

Interview with Catherine Lalumière: 1985: a good year (Paris, 17 May 2006)

Source: Interview de Catherine Lalumière / CATHERINE LALUMIÈRE, Étienne Deschamps, prise de vue : François Fabert.- Paris: CVCE [Prod.], 17.05.2006. CVCE, Sanem. - VIDEO (00:06:32, Couleur, Son original).

Copyright: (c) Translation CVCE.EU by UNI.LU

All rights of reproduction, of public communication, of adaptation, of distribution or of dissemination via Internet, internal network or any other means are strictly reserved in all countries.

Consult the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/interview_with_catherine_lalumiere_1985_a_good_year_paris_17_may_2006-en-3e1a0522-5be9-485b-a4dd-5e4cf344d833.html

Last updated: 05/07/2016



Interview with Catherine Lalumière: 1985: a good year (Paris, 17 May 2006)

[Étienne Deschamps] Mrs Lalumière, it has been said — you are among those who have said, I believe — that 1985 was a particularly rich, one might even say propitious, year for European integration. What is it that enables us to make such a statement?

[Catherine Lalumière] With hindsight, I do believe that 1985 was a good year for Europe. It coincides with the period during which I was fortunate enough to be in European Affairs. I am not so proud as to believe that I was able to have had the slightest influence. No, of course it was a coincidence and I was fortunate. First of all, in 1984, there had been a crisis with the United Kingdom, if you remember. And with regard to the question of the British rebate, a solution had been found, one that some people subsequently regretted, but it enabled the deadlock to be broken in spring 1984.

So this problem had been removed from the landscape. In 1985, Jacques Delors arrived at the Commission, bringing with him teams and ideas, and providing an undisputed driving force. Then in 1985, the negotiations for the accession of Spain and Portugal were concluded, and of course we needed to wait for the ratification period before these two countries could accede from a legal point of view, but we can say that 1985 was the year that Spain and Portugal acceded to the European Community, and it was a great joy, it was truly — despite the hesitations in some French circles, it was a very, very good decision for everyone.

Then, if we follow events chronologically, it was in May, I believe, that a decision was taken in the Council, and that was one of my first very good memories. Shortly beforehand, the ‘Cassis de Dijon’ case law had been established in the Court in Luxembourg, and the principle had emerged of the mutual recognition of standards in the various countries. And in May 1985, based on the philosophy, the principle, of ‘Cassis de Dijon’, the Council adopted the principle of mutual recognition.

I remember this all the more because France, if my memory serves me correctly, before my arrival, had blocked this decision. Once again under the grip of the officials, who were saying: ‘You don’t realise, it’s extremely dangerous, etc.’ And the other countries, which hesitated; however, in the end, the deadlock was broken, and I remember that when the text arrived ... — or was it in 1984? No, I believe that it was in 1985 — anyway, it doesn’t really matter — officials from the Permanent Representation said to me: ‘Listen, it is a very important decision, but we are who we are, the country that blocks decisions.’ Unanimity was required, of course.

I listened to the various people and, finally, I said: ‘But we absolutely have to break the deadlock on this issue.’ Incidentally, I had heard reports from the Élysée; I would not have committed myself on my own. And, having gathered all the opinions, and believing that the time was ripe and that we could not hold firmly to our negative attitude for an indefinite period, I spoke for France and said: ‘We are also in agreement.’ I remember that everyone cracked open a bottle of champagne at the end because it was an important decision.

So all of that came at the same time, and it was progress. It was nothing spectacular in the eyes of the general public, but it had far-reaching consequences.

The year 1985 was also the year of the IGC, which ended with the Single Act. The Single Act; I believe that it was Jacques Delors who said: ‘It’s my favourite treaty, the one I like the most.’ I think that the Single Act did not only have positive qualities — and, at the time, it was judged fairly severely by very pro-European circles. I remember that the European Movement — which is a movement of activists, federalists, ardent federalists — turned its nose up at the Single Act. The Euro-enthusiasts thought that we hadn’t gone far enough in terms of the powers of Parliament, decision-making, etc.

But overall, progress was made in the Single Act, and despite the relative severity of some observers at the time, in practice, it broke the deadlock on a number of things. And as I mentioned, Jacques Delors said that it was his favourite treaty. Personally, I might not go so far as to say that, but in any case it was the only one in which I really participated, which I really participated in drafting, and I felt that major progress was being

made. And there is another thing — which we might be able to discuss — which particularly struck me and pleased me a great deal with the Single Act, and that was to witness the European spirit finally breaking the deadlock over the text, a text which had originally got off to a bad start. That was an event in itself: to see the participants being animated by what might be called European grace. So this year, 1985, was a very interesting year, very, very interesting.