

‘The final report of "Spaak°2" — Hypocrisy and back-handed blows' from Europe (21 March 1983)

Caption: In his editorial of 21 March 1983, Emanuele Gazzo, Director of Agence Europe, analyses the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Institutional Affairs and comments on the reactions prompted by the publication of this text.

Source: Europe. Dir. of publ. Riccardi, Lodovico ; REditor Riccardi, Ferdinando. 21.03.1985, No 4053. Brussels. "The final report of "Spaak 2"- Hypocrisy and back-handed blows", auteur:Gazzo, Emanuele , p. 1.

Copyright: (c) Agence Europe S.A.

URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/the_final_report_of_spaak2_hypocrisy_and_back_handed_blows_from_europe_21_march_1983-en-b0288a27-a2fc-49dc-a16d-706a5aa91291.html

Publication date: 18/12/2013

The final report of “Spaak 2” — Hypocrisy and back-handed blows

The Report signed by the eleven members of the Committee presided over by the Irishman James Dooge has now been presented to those who requested it — the Heads of State and Government (and the President of the Commission). In the Political Day dated 16 March we pointed out the main innovations which have been introduced into this final report and we described in greater detail (P.D. 4051, 4052 and 4053) the changes which have been made in the most important (and the most controversial) chapters: those concerning the Institutions. When our readers have the text of this report before them (which we will be sending to them forthwith) they will be able to compare it with that which we published on 2 December (EUROPE / Documents No 1333).

Here are a few comments following an initial analysis of the texts:

— The first comment — Despite several general reservations, the most “comprehensive” of which is that of Mr Møller (Denmark), the establishing of a European Union is accepted by all the members of the Committee as a desirable aim. Even Mr Møller, who argues that “the general approach of the report is the right one”, when he expresses a reservation on the first chapter (“A genuine political entity”) does so because he feels that it would be more suitable to replace this expression with that of “European Union”. This expression occurs, moreover, at least a dozen times in the text (in particular, the “right of the Union”, the “future Union”, association and accession agreements “negotiated by the Union” etc. are spoken of). It is generally accepted that, in addition to the explicit statement in the final chapter on the method (cf today’s P.D.) all the members of the Committee without exception, have worked on the basis of the idea of establishing a European Union which should inherit, change and improve the existing European treaties, while remaining loyal to the original objectives of the Community.

On this point it can be concluded that the Committee, correctly interpreting the mandate which it received — and despite reservations from a limited minority about these precise subjects — has recognised that the “qualitative leap” involved in moving on to European Union is both necessary and possible. This is important: the Heads of State and Government would certainly not like to disown their authorised representatives.

— The second comment — This concerns the thorny problem of the decision-making procedure in the Council (cf the text in the P.D. of 18/19 March). Today there are some people who are declaring (as have Møller, Papantoniou and Rifkind) that basically it would be enough “to return to the practice laid down in the Treaties”. Thank you very much! For years now the few clear-minded and realistic people who have been advising a return to the rules of the treaties have been pointed at scornfully as being “Euro-fanatics” devoid of any common sense, by those very people who now wish to pass themselves off as “orthodox”. This return to orthodoxy is, unfortunately, merely a rather hypocritical manoeuvre because, immediately after having stated “it would be better to return to the practice laid down in the Treaties”, the minority merely put forward the unfortunate text of the Luxembourg document, believing that “the discussion must be continued until a unanimous agreement has been reached”, something which is never part of any treaty.

Some of those who have accepted the text which was adopted by the majority would, perhaps, have preferred the version which was contained in the interim report, and which retained the possibility of appealing on the grounds of a vital interest, but during a transition period and in accordance with a suitable procedure. The new text has the great advantage of removing any reference to a vital interest and therefore any conflict on this issue, and this is because in the Treaty on Union itself, the issues for which a vital interest is likely to prove harmful and for which, as a result, a unanimous vote would be necessary, will be defined in a limited form. Unfortunately, at the last moment, Mr Dooge, while approving the principles behind this text, was not able to approve it”, which is a ridiculous contradiction. He complains that this text “does not make explicit reference to the safeguarding of vital national interests”. This attitude, which is, to say the least, strange, especially coming from the President of the Committee, has caused a great deal of irritation. Mr Herman has had a note included in which he stresses the “considerable progress” represented by this text, compared with the interim report.

We are not naive. We know that the ulterior motives weigh heavily on this issue, which has been the subject of debate since 1966. This debate must be finally settled. Ambiguities providing alibis must no longer be allowed. In the future Union, conjuring tricks, whatever their origin, will not be tolerated.

(to be continued)

Emanuele Gazzo