

'The EEC talks in Paris' from the Süddeutsche Zeitung (11 October 1961)

Caption: On 11 October 1961, the German daily newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung focuses on the difficulties which threaten to arise during diplomatic negotiations on the United Kingdom's application for accession to the European common market.

Source: Süddeutsche Zeitung. Münchner Neueste Nachrichten aus Politik, Kultur, Wirtschaft und Sport. Hrsg. Friedmann, Werner; Goldschagg, Edmund; Schöningh, Dr. Franz Josef; Schwingenstein, August ; R Herausgeber Proebst, Herman. 11.10.1961, Nr. 243; 17. Jg. München: Süddeutscher Verlag. "Die EWG-Gespräche in Paris - London begründet seinen Aufnahme-Antrag", auteur:Frisch, Alfred , p. 1 et 4.

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Last updated: 06/07/2016



The EEC talks in Paris

London substantiates its application for accession

We fully endorse the aim and purpose of the economic community, says Heath

(SZ) On Tuesday in Paris, Mr Edward Heath, British Lord Privy Seal with special responsibility for the Foreign Office, presented to the Foreign Ministers of the six EEC Member States Britain's proposals for her accession to the European Economic Community. Mr Heath expressed the willingness of his country to recognise fully the aim and purpose of the EEC and to cooperate in the pursuit of European unity. He did, however, call for satisfactory interim solutions to Britain's three main problems, namely Commonwealth trade, British agriculture and relations with the European Free Trade Area (EFTA). After the accession of the United Kingdom to the EEC, Britain would also apply for membership of the European Coal and Steel Community and the European Atomic Community (Euratom), said Mr Heath.

From our correspondent Alfred Frisch

Paris, 10 October

At the conference on British accession to the Common Market, which began on Tuesday morning in Paris, Mr Edward Heath, the British Minister with special responsibility for European affairs, deems it his main objective to convince his country's future partners of her good will and honourable intentions. He means to leave no one in any doubt of his Government's very earnest desire to comply with the Treaty of Rome and of the absence of even the slightest inclination on its part to impede progress. Britain accepts all the rules of the Common Market and does not seek to alter a single article; instead, it is merely contemplating additional protocols which would be applicable for a transitional period. It approves the principles of the common agricultural policy and even the association agreements with Africa; it also endorses the decisions in favour of closer political cooperation which were taken at the conference of the six Heads of Government in Bad Godesberg in July, including the possibility of a political status for the Community. Safeguarding the interests of Britain's EFTA partners presents no difficulties either, for the countries in question could either join the Common Market or secure associate status. For the Commonwealth, more or less empirical solutions would have to be found, either in the form of tariff quotas with purchase guarantees or of special types of association agreement.

Political observers, whilst finding cause for satisfaction in these British declarations, nevertheless warn against overestimating their import. The obstacles do not lie in the principles but in their practical application. Not least among the caveats have been reminders of the essentially straightforward association talks with Greece, in which it took the European Council of Ministers five separate meetings to deal with a single technical question. One disconcerting point about the talks in Paris is the wish expressed by Edward Heath for the negotiations to be conducted with the utmost discretion out of consideration for the sensitivity of public opinion in his own country; in other words, the public are to be kept in the dark for as long as possible about the technical details and practical consequences of British accession to the Common Market. In this way, Mr Heath hopes to avoid dangerous countercurrents.

In addition, more than a little confusion prevails about the political implications of the Government reshuffle. The former President of the Board of Trade, Reginald Maudling, who is not exactly pro-European, has been promoted and now has greater political clout within the Cabinet. While Home Secretary Rab Butler will no longer be Leader of the House of Commons, it is perhaps possible that Harold Macmillan has merely pushed him somewhat into the background because Butler has the credentials to succeed him as Prime Minister. At the same time, however, Mr Butler, who opposes British accession to the Common Market, was appointed chairman of the interdepartmental committee responsible for drawing up the instructions for the British negotiating team, which undoubtedly represents a major concession by Macmillan to the opponents of the Common Market within the Conservative Party.

Political circles in Paris and Brussels, incidentally, fear that the real obstacles lie on another plane, which will prove far more significant in the long term. The tariff and trade policy of the Common Market in respect of industrial and agricultural products cannot be restricted to the Six, Britain, Denmark and Norway. In some form or another, a closer association will have to be developed with Switzerland, Austria and Sweden. To that must be added the expected accessions of Spain, Portugal and Ireland and the granting of associate status to Turkey. This recreates the framework of the recently dissolved Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC). The OEEC failed because it was not empowered to deal with technical tariff issues in the years preceding the Common Market negotiations. Various bids to create a European customs union met with stubborn resistance from the United Kingdom.

The successor organisation to the OEEC now has the United States and Canada among its members. There is not the slightest doubt in Paris and Brussels that the United States will demand compensation for the damage that a European customs union might do to US trade, especially since a customs union will not stop at the borders of Europe but will extend to Africa and, through the United Kingdom, will also affect the Commonwealth countries. It must not be forgotten that Britain will bring a considerable share of world trade into the Common Market, and this in itself means that the new order to which Europe aspires will have far-reaching consequences for the United States. How could the Common Market conclude long-term tariff and supply agreements with India, Canada or Australia without making similar pledges to the United States in respect of US cereals, fats and tobacco exports and so on? This creates the danger of a worldwide regime which, though it might have highly desirable results in the industrial domain, namely the elimination of import duties in the industrialised nations, would mean the creation of a less satisfactory system of import quotas for agricultural produce, leading to a sterile situation in which markets are made inaccessible. The point is that this ceases to bear any resemblance to a common market. A customs union, combined with coordinated trade policies, is neither an economic union nor a political community. The same observers note that there is a geographical optimum size for communities of states. If the optimum dimensions are exceeded, it becomes impossible to establish an effective organisation. A distinction must be made between the unquestionably desirable effects of a return to international free trade along the lines of the 1880 model and the politically essential unity of Europe.

Understandably, observers are considering how the threat of dilution of the Common Market can be averted. One possibility would be to leave tariff and trade issues to the new Euro-Atlantic body, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and to restrict the Community *per se* to the Common Market with the addition of the United Kingdom. There is a firm belief in some quarters that political considerations have played a significant part in Britain's decision in favour of the Common Market. It is considered absolutely imperative to consolidate the Common Market by launching the common agricultural policy before the end of the year as well as by resolutely reinforcing political cooperation at the next conference of Heads of Government, to be held in Rome in early November. The core of Europe must generate European dynamism if there is to be any hope of preserving the original aims of the Common Market and of offsetting the global improvement that the United States is probably bound to demand in the realm of tariff and trade policy in order to defend its interests. Finally, these circles in Paris and Brussels want an additional guarantee in the form of closer Franco-German cohesion, not least on the political stage. They believe that the time has come for de Gaulle and Adenauer to launch some bold initiatives to this end.

The conference on Tuesday morning served not only as a vehicle for Mr Heath, the British Minister with responsibility for European affairs, to present his Government's case, which he elucidated to the press afterwards. Towards the end of the same morning, the Common Market Ministers also met for a shorter working session, under the chairmanship of Professor Erhard, to approve the procedure for the next stages in the negotiations. The afternoon saw the start of the procedural discussions with the United Kingdom; these talks covered a number of purely technical matters — setting dates, establishing a secretariat, appointing a chairman and so on. It should be pointed out that the governments of the six Common Market countries are not at liberty to issue an official response to the statements made by the British chief negotiator until the European Commission in Brussels has delivered its opinion.