

Letter to Robert Schuman from the French Ambassador in Copenhagen (13 April 1951)

Caption: On 13 April 1951, the French Ambassador in Copenhagen writes a letter to Robert Schuman, French Foreign Minister, in which he sets out the attitude of the Danish authorities towards European plans for the organisation of agricultural markets.

Source: Archives historiques des Communautés européennes, Florence, Villa Il Poggiolo. Dépôts, DEP. Pierre Uri, PU. PU 38.

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Letter from the French Ambassador to Copenhagen to Robert Schuman (13 April 1951)

The French Ambassador to Copenhagen
to
His Excellency Mr Robert Schuman, Minister for Foreign Affairs
Paris

Re: opening of a conference on
the organisation of the agricultural markets in Europe (the green pool)

In Circular No 86 of 3 April 1951, the Department asked me to keep it informed of any reactions to the French plan to open a conference on the organisation of the agricultural markets in Europe.

I wish to inform Your Excellency that the Danish press in general has reported that invitations to attend an agricultural conference have been issued by the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe on behalf of the French Government but that, to date, there has been no comment on this news. In February, the radical newspaper *Politiken* published an editorial in favour of the idea of the common market (my telegram No 82 in clear). Since then, the editorial press has kept quiet on the subject.

I have, however, had the opportunity to obtain some very preliminary reactions from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It seems that, in accordance with good administrative practice in Denmark, the French document has to be studied at length and in detail before the Danish authorities will issue a specific opinion on a matter that affects them directly. Generally speaking, the plan appears to have aroused some interest but to have been received with scepticism. On the basis of conversations that I have had with the Directorate of Economic Affairs and of the general situation of Danish farming, the following very hesitant comments can be made:

1. — Farming here is not interested in the same way by all the objectives listed in the memorandum. Although in favour of reducing and harmonising the customs tariffs for products such as sugar, wheat and dairy products, people are less supportive of measures that would, in one way or another, bring the very low prices achieved by Danish producers into line with the average prices of the same products in France, for instance.

Denmark is aware that it enjoys certain advantages in the agricultural field, and it is also aware that it is the only country in Europe for which farming is the primary export 'industry', so it will probably hesitate to commit itself to an endeavour that, in many respects, might well reduce its own competitiveness.

2. — From the agricultural point of view, Denmark feels much more closely linked to the Sterling Area than to continental Europe. It is only in relation to the surplus which it cannot sell in England that the problem of prices and market allocation is seen here in 'European' terms. There is every reason to think that Britain's reaction to the memorandum will be of crucial importance for Denmark's response.

3. — Will the countries that are protectionist towards their agriculture really agree to bring down their barriers? That is the real question. We have seen that coal and steel production problems have, for a long time now, resulted in the adoption of joint solutions, but the conditions under which cereals, dairy products, beet and wine are produced differ so widely from one country to another and are subject to such random factors that, here in Denmark, where the European idea enjoys only lukewarm support, there are fears that a joint authority would come up against almost insurmountable difficulties.

The Secretary-General at the Ministry yesterday made no secret of the fact that, however tempting the idea of an agricultural pool in theory, he doubted whether the present hardening of the trade system following rearmament was likely to promote its achievement.

Forwarded to: Europe Directorate

