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EEC On An Obstacle Race

Early in November, the European Parliament at its extraordinary meeting at Luxembourg, adopted an important resolution. The Heads of State and of Government in the six member states of the EEC are asked to affirm their determination, during the forthcoming summit meeting in The Hague, to make further advances on their way towards European political unification. They are called upon to make decisions which are required for getting out of the present slough of stagnation, in which the movement towards European integration is bogged down.

The resolution came just in time, because the Europeans' ardour is faltering. The creators of the Rome Treaty had been able with their enthusiasm to convince easily all those who were hesitant and half-hearted. The reason for this was that the EEC, in its initial stages, offered everybody concerned visible advantages. Now when it seems to be the rule that every gain for the Community usually entails disadvantages for at least one of the member countries, the road towards Europe is evidently blocked.

Within a short time, the EEC is supposed to enter upon its final phase of completion. However, "completion" of the Common Market will be out of the question at least as long as agriculture gives rise to new strife among the member states. The "Green Front", through its protectionist programme and a mad system of financing it, has skidded into difficulties which grow from day to day—with the powerful aid of all the member governments. Above everything, the question of growing surpluses of produce makes it imperative to adopt, at last, more advanced forms of agricultural policies, lest the EEC be destroyed by the farmers. It would not do any harm if, in this respect, British experiences would be considered, for at least in this field, the British, who wish to join the EEC, have been for a long time a model for the world. If the EEC should adopt the methods used there, this would, at the same time, also make one of the main obstacles disappear which has hitherto prevented Britain's accession to the Community.

Whereas the Federal Republic and the Netherlands are apparently firm in their will to open negotiations for a larger Community early in 1970, France has remained stubbornly hostile. M. Pompidou has been praised prematurely, as there has not yet been a sign that he intends to deviate from de Gaulle's policy. This means that the EEC will still have to go without the UK's technological potential, and this also precludes the chance for Euratom to be thus revived. President Mansholt's threat to resign from his office seems still to be massive enough to frighten obstructionists in the field of agriculture, but it seems that member states have already tacitly accepted the risk that Euratom will not survive much longer.

It is to be hoped that they will not similarly resign themselves to the decay of other joint objectives, since the EEC can be resuscitated only by new and fundamental initiatives. A common economic and monetary policy is therefore much more urgent than ever just now, for it will form the veritable backbone of the Community. But every member state must be willing to make sacrifices in the service of such a community. If they individually cling to their diverse privileges, all future reforms will be specious manoeuvres, including especially the intended measures to strengthen the European Parliament and the much discussed allocation of an independent income for Brussels.

It goes without saying that highly difficult negotiations will have to be got through in order to help the EEC to complete its obstacle race—because nobody is entitled to believe in the possibility of new miracles in achieving European union.

Dietrich Kobschull