

## 'Two 'plasterboard' treaties' from L'Unità (23 March 1957)

**Caption:** On 23 March 1957, two days before the signing in Rome of the Treaties establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC or Euratom), the Italian Communist daily newspaper L'Unità criticises the new European treaties and tries to show that these treaties do not enjoy unanimous support among the six Member States of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC).

**Source:** L'Unità. Organo del partito comunista italiano. dir. de publ. Davide Lajolo. 23.03.1957, n° 71; anno XXXIV. Milano. "Due trattati di "Eternit"", auteur:Calamandrei, Franco , p. 1.

**Copyright:** (c) Translation CVCE.EU by UNI.LU  
All rights of reproduction, of public communication, of adaptation, of distribution or of dissemination via Internet, internal network or any other means are strictly reserved in all countries.  
Consult the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

**URL:**  
[http://www.cvce.eu/obj/two\\_plasterboard\\_treaties\\_from\\_l\\_unita\\_23\\_march\\_1957-en-5c20b7d0-f4a1-44ae-a496-ee712c856b5.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/two_plasterboard_treaties_from_l_unita_23_march_1957-en-5c20b7d0-f4a1-44ae-a496-ee712c856b5.html)

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



## Two ‘plasterboard’ treaties

First announced for February and then for early March, the signing of the Common Market and Euratom Treaties will finally take place in Rome next Monday. But what exactly is being signed? During the negotiations, from Brussels, Paris and Rome, the number of pages, paragraphs, codicils and annexes of both documents grew progressively as procedural devices were used to defer the technical and political problems, the conflicts of interest and the differences between the six governments of ‘Little Europe’. In some instances, those difficulties were concealed in provisionally worded compromises. For some of the acceding governments, and the French and Italian Governments in particular, the swift conclusion of the Treaties has increasingly become a question of form and political obstinacy. The signing ceremony in Rome will be strangely reminiscent of those inaugurations of public works during the Fascist era when, to meet the deadline at any cost, any building work that could not be completed was patched over by cladding it with plasterboard.

The unresolved problems and conflicts will undermine both Treaties when, after they have been signed, they have to be ratified by the parliaments and, if that ratification takes place, implemented. The measures that the French National Assembly has approved in recent days are indication enough of what could happen to the liberalist Common Market proposals. To tackle the threat of devaluation of the currency, the French Finance Minister, Paul Ramadier, has decided to limit imports by reintroducing licences even for those product categories for which they had been abolished, adding a 15 % rate to customs duties for many products. When a government and parliament can adopt such protectionist measures, what guarantees can there be that the free trade principles that should prevail in the Common Market will be ratified and put into effect in the years to come? And will not the other countries acceding to the Treaty, the other parliaments, be induced to consider their own ratification very carefully, in the light of what is a clearly duplicitous French finance policy?

In the German Bundestag, the initial debate on the Common Market and Euratom has revealed how many doubts exist in every party in West Germany about the two Treaties. The Minister for Economic Affairs, Ludwig Erhard, himself stated categorically four days ago: ‘France considers the whole Common Market project simply in terms of the protection of the French economy, and cares little about real commercial freedom. The result will be not a market based on freedom of competition, but an economic void for Europe.’ Again, according to Mr Erhard, ‘as it has been framed, the Common Market doubtless meets a political need, but it remains an economic nonsense. I cannot feign enthusiasm for this Treaty.’ Serious concerns about whether it is appropriate to ratify the Common Market are already emerging in Bonn — not just within the Social Democrat opposition, but even in the ruling coalition. Large swathes of German industry and the German financial sector consider Guy Mollet’s idea of Eurafrica in particular to be an awkward and compromising restriction on their ability to establish their own direct relations with the huge African market and Africa’s resources.

The prospects seem little better in relation to Britain. According to all the theorists of ‘Europeanism’, Britain must be associated with the Common Market through a free trade area if ‘Little Europe’ is to thrive. The British Financial Secretary to the Treasury last week warned that ‘Britain might have to pay too high a price for the free trade area’. During his recent visit to Paris, Harold Macmillan did not conceal from Guy Mollet Britain’s resentment over the damage that would be inflicted on trade from British overseas territories into Europe as a result of the inclusion of the French Overseas Territories in the Common Market. London will never agree to the free trade area in those unfavourable circumstances. Moreover, British reluctance to be linked to ‘Little Europe’ may influence the French Parliament decisively against ratification.

In the circumstances, it is fairly grotesque to claim, as do the spokesmen for ‘Little Europe’, that the Soviet Union’s declaration in favour of economic and nuclear cooperation extending to the whole of Europe is an attempt to sabotage the Common Market and Euratom. Soviet diplomacy is not naïve enough to believe that this will delay the signature of the two Treaties. It is merely confirming what is crystal clear in Paris, and indeed in Bonn and London, namely that signing the Treaties will not resolve anything, and ratification, if it happens, will only result in the nonsense Mr Erhard predicts. There are, of course, objective factors that cannot be prorogued, demanding the integration and joint reorganisation of Europe’s economies, so that

Europe can eliminate its underdeveloped manufacturing zones, remedy its lack of energy resources and reduce its economic dependence on the United States. The Soviet declaration recognises and stresses these needs, highlighted by the 'Europeanists'. But the Common Market and Euratom Treaties, as they are to be signed in Rome, will fail to meet these needs, and indeed undermine them.

One can only integrate elements that are already complementary, like Eastern and Western Europe. But under the mound of paper formed by the two Treaties, with all the conflicts and competition, the monopolies and cartels of 'Little Europe' will continue to confront and clash both with each other and with the British monopolies. Meanwhile, Europe's dependence on the United States will continue and will be still greater, since the US is to be Euratom's sole supplier of fissile material. The Soviet Union is putting forward the outline of an alternative to this misconceived solution. It offers the possibility of Eastern and Western Europe pooling their technologies, their funding and their complementary resources. In addition, the Socialist world's nuclear know-how and fissile material would be available to the whole of Europe. This is not an ultimatum, but a starting point for negotiations that ought to begin in that genuinely European forum, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. The Soviet declaration is far-sighted: it is based on an understanding that events have dictated the need for economic cooperation throughout Europe and that, betrayed by the Common Market and Euratom Treaties, events will seek out the real solution along the only proper path.

Franco Calamandrei