

Interview with Hans-August Lücker: reservations concerning Spain's accession to the European Communities (Bonn, 15 May 2006)

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[François Klein] From 1977 to 1984 you were Co-Chairman of the European Parliament/Spanish Cortes Joint Committee, which dealt with the preparations for the accession of Spain to the European Communities. In 1980, you had presented a report to the European Parliament on the enlargement of the European Communities to include Greece, Spain and Portugal. What were the main obstacles to the accession of these three countries?

[Hans-August Lücker] Yes. There was a recurrence with Spain and Portugal of what we had already experienced with Greece. Greece, the oldest democracy in the world, a culture imbued with the European spirit and European tradition, wanted to be in Europe — that was a gift for us! And when the time came for this process to take place in Spain, I conjured up a word to convey the idea, one that would work a kind of magic. Without Spain and Portugal Europe would remain a torso. This 'torso' image spread across Europe in the ensuing months; it was even taken up by Willy Brandt. I was very happy about that.

There was just — let us just say — some tactical opposition from France and Italy, which was able to be banished by money that the Germans provided, because they said 'now we shall be exposed to Spanish competition on agricultural markets and we are not yet fully prepared ...' Well, suffice it to say that I took the lead in the European Parliament, took the lead in the Committee, and was even endorsed by the Spanish as General Secretary of the Committee. The reports were produced by me, not by a Spaniard. The Spanish trusted me to such a degree that they said 'we feel our interests are safe in your hands', and waived their right to have a Spanish General Secretary. I then went ahead and produced the reports.