

Interview with Charles Rutten: the signing of the Rome Treaties (The Hague, 29 November 2006)

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[Étienne Deschamps] It is March 1957, the 25 March 1957, and we are in Rome for the signing ceremony of the two treaties which, as you told us, were negotiated in parallel. Now, 50 years later, that event stands as a very central, major, symbolic and symptomatic event in the history of the construction of Europe. At the time, what was your experience of that event, the signing ceremony and everything surrounding the ...?

[Charles Rutten] You know, for me of course, it was a very emotional event and, since I'd been involved in the discussions from the very start ... well, since the EDC and the discussions on re-launching the European Union etc etc, it was the crowning moment for all those years of toil and effort. Of course, I was very young and did not play any decisive role in all that, but I participated actively and with considerable conviction. So, for me, those moments there in the Capitol, where the treaty was being signed, were very moving.

[Étienne Deschamps] Was the event something that was greeted with popular fervour on the part of the people of Rome, or was it on the contrary something that took place almost unnoticed, just for experts and diplomats at the Capitol?

[Charles Rutten] I did not have the feeling that crowds of Romans went to gather below the Capitol. No, not at all. Not at all. I remember that Linthorst Homan, who was the head of the Dutch delegation, and had an Italian wife and met with his Italian family on the day of the signing, and he told me that children had heard about it at school and so they had a day off because the ministers had to go to the *market* ... to the *common market*. So people didn't really know what was going on.

And it was the same in the other [countries]. There was very little interest. The reports were ... I wouldn't say negative, but very guarded. *Let's wait and see* what is going to happen next. Then of course, there was still the EDC failure fresh in people's minds. There was a real fear that this new treaty could also fail in a parliament or during its implementation. No it was above all moving for those who were present, such as those who had participated in the groundwork.