

'De Gaulle causes serious irritation' from the Süddeutsche Zeitung (16 January 1963)

Caption: On 16 January 1963, the German daily newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung analyses the hostile reactions towards France following General de Gaulle's refusal to accept the United Kingdom's accession to the European Communities.

Source: Süddeutsche Zeitung. Münchner Neueste Nachrichten aus Politik, Kultur, Wirtschaft und Sport. Hrsg. Dürrmeier, Hans ; R Herausgeber Proebst, Herman. 16.01.1963, Nr. 14; 19. Jg. München: Süddeutscher Verlag. "Starke Verärgerung über de Gaulle", auteur:Paulus, E.G. , p. 1.

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De Gaulle causes serious irritation

France isolated in Brussels.

The five EEC partners remain determined to proceed with Britain's accession, even against de Gaulle's will.

From our own correspondent E. G. Paulus

Brussels, 15 January — France's EEC partners are determined to bring accession negotiations with Britain to a successful conclusion, despite President Charles de Gaulle's refusal to let the UK become a full member of the European Common Market. Immediately before the meeting of the Council of Ministers with Mr Edward Heath, who was representing Britain in negotiations in Brussels, each delegation made a statement on Tuesday, demolishing de Gaulle's arguments against British accession one by one and stressing the need for Britain to share the responsibility for European unification.

Foreign Minister Gerhardt Schroeder made a statement on behalf of the Bonn delegation in which he stated that the German position remained unchanged. On political and economic grounds, which had been outlined many a time, Britain should become a full member of the EEC. Germany believed that a compromise could be found for all unanswered questions as long as there was goodwill all round. Responding to claims made by de Gaulle, the German delegation refuted them as follows:

1. Right from the beginning of the negotiations, Britain had agreed to the EEC's Common External Tariff without reservations, and on accession it would immediately adopt the customs measures that had already been implemented by the Six, something that was not stipulated in the Treaty of Rome. Britain had renounced the Commonwealth preferences and would be satisfied with transitional measures.
2. Great Britain had accepted the agricultural provisions set out in the Treaty of Rome as well as the agricultural decisions taken by the Community and had requested only relief for the transitional period. The agricultural policy within this transitional period would, however, vary significantly among the six EEC Member States.
3. Great Britain had declared that its relations with the EFTA countries would cease from the day of British accession to the EEC.

It should also be noted that association was not a solution for a partner as important as Great Britain. Only as a full member of the EEC could Britain contribute to the political goals of the Community. In its statement, the German delegation also referred to Article 237 of the Treaty of Rome, as well as to the Preamble to the Treaty, which states unequivocally that any European state may apply to become a member of the EEC.

Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak said that the point made by Mr Schroeder was particularly significant. He stated that the Belgian Government could not be responsible for the adoption of a policy of stubbornness such as that pursued by the French Head of State towards Britain. The remaining five EEC partners had shown the utmost consideration towards France, which enjoyed full economic protectionism in 1956, when the other EEC partners pursued a free trade policy. France had been granted a series of concessions and special rulings. The difficulties that France's partners had had in concluding the EEC Treaty with France were at least as complex as those currently being faced in negotiations with Britain. Britain could have special relations with the Commonwealth countries, just as France had been granted special relations with the African states.

Whether or not some EEC partners would resort to voting among themselves during negotiations and acting accordingly would become apparent in the course of events, Spaak continued. The Belgian Government, however, regarded it as paramount that this week of negotiations should have a positive outcome.

The Netherlands Foreign Minister Joseph Luns declared that the Netherlands Government fully agreed with

Spaak's statement. A representative of the Italian delegation also emphasised the need to continue negotiations with Great Britain and said, alluding to de Gaulle's press conference the day before, that such comments did not commit the Six.

De Gaulle's comments caused shock and disappointment at the EEC Conference in Brussels. Although it was common knowledge that de Gaulle had no particular interest in a positive outcome of the negotiations with Britain, it had not been expected that he would reject the British 'with such cynical brutality' and, by offering them association instead, would banish them to the 'below the salt', as a Benelux diplomat said.

The Lord Privy Seal, Edward Heath, however, had already declared that association could not form the basis for negotiations. Britain was not interested in an association with the EEC.

De Gaulle's stance has resulted in France being under threat of isolation, with Brussels showing common resistance. When Spaak declared that the transitional period should not extend beyond 1 January 1970, until which date, however, efforts should be made to meet Britain halfway, it clearly reflected the direction that the Five are wishing to take in order to reach a compromise. Over the next few days, France will have to show how far it is willing to yield to the compromises that its partners are prepared to grant Britain.