

De Gaulle Says 'Non' to Britain in 1963

Source A



'Voila, this is what you call hit for six, non?'

A British cartoon of 1963 showing Macmillan (the British Prime Minister) bowling to de Gaulle in a cricket match. From the Daily Mirror.

Britain applied for membership of the EEC, and in October 1961 talks began in Brussels to work out the terms for Britain's entry. However, in January 1963 President de Gaulle of France broke off the talks, saying that he did not think Britain was ready for EEC membership.

Source B

Statement by de Gaulle at a press conference, 14 January 1963

Britain presented her application to the EEC after having earlier refused to take part and she is not prepared to accept all the terms of the Treaty of Rome. England is insular and maritime, linked through its trade to very diverse and different countries. In short, the nature and structure of England differ profoundly from those of the continentals. The question is to know if Britain can give up all preference with regard to the Commonwealth and stop claiming that its agriculture be privileged. The entry of Britain would completely change the Common Market which would become a colossal Atlantic grouping under American domination and control.

Source C

Speech by Macmillan at Liverpool, 21 January 1963

We made it clear that we accepted the Treaty of Rome, including the Common Agricultural Policy and the common tariff - we have reached solutions over a very large part of the field. It was known right from the beginning that there would be special problems affecting the Commonwealth; if there was an objection in principle to our retaining links with the Commonwealth, we should surely have been told so from the start.

Source D

Statement by Paul-Henri Spaak, Foreign Minister of Belgium, 15 January 1963

As far as the Belgian government is concerned, the approach of Britain at the Brussels negotiations is altogether different from the picture of it which the President of France has given. Some of the differences mentioned by de Gaulle have already been overcome, and although some problems remain, they are no more difficult to overcome than the rest.

Sources: Sources B, C and D are taken from *Keesing's Contemporary Archives for 1963*

Source E

The view of two British historians

The decision to 'enter Europe' had been taken slowly, and in fact, dishonestly, as far as Britain was concerned. The motives behind the application were not those of European unity, and Macmillan had no intention of making Britain a European power. The real reason behind the British application was the need to find somewhere for Britain to act a leading role and improve her international reputation. Once inside the Common Market, Macmillan planned to organize it into a sort of 'second pillar' of western defence, and to lead it in co-operation with America, as part of an extended Atlantic partnership.

Source: A. Sked and C. Cook, *Post-War Britain* (Penguin, 1979)

Questions

- (a) Do you think the cartoonist in Source A is sympathetic to de Gaulle or to Macmillan? Explain your answer.
- (b) In what ways does Source C seem to disagree with Source B?
- (c) Mr Spaak, the Belgian Foreign Minister (Source D), says that 'some of the difficulties mentioned by de Gaulle had already been overcome'. Do you think that the evidence in Sources B and C supports this statement? Explain your answer.
- (d) What reasons can you suggest for the differences of attitude and the contradictions shown in these sources?
- (e) How reliable do you think each of these sources is?
- (f) How useful is each one of these sources in trying to decide why de Gaulle prevented Britain from joining the EEC in 1963?