

Address given by Gaetano Martino (Rome, 18 January 1957)

Caption: On 18 January 1957, Gaetano Martino, Italian Foreign Minister, delivers an address to the Members of the Italian Chamber of Deputies in which he outlines the economic and political objectives of the negotiations conducted at the Château de Val Duchesse by the representatives of the six Member States of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) with a view to establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC or Euratom).

Source: Ministero degli affari esteri (sous la dir.). Gaetano Martino e l'Europa, Dalla Conferenza di Messina al Parlamento europeo. Roma: Istituto poligrafico e zecca dello stato, 1995. p. 66-78.

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From the ECSC to the Common Market

Mr President, Honourable Members, I should have been failing in a specific duty had I not replied immediately, on the Government's behalf, to Mr Ugo La Malfa's interpellation. The duty in which I would have failed is not merely a duty of courtesy to the interpellant, although I am grateful to him for giving me the opportunity to perform it: it is a political duty to the country, which has a right to be informed through its representative bodies about the terms of what has justly been described as the most important decision on economic policy any government has had to take since Italy was unified.

I must, however, ask Mr La Malfa and other colleagues to bear with me and to consider the reasons why I cannot at this juncture anticipate the explanatory statement on the content of a treaty that is not yet fixed or final, even though the preparatory work is well advanced and the States concerned have reached general agreement on the main points.

I am speaking of the treaty establishing the market among the six member countries of the Coal and Steel Community, with which Mr La Malfa's interpellation was primarily concerned. The Italian Government does not need to remind anyone, especially not you who have seen it for yourselves, of its determination to bring this treaty into being and the commitment with which it has participated in the process through its representatives. But that is not sufficient reason for the Government to do now what can and must be done only after the treaty has been finalised and signed, and when it is submitted to you for examination and approval. All I can do today — and I believe it is politically right to do this on the eve of important government decisions — is to give you some indication of what could be described as the main structure of the new edifice that is about to be erected, in testimony to our proposals and our aims.

We have conceived the idea and produced the plan for the Common Market, and tomorrow we hope to realise it by following two convergent paths, political and socio-economic. It is important to remember these two paths because they represent the course the peoples of Western Europe are destined to take in the second half of this century, in which political, economic and military power has assumed such vast proportions. The historic nations of Europe, including Italy, each enclosed within their own confines and all deeply divided, have gradually ceased to carry their accustomed weight in a world where decisive power has increasingly passed to large demographic units, and technical innovation has given those units the tools for the rapid exploitation of their resources. Every European nation has had to face the fact that it is not strong enough to pursue an independent policy. That realisation has generated a theoretical and practical desire for the political integration of the nations of Western Europe, which inhabit the same part of the world and share the same fundamental thought processes and way of life. If they were politically united, those nations would be in a better position to tackle the problem of their own security and play an independent part in political developments worldwide.

Apart from these demographic and political considerations, there are also considerations of an economic and social nature. Political fragmentation creates economic divisions and barriers and prevents the growth of productivity that is vital to the efficient governance of individual nations and the prosperity of the masses. In the past forty years, that is to say between 1913 or thereabouts and 1951, when the European Coal and Steel Community was established, industrial production in Europe — I am speaking of Western Europe, to the west of the Oder — fell from 45 % to 26 % as a proportion of industrial production worldwide. World production increased threefold in that period, whereas production in Western Europe only doubled.

The reason for the disparity is that, at a time when larger markets were being created or becoming active, the Europeans were still jealously protecting their small national markets. The twin paths of political and economic unity offered the peoples of Europe two openings for constructive action as they emerged from the war, their hopes and aspirations all the greater for the pain and destruction they had suffered. The path of political unity was to be temporarily abandoned as a result of considerations and events that I need not recall, since they are still fresh in all our minds.

So the governments of the countries already working very closely together in the Coal and Steel Community decided to press forward along the path of economic unification. That decision was followed by the Messina Conference, here in Italy, and the plans for EURATOM and the Common Market. Experts and government representatives have laboured long and hard for almost two years, under the energetic and inspired guidance of Mr Paul-Henri Spaak, and have now largely translated those plans into two separate treaties, which will be submitted to the governments concerned for final review and signature.

At this point, I should like in particular to discuss the draft treaty to establish a Common Market covering Germany, Italy, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg — that is to say a total of 160 million people. If, as we hope and wish, that treaty is accepted by the national parliaments and deploys its normative effects in the day-to-day life of the people, it will produce a genuine and profound revolution in the structures of the six nations that adopt it.

The revolution will be gradual and progressive. Mr La Malfa has already pointed this out, and he deplors it. But it will undoubtedly also create new situations and insights that will enable us to address and solve with ease the problems on the path to political unification that now seem, and indeed are, insoluble.

For once, we too may now adopt the famous Marxist maxim and observe that, once the economic and social infrastructures of Western Europe are transformed by the Common Market, we shall have created the necessary conditions and instruments for united political action.

Honourable Members, the Common Market means, first, the establishment of a large economic trade area in which there will be no internal barriers and in which workers, goods and capital will be able to move freely to meet the most pressing needs, without artificial obstacles to stop them and force them to remain idle. The Common Market will be neither *dirigiste* nor *laissez faire*: it will follow the course that economic developments allow or require.

However, one principle is — so to speak — at work in the various articles of the treaty: the principle that trade must be conducted under the banner of freedom and competition, save where, in exceptional cases, the common bodies presiding over the operation of the market decree that other methods or solutions are to be adopted.

Recognition that the harmonisation of the economic and social structures of the six countries must be allowed to come about through the free play of economic forces has ruled out any immediate merger of the six markets. This will take place gradually over a sufficiently long period to enable the various sectors to adjust to the new situation at a reasonable rate and avoid, where possible, any disturbances, stoppages or crises in the normal development of the individual national economies.

Provision has therefore been made for an initial transitional period of twelve years, extendable to fifteen, broken down into three periods of four years. Each period marks the maximum time allowed for reaching the interim objectives set from time to time in the advance towards the final goal of establishing a Common Market. The elimination of customs duties within the single market, based on the average duties applicable in each country in 1953, 1954 and 1955, will take place during the transitional period in accordance with a qualified across-the-board system. Following a first reduction of 10 %, duties will be reduced at regular intervals by 10 % on average, with a minimum reduction of 5 % on each product, so that duties within the Common Market will be comparable by the end of the transitional period. It is proposed to include flexibility and acceleration clauses and to apply appropriate corrective procedures should the need arise. It is also planned to introduce a common customs tariff for third countries during the transitional period, to replace the separate national tariffs now in force.

Mr La Malfa notes that the schemes devised so far contain special protective rules and provisions on agriculture; he deplors this, observing that Italy is essentially an agricultural country. He is quite right, but it must be pointed out that these rules and precautionary provisions will allow agriculture too to be fully included in the Common Market of the 'six Messina countries' at the end of the transitional period.

The treaty also recognises the principle that all services provided by the citizens of one member country may be freely provided in the other countries of the Common Market after the end of the transitional period. The only exception is public service functions or duties, which are reserved for citizens of the individual member countries, save as otherwise laid down by the laws of the country concerned. Once the initial doubts arising from the experts' findings had been overcome, the Common Market was, as I explained, extended to include agriculture and trade in agricultural products, although it was recognised that special provisions would have to be adopted in that area, integrating or replacing the general rules contained in the treaty. It was therefore proposed that the member countries should devise a common agricultural policy based on recognition of the special features of the social and economic structure of the agricultural sector, the environmental differences between the various farming areas, and the need to proceed gradually in pursuing the new objectives.

As the six markets gradually merge into a single market, an increasingly acute problem will be that of imposing common rules on competition between economic operators in the Community who are no longer protected by customs barriers and quantitative restrictions, in order to prevent Member States or individual operators in a dominant position from resorting to practices that might prevent their competitors from freely pursuing their economic activities: in other words, the problem of monopolies, cartels and state aid. Recognising that economic monopolies are an inevitable consequence of technical progress, the treaty provides for legislation and appropriate procedures to deal with abuse of a dominant position. The Community institutions may, and indeed must, act to curb the excesses of monopolies that seek to distort the conditions of competition for other operators or take advantage of their position to impose dissimilar or unfair conditions on purchasers or clients.

In the case of cartels and agreements between undertakings, the treaty proceeds on a different principle: agreements and cartels are presumed to be harmful *de iure* and are therefore prohibited, unless it can be shown within the framework of an appropriate procedure that the formation and operation of such cartels and agreements does not wrongfully prevent other operators from competing in the market.

Lastly, aids or subsidies that a Member State may grant in any form to promote production or trade are prohibited, in that they are artificial factors introduced into the free play of competition to distort the results, save where, in exceptional cases, such aids or subsidies are authorised by the Community institutions. Such cases include aid to promote the economic development of areas where the standard of living is abnormally low and aid to facilitate the development of certain economic activities or certain economic areas, where it is not contrary to the common interest.

In order to give effect to these principles, which apply to the special requirements associated with an attempt to merge differently structured markets, the treaty provides for the establishment of an investment bank with a capital of 1 000 million dollars subscribed by the Member States and paid up at the rate of 25 %. Funds are to be used to support projects for developing less developed regions, projects for converting undertakings called for by the establishment of the Common Market, and projects of interest to the whole of Europe that are of such a size or nature that they cannot be entirely financed out of the resources available in the individual member countries.

The Common Market system calls for rules to ensure that workers can move freely within the territory of the Community so that they can go where the demand is highest. However, freedom of movement for workers must not be understood to mean disordered or random movement that could swamp the employment market and have adverse effects on other workers. It is therefore proposed to establish central machinery to balance supply and demand in the employment market and render the movement of workers easier and more economically viable.

It must be borne in mind that the free movement of workers will not be effective or economically and socially useful unless it is accompanied by a special system of vocational training and assistance to enable workers to travel to the new place of work and cover the cost of settling there. The treaty therefore provides for a resettlement fund, on the principle that the fund will meet 50 % of the expenditure incurred by States in connection with vocational retraining and resettlement or to compensate workers whose wages have been reduced or who have been laid off as a result of the conversion of an undertaking.

In addition to the free movement of goods, services and persons, the treaty also recognises the principle of freedom of movement of capital within the six markets. Appropriate steps are to be taken during the transitional period so that the necessary measures to achieve full liberalisation are progressively adopted. At the same time, protective measures are authorised to prevent the possibility of the free movement of capital leading to evasion of the rules on the movement of capital to or from third countries.

Honourable Members, when the treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community was negotiated and concluded six years ago, the governments of the day, including the Italian Government led by Alcide De Gasperi, intended that treaty to be based on full delegation of sovereignty to a common organ of the six countries. They spoke, as Mr La Malfa has observed, of a supranational authority.

I do not propose to consider here whether that was a happy phrase or whether it corresponded, or corresponds, to a genuine political and legal reality. It is widely held that it is, as Gaetano Mosca would say, a 'political formula' rather than a legal one. In fact, States give up part of their sovereignty whenever they sign a treaty, and sometimes they transfer the right to exercise that sovereignty to a common body for so long as the treaty remains in force and has not been abrogated by the unilateral decision of one of the parties. That is the case with the ECSC Treaty, which was concluded not for an indefinite period but for 50 years, and which does not provide for a federal power to replace the powers of the six contracting parties.

Nor would that have been possible, given the limited scope of the treaty, which covers only two economic sectors, albeit the important sectors of coal and steel.

Experience of the ECSC has taught us that it is impossible to establish a federal power or achieve the political unification of Europe through the juxtaposition of a number of partial cessions of sovereignty, and we are therefore sceptical about the idea of constructing Europe by increasing the number of 'supranational authorities' with powers confined to a single sector.

We accepted the idea of the European Defence Community because we envisaged it as a wedge that would breach the wall of national sovereignty at its most sensitive point, namely external defence. And we accepted it because the EDC Treaty contained an article, Article 38, enjoining the States to draw up a further treaty to establish a political community.

However, it was precisely that essentially federative aspect of the European Defence Community that caused the EDC Treaty to run into problems which, as we all know, were to nip that great project in the bud.

We were not disarmed by the problems but strengthened by the experience. So, what course did we decide to take when we met in Messina in June 1955, to avoid being sucked up in the political vacuum that followed the failure of the EDC? We recognised, as I said at the beginning, that what is needed now is to replace limited national markets, a source of falling productivity and damaging monopolies, with a single market on a scale determined by current political conditions in the countries of Europe. Ever since the end of the war, European governments have been endeavouring to move towards greater liberalisation of trade and payments. The OEEC provided the initial impetus, but we had been aware for some time that the potential of this approach was largely exhausted. This was due more to the difficulty of getting a large number of States to agree than to essentially procedural delays.

We therefore decided in Messina to join forces with the countries that seemed at the time to be keen to work together to achieve a more ambitious result: the abolition of customs tariffs and quotas, or in other words the establishment of a genuine customs union. We were quite sure, even then, that there could be no customs union without economic union, and that it was an inevitable, though not a short, step from economic union to political union.

What we did not want, either in Messina or at subsequent conferences, was to put the cart before the horse, political unification before economic union. So we did not — I assure you — tell the experts who helped to draft the Spaak report in April, or the negotiators who are now putting the finishing touches to the draft

treaties, to determine what European institutions and what powers we need to unify Europe. On the contrary, we asked them to consider what procedures, how much time, and what guarantees we need to bring about the glorious and peaceful revolution that will follow, in our time, from the establishment of a customs union; to tell us, in short, what institutions, what minimum powers we need to direct and supervise this gradual revolution and bring it to a successful conclusion.

And what has Brussels achieved in this area? The answer is that, even though the treaty on the Common Market covers the whole economy of our respective countries, it is probably unnecessary at this point to establish a genuine federal power that would override the economic sovereignty of the Member States. It is planned to establish a number of Community institutions in order to express the common will of the Member States, with binding effects on all.

Had we decided that the will of the Member States must always be expressed by the unanimous vote of their representatives, we would have left the gradual progress towards a Common Market open to veto by a single state in all those sectors for which the treaty does not prescribe a procedure and an automatic timetable. We therefore distinguished between questions of such a delicate nature as to require the agreement of all six governments, and questions on which it is sufficient for a majority of members to agree. The distinction will vary as time goes by.

Mr La Malfa has pointed out that some questions will be decided by unanimous vote in the first four or eight years, but by a simple or qualified majority in the last phase of the transitional period. Life itself, the ever-changing flow of events, the habit of coexistence, the interests that are gradually created, all these things will prompt us to seek a consensus on the most important questions rather than submitting the outcome to a majority decision.

In some clearly defined areas, one of the institutions most characteristic of the Community, namely the European Commission, is to have the power to take decisions that will be binding on every State and its citizens. The cases in question are clearly defined in the treaty, and they relate to the administration of the rules designed to establish equal conditions for competing undertakings, since it would have been impossible to leave this to the discretion of individual governments acting on a majority decision.

This composite system, which allows for the expression of the common and binding will and protects the weak against the strong, is counterbalanced by two other common, non-executive, institutions: the Assembly, which is to exercise certain parliamentary powers; and the Court of Justice, which is entrusted with the task of settling disputes concerning the application of the treaty.

We would have nothing against the Community Assembly acting, where possible, as a federal parliament if you, Honourable Members, were to give your approval. This is not the case in some participating countries, where there is still some hesitation about taking this step. Our delegation proposed — and I can assure Mr La Malfa that I myself intend to propose at the next meeting of foreign ministers in Brussels — that, at least after a certain number of years, member governments should accept that the Assembly be elected by the people, by direct universal suffrage, and not by indirect ballot like the ECSC Assembly and, according to current plans, the assembly that is to oversee the Common Market and EURATOM.

This proposal from the Italian delegation did not find favour in Brussels.

Mr La Malfa has pointed out that I have already had the honour to propose to the Council of the Western European Union, on which the six Messina States and Great Britain are represented, that the Assembly of that Union too be elected by direct universal suffrage. Mr Ludovico Montini has asked the Government whether it intends to take action to prevent the establishment of a fourth European parliamentary assembly, the assembly proposed for the Common Market. I agree that it will become necessary at some point to impose order on the number and variety of European bodies, but I think it would be unwise to defer or delay the process of establishing the Common Market for reasons that, however relevant they may be, do not concern matters of crucial importance. We shall have the leisure to decide on the architectural features of the building later, Mr Montini, but meanwhile let us lose no time in laying the foundations.

Honourable Members, the Common Market is intended, according to its founders, to be an instrument of union between the peoples of Western Europe.

But that union cannot and must not mean excluding others. It means reaching a higher, more secure level where it will be easier to collaborate with others.

I am therefore pleased to say that, a few months after the publication of the Spaak report, which met with general approval at the Venice Conference in June, the British Government produced a proposal for a free-trade area to comprise the customs union of the six Messina countries together with such European countries as are disposed to extend the process of establishing an extended European market by gradually abolishing customs tariffs. To our minds, that British government initiative confirmed that we had chosen the right course. There have been no other initiatives so far, except that the British Government and people have increasingly and repeatedly expressed a sympathetic interest in our efforts to bring about the economic integration of Europe.

The most recent manifestation of interest has come from an authoritative and significant source, the United Kingdom Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr Hugh Selwyn Lloyd, in a statement he made a few days ago here in Rome, where he is an honoured guest of the Italian Government.

We warmly welcomed, and welcome, this initiative, even though the limits imposed on it leave us somewhat perplexed.

One thing is certain. As the six Messina countries show that they are determined to persevere in the course set in the treaties to be laid before you in a few months' time, it is highly likely that a larger, albeit looser, union will form round the central core represented by those treaties, and that other European countries may join. We would like the Common Market to deploy its effects without limits or restrictions, but it is clearly in everyone's interest, and in the interest of cooperation in general, that the establishment of free-trade areas between the Common Market and other economic areas be regarded from now on as part of the movement to establish that market.

I do not think I should pause on this occasion to consider in detail the other agreement that the six member countries of the Coal and Steel Community have been patiently negotiating since Messina: the treaty to establish EURATOM. The need for Europe to engage in joint research into nuclear energy and its use for peaceful purposes has frequently been discussed in this chamber; I myself have had occasion to speak about it here and in the other House. I would merely say that this treaty represents an integration of the sector in question on the same lines as the Coal and Steel Community and that, as regards institutions, the proposed solution is identical to the one I have already described in the case of the Common Market.

Honourable Members, I come now to the final part of my reply to Mr La Malfa's interpellation.

How does the Government consider that its accession to the Common Market and EURATOM will fit in with its general political programme? First of all, may I observe that the distinction between the economic unification and the political unification of Europe is purely theoretical. The decision on the measures required to achieve economic unification would itself be an important, perhaps the most important, political decision. The implementation of that decision would entail the establishment of bodies which, although acting in the economic sphere, would be purely political bodies. In short, substantial economic unification could not fail to produce situations highly conducive to the spontaneous development, so to speak, of new institutions that would extend the range and change the very nature of the cooperation between the States concerned.

The peoples of Europe have recently endured bitter experiences, which have taught them that political Europe will certainly not live up to the expectations of its supporters if it lacks economic substance. To create a political Europe, capable of playing its part in the world, we must first create an economic Europe, in other words we must establish a robust, vigorous and productive body that can secure public prosperity

and foster the tradition of technical progress that has its intellectual roots in the old world.

The Common Market and EURATOM are of particular importance in the establishment of economic Europe, which is indissolubly linked with political Europe. At this point, with the discovery and renewal of the sources of energy essential to industrial development, EURATOM is the only way for the peoples of Europe to exploit this new source of energy for the benefit of industry and the industrial workforce, a source of energy that will transform economic and social life as we now know it.

A politically unified Europe of rural life and cottage industries, which is what this dynamic and progressive continent would inevitably become if industrial development were to cease, would have a certain romantic charm but no real political importance. We want a Europe that is economically efficient, which it cannot be without the Common Market and EURATOM, because we want a political Europe that can put its shoulder to the wheel of development worldwide.

To our minds, action to unify Europe is inseparable from action to maintain and develop the instruments of transatlantic solidarity; indeed, it is an essential complement to that action.

The peoples of Europe, worn out by the war, could not have summoned the strength to collaborate with one another had they not been protected in their reconstruction work by transatlantic solidarity.

We must recognise that the achievements of the Atlantic Alliance provided the premises for the integration of Europe. Indeed, the first fruit of that alliance was that the peoples of Western Europe, initially frightened and humiliated, were able to face the future with increased confidence and decide to collaborate more closely.

That first fruit of the solidarity between Western Europe, the United States of America and Canada shows the true function of the Alliance: it was and is a defensive alliance, but the free world has been able to reorganise and grow stronger under its protection. The unification of Europe will mark an important and decisive step in the reorganisation and strengthening of the free world. There is no alternative to a united Europe cooperating with the United States of America within the framework of transatlantic solidarity: neutrality is not an option. A united Europe will need to cooperate more, not less, with the United States of America, not only for the purposes of common defence but in the essential interests of economic growth and development. The idea of a neutral Europe is an arcadian and pastoral vision of a Europe isolated and immobilised in the picturesque costume of bygone days. The fate of such a Europe, resigned and decadent, would be impotence and slavery: a high price for a sorry peace.

In fact, the only conceivable option is a politically united Europe, the very Europe we are now working together to establish, a Europe that is an integral part of the free world; and transatlantic solidarity was and is the principal instrument for the defence and reconstruction of that world.

There are other, more serious, problems to be solved if lasting peace and social progress are to be achieved.

It is reasonable to suppose that, once those problems have been solved, the defence provisions established within the framework of the Atlantic Alliance are likely to change. The decisions taken at the NATO Foreign Ministers' Council in December were already designed to give the executive instruments of the Alliance a greater measure of political sensitivity and flexibility, to enable them to operate in a variety of situations and adapt to such changes as may occur. But, while it is reasonable to foresee such changes and sensible to plan for more varied and realistic political responses in a situation that has become more fluid and dynamic, it would be a foolish mistake to imagine or seek European unity as a substitute for transatlantic solidarity. We have supported, and will continue to support, a programme for political action in which European integration is complemented and reinforced by transatlantic solidarity.

When Mr La Malfa asks, as he has done, whether a neutral zone will be admissible in the politically unified Europe we want to establish, my answer is that it will depend not so much on what happens or does not happen in Europe once it is unified as on what happens or does not happen within the wider framework of

transatlantic solidarity.

In principle, there is nothing wrong with the idea of a territorially based political union including a demilitarised zone; in practice, it would remain to be seen whether there were the necessary internal and external guarantees to ensure that the demilitarised zone does not become a target for aggression.

I think Mr La Malfa will at least agree with me in two essential respects: first, in considering and judging that transatlantic solidarity is not static but dynamic, a commitment by the democratic peoples of the West to a programme that is not just a defence programme but a programme for the development of peace, freedom and prosperity in a changing world, a commitment that is not theoretical but militant, not contingent but permanent; and, second, in recognising that, although the main impetus for that programme comes from the United States of America, all the peoples of Europe can and should contribute to it, not separately but jointly. Any contribution a fragmented Europe could make to the realisation of that programme would do virtually nothing for the common cause and would bring no glory or renown to any individual people. It is in everyone's interest to combine their individual contributions in one common contribution, because only a common contribution can effectively prevent divisive and separatist action that will damage the whole of the free world.

A few months ago, in a period of danger and uncertainty, it was clear that the storm clouds over the old world grew darker and more menacing as soon as there was a question of a split between Europe and America. Any split would inevitably lead, on the one side, to plans and attempts to unify Europe outside the framework of transatlantic unity and, on the other, to efforts to consolidate cooperation with the United States of America by abandoning the idea of European unity. We are against both courses of action; in our view, every effort should be made to unify Europe as soon as possible and to devise an organic system for the free world, which the Atlantic Alliance was formed to rebuild.

We are not, we cannot be, against action, especially if and when we realise that if we do nothing problems do not go away but get worse. It is essential to act to prevent them from getting worse and creating even more dangerous situations. But we also think it is essential to act with wisdom and caution. We would be neither wise nor cautious if we acted today in a way that was likely either to weaken transatlantic solidarity or delay the unification of Europe.

In the difficult but indispensable effort to reconcile the two parts of the divided world, the Italian Government rules out no course of action that is compatible with firm and consistent defence of peace and freedom. If it reaffirms its commitment to transatlantic solidarity and — at the same time — its determination to complete its work of bringing about the unification of Europe, it is because it is convinced that, in so doing, it is helping to defend peace and freedom, which are indissolubly bound up with the present and future interests of the Italian people.