

'Unity of Europe' from the Corriere della Sera (1 April 1950)

Caption: On 1 April 1950, the Italian daily newspaper Corriere della Sera considers the issues and the difficulties involved in the plans for a European political authority called for by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Source: Corriere della Sera. 01.04.1950, n° 78; anno 75. Milano: Corriere della Sera. "Unità dell' Europa", auteur:Negro, Silvio , p. 1.

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Unity of Europe

Rome, 31 March, evening.

The decisions taken yesterday in Strasbourg, and the invective with which the Cominformists greeted the news of the departure of a first cargo of American arms whose purpose is to breathe life into the pretend army that we are allowed under the Treaty, also draw attention, albeit in a different way, to an initiative whose aim is to rally all Italians who are determined to guarantee the freedom of our country's future.

The division of the world into large blocs at odds with one another, even before the normal play of interests, as a result of incurable ideological differences, has radically changed the position of countries that do not have the stature of a colossus, consigning them to the fate of either collaborators or victims; this is precisely the position of the nations making up this continent of ours called Europe. Isolated and at war with one another, they have no chance of ensuring peace or prosperity; united, they have every chance of providing their peoples with both. They may even be able to aspire to being a party to a three-way dialogue. They can, in any event, avoid being no more than a battlefield between two contenders.

The need for a European federation has arisen out of this situation and, the day after tomorrow, at mass meetings in many Italian towns and cities, representatives of all the Italian parties that see democracy as synonymous with freedom and civil progress will explain the purposes of, and ask Italians to support, the petition for a 'Pact on European Federal Union' addressed both to the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Parliament of the Italian Republic.

'The division of democratic Europe into sovereign States' — the petition says — 'inexorably draws peoples into poverty, subjugation and war.' This is why the European Assembly in Strasbourg, at its first session, considered 'that its purpose and its goal is to establish European political unity, with limited functions, but with real powers'.

'We, the undersigned, citizens of the Italian Republic, recalling that Article 11 of our Constitution, "agrees, on conditions of equality with other States, to the limitations of sovereignty necessary for an order that ensures peace and justice among Nations", call upon the European Assembly and our Parliament immediately to take every step to promote irrevocable links between the democratic Nations of Europe on the basis of a federal pact, in order jointly to exercise the rights and duties for which national sovereignties no longer provide the correct framework.'

'This pact must establish a supranational European political authority, democratically elected and endowed with the powers that it needs to ensure equal rights for its peoples and guarantee the fundamental liberties of its citizens, in order gradually to work towards economic unification, to conduct a common foreign policy and to organise a common defence.'

As explained by the Member of Parliament, Mr Nicholas Carandini, who — together with the two Presidents of the Italian Council of the European Movement, Senator Ferruccio Parri and Mr Enzo Giacchero, also a Member of Parliament — held a press conference today to explain the petition, the aim is not to call for immediate change, but to lay the foundations for a genuine joining together of the democratic peoples of Europe and the coordination of their interests. Initiatives such as the Franco-Italian customs union, Benelux, Finebel and so on, have up to now proved ineffective; contrary to the intentions of those who laid its foundations, the OEEC continues to be little more than a committee for the distribution of American aid, and major difficulties surround the Strasbourg Assembly. The goal is to provide these bodies with real power, however limited it might be at the outset, to make them into a European Parliament elected by universal suffrage which is capable of breathing life into a European Government possessing the necessary resources to ensure compliance within the scope of its powers and to inspire government officers and parliamentarians with the confidence that they need vigorously to support the arguments of federalism, recognising that public opinion in their countries is generally in favour of the federal unification of Europe.

At present, campaigns in support of the petition are under way in Italy, France and Germany, i.e. in the three

main countries that would form the first federal core of our continent.

In the ensuing discussion, it became clear that there has been a major step forward, at least between the advocates of the idea, in the past made up of unionists who wished to leave any initiative to governments, and supporters of the UEF who championed an immediate common legislative body elected by the grass roots. Today, everyone — including the smaller groups — is working together to make the Strasbourg Assembly into a body able to resolve the problem from inside. The attitude of the British, whose open reservations have done so much up to now to prevent the problem from being dealt with in a concrete way, currently seems, in the light of recent position statements, to be more positive. Lastly, facing up to the old problem — which Europe, which democracy? — Messrs Parri and Giaccherio confirmed that democracy, as a guarantor of all the liberties of the individual without any kind of preconception, gives the union its distinctive nature and, therefore, that this union is open to the membership of any country accepting the rules of the game. The aim is to achieve the union of Europe and to guarantee its peace, not by imposing a hegemony but through the free consent of the parties, not by a system of force but through agreements.

It is for this reason, even though it was in no way an explicit intention, that the federalists' call for peace in Europe runs counter to the Communists' call for Soviet peace; it is for this reason that the creation of a united democratic Europe is at one with the defence of the west and its free institutions, and that the opening up to the public of this initiative that the federalists have been preparing for many months has been met by attempts by the Cominformists to muddy and poison the waters by frantically repeating the usual slogans, reiterating that war comes from the west and peace comes from the east, while beating their breasts and pretending to believe that their own disarmed people are plotting to attack the heavily armed foreigner and threatening sedition and boycotts that would be entirely to the latter's benefit.

The paradox is merely apparent: the fact is that such conflicting positions not only both invoke the same thing, peace, but also move very openly from one and the same recognition of the reality of matters, i.e. the western countries' current scarce power of resistance against attack. The federalists would obviously like to remedy this pathological condition since they see it as a threat, given the presence of aggressive neighbours, and the Communists would like to preserve it at all costs, even in the name of the Constitution, since they perceive it as a guarantee. Anyone can readily see, unless they want to shut their eyes to it, where peace and war are really at home.

Silvio Negro