

Letter from Edward Heath to Pierre Werner (26 May 1971)

Source: Archives Nationales du Luxembourg, Luxembourg. Ministère d'Etat. Affaires étrangères. Lettres 1er juin 1971-31 décembre 1971, Dossier 49, 1971 II.

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Last updated: 17/10/2014

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Dear Prime Minister,

I promised to write to you more fully about my recent conversations with President Pompidou.

We spent a good deal of our time on the fundamental questions of the role and development of Europe, once the Communities were enlarged, and about how the growing unity of Europe should be organized, and found that our views coincided very closely. On the institutional arrangements also we found ourselves very much of one mind: that the identity of national states should be maintained in the framework of the developing Community, and that in practice Community decisions should be reached by unanimous agreement when the vital interests of member states were at stake.

We also had a considerable discussion on economic, financial and monetary questions. I told the President that Britain could unreservedly subscribe to the programme of progress towards economic and monetary union set out in The Hague Communique of December, 1969, and would play its full part in the action required to carry this progress forward. Our conversation on this subject included discussion of the role of sterling. I think that it would be fair to say that both of us came to understand more clearly than before each other's anxieties and objectives in this field. I am clear that as a result there has been an important evolution of French policy, and any reservations the French Government may have felt on this score have been dissipated.

It was not the purpose of our meeting to reach decisions on the issues outstanding in the negotiations for British entry into the European Communities: but we did of course discuss these questions, particularly Community Finance, New Zealand and the Fisheries Regulations with a view to seeing if we could help to bring the negotiations to a satisfactory conclusion. In these discussions we made significant progress, and both of us were satisfied that this would facilitate the solution of the remaining problems in the negotiations. You will have seen that President Pompidou told a press conference after our meeting that it would be unreasonable to believe that agreement between Britain and the EEC would not be reached in June.

There was no mistaking the warmth of the welcome which I received in Paris, not only from the President but from many French men and women whom I met. The combination of this and the outcome of my conversations encouraged me to think that my visit had re-established Franco-British understanding and friendship and so opened the way not only for a successful conclusion to the negotiations in Brussels but also for continuing progress in the development of the European unity which we all have at heart.

With warmest regards,

EDWARD HEATH