

'A pact with shortcomings' from the Süddeutsche Zeitung (30 May 1952)

Caption: On 30 May 1952, commenting on the signing, on 27 May 1952 in Paris, of the Treaty establishing the European Defence Community (EDC), the Bavarian daily newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung attacks the contradictions and weaknesses of the plan for a European army.

Source: Süddeutsche Zeitung. Münchner Neueste Nachrichten aus Politik, Kultur, Wirtschaft und Sport. Hrsg. Friedmann, Werner; Goldschagg, Edmund; Schöningh, Dr. Franz Josef; Schwingenstein, August. 30.05.1952, Nr. 123; 8. Jg. München: Süddeutscher Verlag. "Ein Pakt mit Mängeln", auteur:Borchardt, Robert , p. 4.

Copyright: (c) Translation CVCE.EU by UNI.LU

All rights of reproduction, of public communication, of adaptation, of distribution or of dissemination via Internet, internal network or any other means are strictly reserved in all countries.

Consult the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/a_pact_with_shortcomings_from_the_suddeutsche_zeitung_30_may_1952-en-7a9b3fbf-4c7d-460c-9da4-1fc7b086d8c9.html



Last updated: 06/07/2016

A pact with shortcomings

Maybe one would have had to be present at the negotiations concerning the European Defence Community (EDC) and experience how utterly insurmountable obstacles were overcome, to be able to give a warm welcome to the Treaty. Apart from the applause coming from the governments, the EDC Treaty is getting a somewhat lukewarm reception.

In France, even the European Army's supporters believe the EDC has too much say in French affairs and too little say in things German. In Germany, even the advocates of the contribution to a common defence wonder whether the commitments and risks to be assumed by Germany would not have warranted greater freedom of movement than is granted the Federal Republic in the General Treaty. In other words, they doubt whether the Germans have secured a high enough price for their contribution, without which Western European defence would not be possible.

The proponents of European unification are at one in complaining that the EDC Council of Ministers will clearly outrank all other political committees and that unanimous voting will apply on all questions of importance, meaning every single member will have right of veto. There is no doubt that the Treaty instrument also contains approaches towards a true political federation, as for example the Defence Commission whose members are expressly forbidden to seek or receive instructions from their respective governments, or the Assembly that has been explicitly referred to as the forerunner of a European legislative parliament. But while the sovereignty safeguards could not be stated more clearly, the federalist provisions either take the form of hopes or will be determined by the process of implementation. What is crucial, however, is whether the mutual mistrust can be overcome and whether all Member States will show an equally strong commitment to the common defence of Europe.

So how does the planned European Army rate on military criteria? One effect of the pooling of European armed forces will clearly be to augment Europe's defensive capability by 12 German divisions. This reinforcement was only made possible through the EDC Treaty, as France would never have consented to the raising of German troops over whose deployment the Federal Republic, acting alone or within the context of the North Atlantic Treaty, would have had power of decision. A German defence contribution within the North Atlantic Treaty would no doubt have been more effective. But all the parties concerned decided to live with the disadvantages of the European solution. France's mistrust of its German neighbour has, however, led to the inclusion of a whole series of provisions in the EDC Treaty that unnecessarily weaken the military effectiveness of the European force. The fear, for example, that one day a German might be appointed Commander-in-Chief of the European Army has resulted in the European Army having no supreme commander at all — a shortcoming that should not be underestimated. There is fierce debate among experts as to whether, in modern mobile warfare — and war formation projections show that defence against an aggressor is indeed to be mobile — army corps can be commanded at all, if, as is laid down in the Treaty, these corps are basically constituted of divisions of different nationalities.

The desire to go as far as possible with the integration of military institutions has led to a situation in which the provisioning of the troops and the procurement and distribution of arms are basically undertaken by multinational staffs or departments. The practicality of this solution is perhaps open to debate. What is, however, quite clear already is that the principle of enrolling European recruits and giving them their basic training without the involvement of the individual Member States is a major error of judgement.

All in all, despite a great number of political reservations, the Treaty provides for military integration that will break new ground as far as organisation is concerned. The Treaty's political and military components are poorly coordinated, thus creating the danger that the deployment of military power will be impeded by the political power of veto. The Treaty's advantages do, however, outweigh its faults. There is no provision in the EDC Treaty that is not open to improvement.

One point, finally, deserves a special mention. The European Army, which according to one of its regulations is not to acquire a strategic air force, is destined to become the Atlantic community's mainland warrior. The Atlantic Pact cannot go into action without it and for that reason the voice of Europe will, in

future, carry greater weight in the council of free nations than have the voices of the individual European peoples in the past.

Robert Borchardt