

NOTE AU DOSSIER

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Secrétaire	Dir.

Talks between T.E. Monsieur Grégoire and Mr. Brown at the  
Foreign Office on Friday, 1st December.

Those present were:

The Rt. Hon. George Brown, M.P., Secretary of State  
Fred Mulley, Minister of State  
Lord Chalfont, Minister of State  
Lord Hood, Deputy Under-Secretary of State  
Sir Con O'Neil, Deputy Under-Secretary of State  
P.F. Hancock, Assistant Under-Secretary of State  
H.T. Morgan, Head of Western Department  
H.E. Mr. Dugald Malcolm, H.M. Ambassador to Luxembourg.

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S.E. Monsieur Pierre Grégoire, Ministre des Affaires  
Étrangères  
S.E. Monsieur André Clasen, Ambassadeur du Luxembourg  
à Londres  
Monsieur le Ministre Hommel, Secrétaire-général du  
Ministère des Affaires Étrangères  
Monsieur Guy de Muysen, Conseiller de Légation, Directeur  
du Commerce extérieur  
Monsieur Paul Helminger, Secrétaire de Légation, Ambassade  
du Luxembourg à Londres.

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Upon arrival at the Foreign Office, Mr. George Brown and Monsieur Grégoire had a five-minute private talk over a cup of tea, before the meeting started. Opening the meeting after welcoming M. Grégoire, Mr. Brown said he was particularly eager to hear what M. Grégoire had to tell him after the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Benelux countries in the Hague on the 29th November, following General de Gaulle's press conference of 27th November, 1967.

M. Grégoire.

In the Hague, the Foreign Ministers of the Benelux countries stressed once again that they had a common attitude concerning British application to join the Common Market, and that they would continue to approve admission of the United Kingdom and the other applicant countries. They would meet again on the 12th December with their German and Italian colleagues to identify the common attitude which they would take at the next Council Meeting on the 18th and 19th December in Brussels. Their basic attitude was that the discussions on the Commission's report concerning the problems arising out of the British application and the various ways of solving them could not be interrupted.

It could not be denied, however, that after de Gaulle's press conference things had changed. In M. Grégoire's view, de Gaulle had a somewhat archaic conception of the national state and he intentionally and purposely provoked a paralysis in European affairs. There was a basic contradiction between his aim to achieve a strong and independent Europe and his opposition to do just that by enlarging it. He had, furthermore, the idea that only France could give a definition of a real European policy. In his mind, the Benelux countries did not have a continentally orientated view of affairs, because they had always lived and intended to continue to be guided by the rule of economics rather than by politics. M. Grégoire commented that although God seemed now to be French, fortunately wisdom and commonsense were still international.

The Benelux countries did not think that the procedure started in application of article 237 of the Treaty of Rome could

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be terminated by way of a press conference, so they were awaiting the official French answer from Couve de Murville at the E.E.C. Ministerial Council to be held on 18th and 19th December. Until, then, the Benelux Ministers wished to believe that the French position had not changed and that France was still not in principle against the British application, although it may feel that the difficulties arising from it are formidable indeed. They did not consider de Gaulle's press conference as a satisfactory answer under the terms of the Treaty to the British request for admission to the E.E.C., and at the next meeting expected France to assume official responsibility for whatever answer it wants to give to the British request.

It was not enough for the Five to issue statements of goodwill. The problem would have to be solved by some action. If de Gaulle argued that the Five could not impose their will on France because otherwise the Community would go to pieces, M. Grégoire thought that the inverse proposition was every bit as true, and that France could not impose its will on the Five without tearing the Community apart. The basis of negotiations had not been destroyed by the French veto, because the Commission's report was still valid. Before going to these extremes, however, we should do everything possible to avoid endangering the stability of the Community, while at the same time doing the very best to achieve the enlargement and strength of the Community. It seemed pure nonsense for de Gaulle to ask prospective candidates now to make alignments in the economic, social, financial and political fields without giving them any assurance of their final accession, especially if at the same time the Community is urged to pursue its own development more rapidly and intensively.

What were now to be our tactics? M. Grégoire thought that the advice of that politician should be followed who said: "Given the choice of two alternatives, choose the third one". We should beware of an all-or-nothing policy: transitional arrangements are always possible. Some of these arrangements were proposed by de Gaulle, such as a Western free trade area, another Kennedy Round, or association. The Benelux Ministers were not in favour of either an enlarged zone of free trade or of another Kennedy Round, because

they might just dilute and drown the European Communities. As far as association was concerned, in the French view this meant agreement on everything except agriculture and finance, and this too seemed hardly acceptable to France's partners, quite apart from Great Britain. "I dare say that perhaps a form of association could be a solution in so far as it opens the road to the U.K. to partake actively in discussions".

M. Grégoire had envisaged some proposals which he would like to submit first to his four colleagues on 12th December, and then to the full Council on the 18th:-

- 1) The U.K. and all other countries do not ask for a favour if they apply for admission, but they exercise the right granted them by the Treaty
- 2) The report of the Community insists on the fact that enlargement does not necessarily weaken the Community
- 3) If we wish a stronger, more united and consolidated Community, we should all provide all possible aid to the applicants
- 4) We should solemnly proclaim the admissibility of the U.K. and other applicants
- 5) To enable both the E.E.C. and the countries seeking admission to coordinate their approach with regard to the transitional arrangements, the duration of the transitional periods, and the date of final admission, a state of pre-accession would be guaranteed at once to the newcomers, giving them the status of consultative members, thus taking part in deliberations but not in the voting procedures.

There was a good chance, of course, that France would not accept this plan, but what the Benelux Ministers hoped to achieve is to give a new impetus to the discussions and to put everybody into a position where they would have to take their responsibilities

George Brown.

Mr. Brown thanked M. Grégoire for Luxembourg's unremitting support in favour of United Kingdom entry, and expressed general agreement with the arguments developed in M. Grégoire's preambular

remarks, but wished to comment on a few points.

When the U.K. had to decide upon whether or not it was going to apply for membership in the Common Market, the economic arguments were outweighed by far by the political arguments. It was indeed not entirely clear at that moment whether the balance of economic arguments was in favour of joining or not. In order to carry all the members of the Cabinet, what mattered finally was the political argument. It alone enabled the Government to reverse the Labour Conference decision of 1962 which was against G.B. joining the Common Market without a whole list of safeguards. The party and the Cabinet had now realised that there was a necessity for Europe, given the developments over the years since 1962, to take shape, to change in such a way as to be able to have an equal voice and influence in world affairs, and it was precisely for this political reason that association was of no interest to G.B. at all because association to G.B. meant that it would be precluded from taking part in voting, from taking part effectively in the development of the new Europe. There would possibly be some economic advantages, but G.B. would have no part in the political decisions to be taken. Europe would now have become a new and more dynamic force in the political as well as in the economic field. The same applied to the idea of a sort of candidate membership, even if it were accompanied by a definite agreed date for final admission, and therefore point 5 of M. Grégoire's proposals was not really what G.B. wanted, not so much for British reasons, but because G.B. did not feel that it would enable Europe to adapt itself and become that Europe which everyone has in mind.

G.B. had been asked in the past whether it could wholeheartedly, in letter and in spirit, accept the Treaty of Rome. Its 1962 answer was hesitating and resulted in failure, but it had now said clearly that it accepted totally and wholeheartedly, in letter and in spirit, the Treaty of Rome. G.B. had committed itself, it was now up to the Six to decide whether the Treaty of Rome was in fact the open Treaty it proclaimed to be. There were problems, but it was found on the tour of the capitals which Mr. Brown made before applying for membership that none of them was insoluble and that G.B. could live with the solution, no matter how drastic the change might be. There was no other way for G.B. It would mean that

the Government would lose public opinion and patience if it did not retain the essential purpose of British application. G.B. could, of course, and was very keen to develop before it was too late other specific forms of European integration, such as in the technological field, and there were good arguments to suggest that indeed it could not wait until formal negotiations about its entry into the Common Market had taken place; but G.B. could not fully commit itself if it did not know whether the end result was going to be a new and enlarged Europe.

Monsieur Grégoire.

M. Grégoire thought that there had been a slight misunderstanding about his proposals. What he had had in mind in fact was that during the period of negotiations concerning the transitional period of the transitional arrangements that would have to be made, the U.K. would immediately be represented in the Council, and could take part in the discussions on all problems, not only on those problems concerning the British application, but also on those concerning the future of the Community, but that of course since negotiations about the membership had not yet been brought to a conclusion, the U.K. would have no vote.

(At this point there was a short interruption to allow both Ministers to consult with their advisors).

When the meeting was resumed, Mr. Brown said that he now understood quite clearly what was meant in M. Grégoire's proposal, but that he thought that one of the main difficulties would be the duration of the negotiations. The British Government was in favour of the shortest possible negotiations. The British Government had done its best, as a result of its tour of the capitals, to reduce to a minimum the points for resolution before the actual adhesion to the Communities, and before accepting all the obligations of a full member. These were resumed in five issues; the U.K. did not envisage long negotiations being necessary over these five issues, and hoped they would take about four or five months. A vast number of matters would be left to solution after final adhesion. This meant that the U.K. would be prepared to accept

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all obligations of a full member without having solved all the problems. It meant that if subsequent decisions went against the U.K. it would nevertheless have to accept the consequences. "If we were going again into two to three years of negotiations, I would despair". The U.K. was in favour of a short period of negotiations because of the pressure of time and the important decisions that were to be taken in the very near future. Obviously nobody wanted to freeze the Community during the period of the transitional stage. On the other hand, the U.K. could not accept that the Community would change without its having a say in this change, because it would mean that after the transitional period other discussions would have to take place concerning the adaptation to the decisions taken in the meantime. Therefore, the U.K., and Mr. Brown stressed the point again, would be prepared to accept all the obligations of full membership from the moment that membership was achieved, and hoped that this would be reasonably shortly after negotiations; he hoped also that from that moment of accession, the U.K. would be associated with the settlement of Community problems. He was quite prepared to accept M. Grégoire's proposal that during the period of negotiations, the U.K. should be consulted, although it would have no vote, but he could accept this proposal only on the basis that the period of negotiations would be a short one and he asked M. Grégoire whether, considering the fact that some misunderstanding could arise between two of the closest friends, it would be wise to be floating ideas as complicated as this one at the moment among the Six, where misunderstanding would be bound to be more serious. It might not be wise now to invent ways for the horse to go round the fence: the important thing is to bring the horses to the starting-gate. It may also, therefore, be better at the meetings of the 12th and the 18th to concentrate on getting the negotiations going, and one of the first items of the agenda would certainly be what the British situation would be during these negotiations and during the transitional period.

M. Grégoire thought that although he would wish negotiations to be shorter, they were probably going to last more than five months. He agreed after this exchange of views with Mr. Brown that it would not be wise at this moment to bring his proposals before their friends, at which Mr. Brown, pretending to read

M. Grégoire's prepared remarks, said: "and we shall use all our influence to bring about an early start of negotiations".

Technology.

M. Grégoire asked whether the latest British proposals were to be understood as putting the emphasis on bilateral cooperation or on integration on a European scale. Mr. Brown said that the proposals meant integration, and not exclusively bilateral arrangements which limited in scope. But the U.K. must protect itself. The policy of the British Government was that the technological integration should go on simultaneously with the European integration, and the understanding was that technological cooperation would be able to have its full impact only in the context of a single and unified economic market. He again stressed the point that technological integration was not a substitute or an alternative to European economic integration, but he saw the British proposals as a token of British goodwill, and as resulting from the recognition that time was pressing and that we would have to go ahead without waiting for formal negotiations on the proper objective to be completed. M. Grégoire asked whether, if the discussions on the 18th and 19th were to result in failure, the U.K. would begin technology discussions. Mr. Brown replied that if the irrational thing happened, sensible people should begin discussions. M. Grégoire then asked whether U.K. would make proposals, to which Mr. Brown replied that Whitehall was now working on them.

NATO.

M. Grégoire wished to know the British Government's views on the Harmel exercise. M. Grégoire was of the view that the end result was a mere collection of good wishes. Mr. Mulley thought, however, that this might have been rather too gloomy a view. Having participated in the work of the various Commissions, and having experienced how close to breakdown the discussions had come at various times, he thought that the final conclusions were very much better than what could have been expected. Indeed, M. Harmel had a fall-back position, which he did not have to use.



The report emphasised the new element of détente in Europe and the political aspects of the Alliance which would have to be stressed from now on. It requested multilateral as well as bilateral consultation about the new political steps to be taken. It asked for consultation on arms control and disarmament, on which point the French had still reserved their decision, and it asked for a study of the more exposed areas, most notably the Mediterranean, again subject to a French reserve. Mr. Mulley thought that a better result might have been achieved if the Fourteen had presented a more unified front. This was unfortunately not always the case. He thought that to aim for an even better result would have meant disrupting the unity of the Fifteen, and he did not believe that the moment had come to push France into a position where she would take other more drastic unilateral decisions. We may want something strongly, but we want above all to maintain everybody in.

Having experienced the quite serious stress to which the Committee work subjected the member states, he thought that the Harmel exercise should be concluded at the next ministerial meeting and he did not think that it would be opportune to follow the Italian suggestion of continuing this review indefinitely, which would inevitably mean a dispute with France on each occasion.

There was one last problem which was the problem of the British troops in Europe. Mr. Brown wished to receive as much help as possible from M. Grégoire to arrive at a final conclusion of the procedure engaged within NATO concerning the redeployment of a limited number of British troops from Germany to Britain. This was agreed to in principle under the so-called offset agreement of last year, and it was really only a matter of speeding up the procedure within NATO so that disagreement could be finalised. Mr. Brown hoped that if he got this limited exercise done with as soon as possible, he would be in a better position to stand up to the various pressures, most notably of an economic and financial nature, to which he would be subjected next year from some of his colleagues who would like drastically to curtail British troop commitments abroad. (This question will be raised in the WEU Permanent Council Meeting on 19th December).

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