

'The conference for a European army has reached an agreement of principle' from Le Figaro (26 July 1951)


Caption: On 26 July 1951, the French daily newspaper Le Figaro announces that, after four months of discussions, European negotiators have at last found common ground on the issue of a European army.

Source: Le Figaro. dir. de publ. Brisson, Pierre. 26.07.1951. Paris: Le Figaro. "La conférence pour une armée européenne est parvenue à un accord de principe".

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After four months of discussions

The conference for a European army has reached an agreement of principle

Announcement by Mr Alphand

The French, German, Belgian, Italian and Luxembourg delegations submit an interim report to their respective governments on the pooling of forces

After four months of technical discussions, the delegations of the five participating countries at the *Conference for the creation of a European Defence Community* have reached an agreement of principle on the pooling of their forces. This agreement is the subject of an interim report that the five delegations — France, Germany, Belgium, Italy and Luxembourg — have submitted to their respective governments.

When Mr Hervé Alphand, President of the Conference, announced that the drafting of the report had been completed, he stressed that this document committed only the five delegations and not their governments, who are simply invited to accept, refuse or amend its provisions. They are also asked to clarify their position on the few outstanding points at issue. The interim report, continued Mr Alphand, illustrates the agreement of the five delegations on the following points:

The armed forces that exist or that are to be formed, being destined for defending the territory of Europe (i.e. excluding overseas and police forces), must be amalgamated under a common supranational authority. This amalgamation must be as complete as possible, as much from a human perspective as from a material one, insofar as compatible with military requirements; while it must increase — not diminish — their efficiency and their value, it must also constitute, together with the Coal and Steel Community, a very important stage along the road towards the creation of a united Europe. As Mr Robert Schuman pointed out to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, the treaty will not discriminate in any way between participating States.

A joint European Defence Fund will be created to cover all the expenses of these integrated forces and will receive financial contributions from Member States and foreign aid from other States.

The delegations also agreed upon the list of institutions and their main functions. There will be:

- a European Defence Authority (Commissioner or College) acting as a European Defence Minister;
- a Council of Ministers whose assent will be required when the Authority has to take major decisions;
- a Parliamentary Assembly (made up of the same delegates as those provided for in the Schuman Plan for the Coal and Steel Community) which will scrutinise the Authority's management and, to a certain extent, the funds allocated to it;
- a Court of Justice to rule on any legal disputes that may arise between the Authority and the States.

The units of the European force will be responsible to integrated European echelons for command, equipment, supplies and so on,

Financial issues

Broad agreement was also reached on financial issues: State contribution (which is to be set on balanced bases and is not to endanger their economic stability), budget, role of the Commissioner (or the College), role of defence, role of the Council and the Assembly, control of budgetary transactions, etc.

Like the Schuman Plan, the treaty will run for 50 years.

In total, concluded Mr Hervé Alphand, tangible progress has been noted with satisfaction by the States who sent observers, in particular by the American delegation.

General Eisenhower, who was asked to lend the support of SHAPE, immediately agreed to send observers to the conference committees and appointed the American General, Mike Michaelis, to carry out those duties.