

---

## Interview: Dr. Joseph Luns

---



# On the Soviet Union, Europe, and the SDI

*Doctor Joseph Luns was foreign minister of The Netherlands from 1952-71 and secretary general of NATO from 1971-84. He was interviewed for EIR by Michael Liebig and Dean Andromidas on Feb. 22, 1985.*

**EIR:** The Reagan administration's Strategic Defense Initiative for the development of an anti-ballistic missile system aims at shifting strategic doctrine from Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) to one of Mutually Assured Survival (MAS). Do you support such a program?

**Dr. Luns:** Well, I do support the program for the very reasons you have given in the question. It is a very good thing to have a system which will rather make a possible nuclear conflict even less likely than it is now.

**EIR:** Given the fact that the Soviets are working massively in this area, do you think this is an additional reason to push ahead with it?

**Dr. Luns:** To be honest, I am not aware of Soviet endeavors in this area. Anyhow, their official attitude is rather hostile.

**EIR:** How do you view the proposal President Reagan has made, namely, that he does not want to have a system for one-sided superiority, but is willing, up to the point of technology sharing, to develop this in a parallel and coordinated manner with the Soviet Union?

**Dr. Luns:** I think the President said that he was willing to give to the Soviet Union what the Americans will find workable. I think it is a very, very good proposal. The people on the left will say that though the President says so he won't do it, but that, of course, is pure speculation. If one takes such an attitude, you can never talk to the Soviets because the Soviets are obviously far less reliable than the Americans. I think it is a very good proposal. It is not impossible that the Soviets are not quite willing to believe it.

**EIR:** Do you think the Europeans should support President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative and his intention to go towards a new strategic regime?

**Dr. Luns:** Yes, I think so, and all indications are that they are supporting it. You have seen what the Germans have been

saying, and Mrs. Thatcher is in favor of it. They have yet to hear adverse voices from the smaller allies, neither in Spain, nor in Turkey or the Netherlands or in Canada, there have been no adverse official comments as of yet, only by individuals in these countries.

**EIR:** How do you view President Mitterrand's very negative comment about four or five weeks ago where he called the SDI "over-armament" and called for a moratorium on space weapon systems.

**Dr. Luns:** I dare say that basically the French are in favor of a strong nuclear deterrent. It might be that the French president fears that the French effort will be judged even smaller than it now is. It might be for internal reasons, too. Do bear in mind that he is a socialist and is being accused by his own followers of being far too conservative in matters of armaments and also in matters of the alliance.

**EIR:** Do you feel the new technologies offered by the SDI could represent new possibilities for the Europeans and therefore they should participate?

**Dr. Luns:** In fact, whether they participate or not, the finger on the trigger will remain American, and the American input will be so important that the voice of Europe with regard to the use or non-use of these weapons will not be very strong. I doubt whether this new line of technical development will mean a lot in terms of political cooperation and cohesion between the allies. I think that all the Americans ask is that the Europeans support them, and when and if the Americans know something more, they of course will be happy to take note of that and even to use it. But I think also for the moment it is rather premature. Nobody knows whether the American effort will be successful, and nobody knows also whether, if successful, it will be so extremely expensive that even the United States might hesitate. There is a lot of talk going on but rather little knowledge.

**EIR:** Do you feel that the moral position of NATO can be strengthened through the development of defensive systems that can neutralize offensive nuclear weapons?

**Dr. Luns:** Let me say that whatever NATO does or does not

do, their moral stature will always be attacked by the left and the governments and the military and most of public opinion are supportive of NATO and that will remain as it is.

**EIR:** How do you see the significance of the double track decision in this context?

**Dr. Luns:** The double-track decision stands as it is. It is a different problem from what we've discussed so far. It has to do with the threat of the SS-20 and it has to do with stationing weapons in Europe, which will be able to counter an attack by them without having to go for the strategic arsenal of the United States, which indeed would be terrible if that had to be done.

**EIR:** Neutron weapons are, on the one hand, highly effective against Soviet armor yet will not have the genocidal effects on the Western European population of normal nuclear weapons. Would you advocate their deployment?

---

---

*The President said that he was willing to give the Soviet Union what the Americans will find workable. I think it is a very, very good proposal. The people on the left will say that though the President says so he won't do it, but that, of course, is pure speculation.*

---

---

**Dr. Luns:** My personal view is completely affirmative. I agree with what you say.

**EIR:** There has been a great deal of discussion that Marshal Ogarkov has assumed command of all Soviet forces, conventional and nuclear, directed against Western Europe. What is your view and how do you assess its importance?

**Dr. Luns:** You know, Mr. Churchill was right when he said that the Soviet Union is a mystery surrounded by an enigma, and I do not really know whether this marshal has been given all these stars. There are all sorts of rumors, and I would hesitate to raise an opinion on what he is going to do or not. And even if he gets this command, it will always be subordinate to the civilian directives issued by the Politburo and Soviet leadership. In the Soviet Union, as in America, as in the West, it is not the military that makes war; the military have to do whatever the tasks if there is a conflict, but they will not—at this time, they are not—the determining factor in whether a country will go to war. The last example was

Japan, where the military decided to go to war and completely neglected the political imponderabilia connected with the United States' position. In other words, they should have been very careful not to have attacked the United States, but to go directly for British and Dutch possessions, and therefore force the United States to declare war. Even if it had happened, it would have taken perhaps weeks, or perhaps months, and it would have given, even up 'til now, the United States a sort of guilt complex: "We have attacked Japan who has never attacked us in order to protect the colonial empires of the British and the Dutch." And there are no signs that in the Soviet Union the military are supreme in matters of policy of war and peace.

**EIR:** Do you believe this could change given what currently seems to be a leadership crisis in the Soviet Union?

**Dr. Luns:** There is a leadership crisis in the sense that, whether he was Andropov or now Chernenko, they have been rather old men, and rather ailing men. For a number of years, the leadership in the Soviet Union has been in the hands of a small group of people and not one man. The Politburo makes the decisions and only changes when there is new leadership. The experiences with Stalin were such that the Soviets will be rather afraid of repeating the experience. But, at the same time, it remains a very clear case of absolute dictatorship by a small group and not by one man.

**EIR:** Would you agree to the premise that Soviet military doctrine always aims at the capability of winning wars and not for mere deterrence?

**Dr. Luns:** Yes, I quite agree, but they are very much aware of the fact that you cannot win a war which has become an all-out nuclear onslaught because, even if on points or on paper you have won it, you will have won it with a completely destroyed country, with your capital and perhaps your leadership gone, too. That is what deters, that is the great deterrent value of nuclear weapons. NATO too always has a nuclear phase in its maneuvers, but they must do it in order to maintain the credibility of their deterrent. NATO must maintain the sense of uncertainty in the Kremlin whether in time of war NATO will escalate and use nuclear weapons.

**EIR:** In the summer of last year, the Soviets staged military maneuvers that were said to demonstrate the heightening of their blitzkrieg capabilities, while simultaneously they undertook various measures, such as withholding military trucks from taking part in last year's harvest. Do you feel that there has been a sharpening of the Soviet military thrust over the past two or three years?

**Dr. Luns:** Let me say that generally speaking the Soviets every year try to increase their armaments and at the same time they keep all the old military systems, to the contrary of NATO. Their armament is the only factor which gives them the status of superpower. They always give great importance

to their military power, knowing too that it gives them prestige, gives them leverage in some instance, and gives them the status of superpower. On the whole, the Soviets are rather convinced that America is rearming too much at this moment under President Reagan, whereas I would say that the rearmament of America is peace preserving because there is no country that is more aware of the power factor than the Soviet Union. So, if America becomes stronger, that will induce them to become more cautious.

**EIR:** You would say that, in their own view, the Soviets see their military strength as the primary factor for their superpower status?

**Dr. Luns:** Not in just their view but in everybody's view. If the Soviets had a very weak defense, you wouldn't give much for what they say or they don't say.

**EIR:** The last couple of years has seen a growing militarization of the Soviet economy with a further strengthening of the military-industrial complex of the Soviet economy at the expense of the rest of the economy. What is your view of this development?

**Dr. Luns:** As far as the statistics go, the condition of the Soviet people has improved slightly this last 10 years; they are less miserable than they were before. Having said that, there remains a factor that the Soviets continue to devote far too much to their military machine, to the tune of about 15% of their gross national income, which compares to the 4% of the NATO countries in Europe and to the 6% or 7% of the United States. Whether you can say there is a growing accent on the military complex, I hesitate to agree. The minister of defense of the Soviet Union speaking to a European minister who asked him whether it was difficult to get what they wanted said, "No, not too difficult; we just say what we want and then we get it, and the rest can go to the civilian sector."

**EIR:** How do you view Soviet strategy vis-à-vis Western Europe in terms of subversion, especially in light of a reported increase in Soviet spetsnaz capabilities?

**Dr. Luns:** Let me remind you of the fact that the Soviet Union has always tried to profit and to take advantage of the terrorist movements in Europe. To pervert the mentality of the peoples of the West has always been one of the great activities of a special sector of the NKVD which employs hundreds and hundreds of people. In these last years, they seem to profit from the fact that terrorism in our countries is on the rise with all sorts of extreme groups. In Spain and Great Britain, we have the Basques and the Irish Republican Army, and in the Federal Republic of Germany, the Red Army Faction, and in Italy, the Red Brigades. My own impression is that the various terrorist organizations will have a certain impact, by making people more nervous. Far more precautions must be taken to protect leading people, not only in Europe but also in the States where there have been various

attempts, also on the President and others. But it will not be conducive to a change of policy in these countries. Therefore, it is not strong enough.

**EIR:** The assassinations of General Audran in Paris and Mr. Zimmermann of MTN in Munich, two non-public figures, has brought us to the conclusion that there is at least an indirect, if not direct involvement of the Soviet intelligence services in terrorism. Would you agree with this conclusion?

**Dr. Luns:** I don't exclude it at all, but neither you nor I have concrete proofs, but all indications are there. I would think it highly probable.

---

*Generally speaking the Soviets every year try to increase their armaments and at the same time, they keep all the old military systems, to the contrary of NATO. Their armament is the only factor which gives them the status of superpower. Not in just their view but in everybody's view. If the Soviets had a very weak defense, you wouldn't give much for what they say or they don't say.*

---

**EIR:** How do you see the Soviet trend of subversion in the Western media?

**Dr. Luns:** One must take note of the fact that a great part of the media in Western Europe is definitely left-wing, and they are anti-NATO, they are anti-American, and they are always rather worrying. And the tendency has been strengthened in these last 10 years.

**EIR:** Do you see an accentuation of anti-Americanism and anti-NATO tendencies in the European Social Democracies as we have seen in the case of West Germany?

**Dr. Luns:** It is unfortunately the case that some Social Democratic parties have become more radical, more anti-American, have a tendency to show far too much compassion for the Soviets and to be far too critical of the United States and of the West. I would say that in Spain, such is not the case, nor in Italy. In France, the leadership, the President and quite a few of the ministers are more sympathetic to the United States than President Giscard d'Estaing was. But in other

countries, Germany for instance, or Great Britain, probably the Scandinavian countries, and also in the Netherlands, the Social Democrats have become more socialists than democrats.

**EIR:** Recently, the Soviet press has endorsed the Green movement in West Germany in an unprecedented way. Do you see this as a new level of Soviet intervention into the Western political system?

**Dr. Luns:** You mean the Greens. . . . They try to profit from these movements and to take advantage of them. It is not a new line of politics. They always take advantage where they can. Let us say the Greens suddenly emerged and it is very anti-government and very radical. The Soviets will certainly try to profit from it. It is a constant line of the Soviets.

**EIR:** The head of the West German Interior Security Services recently charged that the Soviets and East Germans have been involved in financing, through indirect means, the Green Movement and the so-called Peace Movement. Could you comment on this?

**Dr. Luns:** I would rather believe that. My tendency is to believe such a statement.

**EIR:** How do you see the role of the churches in Western Europe, particularly the Protestant churches, in respect to basic questions of defense, NATO, and relations with the United States, and how are the Soviets playing it?

**Dr. Luns:** There you have the same phenomenon as I have just signaled concerning the left-wing parties. It happens in the Protestant churches and the Catholic Church as well, especially in the northern countries of Europe. They are far more interested in left-wing politics, far less willing to conform to the directives of the Pope and the Vatican, although not as serious as in some countries. In Latin America, like in Nicaragua, quite a few priests have become so radicalized that they are no longer Roman Catholics. Some Protestant clerics show the same tendency.

**EIR:** How do you view growing tendencies in the United States to call for higher priority on the defense of United States' interests in South and Central America at the expense of American security interests in Western Europe?

**Dr. Luns:** That, fortunately, is only a very small group in America. It would be disastrous for the United States and also for Europe were America to follow that line. But I have yet to meet one responsible American politician who would say that Latin American is more important than Europe.

**EIR:** How do you judge statements by Henry Kissinger over recent months pointing towards a de-emphasis on the United States presence in Western Europe as in his *Time* magazine piece of March 5 of last year?

**Dr. Luns:** I have known Henry Kissinger for many years, I

admire his intellect, and I like his personality, but these proposals are rather dangerous. To propose that the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe should no longer be an American but a European would weaken the alliance. An American commander in chief has direct access to the President and to Congress, is in the United States on the average once a month, and can directly influence the American political machine. Not so if he were a European. And to have an American as secretary general would be bad, too, because it is already difficult for a European to know all the various tendencies and nuances of the European members of NATO, but for an American it would be far more difficult. Therefore, it should stay as it is now, and the success of Mr. Kissinger's article was rather small, to say it mildly.

**EIR:** Why do you think Henry Kissinger made that proposal in the first place?

**Dr. Luns:** I am not party to his innermost thoughts, but he might have believed it would be good to rock the boat a little and see what the reaction would be. It was not his most serious proposal I would say.

**EIR:** How do you view the likelihood of a U.S. troop reduction in Western Europe?

**Dr. Luns:** Small. It was far more dangerous in the time of [Ambassador to NATO Mike] Mansfield. The last attempt by Senator Nunn, his so-called Nunn amendment to reduce troop strength in Europe, failed. And if it came about it would be demoralizing for Europe, it would encourage the Soviet Union and would, in my strong conviction, make NATO weaker. The possibility of an armed conflict might increase.

**EIR:** What is your view of the Soviet naval build up?

**Dr. Luns:** The Soviet navy is by essence an offensive instrument. The Soviet Union is in the happy position that, all they need in time of war, they can get from allies with which the Soviet Union has common frontiers. From overseas, they need only a little bauxite and some chocolate and bananas, on which they are not overeating in time of peace. Although the Soviet navy is inferior to the American navy, it is a very great menace.

**EIR:** Putting aside budgetary and political constraints, what can be done to improve the defense of NATO's northern flank?

**Dr. Luns:** First of all, the naval posture should be strengthened. I said that the American navy is stronger than the Soviet navy, but it is typical in naval warfare that you don't have to be superior in order to concentrate at certain points a superior force, especially in the case of a naval war against NATO, because we have to protect six, seven, eight vital sea lanes, and the Soviets can choose where to concentrate. Just think of the menace which the two super dreadnaughts, the Bismarck and the Terpitz, and the two battle cruisers, Scharn-

horst and Gneisenau, and the three pocket battleships the Germans had in the last war, presented to the Allies. While the British alone had 15 battleships, 45 cruisers, and hundreds of destroyers, they constituted a menace because they could concentrate at points they could choose. Therefore, the Soviet naval threat is very serious, indeed. The more so as their submarine fleet is bigger than all of the submarine fleets of the whole world combined, and they have more nuclear submarines armed with missiles and slightly more nuclear attack submarines than America and France and Great Britain combined. The naval posture is rather worrying, and strengthening the navy, in turn, would be in the interest of protecting northern Norway, and an increase in the conventional capabilities of the allies, especially Norway and Denmark, would also be in order.

**EIR:** In this respect, what is your strongest concern in respect to West Germany?

**Dr. Luns:** On the whole, Germany being the strongest military power in the Alliance after the United States and the German forces being well trained and well equipped, the German military posture is rather satisfactory. They might perhaps increase somewhat their navy, they might increase somewhat their armored strength. But on the whole the German military machine is very efficient and is rather large. It is interesting to note that the Soviet Union fears only three armies, the German, for obvious reasons, the American, because of the tremendous industrial power of the United States, and the Turkish army because of the high quality of its soldiers.

**EIR:** In this respect what can be done on NATO's southern flank, particularly in respect to Greece and Turkey?

**Dr. Luns:** Greece is a special case. Its present policies are such that I wouldn't be surprised if America, would withdraw its forces from Greece in the near future. This would automatically enhance the military and political weight of Turkey within the Alliance. The weakness of the southern flank is really the weakness of its conventional strength. On the other hand, an attack, let us say, on the eastern part of Turkey, cannot take place without at once involving all the other allies. So you cannot isolate one country from the others because an attack in the north of Norway, or against Turkey, or by air against Canada, would at once be the *casus belli* for the whole Alliance.

**EIR:** How do you assess the Soviet Union's capability for surprise?

**Dr. Luns:** Not too high. There will always be a warning time. The Soviets cannot just tomorrow morning launch an offensive. We will know it days and days before. Furthermore, they need to consult their allies, and it is not a small thing to suddenly go to war with 16 countries, and among them the United States, with its tremendous power. The

warning time will allow us to increase considerably our posture in Europe. So a surprise attack is not likely.

**EIR:** What is your concern in respect to Italy and Spain?

**Dr. Luns:** The Italian political situation is not completely satisfactory, but on the other hand, the Italian armed forces have improved considerably. I saw some of their divisions in action in northern Italy, well equipped, with a very good morale. Their fleet has a number of highly sophisticated and new units, and they are building a number of new vessels. And Spain is another question. For the moment, the integration of the Spanish forces has not taken place, but the tremendous value of Spain lies in its geographical position. Suppose there were a war in Europe and suppose that everything went wrong so that the Soviets would overrun Norway and Denmark and Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium and Luxemburg and France and perhaps Italy, too. Even then, it would be likely that the barrier of the Pyrenees could be held. So, Spain and Portugal would become the bridgehead for the reconquest of Europe. That is the great value of Spain, and then, of course, now that Spain is a member of NATO, she will profit from the military experiences of NATO. Their armed forces are in the process of being modernized. The Spanish fleet will shortly have a new aircraft carrier, and they have quite a few very modern missile-carrying frigates being built or in commission. In the Alliance when you talk about real ocean-going navies, next to America, and of course, Great Britain and France, there are Spain, Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands, which are countries that have well balanced and ocean-going fleets.

**EIR:** How do you assess ideas associated with the Club of Rome that allege that there are limits to growth?

**Dr. Luns:** I have not an enormous admiration for the Club of Rome. I think their proposals are not always very realistic.

**EIR:** What do you think concerning the prevailing cultural pessimism and what can be done to revive the cultural fabric of the Western Alliance?

**Dr. Luns:** That is the \$64,000 question. When you look at what is purported to be art at this moment, especially pictorial art, you ask yourself what is coming over mankind. I have here "Art in Auction," which I get every year from Sotheby's, and the last number shows some incredibly incomprehensible art, so-called masterpieces. Let me look for it and you may share my astonishment. [Dr. Luns walks to his bookshelf for the said volume] Here we have a Dutchman, Appel, he got for this incomprehensible painting \$847,000, this abstract masterpiece got \$1,815,000, and now we have three photos of Elvis Presley which sold for \$184,500. . . . So I would say that I am worried about what is now being called art and what is being shown in the Museum of Modern Art. It makes me gloomy and despondent. It looks indeed like cultural decadence.