

'European "Summit" in London concludes without resolving EEC crisis' from El País (28 November 1981)

Caption: On 28 November 1981, the Spanish daily newspaper El País deplores the minimal progress achieved at the meeting of the Heads of State or Government of the Ten held in London.

Source: El País. 28.11.1981. Madrid. "La 'cumbre' europea de Londres finalizó sin resolver la crisis de la CEE", auteur:Ortega, Andrés; Gallego-Díaz, Soledad , p. 1; 3.

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European ‘Summit’ in London concludes without resolving EEC crisis

Economic disparities between Common Market Member States continue. The Italian–German plan for a European Union has been left in abeyance.

Andrés Ortega and Soledad Gallego-Díaz — London

Eleven hours of intense discussion were not sufficient for the European Summit held in London on Thursday and Friday to reach agreement on how to resolve the crisis afflicting the European Economic Community (EEC). All that the Heads of State or Government of the ten EEC Member States have done is to ask their Foreign Ministers to resume discussions in December.

The Heads of State or Government, however, have made a tremendous effort to pull together, even accepting a discussion at technical level, an event unprecedented in the history of the *Summits*, claimed the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. According to the brief final communiqué, the Ten did not manage to reach agreement on any of the four fundamental points that the *Summit* was intended to address: the problem of dairy product surpluses and prices, the distribution and increase in farm prices, Mediterranean agriculture and the Community budget.

The crisis which began in 1979 concerning the British contribution to the EEC budget, resolved only temporarily, continues. The Ten agree on only one point: a comprehensive solution must be found for the four problems.

The Federal Republic of Germany is not prepared to make an excessive increase in its contribution to sustaining the agricultural policy. France will not allow its small farmers to be adversely affected. If it is to maintain its current situation, the United Kingdom needs a substantial reduction in the money that it has to hand over to the EEC — at least until after the next general elections in 1984. Italy, backed by Greece and France, wants Mediterranean products to be treated more equitably in relation to Scandinavian products.

The Ten acknowledge the failure of the London Summit, despite their clear political will to introduce reforms into the EEC

The *Summit*, initially scheduled as a formality, had its *ups and downs* over the two days of the meeting.

In the early hours of Friday the Heads of State or Government appeared to have reached agreement, but it collapsed when it got into the hands of the *technocrats*, who left the negotiating table at breakfast time without a positive conclusion.

The Heads of Government all emphasised their political will to reach agreement as quickly as possible, but they did not disguise the failure of the *Summit* in terms of tangible achievements.

The Ten were no more adept than their ministers when it came to resolving the complex problem of what is known as the *mandate of 30 May*, by means of which the EEC undertook to carry out far-reaching internal reform.

Not even the President of the European Commission (the executive and bureaucratic arm of the Community), Gaston Thorn, tried to disguise the evident failure that marked the conclusion of the *Summit*. ‘The greatest progress has been that we all now know each other’s limits,’ he claimed.

European Union

The Ten did not take the trouble — or did not have the time — to engage in an in-depth discussion on the *European Union project*, presented by Genscher and Colombo, the Foreign Ministers of the Federal Republic of Germany and Italy. The *Summit* dressed the matter up in fine words but referred it back to the Council of Ministers.

The Italian–German proposals were to be ‘considered and clarified’ by the European Community’s Foreign Ministers, according to a communiqué published at the end of the *Summit* in which stress was laid on ‘the importance of strengthening economic integration in parallel to political development’.

Farm prices

Although solutions to the EEC’s internal crisis could not be found at this meeting, further delay is not an option — the Ten will meet next April at the *moment of truth*: the fixing of farm prices for the 1982/1983 marketing year. At that time the European Community will have no alternative but to reach agreement.

In their final press conferences both the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, and the French President, François Mitterrand, acknowledged that there was no way to reconcile the various points of view once and for all, although they said that the two days of discussions had been useful and worthwhile.

According to Thatcher, the *Summit* could not be deemed a failure since full agreement had been reached on many points, particularly the Community’s international policy, without the clashes or obstinacy that had marred previous meetings.

The British Prime Minister stated that the immediate task of the EEC Foreign Ministers was to try to resolve the difficulties in close cooperation with the Ministers for Agriculture. They would have to ‘put forward recommendations’, but this, she added, would need ‘a great deal of preliminary work’ before a formal meeting was held prior to the next meeting of the European Council, scheduled for March 1982.

Asked whether Great Britain would join the European Monetary System, Thatcher said that she was not in a position to specify ‘if and when’ this might happen.

The President of the European Commission, Gaston Thorn, regretted that, despite ‘intense preparation’, the *Summit* ‘had been unable to reach a detailed joint agreement’, and added that it was worrying that after so many difficult negotiations there was no sign of compromise or solidarity. But he added that there were reasons to hope that progress could be made in the coming weeks towards reaching agreement on the Community reforms.

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