

Memorandum of the British government to the Luxembourg government (15 December 1967)

Caption: On 15 December 1967, in a memorandum addressed to the Luxembourg Government, the British Government emphasises the importance of the United Kingdom's accession to the European Communities.

Source: Archives Nationales du Luxembourg, Luxembourg, Coopération politique européenne-Questions diverses. Adhésion de la Grande-Bretagne aux Communautés européennes 1968, AE 15 477.

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As a number of proposals have been made privately and even publicly for a reply to the British application for membership of the European Community, which in one way or another stopped short of acceptance, Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs is most anxious that Britain's friends and allies may have no misapprehension as to why negotiation for full membership is the sole aim of the United Kingdom and as to why no form of compromise can provide a solution to the problems which now face Europe. For this reason, the attention of the Luxembourg Government is invited to the following points.

When Her Majesty's Government decided in May last to seek full membership of the Community, the two basic reasons for the decision were

a) that although the economic results in the short term would be disadvantageous to the United Kingdom, the economic advantages for Europe as a whole and thus for the United Kingdom in the long run were enormous, given the creation of a single market of some 300 million people.

b) the importance of Europe playing its proper part in world affairs appeared paramount. It is not playing that part today.

It is evident that these results can only be achieved by a united Europe and not by a group including partial members. Since May, Mr. Wilson has emphasized the importance of "economic union" in Europe for the creation of industries on a European scale which can compete in the technological field.

Negotiation leading towards the known aim of full membership and based on the known text of the Treaty of Rome may not be easy or quick. How much greater, therefore, would be the difficulties of negotiation leading towards some other kind of arrangement, the form of which is not known and for which there is no sort of agreed framework or text.

The varieties of possible forms of arrangement are almost infinite, but one thing appears to be common to them all. That is that the position of the applicant member must be less effective than that of a full member. One instance of the difficulties arising from this position is that Community decisions are often the result of balancing a concession in one field against a concession in another, for example, industry as against agriculture. A country with a voice only in limited fields must obviously be at a disadvantage in such a case.

Most important is the development of the Community, and the connexion of an applicant country with this development. Development will and must continue. New decisions must be taken constantly. If there is a quick negotiating period, followed, as the United Kingdom would hope, by full membership, the applicant country will from that moment have the obligations of a member and be fully involved in the new decisions taken. It will be in a position to vote upon them and share responsibility for them. If, however, there is a "waiting room period" in one form or another, there is every probability that over a long period decisions may be taken which eventually will be binding upon the applicant member but in the taking of which the applicant has no part. This is the danger of the theory that a probationary membership might be automatically converted into full membership after the completion of certain conditions. The applicant would indeed be accepting blindly and in advance decisions perhaps yet not even thought of.

Supposing that the six members of the Community cannot find a basis for agreeing to admit applicant countries to negotiation in the present situation, there is no particular reason to suppose that such agreement between the six could be reached at any given time in the future. In other words, if once applicants enter into the waiting room, it is impossible to be sure that they will ever be allowed to board the train. In the meantime, uncertainty can be indefinitely prolonged. There is unlimited scope for argument and discussion, during which time no progress will be made on the European scale and political disunion will continue. It is

for these reasons that the position of Her Majesty's Government has been adopted not at all as a matter of tactics or timing but as a matter of profound principle.

BRITISH EMBASSY,
LUXEMBOURG.

15 December, 1967.