

Alain Peyrefitte, This was de Gaulle

Caption: On 1 July 1965, General de Gaulle listens to French Foreign Minister Maurice Couve de Murville's account of the events surrounding and implications of the breakdown, during the night in Brussels, of the Council negotiations on the financing of the common agricultural policy (CAP).

Source: PEYREFITTE, Alain. C'était de Gaulle. Volume II: La France reprend sa place dans le monde. Paris: Fayard, octobre 1997. 652 p. ISBN 2-213-59458-9. p. 288-291.

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Alain Peyrefitte, *This was de Gaulle*

[...]

Couve: 'All that remained was to take note of the failure'

Council meeting on 1 July 1965.

30 June has been and gone: the sun did not shine on the General's Europe. In Brussels, Couve fought all night and arrived, looking drawn, without having slept a wink, accompanied by Giscard and Pisani.

'Our proposals were torn to pieces. *Nobody accepted them.*

The big question was whether the financial regulation for the common agricultural policy would be adopted, i.e. how the customs duties levied on agricultural imports would be allocated.

We agreed that the common agricultural policy as a whole should be completed definitively within two years. But disagreement broke out on the financial implications.

Would a decision be taken for a short period (one or two years) or for a longer period? That was the particular breaking point. Italy wanted no more than two years.

It was better for the break to have come on a point where the French position was broadly justified. All that remained was to take note of the failure.

A confused discussion then began on the future process. All our partners said that we must continue. They wanted to give the impression that things were continuing, that there was no drama, merely a procedural problem.

I dropped the matter very quickly: the French Delegation cannot continue this discussion. Formal commitments had been made. They were not honoured. We have to note that.

Belgium behaved perfectly. There was no detailed discussion with the Germans. The Netherlands has its hands tied by its parliament. Luxembourg is full of good will. Italy was the main obstacle. The Italian representatives talk about everything and nothing, about irrelevant matters. Their statements are forwarded to the press as soon as they have been uttered, if not before. They were determined to secure a failure. Fanfani, who is taking over the six-month Presidency from me today, was clearly keen to see failure under my Presidency so that it could all be sorted out when his turn came.

The Commission is the main loser. It put forward absurd proposals that nobody accepted. It remained absent from the remainder of the discussion, stubbornly maintaining positions that had not been accepted. The professional "Europeans" were the main obstacle to Europe's progress because of their ideological obstinacy.

We are entering a serious crisis. We have decided not to hold the meeting of Ministers of Agriculture scheduled for 12 July.

Pisani (sombre, as if crushed): "I have nothing to say."

Giscard (certainly affected, but very much under control): "The financial issues were not discussed seriously. Nobody has criticised the French positions."

[...]

'The first consequence is that there are no more sessions, meetings or negotiations in Brussels. All that is

over.’

After the Council.

AP: “I will be asked what the consequences will be, especially the political consequences.”

GdG: “The first of these consequences is that there will be no more common market meetings.”

AP: “Until the new system?”

GdG: “No meetings can be envisaged. That’s all.”

AP: “No Council meeting?”

GdG: “There can be no meetings, no negotiations in Brussels.”

AP: “What if the other five hold them without us?”

GdG: “If they hold them without us, they will be infringing the Treaty of Rome, but that means nothing to us. It does not commit us. A meeting to no purpose. They could simply hold them in London if they wish, at WEU headquarters, where they will be well received. Our chair will remain empty, and all meetings will be meaningless.”

He knows full well that these meetings will take place: but he is determined that the French chair, behind the little label ‘France’, will be empty.

AP: “In fact, since that night, our five partners have been trying to talk down the breakdown, while we are talking it up.”

GdG: “They are thinking of a different French Republic. They have never been able to understand that we were not Guy Mollet or Félix Gaillard. Well, once again they will find that is not true. It is they who will be in most trouble.”

AP: “Only, the Treaty ...”

GdG: “As for this Commission, it will have to go. I want no more of Hallstein. I want no more of Marjolin. I want no more of Mansholt. I never want anything to do with them ever again.”

AP: “But Couve said that Marjolin was very good.”

GdG: “Nonsense, it’s Marjolin who is behind a Social Democrat Federation, on behalf of Gaston Defferre. That is what is called being very good. No, we have to do away with all that. At all events, I do not want the French Government to have anything more to do with those characters. I’m finished with them for good.”

AP: “But under the Treaty they cannot be replaced until 1966.”

GdG: “Bah! There’s no hurry. At all events, we shall no longer be dealing with them.”

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