

## 'France rejects the EDC' from Le Soir (1 September 1954)

**Caption:** On 1 September 1954, the Belgian daily newspaper Le Soir publishes Paul-Henri Spaak's reactions to the failure of the European Defence Community (EDC).

**Source:** Le Soir. 01.09.1954, n° 243; 68e année. Bruxelles: S.A. Rossel. "La France rejette la CED", p. 1.

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**Last updated:** 06/07/2016

## France rejects the EDC

### Mr Spaak's comments

Upon his arrival at Rue de la Loi on Tuesday afternoon, Paul-Henri Spaak, Minister of Foreign Affairs, was questioned by a group of journalists and asked to comment on the vote taken on Monday in the French National Assembly, a vote which clearly signals defeat for the EDC.

The Minister emphasised the importance of the event, adding that the decision of the French National Assembly would represent a significant upheaval in European world policy.

Rather than falling out, however, the best policy was to remain calm and look towards the future. Restructuring would be necessary, although, at present, it was impossible to say how the situation would develop.

The Minister went on to state that the vote in the French National Assembly had obviously not resolved anything. Purely negative as it was, it had taken place amid tremendous confusion and, as far as could be seen, there was no underlying policy. It had recently been announced that Mr Reynaud was planning to make a statement, and this could lead the President of the French Council to reveal future plans.

The vote broached two main issues: European integration and German rearmament. Regarding the first of these, Mr Spaak took the view that it was now necessary to take stock of the situation before beginning again from scratch. 'The European idea, just like the Atlantic idea, is undergoing a crisis, but it should be remembered that the EDC was simply the product of events and has been something of an encumbrance to European integration. Had there not been these imperatives, we would no doubt have approached integration in some other way from the very outset,' he remarked.

In Mr Spaak's opinion, there was *a priori* no immediate advantage in uniting as a Six, or an Eight, for example. He did stress, however, that NATO had constantly confirmed its view that the EDC was an essential structure. This would justify the 14 NATO powers taking up the issue.

The Minister pointed out that he would very shortly have an opportunity to make a statement to the Senate and Chamber committees. He intended to use that occasion to submit a paper outlining the proposals made by Mr Mendès France which demonstrated the extent to which the Five had been sympathetic to the French position and were prepared to make concessions.

While it is accepted that, in the short term, German sovereignty is to be restored, the sensitive issue of German rearmament still remains, although there is agreement among experts that German rearmament is unavoidable. Politicians have not yet been able to come up with a new formula, although they are currently in the process of developing one. They must be given time to achieve that end. If the EDC is no longer required, the solution which automatically springs to mind is that of including Germany in NATO. Whether this is feasible or even possible will very much depend on France.

Mr Spaak admitted in his response to one question that what had taken place in Paris constituted a formidable victory for Soviet diplomacy. He added that whilst the ending of hostilities in Indo-China gave cause for celebration, it had to be acknowledged that the Geneva outcome likewise constituted a victory for the Communists. It needs to be asked whether what has taken place is the best preparation for talks aimed at forcing concessions from the Soviet Union.

The Minister added that the EDC was to have been an important element in the defence of the West and had also been a milestone on the road to European integration. In one sense, it was difficult to make progress on European integration whilst at the same time putting in place structures for defence. However, one thing was clear: German divisions would have to be integrated into the defence of Europe, a fact acknowledged by the military establishment. If defence considerations had not been uppermost, we would have been able to apply ourselves more systematically to the issue of the political and economic organisation of Europe per se.

Now there was no longer a question of an EDC, these two issues were separate, and supporters of the European idea, irrespective of their position vis-à-vis the EDC, would be able to reformulate the problems of European unification. We should harbour no illusions, however, because there would not be further difficulties to overcome.

Questioned about the French position with regard to Article 38 of the EDC Treaty, Mr Spaak referred to the press statement which he had made last Sunday:

‘The Five have informed Mr Mendès France that they have no objections to the President of the Council’s comments that he wanted to slow down the political organisation of Europe, but they have nonetheless made it clear that they themselves have no intention of making any similar declaration.’

Mr Spaak concluded by repeating his intention to submit a paper to the Foreign Affairs committees outlining the extent of the concessions made to the French at the Brussels Conference.