

'The perils of enlargement' from L'Humanité (28 May 1979)

Caption: On 28 May 1979, the French Communist daily newspaper L'Humanité outlines the various dangers resulting from a further enlargement of the European Communities to include Greece, Spain and Portugal.

Source: L'Humanité. Organe Central du Parti Communiste Français. 28.05.1979. Paris: L'Humanité. "Les périls de l'élargissement", auteur: Bulard, Martine.

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The perils of enlargement

The accession of Greece, Spain and Portugal to the Common Market is nothing more than a simple reshuffle of the EEC. This is the claim put forward by the Union for French Democracy (UDF), the Rally for the Republic (RPR) and the French Socialist Party (PS), all of whom are miraculously unanimous in their approval of the plan. In an attempt to make this idea more credible, and with the help of the press, they are refusing to mention both the report by the Commission in Brussels and the report drawn up by the French Economic and Social Council. The same stance is being taken by both Simon Veil and Jacques Chirac.

In reality, they have to be economical with the truth and deceive the French people so that they can relaunch their plans for a type of integration that is not only economic, but also political and military.

I. Economic dangers

‘We must not conceal the fact that Spain’s accession will have its difficulties.’ This is the opening line of the Commission Recommendation on the consequences of the enlargement, known as document 630. The French Economic and Social Council (CES), whose study also includes the accession of Greece and Portugal, adds that this enlargement ‘will present risks’.

‘Risks, difficulties’, and that is just for starters. This poses a real threat to entire branches of our industry; entire agricultural sectors will disappear and whole regions will be crippled.

a) Agriculture

Our agricultural produce will suffer a two-pronged attack. There will be more competition in the domestic market and foreign markets will also be limited. The CES explains that ‘difficulties, which are already considerable for many agricultural sectors, will increase substantially with enlargement [...] Moreover, sales in other EC countries will also be threatened.’ Among the sectors deemed most at risk, the CES identifies wine, fruit (citrus fruit, but also peaches, apricots and pears), vegetables (tomatoes and other greenhouse produce) and pork.

b) Industry

Industry will also face a double blow: the invasion of products that can be manufactured very cheaply due to low wages and social security benefits, and relocation of production to these new countries driven by large multinationals.

Report 630 is quite clear. It states that ‘difficulties currently being experienced by certain sectors in the Community, such as steel, shipbuilding, textiles and shoes, risk becoming even more serious.’

The list drawn up by the CES is even more impressive. In addition to these sectors, it also mentions the toy-making industry, chemical products, wood, rubber and printing.

Two consequences of the enlargement will be thousands of redundancies in France and an over-exploitation of workers in the three accession countries.

c) Regions

Report 630 states that Spain’s accession will increase regional economic disparities in the Community. The CES echoes this statement, adding that the south of France will not be the only region affected, but that the south-west and the west (Brittany, Poitou-Charentes, Pays de la Loire) will also be hit.

II. Political dangers

Supporters of supranationality are not only intent on selling off France’s economic and social interests, they

also want to strip our country of any right to manage its own affairs. This is another area in which they are not prepared to show their full hand, hiding behind technicalities. As the Commission in Brussels states in its Recommendation dated November 1978, 'In a Community of twelve, the ability of the Council of Ministers to agree on acceptable measures might be compromised. In order to overcome this inevitable consequence, increased recourse to majority voting seems advantageous.' Helmut Schmidt expressed his agreement on this matter and the French Socialist Party is not far behind him. In September last year, Robert Pontillon deemed it necessary to 'seize the opportunity of enlargement. It will most definitely raise the issue of voting in the long run [...] and of applying the unanimity rule.'

In an attempt to forget this disgraceful plan, politicians from Giscard to Mitterrand are hiding behind the Treaty of Rome. However, the Treaty in fact states that once a certain number of objectives are achieved, a simple majority is sufficient. We owe the unanimity rule only to an agreement reached in 1966 in Luxembourg. The Treaty of Rome is anything but a guarantee.

III. Military dangers

By abandoning the unanimity rule, the aim of those in high places is to grant the Commission in Brussels greater power, and this comes at a time when the old European defence project is once again coming to the fore. The Dutch Socialist Vredeling, Vice-President of the Commission in Brussels, declared in September last year in Washington that 'the progress on European integration depends on the EEC's ability to establish a common security policy similar to that of the United States'. Mr Davignon himself is now calling for a common industrial policy for weapons production.

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