

'The Common Market and the United Kingdom', from Corriere della Sera (4 December 1969)

Caption: The day after the European Summit in The Hague, the Italian daily newspaper Corriere della Sera analyses the French position on the contentious issue of the United Kingdom's accession to the European Communities.

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The Common Market and Great Britain

The key event of the Hague Summit has been President George Pompidou's speech at the opening session. This is to be expected. Since de Gaulle's France had kept the European Community closed for ten years, the whole of western Europe was now anxious to find out whether de Gaulle's successor would let it move forward or was still keen to keep it closed.

The speech disappointed and embittered the Europeanists. They may, however, be overly pessimistic. What Pompidou said, whatever the reasons and purposes for which he said it might be, is fairly logical. Before deciding whether to admit Great Britain, it is in everyone's interests — those of the Six as well as of London — for the Community to be clearly defined so that the Six are completely in tune with one another when setting the accession conditions, and that Britain may know what the Community that it intends to join actually is and will become.

Let us take an example, a very simple one: if the Community were to give itself a dose of supranationality, would Britain still be applying to join? Or, vice versa, should the Six give up any progress by the Community towards supranationality so that Britain could join? In short, my feeling is that Pompidou's speech cannot be seen as an anti-Europeanist speech, but rather that it placed the demands of logic before the impatience of a Europeanism that has been frustrated for ten years by de Gaulle's arrogance and obstructionism. If we are to assess it, we need to know the author's true intentions. He has certainly managed to delay the opening of negotiations with London. If, however, he has stressed that the 'deepening' of the Community should take priority only for reasons of logic and clarity, he has rendered a service to the Community.

If, however, his purpose has been one of obstructionism, i.e. to make Britain's entry even more problematic than it is, or even to make it impossible, then we would be faced with a French anti-Europeanism more subtle and treacherous than that of de Gaulle. No longer the strident and theatrical veto, no longer the policy of the 'empty chair', but an impossibility based on facts.

A brief comparison of Pompidou's remarks at The Hague with what the *Economist* wrote some weeks earlier may be instructive.

Robert Schuman, in the Senate, launched the formula of the triptych: 'completion', 'deepening' and 'enlargement'. There has been much talk about 'completion', which the *Economist* understood in the sense that France wants to ensure that agriculture is fairly treated. There has also been much talk about 'enlargement' – i.e. Britain's entry. However, there has been far less talk about the other component of the 'triptych'. 'Deepening' (or the development of the Community) means what kind of Community it is wished to create, how far it should go and what it should be. 'And this is what matters.'

French agriculture and Britain's participation are only 'preliminaries' to this (i.e. to the 'deepening' or development of the Community). This is exactly the point of view of the Five, which has been validly put forward by Chancellor Willy Brandt and Italian Parliamentarian Mariano Rumor at The Hague. Given the way in which the *Economist* understands 'deepening', however, is this order of precedence logical and sustainable?

Do the people — and this is how the *Economist* defines 'deepening' — want an economically integrated western Europe or a western Europe whose national industries cooperate when convenient? A western Europe with a single policy or with ten policies? A western Europe that wishes to defend itself and is prepared to pay the costs of defence or a western Europe that continues to rely on the good will and assistance of the United States? A western Europe whose national governments cooperate and use the institutions of the Community as a convenient secretariat or a western Europe whose governments have freely transferred some of their powers to supranational bodies?

Given that the *Economist* included such important and crucial questions in the 'deepening' of the community, it is surprising that it considered 'enlargement' as a preliminary to 'deepening'. How can

Britain decide whether or not to join if it does not know in advance whether the Community will have one policy or ten policies? Whether it wants to defend itself or not? Whether its members will or will not have to transfer certain powers to supranational bodies?

The *Economist* also added that British politicians are not asking these questions since they consider them too far [in the future] for anyone to be concerned by them. The key then follows: ‘the incurable pragmatism of our race, the realism that instinctively feels that what is will continue to be’. In other words, British thinking is as follows: ‘Let us join for now. If the development of the Community throws up any problems, we will think about them when they arise.’ Incurable pragmatism (!), maybe, but one that may nevertheless conceal a more underhand approach: ‘Let us join for now. When we are in, we will try to prevent the Community from developing in a way that runs counter to our ideas’ (supranationality).

If the British suffer from an incurable pragmatism, the French, in their turn, suffer from an incurable logicism, from Cartesianism. At The Hague, Pompidou asked whether we wanted to weaken or strengthen the Community. If we want to strengthen it, we need to do so first and then talk about ‘enlargement’, making any accession conditional on firm and precise commitments. Incurable logicism (!), but here again, as I said above, the approach may be more underhand: ‘Let us deepen the Community in such a way that the British will not want to join.’

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