

Statement by Altiero Spinelli to the European Parliament (14 October 1982)

Caption: On 14 October 1982, one year after the submission of the draft European Act by the German and Italian Governments, the MEP Altiero Spinelli criticises the lack of tangible results and vigorously supports the initiatives taken by the European Parliament with a view to the creation of the European Union.

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Mr President, ten years ago the first summit of the enlarged Community of Nine solemnly declared that economic and monetary union and political union would be a fact of life by 1980 and it instigated procedures that any simpleton could have predicted would lead to neither monetary nor political union.

Today, ten years later, the Community with neither monetary nor political unity faces challenges and responsibilities which make this unity even more necessary and at the same time it is in a state of impotence and increasing collapse.

Mr Colombo and Mr Genscher came here a year ago to say they were going to make realistic, pragmatic proposals to restart the building of Europe and to do so they would use the same procedures of ten years previously, in other words brief and superficial consultations with the genuine European authorities, namely the European Parliament, and secret negotiations in national diplomatic circles.

I understand your embarrassment, Mr Genscher and Mr Colombo, for you are forced to speak to us today with an eloquence which glosses over but does not manage to hide the truth, which is that you have almost reached agreement in numerous points of detail, form, European rhetoric, but that you are far from agreeing on matters of substance. I wish you good luck, Ministers, for if you succeed the Community will have at least taken a tiny step forward and that would be better than nothing; but I shall not hide my deep belief that you are in a dilemma, not because of your aims but because of the means you have proposed to achieve them.

I asked for the floor, not to give voice to my hopes and fears, but to draw your attention to a new fact which you have not exactly overlooked but the importance of which you have underestimated.

The Chairman of the Committee on Institutional Affairs, Mauro Ferri, has just reported on the institutional work for the European Parliament. In July, Parliament voted basic guidelines for this work by an overwhelming majority of its members. At the beginning of 1984 it will not submit this draft to Council but will transmit it to each government with the request for ratification by the relevant national authorities, by Parliament or by referendum, as the case may be. Now I'm not asking for many promises here this evening, but I do ask you to debate this in your own governments so that you can return here soon and tell us that if European Parliament, sole legitimate representative of the European electorate as a whole, approves a draft constitution for European Union by a very large consensus of its Members, then your own governments – and I say your own governments and not the Council – promise to propose ratification by your countries.

Mr Genscher, Mr Colombo, try to think with the political courage which led Robert Schuman in 1950 to put resolutely aside a method which had become sterile and to undertake something new and fruitful. Today this new and fruitful work is represented by the constitutional enterprise of the European Parliament. Try to understand it, try to adopt it, and try to invite those who would follow you to do so.