

Dutch legislator: Need European SDI

by Dean Andromidas

EIR is pleased to excerpt a speech by the Honorable Mr. J.D. Blaauw of the Netherlands Liberal Party, calling for a European aerospace defense initiative. The speech was delivered at the Western European Union Conference on May 20, 1985. The proposal parallels closely a proposal for a European program made by EIR in recent months.

Recently, the SDI was debated briefly and inconclusively in the Dutch parliament, and the government has yet to officially answer Secretary of Defense Weinberger's offer of participation, though a Dutch delegation did go to Washington for talks on the SDI.

Technologically, the Netherlands could make numerous contributions: The electronics giant, Phillips, is a leader in the production and development of radars and other electronic sensors. Fokker Aviation is another company that could offer a great deal of expertise in this area, and there are numerous smaller companies in the relevant fields of electronics and optics.

President Reagan's March 1983 address initially evoked critical reactions from European politicians. But very soon Europe kept silent on the whole subject. Was there a hope that it would just fade away? Well, it did not. . . .

It is quite clear that the Western European allies have to formulate a clear response to the SDI challenge, not only because of the letter from the U.S. Secretary of Defense, Mr. Weinberger, but also because of Europe's responsibility for its defense. . . . The WEU Summit held in Bonn in April has not resulted in a coordinated reaction to the American offer. It is quite clear that policy circles in the different capitals are still trying to find an answer to the questions: Can we do it? Should we do it? And if "yes," how should we do it?

The first question: Yes, we can do it. SDI is in fact a super high technology research program, and . . . European countries have not fared too badly at all in the high tech trade. WEU countries . . . occupy 39.1% of the international trade in the field compared to 17.8% by the United States and 17.4% by Japan. In some areas, such as optical sensors and high frequency techniques also essential in the laser field, research may be even more advanced in Europe than in the United States.

The second question, should we do it, is more difficult to answer. It could be argued that from the security policy point

of view, the balance points to the positive side. Cooperation, in principle, both politically and technically, in the research program will strengthen the cohesion of the Alliance. This would be very welcome after a period of transatlantic political differences over, for instance, the neutron warhead, Afghanistan, Poland, the gas pipeline, and even cruise missiles. Secondly, it would undoubtedly strengthen the American position at the talks in Geneva.

From the military point of view, cooperation with the United States on ballistic missile defense looks rather attractive. Analysis has shown that a defense against shorter range ballistic missiles could enhance NATO's non-nuclear and nuclear force posture quite considerably. Moreover, one of the special interest groups formed around the different SDI components is about anti-tactical ballistic missiles (ATBM). On this particular item, in my opinion, Western Europe should step in: A multilateral Western European study group needs to be set up to work out a conceptual framework for a ballistic missile defense against shorter-range ballistic missiles in Western Europe—this will form the basis for a joint coordinated United States/Western European concept. . . .

In this context the opportunities for Western European companies would be promising. It means not only cooperation with the Americans, but parallel to it the setting up of a special research program of their own. . . . Perhaps this is what Lord Carrington had in mind when he said, on April 10, 1985:

"A collective European response should be made to the invitation of the United States to join the research program for the strategic defense initiative."

And in the *Times* of April 11, 1985:

"The field of arms production and procurement is the key to a stronger European defense identity. . . . I passionately believe that Europe needs to be, and needs to be seen to be, more energetic on its own defense."

. . . Research in advanced electronics, laser, and particle beam technology and space technology will encourage progress in biotechnology and industrial high tech and will raise the level of basic science. This leads to the Western European answer to the American SDI offer—that is, the establishing of a European aerospace defense initiative (EADI). . . .

A parallel European aerospace defense initiative would also appear to be the best means of preventing a so-called decoupling of the United States and Western Europe, a decoupling not only on the level of security and defense, but also technologically and economically.

The third question, how should we do it, can now be answered quite easily. . . . The best forum appears to be the Western European Union (WEU).

With the establishment of the new WEU Agencies, we will have the framework for the study of the aforementioned European aerospace defense initiative. Of course, when the study is in progress, close cooperation with the American SDI structure, together with information exchange, is a necessity. . . .