

## ‘The reform of the Commission’, by Robert Boulay (RTL, 12 May 1970)

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[Journalist] It is now official — negotiations on the accession of the United Kingdom to the Common Market will open on 30 June in Brussels. Robert Boulay.

[Robert Boulay] The Six have indeed agreed on a starting date. On 30 June, they will meet representatives of the four applicant countries: the United Kingdom, Denmark, Ireland and Norway. The meeting on 30 June will be official to a certain extent, although the real negotiations will begin in July. This evening, in Brussels, we shall find out whether the Foreign Ministers of the Six, who have been meeting over the last two days, have reached agreement on who will negotiate with the British on behalf of the Community: the Commission or representatives of the governments. The task will most likely fall to ministerial and Commission delegates.

[Journalist] Indeed, Robert Boulay, the Six have to tackle a delicate issue: the number of Members of the Commission, currently 14, must be reduced to 9, which will certainly throw up a number of ticklish problems.

[Robert Boulay] This matter has almost been settled. In accordance with the Treaty, the number of Commissioners will be reduced to nine as from 1 July: two Germans, two Italians, two Frenchmen, one Belgian, one Dutchman and one Luxembourger. The Six consider that, whatever the difficulties, the Treaties must be respected. Some observers wondered if this decision would exacerbate the problem for the Belgians, for whom a linguistic issue may come into play — more precisely, the Dutch–French issue. It was this question that our correspondent, Léon Wauters, put to the Foreign Minister when he asked him whether decreasing the number of Belgian representatives from two to one would not cause difficulties. Mr Harmel provided a very clear answer.

[Pierre Harmel] In Belgium, there are not two but one President of the Supreme Court of Appeal, one Prime Minister and one President of the Court of Appeal. It follows that, when Belgium has to appoint one person, it is generally able to do so without causing tensions. This will therefore be the case when Belgium is required to appoint one Commission representative. It is a kind of horror story that I have seen a little too often in the foreign press over the last few weeks, and I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to clarify it, all the more so because you were not expecting it.

[Robert Boulay] For the Belgians, the situation is clear. To respect this system of rotation, the current President of the Commission, Jean Rey, a Belgian, must step aside in favour of an Italian, Mr Malfatti, who is currently Italian Post and Telecommunications Minister. At the eleventh hour, we received a telegram: the Six, in their determination to succeed, reached a new agreement this morning on the future representation of the various countries, including the number of places for the United Kingdom and for the other applicant countries. So, all is now well for the important negotiations due to begin in July.