

'Europe in crisis' from Le Populaire (17 July 1965)

Caption: On 17 July 1965, in the French Socialist daily newspaper Le Populaire, André Bergeron, Secretary-General of the French Force Ouvrière (Workers' Force — FO) trade union, condemns France's refusal to attend intergovernmental meetings of Community bodies in Brussels.

Source: Le Populaire. 17.07.1965. Paris: Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO). "La crise de l'Europe", auteur:Bergeron, André.

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Europe in crisis

Those, like us, who are closely following the process of European integration realise the scale of the difficulties that have to be overcome. The establishment of the Common Market is no easy task. Its advocates knew in advance that many problems would arise. Most of those concerning the industrial sector have largely been solved. That is not yet the case for agriculture, despite the January 1962 agreement which provided that the extension and definition of the rules governing the financing of the agricultural market had to be finalised by 30 June 1965 at the latest. It was also made clear that the planned machinery would not be properly up and running until 1970.

Why has this agreement been called into question? Did the negotiators encounter economic and technical obstacles? Are politics to blame? It is clear that, to varying degrees, all these factors governed the conduct of the various parties, and it is impossible to apportion responsibility among them. But that is not our concern here.

We understand the reactions at the failure to honour the commitments given. But, being familiar with contract negotiations, we also understand the concern to improve, refine and polish the documents that we know will have major ramifications.

The Confédération Force Ouvrière has always approved measures aimed at moving more quickly and effectively towards the economic, social and even political integration of Europe on the basis of the principles of supranationality.

But today, we just want to point out the harsh fact. We deplore it, even if it is an inevitable development. The Government has taken measures that will bring the European institutions grinding to a halt. We want to be sure that it will not take any further steps which would lead to a total breakdown.

Recalling an ambassador might perhaps be seen as a symbolic response, but the ban on officials taking part in ongoing work in all areas, not just agriculture, is, in our view, more serious. That decision goes beyond what some are calling the 'hardening of the French position'.

We deplore the way the Government is acting. We hope that it is not using this situation in order to carry out a complete overhaul of its European policy. We continue to hope that recent events will be just 'hiccups' that will be quickly forgotten.

At all events, the Confédération Force Ouvrière will do its utmost to ensure that the hopes kindled by the European idea do not die. Workers, united through their unions, have set off along the road towards European integration. They do not want to give up.

With their comrades in the free European trade unions affiliated to the ICFTU, they call for the opening of fresh negotiations and the resumption of Community business.

They are fully aware that Europe will be created only with perseverance and hard work. They also know what the serious consequences of a total economic and, hence, social failure would be.

They and the peoples of Europe want Europe. It must be built. It will be built.

André Bergeron