

Address given by Pietro Nenni (Rome, 6 December 1973)

Caption: On 6 December 1973, addressing the Italian Chamber of Deputies on the eve of the Copenhagen Summit, the Socialist leader, Pietro Nenni, sets out what the Italian Government's stance on European political cooperation should be.

Source: Pietro Nenni. Discorsi parlamentari (1946-1979). Roma: Camera dei deputati. Ufficio stampa e pubblicazioni, 1983.

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Mr Speaker, Minister, Honourable Colleagues, the circumstances in which the Copenhagen conference is taking place and those in which our Government is participating are extremely uncertain and extremely difficult. It is regrettable to have to say that trust is sparse and confusion and uncertainty are rife.

The report recently published by the Economic Commission is simply catastrophic. The forecast is for a black 1974, with increasingly serious recession accompanied by inflation. Of those forecasts the chapter on Italy is one of the most pessimistic and alarming. There was talk of 1973 being the Year of Europe; President Nixon spoke about it in the very midst of the monetary earthquake caused by the second devaluation of the dollar and the political earthquake of Watergate which has to date prevented the American President from undertaking his planned visit to Europe — a visit still shrouded in uncertainty today. Henry Kissinger spoke about it last April, shortly before being appointed head of the State Department, in his speech on a Pentagon world policy — one that we fully endorse. In that speech he made a truly singular proposal for a new Atlantic pact extending to Japan, in which Europe would have no more than a purely regional role and function, whereas the United States would have more international responsibilities than ever.

The proposal could hardly be more explosive, and it has been heavily criticised — by ourselves first and foremost. The initial response has come from the European Parliament in Strasbourg, with the European component of the Atlantic Pact refusing to take on greater burdens when its field of responsibility is merely regional. This in turn has led in the past few days to the European Community's refusal to sign a Joint Declaration by Europe, the United States and Japan.

1973 has not been the Year of Europe; on the contrary, it has been one of the worst years for the European Community and for Italy's position within it. Europe has had no role whatever in the two major events of 1973: the ceasefire in Vietnam at the beginning of the year and the ceasefire in the Middle East on 11 November. European involvement in military negotiations for the limitation of strategic and nuclear weapons has been almost nil or very intermittent, especially in the negotiations for the reduction of military forces in Europe — an essential issue for us, because it determines our future.

Strictly national, non-Community stances were taken on the world monetary and economic crisis which — to echo Pierre Mendès France — has been weighed down and aggravated by the badly stowed cargoes of tens of thousands of millions of dollars drifting from one continent and from one country to another. On an individual note is the action taken to date at the Pan-European Conference in Helsinki on the Soviet tendency to view security issues as essentially military and as a matter of territorial *status quo*, ignoring the issues of the freedom and independence of peoples and nations, setting no store on the contribution that can be made by the free exchange of views on different experiences and failing to attach due importance to cultural exchanges and cross-border relations between peoples, which are just as important for security as are secure frontiers.

The EEC has not even been able to define a joint initiative on the oil war and the energy crisis. The absolute secrecy surrounding the recent Brussels meetings implies that agreement has not been reached on the three essential points: one, direct cooperation between oil-consuming and oil-producing countries; two, concerted contact with the Arab oil-producing countries; and three, the urgency of and need for a policy of control and containment of the large monopolies, the American and multinational oil trusts, beginning with the infamous Seven Sisters and the role they play in our countries.

Honourable Colleagues, when the joint documents finally emerged from the Copenhagen Conference last September, setting out the response to give to America and the definition of a European identity, and when a joint document emerged from the Brussels Conference on the war in the Middle East, those were documents containing statements of principle and statements of policy but lacking the political will to instigate specific initiatives. That is why the Middle East peace conference, if it takes place as we trust on 18 December in Geneva, will go ahead without Europe being present, even though the issue at stake is the future of regions and peoples who are at the crossroads of our continent with Africa and Asia, continents that are of enormous

interest to us and will be increasingly so in the near future.

Even the second Community summit announced for 14 and 15 December in Copenhagen inspires little hope, and would inspire none at all if the French view of open discussion *au coin de la cheminée* were to prevail; in the city of Hamlet such a 'fireside chat' may well prompt digressions of the 'to be or not to be' type, whereas the task at hand is to take decisions of considerable importance.

One of those decisions should relate to establishing an institutional fabric for the summit meetings and laying down the tasks in order to provide the Community with a true Government of its own at the earliest opportunity. The second involves wider powers for the European Parliament in expectation of it being directly elected: a topic on everyone's lips (although the words are just that — nothing specific has been done). The third is the involvement of the Community as a body in the negotiations on military and on monetary and trade matters in the knowledge that if we do not pull together then none of us will pull through.

Honourable Colleagues, what we must do is to bring Community discourse down from the starry heaven of principles to the realm of taking political action as a body. I have no doubt that that is the position that our Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs will endeavour to have prevail at the Copenhagen summit. A positive outcome would not, unfortunately, be sufficient to make 1973 the Year of Europe, but it would enable Europe to emerge in 1974 from the eclipse through which it is currently passing, and it would enable Italy to move forward within the European Community from the supporting role to which it has been relegated, and to adopt the roles of initiative and prestige that it is still in a position to assume.

[...]

Honourable Colleagues, one final word on the Copenhagen Conference: there is no time to lose. The battle for the political unity of Europe is in jeopardy; it runs the risk of being lost unless it is stirred into action by leadership and the will of the people. In that spirit we are making an appointment with the Government for the day after the Copenhagen meeting; we are eager to give the Government our full approval, we are resolved on our own account not to allow ourselves to be daunted either by difficulties or by discouragement, in an encounter that will determine the future of our nation and the profile of Europe in world politics. (*Very loud applause from the left. Congratulations.*)