

Interview with André Dubois: Paul-Henri Spaak’s role (Brussels, 8 December 2006)

Source: Interview d'André Dubois / ANDRÉ DUBOIS, Étienne Deschamps.- Bruxelles: CVCE [Prod.], 08.12.2006. CVCE, Sanem. - VIDEO (01:45, Couleur, Son original).

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URL:
http://www.cvce.eu/obj/interview_with_andre_dubois_paul_henri_spaak_s_role_brussels_8_december_2006-en-9cb2e40a-a935-4f83-a0fb-97e5536a4300.html

Last updated: 05/07/2016



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[André Dubois] Now you have also asked me how Mr Spaak reconciled his responsibilities as chairman with his responsibilities as Belgian Foreign Minister. First of all, I should say, and I have said this before: Mr Spaak put a great deal into this negotiation. He had taken a personal interest in it. Probably — or certainly, I believe — he gave far greater importance to the Val Duchesse negotiations than to his other responsibilities. Europe was for him one of the great objectives, one of the great ideals driving his career. He relied upon Baron Snoy, who led the Belgian delegation, to defend Belgium's interests. There was also another factor to consider: it was that, in fact, Belgium had no particular interests that needed to be defended in these negotiations. It had always been in favour of the direction they were taking; it was a relatively liberal country from the economic point of view, so we did not find ourselves faced with any major difficulties. This was a great help.

Mr Spaak had also been chosen by his colleagues, and he benefited from their confidence. You could say that he was the defender of the political will. He had a lot of authority and everyone knew that he would not use his position as chairman to pursue national interests, but to pursue a European objective.

That is all I should like to say on this subject.