

'The meeting of the Ministers of the Coal and Steel Community' from the Corriere della Sera (9 September 1952)

Caption: On 9 September 1952, the Italian daily newspaper Corriere della Sera analyses the implications of the inaugural session of the ECSC Special Council of Ministers which the German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer chaired the previous day.

Source: Corriere della Sera. 09.09.1952, n° 213; anno 77. Milano: Corriere della Sera. "La riunione dei ministri della comunità carbone-acciaio", auteur:Sansa, Giorgio , p. 1.

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In Luxembourg, Europe's first capital

The meeting of the Ministers of the Coal and Steel Community

Speeches by Adenauer and Monnet — The Saar question will also be discussed by Schuman and the German Chancellor — De Gasperi present at the gathering

From our special correspondent

Luxembourg 8 September, evening.

It takes an effort to realise it, but it is true: we are telephoning today from what is, in embryonic form, the first capital of Europe, albeit provisionally. With the installation of the High Authority of the Coal and Steel Community, which took place on 10 August, and with today's inauguration of the Council of Ministers of that Community, life has begun for an organisation unprecedented in history. It is not yet a European federation, although it may wish to become so; nor is it, however, a simple alliance of interests. The Coal and Steel Community, as was pointed out by yesterday's speakers, is an international body that, within the limited scope of the production and distribution of these two basic raw materials, stands above the countries of which it is comprised, since they have handed over part of their national sovereignty. If this is not the beginning of a very close union, and possibly a federation, we do not know what is.

The European Coal and Steel Community will have three institutions, two of which exist already. They are the High Authority, which has been in operation for one month, the Council of Ministers, which came into being today, and an Assembly of seventy-eight members, which will be formally inaugurated in Strasburg on Wednesday in the main hall of the Council of Europe. The rotating presidency now falls to Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, because Germany comes first in alphabetical order in the French language. The speech he delivered was very clear and he spoke with evident conviction, indeed with the faith that is born in politicians from the marriage of realism and the call of inexorable necessity, although it can be assumed that faith born in such a way is inherited more from one parent than the other.

Explaining the nature of the Council of Ministers, he said it would be the 'federal' body of the Community and that, as such, it would have a dual character: first of all, it would be a supranational body, having its own sovereignty and therefore able to act independently from the six States, regulating and administering the sovereign rights transferred to the Community; secondly, it would enable the voices of the six States to be heard here and would represent those of their interests falling within the part of sovereignty that has not been transferred, concerning the economy in general and the political issues on which the activities of the pool might touch. In other words, its task will be one of liaison and mediation. 'The Council of Ministers,' stated Adenauer, 'stands on the dividing line between the two types of sovereignty, supranational and national.' He emphasised the need to be broad-minded, thereby giving an implicit warning of the continuing threat posed by small-minded nationalism. Will the aim be achieved? The Chancellor is relying first and foremost on the power generated by the development of the organisation. Much has already been done that would have seemed utopian just a few years ago.

Mr Jean Monnet, the French President of the High Authority of the pool, spoke with equal conviction and, to some extent, paraphrased the words of his German colleague. 'The Council of Ministers,' he went on to add, 'will create the environment essential for the common aims only if it ensures that its responsibility vis-à-vis this group of nations is accompanied by feelings of common responsibility in all the administrations of the six countries; because we must make a break with old habits and feel confident that each of us will soon understand that we are not serving the interests of our own country unless we merge them with those of the others.' The goal is to achieve a common opinion and not just compromises between particular interests ... Thus today's session came to an end.

Over the next two days, further steps are also to be taken in Luxembourg. Two problems need to be discussed. First of all, the six Foreign Ministers will address the idea of giving political authority to the group of nations linked by the coal and steel pool and the defence treaty, which would be a further step

towards a federation. As has been noted, the problem would have fallen within the province of the Ministers of the defence Union but, because the relevant treaty has not yet been ratified and the community therefore exists only potentially, it has been decided, on a proposal from Alcide De Gasperi, to entrust the task to the Council of Foreign Ministers for the Schuman Plan, which is composed of the same people anyway. Secondly, Chancellor Adenauer and his French colleague Mr Robert Schuman will have private discussions on the Saar question and will perhaps call on the advice of Mr De Gasperi, by whose judgement they set great store.

This second series of negotiations in parallel with the work of the Ministers of the Coal and Steel Community — that is the Franco-German discussions — will, from an immediately practical point of view, be more important than the first. For the aim is to resolve the serious dispute if possible or, if not, to settle it temporarily, avoiding a situation in which Germany brings its *memorandum* on the Saar into the discussion in Strasbourg, which could cause a great deal of bad feeling. However, if Adenauer — who is having to deal with an opposition and a majority that is highly sensitive about this issue — is to be able to justify sheathing a weapon (the threat of producing the *memorandum*) brandished during the recent controversies, Schuman will at least have to concede to him the postponement of the Saar elections until pro-German candidates have been admitted to the electoral contests. On this subject, it appears this evening that the French will give way and Adenauer will say that he is satisfied at least for the moment. The present tension was really caused by a misunderstanding: Schuman promised by letter to discuss everything with the Germans, including the Franco-Saar economic situation, while Adenauer believed that his French colleague had promised to change that situation in accordance with German wishes. Today, the men from Bonn will not be banging their heads against the wall; they merely hope that the wall will crumble in time as a result of the economic advantages that should be generated by the coal and steel pool. We trust that this hope is not justified solely by the understandably optimistic mood of the first few days of Europe's first capital.

Mr De Gasperi, the President of the Council, arrived in Luxembourg at midday today. He is accompanied by Minister Piero Campilli and Undersecretary Emilio Paolo Taviani.

Giorgio Sansa