

## 'Fontainebleau: agreement snatched' from Le Figaro (25 June 1984)

**Caption:** On 27 June 1984, the French newspaper Le Figaro examines the results of the arduous Fontainebleau European Council.

**Source:** Le Figaro. 27.06.1984, n° 12 384. Paris: Le Figaro. "Fontainebleau: accord à l'arraché", auteur:Kergorlay, Henri de; Suzannet, Robert de , p. 3.

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## **The Ten manage to solve their financial dispute**

### **Fontainebleau: agreement snatched**

The Ten have agreed to take into consideration this request which was discussed during the afternoon, although the French Presidency nonetheless insisted that the Brussels ‘agricultural package’ — that is, the reform of the common agricultural policy, the dismantling of compensatory amounts and the prices for the marketing year — were not to be challenged.

### **Strengthening European union**

The Chancellor had received France’s assured support on this matter at the outset, ever since his breakfast meeting with the President of the Republic yesterday morning. The Chancellor and François Mitterrand also talked about a subject which has been close to their hearts ever since the Franco-German Summit in Rambouillet: the relaxation of controls for travellers at borders between France and Germany.

A Franco-German committee has already been set up, and it has met twice. It is France that is in the more delicate position with its rigorous exchange control and its customs officers who are considered to be the most nitpicking in the entire Community. Helmut Kohl would have informed François Mitterrand that, in the Federal Republic of Germany, customs officers carry out inspections simply by means of spot-checks, while that is far from being the case in France. The Chancellor and the President, therefore, agreed to put pressure on the national administrations so that the planned relaxations are implemented from 1 July.

This subject was to be raised later, in the context of the ten-way debates on the strengthening of European union. It is known that the committee has submitted a document on this subject to the Council. It is a subject close to the heart of the President of the Republic, since progress in this area might enable 270 million Europeans to become more acutely aware of the Community’s existence. As the German Commissioner, Karl-Heinz Narjes, said recently, it is an area that costs nothing, but it still comes up with a bump against the attitude of civil servants who are highly nationalistic and fiercely attached to their most insignificant prerogatives.

One of the principal results of the Council will have been the decision to set up two ad hoc committees, one to address the daily problems of Europe, the other to tackle the reform of the Community institutions. During the final press conference, Gaston Thorn, President of the Commission, thanked François Mitterrand for having put his finger on the finer details of a People’s Europe.

The ad hoc committee will be composed of people appointed by the Heads of State or Government who will work together with, or on the initiative of, the Commission. It will have to submit a report on its activities during the second half of the year.

What will its job be? Its field is vast, given that it ranges from the devising of a single customs document to cover the entire Community for the transport of goods, like the one which already exists between the three Benelux countries and the Federal Republic of Germany, to the European passport, from the mutual recognition of qualifications to the environment (acid rain, pollution of rivers, deforestation, etc.).

As regards biology and health, a whole series of European projects will have to be determined over the course of the year, and the principle of rationalisation of biotechnology and telecommunications has already been adopted by the Council. More than half of these guidelines fall within the powers and responsibilities of the Commission, which will have to implement this plan.

The list is far from exhaustive: the Ten also discussed a possible flag and European anthem, showing, in this way, their wish to capture the imagination of the Community’s citizens. In the same spirit, the decision will finally be taken to set up a committee to consider the launching of a space station.

### **‘Clearing away the burden of the past’**

The same procedure of appointing an ad hoc committee will be followed for institutional reform. The aim will be to define more precisely the respective powers and responsibilities of the various bodies, in conjunction with the European Parliament.

This committee will have to operate as did the Spaak Committee, whose work was to lead to the Messina Conference and to result in the Treaty of Rome. It will take as its basis the provisions of existing draft treaties on European Union, which means the German-Italian Genscher–Colombo Plan, the proposals made by Chancellor Kohl at Stuttgart, and François Mitterrand’s speech in Strasbourg.

It will also have to clarify the role and the exact nature of the political secretariat of the Council, which, in principle, would have the task of better coordinating the work of the successive presidencies as well as the action taken thereon. In response to a question, the President of the Republic explained that the six founder members of the Community were clearly in favour of these developments. Some of the new members were too, he added, but not quite so closely.

At the end of the day, François Mitterrand will have succeeded in presenting to his partners his ideas about Europe’s future and his plans. However, he will have been able only to suggest some guidelines, since the considerable amount of time spent ‘clearing away the burden of the past’ will not have allowed him to expand the issues raised any further.

From 1 July, Ireland will pick up the baton: it will be able to take over the Presidency in good conditions. However, it seems a safe bet that its style will be different.

Henri de Kergorlay and Robert de Suzannet