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Neither Victory nor Defeat

The six foreign ministers' trip to idyllic Luxemburg did not produce a new EEC spring. The crisis of the Community will live. The only agreement reached was to adjourn its final solution and to start with reestablishing the teamwork à la six.

The return to Brussels in order to deal with practical problems is a success. The scope of application of the majority voting rights, however, will not be extended for the time being, neither will the veto-right be limited. The shifting of national sovereignty rights to the Community's organisation, important as it is for the process of integration, will not take place at the present time. At least formally, five of the six EEC partners seem to insist on the extension of the majority vote. De facto, however, they are prepared to abstain from its application.

Talking about concrete subjects, it must be admitted that the six foreign ministers have been actually more in agreement than the spectacularly arranged course of the conference leads to assume. France returned to Brussels without having obtained the concession that the European Commission's powers should be dismantled and the five steadfast partners should give up their right to take majority decisions, France's maximum claims have been reduced to a modest program of improving the cooperation between the Council of Ministers and the Commission.

However, the old impetus of the Community's teamwork will be missed for some time to come. The past seven months of crisis have already indicated how well the Commission understood the signals of the time. Patience, reserve and caution are the passwords. In future it will act to its own good in preserving its independent position vis-à-vis practical problems, but in abstaining from strongly emphasising that position. Its whole attention should be focussed on these practical problems which so urgently call for solutions. Already the finance of agriculture and the Kennedy round will require all its talents to balance the opposing interests of the partners.

For the EEC foreign ministers and their governments, Luxemburg meant the provisional end of the EEC crisis. But whatlike the performance on the European stage, it cannot delude anybody that the results of the Luxemburg conference have not given answers to the question of the Community's political future. The adjournment of the decision on the application of the majority voting rights represents a concrete expression of this dilemma. The contrast between the Treaty's rules and the present political will of the EEC partners has not been dissolved.

The direct consequences of the crisis must be appraised as much more relevant than the results of the Luxemburg conference—apart, perhaps, from France's return to her seat in the Council of Ministers. The EEC crisis has resulted in the fact that everywhere there is now some more distinction between desire and reality. Before the outbreak of the crisis on June 30, 1965, hardly anybody was able to draw this distinction. The ambitions of the European Commission and of the European Parliament as well as the claims of individual member states originated from a lack of appreciation of the real political situation within the Community—which is not restricted to specific cases only. Today, this situation does not correspond anymore to the conditions of the mid-fifties which led to the conclusion of the Treaty of Rome. And this holds true for all member nations concerned.

For today and tomorrow, the task will be to solve as good as possible the conflict between structures and principles of the EEC as defined by the Treaty, on the one hand, and the actual political constellation, on the other. Integration is a dynamic process and always subject to renewed crucial tests. However, all participants have learnt from the crisis. The scope of readiness to compromise has already been marked. The final solution of the crisis is something which we still have to wait for.

Christian Franck

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