

Press conference held by Charles de Gaulle (21 February 1966)

Caption: On 21 February 1966, General de Gaulle holds a press conference during which he describes the impact of the Luxembourg Compromise and reiterates France's political objectives.

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Charles de Gaulle — Press conference (21 February 1966)

[...]

With regard to Europe, I shall tell you the point that we have reached and what my thoughts are in the light of the agreement reached in Luxembourg.

An agreement was entered into in Luxembourg between the six governments, and we consider that agreement to be felicitous, salutary even. For the first time, we have openly walked away from the myth that the economic organisation of the Six was a matter for a body other than the States with all their powers and responsibilities. The matter was successfully dealt with by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, away from Brussels, because we expressly acknowledged that political foundations and conditions were a necessary part of a successful economic order, because those foundations and conditions were the purview of States and States alone, and because it was for each government to determine whether the action that they proposed taking jointly was compatible with the essential interests of its country.

In view of that, one may well wonder whether the economic negotiations which are to be resumed will have a satisfactory outcome. The political issue had to be resolved.

Without ignoring the potential value of the Brussels Commission's studies and proposals, it is thanks to the interventions of the States — and of France with regard to the common agricultural market — that European economic integration has been able gradually to overcome all the obstacles. But the imminent implementation of the majority rule and the associated extension of the powers of the Commission threatened to do away with a particular reasonable practice which the Commission had hitherto been considering abolishing through the permanent usurpation of sovereignty. Since reason has prevailed, there are grounds for believing that the economic negotiations will continue on good terms.

But is that the sole objective of European ambitions? Must we accept that the six Western European countries which have reached agreement on the political conditions which govern their economies must refrain from ever discussing with each other issues which would affect them first and foremost? What wicked spell can prevent the Six from discussing political issues of common interest among themselves, from having political contact with each other? We are aware that France has been proposing something like this for some time. We are aware that, for their part, the German Government, the Italian Government and the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs have put forward similar proposals since then. Although all the plans differ slightly, they are in agreement on one essential point, namely that there is a need to arrange for the six governments to meet on a regular basis and to discuss political issues of common interest together. Now that, since Luxembourg, European economic integration has resumed its course, France believes that there has never been a better time to launch political meetings of this kind.

It goes without saying that, for the Six, it is not a matter of brandishing absolute solutions as to what, in an ideal world, the future European edifice ought to be, nor of imposing a pre-conceived, rigid framework on the complex, shifting realities which comprise the life of our continent and its relations with the wider world; it is not a matter of viewing European integration as complete as complete before we begin to live together, politically speaking, in Europe, neither is it a matter of again losing ourselves in the myths and idle fancies which have always prevented the Six from doing anything together apart from painfully realigning their economic output and trade. No, what the Six must do is meet so they can work together, with cooperation as their intention and goal; indeed, during the Franco-German talks which took place during Chancellor Erhard's visit to Paris, the two governments were agreed on that point, and that seems to me to be one of the most significant outcomes of that cordial meeting.

The Six must concentrate on the security of the Six, bearing in mind their close neighbourly relations with each other, their geographical and, therefore, strategic location, their relations with the peoples which are close to them such as Britain, Spain, the Scandinavians etc., or the United States, or the countries of Eastern Europe, or China, or Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, their joint activities in the fields of science, technology, culture, space etc., on which the future of mankind depends. Just as movement is

demonstrated by walking, perhaps their community of interests will become evident through their cooperation.

Will that community of interests have to be enclosed in some kind of economic and political fortress? Not at all; on the contrary, when it comes about, especially if subsequently supplemented by further accessions or associations with European countries, the union of the Six can and must be a worthy counterpart in all fields to the United States, worthy in the sense of being powerful and independent. That union of the Six can and must be one of the breakwaters on which to construct, firstly, an equilibrium, then cooperation, and then one day, perhaps, the union of the whole of Europe. This would enable our continent to resolve its own problems, particularly that of Germany, including its reunification. The union of the Six would ultimately allow our continent, which is the origin of civilisation, to achieve a level of financial and human development commensurate with its capabilities and its resources. As of now, this union of the Six, if it were to come about, would be a first-rate spur to progress, *entente* and peace for all the peoples of the world.

For those reasons, if any of the States which are in the process of building the European political Community with us felt bound, in view of this, to take it upon itself to propose a political meeting of the Six, France would respond positively and willingly.

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