

Speech by Paul van Zeeland at the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 10 December 1951)

Caption: On 10 December 1951, Paul van Zeeland, Belgian Foreign Minister, gives an address to the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe in which he examines the possibilities for political development of the European institutions.

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M. Van Zeeland (Translation). — In the political field, I know of no greater or more insidious dangers than those springing from a confusion of ideas. It is, of course, to be expected, when people find themselves forced to launch forth on new paths, when they have to work as pioneers for the benefit of the generations to come, that the roads are not already laid down for them and that many attempts have to be made before the obstacles which are always to be found on the path to the Promised Land are overcome.

That is why I hastened to accept your invitation to speak in this Assembly. It is an excellent thing that several members of the Committee of Ministers should have been given due authority by their colleagues to explain their attitudes here. At the present time, it was right that the responsible Ministers should have more direct, more informal, more personal and more intimate relations with the Assembly than has so far been the case. Moreover, since we have been authorised to speak here in our personal capacities, we have both the privilege and the duty of being extremely frank. An exchange of ideas, such as takes place in the Strasbourg Assembly, has neither sense nor value unless the opinions given are as clear and honest as possible, without the trammels of diplomatic formulae and with due regard to the real difficulties of the times.

The subject on which I want to speak to you, "The possibilities of the political development of European Institutions", takes us right to the heart of the problems of our day.

What is it exactly that we want?

We want to build a united Europe. We want to do it in time, because otherwise it will not be possible; because the national States, which are the natural component parts of Europe, are no longer capable, divided as they have been up to now, of achieving in isolation the vital aims of every human community.

What are these aims? First, to secure for our peoples a standard of living commensurate with the discoveries of modern science. Secondly, to secure peace for the people whom we claim to guide; if not final and universal peace, at least effective protection for their homes and freedoms. This includes the military aspect of the problem.

I shall not unduly enlarge on such ideas in this Assembly. On this matter there is unanimous agreement. Either we unite, or else we must remain in our present shameful condition of being incapable either of securing our own defence or of ensuring for those who have confidence in us the standard of living to which they are entitled.

But the world of today is, more than ever before, steeped in contradictions. Our hearts remain with our own mother-country. But our reason tells us that if we want our mother-country to survive and remain worthy of the part it has to play, we must organise an international life on solid foundations, and, in particular, we must build a united Europe.

And we shall do so.

I am not one of those who take pleasure in being pessimistic. On the contrary, I consider that the steps which we have already taken on the road to European unification are not inconsiderable. It would be wrong to speak of the failure of the Council of Europe. It is true that many of the founders of the Council hoped that it would go forward faster and further. I do not deny that the European idea is to-day going through a period of crisis throughout the world. But I am convinced that these are mere growing pains. In any case, it is our business to see to it that they are no more than that. When I consider this Assembly, it seems to me to have attained one of the essential aims which it set itself. It has kept alive in the minds of the people the idea of a united Europe, the need to build such a Europe, and, I would add — and this, so far from being a criticism, I consider to be a matter for high praise — the difficulties which are inherent in the building of Europe. But nothing great is ever achieved without effort. I readily admit that we have come once again to a crossroads. We have got to make a new start. But how? In what direction? By what means?

Let us get still closer to the reality of the situation. But before we start out upon a new path, let us ask ourselves whether the direction which we have so far taken was the right one. My reply is quite definite. I think it was. I think that we have duly prepared the ground, and that we have dealt with the crucial points which needed to be dealt with.

And as a result, we now have before us a number of achievements and plans that meet the major requirements which I mentioned just now. In other words, we have harnessed ourselves to tasks which should enable the States of Europe to achieve prosperity and security for their citizens.

Let us consider first the economic field. Why should we under-estimate the achievements of O.E.E.C? With the intelligent and generous help of our friends overseas, we have succeeded, in face of the destruction caused by the war, in bringing about in Europe an economic recovery which proves that the fundamental powers of Europe have not been permanently injured. O.E.E.C. has not yet, however, been able to attain its main objective: the integration of Europe, in other words, the creation of a single market in Europe. O.E.E.C. has not abandoned its efforts. At the moment it is meeting with difficulties which are, I hope, merely temporary ones. It is taking them into account, and it is wise to do so. But the very activities of the Organisation have revealed the limitations of its method. Bold and realistic minds rightly concluded that the problem of European unity should be approached from a different angle. Thus it was that the Schuman Plan came into being.

Let us pass on to the political sphere. We find there the same arguments and the same evolution of ideas. The Council of Europe has begun to act. By its mere existence, it already acts as a magnet, a lever. Of course, its power and effectiveness will have to be increased. In the meantime, we came to realize that we had to go further and faster, that we had to strike out along new paths. And so the idea of the European Defence Community arose.

You can see, therefore, that we have concentrated our attention and our efforts on dealing with the crucial points. If we succeed in these two undertakings, we shall really have laid the foundations on which the house of Europe can once more be built. Thus we see both the importance of these two ideas and the need to bring them to fruition.

This must be done? All right! We will do it. But how?

First of all, let me give you a general reflection which has long been in my mind.

In recent years I have followed with interest the opposition between functionalists and constitutionalists. How often, in the efforts made by private organisations in support of the European idea, have I come across arguments which tend to contrast theory with practice. There is no opposition between theory and practice. There cannot be any such opposition. If there appears to be one, either the theory is false or the practice is inadequate. We must, without relaxing our efforts, take two parallel courses of action. On the one hand, we must work out the general, over-all plan which will lead us, sooner or later, to the full attainment of our objective. On the other hand, by using every opportunity and by taking every positive chance that offers, we must, on the basis of this general plan, build up, day by day, and one by one, the various parts of our edifice, the wings and the buttresses, which will in the end go to form the Europe of our dreams. With your permission, I shall now deal with this question. I shall begin by giving a broad outline of the plan for the future. I will then consider what sections must be constructed immediately.

This, then, is how I see the picture of a United Europe in the future. What naturally comes first to my mind are the controlling authorities. For how is it possible to conceive a well-ordered organisation adapted to political ends, which is not controlled by a real authority? But what should be the characteristics of this authority, without which a united Europe is inconceivable?

For my part, I see the Europe of tomorrow in the form of a Confederation of States. As I said just now, our hearts still lie with our own mother-countries and the organisation of Europe must therefore respect the national States. Clearly it must be on a higher level than the national State. But its function is to help the

States of Europe to achieve their common aims. That is to say the Confederation must be given the powers necessary to serve ideas at the European level, but those alone, and no others.

No one will be surprised by my making this point. It is continually in our minds. Even within our own national States, we give the central authority only those responsibilities which cannot conveniently be borne by the parish or the county. Just as local interests are protected by national interests, and give way to them where necessary, so in the Europe of tomorrow will European interests both take precedence over and protect national interests.

In constructing the European Confederation, not only must we respect the proper and legitimate interests of the European States, but we must base it on the same principles as guide those States. It must be in line with the institutions which are the guarantee of our liberties and the expression, indeed, of Western civilisation.

These institutions are, however, above all constitutional and representative; they are based on the fundamental rule that "all powers come from the Nation". There is no doubt that for believers, such as myself, the cycle does not stop there; we have to go back further and to a higher plane to find the philosophical basis of authority, we have to go as high as God himself. Once this authority has been established, it is through the Nation that it pervades the body politic and justifies the powers exercised by some men over others. It is therefore from the European nations themselves that the federation will receive its powers — powers that are precisely specified and confined to essential action, but nevertheless real.

In assuming such powers, the federation will have to be headed by a real Parliament and a real executive, and thus be vested with real authority deriving from the federated nations. In my view, however, such a Parliament should comprise two Chambers which should possess equal legal rights and equal power. The delegates of one Chamber would be elected by direct ballot in accordance with the same procedure in all the federated countries. The second Chamber, on the other hand, would be constituted in such a way that the States would be represented therein on a basis of complete equality. Such ideas are neither new nor revolutionary; they are already applied in one form or another in numerous countries of a federal or confederate nature and it is thus that we shall, I believe, succeed in discovering the common ground for the requirements of intra-European life and the necessary respect of national sovereignties.

Is such a conception nothing but a dream or a Utopia? Yesterday it was a Utopia, today it is a hope, tomorrow it will be reality.

It would not be the first time that history had undergone this threefold development.

In any event, so far as I am concerned, it is not only a possibility, but an opportunity for the future, and I sincerely hope to associate my humble efforts with those of millions of men of goodwill who are not prepared to give up a plan merely because it goes beyond the prospects of the present day...

In my view, there will never be a united Europe until we achieve this result. But is the mind of man today sufficiently prepared to accept such a solution? I fear not. Should we then stand by and wait with folded arms? Shall we content ourselves with undertaking psychological action in order to establish and educate trends of opinion which will enable us to proceed to that stage? Obviously not. Psychological action must, it is true, be undertaken, and I do not doubt that sooner or later it will achieve its aims.

However, the needs which impel us at the present time to establish a United Europe are of extreme urgency. We can no longer afford to wait, either on the economic or military plane. We must therefore, without losing sight of our more distant goal, here and now seek out provisional ways and means adapted to the needs of the hour.

Thus, following the same lines of thought, and bearing in mind the same subjects for concern and the same principles, I visualise at present three immediately essential requirements:

1) A European Coal and Steel Community;

- 2) A European Defence Community;
- 3) The political strengthening of the Council of Europe.

I should, before giving separate attention to each of these points, make a few general remarks which apply to all three. If we must for the time being give up the idea of the establishment of a true European parliamentary authority, can we afford to push into the background the problem of a political authority within the various specialised institutions that we propose to set up? Surely not. Let us, however, labour under no illusion. Whatever the degree of integration decided upon in building the United Europe of tomorrow, there must always be an Authority, a real Authority, which at all times is in a position to take decisions and give orders. The problem of such an Authority arises in connection with each specialised institution set up. There must be such an Authority, but the great question is: what form shall it take?

Some people take the view that an intermediate solution is possible. They urge that there should be set up a kind of supranational authority half-way between the final solution just outlined under the title of Federation and another specific solution, which is already in force in more than one sphere and which is based on joint national wills, on national Governments. In my own view, this intermediate solution would not be a happy one and might still further hinder progress towards a European union.

I should have liked sufficient time more fully to examine such a solution which I consider, rightly or wrongly, would be neither fish nor flesh. Let me, however, for the time being, confine myself to expressing the main fears to which it gives rise.

The supranational authority referred to as the "High Authority" appears to me to have no proper foundation; its power would no longer be derived from national sovereignty and would have no real international basis. It was, on the other hand, obvious that the High Authority would have to be responsible to someone. It was thought that this might be an Assembly, the nature of which also appears to me to be open to some misgivings, since it would be composed merely of leading personalities, appointed by the States, but who would not derive their power from real elections, and would be bereft of any direct contact with the people. What appears to me a serious matter is the confusion of mind which might arise in this connection. Public opinion might be misled and risk attaching unwarranted significance to what was said or done in such an Assembly.

That is why I feel the formula of a political authority that I have just outlined should be set aside. A united Europe cannot be achieved in a roundabout way, but only in a direct and unambiguous manner.

But in that event, you may say, are you in favour of the Schuman Plan? My answer is: yes, I am a convinced supporter of the Schuman Plan. The Belgian Delegation's whole action during the lengthy negotiations that preceded the signing of the Schuman Plan remained directed towards the establishment of a real authority through the Committee of Ministers. Relations between the administrative Authority and the Committee of Ministers were so organised that no single veto could at any time bring the working of the system to a halt. We, however, agreed on the institution of a superstructure that still reflected several of the aspects that I have just criticised. By doing so, we indeed made many concessions, but I am glad we did, for they provided obvious proof of our goodwill. We believe we have succeeded in sufficiently altering the superstructure of the Schuman Plan for it no longer to be radically opposed to the principles that I have just mentioned.

Lastly, we signed this document by making the sacrifices required by the need for understanding; we are proud that in this way we gave priority to considerations of general interest over all others, for we are convinced that it is essential for the Schuman Plan to be made effective. Nevertheless, it will be obvious that the European Coal and Steel Community, however much may be at stake, is only concerned with material interests. You will not be surprised if I say that it is possible to make great concessions to views one does not share, when it is a matter of tons of coal or steel, but that the same does not apply when it is a question of human lives!

What form should, then, be given to the political Authority which is to govern specialised institutions, pending the achievement of a final solution for a federation? I feel the answer is simple. It should consist of a Committee of Ministers representing the various participating countries. In this way we should conform with the framework of our constitutional institutions and achieve a real authority. The members of the Committee would be Ministers in office, exercising governmental authority and responsible for their actions to national Parliaments.

Let such a Committee of Ministers be endowed with ultimate authority, over and above the High Authority or this or that specialised institution, at least for an interim period, and all difficulties of principle would be smoothed out. Each of the Ministers in questions would be responsible to his own Parliament for the position he assumed; nine times out of ten he would explain and support the joint decision taken by the Committee of Ministers. In this way, the will of the people would continue to prevail, parliamentary control would continue to be exercised, and we should remain within the bounds of the procedure of our free institutions.

Now, you smile. Well, listen.

I am well aware of the objection which will immediately be raised and which, here in Strasbourg, will perhaps be particularly strong, when I recall the opposition met with by the action taken by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

I do not, however, ask that such Committees of Ministers should be condemned to perpetual unanimity. It is unnecessary both in principle and in practice that all the decisions taken by this Committee be taken unanimously. Of course, when vital questions are concerned, the rule of unanimity must continue to be observed. Moreover, were this not so, we should come up against wholly insurmountable *de facto* obstacles; instead of having served the cause of a united Europe, I feel we should be jeopardising it. If, on the other hand, I agree that the rule of unanimity should continue to be observed in respect of matters involving the fundamental interests of the nations or of a procedural nature, I am the first to acknowledge that, in respect of very many other measures, a decision by a qualified majority would suffice. Moreover, action by the Committee of Ministers must be followed up and completed by other administrative organs; it would be necessary to ensure that the implementation of general orders or instructions given by the Committee should be entrusted to a High Commissioner or an Administrative Board.

Bearing these observations in mind, let us now proceed to consider each of the three points to which I have referred.

First of all, the Schuman Plan. In the light of the views I have so far expressed, the Belgian Government's attitude will already be apparent to you. It is the clear-cut view that the Schuman Plan is essential under present conditions and that it must succeed. We fully support the Schuman Plan and we shall spare no effort to convince public opinion and Parliament. The latter will decide in its sovereign capacity, but I do not doubt that with its sense of realism and of the requirements of international life it will go ahead, despite the manifest objections and risks, and that it will associate itself wholeheartedly with this splendid undertaking for European cooperation.

Let me rapidly proceed to consider the question of a European Defence Community.

The idea of a European Army is one of those dynamic ideas which from time to time arise in the course of history and the development of which brooks no hindrance. We are resolutely in favour of it. I would go even further and say that, at the present time, after what has happened, Europe would, in my view, no longer be able finally to defend or organise itself, were the proposal for a European Army to be set aside. As soon as the idea of such an Army was propounded, we Belgians endorsed it in principle — and today we are more than ever convinced that the idea is a promising one, that it is necessary and that it must be made to succeed. If I am not mistaken, this question of a European Army constitutes at the present time the crux of the whole position in regard to the establishment of a united Europe.

It also appears to me that, unfortunately, the hesitancy and difficulties we have come up against are in part at least due to a lack of clarity. I shall therefore try to review the questions as a whole and to dispel as far as I am able the confusion which may have arisen in some minds.

Let us begin at the beginning: let us consider the aims that we propose to pursue by the creation of such a European Army. These aims are of three different kinds.

In the first place there is the military aspect. As I reminded you just now, what is above all important is that we should organise ourselves in such a manner as to ensure the protection of our European homes. We cannot do this on our own; but we hope to achieve it within the framework of the, Atlantic Treaty. The European Powers must, of course, contribute all they can to his end: their efforts must furthermore be made as effective as possible. It is therefore important that the European Army shall be stronger than the sum of the contingents of which it is expected to consist. We are all determined that it shall be a first-class military machine.

Our second aim is that of promoting the establishment of a united Europe. The European Army will provide the necessary atmosphere and will hasten the time when a European confederation can be envisaged. In forming this European Army let us therefore see to it that the arrangements we make adequately demonstrate to the European nations that it is in the interest of all of them that their strength should be more and more closely combined in every sphere.

Our third aim is this: to prevent, by ensuring adequate defence of Europe through a truly European Army, the rebirth of powerful national armies which might once more be made to serve policies conflicting with the common interest of European nations; in other words, we do not wish to see the re-establishment of political conditions, such as have hitherto contributed to the splitting up of Europe and made possible the frightful wars from which we are still suffering and which henceforth must be abolished for all time;

We must achieve all three of these aims. The question is by what methods and by what means. Let me try, in connection with the solutions which I now propose to outline, to apply the general principles referred to by me in the first part of this survey. In view of the fact that they are essential for the building of a united Europe, should they not be all the more applicable to the specialised institution which we call a European Army?

First of all, in the integration of this Army, as in the integration of Europe, we must go as far as it is necessary to achieve our aims, but at no time further than it is necessary to go to do this. Any over-integration, or superfluous concentration, would, in my view, be of itself a mistake, a fundamental error. Such action would also represent a great tactical mistake. It would, in fact, only serve to aggravate still further the already heavy burden we are going to have to place upon our peoples in order to achieve a united Europe.

In the light of this reasoning, I consider that those who in specific circumstances wish to go further than is strictly necessary are rendering a bad service to the European cause and helping to jeopardise its achievement. In short, I should like to propose the following rule of procedure: go as far as is necessary along the road to integration, but never further than is necessary.

At the outset another point should be made clear: the Paris Conference has so far adopted no final attitude towards any of the proposed ways and means of establishing a European Army. As you are aware, apart from the inaugural meeting, which was of a purely formal character, the responsible Ministers have not yet had an opportunity of meeting together officially. An initial informal meeting took place at Paris about a fortnight ago, and the Ministers expect to meet tomorrow officially for the first time.

Does that mean that, in the interval, nothing has been done. No, certainly not. A great deal has been accomplished. A method was agreed upon which has both its advantages and disadvantages. It allows the experts to work amongst themselves and not under orders, with a view to preparing the ground, making an inventory of the points on which agreement may be reached almost automatically, explaining problems of a

technical nature and thus preparing the work to which the responsible Ministers will have to devote themselves. Results of undeniable value have been obtained. Technically speaking, the preparatory activities of the Committees have taught me a great deal and prove that the integration and working of a European Army are not only possible but that the plan is practically complete. In connection with such a problem it is, of course, not possible completely to separate the technical from the political aspect and that is why, at one stage of their work, the experts found themselves, inevitably, up against political problems, which they were not competent to solve. Under their terms of reference, they could, and had to, try to define those problems and, if possible, make suggestions, while leaving the ultimate decision to the responsible Ministers.

Personally, I have for a long time wished these political aspects of the problem to be dealt with — and dealt with by those who are required to solve them — and that is why I unreservedly welcome the fact that at last this meeting will take place tomorrow. All this means that so far nobody has succeeded in laying down a specific formula, officially. Working documents have been prepared, but it has been expressly agreed that they shall not be binding on any of the Governments taking part in the discussion; numerous reservations of a general or specific nature have been formulated which leave entire freedom of decision to the responsible Ministers when they meet.

It is therefore with a completely open mind that I propose to explain to you my personal views; I reserve the right, moreover, to modify them in accordance with any additional information which may be given me or, if necessary, to adapt them to the requirements of the ensuing negotiations.

Let us now consider to what extent this Army must be integrated. It must, above all, be an efficient military machine. To what extent, and in what form, should the various elements, drawn from the different European countries, be associated?

There are three distinct possibilities. The first lies at one extreme. It is not the first time in history that countries have united for their defence. But such associations have usually taken the form of a coalition, the different armies fighting side by side, and endeavouring to coordinate their efforts.

At the other extreme is the idea of a "merged" army, that is to say, a composite army, as though it were the army of a single State, recruiting its men as it finds them, to form as it were, the raw material which it proceeds itself to shape and pour into a single mould without regard to their origin. It seems to me that these two extreme positions are not only both of them quite unacceptable in theory, but have already been overtaken by events.

The idea of a coalition army, or simply several armies working side by side, is now out of date. You must not forget that we have already, within the framework of the Atlantic Pact, formed a real army drawn from 12 countries. This army exists. It has its High Command, its General Staff, its Atlantic officers. In short, a real and we hope effective measure of integration has already been achieved. But experience has shown how great are the difficulties still remaining to be overcome, when any attempt is made to increase the degree of coordination between the various elements which go to form this Atlantic army.

The European army has become a necessity — from the military point of view. The degree of integration in the European army should therefore be greater than it is in the Atlantic army.

Does this mean that we must go to the other extreme and accept the idea of a "merged" army? No, for here, too, the facts have given their answer. The work accomplished by the experts within the framework of the Paris Conference has produced a conclusion on which, it seems, there are no differences of opinion: the European army must be based on homogeneous units. And it is these units which will be integrated into the European army. It seems to be accepted that each basic homogeneous unit should be at least a light division. These arguments point therefore to an intermediate solution, namely, a necessary and adequate measure of integration based on homogeneous units.

Nobody should find this conclusion surprising. It is only necessary to think of the variety of languages spoken in the various countries of Europe to realise at once that we are faced here with an inescapable

necessity.

It would therefore seem that the technical or military difficulties of effecting the integration of the European Army are not insurmountable. I do not mean that all the technical problems have been solved. But I think that in each case it is possible to find a practical solution which will meet the requirements of an effective military instrument, and which will yet remain compatible with the political principles of which we have spoken.

But, assuming all these technical problems to have been settled, problems, no doubt, of considerable importance but which do not appear insoluble, there are doubtless still two questions which remain to be answered.

Does the formula of which we are thinking lead to a genuine "integration" of the European army? The answer is clear. It is quite definitely, yes; for two reasons. First we have a single army, with its Commander, its General Staff, its general officers, its other officers and N.C.O.s, and the necessary supporting services, duly coordinated. Secondly, it is necessary in our opinion to make quite sure that all these things are done that confer on an army its moral solidarity. It will serve a single homogeneous policy. It will be an integral part of the Atlantic army. It will be subject to the same military regulations. The same standards of promotion will apply to all officers. Finally, this army will obey a European Authority.

We thus find ourselves back at the very core of the problem, namely: what form will this Authority take? What is to be its character, its limits, its place within the present political organisation?

After what I have just said, you will not be surprised if I dismiss the idea of a heavy, complicated superstructure, which, to my mind, would be a danger for Europe itself; a superstructure, such as that of which, despite considerable modifications, traces still persist in the Schuman Plan.

The Authority which, in my view, should be placed at the head of this European Army is the Committee of Ministers; Ministers will participate with all the authority attaching to them as such, as well as the authority of their Governments; they will make decisions, sometimes unanimously, sometimes by a previously defined majority; they will lay down the general regulations I have just referred to.

I consider that two organisations, or two individuals, are essential for the execution of the policy decreed by the Council of Ministers; on the one hand, the Commander-in-Chief of the European Army, on the other the Commissioner or the college of Commissioners. The respective roles to be played by each of these authorities should be easy to determine, in accordance with the rules in force in every army in the world.

From the political point of view, what is important is that there should be a supreme authority having real power to commit States, to decide the policy which this Army is to serve, and to afford both to the Commander-in-Chief and the Commissioners, the support and direction by which the latter will be enabled to fulfil their respective tasks.

This is broadly our conception of the European Army. I have the impression that the Paris Conference, thanks to its Committees of Experts and the first personal contacts between Ministers, has sufficiently cleared the ground to enable a decision to be taken very shortly. In fact, as I said just now, the technical sides of the problem have been well prepared. The political problems are now clear. A choice must be made; a responsible and capable Political Authority must be created; this Political Authority must command the European Army, in conditions, however, that are compatible both with respect for national States and with the requirements of this effort of integration which we are making to create a united Europe.

I have one last point, which is in my view of the utmost importance. So far, we have talked of a European Army; who will the members be? The Paris Conference includes the majority of the European nations. Unfortunately these nations are divided into two groups; on the one hand, there are the active members who take part in debates, and, on the other, the observers. In our opinion, a European Army should include all the nations of Europe; or, if not all, at least the majority. A quarter-European Army would be inadequate.

I am, of course, as well aware as anyone of the political situation at the present moment. I understand the difficulties, the hesitations, and the objections of this one and that. I have no intention of over-simplifying a problem which is by its nature extraordinarily complex. Do you not, however, think that our first duty, in trying to lay down, as I did just now, the broad outline of a political and technical solution for the European Army, is to look at this formula from a rather pragmatic and concrete point of view, so that we may not preclude *a priori* the possibility of collaboration on the part of any European country?

In other words, if we had the choice of two formulae, both of which were acceptable, do you not think we should choose the one that offered the maximum chances of grouping the largest number of participants in the European Army?

If I have just sketched the outlines of the solution which we advocate at the moment, it is because we believe it to be the one that will most effectively serve the interests of Europe, and lead us more directly to the three goals we have in view. We also believe that, by virtue of its relative moderation and simplicity, it is such as to enable a greater number of European countries to participate in the European Army. It is my wish that every possibility should remain open till the very last minute.

One last word, which I should like you to regard as a warning. Let us make no mistake: the Schuman Plan and the European Army, by virtue of their significance and of the fact they cover the essential points of European policy, have become necessary stages in the creation of Europe; furthermore, so great is the hope that has been awakened in Europe and in the whole world by these two great ideas, that, if they should fail, the idea of a united Europe would suffer a mortal blow.

That is why we must succeed; and quickly, very quickly!

It is a matter of the utmost urgency. For reasons entirely beyond our control as Europeans, a solution must be found at once, in the next two months in fact. We all collectively bear a crushing load of responsibility. I, personally, have never ceased to believe in Europe. All the doors are still open, let us have the courage and the wisdom not to linger on the threshold.

As regards my third anxiety — the strengthening of the Council of Europe — I shall be very brief. You are all better informed on this point than I am. I shall confine myself to a few reflections of a practical nature. The creation and functioning of the Council of Europe constitute a first important step on the way towards a united Europe, and it would be pure folly to wish to start all over again elsewhere on the pretext that it is impossible to go fast enough or far enough in Strasbourg. All such efforts should be concentrated in and around the Council of Europe.

All the specialised institutions should be grouped in one way or another around the Strasbourg organisation. Coordination is essential, and it is quite possible. It comes up against no major opposition arising out of the respect due to national sovereignties; we must set about it as soon as possible. Pending the creation of a truly European Parliament, if we wish to resort less to an assembly of a consultative nature for the purposes of information or verification, would it not be infinitely better to utilise what already exists here than to waste time and energy indefinitely? This essential work of coordination will prove much simpler and much more lasting if, in the creation of the Specialised Authorities, we accept practical and realistic formulae in keeping with our free institutions. We should thereby have removed a great part of its bitterness from the dispute on national sovereignty — and we should at the same time have abolished one of the major obstacles to the prompt achievement of a united Europe.

My conclusion will be brief.

A cruel or kind destiny, I cannot say which, has not ceased to impose superhuman tasks and responsibilities on our generation. How many times during the past thirty or forty years have we not had the impression — terrifying or stimulating — that we were at the edge of the abyss, or else on the threshold of a magnificent period with unlimited possibilities. I think we are in this position today, and the next two months will decide

our fate. Let us within that space of time see the ratification of the European Community for Coal and Steel; let us jointly lay the foundations of the European Defence Community. If we do this, the new year will open under favourable auspices. Perhaps at last we may be able to read on the tablets of fate the three words so long awaited: United Europe, Peace, Prosperity.

(Applause).