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EEC – No High Hopes After Paris

Carsten R. Moser, Hamburg

After the Paris meeting between Mr. Heath and M. Pompidou of May 20 and 21, optimism regarding the successful completion of the negotiations between the EEC and Great Britain seems to be growing without boundaries. In fact, the Press on both sides of the Channel agrees nearly unanimously that again a milestone was set on the road towards an economically and politically unified Europe. But is this frenetic mood really founded?

June Negotiations Problematic

Doubts arise firstly if one reminds oneself that both politicians made quite clear that there are still important problems that have to be solved during the June negotiations between the Community and Great Britain. And even if this hurdle is passed, Mr. Heath and his Cabinet still have to secure public support and a majority in Parliament for EEC-membership. The latest polls clearly show that public opinion continues to be anything but favourable to British entry. If the negotiation results show that the price for Britain and the Commonwealth is high, public opinion will certainly not become more favourable. Europeans

tend to underestimate specially the importance the normal British subject still attaches to the old Commonwealth ties. The question therefore is: Will Mr. Heath risk British entry into the Common Market if public opinion on this issue remains as negative as it is now?

Denmark and Norway Undecided

Secondly, it is by no means sure that Denmark and Norway will join the EEC if Great Britain does. The Governments of both countries have said that they will hold a referendum before agreeing to membership. Under the assumption that negotiations between the two Scandinavian nations and the EEC come to a mutually satisfactory end, the question remains open if the politicians in both countries will overcome the many doubts a vast majority of the public has in this matter.

Necessary European-like Cooperation

The frenetic mood about the future of Europe seems more ill-founded if one considers that nobody can tell whether the Community will be watered down by enlargement or if European unity

will become more than a wish. One often hears the view that the "Entente Cordiale" between Mr. Heath and M. Pompidou was renewed because of the wish of both politicians to create a "countervailing power" against the Western European economic nation No. 1, the Federal Republic. Even if this opinion is not accepted, nobody has argued the fact that the decision taken by Bonn against the will of the 5 members to set the D-Mark free to float was not very "European-like". If in future EEC-members should follow the example given by Germany—and, in the years past, also by France—to act only in accordance to their own national interests, then the future prospects of the Community must be regarded as very dim. For only if every nation is willing to play its part in order to build the "Common Market"—with all its political, economic and monetary implications—will the future outcome be positive. Looking at the Paris meeting from this point of view, the readiness shown by France and Great Britain to forget what happened in the past and to cooperate in future can be seen as a first step in the right direction. But the road towards an economically and politically unified Europe is still long.