

Memorandum from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs on European integration (11 December 1952)

Caption: On 11 December 1952, referring to the plan for a European Political Community (EPC), Johan Willem Beyen, Netherlands Minister for Foreign Affairs, sends his European colleagues a memorandum in which he proposes the establishment of a tariff community that would lead to the gradual abolition of all customs duties on imports and to the introduction of a common external tariff.

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Apart from the reinforcement of their defence by closer cooperation in the military field, as laid down in the Treaty establishing the European Defence Community,⁽¹⁾ it would seem that the principal aim of European integration should be the raising of the general standard of living of the European peoples. In the opinion of the Netherlands Government, economic integration as well as the monetary and social coordination it implies, is therefore of essential importance to the extension of the interests of European countries as it is a prerequisite to maintaining and improving the standard of living, including all social aspects, and may serve to reinforce the defence efforts. It will not be possible to maintain and gradually improve the standard of living in Europe - in spite of the steady increase of the population - without raising and improving European production and increasing productivity, which cannot be achieved in a Europe divided into a number of limited markets as a result of trade barriers and subject to monetary instability.

With regard to the methods to be adopted in order to achieve European integration, the preamble to the Treaty constituting the European Coal and Steel Community⁽²⁾ states the principle that a united Europe can be realised only by the implementation of definite plans, creating first of all a real solidarity, and by establishing common bases for economic expansion.

In the meantime, it appears especially from discussions within the Council of Europe held in the spring of 1952, and from resolution No. 14 adopted during these discussions, that the idea has arisen that the procedure leading to European political integration should be expedited. It is on this idea that the Luxembourg Resolution⁽³⁾ has been based with a view to establishing an Ad Hoc Assembly entrusted with the task of preparing a draft Treaty establishing a European Political Community.

This Community, which should be considered the initial political organisation, is destined to develop and be transformed into the final political structure of Europe.

Mainly in connection with the foregoing the Luxembourg Resolution states explicitly that the Governments are well aware that the creation of a European Political Community of a federal or confederal nature should be bound up with the establishment of common bases of economic development and a merging of the essential interests referred to in the resolution.

Considering the general objectives of integration as expressed in the foregoing, Her Majesty's Government deem it of the highest importance that the merging of essential interests, referred to in the resolution, and the elaboration of the foundation on which integration will eventually be based, should be expedited immediately.

It seems that by merely creating new organisms which in reality would have no competences or definite tasks with regard to new fields of integration in Europe, the development of the European idea in public opinion would be damaged.

The Luxembourg resolution certainly does not envisage giving the European Political Community such an importance as would amount, if not formally, at least in fact, to a modification of the organisation of existing or planned Communities, in particular the organisation of the European Coal and Steel Community and of the European Defence Community.

It may be seriously asked if such a revision of the Treaties establishing the above-mentioned Communities would offer advantages compensating for the evident drawbacks resulting from the revision. In this connection it is possible to say that the Treaties, elaborated after long and arduous negotiations, determine fairly exactly the limits within which transfer of sovereignty to a supranational Community is consistent with the responsibilities incumbent on the Governments of the Six States with respect to the non-integrated part of the governmental task.

Therefore there is no reason to suppose that it would be possible, to a certain extent, to entrust additional

competences to supranational Communities, without expediting integration in other fields.

Under these circumstances the Netherlands Government is of the opinion that it would be extremely difficult in due time to endorse the proposals made with a view to establishing a European Political Community, if at the same time no progress had been made in the fields mentioned above, or at least, if no clearly defined engagements had been entered into with a view to achieving tangible results in this respect.

The Netherlands Government is fully aware of the fact that European economic integration cannot be hurried and that what has been achieved in this field up till now should rather be considered as symptoms of a first stage of growth which can only guarantee favourable results at a later date. Nevertheless this will not prevent us from taking measures necessary for attaining the objectives of European integration and consequently of a European Political Community.

With a view to defining the foregoing more accurately, the Netherlands Government would like to draw attention to the following issues which may be considered as the minimum provisions to be laid down with regard to economic integration when a European Political Community is established.

1. First of all it seems that the States have a joint responsibility with regard to the temporary disturbances of national economies that will arise as integration develops.

2. Within a certain number of years a Tariffs Community should be established, which would result in the complete abolition of import duties within the Community and would introduce a new general tariff of import duties *vis-à-vis* non-participating States.

The period referred to above will make it possible gradually to establish the Tariffs Community and during this period the Netherlands Government think that it would be advisable to take into account the three following considerations:

a. it will be necessary to level the existing tariff walls hampering the stabilisation and the expansion of markets and consequently restricting production, which in their turn stand in the way of a rising standard of living in Europe;

b. the negotiations should equally take into account other obstacles hampering trade, transports and invisible transactions;

c. it will have to be taken into account that some escape clauses must be included in the agreements to be made. Under the system envisaged by the Netherlands Government it will be incumbent not on the national Governments, but on the Community to give effect to these clauses.

3. The Netherlands Government deem it of vital importance that European integration should eventually include the greatest possible number of countries. In their opinion cooperation as it is understood here, will by no means restrict the actual possibilities of such widespread integration, but will even promote the latter considerably. Moreover it will be necessary to lay down from the outset the lines along which cooperation with non-participating States may be achieved.

4. The Member States of the European Political Community should in the near future proceed to the establishment of the supranational organisations of which detailed preliminary studies have been made; in this connection we should especially point to European agriculture.

(1) The EDC Treaty was signed on 27 May 1952 by Belgium, Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

(2) The ECSC Treaty was signed on 18 April 1951 by the six countries mentioned in note 2.

(3) See Document 14.