

'The Twelve hold a Summit: the EEC is making progress' from Le Figaro (5 December 1985)

Caption: On 5 December 1985, the French newspaper Le Figaro gives an account of the Luxembourg European Council and welcomes the agreements reached in extremis by the Heads of State and Government of the European Community concerning the revision of the Treaty of Rome.

Source: Le Figaro. 05.12.1985, n° 120834. [s.l.]: Le Figaro. "Sommet des Douze: la C.E.E. en progrès", auteur:Suzannet, Robert de , p. 3.

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The Twelve hold a Summit: the EEC is making progress

However limited they may be, the agreements reached in Luxembourg — which remain to be clarified — deserve a warm welcome.

Luxembourg:
Robert de Suzannet

Despite its limited scope, the agreement that was finally reached at the Luxembourg European Council deserves a warm welcome.

The Heads of State or Government of the European Community and of Spain and Portugal adopted provisions that will enable Europe to head towards the completion of the internal market which is still not a reality. They also decided to institutionalise political cooperation, which entails the coordination and approximation of their foreign policies.

Finally, explicit reference is made to European security: that adds a new dimension to the Community as had been envisaged by the Treaty of Rome. All these provisions, especially the last, still need to be finalised, and some points will have to be clarified. This will be the task of the next Council of Foreign Affairs Ministers which will meet in Brussels on 16 and 17 December. On the other hand, account must be taken of the general reservations expressed by Denmark because of its sensitive domestic situation. Finally, Italy's definitive acceptance is subject to that of the European Parliament. Parliament will debate the Luxembourg agreement next week.

Following the Milan Council last June, the Ten — or, more precisely, seven of them — had accepted the challenge of making 'more definite progress on the European Union' and, in particular, on adapting the existing institutions and extending Community powers and responsibilities.

This challenge has been partially won. As far as the internal market is concerned (defined as a 'frontier-free area' where goods, persons, services and capital move freely), progress has been made.

Several articles of the Treaty of Rome will be changed or supplemented with a view to increasing the number of cases where decisions within the Council of Ministers will no longer require unanimity, but simply a qualified majority. In particular, this is the case with Article 100, which deals with the approximation of laws, regulations and administrative provisions. All the same, unanimity will still be required with regard to taxation, the free movement of persons, and the rights and interests of employees. Similarly, Article 99, which relates to the harmonisation of turnover taxes and indirect taxation, will be replaced by a new, more voluntarist text, but backed by the unanimity rule.

We are far from the Commission's original proposal. However, a genuine step in the right direction has been taken.

Progress has also been made in monetary matters. Accordingly, reference will be made in the revised treaty to the European Monetary System and the ecu. This is fairly symbolic, given that the role of the central banks remains unchanged and that any institutional change in monetary matters will require unanimity. Finally, among the positive points, those relating to research and development as well as to the indispensable economic and social cohesion of the Community should be highlighted.

A 'historic missed opportunity'

On the other hand, maximalists will regret how little was achieved by the European Council as regards the extension of the European Parliament's powers. If there is to be no codecision, as Italy had would have liked, the European Parliament must, nonetheless, secure a increased role by playing the middle man vis-à-vis the Council. Its President, Pierre Pflimlin, has, all the same, described himself as very disappointed by this inadequate result. He recalled that the convening of the intergovernmental conference with the task of

revising the Treaty of Rome had been ‘the result of an initiative of the European Parliament’ and that its goal was to move closer towards European Union. Mr Pflimlin described it as a ‘historic missed opportunity’. On the other hand, the German Chairman of the Christian-Democratic Group in the European Parliament, Egon Klepsch, was more subtle: ‘It is less than we were hoping for,’ he said. ‘But it is more than we had feared.’

As for the section on ‘political cooperation’, nobody really knows yet what form this will take. It is up to the Foreign Ministers to reach agreement on this point. In Milan, France wanted this cooperation to be organised around a heavyweight permanent secretariat which was to have operated independently of the Commission. On the contrary, the text adopted in Luxembourg provides for the Commission to work in partnership with the Foreign Ministers and for the creation of a simple administrative secretariat. This text also takes into account economic, technological and industrial aspects of security. Finally, it provides for closer cooperation on security between certain Member States alongside the Western European Union (WEU) and NATO.

R.S.