches were subtly tempered by nuances without outrightly rejecting its membership. Making a major speech in the Commons in June 1962, after Macmillan applied for the Common Market membership, Wilson said that "the whole conception of the Treaty of Rome is anti-planning, at any rate, anti-national planning ...."

He continued:

We emphasize our opposition to the development of EEC on political lines—for that means federation, a United States of Europe or a common foreign policy—for all the reasons mentioned in this debate, but perhaps for one above all, namely Britain's position in the world, due to our special relation with the Commonwealth ....

Then Wilson expressed the familiar fear of the anti-marketeers that the Common Market was "an inward-looking, high-cost, high-tariff community, dedicated to the expansion of European production to the detriment of Commonwealth trade ...."

As a matter of fact, Wilson, like many Labourites showed greater concern for the Commonwealth and he blamed

5. Ibid., col. 714.
the Tory Government for Britain's declining trade with the Commonwealth. Later in May 1963 Wilson drew up a 'ten-point plan' for the promotion of Britain's trade with the Commonwealth and meet the developmental needs of the underdeveloped Commonwealth countries.

By 1963, Wilson, now elected as the leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party after Hugh Gaitskell's sudden death, took a harder line on entry into the Common Market. In a T.V. interview on 25 June 1963, he said:

...so far as Europe is concerned, there are even more signs now in the Common Market than there were when we expressed our anxieties last year that it is becoming inward-looking and protectionist.

There was no positive change in Wilson's view of the Common Market even after he became Prime Minister, at least during the first seventeen months of his administration. He regarded the Common Market issue a 'dead duck', a phrase borrowed from Sir Alec Douglas-Home. Ruling out the entry of Britain into the Common Market, Wilson told the House of Commons in April 1965: "There is no question whatever of Britain either seeking or being asked to seek entry into the Common Market in the immediate foreseeable future ....".

Officially the Labour Party's policy remained anchored to the "Five Conditions", whatever the way one interpreted them. There was no surprise, therefore, that as far as the question of Britain's Common Market membership was concerned, the Labour's electoral success was coolly received by the continental Europeans. As the New York Times reported on 18 October 1964,

...the chief effect on the European Community of the Labour Party victory will be bolt the door for foreseeable future on U.K.'s entry. This was the consensus in Brussels. With the Labour Party in power the prospects of a new effort have disappeared, according to diplomats in Brussels.8

That Europe, including the EFTA, had little place in the Wilson Government's external priorities was evidenced by a diplomatic omission committed by it hardly few weeks after coming to power.

On 20 October 1964, the British Government imposed unilaterally an import surcharge of 15 per cent on all the imports from the EFTA. Moreover, the United States was informed of this decision two days earlier while the countries in question received a few hours' notice. The EFTA countries reacted sharply to this measure and the Danish Foreign Minister said that the British had caused

a 'crisis' within the EFTA and it could be 'the beginning of the end for the organization'. All the EFTA countries agreed that Britain had broken the regulations of the GATT.

The irony of all this was that the Government's decision came when the Kennedy Round talks to reduce tariff barriers were quite in earnest and publicly supported by the Wilson Government. Moreover, hardly a week preceding the imposition of surcharge, the Labour Foreign Secretary, Patrick Gordon-Walker declared that "we can't restart the Brussels negotiations" and favoured a pragmatic policy of building up the strength of EFTA. As a pointer to the 'bridge-building' policy in Europe he sought closer relations between EFTA and the Common Market. However, neither the British Government gave a concrete shape to this 'bridge-building' proposal nor did the European Governments either of EFTA or the EEC respond to it enthusiastically.

Towards the end of 1965 there was a discernible change in the attitude of Labour leader towards the Common Market. Though, the official position of the Government stood that entry was not possible until the "Five Conditions"

were to find satisfactory solution, some of the conditions came to be de-emphasized. Ministers did not still confine themselves to a rigid interpretation of the "Five Conditions" laid down in 1961. Thus, answering questions in the Commons on 2 August 1965, Walter Padley, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs said:

...the Prime Minister said that the question of Britain's relationship with Europe was not one of theology but a matter of practice. The Five Conditions are not ten commandments. They relate to the vital interests of Britain and the Commonwealth. They will be interpreted in practical terms in the light of practical affairs as they exist between Britain and Europe. 11

When this reply was challenged by Emanuel Shinwell, Chairman of the PLP, who said that Padley was not competent to change the Scarborough decision and that the "Five Conditions were", definite conditions, Padley replied, "as Vice-Chairman of the Labour Party, I accept that view. The point is that the facts can change even if the conference resolutions remain". 12 The next day, Harold Wilson, in the light of Padley's remarks, clarified that,

...certain of those (Five) conditions are less applicable, in terms of urgency than they were—particularly, for example, the one relating to EFTA. At that time, there were real fears that Britain might join

12. Ibid., col. 1043.
without securing safeguards for the other EFTA countries, especially the neutrals. There has now been a complete change of attitude concerning the position of neutrals, and to that extent the conditions is not as important as it was.

The Prime Minister, however, took care to caution that "there is no possibility or question of the application (for membership) in present circumstances". He also thought that the Common Market Agricultural Policy would make joining difficult with "its damaging effect on Commonwealth imports into this country, and upon our balance of payments." 13

Four months later, on 6 December 1965, Michael Stewart who replaced Patrick Gordon-Walker as Foreign Secretary, repeated the same theme. Replying to an oral question Stewart said, "I said earlier that these five conditions still remain and to my mind are essential. I think that is true that the actual passage of events makes some of these conditions easier to fulfil now than at the time when they were formulated." 14 A fortnight later in the Commons debate, the Foreign Secretary felt that agriculture was the most difficult of the five conditions and the chief obstacle to entry. 15 Commonwealth,

13. Ibid., cols. 1271-72.
15. Ibid., col. 1724.
however, was not mentioned by him.

As the year 1965 wore on and 1966 set in the Labour Ministers' statements moved from mere relaxation of 'Five Conditions' to enthusiasm to enter the Common Market. Such enthusiasm was further boosted amidst statements by French leaders that British membership perhaps would not be opposed by their country. On 15 January, 1966 Sir Con O'Neill, Deputy Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office said, (reportedly with the approval of the F.O.) that there was a growing readiness in United Kingdom "to accept an involvement in Common Market." And a week later the Foreign Secretary stated that none of us can afford another failure to join and "must succeed" next time. He found only agriculture and balance of payments as the two difficult problems requiring careful consideration. Stewart's remarks, particularly his emphasis that U.K. "must succeed" next time in seeking membership, angered the anti-marketeers within the Labour Party. They interpreted the Foreign Secretary's statements as considerable weakening of Government's stand on the Gaitskell policy. Pro-marketeers too stepped up their activity.

By the time of the next General Election in March 1966 it was widely felt that there was a tangible change in Labour's European policy from what it was in 1964 when Labour entered the Government. Wilson's own statements on Common Market became much less critical and even softened. Speaking in the House of Commons on 10 February 1966, almost a month before the 1966 General Elections, Wilson said: "I hope that honourable members would agree that we should join if we can get the right conditions to safeguard British interests ... the position is that we shall go in if we can get the right terms." Thus there was a good deal of departure in less than a year, from what had been said in April 1965.

The Labour Party Manifesto for the 1966 Elections said: "Labour believes that Britain in consultation with her EFTA partners should be ready to enter the European Economic Community, provided essential British and Commonwealth interests are safeguarded." Unlike the 1964 Election, Common Market was a major issue in the campaigns of both the parties. Labour party's tactics during the campaign had been to arouse distrust of

Heath’s European enthusiasm, but no suggestion was made that a vote for Labour was a way to stay clear of European commitments. On the contrary, the message seemed to be that a Labour Government would take the country into Common Market in a dignified way and on satisfactory terms.20

The General Election returned the Labour back to power with an overwhelming majority of 97. In forming his new Cabinet, the Prime Minister Wilson made two important changes. He appointed George Thomson as the Chancellor of Douchy with the specific responsibility for European affairs. As Wilson explained his task to Parliament, Thomson was

...to seize every opportunity, in political field, in his contacts with European Organizations ... as well as any bilateral opportunity that presents itself as a result, for example, of his responsibilities within NATO, to probe in a very positive sense, the terms on which we would be able to enter the European Economic Community and its related organizations. (Emphasis added)21

The Prime Minister also made George Brown, the Deputy Leader and Minister of Economic Affairs, also a passionate pro-marketeer to "chair a new and very senior committee to

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examine all the economic and social implications of joining EC. "22 While it cannot be argued at this stage that Wilson was converted to the European cause, it could at least be said that he was keeping it as a major foreign policy option open to him. Moreover, two important Cabinet posts, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Foreign Affairs, were now held by pro-marketeteers, the Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart, being a fairly recent convert. A further evidence of the Wilson Government's growing interest in the Common Market issue was its reference in the Queen's speech for the new Parliament. The Queen's speech of 21 April said:

... my Government will continue to promote the economic unity of Europe and to strengthen the links between the European Free Trade Association and the European Economic Community. They would be ready to enter the European Economic Community provided essential British and Commonwealth interests are safeguarded....23

Though there was no explicit commitment to enter the Common Market, the importance of the speech lies in the fact that for the first time after the Labour came into power such reference was made in the Government's statement of policy. The earlier two speeches by Queen promised only 'cooperation' with Community. Subsequent speeches

22. Ibid., p. 221.
by Labour leaders made immediately favourable references to the membership issue. Thus, on 26 April 1966, George Brown declared that "the political will to enter the EEC exists in Britain today." He further said that essentially there had been two debates in Britain: whether she should join the Common Market or not and secondly whether she could negotiate terms satisfying her needs, and "I think it is fair to say that the first debate has come to an end." 24

As part of Government's plan to investigate the intention of European governments towards the British membership, a period of careful political exploration by Ministers, described as 'probing' by Stewart, started. Both at formal and informal gatherings the Labour Ministers missed no opportunity to explore the possibility of Britain joining the Common Market. In so doing some of the overenthusiastic Ministers such as George Brown went very near to committing their Government. For instance, Brown's speech at the EFTA Conference at Bergen in May, in Wilson's words, suggested "a clearer commitment to entering EEC than the Cabinet had ever agreed. The party was in uproar." 25 At this EFTA Conference, Britain's

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25. Wilson, n. 21, p. 232
earlier surcharges on EFTA imports were abolished. But, an important outcome of this meeting was that the EFTA partners gave Britain a carte blanche to continue its probing of opinion in EEC, which in effect meant that they were reconciling to a future British membership of the EEC. An outcome of this sort would also relieve the Labour of one of its "Five Conditions".

In the month of July the French Premier Georges Pompidou accompanied by his Foreign Minister Couve de Murville visited Britain. Their visit coincided with the worst economic crisis that Britain had faced in the recent past. As a result of the seamen's strike which had been going on since last May, the finance world lost confidence in the stability of the Pound. Hence, there was a serious run on the Pound thereby further aggravating the existing balance of payment deficit and sterling reserves. The French leaders, it was reported, remarked that Britain should take appropriate monetary and economic steps and express her willingness to adhere to the Common Agricultural Policy of the EEC before she entered the Common Market. As The Times commented,

...what the present talks failed to produce was any assurance on the French side to match Mr. Wilson's statement during the talks that there now existed in Britain the political will to join.26

During this visit, according to De Courcel, the then French Ambassador to Britain, "Wilson had told Pompidou that we had decided to join the Common Market. It was then agreed that the matter should be examined by experts." 27

Wilson, however, received no clear commitment by the French leader on the membership issue. Wilson himself would record in his memoirs that the Anglo-French talks "were of little profit so far as our approach to Europe was concerned." 28 The British Government, however, continued its 'probing' whatever was the French attitude. Meanwhile the Senior Official Committee appointed to study the advantages or disadvantages of British membership of Common Market believed to have concluded that membership would, on balance, be in the British interest. 29

However, though the concerned Ministers and the pro-marketeers had been favourably speaking of the European membership, the Prime Minister himself had hardly come out clearly on the issue. His call for an informal cabinet gathering at Chequers prompted the press to speculate that Wilson might take a decision on the issue of Common Market membership.

28. Wilson, n. 21, p. 249.
The cabinet, in fact, met at Chequers on 22 October in a totally informal atmosphere with the exclusive purpose of exchanging views on the Common Market issue. While the forenoon saw a lively exchange of views between the Ministers and the top civil servants, in the afternoon it was only the Ministers without the officials.

It would appear that the Prime Minister had come to this meeting as already a convert to the European membership. As he records, "the case for applying to join ESC had been strengthened in my mind. But, on what terms?" He was also sure that a majority of the Cabinet was in favour of applying for membership. During the discussion the Ministers examined several options open to Britain. The first option was, of course, membership of the Common Market. At this meeting George Brown and Michael Stewart "tried to justify entry as the only way to make sure that Britain kept a place at the top table." They even pressed for a declaration of intent to sign the Rome Treaty. George Brown felt that probing really had not got anywhere and "we wanted to start straightaway with a new round of investigations. He wanted to push hard because he was convinced the door was open and we could get in."  

30. Wilson, n. 21, p. 293.  
Majority of the Cabinet threw their weight behind the Brown-Stewart approach. Those who opposed membership or at least fundamentally were uninterested in entry, suggested two other alternatives. One was a serious reconsideration of the NAFTA (North Atlantic Free Trade Area) proposal. Originally proposed by Senator Jacob K. Javits of United States, the plan envisaged a free trade area of the EFTA countries, Canada and United States, possibly embracing Australia and New Zealand as well. The proposal received immediate support from some Labour leaders. Prominent among the NAFTA supporters was Douglas Jay, President of the Board of Trade under the Wilson Government. At the Chequers meeting, as Richard Crossman, the Lord President records in his voluminous diaries,

...some of us tried very hard, including the P.M., to get Tommy Balough's papers on the North Atlantic Free Trade Area considered seriously. But, the trouble was we all know this is a non-starter because the Americans aren't prepared to take it seriously. The real choice is between staying out and seeing what we can do to get in. 32

A last alternative, much supported by the anti-marketeers, was what came to be nicknamed, “GITA” (Go it

* Thomas Balough was the Chief Economic Adviser to the Labour Government.

32. Ibid., p. 84.
Alone). Advocates of this course wanted that Britain should remain just a little England, cutting off all the overseas commitments, staying outside Europe, and retaining the freedom to plan her economy. This view was supported by Richard Crossman, Richard Marsh, Wedgewood Benn and Barbara Castle. At the end of the discussion, without taking a final decision on the principle of membership, Wilson announced that he and the Foreign Secretary George Brown would tour the capitals of the six Common Market countries. The main aim of such tour would be to get several doubts cleared, such as the effect of entry on Britain’s balance of payments, her right to plan, etc. Wilson accompanying the Foreign Secretary, George Brown, perhaps was unnecessary, unless the Prime Minister was by then decided on entry into Common Market and hence make good personal impact on his European counterparts. But he had a different purpose. He "insisted that he must go too in order to keep George Brown"34, the overenthusiastic minister. Wilson’s decision, as he claimed, was ‘universally supported’ at the Chequers meeting. The deliberations and decisions reached at this meeting were not made public.

33. Ibid., p. 84.

leaving thereby the press to speculate variedly.

At the formal Cabinet meeting held on 10 November 1966 Wilson got the approval for the policy statement on the Common Market entry to be made before the Parliament in the afternoon. In his statement to the House of Commons, Wilson said:

...the Government have decided that a new high-level approach must now be made to see whether the conditions exist—or do not exist—for fruitful negotiations, and the basis on which such negotiations could take place.

Then Wilson informed that the EFTA Conference of the Heads of State, to be held in London soon, would "discuss the problems involved in moves by EFTA countries to join the EEC." Following the EFTA Conference, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary would tour the capitals of "the Six" to establish "whether it appears likely that essential British and Commonwealth interests could be safeguarded if Britain were to accept the Treaty of Rome and join EEC", and

...in the light of these discussions the Government will then take its decision whether or not to activate the arrangements for negotiating for entry, and what the appropriate time for such negotiations would be ....I went the House, the country, and our friends abroad to know that the Government are approaching the discussions I have foreshadowed with the clear intention and determination to enter EEC if, as we hope, our British and Commonwealth interests can be safeguarded.
We mean business. (Emphasis in original). 35

The Prime Minister's statement no doubt was a very cautious one, marked by several reservations. On 16 November the House sat for the two-day debate on the Prime Minister's announcement. Opening the debate George Brown, the Foreign Secretary, tried to dispel the idea that Britain's case for membership was economic.

We are far from being suitors.... We do not pursue this policy just for our own economic interests or for the benefits that we could bring to the EEC. From enlarged community great political benefits would also flow. An enlarged community—could contribute an enormously increased influence to the wider problems affecting our continent, in the Atlantic Alliance and in the world at large. 36

The Foreign Secretary, while noting the other alternatives open to Britain, such as, the NAFTA and CITA, however, emphasized that "neither choice would carry with it the benefits which would flow from our accession on acceptable terms, to the Community." He even reminded the House that "it is sometimes suggested that if Britain is to join the EEC, we must change our relationship with the United States, particularly in defence, and abandon the role which we play in the outside world. To this the Government are absolutely opposed." 37 Concluding the

35. Wilson, n. 21, p. 299.
37. Ibid., col. 455.
speech. Brown assured the skeptics and anti-marketeers that "the existing Community has not developed in the way that the former (federalists) would have wished." Speaking the following day, Wilson came back to the same theme:

... as far as the Rome Treaty is concerned it is a question of convention and the way in which it has worked or looks like working, and this is of great importance for us. Four years ago, we had much less experience of these things and perhaps we could not—certainly not all of us—have foreseen that it would develop in this way.

The speeches by both the Prime Minister and his Foreign Secretary did not angur well in the French eyes. The Foreign Secretary's statement that Britain's attempt to enter would not mean a fall in the Anglo-American 'special relationship' reportedly confirmed the French Government's and De Gaulle's view that Britain did not contemplate any change in the 'special relationship'. Michael Debre, the French Minister for Economic Affairs said that there was 'no sign' that Britain and her leaders were willing to 'accept a European destiny'. Wilson's statement that the British case did not carry any defence implications only reinforced the same view. Wilson was known to be a strong pro-NATO man, while De Gaulle

38. Ibid., col. 453.
39. Ibid., col. 774.
40. The Daily Telegraph, 18 November 1966.
advocated an 'independent nuclear force' force de Proprey for Europe, if possible, with British support. Wilson, in fact had very strong views on NATO and believed in no other defence policy for Britain, or for that matter Europe, than strengthening the NATO. Delivering a speech at the National Press Club, Washington on 1 April 1963, Wilson said:

Now on defence our position is clear. We stand firmly by NATO and the Western Alliance. We are not a neutralist party and neutralism has no part or place in our policies. We want to see Britain and other European countries make a more effective contribution to NATO.41

On an earlier occasion during the Nassau Debate in the House of Commons on 31 January 1963, Wilson explained: "First, as I have said before, and as all of us have said, we must make NATO the centre of our defence policy in Europe."

Wilson's views against an independent nuclear force for Britain and a 'European deterrent' were equally firm. Ridiculing the Macmillan Government's abortive attempt to build an independent nuclear force for Britain, Wilson said that such policy amounted "to a wrong deployment of our national defence resources. Simply because we allocate our resources and equipment and our all-too-scarce scientific

manpower to nuclear effort we have not the resources to honour minimum national commitments." Therefore, "we can, with out limited resources either pay for the pretence of nuclear deterrent or can honour our commitments in NATO and elsewhere. But we cannot do both." Rejecting a 'European deterrent' force Wilson said that it "leads to a dangerous diversion and distracts urgently needed resources of energy from NATO itself into the new nuclear grouping." It also leads to, he said, "a narrow, nationalistic, intrusively third force in Europe."42

There was no change in Wilson's above views after he came to power. Thus he was trying to take Britain into a Europe whose dominant member, France, was trying to keep NATO as far away as possible from it and build an independent nuclear force, force de Froppe. France was never at ease with the U.S.-U.K. dominated NATO, which Michael Debre, De Gaulle's first Premier under the V Republic, characterized as "the instrument of American security in the hands of the Anglo-American directorate."43

Exactly what made Wilson to turn to Europe cannot be attributed to a single factor. A combination of several

42. Ibid., pp. 199-201.
factors, both domestic and external, did compel the British Prime Minister to consider seriously Britain's membership of the Common Market, an issue which had least attraction for him hardly two years ago. When the Labour Party entered office, Europe certainly figured least in its foreign policy priorities, the 'special relationship' with America remaining at the top.

The inheritance from the Tory Government of about £ 800 millions deficit and the subsequent weak sterling had forced the British Prime Minister to depend heavily on the United States for its financial support to keep the sterling firm. In fact the deficit that the Labour inherited was the largest current deficit in this century. Moreover, her dependence on the United States meant for Britain to support American policies on several world issues, particularly the Vietnam war. It also meant that Britain had to postpone pressing economic measures to strengthen the Pound, specifically its devaluation, for the fear that devaluation would affect the U.S. Dollar. From an economic point of view it is argued that the Labour Government's failure to devalue early was the major cause of its defeat in 1970, as it resulted in rising

prices, higher unemployment, worsened industrial rela-
tions. The degree of Britain's dependence on the United
States and what it meant in practical terms was well
stated by Walter Lippman:

The history of Harold Wilson's Labour Govern-
ment has been dominated since its first week
in office by its decision not to (de) value
the Pound. In foreign policy this has meant
satelliteism to Washington (Emphasis added).

Wilson came to office with high notions about the 'special
relationship' with the United States. He hoped he could
moderate the American actions in South-East Asia, and
could play the role of a honest broker between the super
powers. Labour Ministers, firmly

believed in the centrality of the American
alliance. One fact of the relationships sought
by Wilson concerned the ability of a sympathetic
British Government to act as a brake on the more
provocative American proposals. This claim to
influence was central to the Government's defence
of its general support for American policy in
Vietnam.

So great was his emphasis on the Anglo-American relation-
ship that almost immediately after he came to power the
British Prime Minister visited the United States in December
1964, followed by another visit a year later. When the

45. Ibid., p. 78.
46. Quoted in, Andrew Roth, Can Parliament Decide ...
47. David Howell, n. 1, p. 328.
decision to impose the 15 per cent import surcharge was taken the United States was taken into confidence, but not the EFTA partners.

However, it was not much longer before Wilson was disillusioned with the Johnson Administration. Despite the sincere efforts by Wilson to remain closest to the United States, there yet remained the inevitable divergence between the policy objectives of both the Governments. Thus, while as far as the military arrangements in Europe were concerned the United States preferred the Multilateral Force (MLF) to which all the NATO countries would make military contributions, the Labour Government preferred an Atlantic Nuclear Force (ANF). But the Johnson Administration was very particular on the adoption of MLF and the British support to it. Wilson records that George Ball, the U.S. Under-Secretary of State, made it very clear to him just before his first visit to United States that

there could be no question of going back on the MLF, that the American Government would expect us to support it and that unless I was going to be in a position to say so, it would be better if I cancelled my visit.48

And during the visit, Wilson successfully moved the U.S. President away from the MLF.

48. Wilson, n. 21, p. 46.
During the same visit Johnson also raised the question of "our co-operating with him in South Vietnam, even if only on a limited—even a token—basis. I made it clear we could not enter into any such commitments." At this meeting, Johnson reportedly had urged the British Prime Minister to keep Britain's "Foreign Policy in keeping with her economic position in a rather brousque manner."

Wilson appeared to have returned home, however, unhappy about his trip. He reportedly remarked to an aide on his return, "Johnson is gone mad ... we will have to find a new ally", questioned if the new ally could be De Gaulle, Wilson replied in affirmed.

As the war escalated in Vietnam, the Anglo-American relations too worsened. On 7 February 1965, when the American planes heavily bombed North Vietnam for the first time, Wilson, to thwart further intensification of the war, offered his visit to Johnson. Then, Johnson in the telephonic conversation, as Wilson records, 'let fly in an outburst of Texan temper'. "I think a trip, Mr. Prime Minister," said Johnson,

49. Ibid., p. 48.
51. "Mr. Wilson Turns to Europe: The Two years and four days of his conversation", *Sunday Times* (London), 17 May 1967.
on this situation would be very misunderstood and I do not think any good would flow from it .... As far as my problem in Vietnam we have asked everyone to share it with us. They were willing to share advice but not responsibility.

Then, recalling a similar situation when the Labour Prime Minister Attlee visited Washington to prevent President Truman from the danger of escalating the Korean war in 1950, Johnson pointed out that whereas then Britain had troops in Korea, but not in Vietnam now. Then, the President continued:

I won't tell you how to run Malaysia and you do not tell us how to run Vietnam ... if you want to help us in Vietnam send us some men ... (end) announce to the Press that you are going to help us. Now, if you do not feel like doing that, go on with your Malaysian problem ... 52

The President was referring to the British involvement in the conflict between Malaysia and Indonesia. Such outburst as above was certainly uncharacteristic of the dialogue between a Head of the State and Head of another Government, more so, between the partners of a "special relationship". The British Government's decision to withdraw from the East of Suez in order to cut down the maintenance cost, was also another irritating factor in the Anglo-American relationship. Faced with a steep
balance of payments crisis and worsening economic situation at home, the Labour Government was forced to take a fresh stock of its overseas defence commitments. Patrick Gordon-Walker who served as the Labour's Foreign Secretary during the early years of power notes that there was an "embryonic group" within the Cabinet which favoured "at least a scrutiny of the Far East policy. The 'economizers' were conscious of the burden that our commitments East of Suez placed upon the budget and the balance of payments."53 An important feature of the February 1966 Defence White Paper was, apart from guaranteeing Aden's independence, it for the first time abandoned the idea that a base in Australia was an alternative to the existing ones. On the other hand, Britain's presence in Persian Gulf, South East Asia and Indian Ocean served U.S. interests. Gordon-Walker recalls how insistent the U.S. was about Britain's presence East of Suez: "Mr. Dean Rusk on a number of occasions told me and other visiting British Ministers who visited him that in America's eyes a British soldier East of Suez was more valuable than one in Germany."54 Similarly "time and again whenever Wilson went to USA, he had been pressed not to withdraw

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54. Ibid., p. 138.
In July 1965, due to some industrial trouble there was a heavy threat to the Pound. Overseas holders of the sterling lost confidence in the Government's ability to maintain prices. When the Wilson Government requested the United States to come to the rescue of Pound, it was denied. Cecil King's entry of 5 August 1965 records the Governor of Bank of England having told him that President Johnson refused to support the Pound.

Political differences apart there was the lack of personal understanding between the Anglo-American leaders. In the words of George Brown, Wilson's Foreign Secretary, "Mr. Johnson did not like the Prime Minister much." Or as Wilson's political confidant George (Lord) Wigg said: "I saw no sign that President Johnson even regarded Wilson's policies with the respect they were supposed to have earned." 57

In fact with Kennedy's death the "high noon" of "special relationship" ended. It was "no more an informal person-to-person relationship .... Johnson's Administration

turned Anglo-American relationship into government-to-
government relationship." Johnson never visited Britain as President, not even Churchill’s funeral. The Anglo-
American relationship, which was high on the list of
Wilson’s foreign policy priorities, left the British
Prime Minister with no dividends, political or economic, but disillusionment. Thus within three days of Johnson’s rebuff to Wilson on telephone on 10 February 1965,
"Harold Wilson announced the dates of his delayed visit
to Bonn and Berlin followed by visits to Paris and Rome." As already noted in the preceding pages Wilson and his Ministers’ statements on Common Market became less rigid, deemphasizing the "Five Conditions". Privately Ministers were hinting that their Government was taking the European course. Some, like George Brown even claimed that Wilson had made up his mind to join the Common Market. George Brown quoted Wilson as telling him in January 1966:
"George I have got news for you. You will be startled by what I am going to say. We are going in." Commonwealth was the other area on which Wilson had set great store. Sharing the Labour sentiment attached

59. Andrew Roth, n. 46, p. 78.
to the Commonwealth, Wilson exhibited much concern for the Commonwealth countries, particularly the backward nations of them. While in opposition, he blamed the Tory Government for neglecting the Commonwealth and for Britain's falling trade with those countries. As noted already he drew up an ambitious "ten-point plan" for the all-round development of the backward countries of the Commonwealth. Participating in a major Commons debate on Commonwealth on 6 February 1964 Wilson, the Opposition Leader had said:

We made it clear all along that our view is that preferences as such are a much less important asset in inter-Commonwealth trade now, but we were not prepared to sacrifice trade with the Commonwealth in order to get into the Common Market. That was our position and it is our position.61

Then, in a peroration, he threw a challenge to the Tory Prime Minister, Alec Douglas-Home:

... will he (the Prime Minister) give a pledge that no Government of which he is the head will consider entry into the Common Market on any terms which would reduce Britain's existing freedom to trade with the Commonwealth? On behalf of my Party, I give that pledge.62

Writing a few months later in the Fabian Journal, Venture Wilson argued that with the British initiative, the

61. Wilson, n. 21, p. 94.
62. Ibid., p. 124.
Commonwealth could become a dominant force in world affairs, even a big power bloc. As he elaborated:

A more concerned policy which will not be possible until we have a Government at Westminster which is prepared to come to terms with the world we are living in, will enable Britain in and through the Commonwealth to assert our influence in world affairs far greater than Her Majesty's Ministers are capable of realizing.63

Such an ambitious scheme for the Commonwealth, drawn up hardly a month preceding the Labour's entry into the Westminster, hardly withstood the force of circumstances. In mid 1960s Britain had several problems with the Commonwealth countries, such as with India, Ghana and Rhodesia.

The Rhodesian situation, which was 'at danger-point' as Wilson described when he took over as Prime Minister of Britain eventually culminated in the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) by Ian Smith. The British Government's reprisals of economic sanctions against the illegal regime were, however, far from satisfactory to the Commonwealth African leaders. When Wilson addressed the U.N. General Assembly on 16 December 1965, some twenty African Delegates staged a walkout. At the Lagos Conference of the Commonwealth leaders, held in

January 1966, "from Asia, Cyprus, the Caribbean, the message of condemnation was the same." The next Commonwealth Conference in September 1966, to put it in Wilson's words "turned out, in fact, to be a nightmare conference, by common consent the worst ever held up to that time ...." Rhodesia was the single issue that dominated the gathering, each African leader demanding that Britain should take armed action against the illegal Smith regime, even against South Africa which ignored the economic sanctions against Rhodesia.

What piqued Wilson more was "the cabalistic and discourteous methods which were being adopted by a 'caucus' of all the African leaders. Things became worse when the Zambian Foreign Minister accused Wilson as a 'racialist'. The Conference atmosphere became so tense that "few could be confident that the Commonwealth would not break up." At last, with great difficulty, the Conference could save the situation by agreeing upon a composite statement.

Britain's refusal to use force against the Smith regime also led to Tanzania and Ghana breaking off the

64. Wilson, n. 21, p. 185.
65. Ibid., p. 279.
66. Ibid., p. 282.
diplomatic relations with her.

The Indo-Pakistan conflict in 1965 was another situation where Britain's ability to influence the events in the Commonwealth was in question. Being the nerve-centre of the Commonwealth, Britain could have settled the dispute but such diplomatic initiative was taken by Soviet Union. Eventually, "Britain's inability to deal with it (Indo-Pak conflict) damaged her standing greatly in the eyes of the rest of the world." Moreover, by branding India as an aggressor, a statement which he withdrew later, Wilson had denied to Britain the role of playing a honest broker in the conflict between two of her Commonwealth partners. The Indo-Pakistan conflict did have some influence on Wilson's move towards Europe. Cecil King's entry of 20 January 1966 records George Brown saying to him:

...Wilson is deciding to enter the Common Market. He (Wilson) has obviously been moving in this direction for some months but this is a big leap forward. It is apparently due to the India-Pakistan agreement arrived at Tashkent and the subsequent advice of John Freeman, our High Commissioner in Delhi. The Commonwealth provides no basis for a policy — so, into Europe. 68

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Economically too, Commonwealth was holding dwindling prospects to Britain. After the first attempt, several members of the Commonwealth felt convinced that Britain would eventually join the Common Market, and therefore they had actively turned to alternative markets. Thus, Australia turned to USA, Japan, China, India and others as her new trading partners. After the first veto, China emerged as the major buyer of Australia's wheat and raw materials. In fact Australia's official policy after 1963 was towards diversification of trade. While Australia's exports to China in 1954-55 amounted to $5.5 millions, the figure shot up to $134.6 millions in 1964-65. On the other hand, Australia's exports to Britain fell from 60 per cent of its total world exports in 1953-54 to 50 per cent of its total world exports in 1957-58, to a further 33 per cent in 1964-65. 69 African members of the Commonwealth like Ghana, Tanzania and Nigeria too were turning to the Common Market either to establish direct trade links or seek associate membership. In May 1966 Nigeria signed an Association Agreement with EEC and Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda were negotiating for the same purpose with EEC. USA took more and more imports/exports from India and Pakistan. She provided more than two thirds of

India's import needs and replaced as the main receiver of India's exports.\textsuperscript{70}

The net result of such trade diversion was that there was a great fall in the Commonwealth exports/imports trade with Britain. The following Table would substantiate this trend:

\textit{U.K. - Commonwealth Exports}\textsuperscript{*}

\textbf{Exports by Commonwealth Countries}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage to U.K.</th>
<th>Percentage to U.S.A.</th>
<th>Percentage to EEC</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>19</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

\textit{Imports by Commonwealth Countries}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage from U.K.</th>
<th>Percentage from U.S.A.</th>
<th>Percentage from EEC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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\textsuperscript{*} The above two tables are rearranged from the figures provided by O.E.C.D. \textit{Statistics}, 1968.

79. Paul Foot, n. 60, p. 246.
Canada became more and more dependent on the United States. Canada too diversified her trade to new partners. Thus between 1957-66 her exports to Japan increased from $91 to $395 millions and from $12 to $645 millions to communist countries. Both politically and economically, therefore, Commonwealth which had been once the bedrock of Britain's imperial glory and strength, came to be "increasingly and probably correctly viewed in Britain as a burden than an asset." Against such background Wilson's ambition that a Labour Government would enable Britain in and through the Commonwealth to exert a greater influence in the world affairs, remained a far cry.

By the time of 1966 General Elections, Wilson's earlier foreign policy objectives were in quandary. He felt disillusioned with the Johnson Administration, humiliated at the Commonwealth hands, and did not succeed to his 'bridge-building' task in Europe. The EFTA was never a matching alternative to the Common Market, politically or economically. EFTA states were not as capable industrially as the EEC states to give a competitive thrust to British industry. Moreover EFTA's trade with EEC was more valuable than trade between its own members.

71. Roy Mathews, "Canada, Britain and Europe: A Re-appraisal", in Pierri, n. 69, p. 99.
72. Proudfoot, n. 67, p. 211.
On the other hand, "the whole affair of surcharge had dramatized a fundamental weakness in the EFTA, that is, the fact that it is not a viable economic unit."

With the other EFTA countries themselves showing interest in Britain's membership of Common Market, the EFTA hardly remained an impediment to entry into Europe.

Against the background of the changed external environment, a reorientation of foreign policy priorities by the Wilson Government looked imminent. The Cabinet meeting at Chequers in October had undertaken the task of examining all the alternative courses open to Britain, out of which emerged membership of the Common Market as the best available. Hence, followed the 10 November decision to explore the possibilities of entering the European Community.

Wilson's move towards the EEC, however, cannot be explained only in terms of his frustration with the external policy-goals. His frustration with the domestic economy was also a contributory factor.

Britain faced one of the worst economic crises in the summer of 1966. There was the seamen's strike going on since May and in the month of July the Pound was in

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74. Miriam Camps, n. 20, p. 171.
serious crisis as a result of speculation caused by lack of confidence in Government's economic management. The Government, faced with the crisis, resorted to severe deflationary measures ('July Measures') of a freeze on pay rise for 6 months, cuts in public expenditure and tax increases, the toughest measures since 1949. The political fall out of such measures was resignation by Frank Cousins, Minister of Technology and the President of the Transport and General Workers' Union. George Brown, the Minister for Economic Affairs too resigned, but on persuasion withdrew and was shifted to Foreign Affairs. The economic consequences of the July Measures were that the ambitious National Plan with the annual growth rate of 4 per cent was given up, and then also there was a rise in unemployment. There was a general sense of disillusionment in the Labour and growing doubts about Wilson's ability to provide adequate leadership. A better way of diverting the Party and the public from the general sense of disillusionment with his administration was, for the Prime Minister, to embark upon the European venture. George Wigg explains, though with a little sense of exaggeration, that Wilson turned to the European device to neutralize his restive cabinet colleagues who were unhappy with the 'July Measures'. And then he adds:
The arch-pragmatist had solved the political crisis of the July Package deal by promising to deliver goods and to float the Pound from strength. He could not do the first. He had no intention of doing the second. To tour Europe was his way out.75

Though, it could be an overstatement to ascribe Wilson's European venture exclusively to this domestic factor, it nonetheless was the immediate and short-term one in forcing him, perhaps reluctantly to look to Europe. However, it is far from truth to discredit the Labour Prime Minister's disappointment with the United States and the Commonwealth as the long-term factors in his decision to explore the European option. Moreover, with the EFTA Prime Ministers approving the Labour Government's European move 'with great warmth all round' as Wilson described it, the decks were finally cleared for Britain to proceed. The one-day conference of the EFTA Prime Ministers was held at London on 6 December 1966. Wilson's conversion in fact took place even before the 1966 General Elections. It started with his disenchantment with the Johnson Administration and the Commonwealth. His disclosure to George Brown about his intention to take Britain into Common Market on his return from United States and his increasingly softening remarks about Common Market

75. Wigg, n. 57, p. 338.
prove his conversion. Cecil King’s entry of 11 February 1966 says that Wilson confided into his (King’s) editor, Hugh Cudlip that he was choosing the European option. King’s entry records:

Wilson is planning to take the country into the Common Market. George (Brown) is scared of announcing this now as it might split the Party. Wilson ...was planning to send Gerald Gardner, the Lord Chancellor, to spread the glad news around Europe.76

If the Prime Minister had not publicly announced his intention it was because of the threadbare majority of his Party in Parliament. Rather he wanted to announce formally after another General Election in March 1966. Thus Cecil King after his meeting with Wilson recorded on 18 February 1966: "He (Wilson) will not come out in favour of Europe before the elections as this would split his party — two-thirds for, one-third against. He is, however, to send Callaghan round the Europe capitals involved asking about ways and means."77 James Callaghan, the Chancellor of Exchequer, himself told Cecil King on 20 March 1966 that "they (the Labour Government) were taking the plunge into Europe."78

76. Cecil King, n. 68, p. 58.
77. Ibid., p. 56.
78. Ibid., p. 62.
Therefore the argument that the July 1966 economic crisis was the decisive factor in turning the Labour Prime Minister to Europe does not carry much weight. But the decisive factors were the United States and Commonwealth. It was "the disappointment with the 'special relationship' with Washington and with the political leverage to be exercised through the Commonwealth that turned the Labour Government so sharply towards Western Europe."79

Apart from the external and domestic political factors, the civil service too played no less a role in moving the Labour Government towards the European option. The foreign office was the first convert to the European membership of Britain and according to one Labour Minister "from 1964 onwards the tone of foreign office papers was noticeably pro-European."80 Among the senior civil servants who had influenced the Labour Government's European policy were: Sir Con O'Neill, Deputy Under-Secretary in charge of European affairs at foreign office; Sir William Burk trend, the Deputy Secretary in Cabinet Office. Michael Palliser, son-in-law of Paul H. Spoak, who was on Wilson's personal staff had "great influence in No. 10, particularly on

problems connected with Europe."

On 15 January 1967, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary left for Rome, the first of their six visits. The Italian leaders, including the Prime Minister Signer Moro "strongly supported British entry and would go to great length to achieve it." Wilson made his position clear to the Italian leaders that his mission was not to negotiate, but establish whether the conditions were favourable for future negotiations. As a proof of British conviction Wilson told his hosts that Britain was prepared to accept the Treaty of Rome and "not to seek new amendments or revisions as would fundamentally alter its character." The visiting leaders were subjected to serious interrogation on nine major issues which included: Britain's economic commitments; the extent of Britain's readiness to accept the results of 1961-63 negotiations; the British Commonwealth problems and EFTA and Britain's stand on further political unity in the community. But what dominated the talks, as they did in all others capitals, was agriculture.

82. Wilson, n. 21, p. 327.
83. Ibid., p. 328.
The Foreign Secretary, George Brown, who was the spokesman on agriculture all through the tour explained that the CAP of the community would raise Britain's food prices, that community's higher price-system for some farm products would affect the British farmers, and therefore, Britain, if she sought membership would be forced to seek production grants from CAP's "Guidance Fund."\textsuperscript{84} In so far as the Commonwealth was concerned, with the exception of New Zealand, the British leaders did not think it was difficult to find solution for other countries, including Australia; summing up his talks with the Italian, Wilson reminded them that "given the reasonable attitude on Commonwealth problems, foreign exchange policies and certain other issues, the big outstanding problem was the agricultural policy, particularly so far as its financial operations were concerned." And warning the hosts that a failure to reach agreement on agriculture would offset agreement on other issues too, he appealed to the "European ingenuity and goodwill to overcome it."\textsuperscript{85}

France was the second leg of the tour, but before meeting the French leaders, Wilson addressed the Council of Europe, the first institution of European Unity, at

\textsuperscript{84.} Ibid., p. 330.
\textsuperscript{85.} Ibid., p. 333.
Strasbourg. Wilson's speech at the Council of Europe was perhaps one of his most passionate speeches on European unity ever made. Stressing the need for political and economic unity in Europe, Wilson said:

We mean business in a political sense, because, for the next year, the next 10 years, the next 20 years, the unity of Europe is going to be forged, and geography, history, interest and sentiment alike demand that we play our part in forging it, and in working it.\(^\text{86}\)

Reverting to the European Technological community, a scheme which he first proposed two months earlier, Wilson called for the fusion of Europe's industrial and technological resources into a single community. Undoubtedly, the British Prime Minister's speech made a great appeal to Europeans. Jean Monnet felt it (Wilson's speech) is not an insular speech. He convinced me of the sincerity and of the determination of Great Britain to join the Common Market and to participate fully with the other countries of the EEC in the construction of Europe.\(^\text{87}\)

The following day, 24 January 1967, the roving leaders called on the French President De Gaulle.

The Anglo-French talks, among many other related issues were largely preoccupied with two major things:

\(^{86}\) The Times (London), 24 January 1967.
\(^{87}\) The Times (London), 24 January 1967.
the sterling's effect on the Community and the changes that the Community would undergo if Britain enters.

On the specific issue of sterling, De Gaulle found that Wilson was not too explicit about the future role of the Pound. The French President felt, as Wilson records, that "Our (British) policy towards sterling still seem to be very closely linked with United States' financial policy". Moreover, the role of the sterling as world's reserved currency, in De Gaulle's view presented certain very special difficulties which placed it in a different situation from the currencies of the Six.88

Then the General expressed fears about the effects on the Community of Six if Britain and others along with her entered. He reminded his guests that the application of the Rome Treaty had led to a certain practical realities in such fields like agriculture, industry and economic. And if Britain and others enter, the "consequences would be profoundly to change, if not the text of the Treaty, certainly its practical application." Moreover, with enlargement, the Community would be not of a Community of Six but eight, nine, ten and more. Naturally, the very nature of the Community would be different and indeed

88. Wilson, n. 21, p. 337.
'very difficult'. The French leaders also expressed concern over the changes that might occur in the CAP in case of enlargement.

Finally, De Gaulle concluded the talks in the following way, as Wilson records them:

Would the presence of Britain enable the Community to remain what it was? If we had to face the fact that Britain could not enter EEC without changing its fundamental character, could some other means, he emphasized, other than membership? An arrangement? An Association? An Agreement between Britain and the Six? This was the question he asked himself, he said. He came to no conclusion, except to note Britain's evolution, which correspond to his wishes. He was disposed, for himself, to study fully the question which the British had put to themselves: did the conditions exist—or not exist—for Britain to join the Community.

An equivocal presentation of such views on the part of the President had left the British leaders equally in equivocal position to understand what the President meant. As the Prime Minister explains his team's dilemma:

But what did it mean? Some members of my delegation were encouraged, because of the reference to 'mooring alongside Europe'. On the other hand, there were the references to the alternatives. What, if anything, did they (the French) mean? 91

89. Ibid., p. 337.
90. Ibid., p. 340.
91. Ibid., p. 341.
Speaking to the Press at the end of the two day discussions, Wilson said he was able to convince De Gaulle about Britain "meaning business". He said entry was still a live issue.92

The British leaders in their Benelux trips had full and enthusiastic support to their case, which of course was never doubted. In Belgium, the talks were centered on political aspects of the British entry and agriculture. The Belgian Prime Minister reiterated his Foreign Minister Harrel's 'tripod' theory. According to this, the Belgian leaders advocated that Europe could develop healthily only if there were a balance between the three 'great European powers' -- Britain, France and Germany -- on a basis of equality. Given this balance, "smaller powers such as Belgium were prepared to accept a larger measure of influence in the Community of the three great powers."93

The Belgian leaders also showed keen interest in Wilson's concept of the Technological Community.

The Dutch, on the other hand, pressed the British leaders to make their application for membership as soon as possible after the tour was completed, and that the

93. Wilson, n. 21, p. 341.
application should be as simple as possible. As far as Luxembourg was concerned, her leaders did not find that sterling would pose a serious problem to British entry.

The last country to be visited by the British leaders was Germany on 15 February 1967. The visit, compared to those of the other five was a bit uncharacteristic in view of the nature of Franco-German relationship. For, the British leaders wanted the Federal Republic to use its influence since "the outcome of our talks would depend to a great extent on the exercise of German influence in Paris." The foreign secretary too asked the German Chancellor Dr. Kiesinger to use his influence to head off the proposals for an associate status or any other arrangements other than full membership to Britain as suggested by De Gaulle.94

The Chancellor replied that though he strongly supported the British case and conveyed the same to the General equally strongly, he doubted if his Government could exercise any influence on him. In an interview to Spiegel in 1967, Kiesinger made quite clear about what he told Wilson: "I spoke plainly with Mr. Wilson. I promised him that we do not wish nor can we exert any pressure."

94. Ibid., pp. 357-68.
And I also promised no success by any attempt." Wilson too recorded his view of the Anglo-German talks as under:

We got the impression that Dr. Kiesinger's approach was very much 'softly, softly, catchee General? But, how softly? Then, and subsequently we became increasingly convinced that he would never be prepared to press his undoubted conviction that Britain must be admitted to the Six to the point of annoying General De Gaulle.95

The real issue at stake was that the newly formed German Coalition of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats regarded close cooperation with France as the chief plank of its foreign policy. It hardly wanted to disturb the foundations of Franco-German friendship laid by Konrad Adenauer. Moreover the Coalition Government's Ostpolitik policy of normalizing Germany's relations with East Europe and the Soviet Union needed the French help very much, since France had cultivated a better understanding with the USSR. Exactly a month preceding the visit by British leaders the German Chancellor and his Foreign Minister, Willy Brandt had visited France. At the end of their two-day visit Dr. Kiesinger said that the Franco-German treaty of cooperation had been 'revived', and that his cooperation was destined to overcome the division of Europe96 leading to a peaceful

95. Ibid., p. 368.
settlement of the German problem. There had been a slight set-back to the Franco-German Treaty under the previous Chancellor Erhard. Kiesinger regarded himself as the executor of Adenauer's policy of firm friendship with France. 97

Therefore, a German Government with such a primary objective of consolidating its relations with France could hardly be expected to prevail upon the General to further the British case. The last leg of the British leaders' tour thus concluded with a note of disappointment. Despite his disappointment in his talks at Paris and Bonn, Wilson remained unperturbed and firm on his European venture. As it will become clear in the later chapter, he did proceed with his enterprise but without success, notwithstanding Willy Brandt's personal help extended in this regard.