

'Paul-Henri Spaak elected President of the Assembly of the Coal and Steel Community' from Le Monde (12 September 1952)

Caption: On 12 September 1952, the French daily newspaper Le Monde comments on the appointment of Paul-Henri Spaak as President of the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community in Strasbourg.

Source: Le Monde. dir. de publ. BEUVE-MÉRY, Hubert. 12.09.1952, n° 2373; 9e année. Paris: Le Monde. "M. Paul-Henri Spaak est élu président de l'Assemblée de la communauté du charbon et de l'acier", auteur:Schwoebel, Jean , p. 1.

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Strasbourg

Paul-Henri Spaak elected

President of the Assembly of the Coal and Steel Community

By phone, from our special correspondent Jean Schœwbel

Strasbourg, 11 September — The first session of the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community opened yesterday evening, Wednesday, at the headquarters of the Council of Europe, with an address by the oldest member, Boggiano Pico. The rest of the evening was devoted to procedural matters.

It was only at 10 o'clock this Thursday morning that the Assembly got down to the business of electing a President. Fierce competition for the post had been announced yesterday. But, contrary to expectations, the Belgian Socialist leader, Paul-Henri Spaak, won on the first ballot, polling 38 votes against 30 for Heinrich von Brentano, leader of the West German Christian Democratic group.

Yesterday evening, the new President had declared he was not a candidate, explaining to us personally that he would accept the presidency only as a means of resolving a deadlock.

In the end, Mr de Menthon, whose name had also been mentioned, did not stand. He is already President of the Assembly of the Council of Europe. Mr Spaak said yesterday that it was not a good idea for the same man to chair both bodies, and many people agreed with him. Mr Monnet, who is eager to preserve the independence and autonomy of the new Assembly, was himself probably not in favour of a dual mandate.

Mr von Brentano was supported by Italy and several other delegations keen to counterbalance French influence, which is very strong owing to the presence of Mr Monnet as President of the High Authority. But Mr von Brentano was decisively defeated.

The considerable public interest in the election of the President of the Assembly is very understandable.

The first meeting of the Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community is more than just the third decisive step in the Schuman Plan, following the establishment of the High Authority and the recent meeting of the Council of Ministers of the pool in Luxembourg. It is also a red-letter day in European politics, since the Assembly is the first European parliament responsible for directly and democratically controlling a supranational power. As the six foreign Ministers have given it the task of drawing up a plan for a European political authority by 10 March 1953, it will act as a kind of European constituent assembly.

In these circumstances, it is easy to understand the highly-charged atmosphere in the corridors of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, especially among the Members of the Consultative Assembly. Speaking only yesterday, Paul Reynaud again said the Consultative Assembly was now nothing more than a talking-shop doomed to gradual disappearance. All Members' eyes are turned to the new Assembly, which seems destined to play the truly European role that should have fallen to the Council of Europe.

All the delegates of the six ECSC countries, as well as European federalists from the fifteen member nations of the Council of Europe, are eager to play a part in the new Assembly.