

## 'A small European capital ... with reservations' from the Süddeutsche Zeitung (11 August 1952)

**Caption:** On 11 August 1952, the day after the inaugural session of the High Authority in Luxembourg, the German daily newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung paints a sober picture of Luxembourg and describes the lack of enthusiasm for this inaugural session.

**Source:** Süddeutsche Zeitung. Münchner Neueste Nachrichten aus Politik, Kultur, Wirtschaft und Sport. Hrsg. FRIEDMANN, Werner; GOLDSCHAGG, Edmund; SCHÖNINGH, Dr. Franz Josef; SCHWINGENSTEIN, August. 11.08.1952, n° 183; 8. Jg. München: Süddeutscher Verlag. "Kleine Europa-Hauptstadt mit Vorbehalt", auteur:Bühl, Fritz , p. 3.

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



## A small European capital ... with reservations

### In a modest ceremony, Luxembourg hosts the inauguration of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community

*From our correspondent Fritz Brühl*

Luxembourg, 16 August

Saturday evening's procession in the 'Place d'Armes', a square framed by bistros and souvenir shops in the city centre, was hardly distinguishable from the kinds of innocent entertainment normally on offer in the capital at the close of day. As was usual, the girls, well-versed in the art of applying the latest advances in cosmetics, strolled up and down, as yet undecided as to whether they should be playing the role of women or still children. The boys, aged between 16 to 19, stood with their bicycles around the edge of the square — Luxembourg is the land of the velocipedes and international road race cyclists — their hair brushed and their suits cut in the American style. Almost devoutly, the older people sat around the bandstand in the shade of the trees and drank their wine, aperitif or beer — their drinks somehow reflecting the fact that the Duchy shares its borders with three other countries — and the golden-yellow glow of the floodlights played on the public buildings, turning their columns and façades to bronze. As the programme promised, the three bass tubas and the army of clarinets, bassoons and trumpets of the Grand Duke's Military Band blasted out their repertoire into a sultry, overcast evening 'in honour of the meeting of the Schuman Plan High Authority' — Bizet's lengthy 'L'Arlésienne' followed by the 'Nouvelle Vie' waltz.

Now that the honour of becoming the seat of the European Coal and Steel Community has fallen unexpectedly on this town — rather like when Josy Barthel took Olympic gold for Luxembourg in Helsinki — it is hoping for new impetus. With the sort of haste demonstrated years earlier in Bonn, the city has vacated its railway management offices and made ready the four-storeyed administrative building on Luxembourg's Avenue de la Liberté; the last few removal men could still be seen in action on Saturday. Luxembourg's journalists have been anxiously trying to discover from both Schuman and Adenauer — currently staying at their holiday residences — whether Luxembourg will actually remain as the seat of the European Coal and Steel Community. As the solution to the Saar question seems ever less imminent, the prospect that Luxembourg's provisional status as the seat of the Schuman Plan will be retained becomes all the more likely. As the old saying goes: 'there is nothing quite so permanent as a temporary arrangement.' Even now, with the celebrations in Luxembourg going on, one can still detect just a hint of Belgian resentment that Liège was unable to win the race to be the seat. For, in the opinion of all the experts who had spent weeks searching throughout Europe for a suitable city, Liège was, in many respects, the better option. The Belgians now have to comfort themselves with the thought that decisions of this type usually 'owe more to politics than to good sense'.

And so it is in this city on the River Alzette that the nine Members of the High Authority (two German, two French, two Belgian and one each from Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Italy) will have their nameplates put on their doors, ask their secretaries to take dictation and be driven around in their cars. The skyline of this capital of just 70 000 inhabitants — the entire population of the country numbers only 300 000 — is not, as in Liège, shaped by smokestacks but rather by rolling hills and forests more reminiscent of the Eifel region. Only the ostentatious and overbearing 'ARBED' building, built 30 years previously, serves as a reminder that this is iron and steel country and that these industries rule alongside, perhaps even ahead of, the Grand Duchess. Moreover, the city, with its wide avenues and voluminous traffic, its churches and its blocks of flats, does give the impression of a capital city, one which at first sight could well be believed to have three times its actual number of inhabitants.

In recent years, there certainly has hardly been a 'festive occasion' more businesslike, brief and dispassionate than the investiture of the nine Members at midday on Sunday in Luxembourg's Town Hall. Only a few dozen inhabitants watched the delegates arrive at the Town Hall, whose exterior gives the impression that the soot of the entire European Coal and Steel Community has already fallen onto it. While the great chandeliers and wall lamps burning in the well-proportioned hall, the tea roses perfectly positioned

at one end of the hall under a picture of the Grand Duchess, the flags of the six nations cleverly arranged on the mantelpiece, the whirring of the newsreel apparatus and the dignified black worn by the dignitaries from the world of iron, steel and politics spoke volumes for the significance of the occasion, after precisely 18 minutes, Jean Monnet — rosy-cheeked, elegant and self-assured — reached the conclusion of a speech read entirely without emphasis, the interpreters began their work, the hall emptied and, 50 minutes later, one of the city policemen, being the very last person in the room, straightened up a floral display which had somehow managed to get itself into a mess. Dr Franz Etzel, the High Authority's First Vice-President and CDU Bundestag Member, had sat to the right of Monnet, looking rather anxious and clearly affected by the sense of occasion; to his left had been the Second Vice-President, the Belgian Albert Coppe, at 41 practically the baby of the group; and next to him had sat Dr Heinz Potthoff, former Head of the German Delegation in the Ruhr Authority, who had risen from the ranks of the trade union movement.

### **Promises for the common man**

Monnet's almost monotonous flow of words did not really find any warmth until he reached the very peak of his performance, when he spoke of the independence of the nine delegates, meeting together for the common good for the first time on Sunday. There were no government instructions, nor indeed any conditions of any other kind, and nationality was no longer a consideration; only independent resolutions shaped by the concerns of Europe — such was the general thrust of his address. And he was already in a position to announce that, for the next few months, there would be an end to all customs bureaucracy with its accompanying restrictions and discriminations. He put himself into the shoes of the man in the street, promising that, in carrying out the Schuman Plan, better quality coal and steel would be produced in greater quantities and at a cheaper price, meaning that greater spending power and a better standard of living could be achieved for every household. Remarkably, he confirmed that the High Authority would 'immediately enter into direct discussions' with the United Kingdom with a view to establishing close links and that the prospects of profitable cooperation with the USA might also be envisaged. The immediate work of the High Authority, however, was rapidly to build up a picture of the general situation regarding coal and steel in Western Europe and to draw up a report including proposals addressed to the governments as to how they might eliminate the current inequalities in taxation and pricing. A common market for coal was to be in place within six months, and within eight months for steel. In order to protect the free market, the High Authority itself would be able to set maximum and minimum price limits, where necessary determine production quotas and even out coal and steel shortages. A stipend of 30 000 dollars per annum would ensure the capacity for independent action of each Member of the High Authority, a characteristic of the plan which is regarded as vital.

### **From now until the year 2002 ...**

Recently, we have been frequently reminded of New Year's Eve 1834, the very moment of inception of the German Customs Union, described by Heinrich von Treitschke in his now famous passage: 'As the bell struck for the very last time to mark the passing of the old year, the barriers lifted, the horses lunged forward and, amid jubilant cheers and the crack of the whip, we galloped on towards the liberated land.' Treitschke was contributing freely to the pathos of his times, to an era when the noise of the battle of Königgrätz was already audible for those with an ear tuned in that direction. It is the din of battle which the European Coal and Steel Community has resolved to silence once and for all in Europe. Such an experiment must surely earn respect for its courage and, consequently, also for its aims. We certainly do not need to contain our understandable curiosity until the year 2002, the planned expiry date of the project, to discover whether, in the reality of our own age, such a high-flying concept can effectively take root.