

## Interview with Catherine Lalumière: the stance taken by the Ten on the accession of Spain and Portugal to the European Communities (Paris, 17 May 2006)

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[Étienne Deschamps] How were things conducted in the Council? Was this political determination, this clear line taken by the French Presidency, also shared by the Ten?

[Catherine Lalumière] Yes, in fact, the other Member States of the Community at the time had realised that the accession of Spain and Portugal would cause more problems for France than for the other countries because of its proximity and also because its agricultural sectors were particularly affected. So they let us do most of the work, if I might put it that way. Throughout this period, January–February, in order to conclude the negotiations in areas where there were still points to be resolved, we really worked bilaterally. The others had the courtesy and the realism to say to us: ‘Look, once you have reached an agreement, we shall approve it. Because it is really the French for whom this poses the most problems.’ So, contrary to what we are usually supposed to do, which is to work on a multilateral basis, here it became a genuinely bilateral dialogue in order to find solutions. This meant that, once we had secured compromises which we deemed to be acceptable, and ones which turned out to be very good compromises for France, I strongly emphasise that point — we did negotiate very well — the others were completely in agreement. In the Council, it was the Italian Presidency, and the Foreign Minister, who was the President of the Council, was Andreotti. Now, Andreotti was very much in favour of the accession of Spain and Portugal. So the driving force that he provided, the skill with which he negotiated right up to the end — in particular during this mammoth session, where, for several days, we were meeting from morning to evening in order to try to reach a conclusion; the action taken by the President-in-Office of the Council, Giulio Andreotti, was also critical. He was really very keen that Spain and Portugal should accede. So the French were certainly among the most hesitant. The Greeks had been very reluctant, but the IMPs, of which they had received a considerable share, had helped them to overcome their doubts. Italy had also ... the Integrated Mediterranean Programmes had been very effective in softening the positions adopted.