

CONCORDE DEBATE STIRS 2 CAPITALS

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London and Paris Picture
Dispute Here as an Issue
of Political Relations

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PARIS, Jan' 6r-Debate in the United States over whether or not the Concorde supersonic jet should be given landing rights at two American airports has been shrilly cast in Britain and France into an issue of Atlantic political relations.

In Paris the arguments echo the old Gaullist frars that the United States is trying to slap down France and maintain an industrial monopoly and political hegemony.

In London, similar sentiments are expressed, but the tone is not quite so sharp. The British were more or less reluctant partners in the plane project, rganized some 13 years ago as a joint Franch-British effort to sow seeds of unity.

When a British Labor Government came to power shortly after the enterprise got under way, it said Britain could not afford such an expensive "prestige" project and tried to bow out.

Prime Minister Harold Wilson went ahead only after an angry President de Gaulle threatened to sue Britain for extensive damages in the International Court of Justie for not fulfilling the terms of the contract.

Dinner Talk

The Washington hearing before Secretary of Transport William T. Colemdn Jr. &terday became front-page news in Paris and London lye! and a prime subject of after dinner conversation in both capitals.

Many in the two capitals see the United States thrusting an ugly, protectionist face forward in threatening to refuse the landing rights.

At one dinner party a high French official observed tartly: "How can you expect Europeans to play host to your technology and buy your military planes when you don't give a chance to our technology."

A European official at an international organization here commented: "This is a holding operation to get the American aircraft industry back into the business of supersonic transport. If this were Boeing's plane do you think there would be such a fuss."

In a allusion to the La Fontaine fable, a cartoon by Trez in France Soir portrays Uncle Sam as the sly, hungry fox waiting patiently for the Concorde in the tree above to open its mouth and drop he cheese.

'Trying to Kill It'

"The environmentalists are trying to kill it before it is allowed to operate over the North Atlantic," said The Daily Express of London editorially. "The American aircraft manufacturers have been trying to kill it for years."

The Concorde's economic survival is largely dependent on its being able to operate on the North Atlantic route to tap what may be a large potential market for high-speed, though more costly, travel.

The plane roughly halves the present light time from Paris or London to New York.

"The Americans are trying to argue that when it comes it will be pure a technical decision" [the Coleman report is due in a month], "bu that is not so," said a German-speaking diplomat in Paris. "It is pure politics."

"If the Americans say no," he added, "it will represent out-and-out protectionism."

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