

'Saving Europe' from Il nuovo Corriere della Sera (12 July 1947)

Caption: On 12 July 1947, representatives of the countries accepting reconstruction aid, offered to Europe under the Marshall Plan, met at the conference on European economic cooperation, held in Paris. The Italian newspaper Il nuovo Corriere della Sera describes the political and economic issues involved.

Source: Il nuovo Corriere della Sera. dir. de publ. Guglielmo, Emanuel. 12.07.1947, n° 166; anno 72. Milano: Corriere della Sera. "Salvare l'Europa", p. 1.

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Saving Europe

The short Paris Conference, which opens today, simply aims at establishing contacts between those European nations willing to cooperate in the rebirth of their continent. The 15 States assembling at the Quai d'Orsay are experiencing a sense of European solidarity and above all are able to put it into practice. It is specifically the intensity of independence that distinguishes the countries participating in this preliminary meeting from those many who, recognising the essential importance of participation, would have liked to be there and yet could not accept the invitation.

Given that the United States, Great Britain and France had previously been accused of wanting to divide Europe into two blocs it is important that, on the occasion of this Conference, the obvious prohibition that has prevented certain countries from taking part, even in the initial stages, has now made it clear who really wants this alliance, albeit negative, of one part of Europe against the other European States whose intention it is to promote a common salvation. Because this is what the refusal to go to Paris comes down to: a refusal to cooperate in a revival of the European economy; a refusal to see trade flourish again in our poor Continent laid so low by war and destruction; a refusal freely and consciously to be a member of this great community, the cradle of civilisation, rather than going back to being part of a bloc that displays on its pennant the melancholy illusion of autocracy. We, ourselves, in Italy have toyed with this tragic fantasy for too many years to be able to forget where it eventually leads to.

It is with deep bitterness that we have to deplore this divide in the economic unity of our continent: it reflects no logical economic criterion but is exclusively based on a political concept. Political convictions had unfortunately also been at the root of the far more partial autocratic isolation of Germany and Italy in the decade preceding the war, which had sadly helped to bring about their ruin. And if history is to teach us something, some of the States now gravitating towards the Eastern orbit should have learned their lesson from having militated in the orbit of the Axis before the Second World War: Hungary, Finland, Yugoslavia, Albania, Rumania and Bulgaria are repeating, willy-nilly, their former error, only in a different camp. Perhaps their geographical location (according to the explanation given by Finland to justify its choice) or the fact of not having gained their independence is at the source of this aberration, for which they will inevitably have to atone, just as all fundamental errors, in life as in politics, will have to be atoned.

Nobody will mourn the fact that Paris is now witnessing — in contrast to the now obvious bloc of Central and Eastern European nations that do not enjoy complete political independence (Mr Molotov's claims of a heightened concept of national sovereignty on their behalf is another story) — the establishment of a bloc of free Nations, governed by a regime of sincere democracy, that are honestly trying to help one another and sincerely looking for a form of solidarity to eliminate the seeds of any future differences.

After two years of international conferences, all ending in complete disagreement, we are finally moving towards clear and unanimous decisions, even though a more limited number of Nations is contributing. It will certainly be useful for the diplomacy and sincerity of international relations. Nor will there be reason for Italy to regret such clarification, for our country has so far been the one to bear the cost of a fictitious European solidarity of which nobody was convinced. All the concessions made to appease the Soviet Union were in fact made at our expense, and when this hypocrisy stopped, the need instantly ceased to continue considering us as an enemy State, the only enemy State in fact, given that Germany does not yet exist as a State and the smaller satellite States in the Axis have been acquitted and welcomed into the bosom of Mother Russia and so are guided and protected by Moscow.

Faced by the advantages of the clarification of the diplomatic situation and the inevitable revaluation of Italy, some of our countrymen have been anxiously pointing out the danger of a conflict between the two blocs. This childish bogeyman should be dismissed immediately. The experience of both the first and second world wars has shown that the probability of a conflict is much higher in situations where no definite alignments exist. In both wars, Germany decided to provoke the attack because it was counting on Great Britain not entering the battle. The conviction that the democracies would not become involved in the war was the spring that triggered off the German war machine, and the appeasement policy culminating in Munich further confirmed Hitler in his mad mission. A Europe of detached, isolated and conflicting nations

is a more desirable prey than a bloc of countries united by the positive and profitable links of trade, by the unity of their political direction and their common programmes. Unity is strength. And we are looking here at the unity of the world's most advanced countries, with the most powerful industries across the entire globe.

Those who propagate apocalyptic visions forget that at least a whole generation will have to pass before the memories of a terrible war fade and it becomes possible for another to be waged. No democratic country will declare war unless it is attacked. And, in any case, the resources of the other camp are also exhausted.

Let us rather remember our recent experience as a totalitarian country in order to understand certain attitudes. For 25 years, Italy had been kept under pressure, in a state of permanent mobilisation. Was this because Prime Minister Mussolini, ever since 1925, had been considering declaring war on somebody? No, it was because this preaching about the danger from outside, this hostility towards other countries, had served his purpose of suppressing liberties at home and securing his own Party's domination.

Hence there is no need to be alarmed if we see that the Soviet Union does not want a situation of agreement among nations, an aura of peace and prosperity, to be established in Europe. Moscow has excellent reasons of an internal nature, as a totalitarian State, to act in this way.