

Complacency Regarding Market Unity Born of De Gaulle Rebuff

By WILLIAM ANDERSON
United Press International
BRUSSELS (UPI) — Some of the urgency has gone out of the drive of the Common Market nations to cap their economic partnership with full political unity.



Such unity remains a major goal and some of its proponents are still urging haste, but where a year or so ago it was being pushed hard on all Common Market fronts there is today more of a "no need to rush" attitude.

This complacency, born of full employment, high wages and increasing standards of living, has been increased by French President Charles de Gaulle's refusal to allow Britain into the European Common Market. British membership now seems unlikely in the general's lifetime and many "Europeans" — thus robbed of an immediate target — have lost the fiery enthusiasm for political unity that was evident before the rebuff to Britain last January.

Politicians are becoming more reluctant to suggest that the drastic legislation needed to unite the continent be rushed through. Their national electorates, better off than at any time in history, are less willing to experiment with their well-being.

Makes Big Studies

Economic integration, meantime, is marching ahead with giant strides — but not without dangers. There is growing evidence that the continent's two economic blocs represented by the six countries of the Common Market — France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg — and the seven countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) may be drifting apart.

The EFTA countries — Britain, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Austria, Switzerland and Portugal — were on the point of dismantling their trade agreement when it seemed Britain would join the Common Market.

But since the De Gaulle veto of British entry the EFTA countries have shored up their organization to meet the competition of the bustling Common Market.

MARKET MEMBERS MAPPED—This newmap designates which countries are European Common Market countries and which are European Free Trade Association members. (UPI)

Both trading blocs are prosperous but EFTA countries exported twice as much per capita last year as did either the Common Market or the United States. The combined exports of seven nations totalled over \$38 billion.

Cuts Tariff, Too

EFTA also is matching the Common Market in tariff cuts among members, and tariffs on industrial exchanges have been cut by 50 per cent by both groups.

EFTA's members like to point up their organization has managed its business with a secretariat of some 40 people compared to the 3,000 "Eurocrats" working for the Common Market. The comparison is not really valid. EFTA does not touch on agricultural exchanges, has no political program and no supra-national authority as does the Common Market.

Recently a group of parliamentarians from EFTA met in to discuss their world image. Some right-wing legislators went so far as to suggest that EFTA should set up a rival common market among member nations. This would have meant extending tariff cuts to farm produce, setting up political aims, and establishing an over-all directing authority.

This extreme idea got little support but it did spark a motion that EFTA should publicize itself more.

The essential difference between EFTA and the Common Market is one of sovereignty.

Follow Orders

In the Common Market the six members are merged economically and they all must follow the directives of the market's authority. In trade negotiations, they bargain as one.

EFTA's members, on the other hand, are seven sovereign nations who have surrendered none of their independence but simply have gotten together to ease trade barriers among themselves. All trade problems are handled on a nation to nation basis. Politically, as well, EFTA's members are completely independent and in the present grouping could hardly be otherwise with, for example, such different regimes as Sweden and Portugal.

Majority opinion in EFTA prefers "la difference" but at the Strasbourg meeting the parliamentarians did nevertheless discuss increased contacts with the Common Market. The discussion was extended some time later by the EFTA representatives to talks with Common Market officials.

The sole result of the EFTA Common Market talks was a vague motion that contacts should be continued via the Council of Europe. This idea is not likely to be efficient as the council is only a consultative body. Portugal, an EFTA member, is not a council member; neither is Finland which is an associate member of EFTA.

The only real bridge is a quarterly meeting between the six Common Market countries and Britain within the framework of the Western European Union. This excludes the other six EFTA members, however.

Chicken War

The Common Market too, is flexing its economic muscle. Its

foreign ministers recently refused to bow to the United States in a wrangle over imports of American chickens in what has become known as "the chicken war." The amount involved was only \$46 million a year but the ministers refused to lower their tariffs sufficiently to allow the Americans to retain a market they formerly dominated. This may be a point-

er to the attitude towards America's \$1.2 billion a year farm exports to Europe.

Extending itself to Africa, the market has associated 18 French-speaking countries on that continent in an economic convention. Greece and Turkey have also hurried into association. Iran has initiated a trade agreement for agricultural produce.

Russia, too, is seeking tariff concessions from the "six" to increase her cash sales of caviar, crabmeat and vodka over Europe's bustling shop counters. EFTA countries and especial-

ly Britain are suspiciously watching Common Market overtures to the English-speaking nations of Africa — hitherto an almost exclusive British market.

Already preliminary talks are under way with African giant Nigeria with a view to drawing up a trade agreement giving Nigerian cocoa, vegetable oils and tropical timber greater access to the "six."

Fear Economic Split

All these moves worry the "Europeans" in EFTA and the Common Market. They fear that they herald a permanent split between the two economic blocs. The blocs may develop along different economic lines if there is no contact or coordination. This would make political unity more difficult at a later date.

The "Europeans," who include Frank Figueres, secre-

tary general of EFTA, and Walter Hallstein, the Common Market's chief executive, therefore put great hopes on the forthcoming "Kennedy round" of tariff negotiations. These negotiations are due to open in Geneva in May, 1964. They will be the biggest trade talks in the history of the world.

It is hoped that cuts of up to 50 per cent in industrial and agricultural tariffs will be negotiated at this conference on all goods passing between the 50 nations which subscribed to the general agreement on trade and tariffs (GATT).

France Included

France has been cool to these negotiations but is being carried along by the other five Common Market partners into what will certainly be some tough bargaining. But if the "Kennedy round" is successful it may help break down the

tendency of the Common Market and EFTA to settle down in different trading patterns.

The "Kennedy round" is named after President Kennedy who proposed the negotiations after Congress gave him powers under the trade expansion act to negotiate on modification of U.S. tariffs.

The "Europeans" hope the "Kennedy round" — by boosting trade with the West — will remove fears of trade wars and settle economic questions long enough to start anew on the problem of political integration.

Just how this is to be accomplished is vague at this stage. Recently Professor Hallstein warned if Europe "wants to play its part on the stage of world politics it must unite politically." And he said that only a united Europe would be able to accept President Kennedy's offer of Atlantic partnership.



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