

'The Luxembourg compromises' from the Süddeutsche Zeitung (31 January 1966)

Caption: On 31 January 1966, the Bavarian daily newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung measures the impact of the Luxembourg institutional compromise and shows why it is in France's interests to remain a Member of the European Common Market.

Source: Süddeutsche Zeitung. Münchner neueste Nachrichten aus Politik, Kultur, Wirtschaft und Sport. Hrsg. Friedmann, Werner; Goldschagg, Edmund; Schöningh, Franz Josef; Schwingenstein, August. 31.01.1966, Nr. 26; 22. Jg. München: Süddeutscher Verlag. "Luxemburger Kompromisse ", auteur:Fackler, Maxim , p. 4.

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The Luxembourg compromises

The EEC's acute crisis has been overcome, the European flag, which has been hanging limply from its mast for seven months, is beginning to catch the wind and Brussels has found fresh hope: France is returning to the table at the Council of Ministers. To symbolise this new beginning, the six Foreign Ministers have lost no time in drawing up a loose schedule for the EEC's next and, in some cases, urgent tasks. It does not, as far as we can make out, impose the sort of early deadlines that could have meant buying France's return too dearly. Adopting the budgets, wrapping up agricultural funding, merging the EEC, Euratom and ECSC executive bodies and proceeding with the statutory election of new Commission Members — these are outcomes in which the Six all have the same interest. These issues will soon put the foundations on which the Luxembourg compromises are built to the test.

The acute crisis has been overcome, but its outbreak and the very fact that it could break out in the first place will continue to have an effect, no matter how sincere the effort on all sides to forget and, at best, forgive. France's contract-defying absence has touched the EEC too deeply for anything more to be attempted in the initial stages than a process of recovery. Although we sincerely hope that the EEC will regain the vigour of its early days, whoever still has doubts about whether that will actually happen cannot be accused of pessimism. Rarely has an institution come out of a crisis exactly as it had been in those days when such a crisis would have been unthinkable. Still we must try to find our way back to the trust that reigned in 1956 when the Treaties were being concluded and in whose uninterrupted growth everybody then believed. But instead of growing trust, there was nothing but adversity for at least half a year.

While France had made demands of the EEC that were irreconcilable with the Rome Treaties, Paris never actually sought their revision. De Gaulle sensed that none of the partners were prepared to concede a revision. The text of the EEC Treaty has thus emerged unscathed from the two sessions in Luxembourg. We feel a sense of satisfaction about this. Revising the Treaty would have meant capitulating to France, to avoid which the delegates strove for an *agreement* into the early hours of Sunday morning. And when finally both protocols were on the table, the Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany, Gerhard Schröder, said that there were neither winners nor losers. It would, however, be reassuring to think that there has been a winner after all, namely the EEC. All the signs are that this is so.

The two Luxembourg compromise protocols relate to the Commission in Brussels and the voting procedure in the Council of Ministers. The Commission will not be forced back as far as France had originally wanted. As the other five partners are all fervent advocates of a Commission acting and empowered to act in a truly European manner, they clearly believe that they can square with their conscience, a conscience committed to the spirit of the Treaty, the provisions that have now been established by protocol concerning cooperation between the Council of Ministers and the Commission. The Commission can still claim to be in the driving seat, although it is certainly still not free from French suspicion. And France has dropped its claims on certain points to which it had previously attached the highest importance.

All the more tenacious, therefore, was the fight by Couve de Murville against majority voting and hence in favour of sovereign decisions by nations, by states. Here the gaps in the protocol are particularly striking. It states that no agreement was reached on how, in practice, to conjure up, during majority voting, the kind of unanimity that France continues to deem imperative. At issue are 'vital questions' for one of the Six or, as they are now called, 'crucial interests' of Member States. As being outvoted is still more than uncomfortable for any state, outarguing the opponent will have to be the escape route from future conflicts. In view of the French urge for independence, this method provokes feelings of unease; de Gaulle hasn't suddenly shifted his ground on integration. Where the 'crucial interests' of individual states are at stake, the EEC is likely to act with great prudence, perhaps even with too much hesitation. But it has started to move again. And who would not be pleased at France's return to the Council table? Paris obviously considers EEC membership a vital issue for France, but also the existence of the EEC a vital issue for Europe.

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