

General de Gaulle's first veto

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On 14 January 1963, General de Gaulle held a press conference at which he declared his opposition to the United Kingdom's application for accession. He referred to incompatibilities between continental European and British economic interests. He demanded that the United Kingdom accept all the conditions laid down by the Six and revoke its commitments to countries within its own free trade area. On 28 January, the French Government forced its five European partners, who were already shocked by the unilateral veto, to adjourn the accession negotiations.

General de Gaulle was afraid that the new member might jeopardise the common agricultural policy (CAP) and transform the European Economic Community (EEC) into a huge free trade area. Above all, he regarded the United Kingdom as a Trojan horse concealing US interests: he believed that British accession would lead to the Americanisation of Europe. He declared his support for a deepening and an acceleration of Common Market integration rather than enlargement, and shed doubts on the UK's commitment to Europe.

De Gaulle's attitude also stemmed from reasons not connected solely with EEC interests. In addition to the anti-British resentment that he had continued to harbour ever since he was exiled to London during the war, he was afraid of British-American nuclear cooperation. When, in October 1962, American Polaris rockets were delivered to the British, this was a grave blow to Franco-British relations, while de Gaulle continued to develop close relations with Germany.