

Yes to Europe!

On 5 June 1975, voters went to the polls in Britain's first national referendum to decide whether the UK should remain in the European Community. As in 2016, the campaign shattered old political allegiances and triggered a far-reaching debate on Britain's place in the world. The campaign to stay in stretched from the Conservative Party – under its new leader, Margaret Thatcher – to the Labour government, the farming unions and the Confederation of British Industry. Those fighting to 'Get Britain Out' ranged from Enoch Powell and Tony Benn to Scottish and Welsh nationalists. Footballers, actors and celebrities joined the campaign trail, as did clergymen, students, women's groups and paramilitaries. In a panoramic survey of 1970s Britain, Robert Saunders reveals the full history of the referendum for the first time, asking why voters said 'Yes to Europe' and why the result did not, as some hoped, bring the European debate in Britain to a close.

Robert Saunders is a Senior Lecturer at Queen Mary University of London. He is the author of *Democracy and the Vote in British Politics, 1848–1867* (2011) and co-editor (with Ben Jackson) of *Making Thatcher's Britain* (Cambridge, 2012). He appeared in the BBC TV series *The Victorian Slum* (2016) and has given interviews and commentary on the BBC, CNN and a wide range of media outlets.

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The 1975 Referendum and Seventies Britain

Robert Saunders
Queen Mary University of London



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