SPINNING EUROPE:
PRO-EUROPEAN UNION PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGNS IN BRITAIN, 1962-1975[1]

Andy Mullen and Brian Burkitt,
Department of Social Sciences and Humanities,
University of Bradford

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between Britain and the European Union (EU)[2] has been, and remains, controversial. In part, this is the result of concerted efforts by both anti- and pro-EU forces to influence the European policies of key political actors and to shape public opinion. This article focuses on the efforts of the latter during the 1960s and 1970s, a critical period in Anglo-EU relations. Although anti-EU forces were active during this period, it was the latter that dominated the 'great debate', for two reasons. First, for most of the period under study, pro-EU forces sought to change the status quo, promoting entry to the EU amongst a largely sceptical British public. Consequently, propaganda was essential. Second, pro-EU forces possessed more money, obtained the backing of most of the business sector and the media, and enjoyed access to the considerable power resources of the British State. Consequently, they were able to overwhelm the propaganda produced by their opponents. Given the considerable advantages enjoyed by pro-EU forces, and the lack of financial, business and media support for anti-EU forces, the efforts of the latter are ignored for the purposes of this article.

The impact of pro-EU propaganda campaigns in Britain has been neglected within EU studies, and the recent work on the Europeanisation of political parties, trade unions and the British State. Bringing together the few sources of information that exist, this article documents the three government-organised pro-EU propaganda campaigns of the 1960s and 1970s. It specifically discusses the campaigns in 1962-1963 to bolster public support following Britain's first application to join the EU, in 1970-1971 to prepare the public for accession, and in 1974-1975 to ensure continued membership in the 1975 Referendum.

The article begins by defining what is meant by propaganda, details the aforementioned campaigns within the context of the shifting European policy of the British State, and advances empirical evidence, in the form of polling data, which suggests that these campaigns were effective in changing public opinion. It then sets out three reasons why pro-EU forces resorted to propaganda rather than educating the British public about EU membership, before contrasting the 1962-1975 period with the contemporary situation. It is likely that the next five years will witness two further government-organised pro-EU propaganda campaigns, in an attempt to ensure 'Yes' votes in any future referenda on the European Constitution and the euro.

WHAT IS PROPAGANDA?

The juxtaposition of education and propaganda was usefully encapsulated by Carey:

> 'Propaganda' refers to communications where the form and content is selected with the single-minded purpose of bringing some target audience to adopt attitudes and beliefs chosen in advance by the sponsors of the communications. 'Propaganda' so defined is to be contrasted with 'education'. Here, at least ideally, the purpose is to encourage critical enquiry and to open minds to arguments for and against any particular conclusion, rather than close them to the possibility of any conclusion but one.[3]

In this case, propaganda refers to the attempts by pro-EU forces to shape the public discourse about European integration and Britain's role in this process.

Carey advanced a two-level model to explain how propaganda campaigns seek to influence policy-making and public opinion more generally. 'Grassroots' propaganda seeks to reach as large a number of people as possible in order to change public opinion, whereas 'treetops' propaganda is aimed at opinion-formers and the leaders of society. The former aims to change directly the attitudes, beliefs and values of the general public, whilst the latter seeks to influence public opinion indirectly by shaping the discourse of the business sector, the media, political parties, think tanks, trade unions and universities. The evidence presented below suggests that pro-EU forces deployed both forms of propaganda in order to win over key political actors and the general public.

BRITAIN AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

The European policy of the British State shifted several times over the post-war period. Between 1945 and 1948, it was enthusiastic about European integration. However, between 1949 and 1960 it tried to steer the process towards an intergovernmental direction, in an attempt to contain the supranational ambitions of the original members of the EU, hereafter known as the Six. Its failure precipitated a process of gradual engagement, including two failed applications to join the EU in 1961 and 1967, culminating in Britain's accession in 1973. Contrary to expectations, the referendum on continued membership in 1975 did not settle the issue, leading Britain to be dubbed the 'awkward partner' and Britons, the 'reluctant Europeans'.

An Imperial Third Force (1945-48)

The post-war objective of the Foreign Office was to maintain an independent foreign policy to safeguard Britain's 'great power' status. Two options were considered. A restoration of Empire strategy was deemed unrealistic, whilst the feasibility of an imperial third force policy was explored by the Foreign Office and the Labour government between 1945 and 1948. The latter envisaged the creation of some form of European entity, led by Britain, and three schemes were devised: Anglo-French economic co-ordination, the 'Euro-Africa' plan based on the joint exploitation of Europe's colonies, and a European customs union. However, the *imperial third force* policy was abandoned in 1948 in favour of the 'special relationship' with the United States (US).

Limited Liability (1949-55)

In January 1949, an interdepartmental meeting of Foreign Office, Treasury and other officials outlined the essential characteristics of the *limited liability* policy, which operated between 1949 and 1955:

> Our policy should be to assist Europe to recover as far as we can. But the concept must be one of limited liability. In no circumstances must we assist them beyond the point at which the assistance leaves us too weak to be a worthwhile ally for the United States if Europe collapses, i.e. beyond the point at which our own viability was impaired.[4]

The results of this policy include the Labour government's rejection of the Schuman Plan, and the Conservative government's opposition to the European Defence Community and the European Political Community, plus its attempts to wreck the 1955 Messina Conference. It also informed the Cabinet's 1955 assessment, which ruled out entry on the grounds that it

would weaken the Commonwealth, undermine free trade, lead to further integration, perhaps a federation, and subject industry to increased competition.

Partial Engagement (1956-60)

The 1956 Suez crisis undermined the confidence of the British Establishment, exposing Britain's weakness and the one-sided reality of the 'special relationship'. It thereby precipitated a policy of *partial engagement*, as Britain reoriented its foreign policy in an attempt to re-capture the leadership of Europe. One manifestation of this policy was the plan for a free trade area in manufactured goods, presented to the Cabinet by Harold Macmillan in September 1956. Plan G was one of the seven options devised by the Treasury in anticipation of the Messina Conference. The plan envisaged the creation of a 17-member Free Trade Area (FTA), in which the Six would constitute the core of a wider membership. It represented an attempt to reinstate the intergovernmental principle and thus supplant the Six. However, the FTA proposal was rejected and Britain opted for a smaller European Free Trade Association (EFTA).

Near Identification and the First Application (1960-63)

During the early 1960s, a new generation of pro-EU officials joined the civil service, displacing those loyal to the Commonwealth. This precipitated the development of a new pro-entry orthodoxy within the Foreign Office and the Treasury. In March 1960, an interdepartmental committee of senior civil servants, chaired by Sir Frank Lee from the Treasury, was established to review Britain's European policy. The subsequent Lee memorandum recommended a policy of *near identification*, that is, accepting many of the obligations of the EU without formal membership. The Cabinet discussed the Lee memorandum, plus the answers to 23 questions posed by Macmillan, in July 1960. However, it was apparent that it was divided on the benefits and costs of entry. Two weeks later, Macmillan restructured the Cabinet in favour of pro-EU ministers. Looking back on this period, Young noted that no ministerial paper was put to the Cabinet, making this 'an officials' operation'.[5] In other words, Macmillan's new European policy, in effect, a decision to join the EU, was made by civil servants. Denman charged that 'it must be the only occasion in British history when a memorandum by an official was largely responsible for a momentous change in British foreign policy.'[6]

Between April and July 1961, several Cabinet committee meetings discussed the implications of joining the EU. The Cabinet also considered several papers that had been produced by a number of officials. The Lord Chancellor, Lord David Kilmuir, assessed the impact of entry on the British legal and parliamentary system, concluding that

> (a) Parliament would be required to surrender some of its functions to the organs of the Community. (b) The Crown would be called on to transfer part of its treaty-making power to those organs. (c) Our courts of law would sacrifice some degree of independence by becoming subordinate in certain respects to the European Court of Justice. In the long run, we shall have to decide whether the economic factors require us to make some sacrifices of sovereignty. My concern is to ensure that we should see exactly what it is that we are being called on to sacrifice, and how serious our loss would be.[7]

Officials acknowledged the loss of sovereignty:

> In the past, the loss of national sovereignty has been the most potent argument against British participation in supranational institutions. It was to a large extent responsible for our decision, in 1950, not to join the ECSC and, in 1955, to withdraw from the discussions

which led eventually to the drafting of the Treaty of Rome. Although the Treaty of Rome does not express this explicitly, it has underlying political objectives, which are to be brought about by a gradual surrender of sovereignty.[8]

Officials also conceded the risks involved in majority voting in the Council of Ministers if Britain signed the Treaty of Rome. Britain 'would be committing itself to a range of indefinite obligations over a wide field of action within the economic and social sphere which might subsequently be translated into specific obligations by means of a decision, regulation or directive adopted by the Council with which we would not necessarily agree.'[9] However, these assessments, and that of Kilmuir, were never placed in the public domain.

In June and July 1961, Macmillan consulted with the Commonwealth about British entry. In July, the Cabinet agreed to open negotiations with the Six. The government announced its decision to Parliament on the 31st July, giving an undertaking that it would consult the House of Commons before entering into any agreement. However, it refused to publish a White Paper. On the 9th August, Macmillan formally submitted Britain's first application to join the EU and the negotiations, led by Edward Heath, opened in October.

The First Pro-EU Propaganda Campaign (1962-1963)

While the negotiations were proceeding, the Conservative government turned its attention to preparing public opinion for entry. An opinion poll in 1954, by the US Information Agency (USIA), found 78 per cent in favour of European unification. By 1962, however, situation had changed significantly; the USIA found that only 47 per cent were in favour (see Table 1).

Table 1: Public Support for European Integration (1952-1962)

Q. Are you in general for or against making efforts towards uniting Western Europe?

	For very much	Against to some extent	No reply
	%	%	%
1952	58	15	27
1954	78	4	18
1955	67	10	23
1956	65	16	19
1957	64	12	24
1962	47	22	23

Source: United States Information Agency[10]

In May 1962, a Gallup poll found that 53 per cent supported the government's European policy. Another Gallop poll in June, however, found that only 36 per cent were in favour (see Table 2).

Table 2: Public Support for Entry to the European Union (1960-1963)
Q. If the British Government was to decide that Britain's interest would best be served by joining the European Common Market, would you approve or disapprove?

	Approve	Disapprove	Don't know
	%	%	%
Jul 1960	49	13	38
Jun 1960	44	20	36
Jul 1961	40	24	36
Aug 1961	49	19	32
Sep 1961	51	18	31
Oct 1961	48	18	34
Nov 1961	52	19	29
Dec 1961	53	19	28
Jan 1962	47	22	31
Mar 1962	49	23	28
Apr 1962	47	27	26
May 1962	47	21	32
Jun 1962	36	30	34
Jul 1962	42	25	33
Aug 1962	40	34	26
Sep 1962	46	30	24
Oct 1962	58	22	20
Nov 1962	50	23	27
Dec 1962	37	29	34
Jan 1963	41	30	29

Source: Gallup[11]

In July, the Cabinet agreed that it 'would be necessary for the Government to undertake as soon as practicable a campaign to present membership of the Common Market in a fairer light.'[12] In September, the Cabinet decided that 'public opinion was getting dangerously sceptical and needed correction.'[13] To counter public scepticism, the government enlisted the services of Lee, who set about devising a propaganda campaign to sell the concept of entry. As noted by Kitsch,

> At the Treasury, Sir Frank Lee held the national purse strings. He controlled public expenditure. He was at the nerve centre of Britain's communications, in an exceptional position to orchestrate and manipulate the entire complex of Britain's government and civil service communications system with the machinery of private enterprise. It was the first observable example of the entire machinery of Britain's public and private communications system being co-ordinated and geared for a single objective.[14]

That objective was joining the EU. Following intensive planning and co-ordination, the Conservative government launched Britain's first national pro-EU propaganda campaign.

For the government, facing the difficulty of projecting one intention to EU member states and another to its domestic and Commonwealth constituencies, the issue of presentation was critical. For the domestic audience, it highlighted the economic benefits of entry whilst minimising its political consequences. The campaign included the publication of a government booklet and another produced by the Central Office of Information, plus the widespread distribution of leaflets and fact-sheets to the business sector, the media, politicians, trade unions and the general public. Campaigns by other pro-EU forces

augmented the government's efforts. Hubert Gladwyn Jebb from the Foreign office was instrumental in forming the cross-party Common Market Campaign. Other campaigns were launched by the Conservative, Labour and Liberal parties, the Federal Union, the United Europe Association, the business sector and by the EU itself. Although no official record of the first pro-EU propaganda campaign exists, making it difficult to assess its cost, Kitsch estimated that millions of pounds had been spent.

The campaign's aim was to swing the business sector, the media, political parties, trade unions and ultimately the general public behind entry. It appears to have been a success. A Gallup poll in February 1963 found that 42 per cent felt that Britain should join the EU. By March 1965, support had increased to 57 per cent (see Table 3).

Table 3: Public Support for Entry to the European Union (1963-1965)
Q. If any opportunity occurs for Britain to join the Common Market, would you like to see us try or drop the idea altogether?

	Try to join	Drop the idea	Don't know
	%	%	%
Feb 1963	42	37	21
Jun 1963	46	25	29
Sep 1963	46	36	18
Nov 1963	49	32	19
Dec 1963	42	34	24
Jan 1964	36	40	24
Feb 1964	42	33	25
Jul 1964	41	37	22
Nov 1964	44	28	28
Jan 1965	48	30	22
Feb 1965	53	25	22
Mar 1965	57	22	21

Source: Gallup[15]

Although French President Charles de Gaulle vetoed Britain's application in January 1963, the downward trend in public support had been reversed.

Following Labour's 1964 General Election victory, Harold Wilson reaffirmed the party's five conditions for entry: safeguarding Britain's trade with the Commonwealth, its freedom to pursue an independent foreign policy, its obligations to the EFTA, its ability to plan the economy and its commitment to British agriculture. However, under the influence of pro-EU civil servants, Wilson began to shift in favour of entry. By the spring of 1967, Wilson was determined to join and, together with Foreign Secretary George Brown, he embarked on an official tour of the European capitals to sound out opinion. At the end of April, the Cabinet voted 13-8 in favour of reopening negotiations with the Six, with a view to joining the EU. When the decision was put to the House of Commons in May, three-line whips were imposed on both Conservative and Labour Members of Parliament (MPs). The decision was carried by 488 votes to 62, with 35 Labour MPs voting against. Britain's second application to join the EU was formally submitted on the 10th May 1967, only to be vetoed by de Gaulle in November. Nevertheless, Peter Shore later revealed that a Cabinet sub-committee of pro-EU ministers was established in 1969 to prepare positions and papers for a third application. The full Cabinet, however, was not informed of this.

The primary objective of the Conservatives, following their 1970 General Election victory, was to secure entry. To achieve this, Heath established the European Secretariat in the Cabinet Office and the third leg of Britain's negotiations began. Heath inherited the negotiating team from the previous government and proceeded on that basis between July 1970 and January 1972. Sir Con O'Neill, who led the negotiations, claimed that there was no discontinuity between the third application and those submitted by previous administrations. However, there was one aspect of discontinuity: the direction and responsibility for the negotiations was transferred from the Foreign Office to the Cabinet Office, in order to facilitate direct executive control.

The Conservative government's White Paper, stressing the economic and political benefits of accession, was published on the 7th July 1971. It conceded that food prices would rise and that Britain's contribution to the EU budget may become a burden, unless the Common Agricultural Policy was reformed. However, it neglected to mention Economic and Monetary Union, even though the Six had already pledged to create a single currency by 1980. The White Paper also dismissed the notion that entry would undermine national sovereignty. 'What is proposed' it claimed, 'is a sharing and an enlargement of individual national sovereignties in the general interest.'

O'Neill admitted that 'what mattered was to get into the Community, and thereby restore our position at the centre of European affairs which, since 1958, we had lost.'[16] He conceded that mistakes were made in terms of fishing and that Britain's contribution to the EU budget was burdensome. However, O'Neill concluded that, on balance, Britain's terms represented a good deal. Meanwhile, in May 1971, following a meeting between Heath and Georges Pompidou, the French President signalled that the veto would be lifted and that a third application would be successful.

The Second Pro-European Propaganda Campaign (1971-72)

Heath needed to win over the Conservative Parliamentary Party, the Conservative associations, the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) and public opinion, if accession was to be accomplished. The fourth task was particularly difficult. Gallup found that between 1967 and 1971 support for entry fell from 65 to 22 per cent. In April 1970, another Gallup poll found that only 19 per cent were in favour of entry and more than half rejected even the principle of starting negotiations. To ensure public support for entry, the government enlisted the assistance of the Information Research Department (IRD). This covert unit, established by the Labour government in 1948, financed from the Secret Intelligence Services budget with close links to MI6, was judged to be the most effective conduit for Britain's second national pro-EU propaganda campaign.

Following extensive survey research commissioned by the European Movement, the Conservative government and other pro-EU forces decided to concentrate upon several themes for the campaign, found to be effective in influencing opinion. These included the notions that entry would deliver higher standards of living, better social welfare, strengthen trade links, safeguard peace and security, and protect Britain's national interest whilst enhancing its global role. The government's campaign incorporated three stages.

The first stage began in the spring of 1971 when the government issued 12 fact-sheets and distributed 6 million copies of a booklet outlining the benefits of entry. Pro-EU campaigners flooded the press with letters, whilst government ministers made 280 speeches on the issue between July and October. Furthermore, a special IRD organisation, the European Unit, was created to work closely with pro-EU forces to rebut the claims of the anti-EU campaign.

The second stage witnessed the lobbying of Conservative MPs by the parliamentary Conservative Group for Europe and party whips, plus the negotiation of a secret alliance with the pro-EU wing of the PLP to ensure a successful House of Commons vote. Conservative Central Office, the Conservative Research Department and the Conservative Political Centre targeted Conservative associations, through constituency chairs, party agents and officers.

The third stage of the campaign was a national one, aimed at influencing the general public through the media. To this end, Geoffrey Tucker, a public relations expert who had worked for the Conservative Party, organised a series of cross-party breakfast meetings of between 20 and 30 people at a London hotel. Business leaders, civil servants, media representatives and politicians attended these IRD-funded meetings. Furthermore, Geoffrey Rippon and Crispin Tickell, from the British negotiating team, reportedly attended some of these meetings. Radio and television media were particularly targeted, including such programmes as News at Ten, Panorama, Today, 24 Hours, Women's Hour and World at One. The national campaign was augmented by specific ones organised by the Conservative Party for Europe, the Labour Party for Europe, the Liberal Party for Europe and the European Movement. These activities were co-ordinated by a government committee.

The European Movement campaign involved the recruitment of over 200 speakers, who addressed over 1000 public meetings, the distribution of over 10 million leaflets, and the distribution of the *British European* newsletter. It also included extensive advertising in the British press, billboard advertising, the distribution of prepared articles and letters to local and national newspapers, plus the release of a pop record called 'We've got to get in to get on'.

As with the first campaign, no official record of the second campaign exists, making it difficult to estimate its expenditure. However, Wistrich reported that the European Movement alone spent over £1 million, in stark contrast to the anti-EU campaign, which only spent £50,000. The second campaign also seems to have been a success. Support for entry stood at an all-time low of 19 per cent in April 1970 (see Table 4).

Table 4: Public Support for Entry to the European Union (1970-1971)
Q. Do you approve or disapprove of the Government applying for membership of the European Common Market?

	Approve	Disapprove	Don't know
	%	%	%
Feb 1970	22	57	21
Apr 1970	19	59	22
Jul 1970	24	55	21
Sep 1970	21	56	23
Oct 1970	22	56	22
Nov 1970	16	66	18
Jan 1971	22	58	20
Mar 1971	19	60	22
Apr 1971	22	60	19
May 1971	23	59	18
Jun 1971	27	58	15

Source: Gallup[17]

By July 1971, however, Gallup found that public support for membership had increased to 28 per cent and by August to 34 per cent (see Table 5).

Table 5: Public Support for Entry to the European Union (1971-1972)
Q. On the facts as you know them at present, are you for or against Britain joining the Common Market?

	For	Against	Don't know
	%	%	%
Jul 1971	25	57	18
Aug 1971	39	43	17
Sep 1971	35	47	18
Oct 1971	32	51	17
Dec 1971	38	47	16
Feb 1972	42	41	17
Apr 1972	43	43	14
May 1972	41	45	14

Source: Gallup[18]

With public opinion moving in the desired direction, the Conservative government decided to act. The House of Commons debated a Conservative motion in favour of entry in October 1971. As a result of the secret alliance between the Conservatives and 69 pro-EU Labour MPs, 356 MPs voted for entry with 244 against in the final division on the 28th October. In January 1972, the government signed the Treaty of Accession and published the European Communities Bill. There were 104 divisions during the Bill's passage, and although government majorities fell to single figures several times, not one vote was lost. Using the guillotine measure to expedite its passage, the Bill was passed on the 17th October 1972. Britain joined the EU on the 1st January 1973.

The hope that entry would settle the issue of European integration was not realised. In January 1973, Gallup found that 38 per cent believed that Britain was right to have joined the EU, whilst 36 per cent believed that it was wrong. As a result of Tony Benn's campaign for a referendum, Wilson went into both general elections in 1974 with the pledge to renegotiate the terms of membership and to put the decision to the British people. Following Labour's election, and in anticipation of a referendum, Wilson created two new cabinet committees, one for European strategy and another for tactics.

During the renegotiations of 1974-1975, Wilson and Foreign Secretary James Callaghan managed to secure some concessions. However, several commentators believe that the renegotiation tactic was part of strategy to swing public opinion behind continued membership. Indeed, Michael Palliser, Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, stated that 'the whole object of the exercise was to keep Britain in, and get something that could be presented to the British as politically adequate.'[19] In March 1975, following the conclusion of the renegotiations, the Cabinet voted 16-7 in favour of maintaining membership. When the decision was presented to the House of Commons, it received a large majority, mainly due to Conservative support. On the Labour side, 137 voted for membership, whilst 145 MPs voted against and 33 abstained. However, at the Labour Party Special Conference in April, 3.7 million votes were cast in favour of withdrawal, compared to 1.98 million against. To avoid exacerbating these divisions, the Cabinet agreed that ministers could campaign both for and against membership in the forthcoming referendum.

The Third Pro-European Propaganda Campaign (1974-75)

Following accession, public opinion returned to a position where a majority opposed membership (see Table 6). Indeed, in January 1975 Gallup found that 55 per cent were in favour of withdrawal, compared to 45 per cent against.

Table 6: Public Support for European Union Membership (1973-1974)

Q. If you were told tomorrow that Britain was leaving the EEC would you be very sorry about it, indifferent or relieved?

	Very sorry %	Indifferent %	Relieved %	No reply %
Sep 1973	20	33	37	10
May 1974	24	28	40	8
Nov 1974	31	22	38	9

Source: Gallup[20]

Public opposition, together with increasing hostility within the Labour Party, prompted the reconstitution of the pro-EU propaganda infrastructure that had been effectively dismantled upon entry. In the spring of 1974, an elite group, known as the 'principals', launched a series of secret meetings to co-ordinate the campaign. Wistrich, who was then the national organiser of Britain in Europe, reported that

> within a month of the February 1974 election, we had set up a campaign committee involving not just the European Movement but representatives of political parties and others. We conducted a major attitude survey in June. In July we distributed 6.5 million leaflets to try and recruit the troops to conduct a referendum, as a result of which we got about 12,000 people involved.[21]

These preparations presaged Britain's third national pro-EU propaganda campaign.

There were three stages to this campaign: the first whilst the government was renegotiating the terms, the second during the passage of the Referendum Bill, and the third during the final weeks of the referendum campaign. The 'Yes' and 'No' campaigns broadly coalesced around two organisations: Britain in Europe united most of the pro-EU forces, whilst the National Referendum Campaign brought together opponents of the EU. Britain in Europe published *Why You Should Vote Yes*, the National Referendum Campaign issued *Why You Should Vote No*, whilst the Labour government distributed its pamphlet in favour of membership, *New Deal for Europe*, to every household in Britain. Shore[22] highlighted two assurances in the government's document that turned out to be untrue. First, the statement that

> There was a threat to employment in Britain from the movement in the Common Market towards an Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). This could have forced us to accept fixed exchange rates for the pound, restricting industrial growth and so putting jobs at risk. This threat has been removed.

And second the statement that

> No important new policy can be decided in Brussels or anywhere else without the consent of a British Minister answerable to a British government and British Parliament. The Minister representing Britain can veto any proposals for a new law or new tax if he considers it to be against British interest.

Recalling the themes and strategy of the pro-EU campaign, MORI's Robert Worcester stated that polls at the time indicated that economic rather than political issues were decisive: 58 per cent of respondents said the issue of the cost of living was central to how they would decide. Others said that food prices (37 per cent) and unemployment (15 per cent) were crucial, whilst only 9 per cent felt that independence and sovereignty were important.[23] Butler and Kitzinger[24] argued that the electorate was divided into three roughly equal groups: pro-EU, anti-EU, and the 'hesitants'. 'Yes' campaigners concluded that the 'hestitants' were more likely to be persuaded by another hesitant rather than a pro, and this belief became central to their strategy.

Britain in Europe recruited 17 regional co-ordinators and trained 600 speakers who addressed thousands of public meetings. It created cross-party committees, leading to 374 local campaigning groups, developing a network of campaigning groups for professionals such as doctors and solicitors. High profile public personalities were enlisted, millions of leaflets, posters and other promotional materials were distributed, and shops in prominent locations in many town and cities were rented. The campaign also included the staging of mass public meetings, the screening of party political broadcast-style television programmes, the launch of a newspaper campaign using the local and national press, plus billboard advertising.

Subsequent analyses of the referendum reveal a number of disparities in terms of employees, financing and the roles of the government, official opposition, business sector, civil service, EU and media. The 'Yes' campaign officially employed 163 people whereas the 'No' campaign only possessed six. Both the pro- and anti-EU campaigns enjoyed access to government grants of £125,000 for publicity. However, Britain in Europe managed to raise an additional £1.8 million from business and other sources, whereas the National Referendum Campaign merely secured an extra £8,610. The Labour government and official opposition actively assisted the 'Yes' campaign. O'Neill played a central role in Britain in Europe, whilst the cross-party initiative enabled Heath, Jenkins, and the Liberal leader, Jeremy Thorpe, to share the same platform several times during the campaign. By contrast, Wilson and Callaghan kept a relatively low profile during the campaign. Butler and Kitzinger surmised that this seemingly reluctant, but ultimate call for a 'Yes' vote was deigned to carry the 'hesitants'.

The business sector was united in favour of a 'Yes' vote. A Confederation of British Industry survey found that 415 out of 419 companies favoured continued membership. The civil service was not neutral during the referendum campaign. In addition to helping to produce the government's pamphlet, Whitehall assisted a number of task forces and liaison committees to support the 'Yes' campaign. Sean Stewart, who worked for Peter Shore MP, complained of Civil Service bias:

> Peter Shore was my minister. Most of my colleagues thought that he was a 'fellow traveller', and Benn was regarded as a Communist. In the whole of Whitehall, at the middle level, there was fear all over the place, and the 'antis' were being labelled as Communists and 'fellow travellers.[25]

The EU intervened in the referendum campaign through its British commissioners, prompting one commentator to remark that 'in the deployment of two international civil servants, the pro-EU campaigners displayed an extraordinary lack of sensitivity to the constitutional ethics of non-interference in the domestic policies of a nation-state.'[26] It was also alleged that the Central Intelligence Agency intervened. Conservative MP Richard Body recounted how

> At the very beginning of the campaign, two Central Intelligence Agency agents came to see me in the House of Commons. They were Anglophiles and they were very upset at the way their agency was going to interfere in the referendum campaign. They said the new station head [Cord Meyer] was going to be appointed, who was not a normal Central Intelligence Agency man, he was well known in the federalist movement and they were going to interfere in different ways.[27]

As with previous pro-EU propaganda campaigns, the media played a central role during the 1975 Referendum. The press was united in favour of membership, with only the *Morning Star* campaigning against. In terms of press coverage, Butler and Kitzinger revealed the 'grossly unequal treatment of the two sides as far as sympathetic column inches were concerned.' The 'mean balance was 54 per cent pro- and 21 per cent anti- (the rest neutral)'. They insisted that these figures did not reflect public opinion or the final result. Likewise, Broad and Geiger noted that the media were almost all pro-EU, yet public opinion polls, between mid-1973 and January 1975, showed a narrow majority in favour of withdrawal.

Press bias was also identified by a British Business for World Markets (1975) study. The systematic media bias led one member of the Press Association to state that

> What the referendum revealed was the power of the press when linked with the big battalions of politics. It is probably true that newspapers do not shape people's opinions, at least not directly. Readers read the news columns and do not automatically adopt the opinions of the leader columns. But when the news is opinion, as it was during the campaign…with no facts to go on, and the emphasis is in one direction then readers are swayed in that direction.[28]

Broad and Geiger questioned whether a shadow referendum on Benn and Enoch Powell, amongst others, was the real influence in terms of public opinion and the actual result. A Britain in Europe survey in April 1975, for example, found that of the leading 21 political figures in the campaign, each of the 13 pro-EU figures enjoyed a positive rating, whereas six of the eight anti-EU campaigners had a negative rating. Hollingsworth argued that 'the personalisation of the referendum was so intense that a 'Yes' or 'No' vote really meant whether you were 'for' or 'against' Tony Benn as an individual politician.'

The 22 per cent swing took place over the first three months of 1975. In January, Gallup found that 55 per cent supported withdrawal and 45 per cent supported membership. By early March these figures had reversed. By the end of March, 66 per cent supported membership and only 34 per cent supported withdrawal. On the 5th June 1975, the British people were asked, do you think that the United Kingdom should stay in the European Community (Common Market)? The result was decisive: 67.2 per cent voted 'Yes' and 32.8 per cent voted 'No'.

WHY PROPAGANDA?

There are three reasons why pro-EU forces have resorted to propaganda rather than educating the general public about membership. First, the EU is essentially a political project involving the loss of national sovereignty and democratic control to unaccountable intergovernmental and supranational EU institutions. The governing elites in other member states have been generally honest with their electorates about the political nature of the EU, whereas the British Establishment has not.

Second, membership of the EU is costly in economic terms. Although no government has conducted a review of the costs and benefits of membership, Podmore and Katz[29] estimated the combined cost of EU budget contributions, Exchange Rate Mechanism membership, Maastricht convergence criteria compliance and the cumulative trade deficit between 1973 and 1997, at £255 billion. This figure did not include the costs of Common Agricultural Policy and Common Fisheries Policy membership, import penetration and the subsequent loss of manufacturing jobs, nor the loss of markets in the rest of the world. These costs have never been presented to the British public.

Third, to a considerable degree, the interests of big business have driven the EU. Witness, for example, the positive correlation between the recommendations of the European Round Table (ERT) of industrialists, composed of 45 chief executives from Europe-based multinational companies, and the policy agenda and treaty output of the EU. Richardson, Cowles, Balanyá et al., and Lucas and Hines[30] traced the link between the recommendations of reports produced by the ERT and the Single Market, single currency and enlargement projects. The British public has never been asked whether or not it supports an increasingly neoliberal EU.

THE EURO AND THE EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION

New Labour's 1997 General Election victory heralded a sea change in Britain's relationship with the EU, both rhetorically and in terms of policy. Rhetorically, Prime Minister Tony Blair promised to put Britain at the 'heart of Europe'. Policy-wise, where previous governments had exercised caution and introduced a measure of reluctance and scepticism in the relationship with the EU, New Labour has pursued an overtly pro-EU agenda. Its enthusiasm is most evident in its policies towards the euro and the European Constitution.

New Labour's 1997 manifesto set out three pre-conditions that would have to be satisfied before Britain could join the euro: the Cabinet would have to agree, Parliament would have to vote in favour and the British people would have to say yes in a referendum. New Labour decided against joining the first wave of euro members in 1999, opting to delay membership until a number of conditions, set out by Chancellor Gordon Brown in October 1997, had been satisfied. Five economic tests would have to be passed before any decision was taken: whether there is sustainable convergence between Britain and the eurozone, whether there is sufficient flexibility to cope with economic change, the effect of membership on investment and the financial services industry, and whether it is good for employment.

Although the official policy in its first term was one of *wait and see*, New Labour's unofficial policy was euro entry. However, the main obstacle to its strategy was public opinion. An ICM poll for the No Campaign in February 2002 found that 60 per cent would vote against euro membership in any referendum, compared to 27 per cent who were in favour. The straightforward question of yes or no to membership was asked 47 times by ICM between 1992 and 2002. The aforementioned poll result, 60-27 against, was exactly the average result of the polls conducted during this period. Another obstacle was Rupert Murdoch. Peter Mandelson revealed that New Labour did not stage a referendum during its

first term because Murdoch's media empire would have campaigned against euro entry. Importantly, Mandelson revealed that 'the Cabinet was never consulted, the decision involved only Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, Robin Cook and John Prescott.'[31] Consequently, New Labour adopted a policy of *prepare and persuade*, as evidenced by a number of institutional and legislative initiatives, two 'low intensity' propaganda campaigns aimed at the business sector and the public, and successive interventions by business leaders and EU bureaucrats to augment these campaigns.

In June 2003, the Treasury published its assessment of the five economic tests together with 18 additional documents, concluding that only one test, the impact on financial services, had been passed. New Labour subsequently set out a road map to euro entry, concluding that several reforms would have to be instituted before Britain could join. These include transforming Britain's fiscal policy, restructuring its housing market, and introducing a new inflation index. Other reforms include changing the statutes of the ECB, to introduce a Bank of England-style symmetrical inflation target, transforming the SGP and increasing labour market flexibility across the EU. Unofficially, EU reform constitutes the sixth euro test.

New Labour supported the 2002 Convention on the Future of Europe, and the resulting European Constitution in 2004. A Conservative motion in the House of Commons in March 2004, demanding a referendum on a future constitution, was defeated by 328 to 212. New Labour argued that there was no need for a referendum; indeed, one minister described the restructuring of the EU treaties as a mere 'tidying up' exercise. However, one month later, following a campaign by the Murdoch press, and another by Vote 2004, which gained the support of 60 Labour MPs, Blair performed a U-turn and agreed to hold a referendum. He also hinted that a second referendum would be held if the first one produced a 'No' vote. It is alleged that Blair's policy U-turn, which was not discussed by the Cabinet, was also influenced by Murdoch's threat to withdraw his support from New Labour at the next general election unless he changed his policy. In June 2004, Mandelson was appointed as a European Commissioner, in prime position to help sell the euro and the European Constitution to a sceptical British public, whilst promoting the EU reform agenda.

A MORI poll in June 2004 found that two-thirds would vote 'No' in a referendum on the European Constitution. However, it also found that significant numbers could be persuaded to change their mind, whilst between one in four and one in five did not know how they would vote. Indeed, a subsequent MORI poll in September classified 46 per cent of respondents as 'waverers'.

Given the state of public opinion on both the euro and the European Constitution, it is likely that New Labour will organise further pro-EU propaganda campaigns to achieve its objective. Indeed, the pro-EU Foreign Policy Centre has already suggested strategies for winning future referenda on the euro and the European Constitution.[32]

CONCLUSION

Britain's first application to join the EU in 1961, its accession in 1973 and the 1975 referendum on continued membership, represent key milestones in British-EU relations. These events were marked by concerted national pro-EU propaganda campaigns targeting the business sector, political parties, the trade union movement and the general public. These campaigns coincided with significant shifts in public opinion to the benefit of pro-EU forces. The evidence presented, in the form of polling data, clearly demonstrates a positive correlation between the timing and duration of these campaigns and changes in public opinion. The high levels of spending on these campaigns, by successive governments, the

business sector, the European Movement and other actors, is a further indication of their efficacy.

Pro-EU forces perceived the widespread scepticism, if not opposition, of key political actors and the general public as a threat to their plans. It thus required a 'correcting mechanism': propaganda. Given that an objective statement about the Treaty of Rome's goal of 'ever-closer union' is unpalatable and difficult to sell, pro-EU forces chose not to educate the public about European integration. To do so would have risked British withdrawal from the EU. Instead they employed concerted pro-EU propaganda campaigns to manufacture consent for membership.

While it seems likely that future referenda on the European Constitution and the euro will witness further pro-EU propaganda campaigns, there are a number of important differences between the balance of forces in the 1975 Referendum and the likely configuration of forces in future referenda. In the 1975 Referendum, pro-EU forces were defending the status quo of maintaining EU membership. In the current period, however, they are seeking to change it, advocating ratification of the European Constitution and euro entry, both of which have significant constitutional, economic and political consequences. Furthermore, unlike in 1975, anti-EU forces have access to substantial financial resources, and the business sector, media, political parties and trade union movement are more evenly divided on the question of the European Constitution and the euro. There are also a number of similarities, not least that, as in 1975, pro-EU forces currently enjoy the backing of the government and the considerable power resources of the British State. Given that the balance of forces is more equal than in 1975, the government's success in deploying pro-EU propaganda campaigns to deliver 'Yes' votes in any future referenda on the European Constitution and the euro is thus far from assured. What is certain is Tucker's assertion that 'the battle' for public opinion on the EU 'will never be over.'[33]

This account of previous pro-EU propaganda campaigns is of both historical importance and contemporary relevance, for academic and political reasons. Academically, it excavates an important subject long neglected within EU studies. It also suggests a new dimension for the analysis of Britain's changing relationship with the EU and the dynamic process of European integration itself. Politically, despite protagonists' insistence that the future referendum on the European Constitution and the euro should involve an informed debate, it is likely that such referenda will be preceded by concerted, government-organised pro-EU propaganda campaigns.

NOTES

[1] This article complements the authors' earlier work – 'European Integration and the Battle for British Hearts and Minds: New Labour and the Euro', *Political Quarterly*, 74 (3) [2003], pp.322-336 – which detailed New Labour's preparations for a future pro-EU propaganda campaign to secure a 'Yes' vote in a referendum on the euro.

[2] For simplicity, the post-war project of European integration will be referred to as the European Union (EU), rather than its previous titles of the European Economic Community, Common Market or European Community.

[3] Alex Carey, *Taking the Risk Out of Democracy*, Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1995, p.20

[4] Quoted in Richard Clarke, *Anglo-American Economic Collaboration in War and Peace, 1942-1949*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982, p.209

[5] Hugo Young, *This Blessed Plot: Britain and Europe from Churchill to Blair*, 1998, p.123

[6] Roy Denman, *Missed Chances: Britain and Europe in the Twentieth Century*, London: Indigo, p.211

[7] Public Records Office (PRO), FO 371/150369

[8] PRO, CAB 134/1821

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] European Commission, *Eurobarometer: Public Opinion in the European Union, Trends 1974-1994*, Table B4 (Attitudes towards the Unification of Western Europe), Brussels: European Commission, 1995
[11] Gallup, 'Public Opinion and the EEC', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 6 (3),1968
[12] PRO, CAB 128/36, CC (62), 44
[13] PRO, CAB 128/36, CC (62), 48
[14] Richard Kitsch, *The Private Life of Public Relations*, London: Macgibbon and Kee, 1964, p.163
[15] Gallup, 1968
[16] O'Neill, p.355
[17] Gallup, in David Zakheim, 'Britain and the EEC – Opinion Poll Data, 1970-72', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 11 (2), 1973
[18] Ibid.
[19] PRO, FO 371/182377
[20] Gallup, in David Butler and Uwe Kitzinger, *The 1975 Referendum*, Second Edition, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996, p.247
[21] Ernest Wistrich, in Roger Broad and Tony Geiger, 'The 1975 Referendum on Europe: A Witness Seminar', *Contemporary Record*, 10 (3) 1996, p.89
[22] Shore, p.13
[23] Robert Worcester, in Broad and Geiger, p.98
[24] Butler and Kitzinger, 1996
[25] Sean Stewart, in Broad and Geiger, p.103
[26] L.J. Sharpe, 'British Scepticism and the European Union', in Martin Holmes, Ed. *The Eurosceptical Reader*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996, p.305
[27] Richard Body, in Broad and Geiger, p.93
[28] Mark Hollingsworth, The Press and Political Dissent: A Question of Censorship, London: Pluto, 1986, p.50
[29] Will Podmore and Phil Katz, *Sovereignty for What? Why Stopping European Monetary Union is Just the Start*, London: Tribune, 1998
[30] Keith Richardson, 'Building Europe's Infrastructure', in Harry Cowie and John Pinder, eds., *A Recovery Strategy for Europe*, London: Federal Trust, 1993; Maria Green Cowles, 'Setting the agenda for a new Europe: the ERT and EC 1992', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 33 (4) 1995; Belén Balanyá, , Ann Doherty, Olivier Hoedeman, Adam Ma'anit, and Erik Wesselius, *Europe Inc: Regional and Global Restructuring and the Rise of Corporate Power*, London: Pluto, 2000; Caroline Lucas and Colin Hines, *From Seattle to Nice: Challenging the Free Trade Agenda at the Heart of Enlargement*, Brussels (European Parliament): Green Party/European Free Alliance, 2000
[31] Andrew Rawnsley, 'Mandelson admits: we are banking on Murdoch', *The Guardian*, 19 April 1998
[32] Mark Leonard and Tom Arbuthnott, Eds., *Winning the Euro Referendum: A Guide to Public Opinion and the Issues that Affect It*, London: Foreign Policy Centre, 2001; Mark Gill, Simon Atkinson and Roger Mortimore, *The Referendum Battle*, London: Foreign Policy Centre, 2004
[33] British Management Data Foundation, 'Document: A Letter to *The Times*', Transcript of BBC Radio 4 programme broadcast on Thursday 3 February 2000, Stroud: British Management Data Foundation, 2000