

Address given by Paolo Emilio Taviani (December 1952)

Caption: In December 1952, Paolo Emilio Taviani, Junior Minister in the Italian Foreign Ministry, criticises the political aims of the Moscow leadership and describes European unification as a bulwark against the Communist threat.

Source: TAVIANI, Paolo Emilio. *Solidarietà atlantica e comunità europea*. 5 éd. Firenze: Le Monnier, 1957. 400 p. p. 201-204.

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Address given by Paolo Emilio Taviani (Nice, December 1952)

We want European unity because we believe in European civilisation.

We believe, therefore, that all the nations of Europe share common ground, a common heritage, which each manifests in its own way within its own separate and independent national identity. It is this common ground that constitutes 'Europe', so that it is not just a geographical term but a concrete historical fact and a human reality. It is precisely this nature of Europe that is nowadays being denied, in theory and in practice, by Communism. For Communism, Europe has no living cultural unity but is a set of conflicting social relationships that can only lead to impotence and then to disintegration and chaos.

This historical judgment is confirmed by a re-reading of Malenkov's important report to the congress of the USSR Communist Party.

There is nevertheless an incontrovertible element of truth in this historical judgment: it is this element of truth that explains why Soviet policy, based on this historical judgment, has had indisputable successes between 1944 and 1949.

The element of truth that Communism's historical judgment contains is as follows: in the 19th and 20th centuries, Europe suffered its greatest 'challenge', to use Toynbee's term, the greatest attack on its existence it had ever experienced. Unlike other historical challenges, this came not from outside, but from inside.

We are talking about the divisions brought about by nationalism. Up to the 19th century, Europe had always been aware that it was a unit; from the 19th century onwards, the culture and therefore also (to some extent) the conscience of the Europeans meant that it was no more than a set of single states cohabiting in the same continent.

Communism understood this crisis, but it interpreted Europe as though it were no more than a crisis of Europe. This was its limit and therefore the cause of its historical defeat. While it is true that its correct intuition of the crisis guaranteed Communism a number of successes, whose effect was to aggravate Europe's crisis by pushing it back within the confines of its original frontiers, the failure to look beyond this crisis and discern the living spirit and soul of Europe paved the way for just as significant failures.

This is why we are astonished when we hear Stalin and Malenkov prophesy a war among European states: Stalin's political assessment is little more than a simple deduction from his historical judgment that Europe is merely a system of conflicting social relationships. For Stalin, the Europe of 1952 is no different from the Europe of 1939, a Europe threatened by Nazism (i.e. the culminating and paroxysmal expression of nationalism). For this reason, Stalin can calmly prophesy, as in 1939, a 'war' between capitalist States on which, as at that time, the fortunes of the Soviet empire can be founded.

It is here that the Communist vision falters, because, partly as a result of Communism, Europe is at a turning point. It has reached a point at which there are only two alternatives: recovery or death.

All the energies of our real, historic, living Europe are being brought into play here. We need to show that Europe's life is stronger than its seeds of disintegration and death. We need to show that Europe's life, its culture and its civilisation, are able to unify the constituent parts of Europe, the European nations, in a way that breathes new life into them.

All Europe's energies must be channelled into this effort: the energies of men of faith and culture, economists, party activists and government officials, all Europeans of good faith. Faced with the radical nature of the alternative, we can be certain that the forces of Europe will respond, historically refuting Communism.

When and where did political freedom come about in the Christian world? In the Italian communes of the

13th and 14th centuries: they taught political freedom to the French, Flemish and Germans and all the Christians of Europe. They were the first stirrings in the development of modern political freedoms.

When and where did modern democracy come about? In France, and the French taught it to the Italians, Germans, Dutch, Europeans and peoples throughout the world.

Now we are at a time where freedom and democracy sound like empty words if they are understood as being within the confines of each individual nation state. Unless they are applied beyond and between the nation states, unless they are applied to what has up to now been called foreign policy, they will in the end disappear from domestic policy as well.

We are entering the age of the supranational. The French and the Italians understand how the supranational can be put to use in a context of liberty and democracy with the result that both will be strengthened. Otherwise we shall enter the supranational anyway, but in a context of collectivisation and coercion, and liberty and democracy will be no more than a memory, something recalled with regret but to which we can never return.

We do not believe that our work as government politicians takes precedence over other people's work. On the contrary, while we believe that it has its own autonomy and is indeed a foundation for everyone else's work (because no one is more aware of the gravity of the hour in all its drama than those who view it from a government bench), it is also shaped to a large extent by everyone else's work.

It is to this work done by you all that we are appealing.

Above all, we need your hope. We do not believe that the free world is faced solely by two alternative catastrophes: acquiescing to Communism or waging war. We believe in humanity, and for that reason we believe in peace in liberty and security.

Today, we have the glimmer of light we need to work in the dark, but not enough to see the 'solution'. All those who have lacked the humility to accept this have become 'makers of schisms and preachers of war'. We are not on that road: I am certain that you are not either; I am sure that you possess hope as well.

May God ensure that our anguished hope becomes a peaceful certainty for our children.