

'Europe on the move', from Corriere della Sera (21 December 1967)

Caption: On 21 December 1967, the Milanese daily newspaper Corriere della Sera deplores General de Gaulle's decision to oppose the United Kingdom's accession to the European Economic Community (EEC).

Source: Corriere della Sera. 21.12.1967, n° 301; anno 92. Paris: Corriere della Sera. "L'Europa al passo", auteur:Bartoli, Domenico , p. 1.

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Europe on the move

By our special envoy

Brussels, 20 December.

The other evening I was looking out over the Grand'Place in Brussels from a top-floor flat, when a 'Eurocrat' friend of mine told me that fire had on more than one occasion destroyed this magnificent square-cum-drawing room, whose buildings boast highly ornate and gilded frontages on which the emblems of the ancient guilds are displayed, and that it had been painstakingly rebuilt on each occasion — just as we, I suddenly thought, are forced every now and again to remake all of the very small amount of Europe we have built. We need to have the patience and the skill of the craftsmen of old. Patience, however, does not signify resignation. Patience must be an active, creative virtue if it is to be productive; it is not a bar to energy and courage. Unfortunately, in our endeavours as builders and re-builders we sometimes happen to have a partner who, when the whim takes him or his interests so dictate, is capable of turning to arson, even to his own detriment.

We are in crisis. We know we are, we have said so time and again. The fact that France decides, irrevocably, whom to allow and whom not to allow into the Community amounts to tearing up once and for all the method that obtained in the Europe of the Six: a method based on intimate negotiations, which are sometimes protracted, incredibly finicky, or even tempestuous — just like family arguments — but without any orders being given, even if they are justified by the wording of the Treaty, and without the other side's arguments being scornfully discarded. That method was laid to rest five years ago now. We have known several instances that prove it incontrovertibly, the most recent of which came yesterday evening. Our regret at the unfair, damaging vetoing of the British is no less profound than the painful mourning of the passing of a particular way of acting, working, behaving, of restraint, of a willingness to compromise, which Gaullist arrogance has, we fear, consigned to the grave for ever.

What can be done? We cannot go as far as to destroy what we have made; neither does the French Government, in its own interest, have any intention of unravelling it. The development of the Community, admittedly, will be slowed down and perhaps come to a standstill; reprisals will be taken against the French Government, which will find a way of reciprocating. There is no other action that France's five partners can take. Although the French, who voted for President de Gaulle, feel able to acquiesce under his power, that is no reason why we too should also accept Gaullist hegemony in Europe. There will therefore be controversies and battles within the Community institutions. No headway will be made, and there may be some back-tracking. But the Community can be destroyed only by unforeseeable events that are considerably more serious than these. It is in everybody's interest to ensure that it survives and, for that reason, survive it will. If it is our wish to counter-manoeuvre, to pit policy plan against policy plan, strategy against strategy, we must leave the Community enclosure where the power to take action is held very much in check by the desire not to cause irreparable damage. We need to move, to operate in the open field.

It is widely known that the reasons why General de Gaulle used his veto against the British are not the reasons given yesterday and again the day before by his Foreign Minister, Maurice Couve de Murville. The point is not to wait for economic recovery in Great Britain. The point is to prevent a power of considerable political weight from being able to thwart the plan that France should reign supreme in Europe. The point is to punish Great Britain for its historic friendship with the United States, which, apparently, is guilty of having saved France three times within a few decades. The point is to assert its national will over its five Common Market partners by forcing them to endure several unpleasant decisions, of which the second veto against the United Kingdom is only the most recent. French diplomacy sought to focus its efforts on that aspect of its strategy by resigning itself to keeping under wraps the customary anti-American controversy at the Atlantic headquarters. During the NATO Council last week, Mr Couve de Murville was calm and accommodating. He did not want to engage in battle on the Atlantic and European fronts at the same time.

This interpretation of the Gaullist political line must, I believe, give us a hint as to the political line we should take. In going into the open field, beyond the narrow minefield of the Common Market, Italy must

compete everywhere with its opponent's design and methods. That means setting aside its ambitions in the Arab and Mediterranean areas and rallying round our most reliable allies, namely Great Britain and the United States, and spurring the Germans on to follow suit. Whether the Germans will do so I do not know. The Francophile tradition bequeathed by Adenauer, the desire to have a benevolent go-between in relations with the East, the fear of a French initiative that may weaken the Federal Republic in the eyes of the East German regime and Eastern Europe in general: all those are factors conducive to making the Germans feel uncomfortable, keeping them bound to their pact with France. That much has been evident even in the last few days. But if we can set the example, if we succeed in building a specific policy action for close cooperation with the British and the Americans, then Germany will be unable to remain deaf and insensible to it. Germany knows full well where the true guarantee for Berlin and for everything else lies.

In its clipped editorial this morning, *The Times* says that, all things considered, the Europe that de Gaulle has vetoed Britain from entering is not the Europe of electronics and advanced technology, but the Europe of butter and sugar beet. That is perhaps an attempt at self-consolation, a salve for the blows delivered to the pride of the old, weakened lion. But there is no flaw in the argument. The French policy is backward. What is to prevent Italy from contemplating the building, away from France and outside the Community (for as long as the veto remains), of a Europe of research and technology with the British, with the Germans, in cooperation with the Americans? Or are we too spineless, too indecisive, too lacking in imagination?

Domenico Bartoli