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France-Germany: Ten years after the fraternal kiss

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COMMENTS

France—Germany

Ten Years after the Fraternal Kiss

Ten years are a short span in the life of nations. But they are long enough a period of probation for a treaty that at its conclusion was believed to mark a historical change — long enough also for an evaluation of its consistency and future importance. Everything that since 1948, after the foundation of the Federal Republic, had been jointly achieved, the change of the French-German relationship from the guardianship of an occupation power to an alliance rebuilding Western Europe, was sealed with a symbolic fraternal kiss between Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer in the Elysée-palace on January 23, 1963. For the French this reconciliation with their sworn enemy meant the renunciation of a moral reservation; for the Germans the conclusion of the treaty and the embrace symbolised their recognition as an equal and trustworthy partner.

Ten years after the fraternal kiss the treaty, in spite of many differences regarding West European and Atlantic politics, has stood the test. It has proved to be just that, what it possibly could be under the given conditions: a mutual promise always to give the common cause priority over controversial issues. All governments in Paris and Bonn stuck to this principle in spite of irritating differences in their political views on e.g. the USA, temporarily also on the USSR and a long time on Britain — but also on the EEC, its market order or the arguments about integration and sovereignty.

Essential for the success of the treaty has been its consultation system. This mechanism has the beneficial effect that never an interruption of these regular meetings or a renunciation of the dialogue on all controversial issues occurred. During one of the many crises in the French-German relations even after the conclusion of the treaty, General de Gaulle compared such treaties with easily withering roses and girls. But fortunately this melancholic allusion has proved to be wrong. After this celebration of the treaty's 10th anniversary it must be acknowledged that the reconciliation sealed by the fraternal embrace has indeed proved to be a historical event. hg.

EEC

Mansholt, the European

Sicco L. Mansholt, who vacated the post of President of the European Commission at the end of the past year, was the last one left of the politicians who had taken part in the work of the European Communities from their very first days. At the

beginning of 1958 Mansholt was appointed to the first European Commission headed by Walter Hallstein. For 15 years he has been playing a decisive part in building the new Europe — first as a Vice President and finally, for a little under one year, as President.

The design of the common agricultural policy of which he was the architect cannot but be regarded as defective at this time because it has swallowed up vast sums of money without ensuring really satisfactory incomes for farmers and helping to open up the EEC markets to the rest of the world. It is also true that the attempt to overcome these faults by means of the hotly contested and repeatedly revised Mansholt plan has so far failed to establish a structural policy for agriculture which has a clear and concrete profile.

Mansholt however was not only an agrarian technocrat, though it was as such that he appeared to the public. He himself always conceived his mandate to be a political one. There were times when he, the Dutchman, defied de Gaulle and his followers more resolutely than anybody else in defence of the supranational principle of law of the European Communities. That explains why Mansholt during his term in Brussels had the reputation of being one of the strong men at EEC headquarters — a politician to whom, like Walter Hallstein, the vision of a united Europe meant more than national state interests. The European commitment of his successor, François-Xavier Ortoli of France, is not yet known. As far as can be predicted, however, he does not see himself primarily as a counterforce to the Council of Ministers, let alone the French President, but as the manager of Europe's headquarters. Now that Mansholt has departed and the Community been enlarged, the time of the committed Europeans seems to have passed forever. kw.

Ghana

Hopes for the Cocoa Agreement

In Nkrumah's days the West African state of Ghana made the headlines because of his Pan-african aims. These political aspirations left large economic burdens behind which put a heavy strain on the country's economy. Between 1960 and 1972 Ghana increased its real national income at an annual rate of only 2.5 p.c. while the population rose by 3 p.c. a year, so that the real per-capita income has actually fallen since 1960. The savings rate is down from 16 to 11 p.c. and investment from 22 to 14 p.c. of GNP. The food production in the country is insufficient to cover all needs, and the export trade is stagnant.