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**THE BEYEN PLAN AND THE EUROPEAN
POLITICAL COMMUNITY**

by

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SUMMARY

In September 1952 the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, J.W. Beyen, extracted from the Council of Ministers of the ECSC a commitment that the future European Political Community envisaged in the treaty for the European Defence Community would also be entrusted with economic tasks. This has usually been understood in the literature as an important origin of the European Economic Community. This paper considers Beyen's initiative in the long-term context of Dutch attempts to reduce tariffs and non-tariff-barriers to trade in western Europe since 1949. In this context the paper shows how Beyen was able to maintain the momentum of the Dutch proposals although the European Defence Community treaty itself always appeared doomed to failure and also why the Beyen proposals for a common market appeared on the agenda of the six foreign ministers of the ECSC countries when they met again at the Messina conference. The paper examines the divisions within the Dutch cabinet on this question as well as the mixed, occasionally hostile, reception which the proposals received from the other five member states of the ECSC. In doing so it shows the centrality of these economic issues, rather than defence questions, to Dutch participation in the discussions of the proposed Defence Community and by analogy the centrality of the same long-term Dutch policies to any participation in any other future form of association between the Six.

THE BEYEN PLAN AND THE EUROPEAN POLITICAL COMMUNITY

The Netherlands had agreed to participate fully in the discussions to create a European army only in October 1951, only with great reluctance, only by a decision of a divided government and only under strong American, French and German pressure. When agreement to the European Defence Community seemed the only way to ensure an effective land defence of the Netherlands, and only then, did the Dutch accept the management of a common defence as a reason for common European political institutions. The Dutch interest in such institutions was economic. More precisely it was commercial. Foreign commodity trade accounted for more than a third of national income. Most of it was with western Europe. Foreign invisible earnings had historically always weighed heavily in the balance of payments and there was every reason to suppose they would do so in the future. The search for higher levels of income and prosperity demanded maximum access to European markets and a better regulation of international payments and capital movements. This was the reason for seeking common European action.

About the framework within which that common action should be taken Dutch governments were in a much greater state of confusion. The Stikker proposals of June 1950 had envisaged common action to reduce both tariffs and quantitative trade restrictions in the wide framework of OEEC and had been prepared for this purpose to concede a marginally greater degree of executive and managerial power to the Executive Committee and Council of OEEC, particularly in order to provide 'compensations' from a common monetary fund to governments whose industries were particularly damaged by this process. After December, however, faced with strong opposition from the Italian government and the likelihood that the French government was sheltering behind the Italian position, the Dutch had more or less abandoned

this OEEC framework in the hope of getting better results from GATT. This was even less successful. The disturbances of the Korean War meanwhile had led to the suspension, nominally temporary, of many of the trade liberalisation measures which ECA had squeezed out of OEEC in return for Marshall Aid.

Any plan in GATT which required the agreement of all members to tariff reduction, as had the Pflimlin proposals after the Torquay conference in 1951, was more or less doomed to failure because of the presence there of underdeveloped economies also. Europe looked the only feasible framework for Dutch action. But that meant encountering French intentions to maintain protection either by tariffs or quantitative restrictions. The extension of preferences by the existing processes of tariff bargaining so as to create a preferential tariff zone in western Europe, along the lines of the Italian proposals in summer 1950, would only be economically helpful to the Netherlands if it produced results very quickly, in the first round of negotiations in fact. It would not do anything about quota restrictions. It might well not get the agreement of GATT. A gradual resumption of the process of trade liberalisation, that is to say joint removal of quotas under OEEC supervision, would presumably again encounter the same resistance. It would also not serve the purpose of providing sure and growing markets for Dutch agricultural exports, because there was no likelihood that countries would be any more willing to reduce their barriers against agricultural imports than they had been in 1950. There were therefore certain persuasive arguments that nothing could be achieved without the creation of some new European body with a political mechanism which might force a process of change in the desired direction.

The High Authority of the ECSC was of course just such a body. Its importance for the Dutch economy was very limited. Had it been greater the

Netherlands would probably never have accepted such a form of political machinery. The small coal sector and the even smaller steel sector in the Dutch economy both worked at relatively high levels of efficiency and were in no serious economic or political danger of having to make much adjustment as a result of the institution either of the common market or the High Authority. Even so the political shape of the institutions of the Community had been greatly changed in the negotiations because of Dutch pressure. The Assembly, the Council of Ministers, the advisory committee, the Court of Justice, all had been strengthened in their position relative to the High Authority, because of Dutch opposition to the apparently uncontrolled technocratic, interventionist form which the French proposals had originally wished to give to the High Authority. The Netherlands had sternly resisted all attempts to transpose the political concepts and machinery of the Monnet Plan to a European level, and there was great opposition inside the Dutch government to repeating this experiment, even in the modified form in which it had come into being, for any other sector of the economy.

This had become clear in the cabinet struggles over Mansholt's proposals for a similar high authority to regulate western Europe's intra-trade in agricultural products. Like the ECSC such a solution had two glaring weaknesses from a Dutch point of view, leaving aside entirely the question of how acceptable it was to other nations. Firstly it placed the Netherlands in a separate framework for political action from the United Kingdom, when the United Kingdom was one of its two most important commercial partners and a crucial military ally. Secondly it placed the Netherlands in a political framework where French influence would be preponderant. And since French policy was to strengthen the domestic methods of economic management by extending them through western Europe this augured a future of trade controls, production agreements and market sharing

agreements which, except in agricultural products, was not exactly what the Netherlands was looking for and presented obvious dangers of subordinating Dutch domestic economic policies to the French interest. These French pressures were obvious in the negotiations over the EDC, especially in the French insistence on coordinating western European armaments production and production by a centralised Commissariat directed by Monnet's successor in the Commissariat au Plan. It was this which had brought the EDC negotiations to deadlock at the end of 1951. Furthermore France showed little interest in any European association wider than the six members of the ECSC. It was a cardinal point of French policy that if new European organizations with real powers came into existence their purpose must also be that of retaining the West German republic in the integrated western European framework. The 'six' had been painfully constructed for this purpose in the iron and steel sector only after its construction had failed in the foreign trade and payments sector. In effect the rationale for now once more confining to the six members of the ECSC the development of foreign trade rules in western Europe was a purely pragmatic one. Its damages were mitigated by the existence of the European Payments Union which continued to operate its own trade rules in the wider OEEC framework. In that sense demanding a liberal common market as part of the federated western Europe which the EDC was supposed to bring about could be construed as exercising pressure to make the OEEC trade rules more liberal. It served the purpose of strengthening the Franco-German peace treaty and association embodied in the Schuman Plan and the Treaty of Paris as well. This was certainly of overwhelming importance to the Netherlands, but the problem of Dutch foreign trade was one which went far beyond the confines of the six and was thus conceived as being of even more fundamental importance.

It was also true that the bargaining position of the Netherlands was stronger in the six than in a wider setting, because, as the Schuman Plan negotiations had proved, French policy was unrealisable without some agreement with the Benelux countries to act in concert. In fact in the wider forum of the OEEC the Netherlands had had little influence on the process of trade liberalisation and the tortuous negotiations on agricultural trade in the OEEC Food and Agriculture Committee had produced a state of total disillusionment. A reasonable weighing up of the Dutch chances of improving the international framework of the domestic Dutch economy after 1950 would have pointed to the six as a more promising framework for political action, although the chances of success could not be viewed optimistically. Furthermore, if the ECSC was actually going to be extended into a European Political Community (EPC) in order to bring the European army under some form of political control, everything spoke in favour of the Netherlands at least attempting to gain some concessions in return for its adhesion to this new European political body and even trying to convert it into a body which would have an economic, rather than a merely political, purpose beyond that inherent in the ECSC.

When the foreign ministers finally produced the draft treaty for the EDC in May 1952 the second paragraph of Article eight stressed that the proposed constitution of the EDC was only temporary and that it should eventually be replaced by a new European organisation. This organisation would clearly have to be related in some way to the ECSC either by assimilation into it or by a reconstruction of the first Community. The existing Court of Justice was to serve also for the EDC. On the other hand the members of the proposed parliamentary assembly would be the members of the Council of Europe with some additions. Everything pointed towards a weakening of the supranational powers of the ECSC. Benelux pressure had

ensured that the European Commissioners for Defence would in no sense have the same degree of independence from national governments as the High Authority. The possibility therefore existed that because the new European organisation which was to be created would not have the same independence or strongly interventionist character as the High Authority, the other nations might not object if it were enjoined with carrying out a programme of removal of barriers to trade as well. The investigation of this new form of European organisation should, the draft treaty insisted, be undertaken within six months of the ratification of the treaty by the proposed EDC assembly. The Italian government had then proposed for the meeting of the foreign ministers in September in Luxembourg that the parliamentary assembly be established immediately in ad hoc form for one specific purpose, to study the possible formation of a European Political Community at once without waiting for the ratification of the EDC treaty. Any modifications to the purely political nature of the proposed EDC would therefore have to be proposed in September at the latest.

The proposals had to be formulated by a new government and a new foreign minister. Stikker's efforts had all been in the context of the OEEC and his dislike of any arrangement, political or economic, which disassociated the Netherlands from Britain had been strong. After the general election he was replaced by two foreign ministers, Jan Willem Beyen and Joseph Luns. Beyen was specifically charged with multilateral relations, which included international commercial relations, but Luns was in charge of Benelux affairs. As minister of economic affairs Zijlstra had replaced van der Brink. Drees remained as prime minister and Mansholt stayed as minister of agriculture. The initiative to turn the proposed EPC into an economic organisation as well came from Beyen and Luns appears to have had very little to do with it. The change of policy from Stikker to Beyen was less a

matter of personality than of reaction to events. For both, the central issue was the reduction of trade barriers. Stikker having made so little progress in OEEC it was normal enough to go about it in a different direction whoever was in charge. It is clear, however, from subsequent events after the failure of the EDC treaty, that Beyen was prepared to push harder and go further than his civil servants towards some form of 'integration' with the six, always providing that it served Dutch commercial purposes which he defined no differently from Stikker. He was simply more optimistic about the chances than were his advisers and most other members of the government and less deterred by the possible dangers. Although Dutch policy followed a coherently rational line throughout the changes in government and was essentially a response to the events outside the Netherlands the difference that an energetic minister with a will to push his own line could make was certainly observable, as it was also to be in 1955 after the complete collapse of the proposed EPC.

That being said, much more important than personality was the repercussive nature of policy formulation in the Netherlands, as in all the member states. The French proposals in 1950 for a closer American integration into NATO planning had produced the American proposals for German rearmament in a European Defence Community. The French and German attempts to construct a purely political body to oversee a common defence forced the Dutch to the position that if they were forced to accept a European Political Community it should have an economic purpose. No side actually wanted a further European organisation of any kind, much less one with real powers, for its own sake. But if the Defence Community, which by 1952 only the Germans and Americans really seemed to want anyway, was the only way forward towards solving the political problem of combining German rearmament, French security and America's foreign policy objectives in

Europe, it was now not going to be achieved unless the Political Community, which in turn was the price paid for ensuring the control of the Federal Republic within the Defence Community, also helped to solve the international economic problems of the Netherlands. The Dutch government would have preferred to have solved these in a wider framework and without a further level of European organisation had the possibility existed. Adding to the superstructure of an unwanted house built on no foundations of real political will or purpose was only likely, of course, to make its collapse more certain. But what else can small states do but accept the repercussive nature of foreign policy and hope that their interests will not be entirely dismissed? It is hardly up to them to change the agenda for international negotiation. In this way the structure of the European Political Community was to become even more gothic, a soaring mass of complicated and ill-connected aspirations to the solution of problems which had only one thing in common, the fact that they could not be solved within the national frontiers, but were otherwise absolutely different in nature.

This was well expressed by the Dutch Secretary-of-State for Foreign Affairs, Hendrik Boon, who considered that the Italian resolution seemed to be working from the premise that the establishment of a 'political authority' would be the panacea for all the troubles facing Europe but he wondered whether the reverse might not be true, -- that in working towards and propagating a political community the drive towards solving fundamental economic issues might be weakened even further. Besides that, he felt that the Dutch should resist any change in the EDC treaty which might imply the eventual devolution of any power to a supranational organisation without arrangements to protect the individual states' interests. Finally he argued that if it was intended to abandon the functional approach to integration, this should only take place after all the other options had been properly

studied by national governments (1). In August a state commission was set up to advise the government on the whole question of European integration. Beyen, however, was determined to stake some sort of claim at Luxembourg when the foreign ministers met.

The claim was vague, as it could only be in the circumstances. The Assemblée ad hoc, he argued, should consider as well as the political form of the EPC the question of economic integration. Van Zeeland supported this position completely and de Gasperi had no real objections. This study, Beyen also argued, should be implemented under the guidance of the foreign ministers who would provide guidelines. Again this idea was supported so that Beyen had at least altered the situation in the sense that the foreign ministers could lay down, if they were capable of agreement, economic guidelines for the future activity of a Political Community (2).

In October the State Commission which had been established to advise the government on the question of European integration produced the results of its deliberations on the Luxembourg Resolution. It considered that in the area of economic integration (and especially in agriculture) it would be difficult for the Netherlands to obtain quick results. Indeed it was likely that the negotiations would get little further than an agreement that the EPC would concern itself with economic questions. It might possibly even get round to deciding which economic questions to discuss. But the whole process could be time-consuming. Thus, the Dutch should not enter the EPC unless satisfactory progress were made on the economic front. What was needed was for an economic study group to be set up with a detailed list of instructions, since only in this way could it get on with serious activity in the direction which the Dutch wanted (3).

In November, Beyen formulated what he believed should be the basis for the Dutch standpoint on European integration. He painted a picture of Europe

threatened externally by military pressure and internally by communism and fascism. To cope with these pressures an increase in production and productivity was necessary, but this was impossible as long as Europe was splintered into small markets by trade discrimination and monetary uncertainty. So far the external threat had made clear that military cooperation was necessary and the realisation had grown that this required a measure of political cooperation. However the question should be asked whether political integration without economic integration made any sense. 'Political integration which has no content other than making possible coordinated military action and organising the production and marketing of certain important raw materials can only bring about a very limited unity' (4). To a certain extent these remarks must have been directed against his cabinet colleagues. It was Drees who had denied the seriousness of the military threat to western Europe in 1950. The proposals which Beyen went on to make were even less likely to meet with universal accord. Because it would be a waste of energy to attack all barriers to trade in whatever form the eventual goal must be a customs union. Only this could guarantee the institutionalisation of freedom to trade across frontiers. The customs union would have to be attained in stages as and when improvements in the separate national economic situations allowed. If it were implemented at once economic disturbances would produce a resurgence of protection. Here, presumably, he had in mind the sad fate of the OEEC trade liberalisation programmes. A programme of this kind implied a supranational authority to direct it. The first steps should be taken in those sectors where output was most restricted by trade barriers. The cabinet should set up a special commission under his chairmanship to work out these proposals in greater detail.

The timetable foresaw a further meeting of the foreign ministers at Rome in February 1953. By this time the Beyen proposals had taken a final and slightly altered shape. The form of the proposed customs union had become more specific. No longer was Beyen content to leave the implementation of the customs union to any supranational power. Both the target date and the timetable for achieving it were to be specified in the treaty. Behind the common external tariff there would also have to be a programme for removing quantitative trade restrictions, transport monopolies and discriminations and barriers to invisible transactions. The Community should administer a series of safety clauses under fixed values. To help in this the familiar idea from 1950 of a 'European Fund' was resurrected, to be deployed by the Community in cases where there were 'fundamental difficulties'. The relationships with non-members of the Community should be regulated from the start in the terms of the treaty (5). It is hard to believe that after the start of 1953 there was any real chance of the EDC treaty being passed in the French parliament. The decision of the Mayer government to seek additional protocols to the treaty had begun to alter its nature without making it any more likely that it would finally be acceptable to the national assembly. The new Dutch proposals only exacerbated the position, putting ratification and a political settlement of the Franco-German question further at risk. Beyen's reaction of course was that it was doubtful if a parliamentary majority for ratification could be found in the Netherlands without including in the treaty a proposition for a common market. Belgium and Italy both supported this position and the conference communiqué eventually contained a section reaffirming the Luxembourg resolutions and agreeing to study the possibility of implementing a common market within the terms of that resolution (6).

The draft treaty was handed over by the Assemblée ad hoc to the foreign ministers in Strasbourg in March at their next meeting for their further consideration and in May they met in Paris to pronounce on it.

The treaty envisaged a directly elected parliament, elected at first on the basis of the separate national systems but after five years by a common European electoral system to be established by the parliament itself. It would have 15 seats specially reserved for the Saarland, three more than for Luxembourg. Above it would be a Senate, whose members would be directly appointed by national parliaments. The Senate would appoint some of the members of a European Executive Council and its chairman would appoint the others. It could be removed by a motion of no-confidence from either chamber of the Parliament. There should also be a Social-Economic Council comprising various interest groups which could present advice to the Executive but which also had rights of initiative. A Council of National Ministers would have the task of harmonising relations between the Executive and national governments and exercising any further powers delegated to it by the Senate. Finally there would be a Court with responsibilities for ruling on interpretations of the Treaty and on questions of constitutional abuse.

Exactly what this impressive constitutional construction was supposed to do was rather less clear. On foreign policy the only rights attributed to the parliament were the approval of treaties with third countries and association agreements. The Council of Ministers was to coordinate a common policy in international conferences and to be receptive to proposals and advice from the Executive and parliament. The Community was also to have its own budget, but its size and financing was left ultimately to the Executive and had to be approved by a unanimous decision in the Council of Ministers. The amendments which parliament could make had to be within the framework of the total expenditure agreed. Again, the Community had the task of

progressively creating a common market but on the basis of measures proposed by the Executive, approved by a unanimous vote in the Council of Ministers and by a majority of both Chambers of Parliament. There was also to be an adaptation fund under parliamentary control. Finally, after two years, the EPC would completely take over the control of the ECSC and the EDC (7). The economic committee of the Council of Europe reviewing its work in May frankly conceded 'The European Community to be set up is endowed in the Draft Treaty with economic powers which would make possible a progressive development towards a common market. The Draft Treaty does not, however, contain any obligatory provisions concerning economic integration, and the safeguards foreseen are such that if they are exploited they would make impossible any substantial progress towards achieving the objective proclaimed. One might almost say that the economic provisions contained in the Draft Treaty presented the only possible compromise that could be reached by a majority of the Assemblée ad hoc, rather than a unanimous or a whole-hearted support for immediate action towards the establishment of a common market (by) the six countries concerned' (8).

Meanwhile at the end of April, the Dutch Commission set up by Beyen had formulated its first conclusions. The economic sub-committee, having pointed out that the realisation of a common market was not just a question of removing trade barriers but also of harmonising monetary and social policies which artificially distorted national structures, went on to criticise the Beyen proposals as being inadequate by themselves for the realisation of their own ultimate goals. 'The opening of frontiers', it warned, 'is almost impossible as long as a certain measure of coordination has not been achieved in the areas of general economic, financial, monetary and social policy.' It recommended that article 82 of the draft treaty be amended accordingly. It also wanted to see a synchronic treatment of tariffs, quotas

and a common external trade regime. But it argued against fixing a definitive end date partly because the realisation would depend on the progress towards harmonisation elsewhere, partly because no one was likely to agree to it and partly because it was outside the Dutch principles - 'it is about integration and not a unitary state'. Apart from that it recommended some procedural changes made in the way the safeguard clauses were dealt with and the way the fund was administered (9). The institutional sub-committee was much less iconoclastic as far as the main lines of Dutch policy were concerned. It warned against the early subsumation of the ECSC and EDC into a new political community, because it would require a substantial modification of both treaties and also because it would deflect attention from the wider economic task. On the other hand it recognised the force of those arguments which said that if one were striving for political economic integration it was illogical to maintain the existence of separate functional communities. Perhaps, it suggested, a compromise could be found along the lines of a partial subsumation or by aiming for a later date. Secondly, the subcommittee was opposed to the senate electing the chairman of the Executive and the chairman in turn appointing the rest. It preferred to leave both questions to the Council of Ministers. It was not too enamoured either with the balance within the senate, where it preferred an equal representation for all states, but it felt that to achieve this, the Dutch might have to concede a form of representation in the parliament based on the size of population, which would leave small states in a worse position than envisaged by the treaty. It made no recommendation of its own on the question of direct elections (10).

Beyen's simple formulation of economic integration virtually exclusively in terms of a customs union was challenged by the higher civil servants represented on the advisory committee as not going far enough. More

serious, however, was the challenge from within the cabinet that the Dutch had gone far enough already. This group was led by the Prime Minister, Willem Drees. He stated quite bluntly that the Six were too unbalanced to form a political community. Political instability hamstrung the decision-making process and there was, besides, a lack of political will for its creation. There was still absolutely nothing to show for the Dutch initiatives to date. And finally, he argued, if the Six did manage to create the whole institutional structure, it would probably fail anyway. To this Beyen replied equally frankly that if the government had felt in its heart that nothing would come of the negotiations it should have said so before they began. In this he was supported by Mansholt who argued that the Netherlands should not pull back from the course upon which it had embarked. Finally Drees backed down but at the same time made it absolutely clear that the creation of a customs union was the minimum and absolute condition for Dutch participation in the EPC. If all that resulted from the negotiations was an involved institutional structure with no advantage for the Netherlands, he reserved the right to resign from the cabinet (11).

In formulating the Dutch reply to the Projet de Traité, Beyen therefore ignored the advice of the economic sub-committee and insisted that a date be stipulated in the treaty by which all tariff and quantitative restrictions on intra-trade should be abolished and a common external trade regime should be established. He did, however, take up the other points. In view of the disinterest in cabinet in the political motives for the EPC, although the Dutch memorandum could have dealt with any point in the treaty, it made no mention of the institutional clauses at all (12). Beyen explained later to cabinet that the memorandum had been designed to keep the initiative in Dutch hands, any institutional points he could respond to verbally. Moreover, although he did not anticipate a detailed discussion of the treaty

at the meeting of the six in Paris, he explained that he had drafted a number of economic articles for an eventual treaty which he would table if necessary. He was advised only to proceed with such a text with extreme caution. The other main conclusion of cabinet was that the draft treaty should not be referred back to the Assemblée ad hoc, as the Germans wanted, but should be dealt with at governmental level, albeit with some contact with the Assemblée (13).

At the meeting of the six ministers of foreign affairs in Paris on 12/13 May, Adenauer did not take up the position the Dutch had anticipated, but one which for them was much worse. What the ministers had before them, he argued, was a draft treaty which would enable the ECSC and the EDC to be married in a system of democratic control. And that was what the ministers should strive for without trying to give the EPC any other attributes, which would only delay or might even endanger its implementation. There were a few institutional questions to be sorted out and then it could be left to government experts to draft a final text. This extreme 'minimalist' position was not shared by Hallstein who, in Adenauer's absence, suggested that the German government could largely agree with the draft treaty and was not averse to giving the Political Community functions outside that of controlling the existing institutions as long as these were firmly agreed beforehand. However, he did share the Chancellor's concern that the treaty be agreed as soon (and therefore with as few amendments) as possible. The German position, as stated by Hallstein, was most closely approached by de Gasperi who wanted the inter-governmental conference envisaged by the EDC treaty to be called as quickly as possible so that a final treaty could be agreed. At the other extreme, however, van Zeeland pointed out that far from dropping the economic clauses in the draft treaty, as Adenauer appeared to be suggesting, it was in these very areas that the treaty should be

expanded. This position was supported, naturally, by Beyen and also by Bidault who, waving the text of the draft treaty in his hand pointed out that half the articles had nothing to do with the ECSC or the EDC at all. What was involved was 'une Europe presque totale'. In the end a hopelessly optimistic timetable was agreed. There would be a further ministers' meeting in a month's time which would be immediately followed by an inter-governmental experts' conference whose work would be finished a fortnight later and ten days after that, the Ministers would meet again to review the results (14).

For France it was a useful delaying manoeuvre to set about studying all these other aspects of the problem and Bidault now even requested that these should be agreed first before the purely military and political aspects of the treaty were ratified. In one sense this made the Dutch proposals merely abstract because the strong probability now was that the treaty would not be ratified by the French national assembly and any delay in presenting it only increased this probability. But in another sense this meant that in the world after the rejection of the treaty the Dutch proposals would be on the agenda for action as the least objectionable aspect of the treaty. Beyen obtained from the ministers agreement that a committee be set up to study the common market proposals at once and report on them to the next ministers' conference. Again this received van Zeeland's support.

The difficulties of the French government, the general elections there, the voluble opposition to the treaty, the German determination not to see a policy on which they had staked so much collapse, led to successive postponements of the alleged moment of decision until the end of September, when the full meeting of the foreign ministers and their deputies in Rome, originally set for July, eventually took place. There were less formal meetings in Paris and Baden-Baden in the interval concerned with the

political and military aspects only. This long interval gave the Dutch government time to take stock. So long as Beyen's proposals had involved only statements of principle they were useful and harmless. Setting up a study committee to report to the foreign ministers, however, meant that after the débacle it was their report which might be on the agenda. What it was the Netherlands would then really want out of the situation required further definition.

Even before the Rome meeting in May the prime minister had objected that Beyen's proposals, even if written into the draft treaty, would not go far enough to meet Dutch needs. The proposals foresaw that the executive body of the EPC should fix a programme for abolishing tariffs and quotas and that this programme should be subsequently approved by the parliamentary organs. As far as Drees was concerned there must be a guarantee that something would actually happen, that there should be an automatic process of tariff and quota reduction and not one dependent on the voting in the Executive and the parliamentary assembly (15).

The difficulty here was to get agreement at international level on an automatic process. The opinions elsewhere as tested out by van der Beugel and Linthorst Homan on a tour of the capitals in May did not suggest this would be easily reached. Belgium was the only other strong supporter of the customs union concept but the standpoint in Brussels was not the same as in the Hague. A customs union would, the Belgians argued, have also to provide for freedom of capital and labour movements. It could not, however, cope with changing the monetary systems and policies because currency convertibility, which was essential to the operation, would have to be reached and managed in a wider framework than that of the six. Elsewhere, Italy and Luxembourg while not openly opposing the Dutch proposals showed little enthusiasm for them, except in the sense that if 'Little Europe' were

to be created some form of economic integration would have to be part of it. In the Federal Republic opinion could hardly be weighed up, it depended on which ministry was assumed to be making policy and on guesses about the power of Adenauer to make recalcitrant ministers accept his view of the prime political importance of the treaty. As for Monnet himself, although of course he would have accepted the widening of the ECSC into the EPC, he was strongly against the Beyen plan as a definition of the purposes of a future EPC (16). The Ministers' meeting in Baden-Baden in August provided a further opportunity for testing the waters for the reaction of the others but it provided little by way of new insights. Taviani was slightly more positive in expressing the Italians' support than might have been expected from van der Beugel's and Linthorst Homan's report, but he warned that the EPC was a political statute and not an economic one. Bech expressed Luxembourg's reservations on the free movement of labour and the removal of agrarian protectionism, at least as far as Luxembourg was concerned. But since neither Italy nor France nor Germany had come prepared for involved economic discussions, that was as far as it got (17).

As early as the beginning of June the Dutch cabinet set about fixing the instructions of the delegates to the Rome conference. Beyen and Luns suggested that the delegates be instructed to push for a term of 10 years to be written into the treaty for the realisation of a customs union, a point which was eventually accepted despite the fact that both Drees and Zijlstra considered it too long. Beyen pointed out that if the time-scale was shortened it would lead to an increase in the number and complexity of the escape clauses. Aside from that, the opinion in cabinet was unanimous that the delegates should work from the basis of the Beyen Plan, that they should refer back to cabinet any possible compromise suggestions, and that the

Netherlands should not join the EPC unless it had a real economic content (18).

The experts met together in plenary session in Rome for the first time on 22 September and confined themselves to a general exposition of national positions. The Belgians were firm in their standpoint that the Community should be more than an organ linking the ECSC and the EDC. On the institutional side, they wanted collective responsibility in the Executive (i.e. that the parliament could not insist on the dismissal of one member) and 'paritair' representation in the senate. Moreover they wanted a secession clause introduced into the Treaty. Hallstein, representing the German delegation, wanted far more clarity on the relationship between the various proposed organs of the Community. He was not opposed to the incorporation of the EDC and ECSC as envisaged in the treaty, seeing any difficulties as technical rather than political. Finally he supported the Benelux position of wanting more economic tasks entrusted to the Community, emphasising in particular the monetary question. The Italians, too, supported the Benelux position on economic questions and the German position on the question of incorporating the two communities. They supported a directly elected parliament, but wanted the membership to reflect more closely national population distribution, though they were willing to consider a 'paritair' senate. Tjara van Starckenborgh Stachouwer, leading the Dutch delegation, stressed the Netherlands' demand for automatism in tariff integration and reduction, the reserve on incorporating the other two communities and the postponement of direct elections. The Luxembourg delegate confined his opening comments to a demand for a 'paritair' senate, whilst the French declared themselves unable to make a declaration at all at that moment (19). The reason for the French position was broadcast on the French radio the following morning - namely a split within the government

between the MRP, who wanted a construction for the Executive similar to that argued in the draft treaty, and the Gaullists (20). At the next session, the French prime minister asked for understanding for the difficult position in which he found himself, but he was at least in a position to reject as unacceptable the Dutch demands for automatism in the procedure towards a customs union. Moreover it became clear that he wanted the economic clauses to be framed very generally so as to be subject to later treaties. On institutional questions, he considered a directly elected parliament acceptable and a 'paritair' Senate possible, but he did want a shift in the balance between the Council of Ministers and the Executive in favour of the former. To this Hallstein had replied that Germany, too, considered a political community shorn of economic clauses useful in its own right as promoting 'sachliche und politische Ziele'. With the battle lines so drawn, the experts decided to entrust their further deliberations to two working groups, one devoted to economic issues and the other to institutional questions (21).

The differences apparent in the opening sessions manifested themselves immediately in the first session of the economic working-group. At the one extreme were the French who argued that the incorporation of the EDC and ECSC into a European Community was an important step in itself and warned not to move too far ahead of public opinion in trying to do more. Closest to them, though at some distance, were the Italians who argued that the new Community should have some economic tasks but wondered if everything had to be regulated by treaty at this stage. The Dutch, hammering on the need for a timetabled customs union, found themselves in the middle-ground. Next came the Belgians, who, whilst supporting them on this question, asked if a customs union, without measures to coordinate national economic policy, was not an 'adventure'. The Germans argued that monetary and financial questions

were of primary importance, but made no statement on the desirability of a customs union itself. Luxembourg, according to the Dutch report, 'made some unimportant comments' (22). The following day was devoted to a largely inconclusive discussion on how further to proceed but it did provide three additional standpoints: that the Germans were prepared to consider a certain degree of automatism in the achievement of tariff reduction; that the French were willing to cooperate in any common investment policy to remove obstacles in the way of a common market and to give the Community the right of initiative to make 'propositions and recommendations' for the achievement of that market, and that Luxembourg could agree with anything the rest decided as long as it did not have to surrender the protectionist privileges it enjoyed in Benelux! (23).

The next day the various standpoints began to clash for the first time when the delegates settled down to discuss the issue, 'Definition of the common market'. No-one was particularly happy with the definition tabled, which was limited to goods only, and eventually 'services, capital and labour' were added. It was at this point that the Germans wanted added to the definition the statement that, 'the achievement of this final goal presupposes a financial and economic policy based on analogous principles, which would in particular have the effect of guaranteeing the financial stability of the member states' (24). This was broadly supported by the Belgians but not by the Dutch, who argued that a common market referred solely to the removal of economic frontiers. If, as a result of an inflationary policy in one country, it ran a balance of payments deficit with the rest, the country could either draw on its reserves or international credit or it could allow its exchange rate to fall. In either case the common market will have been left intact. Thus one could not argue that political coordination of financial and economic policy was a

precondition for a common market, let alone part of the definition. The French, whilst not accepting the full rigour of the Belgian/German position, argued that it should be seen as a precondition. If a country, for historical reasons, had a high price level, it would import more or export less. Unless such a country were able to limit its imports it would soon encounter great financial and monetary difficulties. The problem, explained the French, was that the ministers at Baden-Baden had said that the states must retain sovereignty, so that it was impossible to agree to such a measure of policy coordination as the Germans proposed, since that would mean, for example, that France would have to discuss its Indo-China difficulties with the Community, which was unthinkable. The whole matter, they argued, required a new political decision by governments after Rome (25).

The deliberations then shifted to the question of 'measures to be taken in order to achieve the common market'. The Germans had submitted an aide mémoire which placed monetary and financial harmonisation on an equal footing with the elimination of trade barriers. On the first point it stressed the need among member states for budgetary equilibrium and a monetary policy sufficiently constrained to ensure currency convertibility on current account at least. On the latter it stressed the gradual abolition of tariffs and quotas on intra-group trade and the erection of a common external trade regime 'appropriate for the encouragement of international exchanges' (26). The discussion first centred on the point of the external tariff and surprisingly there was general agreement on the fact that it should not be autarchic, but that still left a wide range of alternatives ranging from the lowest to the highest or a trade-weighted average per product. Presumably thankful that there was some agreement, that question was pushed aside. After the Germans assured the Dutch that it had not been

their intention in stressing budgetary equilibrium to rule out the possibility of countries following a counter-cyclical policy, the session was adjourned (27). Two major questions had been left hanging in the air, how were financial and economic policies to be coordinated and exactly what was to go into the treaty concerning the creation of the customs union? That discussion was bound to come but, in the event, it was triggered by the Italians who argued that it was inappropriate to fix executive steps and dates for a process of integration which would demand a long period of preparation and evolution (28).

The German position was defined before the meeting by von Maltzan in a private conversation with Linthorst Homan. 'The only thing we want', he said, 'is that we six should not retreat on the monetary question'. Referring, presumably, to the British proposals for a more general, coordinated approach to currency convertibility in the western world he described these proposals as 'immensely dangerous, because they could break apart our group'. In the meeting itself he proposed that the six form a 'convertibility club' which could take initiatives towards real convertibility in a group larger than the six (29).

The German solution both to the Dutch demand for 'automatism' and for the question of policy harmonisation was to give the Community rights of decision and the power to make its own legislation. This was supported by the Belgians since it would ensure that countries could not sabotage progress towards the common market. For the French, it was unacceptable to move rapidly to a Community; given over to the old liberal ideas of 'the game of competition' which would lead to the enrichment of the rich and the impoverishment of the poor. Would it not be better 'to integrate in order to liberate rather than to liberate in order to integrate'? However, the German idea of giving the Community its own legislative powers would erode national

sovereignty. 'Recommendations', rather than 'decisions', were the most they were prepared to concede to the Community's Executive (30). It was at this point that the discussions were suspended since the experts had to knock together some kind of report and there was only a week to go. Because of the lack of time, it was agreed that the report would list a number of general principles and that the position of each delegation would be recorded on each point (31).

Looking at the conference as a whole one thing was clear from the start, the French reaction to the inclusion of any commitments to 'economic integration' was negative in the extreme! This in itself handicapped the attainment of much consensus over the various elements of the Beyen Plan. A further problem was that the Beyen Plan (as it existed in its three separate memoranda) was not accepted as a conference document. Moreover, the Dutch delegation felt that they were handicapped by the very detail in which the Beyen Plan was worked out. Almost every detail called forth a psychological or political reaction and the overall direction of the proposals tended to get lost. Another factor was that there was very little negotiation in the strict sense of the word. Finally economic integration, to be successful, required both liberalisation and harmonisation but the Dutch standpoint seemed to require automatism in the first case but not in the second. Because what the Dutch wanted was a guarantee that something would indeed happen, their delegation pressed hard for room at the next foreign ministers' meeting to make concessions which might produce a better front against the French (32).

Even while the Conference of experts was going on, there were clear signs of a split beginning to emerge within the Dutch cabinet on this question. On 28 September Mansholt wrote to Beyen urging him to modify the delegates' instructions. He pointed out that the German sympathy for Dutch

aims for economic integration was beginning to evaporate in favour of an acceptance of a political treaty which, in line with French thinking, would do no more than link the ECSC and the EDC within a common institutional framework. Although he himself was not against such a treaty, he felt it would hamper further progress towards economic integration. Yet this development was difficult to deflect given the instructions binding the Dutch delegation which did not it to make any concessions to the Germans on monetary questions and none to the Italians on social issues. Such concessions would make it clear that the Dutch viewed economic integration in terms larger than a tariff union. As long as this was the case, the French had a free hand and the danger increased that the economic paragraphs would disappear from the Treaty altogether. He felt that the Netherlands should accept a situation in which a common market would be regulated by a separate agreement or else that the Community itself be instructed to prepare such an agreement. 'This limited auto-extension has so far been rejected by the Dutch government, but if our concrete plans should strand on too much resistance, I would prefer it above the omission of a every of sentence on economic integration in the draft treaty and also above a purely platonic mention in the goals' (33). It shifted Beyen not one inch. In a somewhat high-handed reply he argued that the reaction to the Dutch proposals in Rome surprised him not in the slightest but 'it has been our strength that amid all the wavering, changes in position and opportunism we have met from our friends in this company we have stayed firm by a simple and clear proposition'. Political integration without a task in the economic field would be an 'empty husk' which would do Europe more harm than good. The purpose of the Rome Conference was to inventory government reactions and it would be premature to alter the Dutch position since it would only create uncertainty and confusion over Dutch intentions. After Rome would be the

appropriate time for the cabinet to take new decisions (34). When Mansholt raised the question of introducing some suppleness into the Dutch negotiating position in cabinet, he received no support whatever. Beyen did not see the risk that the French and Germans would push for a limited treaty as very great. Moreover he argued that the minimalist French stance was more a reflection of the fact that it had no position (vide the disagreement in cabinet) than an indication of what French policy would be when it eventually emerged (35).

At the end of October Beyen produced a memorandum outlining the range of possible Dutch concessions. The target date for achieving the customs union could be set back to fifteen years. Because no one else would accept the automatism of tariff reductions it might be possible to stipulate that half the reductions be automatic and completed halfway through the transition period while the executive body could decide on the rest. It might be possible to accept Belgian and German wishes to give the Executive powers over policy harmonisation, but only if the removal of trade barriers proceeded at the same pace. This was not much. And it must not prejudice the Dutch position that steps to the customs union must not be dependent on a unanimous voting procedure in the Council of Ministers of the EPC nor upon repeated parliamentary ratifications (36).

In cabinet Beyen acknowledged the danger that the forthcoming foreign ministers' meeting in The Hague might reach agreement on the constitutional questions whilst the economic issues could be referred for further study. This would be completely unacceptable to Drees who felt that you could only establish the form of the EPC once it was clear which tasks it should get. If agreement were reached on the political points the Dutch would be under pressure from the others to let it operate immediately and leave the solution of the economic difficulties till later. He felt that there should

be no compromise on the political front until agreement on economic questions was reached, a point which was supported by other ministers. Moreover there was a majority in cabinet against making the time-span for the implementation negotiable (37). Such, then, was the position of the Dutch government on entering the The Hague meeting -- a position which, in practical terms, boiled down to pushing for further study of the EPC in its entirety by groups of experts (38).

At the last moment Mansholt tried again to convince cabinet that it was essential to bring the EPC into operation quickly. This meant abandoning its standpoint on a customs union, giving the task of the realisation of economic integration to the proposed executive body and recognising that nations had a right of veto. This found virtually no support. The views of Drees were representative, 'Even if the French only want a head-dress for the ECSC and the EDC, the Netherlands should still say no, in view of the fact that we should not be prepared to surrender part of our sovereignty for the creation of an empty husk' (39).

Even this was probably overstating French ambitions by 26 November when the Hague meeting of foreign ministers took place. Bidault himself could not attend until the last day and that, together with the fact that the government had not been able to discuss its position with the French parliament meant that the meeting was unlikely to get very far in making decisions (which for the Dutch/Benelux strategy was possibly an advantage since it made it easier to push the case for the installation of a study commission). In fact the proposal to set up a study commission was accepted relatively painlessly (though one could wonder why the French should bother since Parodi explained that as far as the French were concerned the fundamental aim of the EPC was to link the ECSC and the EDC under a single form of democratic control). The basis for the group's work was to be the

report of the Rome conference and it should have its report completed by 15 March 1954 (40). The cabinet decided that no new instructions for the delegates to the Paris study group were necessary (41).

It hardly seemed any longer a matter of real concern. The Study conference did not meet until 8 December and the negotiations proper did not start until 7 January. It then divided into three commissions -- an economic commission, an institutional commission and a commission to study the question of European elections. Of these, the economic committee was the most important for the realisation of Dutch goals but it took almost a week to get going at all largely because the French spokesman, Wormser, kept insisting that the discussions should not go beyond the terms of article 38 of the proposed treaty and that if the Community were to assume new economic tasks, that was something over which it could deliberate and upon which governments could decide at a later date. Eventually, to stop the talks stalling altogether, it was agreed that French reserves could be stipulated and recorded on every single sentence if necessary (42). However, although the schism separating the French from the rest was the most evident, and from the Dutch standpoint the most welcome, there was a further split which was much less promising: namely that Italy and Germany seemed to be thinking more in terms of a traité normatif rather than the traité executif which the Benelux countries considered necessary to ensure some real economic progress (43). The Economic Committee, however, did not so much function as a 'study-group' or a 'negotiating platform' at all in the early weeks but attempted instead to unravel the text of its report at the end of the Rome conference and to stick it back together again in a somewhat more logical fashion. The one positive point was that the Germans pulled back from their flirtation with a traité normatif. On the other hand, the Benelux cooperation which had been set up before the Paris talks, appeared to be paper thin. In the first

place, in the first days, the Belgians had presented a list of questions to form the Committee's approach, without prior consultation with the Dutch, which did not appear to give primacy to a free exchange of goods as a principle goal (in the event, nobody paid any intention to the list anyway). More damaging to mutual cooperation was the Belgian attack on the Dutch system of sauvegarde suggesting that it would be rendered totally unnecessary if liberalization were preceded by a system of strong policy coordination. Not only did this go beyond earlier Belgian sentiments on giving the executive powers to impel monetary coordination, but it propelled the Belgians almost directly into the arms of the French who wanted nothing better than 'intégrer pour libérer'(44).

The French were distantly tolerant of the rest wanting to concretise points which they considered irrelevant whilst the Italian delegation still had received no instructions owing to a simmering cabinet crisis (45). One of the first points was the realisation of the customs union, or was it an economic union or was it something in between? By the time they had sorted that out, what was to become the new French strategy made its first appearance. Should not the appeal to GATT be made on the basis of article 25 instead of article 24 since certainly clauses 5-c and 7-c of article 24 were less attractive than a possibly revised article 25. Of course France's reserve remained intact that, as far as they were concerned, none of this belonged in the treaty. After the delegates had followed that red herring to the bitter end, the Germans said that they were not sure it was relevant anyway since they at least had not agreed to the automatism in the Dutch proposals and that they could not really talk about GATT until the question of harmonisation had been discussed. At this point Linthorst Homan seems to have lost his temper and suggested that if the others did not like the Dutch proposals, why did they not come up with some concrete alternatives

themselves so that there was at least something to discuss. When the discussion resumed only Belgium supported the Dutch position that an end-term for a customs union should be included in the treaty. Germany suggested a mixture of automatism and supranationality whilst the Italians felt that the whole question depended upon the degree of progress towards policy harmonisation and the removal of 'structural barriers'. The new German suggestion lay in the direction of the compromise Beyen had already considered making and was, moreover, acceptable to the Belgians (46). The Dutch, however, did not make that concession and so, when it came to discussing how tariffs could be lowered, the gulf opened up again (47). It was at this point that the French made a proposal for a preference agreement - mentioning specifically, as an example, French grain exports. The Dutch chairman referred to this as a 'bomb in the conference hall' to which the French replied that it was a normal extension of European solidarity which could be decisive for French public opinion. The question was shelved (48).

On the question of free movement of labour, the Germans and Belgians expressed the worry that the ethnic composition of certain regions could be affected; a point conceded by the Italians who felt that safeguarding clauses could play a useful role. Germany, moreover, expressed reserves about whether the principle should be extended to cover all professions (doctors, lawyers etc.) but agreed to look into the matter again. Luxembourg wanted itself exempted from whatever the rest agreed. (49)

Policy coordination was also discussed by the experts for the first time in any detail. Germany emphasised the distinction between positive coordination which would help promote changes in economic structure and thus facilitate the realisation of a common market, and negative coordination in the sense of removing differences in national policies or regimes impeding its realisation. Belgium also enumerated the circumstances which might

warrant community intervention - monetary and financial instability, unfair competition and balance-of-payments disequilibrium within the six. When the Dutch suggested that an opening be left for the Community to intervene in areas not foreseen, the Belgians rejected it on the grounds that this would imply auto-extension. The Community, according to the Belgian suggestions, should be able to give directives on questions of discount rates, bank cash and liquidity ratios, the level of central bank loans to governments, the development of the national debt and the size of budget deficits (50). There followed a discussion on the issue of safeguarding clauses which was now more or less the mirror image of the co-ordination discussion - those who wanted the first saw little need in the second and vice-versa (51). And then everyone settled down again to prepare an agreed text which properly reflected the full extent of disagreement.

At this point the French reverted to a minimalist/obstructionist position which, the Dutch observed, only served to drive the rest closer together. Moreover, the German tendency not to push too hard for their own position and to try to omit areas from discussion which might prove unacceptable to the French was now abandoned. Even the Italians who, in their desire for a traité normatif had been closest to the French position were now completely 'uncoupled'. The report itself had resolved very little. The time had come for political decisions (52).

Two months of work in Paris had altered very little when compared with the situation arrived at in Rome. There were a number of reasons for this. The first was that the Rome report was declared by the Hague Meeting an 'official' document, even though it reflected little more than the listing of six sets of government instructions to the respective delegates. Although the Paris conference was supposed to be an exchange of views by unprejudiced experts, it appeared that in Paris, too, they were tied by government

instructions and that any divergence from the Rome Report was seen as a sign of weakness. A second factor was the approaches of the delegates themselves. The French delegation, the Dutch reported back, 'continually attempted to throw sand into the works by continually trying to initiate discussions on problems of detail; the Germans are extremely cautious and hardly ever speak out clearly or else they try to push problems aside as a result of which they often continue to travel round in a vicious circle of vague slogans; the Italians seem to be working on direct instruction from Rome and refer back every important point and the Luxembourgers, true to tradition, remain silent'. But the Dutch themselves were equally to blame as Linthorst Homan (who was heading the delegation in the economic commission) pointed out caustically. Their freedom for manoeuvre, outside the minor concessions authorised, was minimal. They had detailed proposals in one area (which was seen by all the other delegates as insufficient) but no room in their instructions to be able to consider seriously the proposals of the others on other areas. This in fact could have wasted the chance of forming a closer position with Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany and Italy none of which was against trade integration but saw the problem of a 'common market' in a wider perspective than the Dutch but the Dutch could make no concessions. In the end Van Starckenbourg Stachouwer (head of the overall Dutch delegation) had brought this to Beyen's attention and in drafting the final report, the Dutch had dropped their reserves on a number of points concerning policy coordination. However, not only was this too late in the day to make any difference, but, as Beyen cynically explained afterwards, it would demonstrate that the Dutch at least had seen the exercise as a study which did not bind the governments; he could always reintroduce Dutch reserves at a later date. That was about the only movement achieved in the two months in Paris (53).

When the Dutch cabinet met to review the results of the Paris study conference in April 1954 the clearest point visible to all was the gulf separating France from the rest. Louis Beel, the Vice Prime Minister, commented on the irony that the Dutch had gone along with the EPC because France apparently wanted it as a condition for ratifying the EDC. The situation now was that France seemed to be exceptionally negative on the question of both the EPC institutions and the powers it was willing to give them and that the ratification of the EDC seemed to have split the country down the middle. The general consensus in cabinet was that there was little point in formulating the Dutch position until it was clear what the French were going to do. Mansholt, who thought that the Dutch should push ahead allowing the new EPC organs to implement the proposed 'economic integration', found himself in a clear minority (54).

The next Council of Ministers meeting asked the study conference to resume its work. So in May the experts trudged back again to Paris to resume their work and it was decided in both committees that the aspects they would study should be as 'neutral' as possible. In the economic committee the French delegate, Soutou, had explained that his country's position had been so vague in the earlier talks because of French difficulties in the OEEC. Since these had been resolved, a new dynamism had been imparted to French economic policy and they could now talk more openly. 'We are emerging from the circle of protectionism', he proclaimed (55). Whether any of the others believed him is not clear. When the talks began in earnest, however, it became apparent that little had changed. The French position remained that everything would be settled in a later treaty whilst the Germans had reverted to a conciliatory stance towards France though, rumours had it, that this was partly the result of a struggle between the economic and

agricultural ministries over the economic implications of freeing trade (56).

Nonetheless a number of new ideas did emerge. On the question of how to implement a customs union the Germans revived the idea that a starting period of two or three years should follow the working of the treaty, after which the Community would proceed to the implementation of a customs union. This band-wagon was immediately jumped on by the French who had always wanted a starting period, although a much longer one, before moving towards integration. Since, by this stage, it was unclear who was talking about what, the others stuck to the position that the date for the implementation of the customs union had to be fixed in the treaty (57). As for the question of how to arrive at that customs union, the Germans outlined a number of routes other than the strictly arithmetical approach of the Beyen-Plan: differential tempos for different sectors, reductions by weighted averages, beginning by 'capping' highest tariffs and exempting the lowest and then proceeding to a common scheme. The Dutch now moved away from the Beyen scheme and declared a willingness to consider any scheme as long as it included a measure of automatism and ended, at a specified time, at a nil-tariff on intra-group trade, but that was still insufficient to bring round the French (58). As far as the external tariff was concerned the range of options lay between the French insistence that it should be high, so as to improve the chances of GATT concessions, and the Benelux position that it should be as low as possible. This succeeded in resurrecting the French idea of preferential purchasing - if, for example, the duty on grain were low, there would have to be an agreed grain-programme. The position of the Germans and Italians did not emerge (59). At the last meeting, in July, the discussion focused primarily on a Belgian document on Benelux. It was agreed to put together a report and to meet again 'in the autumn'.(60)

In August Mendès-France called together a meeting of the Six governments which met in Brussels, at which France demanded a number of further concessions on the EDC Treaty which, he argued, were necessary if it were to have a chance of success in the French parliament. The other five were equally resolute in their refusal to amend a treaty they had already ratified, especially since the French were not willing to put anything in its place (61). On 31 August the French national assembly rejected the EDC. Since the EPC existed solely by virtue of the EDC, the whole edifice came tumbling down. The whole question of German rearmament was eventually resolved by the creation of the Western European Union, but the push towards 'economic integration' seemed to have come to a grinding halt.

Looking back over the economic negotiations within the context of the European Political Community it is important to bear in mind that they all took place at a time when few political commentators would have given the European Defence Community, which underpinned the whole structure, even the slightest chance of ever being ratified by the French Parliament. Yet armies of diplomats, civil servants and so-called experts from six countries were locked together for months in Rome and Paris discussing the economic and political structure of a new community. The archive situation allows us to do no more than speculate over the answer to this apparent paradox. The first possibility is that the leaders of the six were trapped by the very expectations which they had created and that none of them was willing to attract the odium for allowing the initiative to fail. This seems highly improbable, certainly as a consensus, partly because it seems likely that at least some of the six had other motives for keeping the initiative going and partly because, if such had been the consensus, the best tactic would have been to allow matters to drift and not to begin by setting up layer upon layer of study groups. The French position of frank hostility towards the

study groups was certainly consistent with this second attitude. But if it was not a dance of the dead, what was it? The second possibility lies at the other extreme of the spectrum namely that leaders such as Adenauer believed to the bitter end that the EDC would be created and he was supported in that by the American Secretary of State, Dulles. Along this line of thinking, once the log-jam had been broken, the EDC, the EPC and a limited economic community would all, in turn, come into existence. However, this alone would appear to be an insufficient explanation. The explanation becomes more plausible when a third possibility is admitted namely that, even if the EDC were to be written off as dead, there were those European federalists who considered that the EPC itself was worth salvaging. Certainly the Italian position, which throughout the whole episode remained closest to the original conception of the draft treaty of the Assemblée ad hoc, would suggest that de Gasperi considered this a real possibility. Add to this a fourth option, that the Dutch and the Belgians, whilst disagreeing over the best approach, considered it important to keep the issue of European protectionism on the political agenda even if progress were minimal, and there is a majority which for diverse reasons had an interest in keeping the political process alive.

For the Dutch at least the failure of the EPC had temporarily cut off one route but the tariff question remained unresolved and its resolution would ultimately have to come from an international solution. Eventually, it could be argued, a situation would arise when other countries wanted something else so much that they would be willing to pay the Dutch price for its participation, in the form of an agreement to lower tariffs. After all, the Dutch institutional reservations had all been accepted early on in the Schuman plan negotiations because France and Germany wanted a coal and steel pool. In the same way, the Beyen Plan had only got onto the agenda in the

first place because France, Germany and Italy had at the time wanted a form of democratic control over the EDC. Thus, when a year later the Beyen/Spaak initiative linked the call for the creation of a customs union with a plan for the joint regulation of atomic energy, it could be interpreted as an astute move to create a situation in which the Dutch bargaining position could be maximalised.

NOTES

1. Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague, Ministerraad Archive. ARA, MR (482) Nota aan de Ministerraad inzake Ministers conferentie 9 en 10 September te Luxembourg (MR 5.9.1952).

2. ARA, MR (482) Kort verslag van de Eerste Zitting van de Bijzondere Raad van Ministers van de Europese Gemeenschap voor Kolen en Staal en van de daarop aansluitende Conferentie der Ministers van Puitenlandse Zaken van de staten-leden dezer Gemeenschap, gehouden op 8, 9 en 10 September 1952 (MR 15.9.1952). See also J.W. Beyen, Het Spel en de Knikkers. Een kroniek van vijftig jaren, Rotterdam 1968, 205-209.

3. ARA, MR (483) Nota der Advies Commissie inz. de instelling ener Europese Politieke Gemeenschap, betreffende het van de zijde der Nederlandse Regering in te nemen standpunt dienaangaande, en in het bijzonder omtrent de aan de Assemblé ad hoc voor te leggen vragen (MR 16.10.1952).

4. ARA, MR (484) Grondslagen voor het Nederlandse standpunt met betrekking tot het vraagstuk der Europese integratie (MR 17.11.1952).

5. Beyen, Het Spel en de Knikkers 227-229. ARA, MR (486) Ontwerp van een Memorandum bestemd voor de regeringen dd. 28.1.1953, Europese Politieke Gemeenschap dd. (MR 9.2.1953).

6. ARA, MR (487) Verslag van de Ministers Conferentie van de zes Schuman landen te Rome op 24 en 25 Februari 1953 (MR 2.3.1953). Min. BZ, 913.100/23 Reacties van de verschillende Ministers op de Nederlandse voorstellen dd. 7.3.1953.

7. ARA, MR (488) Ontwerp Verdrag behelzende het Statuut van de Europese Gemeenschap (MR 29.4.1953).

8. Archive of the Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, The Hague. Min. BZ, 913.100/26 Council of Europe. Consultative Assembly. 5th Ordinary Session, May 1953. Recommendation 45 Appendix II.

9. Ibid., Rapport van der Economische Sub-Commissie dd. 22.4.1953.

10. Ibid., Staatsrechtelijk-Institutionele Beschouwingen omtrent het ontwerp-verdrag inzake de Europese Gemeenschap dd. 23.4.1953.

11. ARA, MR (398) Minutes of Cabinet 29.4.1953.

12. Min. BZ, 913.100/25 Concept voor Nederlands Memorandum inzake de Europese Gemeenschap, n.d. Accompanying letter dated 4.5.1953. ARA, MR (489) Memorandum du Gouvernement des Pays Bas concernant la Communauté Européenne (MR 11.5.1953).

13. ARA, MR (398) Minutes of Cabinet 11.5.1953. See also ARA, MR (489) Projet de Dispositions économiques du Traité portant Statut de la Communauté européenne n.d. (MR 11.5.1953).

14. ARA, MR (489) Verslag van de op 12 en 13 Mei gehouden Ministersconferentie betreffende de Europese Gemeenschap (MR 26.5.1953).

15. ARA, MR (398) Minutes of Cabinet 11.5.1953.

16. Min. BZ, 913.100/27 De eerste reacties op de Nederlandse voorstellen dd. 30.5.1953.

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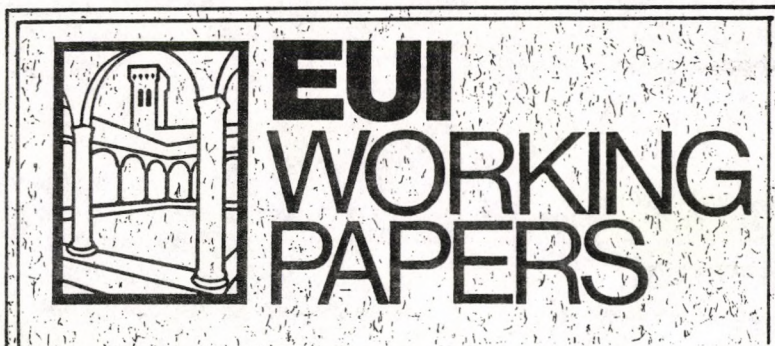
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