

Address given by Gerhard Schröder (Brussels, 29 January 1963)

Caption: On 29 January 1963, during the 17th ministerial meeting between the Member States of the European Economic Community (EEC) and the United Kingdom, the German Foreign Minister, Gerhard Schröder, laments the abrupt breakdown in negotiations on the United Kingdom's accession to the European Communities.

Source: Western European Union Assembly-General Affairs Committee: A retrospective view of the political year in Europe 1963. March 1964. Paris: Western European Union Assembly-General Affairs Committee. . "Speech by Gerhard Schröder, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany (Brussels, 29 January 1963)", page:34-35.

Copyright: (c) WEU Secretariat General - Secrétariat Général UEO

URL: http://www.cvce.eu/obj/address_given_by_gerhard_schroder_brussels_29_january_1963-en-adbe7e44-9ca7-45bf-8bba-f394faebc706.html

Publication date: 15/01/2013

Speech by Gerhard Schröder (Brussels, 29 January 1963)

[...]

I shall not be wrong in presuming that each of us grouped around this table is deeply disappointed. Much effort has been expended on work which can no longer be continued. Dozens, indeed, hundreds of our colleagues have struggled for months to solve the problems arising, and I do not think there is anyone who is not deeply disappointed at the final outcome.

I should like to say on behalf of the Federal Government that our attitude to the problem has remained unchanged and constructive. As we have so often said, in governmental statements and on many other occasions, we consider that Great Britain's membership of the Community is both politically and economically desirable, and that we consider it can be achieved. Allow me to take up again an idea expressed earlier on, namely, that the Rome Treaty, in Article 237 and in the preface, issues a general and open invitation to European countries to join the Six. And allow me to point out also that it was only possible to get the Bundestag to adopt the Treaty instituting the European Economic Community a few years ago by promising (and the Government which made this promise has remained almost unchanged) to try to widen the circle of members. One of the parties which is at present a member of the Coalition Government refused to support the Treaty, although it supported a European policy, because they considered that the geographical area covered by the member States was not sufficiently wide. The parties which accepted the Treaty did so only because of the promise the Government made. This is a policy which has remained unchanged for a number of years.

We now find ourselves faced with a situation in which our opinions on whether Great Britain's accession is possible or not, are divided. One of the six delegations considers the cause as a hopeless one, whereas the other five are convinced that a solution can be found. For this reason we supported the proposal to introduce a new element into the negotiations, i.e. the Commission's report which was to give us all a chance of seeing the solutions already reached and the problems not yet solved, and possibly of getting some ideas which could be useful for continuing the negotiations. We were encouraged to think so because in circles close to the Commission it had recently been said with a great deal of urgency and conviction, that provided appreciable and important concessions were made on both sides, it would be possible in the not too distant future to solve the remaining problems within the framework of the Rome Treaty.

I am sincerely sorry that we have been unable to agree to this proposal which could have done no harm and would have provided an opportunity to re-examine problems in a new and more constructive light. Unfortunately we must now consider this attempt as abortive and for the time being we are not able to point to a way of making the negotiations progress.

In conclusion, I should like to make myself quite clear: my Government will not give up its intention of continuing with this project; we will do everything possible in the future to further it, although for the time being we cannot see how this can be done.

I should like to express my respect and appreciation for the feelings of those of our British friends who are at the head of a movement to bring Great Britain into closer relations with the six other countries. I know that for those concerned, it has not been easy and that they have taken this path after serious reflection, and followed it with remarkable perseverance and energy. The only hope I can express is that the movement towards Europe which has started in Great Britain will not die suddenly as a result of what has happened, and that, despite today's setback, it may stay alive. If so I — and I say this on behalf of my Government — am convinced that the day will come when we will be able to settle this problem.