

Reaction to the empty chair crisis (RTL, 12 July 1965)

Source: La crise de la chaise vide à l'occasion d'un sommet atlantique. Interview de Joseph Luns, interview de Michel Debré (ancien ministre) / JOSEPH LUNS, Michel Debré.- Paris: RTL [Prod.], 12 juillet 1965. RTL, Paris. - SON (04:36, Montage, Son original).

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[Reporter] There will be no holidays for the diplomats. The ministerial meeting of the Atlantic Alliance in Paris was attended by a large number of Foreign Ministers: in particular, the American George Ball, the Italian Amintore Fanfani, the Belgian Paul-Henri Spaak, the Netherlands Minister Joseph Luns, and, of course, the French Minister Maurice Couve de Murville. Many meetings took place as a result, and in the course of these encounters, Jacques Hillier, subjects that could not be ignored included the war in Indo-China and the European crisis.

[Jacques Hillier] The Foreign Ministers who have come to Paris for a NATO ministerial meeting are going to be very busy men this week. We can be sure that they will not be able to bring a solution to the Vietnamese problem a step nearer, but it is quite possible that prospects for the European common market will be a lot brighter after the discussions which are about to take place in Paris. This afternoon, at five o'clock precisely, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, Maurice Couve de Murville, will receive the Netherlands Minister for Foreign Affairs, Joseph Luns. Joseph Luns has told Jacques Boutelet of his scepticism and, at the same time, his hopes.

[Joseph Luns] I am not here as a mediator, nor as a negotiator. I am here for a NATO Council, and obviously I shall take this opportunity to see and talk to my friend and colleague, Maurice Couve de Murville.

[Jacques Boutelet] In your opinion, Minister, is the common market in danger?

[Joseph Luns] It all depends on how things develop. I would not say so; not at the moment. I have not heard that France wants to leave the common market.

[Jacques Boutelet] Who is responsible for this crisis?

[Joseph Luns] We might say that the French stance was somewhat unexpected.

[Jacques Boutelet] What precisely is your opinion of this stance?

[Joseph Luns] Right now there has been some damage, but I hope that it can be repaired.

[Jacques Hillier] So Monsieur Luns shifts part of the responsibility for this crisis in the common market onto France. This is quite understandable, since French and Dutch interests in this affair are not quite the same. However, for former French Prime Minister Michel Debré there is no doubt whatsoever: France is in the right. We asked Michel Debré, currently relaxing in Mont-Louis, from his position as a representative of the majority party and following the article that he wrote last week for the daily newspaper *La Nation*, in what conditions France would be able to resume negotiations.

[Michel Debré] It seems to me that the Brussels negotiations will not be able to continue unless the French position is accepted beforehand. This is not a matter of principle: it is a matter of fact. What is the issue at hand? The issue at hand is the common agricultural market. This common market was provided for in the Treaty of Rome and was also subject to precise commitments. The Treaty of Rome specified that the common market, i.e. the abolition of customs duties, price adjustment, a common policy, would be concerned as much with the industrial as with the agricultural policy areas. It was no doubt less precise concerning implementation, but concerning the principle it was categorical. Now it has to be complied with. And it is not possible, unless the common market is to exist no longer, that the provisions applying the Treaty and which put into effect the commitments made do not serve as the prerequisite for any further negotiations.

[Jacques Hillier] Tomorrow morning, Maurice Couve de Murville will also be meeting Paul-Henri Spaak, the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs, and his Italian colleague, Amintore Fanfani. Paul-Henri Spaak would be happy to play the role of a mediator in this common market crisis. In fact, it is probably the Couve

de Murville–Fanfani meeting that will be the most important one. On Friday, in Courmayeur, General de Gaulle will be meeting the Italian President, Giuseppe Saragat, for the official opening of the tunnel under Mont Blanc. President Saragat has just held important talks in Bonn with the leaders of the Federal Republic of Germany, and it is Amintore Fanfani who has been entrusted with preparing this meeting between General de Gaulle and the Italian President.

[Reporter] Before this meeting takes place, there is a deadline tomorrow. In Luxembourg tomorrow, 13 July, the Council of Ministers of the ECSC — the Coal and Steel Community — is due to meet. According to an ECSC spokesman, the Ministers will meet tomorrow as planned, despite French opposition. However, the Associated Press agency has learnt from a reliable source that the representatives of Belgium and Luxembourg intend to propose that this Council be adjourned as soon as the meeting begins.