

'The EEC Council "Summit" opens today at Fontainebleau with moderate optimism, despite the "British problem"' from El País (25 June 1984)


Caption: On 25 June 1984, the Spanish daily newspaper El País analyses what is at stake at the European Summit of the Ten in Fontainebleau.

Source: El País. 25.06.1984. Madrid. "La 'cumbre' de la CEE se abre hoy en Fontainebleau con un moderado optimismo, a pesar del 'problema británico'", auteur:Ortega, Andrés; Fidalgo, Feliciano.

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The EEC Council 'Summit' opens today at Fontainebleau with moderate optimism, despite the 'British problem'

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The Heads of State or Government of the ten countries forming the European Economic Community (EEC) are meeting today and tomorrow at the Palace of Fontainebleau, to the south of Paris. That meeting is seen as essential to the future of the Common Market. The Summit will tackle a broad agenda, dominated by the British dispute as to its Community budget contributions. The prognosis is anyone's guess, though bitter pessimism seems to have given way to moderate optimism, suggesting that another step may be taken towards enlarging the Community with the accession of Spain and Portugal. As Gaston Thorn, President of the European Commission (equivalent to the Community Council of Ministers), has pointed out, there is no doubt that the budget dispute *must be resolved* and that the historical baggage that has paralysed the EEC since 1979 must be removed. Despite the apparent insouciance of the French, a general degree of flexibility and a new moderately pro-European dialogue can be discerned from London.

Mitterrand has been careful not to show his hand in public and will not submit the final communiqué until today. In his appeal to the leaders of the other nine Member States, however, the catalogue of concerns will begin with the British question, and there were indications that the current budget *shortfall* of 350 billion pesetas, which has reached the ceiling of available funds, will be reviewed at the same time.

A failure would generate a financial crisis for the EEC. Solutions can be envisaged that do not involve British agreement, but virtually everyone assumes that the common agricultural policy will be renationalised, something that cannot be ruled out, since if things came to a head it would allow the EEC to continue to function.

Thatcher's discourse in recent years may be one of the reasons why two out of three British citizens abstained in the most recent elections to the European Parliament in Strasbourg. There is not much difference between the figures in the solutions proposed to resolve the British dispute. The big question is, who will take the first step and how far will it go?

Are the other nine leaders prepared for another confrontation with Margaret Thatcher that would generate a major political crisis in the EEC? They would have to be very united to contemplate this.

The results of the European elections have not helped matters, and they will not be helped either by the call from the German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, to increase and bring forward an indirect subsidy to German farmers. This problem threatens to reopen the *agricultural package* approved by the Ten in March. The European Commission, for its part, does not approve of the suggested increase in the EEC's own resources and took a decision to that effect at the previous Summit.

The point stressed most heavily by *Mitterrand the European* is the strengthening of the European Union. This is where France can catch the United Kingdom out, forcing it to define its position, even though its dispute may not have been resolved. Mitterrand is proposing a return to majority voting — and a rejection of the use of the veto imposed by the unanimity rule — discussion of the draft treaty on European Union approved by the outgoing European Parliament, and the creation of a permanent secretariat for political cooperation. The *Summit* also has to decide what to do with the present European Commission and to appoint a new President for the institution, since if the Luxembourger Gaston Thorn's term of office is not extended, he will leave the post in December. The number of Commissioners when Spain and Portugal have joined the Community must also be decided.

Spanish accession

It is unlikely that the *Summit* will discuss the accession of Spain and Portugal in depth, although if other

outstanding issues are resolved, particularly the British question and the increase in own resources, the principles and date of enlargement will be clearly established. Last Tuesday in Luxembourg the agreement between Spain and the French Presidency of the EEC was ultimately linked to the *Summit* being able to come to a clear and open decision on the accession of Spain and Portugal. In the text Spain made many concessions, and the Presidency acknowledged that principles of balance, progress and reciprocity should underpin the negotiations. According to the Spanish, the French Minister for European Affairs, Roland Dumas, gave assurances that the lengthy text agreed would act as a basis for a declaration at Fontainebleau, where Dumas himself assured *El País* that enlargement of the Community, with the accession of Spain and Portugal, was closely related to resolving the budget dispute between the United Kingdom and the other Member States.

Besides resolving the *British question*, and with the institutions as the focal point, Mitterrand proposes to organise the discussions into large blocks, beginning with political cooperation: East–West relations (he has just come back from Moscow), disarmament, aid to the Third World (including debt policy), the Middle East and Latin America.

In order to revive the Community, the serving President wants a discussion — and decisions — on existing and new Community policies: the environment, the European social area (forming the basis of a Commission declaration on the economic and social situation in the EEC), the creation of a cultural policy and research into cutting-edge technologies in the EEC.

As the third block, under the heading of *A Citizens' Europe*, Mitterrand proposes to address measures to achieve a genuine internal market in the EEC: free movement of persons, goods and services, equivalence of qualifications and some *stimulating initiatives* that he is keeping close to his chest.

Renewal of the Lomé Convention between the EEC and 72 Third World countries is scheduled for debate in the autumn. One thing is certain: Mitterrand needs a success, as his plan for a conference of nine, six or four has fallen on deaf ears for the moment.

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