

De Gaulle and a possible “Norway Option” in 1963?

Many Independence Campaigners will remember Reg Simmerson. He was untiring in his campaigning and very well informed in his frequent letters to the press

Here is one of his letters to the editor of the Sunday Telegraph, dated 29 August 1990

“Dear Sir,

Although I agree with most things written by Peregrine Worsthorne it appears necessary to pick him up on one point.

De Gaulle was certainly not “insulting” when he vetoed Britain’s application to join the EEC in 1963; in fact he made a suggestion which coincides almost exactly with that of Reginald Maudling a few years before and also coincided exactly with the offer accepted by the other EFTA countries when Britain and Denmark joined the EEC in 1973.

The suggestion was that each EFTA country should have free trade in manufactured goods with the EEC, that each EFTA country should be able to fix its own tariffs with third countries and that the Common Agricultural Policy should not apply to EFTA countries.

The arrangement would have been ideal for Britain as we could have continued with our cheap food policy whereas we are now paying three or four times world prices for food which is produced by nauseous, intensive farming methods; we should not have needed to subsidise food mountains or sales of food to Russia at give-away prices.

No, de Gaulle did not insult us but Harold MacMillan and Ted Heath asserted that we had been insulted because they wanted

to get into the politics of the EEC and, although de Gaulle's proposal would have been ideal economically, the arrangement did not satisfy the ambitions of those two extremely ambitious British politicians.

The two British politicians therefore asserted that de Gaulle was offering Britain associated status just like that of some French ex-colony when, in fact, he was offering something very different indeed.

No one managed to make an effective challenge to their assertion at the time so they got away with it; the cost to Britain has been immense in trade with the rest of the world; we should have been able to import cheap, wholesome food from Canada, Australia etc. and sell them our manufactured goods; we should not have paid huge sums of money to the EEC; North Sea Oil would have made us rich.

What a pity that such an opportunity was thrown away but let us get one thing straight; de Gaulle certainly did not insult us; MacMillan's and Heath's assertions caused the trouble.

Sincerely,

R.E.G. Simmerson BSc (Econ) FCA "

**FIGHTER FOR BRITAIN'S FREEDOM – Letters to the Press 1971 -98
by Reg Simmerson**

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