

'Hallstein must go' from Neues Deutschland (20 January 1966)

Caption: On 20 January 1966, the East German newspaper Neues Deutschland analyses the proposals put forward by France during the first extraordinary meeting of the Council on 17 and 18 January in Luxembourg with a view to putting an end to the empty chair crisis.

Source: Neues Deutschland. 20.01.1966. Berlin-Ost. "Hallstein soll gehen", p. 3.

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Hallstein must go

G. H.

‘French ultimatum’, ‘EEC in crisis’; this is how the press, taking its cue from West Germany, is describing the latest developments in the serious arguments within the ‘European Economic Community’ (EEC).

These reports do not get to grips with the central issue, however. What is really going on is that the French Government wishes to confront the dangers to French sovereignty resulting from the structure of the EEC. The West German Government is trying to use this structure to establish its own supremacy in Western Europe, in the guise of ‘European unity’. France is well aware of this.

At the extraordinary meeting of the EEC, which finally took place in Luxembourg after much toing and froing, the French Foreign Minister, Maurice Couve de Murville, called for the Member States to continue to enjoy a right of veto in the EEC’s Council of Ministers, for the powers of the EEC Commission in Brussels to be drastically curbed and for the three ‘European Executives’, the EEC Commission, the Euratom Commission and the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community, to be merged into one single Commission with a rotating presidency.

Implementation of this third point would mean that Professor Walter Hallstein, the West German monopoly’s representative, would have to resign from his current influential position. France presented a memorandum during the discussions in Luxembourg in which the current EEC Commission and its President, Walter Hallstein, were heavily criticised for exceeding their powers.

France’s request that the right of veto be retained in the EEC Commission is also intended to help protect France’s sovereignty. West Germany had been waiting impatiently for 1 January this year when, in accordance with the EEC treaties, the unanimity currently required in the EEC’s Council of Ministers would have been superseded by majority decisions. By securing majorities on a case-by-case basis, the West German Government wished to interfere with its partners’ domestic affairs, for example tax and transport issues or issues of competition regulation, in order to facilitate West German businesses’ penetration in its partner countries. The French Government had realised this danger, too.

The coming weeks will see more arguments in the EEC, this time about France’s precisely formulated requests. It is already plain now, however, that the West German Government’s attempts to abuse trade and the relevant customs agreements for its own purposes of imperialist supremacy are meeting with growing resistance from the EEC as well.