

## Interview with Charles Rutten: Johan Willem Beyen and the revival of European integration (The Hague, 29 November 2006)

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[Etienne Deschamps] Indeed the relaunching, beginning in 1954, 1955, would lead, as we know, and we will come back to this later, to the Rome Treaties. But the relaunch was also prepared in the Netherlands by someone such as Johan Willem Beyen, who was to submit various plans to his European partners, essentially amongst the Six — in 1953, 54, 55 — various plans for an economic integration of Europe. What — how should I say — might that series of plans from Jan Willem Beyen have contained?

[Charles Rutten] Firstly, with regards to Beyen, I would like to state quite clearly that it was he in fact, at that moment in time, who played a decisive role in the re-launch. Beyen was a man ... — he was not a traditional politician — he was someone with very clear ideas, his career had always been in the financial and economic sectors. He had been president of the Bank for International Settlements in Basel. He spent the war years in London, but in a setting where the future and how to organise Europe after the war were being discussed. So he really came very early to questions of European co-operation. He reached the conclusion that European economic co-operation could not succeed, could not be permanent and lasting ... A European and economic cooperation that was based on the principle of an economic union. When the EDC treaty was being negotiated, as you are probably aware, the Netherlands had already proposed an economic union because the logic was: an EDC extends so far into the area of political cooperation that it cannot be created in a vacuum, this political cooperation needs an economic basis, otherwise it will not be sustainable. And so Beyen at that time put forward his basic idea: if we want economic co-operation then it must be on the basis of an economic union. And that led to including in the EDC treaty this committee, drawn from the Parliament ... from the ECSC Assembly that examined the principle of an economic union.

Well, all that disappeared when the EDC failed, but during the discussion on the relaunch, Beyen returned to his idea. And during the talks on the relaunch, particularly with Spaak and, through Spaak, with Monnet, Beyen did not budge. He continued to say, 'An economic union is needed as a basis, as a target,' and he strenuously opposed any idea of developing economic cooperation sector by sector, which was Monnet's idea. Monnet feared that, following the collapse of the EDC, public opinion in France could not, he could not be asked to accept something which went far beyond the EDC, and thus there was this idea, Monnet had the idea of enlarging the (ECSC) to include traditional energy and there was already talk of nuclear energy and there were ideas about the green pool, the white pool ... well all sorts of ideas.

Beyen continued to insist on his idea and finally he managed to convince Spaak that it was the right way to go and that led him to draft the famous Benelux Memorandum that actually included the two elements, it was a compromise; if you read the Benelux document both ideas are there. But Spaak was convinced and that allowed for the launch of the Benelux document which in turn led to the Messina Conference.