

Telegram from David Bruce to the US Department of State (Paris, 3 January 1952)

Caption: On 3 January 1952, David Bruce, US Ambassador to Paris, sends a telegram to the US Department of State in Washington outlining the progress of European negotiations on the establishment of a common army.

Source: BERNBAUM, John A.; ROSE, Lisle A.; SAMPSON, Charles S. (Ed.). Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954. Volume V: Western European Security. Book Part 1. Washington: Department of State, 1983. p. 572-576.

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Telegram from David Bruce to the US Department of State (Paris, 3 January 1952)

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3958. Personal attention Secretary. Distribution as determined by Secretary's office. Eyes only Chiefs of Mission. Subject: European Defense Force. Re Embtel 3957, Jan 3.

This telegram attempts to sum up various outstanding issues in EDC and what action should in my opinion be taken to move them forward as rapidly as possible.

1. French-German-Italian agreement.

The Ministers' meeting made clear complete agreement of Germans and French (and for all practical purposes, Italians) on the major issues involved in EDC. They agreed that EDC must from beginning replace national armies and national budgets and must be operated as genuine common defense force and not merely as a coalition. Institutions must be so designed and power so distributed among them that they can effectively create and support forces of community. EDC must have responsibility and authority from outset although functions are to be delegated in treaty or by institutions to existing national services and only progressively assumed by EDC institutions as they are prepared to exercise particular functions.

In face of Benelux opposition, French and Germans maintained solid front on issue after issue. On many of these issues Adenauer took lead in insisting on vital necessity of immed common activity; on all he took strong position against anything that would have effect of creating German national force or national defence budget, or which would derogate from supranational character of community itself.

2. Benelux position.

In Ministers' meeting Belgians and Dutch were able to maintain a joint position on most issues. In substance, their position was that community should have very limited authority in initial period and would constitute little more than a coalition of national forces of the members comparable to Brussels Pact. Nevertheless, review of minutes and discussions with individuals indicate that bases of Belgian and Dutch positions are quite different.

Dutch position seems to be based on :

(a) Belief that if a strong and effective EDC is created US might withdraw its military support from Europe, which support in Dutch mind provides their real security.

(b) Concern that France and Germany will dominate small countries, particularly if substantial authority delegated to central institutions.

(c) Hope that if EDC were sufficiently watered down the UK might some day join.

(d) Worry that under common financing and with continued support of US and UK forces in Germany, Dutch will have to make substantial financial contribution to build-up of German forces. Experts at conference, including Germans, seem to share view that Germany would contribute more than cost of own contingents in first year but would contribute less in subsequent years.

(e) Belief that Dutch can obtain more US end-items and military support aid if aid is handled on a national basis.

(f) Reluctance to give common institutions authority, particularly in build-up period, to make any modifications whatever in military program they have presented to Dutch Parliament and NATO. Basic

concern appears to be that rapid build-up and equipment of German contingents might be attempted at expense of Dutch plans.

Van Zeeland probably has even more distaste than Dutch for changes in national programs that will result front common financing, common procurement and common planning, and of course does not like prospect of Belgian financial contribution being increased.

Like Dutch, Van Zeeland does not yet accept necessity advocated by Adenauer and Schuman to invest EDC with real authority front beginning in order to avoid discrimination against Germany on one hand and creation of German national forces on the other.

Van Zeeland is also motivated by his fear of rising power in election which would be required to amend Belgian constitution if, as he claims, this should be necessary in order to authorize [apparent omission] than a coalition. Consequently, he is seeking to have community take a form which will enable him to tell his Parliament that there has been no transfer of sovereignty and that such transfer will occur only when a federation is created. Undoubtedly he believes that this would not take place before regular elections would be required in Belgium.

Both French and Germans have asked us to do everything we can to get Belgian and Dutch support for Franco-German conception. Both seem to think that best hope is to approach Dutch first in order to remove certain of their misunderstandings. Both think that much of Dutch preoccupation re transitional period can be met without sacrifice of essentials of French-German position. Both think that Dutch might be persuaded, but that Belgians can only be pressed, and that this will be easier if Dutch can be swung around. Plevin and Schuman plan to visit The Hague and Brussels in hope of modifying the Benelux position. Germans might also try to make clear importance which Adenauer attaches to fundamental principles advocated by Schuman and himself and why Adenauer's proposals are in the basic interest of Eur security and unity.

Recommendations :

Position of Adenauer and of Fr seems to me to make clear fact that there is no real alternative to a Eur Defense Community vested with functions considered essential by Fr and Gers, and that there is little basis for any assumption we might make that a Ger contribution could be obtained thru some other method. Adenauer and Schuman seem convinced that agreement can soon be reached. Consequently, realistic policy is now [not?] to talk in terms of alternatives but keep pressure on participants to bring matter to conclusion as rapidly as possible. Under circumstances adherence to a rigid time-schedule for bringing about matter of this momentous character appears unrealistic. If these discussions are viewed as a process, progress at Ministers' meeting as well as at officials' conference has been encouraging.

a. US can help with Benelux if Secretary could call in Dutch and Belgian Ambassadors and make clear to them :

(i) That US is more likely to preserve interest in maintaining troops on continent to assist Eur defense if EDC is made effective than if present situation continues.

(ii) That American aid will be distributed in manner most likely to promote effective defense, and that EDC is in line with views of Congress, as stated in present legislation, which favors political and economic unity of Europe.

(iii) That Franco-German agreement presents historic opportunity for fundamental solution of relations on continent, for strengthening of defense and for moving towards federation. This opportunity must not be lost, and if Benelux opposition has this result it would be hard to justify to American opinion.

b. As soon as possible Dutch should receive assurance that support costs in Ger will not have effect either now or subsequently in passing part of this burden to them. Fr and Gers should explain to Dutch that Franco-German proposals on common financing and common procurement have gone long way to meet Dutch preoccupations :

(i) No substantial change, if any, in force goals for Dutch contingents and in broad lines of NATO military program for next three years is involved.

(ii) In practice executive and community's institutions must be guided in expenditures by present NATO programs and must for some time use present services under Eur responsibility to carry out programs.

(iii) Executive and community will be bound by legal commitments already taken by member states for expenditures, and any shifts in expenditures will be in interests of community and will with certainty be shifts worked out with and desired by SHAPE and other NATO organizations.

(iv) Contributions to EDC for an initial period would be determined in NATO framework on basis and under procedures determined by that organization. EDC countries would merely be under greater obligation to accept NATO recommendations on equitable contributions; as each country is required to contribute to defense maximum consistent with political-economic capabilities, Dutch will not do more in EDF than they would in NATO.

In return for Fr-Ger acceptance of transitional period on such a basis plus acceptance community executive, Dutch should be able to agree that Eur institutions have responsibility and auth from first day so that both discrimination against Germany and creation of Ger national army can be avoided.

Voice of smaller countries in community will be determined when weight of votes in Assembly and Council of Ministers is agreed upon. If Schuman Plan institutions are a precedent, Benelux countries will probably obtain larger voice than is desirable or justifiable.

3. French-German disagreements.

Fr and Germans are not in agreement on intermediate command at national level to be inserted between Eur general staff and local military district commands, but this question can be worked out in conference. However, Gers are in disagreement with US, UK and Fr on two questions which in Ger view may seriously retard progress of EDF conference. These are security restrictions on Ger production, and Ger financial contribution and support costs.

a. On security restrictions, Schuman and Adenauer had some discussions but did not reach conclusions. Apparently both thought that they would be able to work out some solution acceptable to them and to US and UK. According to Schuman, Adenauer said he thought he could use proximity to Russia as a reason to maintain restriction on certain production. Hallstein also pointed out that issue was largely formal since Gers did not expect to produce or desire to produce any of weapons under discussion. He said one issue which might cause trouble was research whereas restriction would be badly received in Germany. As I understand it, Fr intend to authorize Francois-Poncet to have further talks with Gers in order to work out solution.

b. On Germany's financial contribution Adenauer made two points, especially in relation to its acceptance by Bundestag: (a) That Fed Rep's total contribution should be determined according to same criteria as the other members and that TCC should make recommendation on Germany's total contribution; and (b) that support of UK and US forces should not appear as continuation occupation costs and should be considered as a community obligation.

Recommendations

a. I would suggest that we encourage Fr-Ger discussions on security restrictions and refrain from intervening until they have had a reasonable chance for success. High degree of understanding between Fr and Gers and very favorable impression that Adenauer has made on each of his trips to Paris will, I think, encourage Fr to adopt more reasonable attitude than has heretofore been case. Nevertheless French Foreign Office apparently remains as intransigent on this issue as ever and refuses to take advantage of real guarantees in EDC to work out solution with Germans.

b. Above position of Adenauer on German financial contribution and support costs seems to me reasonable and probably necessary for Bundestag approval. In my opinion we should go as far as possible to meet it. A number of French officials have indicated that they are sympathetic but they do not wish to come forward with any suggestions because they consider themselves bound by agreement reached with US and UK on these points. If conference should ask for TCC to study and recommend German financial capacity for defense, and if transitional convention of treaty should provide that second year's contributions would also be determined in NATO framework, it would help prepare ground for Germany's membership in NATO. French officials sympathetic to Adenauer's position fully recognize this.

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