

Interview with Charles Rutten: the position of the Netherlands (The Hague, 29 November 2006)

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[Étienne Deschamps] I have one specific question about how the Dutch Delegation's position was defined at that time during the negotiations. How was a decision finally reached between Willem Drees, who was Prime Minister at the time and who had clear-cut ideas about his country's international or foreign policy, and the two Foreign Ministers, Beyen (about whom we have spoken) and Luns? Within this trio, how was a common position established for the Netherlands, and, in this specific case, for the Dutch Delegation in Val Duchesse?

[Charles Rutten] Yes, clearly the situation was complicated. First of all, it has to be said that, while there were two Foreign Ministers, Beyen and Luns, there was a division of responsibilities, and it was clear from the outset that Beyen would be in charge of all European cooperation issues, and Luns would be in charge of all other bilateral relations, the United Nations ... well, the rest of the world, if you like. But Beyen really kept Europe entirely to himself; Luns did not deal with European issues. So, there was quite a bit of friction between the two, but not on the European issue, because Luns in those days didn't deal with it.

The situation was very different, of course, with Drees. Drees had been persuaded by Beyen to approve the decision set out in the Benelux memorandum and all that it involved, but he was never very enthusiastic. In fact, he was opposed to it not only as a matter of principle but also personally and emotionally. He was opposed to the idea of European integration in the shape of a supranational community, etc. But Beyen was a strong personality. Most of his colleagues, particularly the Prime Minister, didn't dare stand up to him in those discussions because he was far more knowledgeable than they were.

When Beyen resigned — and that, in fact, was after the Paris [*sic*]* Conference, so I believe at the very start of the Val Duchesse talks — afterwards, Luns very loyally pursued Beyen's policy without having the same strength of influence and conviction. But he did pursue the same line. So, Luns was not an obstacle at all to concluding the treaty.

* Venice.