

Interview de Charles Rутten: the first Permanent Representatives of the Netherlands (The Hague, 29 November 2006)

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[Étienne Deschamps] Once again in the 1960s, you worked with two successive Permanent Representatives of the Netherlands: Linthorst Homan and then Spierenburg. Can you tell us something about these two ambassadors, these diplomats and their respective individual work methods?

[Charles Rutten] Yes, Linthorst Homan was quite a complex individual. He had played a role during the occupation, he had been one of the leaders of what was called *Nederlandse Unie*, the Dutch Union that was set up at the start of the occupation, in 1940, as a sort of counterweight to the National Socialist Organisation, that was supported by the Germans. Since the traditional political parties didn't come forward, Linthorst Homan and a few others set up *Nederlands Unie* which strove to establish a sort of *modus vivendi* with the Germans. It was an illusion and it led them to make concessions to the Germans that, after the war, were bitterly ... they were accused of collaborating, etc.

Linthorst Homan was not reappointed — well, he was governor of a province — and he was not reappointed, which deeply hurt him. But, after a few years, he was nevertheless rehabilitated and was appointed Director in Economic Affairs and hence he joined the negotiations on the Treaty of Rome and was finally appointed as the first Permanent Representative. He was a federalist by conviction so he felt uncomfortable in a structure that was not federalist, at least not in the real sense of the term. And, for him, that made [things] difficult. Besides all that, he was a very charming and hospitable man. I always very much enjoyed working with him.

But then came Spierenburg, who was very well known in the Netherlands for his role as Director-General in the Ministry of the Economy after the war, during the early post-war years. He was Head of delegation for the ECSC talks. Monnet invited him to join the High Authority, which he did. But, after two or three years at the High Authority, he began to get terribly bored because he was limited to coal and steel and to technical questions. So, after a while, it wasn't all that fascinating. So he asked the government if nothing else was being produced and so, well, the government, in its wisdom, decided that he would replace Linthorst Homan and Linthorst Homan was appointed a member of the High Authority.

Spierenburg was a very active and determined man, very intelligent. He was a good friend to his colleagues, particularly with Boegner, his French colleague, and he was an extremely successful permanent representative. Particularly in that difficult period in the 1960s, particularly the second half of the 1960s when General de Gaulle launched his attack on the European Communities.