

'The victory of peace' from L'Unità (1 September 1954)

Caption: On 1 September 1954, the Italian Communist daily newspaper L'Unità welcomes the rejection, the previous day, of the Treaty establishing the European Defence Community (EDC) by the French National Assembly.

Source: L'Unità. Organo del partito comunista italiano. dir. de publ. Lajolo, Davide. 01.09.1954, n° 208; anno 31. Milano. "Vittoria della pace", auteur:Togliatti, Palmiro , p. 1.

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The victory of peace

The French Parliament has rejected the treaty establishing the European Defence Community. Its rejection has been clear and unequivocal. It has refused the compromises and alternatives it was offered right up to the last moment, declaring that the treaty was incompatible with the democratic Constitution of the French Republic. This is a great, an irrefutable, victory for the forces of peace that have been battling for years against the threat that Europe might once more be thrown into the abyss of an annihilating armed conflict. For this was the real threat posed by the notorious treaty to European nations and to European civilisation: that the unity of Europe might be brutally shattered to give birth to a military bloc dominated by German armed forces and inspired by the aggressive policies of American imperialists. So let us pay tribute to the French people, the prime movers in this victory, and thank them for the example they have set us all of the energy that must be deployed to defend not just the cause of peace, but also the independence and sovereignty of the people, against those who would wish to destroy them in order to prepare for another war. At the same time, let us make an effort to understand clearly just what has happened so that we know how to take the right and decisive actions in the new situation arising from the Paris vote.

It would be a mistake not to see and not to acknowledge openly that various pressures, with diverse points of departure and animated by different long-term aims, have contributed to the defeat of the EDC. The advocates of peace and jealous defenders of national independence, resolute adversaries of any imperialist policy, such as the Communists, as well as the elderly statesmen who have governed the destiny of France for decades, all these have come together to attain a great and immediate common objective. The question now arises of the steps to be taken to build something new and constructive on what has been achieved so far. This question, of concern to us Italians as it is to all the other European nations, must be seriously and urgently examined. The baggage of lies and provocations with which the unsuccessful supporters of the EDC, German militarism and American imperialism pollute the air, including that of our country, must be thrown overboard.

The real nature of the EDC has always been clear to us and, I believe, is clear today to the great majority of decent citizens. What is known as 'European unity' had absolutely nothing to do with this monstrous deformation. The EDC was just a model of rigid political and military organisation that American imperialism, backed by a reborn German militarism and thirsting after a war of aggression 'against Communism' — that is, against the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries — was attempting to create for its hegemony in Europe. As for internal affairs, the EDC proposal and the whole heavy-handed, mendacious campaign that accompanied it for several years have coincided with the temporary domination in France, Germany and Italy of the clerical parties, with their explicit intention to dominate almost the whole of western Europe as the agents of American imperialism. Today, profound changes have come about or are coming about, as much in the first area as in the second.

It is ludicrous to read in the Italian press that France, firstly by demanding a radical reform of the EDC and then by rejecting the treaty, has compromised itself, 'isolated' itself, ruined itself, and has almost become an outlaw. The truth is precisely the contrary, and the only explanation for the idiocies with which our public is daily bombarded and misled is the degree of servile degradation to which Fascism and then clericalism have reduced political journalism. The truth is that France, by repelling American encroachment and by affirming its resolve to follow its own policies, sacrificing neither its independence nor its sovereignty, has leapt to the forefront of European politics where it is taking up its guiding role once again. At the same time, those in the clerical party, who bear the greatest responsibility for the disastrous war in Indo-China, are being relegated to second place, while the Radical Party, with its long-established traditions and with Pierre Mendès France at its head, has returned to direct French politics.

It is now two years since comrade Stalin clearly foresaw that the supine subjection of the great European states to the wishes of American imperialism could not last long. What must concern us, however, is that as a result of the current profound crisis assailing US foreign policy — be it on Asia or on Europe — no new attempts at imperialist policies or warlike experiments should come forth, but in their stead there should be a policy for peace. What concerns Italy and every other nation is that the rebellion against the intolerable arrogance of the Americans should spread wide, that it should embrace new countries, new popular

movements and new political forces. The whole of Europe must be united in this great movement; but it has to be the real Europe, the one that stretches from the Urals to the Atlantic, whose populations must succeed in understanding and working with one another if peace and civilisation are to triumph, whatever the economic and social regime under which they live.

But for this to happen an entirely new road has to be followed, the road towards a real policy for peace: one without exclusions, without preconceptions and without fatal divisions of the European continent and the world into opposing blocs on a constant war footing; a world without a rearmaments race, without ideological and social fanaticism. It is largely up to us to ensure that those who reject American encroachment through a sense of national dignity will find this road and will follow it, alongside the forces of the proletariat and the people, in order to safeguard a stable and secure peace. The cause of peace is today, just as it has been in the past, in the hands of those people who are aware of their destiny. On their struggle depends its future.

In Italy the difficulties may seem greater because the advantage is currently in the hands of the clerical party, while all the other parties, with the exception of the Socialists and the Communists, merely fall in line. But it is an illusion to believe that this is a stable or enduring situation. For in Italy, let us not forget, there has been the 7th of June 1953 [the elections that saw a rise in the representation of parties of the left compared with the leading coalition of centre parties], the first severe blow to clerical domination, to American imperialism and to its lackeys.

Palmiro Togliatti