

## ‘The Conference of ECSC Foreign Ministers opens today in Messina’, from Corriere della Sera

**Caption:** On 1 June 1955, commenting on the opening of the Messina Conference of the Foreign Ministers of the Six, the Italian daily newspaper Corriere della Sera considers the prospects for a revival of the process of European cooperation.

**Source:** Corriere della Sera. 01.06.1955, n° 129; anno 80. Milano: Corriere della Sera. "Si apre oggi a Messina la conferenza dei ministri degli Esteri della C.E.C.A.", auteur:Airoidi, Aldo , p. 7.

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## The Conference of ECSC Foreign Ministers opens today in Messina

### Mayer likely to be appointed President of the High Authority

From our special correspondent

**Taormina** 31 May, evening.

The delegations of the governments of the six ECSC countries who will be taking part in the Conference of the six Foreign Ministers in Messina tomorrow have closeted themselves away in the tranquillity of Taormina's upper town. Even up there, the flags of the ECSC countries are intermingled with the manifestos for the Sicilian elections; it may well be that Minister Martino, in organising this international conference in his city, was mindful of the difficult battle facing the democratic parties in the regional elections.

The delegations of the six ECSC countries have their own concerns, however, that have no place among the publicity disseminated by the electoral propaganda machine, and it is perhaps for this reason as well that they have chosen to isolate themselves up there, where initial contacts have been made.

Few can be unaware that the ECSC is going through a difficult period. Alcide De Gasperi and, in general, so many supporters of European unity believed that once the machinery of integration had been set in motion, in the end it would inevitably involve other sectors and gain ever wider powers. If an organisation of a supranational nature grinds to a halt, however, there is little doubt that it will sooner or later be re-absorbed into the old system of national economies and bilateral and multilateral pacts.

This is the threat facing the ECSC. The collapse of the EDC has also meant that the plans for sovereign supranational bodies, drawn up by the Ad Hoc Assembly, have been shelved; following Pierre Mendès France's rise to power in France, the President of the High Authority of the Coal and Steel Community, Jean Monnet, who already felt hampered by some of the limits on his powers, especially in the taxation and welfare areas, found himself in disagreement and handed in his resignation last November.

The whole machine is now grinding to a halt and if this standstill were to continue the ECSC might well disappear as well: people are already saying now, for instance, that its supranational executive is just one of the usual coordinating committees of national governments.

The Messina Conference should resolve two questions: the appointment of the new President of the High Authority and the 'revival' of European integration plans in order to breathe new life and prestige into the idea of Europe and European institutions.

There is little doubt that Mr Monnet has been the organiser and leader of the ECSC in its first two years; he hinted recently that he would withdraw his resignation, but on the proviso that he received some guarantees about the extension of the powers of the ECSC and the plans for European integration.

However, the new geography of the French Parliament in particular, with the influence of the Gaullists, and the international situation, with the involvement of Britain, rule out further-reaching concessions from the point of view of supranationality; the new French Government whose task it is, in practice at least, to propose the President of the High Authority of the ECSC, is supporting the candidacy of the former President of the Council, René Mayer, who has less fixed ideas about the methods by which economic integration can be achieved.

His appointment should now be unanimously approved by the Foreign Ministers of the ECSC countries. According to news filtering out from the diplomatic delegations, 'bitter words' about the French are to be expected from the Belgians and Germans, who feel that Mr Monnet has been sacrificed for reasons of internal policy. The Italians also liked Mr Monnet, despite having introduced only a few measures of a social nature; they will to some extent be the peacemakers, especially as the French Government has avoided candidates with more anti-European leanings (Paul Ramadier, for instance); no one, however, is

keen to fall out with the French Government over this issue, and it is therefore likely that Mr Mayer will be appointed President of the High Authority.

The other issue — plans for European integration — seems more complex, because it will revive the old dispute between vertical or sectoral integration (such as the coal and steel community) and horizontal integration (i.e. covering all goods sectors and achieved chiefly through the liberalisation of trade, customs tariff reductions, and so on).

The Benelux countries have already unveiled their own plan (which the French have not exactly welcomed) in which they jointly envisage wide-ranging horizontal integration by set deadlines, and vertical integration in the sectors of transport and other energy sources (electricity, oil, gas and atomic energy). According to news we have received this evening from Luxembourg, the Benelux plan, which is encountering a whole range of problems, will not even be discussed in Messina and may well be modified subsequently and possibly even dropped altogether.

The delegations at the Messina Conference will be chaired by Ministers Gaetano Martino for Italy, Antoine Pinay for France, Paul-Henri Spaak for Belgium, Johan Beyen for the Netherlands and Joseph Bech for Luxembourg and by Under-Secretary Walter Hallstein, representing Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, for Germany.

Sensational results are not to be expected, since even the plans for the relaunch of European integration are to be studied in further depth and fleshed out. The approach taken to these plans, however, should help us to understand whether what is involved is no more than a sop to the notion of European unity, or its concrete revival.

Aldo Airoldi