

'Is de Gaulle anti-everything?', from the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (1 December 1967)

Caption: On 1 December 1967, the German daily newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung deplores the attitude of General de Gaulle, who, on 27 November 1967, again opposed the accession of the United Kingdom to the European common market.

Source: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. Zeitung für Deutschland. Hrsg. Benckiser, Nikolas; Deschamps, Bruno; Eick, Jürgen; Korn, Karl; Tern, Jürgen; Welter, Erich. 01.12.1967, Nr. 279. Frankfurt/Main: FAZ Verlag GmbH. "Will de Gaulle überhaupt nicht?", auteur:Tern, Jürgen , p. 1.

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Is de Gaulle anti-everything?

by Jürgen Tem

Efforts to include Britain in the European Economic Community (EEC) cannot be given up but must be continued. It will come about. France's five EEC partners cling to this notion, which was also reflected by the British Government's disappointment and annoyance. And even the French Government is prepared for a long drawn-out process regarding the British application — unless the British unexpectedly lose all their courage and patience. Unfortunately, patience is increasingly going to be an essential prerequisite. Nevertheless, the situation does differ from that following the General's first veto in January 1963. At that time, the entire negotiating framework, so painstakingly erected, fell to pieces; all the links had abruptly been severed. Today, several days after the General's press conference of 27 November, a depressingly tough atmosphere is noticeable, although the next round at the negotiating table with the Six is already being eagerly awaited.

This basically answers the question: does the General never ever want to admit the British into the Community? Or does he wish to hinder their accession 'only' now and in its current state? Will he get used to the idea of British accession in the long run, once the Community has become more close-knit, once European identity has become even more secure, and when Great Britain has gone further with its 'radical' transformation programme? Despite the General's shocking remarks, his words are, nevertheless, not entirely futile and represent the key issue. There is no straightforward answer, no answer that could be given with complete certainty. Speculation, hope and determination all play a role. Bearing this in mind, our opinion is: the General knows that Britain will sooner or later accede to the Community, as long as they do not lose heart and withdraw of their own accord. Will that happen in de Gaulle's lifetime? That remains to be seen. It depends on the sincerity of their attempts, which, however, cannot be proved by strength alone.

This is not just wishful thinking. It is also the opinion of people who know France and who started regarding matters critically after the torrential events of 27 November in Paris. This explains why the feelings of shock and bitterness in Bonn have been curbed. Indignation is not a policy in this instance. We have to think of tomorrow. Although the political and diplomatic room for manoeuvre of Couve de Murville's partners has been noticeably restricted in the EEC Round, a proposal has also been made by the French Head of State which is of significant market value: 'In order to make things easier for Britain, France is fully prepared to conclude an agreement, operating under the term Association or another name, which could promote trade between the continentals on the one hand and the British, Scandinavians and Irish on the other.

Initially, in all the excitement, this proposal went unnoticed. It will have to be picked up again, unless it was regarded as a stunt carried out for effect. It should nevertheless be taken seriously. And we should take the General at his word. The proposal shows that de Gaulle's comments on Britain's European stance do not contain anything particularly new or revolutionary. He had explained all this, at least the core of the matter, to Mr Wilson during his Paris talks, analysing it practically word for word for Dr Kiesinger and the Federal Ministers gathered for the consultation round in Bonn. The 'sensation' was the total publicity of the matter, the emphasis of the Olympian, the accompanying drum-roll. And the forgetfulness of his contemporaries.

If we assume that the French (a) obviously do not reject temporary solutions, (b) that the British, even in the event of accession, would opt for certain transitional solutions, and (c) that the Germans and the other Four do not have to be affected by the stages of British accession, the three basic positions should, with some skill, be such as to allow the door to further negotiations to be opened. At least it is not totally pointless to seek further progress. A beacon is visible on the horizon. There will, of course, be differences at the Council of Ministers meeting on 18 December.

The confrontation may be tough, the crisis among the Six might be inevitable. This would have to be overcome. But it is not the noise made during the dispute that will solve matters. An empty-chair policy is inadvisable. Pure reason is required; money may be ignored. It is obvious that the Federal Government may not in any way endanger its existing EEC foundation nor its reconciliation with France. The aim is a transitional stage or a series of transitional phases. The British should thereby refrain from acting as if

immediate accession was their only consideration. They should not expect a revolt among the Five, nor should they try and instigate one. The Five will of course have to reach an agreement over the next two weeks on how to aim directly for a transitional solution. They will find themselves in choppy waters.