

‘Strasbourg: European Parliament angered over French "blackmail" threat of a break-up of the Six' from Le Monde (30 November 1967)


Caption: On 30 November 1967, the French daily newspaper Le Monde reviews the reactions of the various political groups of the European Parliament to the press conference held by General de Gaulle.

Source: Le Monde. 30.11.1967. Paris. "Strasbourg: le Parlement européen s'irrite contre le "chantage" de Paris à l'éclatement des Six" ".

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Strasbourg: European Parliament angered over French ‘blackmail’ threat of a break-up of the Six

(From our special correspondent)

Strasbourg, 29 November. — The stir caused by General de Gaulle’s press conference has dominated the annual colloquium of the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council of Ministers of the Communities, which is usually a rather academic affair. This year’s colloquium was chaired by Karl Schiller, Minister for Economic Affairs of the Federal Republic.

Abuse of the right of veto

Mr Illerhaus, spokesman for the CDU group (Germany), described the statements by the French Head of State as ‘very disappointing’, adding that ‘to impose a temporary veto on British membership is an abuse of the right of veto. Candidates for accession must obey the rules in force and regard them as such. But we must not — as was done yesterday in Paris — raise the spectre of dissolution of the Community.’

Mr Metzger, spokesman for the Socialist group (Germany), argued that British accession would strengthen, rather than weaken, the Community. To reject British membership of the Common Market and refuse to begin negotiations would mean refusing Britain the help that it needed,’ he added. Like the previous speaker, he objected to being blackmailed with threats of a break-up of the Community and declared that if France repeated its veto on British accession, the Council of Ministers should decide to open negotiations by a majority vote.

On behalf of the Liberals and Allies, *Mr Rossi* called for negotiations to begin as soon as possible.

Mr Terrenoire suggests trial period

‘France does not need lessons from anybody,’ *Mr Terrenoire*, the Gaullist spokesman, said. ‘The dilemma is as follows: either we suffer a crisis that would lead to the break-up of the Community and its transformation on the grounds of free trade, or Community feeling will prevail and we shall adopt a provisional intermediate solution — not association, since Britain does not want it, but a transitional arrangement under which Britain, as a candidate, would be subject to a trial period during which its rights would be strictly limited to its obligations.’

Mr Rey, President of the single Commission of the Communities, appealed for solidarity and a sense of political unity. ‘The Commission of the Communities,’ he stressed, ‘does not think, nor has it ever thought, that Britain’s economic performance could prevent its accession to the Community. But it has long argued that the Community is perfectly entitled to analyse the situation of the ‘future bride’ before the start of negotiations, just as Britain is entitled to study the Community before committing itself.’

The Five should form a bloc

The need for enlargement of the Communities was again stressed by *Mr Pedini* (Christian Democrat, Italy), who argued that the other five members of the Common Market ‘should form a bloc in opposition to the French veto’ in order to ensure the start of negotiations with Britain. *Mr Burger* (Social Democrat, Germany) shared that view.

At the end of the discussion, which also dealt with the economic development of the Community following the merger of the Commissions, *Mr Schiller*, speaking this time as a minister of the Federal Republic, reminded the meeting that the Federal Government was in favour of the accession of the four applicant states and considered that all the economic and financial issues involved in their accession could be resolved.