

Letter from Paul-Henri Spaak to Konrad Adenauer (Brussels, 4 April 1955)

Caption: On 4 April 1955, Paul-Henri Spaak, Belgian Foreign Minister, sends a letter to the German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, in which he proposes a revival of the European idea by extending the responsibilities of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) to other sources of energy and to transport.

Source: Ministère des Affaires étrangères; Commission de publication des DDF (sous la dir.). Documents diplomatiques français. Volume I: 1955, 1er janvier-30 juin. Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1987. 849 p. p. 400.

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Now that the Paris Treaty has been ratified by the various parliaments, I think that the time has come to settle the issue raised by Mr Monnet's resignation as President of the High Authority and to try to put the European idea back on the agenda.

As I see it, the two things are linked. I believe that Mr Bech, who is currently President of the Committee of Ministers of the ECSC, is intending to propose that the Foreign Ministers meet in Luxembourg on a day in the week commencing 25 April. I think that, during that meeting, we should adopt our joint strategy.

I believe that the best solution would be to keep Mr Monnet as President of the High Authority. All the combinations envisaged with a view to replacing him have run into very genuine difficulties.

Obviously, Mr Monnet can go back on his decision only if there is a new development. In my view, it is up to us to create that new development. What is needed is for the Foreign Ministers to proclaim publicly their determination to give fresh impetus to the European idea by expanding the power and responsibilities of the European Coal and Steel Community. Such expansion could apply to all current forms of energy (electricity, gas and fuel) and means of transport (railways, inland waterways, and road and air transport). The pooling of efforts to develop the use of atomic energy for non-military purposes could also be entrusted to an agency subordinate to the ECSC. If we are to expand the ECSC in this way, an international conference would have to be convened as a matter of urgency to discuss the practicalities and also, ultimately, draft a treaty. That conference could no doubt be chaired by Mr Monnet himself, given his solid experience of the issues.

If the Foreign Ministers were able to agree on such a policy in Luxembourg, they could notify Mr Monnet accordingly and point out that there was no longer any justification for his resignation, since the policy that he himself had recommended was going to be pursued.

If matters could be arranged as I describe, I have good reason to believe Mr Monnet would go back on his decision. We should then have solved two problems at once: the problem of the Presidency of the High Authority and the problem of giving Europe new impetus. I do not think that I need emphasise to you that there is no time to be lost: we must take advantage of the atmosphere created by ratification of the Paris Treaties to push ahead with European policy and regain some of the ground that we lost last summer.

The present situation seems rather favourable. I am struck by how much general support there is in Belgium for the idea of European integration.

I have recently had a number of contacts with my Dutch and Luxembourg colleagues, and I believe that I can assure you that they share the ideas and sentiments expressed in this letter.

According to certain information, the French Government, too, is likely to support such a policy and, although I do not know the Italian Government's views on the subject, I have no reason to suppose that it would oppose it.

One thing worries me a little: how would Britain react to the idea of pursuing the European idea outside WEU? I should tell you that I mentioned this to the British Ambassador in Brussels a few weeks ago, since I did not want the British to be faced suddenly with a situation of which they had had no prior notice, but I have so far received no indication of what position they might take.

I should naturally be very glad to know how you feel about all this before the meeting at the end of April, since I believe that we need to have cleared the ground by that time.