

Letter from Robert Silvercruys to Paul-Henri Spaak (3 September 1954)

Caption: In this letter sent to the Belgian Foreign Minister, Paul-Henri Spaak, on 3 December 1954, Robert Silvercruys, the Belgian Ambassador to the United States, considers the mindset of US officials following the failure of the European Defence Community (EDC) project.

Source: DE VOS, Luc; ROOMS, Etienne; DELOGE, Pascal; STERKENDRIES, Jean-Michel (sous la dir.). Documents diplomatiques belges 1941-1960, De l'indépendance à l'interdépendance. Tome II: Défense 1941-1960. Bruxelles: Académie royale de Belgique, 1998. 582 p. ISBN 90-6569-670-9. p. 376-377.

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Washington, 3 September 1954

Summary: disappointment, the need to rearm a sovereign Germany, the loss of the American guarantees of April 1954 and a move to new arrangements.

The US Administration is openly disappointed by the French National Assembly's vote to terminate the project that grew out of the now distant signature of the European Defence Community Treaty.

The creation of the European Defence Community had become the 11th commandment for US diplomats. The plan included both European defence and European integration, the latter of which was deemed necessary by the US in order to remind Europe that it should make use of its own armed forces. Although interest in Asia is growing, the EDC was the foundation of the political and military hierarchy of the West, which remains the primary concern of the Eisenhower Administration.

John Foster Dulles was forthright in his communiqué, a copy of which is attached. He called the collapse of the EDC 'a saddening event' which does nothing to change the facts nor the need to rearm a sovereign Germany and to forego, in the interest of peace, certain prerogatives in order to create a supranational institution.

The French stance will mean that the United States will have to review carefully not only its policy towards Europe but all the measures taken since 1946 to guarantee the military and economic defence of our countries as well. Does the Secretary of State's use of the word *reappraise* imply a change? No one can be sure. But some politicians and military staff will use the failure of the European Defence Community to call for a review of the United States' defence strategy.

In addition, one must keep in mind the fact that the guarantees offered by the US President last April to the Prime Ministers of the signatory states, which were contingent upon the entry into force of the European Defence Community, are no longer valid today. Those guarantees were considerable and included the maintenance of US troops in Europe, consultations on their numbers, integration, communication of technical information, military guarantees and guarantees on the length of US participation in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. The conditions that led to the US stance have not changed, and it would be wrong to infer that a policy has been abandoned. We must not forget that the substantial guarantees offered by the Americans of their own accord have been lost.

In the short term, the Americans will work on restoring Germany's sovereignty and it is hoped that US diplomacy will also seek new arrangements. According to the US Secretary of State, today's tragedy would be far worse if French nationalism, with help from the Communists, were to induce the United States as well to confine itself to a narrow-minded nationalistic approach. The Americans' new arrangements will be set up via the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, whose Council Mr Dulles felt it necessary to convene, in parallel with consultations with Chancellor Konrad Adenauer.

The United States has spent little time preparing its new arrangements because the State Department has flatly refused to countenance the possibility of a French defection or the need for any fall-back solutions. Unquestionably, the arrangements would seek to include Germany in the group of Western nations and in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and would try to unify Europe. The United States, ever optimistic, has not forgotten that five national parliaments out of six voted for the European Defence Community and, that in France, a sizeable minority backs the EDC, in spite of the pessimism expressed by Pierre Mendès France.

[Signature] the adviser, pro procurationem the Ambassador