

'The advantages of the Schuman Plan presented in a wide-ranging speech by Cesare Merzagora' from the Giornale d'Italia (15 March 1952)

Caption: On 15 March 1952, the Italian daily newspaper Giornale d'Italia outlines the positions taken by Italian Senators during the debates on the ratification of the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in the Senate in Rome.

Source: Il Giornale d'Italia. 15.03.1952, n° 65; anno 51. Roma: Il Giornale d'Italia. "I vantaggi del Piano Schuman in un ampio discorso di Merzagora", p. 2.

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The advantages of the Schuman Plan presented in a wide-ranging speech by Cesare Merzagora

In an attempt to speed up the unduly prolonged debate on the ratification of the Schuman Plan, Enrico De Nicola, President of the Italian Republic, opportunely brought forward today's morning session to 9 a.m. It is hoped that rapid progress can now be made towards winding up the debate, which must, at all events, be concluded by tomorrow.

The first of today's contributions came from Gino Castagno (Italian Socialist Party — PSI) who regretted that the Industrial Committee had not considered such a serious issue in greater depth, accusing it of 'dereliction of its specific duty' by setting aside Senator Falck's report and not bringing it to the attention of the Assembly. The Committee, he said, merely recommended that the Government play a 'Red Cross' role in preventing the Schuman Plan from destroying our economy. And yet the political considerations by which government policy is guided should take second place to the technical considerations that weigh against ratification.

The speaker reviewed in detail the position of the individual industrial concerns involved in the production of coal and steel. He pointed out that even those who support the Pool realise that it is an unknown quantity, accepting it only as a necessary evil that we have to try to render as painless as possible.

After a hundred years' talk of a 'united states of Europe' — said Lanzetta (PSI) — the politicians of this continent have not made much progress. An attempt is being made to put this Plan into operation, and if the other pools being discussed are added, each with its various agencies and sinecures, we shall realise that what are being created are not cohesive elements but rather watertight compartments that harm rather than serve the European union. The whole Plan is predicated on the impartiality of a supranational authority, but the power of this authority is dubious, bearing in mind that ultimately it will be the United States that directs the initiative and foots the bill.

The steel industry — affirmed Cesare Merzagora (Independent) — has on this occasion taken its revenge by inducing the very same people who fought against it in the past to take up its defence. The issue under examination is vast and complex and is of concern to the whole body of consumers and broad sectors of Italian workers, directly or indirectly affecting one sixth of world production. The attention being paid to the Schuman Plan is therefore wholly justified. It must not be forgotten, however, that Finsider accounts for 50 % of the steel industry in Italy, and private industry the remaining 50 %. It should also be borne in mind that any growth that there has been in the steel industry has been due to special circumstances and protective measures, which have brought no benefits whatsoever to the community.

The Plan does away with dual pricing and establishes freedom of movement for the steel industry's workforce, two factors of undoubted importance, to which should be added various other innovative measures. Furthermore, the Pool also concerns the engineering industry, which will derive no small benefit from the reduction in the cost of steel. And besides, in a report by Mr Oscar Sinigaglia, this industrialist himself has recognised the importance of the positive influence that the Schuman Plan will have on the future of mechanical engineering.

The Santa Margherita agreements correct the disadvantageous position in which we had been placed by the exclusion of Algeria from the Plan. In the face of this, we must ask ourselves a specific question: which is more important for us, defending the steel companies under threat to the bitter end, or strengthening the engineering industry? Which is more important: a sector that gives work to a few tens of thousands of workers or a sector employing 650 thousand? A fully efficient engineering industry is inconceivable unless we have a steel industry charging international prices. It is certain that, if we do succeed in making the Schuman Plan work, 'we shall have solved one of the greatest problems of our economy, not just for today, but for tomorrow as well.'

With only four members of the Christian Democratic Party apart from the usual little band of Social Communists to listen to him, Girolamo Li Causi (Italian Communist Party) launched a more political than

technical attack on the law, reiterating the aversion felt by the proletariat towards the government line that has, he said, squandered the energies of the Italian labour force.