

## 'The Common Market: meeting without France' from Paris-Presse (27 July 1965)

**Caption:** On 27 July 1965, the French daily newspaper Paris-Presse expresses its concern over the consequences for France of what is known as the 'empty chair' crisis.

**Source:** Paris-Presse. 27.07.1965. Paris. "Marché commun: Réunion sans la France", auteur:Delarue, Maurice.

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## THE COMMON MARKET: Meeting without France

France's Common Market partners (Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) are meeting today in Brussels with an empty chair in their midst — that of the French Minister — and they are meeting precisely to make the point that it is empty. The aim of our partners (with the exception of Belgium and Luxembourg, which only reluctantly accepted the Italian President's invitation) is to show up the French Government.

No one denies that on 30 June the Dutch, Italians and Germans failed to honour their commitments when they did not sign up to an agreement on the funding of European agriculture by the agreed date. Was that a sufficient reason for boycotting the Common Market? General de Gaulle thinks so, and he believes that he will get his way on the substance of the issue only by being intransigent on the procedure.

His position became more entrenched following the attacks — sometimes veiled, sometimes direct — made on French policy by Mr Hallstein and Mr Mansholt, respectively the German President and Dutch Vice-President of the Common Market Commission. It is that Commission, according to de Gaulle, that sparked off the crisis by trying to impose a national solution that was unacceptable to the French Government rather than playing its role as a mediating force.

Where do we now stand? Last week, the Commission presented the compromise that had been expected of it on 30 June. Its proposals come very close to the French position. In any case they provide a basis for negotiation. But Paris no longer wants to negotiate within the Common Market Council. If the French Government is to consider a compromise, one of its partners must now take it over and 'sell' it to France. By then, the German elections on 19 September will be over, and that is why the Five plan to arrange another meeting on 27 September. But between now and then a substantial new element will come into play: General de Gaulle's press conference.

The President of the Republic will not mince his words. He no longer wants to secure merely the financial settlement for agriculture but also a political agreement on the role and composition of the Commission. The Commission is not an independent executive body and should limit itself to finding common ground. Mr Hallstein and Mr Mansholt should no longer be members. As it happens, the Commission is due for a reshuffle, with new Members being appointed by 1 January. So the feeling now in Paris is that the crisis will not be resolved until the end of the year.

Maurice Delarue