

'Paris has decided to boycott the European Common Market' from the Corriere della Sera (1 July 1965)

Caption: On 1 July 1965, following the breakdown in Community negotiations on the financing of the common agricultural policy (CAP), the Italian daily newspaper Corriere della Sera comments on France's decision to boycott intergovernmental meetings of Community bodies in Brussels.

Source: Corriere della Sera. 01.07.1965, n° 154; anno 90. Milano: Corriere della Sera. "Parigi ha deciso di boicottare il MEC", auteur:Ballardin, G.F. , p. 16.

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Paris has decided to boycott the European Common Market

Forthcoming meetings will be fruitless as no French minister will attend — For the French, the Community is a thing of the past

From our own correspondent

Brussels: 4 July, evening.

Five members of the Common Market are prepared to return immediately to the negotiations on the financing of the Common Agricultural Policy, but France is not, for now at least. After the ‘no change’ of Thursday morning, the French delegates — from what is being said in Brussels — would be prepared to come back to the negotiating table on one condition: that France’s partners accept the French idea, that the current operating regulations of the Community’s agricultural fund should be extended to 1970. The other countries want to extend them for only one or two years; ‘accepting the French argument’, in the view of Dutch journalists, ‘would be a capitulation.’

The standoff between France and the other members of the European Community therefore seems set to continue for some time. To exert pressure on the other Common Market countries, the French Government is threatening to paralyse the Community: the Common Market, in other words, is to be put ‘on hold’ and no further progress will be made. Unless there is a dramatic turn of events at the last minute, France’s Permanent Representative to the European Communities, Ambassador Jean-Marc Boegner, will for instance attend the Foreign Ministers’ meeting to be held on 26 and 27 July in Brussels under the chairmanship of Amintore Fanfani, while all the ministers will be detained in Paris. In these circumstances, since almost all the decisions taken by the Council of Ministers of the Common Market have to be unanimous, the French ministers’ absence will in all likelihood mean that this meeting, and subsequent meetings, will be fruitless.

The failure to agree on the financing of the Common Agricultural Policy by the deadline of 30 June 1965, set three years ago by Article 7 of Financial Regulation 25, has angered the French. The Common Market’s agricultural fund, a kind of moneybox financed by financial contributions from the six countries, is to some extent the cornerstone of the agricultural policy developed by the ‘Eurocrats’ of Brussels. The Common Agricultural Fund makes it possible for France, for instance, to export its grain below cost to Communist China, with financial aid from the other Common Market countries; Italy has not yet managed to get the fund to finance even our fruit and vegetable exports.

As a result of these differences the Foreign Ministers of the Common Market countries have failed to reach agreement by the scheduled deadline. This is not the first time that such a thing has happened in the history of the Common Market. However, France has now sparked off a ‘date crisis’. ‘For the first time,’ according to Foreign Minister Maurice Couve de Murville, speaking after the breakdown of the talks, ‘solemn undertakings have not been respected. This being so, we must suffer the consequences.’ On Thursday afternoon, after the meeting of the French cabinet, the Information Minister, Alain Peyrefitte, announced that ‘for the time being, France will not take part in any further Common Market meetings.’ Yesterday afternoon, the Agriculture Minister, Maurice Bokanowski, speaking at the inauguration of a chamber of commerce, spoke of the Common Market as though it were a thing of the past: ‘Unless agriculture is included,’ he said, ‘the Common Market has little meaning. At midnight last Wednesday, the Netherlands, Italy and Germany dashed a great French hope.’ It would seem, however, that the French Minister was speaking personally.

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