

Interview with Gaston Thorn: the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe and the WEU Assembly (Luxembourg, 6 February 2006)

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[Étienne Deschamps] It was during this period that you sat in the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe as well as in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Western European Union, or the WEU. How would you describe the outcome of these deliberating bodies' activities?

[Gaston Thorn] Well, the Council of Europe had the great advantage of putting you into contact with people that were not at the centre of Europe, like us, like the Six, and this helped us find out through direct contact how they saw the form that Europe was taking. As for the WEU Assembly, that was all about defence and it was essential, given the period and given that everything was more problematic, with no one yet knowing for sure how the land lay. They were contacts, on the one hand with a quasi-military community, on the other with the Communities that I should call non-European – I'm being very wicked here, for they considered themselves as European. But we did not consider a lot of those in the Council of Europe as European, rather than... how shall I put it?... as Zaungäste, as the Germans would say; like people that stand on the bank and watch the train go past or the river flow by.