

## Memo from J. Papeians de Morchoven to Louis Scheyven (21 December 1951)

**Source:** DE VOS, Luc; ROOMS, Etienne; DELOGE, Pascal; STERKENDRIES, Jean-Michel (sous la dir.). Documents diplomatiques belges 1941-1960, De l'indépendance à l'interdépendance. Tome II: Défense 1941-1960. Bruxelles: Académie royale de Belgique, 1998. 582 p. ISBN 90-6569-670-9. p. 303-309.

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**Last updated:** 06/07/2016

## Memo from J. Papeians de Morchoven to L. Scheyven (21 December 1951)

Brussels, 21 December 1951.

Subject: Establishment of a European Defence Community.

### A. General remarks. Current situation.

The negotiations due to open shortly in Paris will doubtless determine the bases on which the European Army will be established.

What has led to this development?

1. Imbalance between forces deployed in the East and in the West. The Americans do not believe it is possible to restore the balance except by bringing in German troops. For political reasons, Spain does not come into the picture.

2. While the Americans may be prepared to consider the re-establishment of a German national army, the same cannot be said of the French, who reject any suggestion that Germany should be free to set up a military machine which might serve its national interests. As the Germans will only agree to make a military contribution to Western defence on an equal footing, the idea was mooted to place all European military forces under the control of a supranational authority.

3. Concern of the French to recover their prestige in Europe by becoming in effect, as they hope, the guiding force in a Europe united on their initiative.

Aware of the difficulty of creating a federal Europe at a stroke, they hope to bring it about by the establishment of supranational authorities specialising in different fields which will, eventually, be supervised by a federal parliament. It might be wondered whether, instead, the economic, demographic and military vigour of Germany might not enable that country, in the more or less long term, to become the leading power in the Continent.

4. Certain countries — Italy — also hope that the Community will afford them the means of solving the social problems (unemployment) and financial problems (deficit) confronting them.

### B. Advantages.

- Giving effect to the grand idea of a United States of Europe;
- more rational use of American aid and, more especially, its continuation, given the mindset apparent on the other side of the Atlantic;
- holding back to some extent the acceptance of German militarism;
- making German rearmament more palatable to the USSR (doubtful);
- facilitating the solution to the standardisation problem.

### C. Disadvantages.

- Absence of Great Britain, a balancing factor and the only power capable of preventing Europe from being dominated by France in the immediate future and by Germany in the longer term;
- fear of seeing our army and, later, our youth denationalised (two ethnic and linguistic communities in Belgium);

— concern to ensure that a fourth reorganisation does not throw our army into disarray (similar danger for the EDC);

— fear that the standard of the European Army may be geared to the lowest level — that of France;

— fear of German influence, which would be beneficial in terms of military technology but politically dangerous.

It may be wondered how effective the European formula may be in preventing the re-establishment of a German army — examples from the past (Noske and von Seeckt). Currently, 162 officials are working under the orders of Dr Blank ... the argument that insufficient American equipment is available is not strictly relevant, since it would take 18 months to set up the German army and, in that event, it might be hoped that enough would be received.

— Possibilities for withdrawal from the European Army with fewer difficulties the higher the degree of integration.

— Danger that a Federal Europe may be created in inconsistent stages without the provision of appropriate guarantees for future minorities (the fate of the Belgian Army in a Europe of nation states in the last two wars does not prompt much optimism with regard to future developments which, this time, will extend to all areas of national life). The setting of a European average may be to our detriment in several areas (welfare provision, security, citizenship, etc.).

Why, then, are the small powers participating, albeit timidly, in the establishment of the European Army?

They are acting on their wish to promote European unity out of fear that, by adopting a negative attitude, they will clash head-on with the determination of the great powers and will incur the displeasure of the United States.

Policy pursued by Belgium.

In the national interest: to endeavour, while accepting the principle, to mitigate its constitutional, political and military disadvantages. On an international basis: to endeavour to create a form of organisation which is as practical as possible, in order to facilitate close cooperation between future European armies and Britain.

Constantly to restate that our essential aim is to secure the creation of institutions to which Britain and the Scandinavian countries could accede.

However, the fact is that the position adopted by the other parties in the negotiations renders British accession illusory and will minimise the extent of British collaboration.

### **Observations of a general nature.**

#### **A. European Army and British cooperation.**

On several occasions in the past, Great Britain has proved its willingness to cooperate in joint European defence bodies. The participation of Britain in common endeavours, such as the creation of infrastructure, the SHAPE budget and the Headquarters are all precedents.

However, its links with the Commonwealth, its insular traditions and, probably, its mistrust of Continental creations are keeping it aloof from the European Defence Community.

The Minister's theory, whereby the Council of Ministers would become the supreme political authority, the Commissioner would be reduced to the status of an administrator and the national budgets would be maintained alongside a common budget, is consistent with recent statements by Mr Churchill.

Is it possible to reconcile this thinking with the French proposal? No, but a *rapprochement* could be brought about on the basis of the following ideas:

(a) maximise integration within NATO;

(b) secure the integration of European forces, taking into account, as far as possible, the concepts favoured by Britain;

(c) stress that allegiance to different communities calls for different solutions; the fact that France will retain extensive forces for its colonial empire and that a provision exists to enable troops to be recruited for special missions (Article 6) should make it possible for a special status to be conferred on Britain, given its responsibilities towards the Commonwealth.

If Belgium gains a special status (two regiments), this would be a further step in the direction of the British approach;

(d) the fact that Eisenhower fulfils a dual function as Commander of SHAPE and European Commissioner could be of decisive importance on a practical level.

At what stage will it be possible to include the British?

This will depend on the development of the political situation; but the development of the European Army itself will be decisive.

An effort should be made at least to conclude special agreements, and the end of the transitional period might be the psychologically appropriate moment.

## **B. Institutions.**

In order to counter the disadvantages identified above, while leaving the door open to the British, the Belgian proposals seem particularly appropriate.

The role given to the Council of Ministers has a precedent in the NATO Council and that of the Pact of Five; it would doubtless be easy to allow the Commissioner a broad measure of autonomy if, at least in the event of difficulty, the Council were to have the last word.

The existence of the Atlantic Council does not diminish the importance of General Eisenhower, and such a structure is alone capable of guaranteeing an acceptable minimum for the 'minorities'.

From this point of view, it is essential that, on any important matter, the Council may take only unanimous decisions (declaration of war, appointment of senior international officials, scrutiny of the budget).

In theory, it might be undesirable for the opinion of a single State — even the smallest — to be capable of paralysing the Council; in practice, this cannot happen, because the major powers have sufficient resources with which to exert pressure on and to win over their partners. The principle of unanimity, even if only invoked as a threat, may be the ultimate safeguard for national interests perceived to be in jeopardy.

As regards the powers of the Commissioner: he may have no more than an executive role, though without being reduced to the status of chairman of some delegate authority, hence, more of a coordinator or director. It is possible to leave him a wide measure of discretion and considerable authority, as was stated above, while reserving the major decisions for the Council.

Several Belgian amendments concern Articles relating to these issues (Articles 10, 11, 16, 26 and 27): appointment of the Commissioner by unanimous decision, suspension, if not dismissal, by the Council of

Ministers. Here, requiring unanimity contradicts the aim pursued: if a single country opposes the suspension, the Commissioner remains in office. The Belgian proposal of a 5/6 majority for suspension has the same disadvantages. In addition, it is clear that such a serious measure could only be entirely exceptional and that many abuses of power will be tolerated before that step is taken. It is all the more crucial to state clearly in the Convention that it is for the Council to lay down all the necessary instructions for the Commissioner, including those relating to the deployment of forces. Day-to-day management and matters involving military technology should remain his prerogative. Article 16 of the Convention, amongst other things, confers excessive powers on the Commissioner. These include management of the military colleges, with all the implications that that has for the denationalisation of officers and men, and the territorial location of forces. With regard to his authority in the field of arms production, the latest proposals seem satisfactory, provided they are subject to approval by the Council acting unanimously.

The judicial powers conferred on the Commissioner raise further serious legal problems: Article 5 of the Transitional Convention, moreover, takes a major step in the direction of the Belgian proposals. Undoubtedly, changes are called for on many points, but this is, nevertheless, a trend worth noting.

### **C. Coordination between NATO and the EDC.**

The need for such coordination is acknowledged, although the procedures involved may vary. The crucial question is whether the members of the European Defence Community will be bound together by an automatic link, as was the case for the Pact of Five, or only as provided by the Atlantic Treaty.

The excuse of the British — with a legalistic attitude more often manifested by the French — for not participating in the EDC is that it could involve them automatically, in the event of conflict in Germany or Italy, beyond their obligations under the Pact of Five.

In reality, this objection is fallacious, given that Britain is already committed to all the NATO Commands and that the bond which links the Five would not, in fact, be any stronger than that currently uniting the Twelve.

It would probably be better to harmonise the European Defence Community with NATO, at least during the transitional period. It might be possible to pursue this option in return for closer cooperation by Britain.

#### **Specific points.**

Now follow some observations prompted by the study of the draft Convention texts and the Belgian reservations.

Let us first draw attention to the constitutional difficulties posed by certain provisions of the draft Convention (see the Ganshof study).

Many Members of Parliament are concerned about maintaining sovereignty (these are to be found in the ranks of both the Christian Social Party (PSC) and the Belgian Socialist Party (PSB)); others, on the contrary, feel that what is important is the creation of Europe.

Let us review the main points:

#### **(a) Recruitment of Forces:**

Progress has been made in Strasbourg, since it is no longer the Commissioner but a protocol which will lay down the standards of recruitment during the transitional period.

#### **(b) Composition of Forces:**

Let us say that France, because of the war in Indo-China, its commitments in Korea under the UN and its special deployments in Berlin and in Austria, will actually have two armies: a national army and a European

army, the former having a considerably greater value than the latter.

The case of special deployments in Berlin and in Austria creates a precedent which, together with that of the exceptions for France's Overseas Territories, might constitute the form of special status which would facilitate the accession of Great Britain.

As far as we Belgians are concerned, the fact that the experts have scrapped the maintenance of national detachments for internal security may have serious consequences.

Our Constitution makes it difficult to recruit colonial troops. We should have to persuade Parliament and the general public to accept that the defence of Belgium, to some extent, necessitates that of the Congo, in the same way as the defence of the country necessitates the presence of Belgian troops in Germany.

According to certain officers, the Minister for the Colonies will not be easily won over. Even so, would it not be possible to generate a movement of sympathy among young people, many of whom will no doubt be happy to spend a short period in the Colony? Furthermore, this new concept would sit well with the defence needs of the Congo, which are currently the cause of very serious problems.

In the absence of sufficient forces, the Americans or British would doubtless be quite prepared, if a threat arose, to dispatch one or two airborne divisions to defend the uranium mines or the mouth of the Congo river. But, once there, when would they leave? (cf. Egypt).

The question remained open in Strasbourg, and the Minister was asked to outline the reasons why a special regime should apply to Belgium. The reasons are clear from a national point of view: the existence of a dual community is a source of weakness in our country; in addition, whereas other countries will retain a full military organisation for their overseas troops, we shall have practically none at our disposal.

Now, if experience of the European Community proves negative, this mode of organisation would enable France and Italy, etc. to withdraw from the European Community and to reorganise their armies under acceptable conditions. This would not be the case for us; indeed, it is likely that Parliament, having found it sufficient to approve the raising of taxes for the European Army, would show little concern to keep troop formations in place to deal with any problems that might arise.

In the international context, the maintenance of troops for internal security would be justified by the fact that, if Germany is swarming with NATO troops able, if necessary, to provide that security and if France retains on its own soil troops to relieve its colonial forces, Belgium will be proportionally much less well protected.

To sum up, the fact is that France will be able to maintain a national army the size of which will not be limited by rigid criteria and that the particular circumstances affecting France (Indo-China, Berlin, Austria, French Empire and Colonies) will allow it to assign considerable strength to that army. On the other hand, constitutional, financial, climatic and psychological difficulties, plus the question of transport, will not allow Belgium to take full advantage of the freedom to maintain a colonial army outside the authority of the Community. It is in these facts, too, that Belgium must seek the arguments vis-à-vis France which constituted its main demand: freedom to maintain under Belgian sovereignty forces for internal defence. This demand seems unavoidable if one takes into account the possibility that Dr Schumacher will be victorious in the 1953 general elections in Germany and that General de Gaulle may come to power in France sooner or later.

The coming together of these two figures and of the heightened nationalist sentiments that they represent would pose an unprecedented threat to Belgian independence.

(c) Appointment of officers: matter settled in Strasbourg.

(d) Training.

Request by Belgium for basic training to be undertaken in Belgium: matter adjourned.

There is no need to stress how vital this requirement is for us. For each generation, induction into the army gives a grounding in patriotism and national unity. What can be substituted for this training? Doubtless, with a little imagination, it would be possible to channel Belgian school-leavers into work camps of a kind which would, to a certain extent, take on the role of the army but, as the officials responsible for public education hardly seem up to the task of putting a viable system into operation, it would be necessary to rely on the reactions of the nation who would view such a scheme as simply an extension of national service.

Even if most of the other Belgian demands were to be abandoned, it would be absolutely essential to uphold this one, because it constitutes the only means of counterbalancing the slow but sure denationalisation of future generations.

At all events, the Government should develop a special programme of civic education which would be integrated into all courses of education at all levels. This, it should be noted, is absolutely at variance with the programmes of UNESCO.

(e) Budget (Articles 53–57 and 63a).

The Ministers should retain absolute control of the budget. The Belgian formula of two budgets — one for homogeneous forces and one for non-homogeneous services — is particularly to be recommended, firstly, because it goes a long way to accommodating the British view and, secondly, because it guards against the recurrence of international demands on the lines of those evidenced by the Temporary Council Committee (TCC). In that connection, it is likely that the conflict of opinion on the apportionment of financial burdens in NATO will come home to roost here (Article 63a), all the more so since neither the Germans, nor the French nor the Italians are resolved to finance their own rearmament but, instead, seek to have a minimum paid for by others.

(f) Armament programme.

See above: Institutions — Commissioner.

(sgd) J. Papeians.