

Interview with Carlo Sforza published in the Italian press (18 April 1951)

Caption: On 18 April 1951, in an interview granted to the Milan daily newspaper Corriere della Sera, Count Carlo Sforza, Italian Foreign Minister, sets out the implications of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC).

Source: SFORZA, Carlo. Cinque Anni a Palazzo Chigi, La politica estera italiana dal 1947 al 1951. Roma: Atlante, 1952. 586 p. p. 316-319.

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‘As you know I have been campaigning for a united Europe for many years. I was extremely pleased when the OEEC and the Strasbourg Council were established, and pleased and proud that Italy had played a notable part in these successes. But I never felt then, as I do now, that Europe was really on its way. As an Italian, I can confirm that our country, in putting all its weight as a free nation that has returned to the forefront of the international community, has been a decisive factor in the conclusion of the agreement. You know I hate boasting; such effusions are for the weak. So let the facts speak for themselves. Think of the two dangers we might have faced, had Italy not played its part: first, France and Germany might not have succeeded in overcoming the historical divisions that have overshadowed relations between the two countries. Italy is firmly convinced that the new, democratic Germany must be closely bound to the free nations, forging economic and political links not with this country or that but with the great number of countries that make up an organic whole. The Schuman Plan offers Germany that precious opportunity. The second danger we might have encountered was the very opposite: the danger that France and Germany might together pursue the vain and dangerous dream of establishing a joint hegemony. The possibility was extremely remote but it was there, even though such a course would clearly be detrimental to both countries.

Italy has provided a balance, which has been useful to all parties and naturally also to Italy itself. Where does our interest lie? It lies in establishing a system of cooperation that will resolve the traditional conflict between the Germans and the French once and for all, so as to secure peace and independence for Italy itself. Perhaps never before have I felt so sure, in the light of the facts, that Italy’s policy on Europe is justified and creative, designed as it is to make ever closer friendship with France a permanent pillar of European unification and to build a new world in which the two countries will have so many contributions to make — always provided that Germany is linked to us, in the interest of peace and freedom.’

Question: ‘Can you tell us, briefly, what Italy stands to gain in material terms, apart from the obvious moral advantages?’

Answer: ‘Your question is a difficult one for me to answer but an easy and welcome one for Mr Taviani and our capable colleagues. Italian coal, iron and steel production is relatively modest. Italy is nevertheless on an absolutely equal footing with the other major participating countries as one of the constituent Governments of the High Authority in this new sovereign body, the first of its kind in the world, and it will have the same number of representatives in the Assembly.

It is also on an absolutely equal footing in the Council of Ministers, although in the case of some economic problems it will be impossible to prevail against the combined forces that control 75 % of production. If you consider how far this outcome is from the initial Franco-German proposals, you will understand that the negotiations required to achieve it were neither short nor easy. Why did we succeed? Because, under Mr Schuman’s flexible and far-sighted chairmanship, I never thought of banging my fist on the table. I only had to make it clear that Italy’s interests ultimately coincide with the European ideals common to us all. And so it came about that the most controversial decisions at the Conference were taken on our initiative and our proposals.’

Question: ‘Minister, we know that you have spoken with Chancellor Adenauer on several occasions. Can you tell us what impressions you have formed?’

Answer: ‘Certainly, that is an easy question for me to answer. Chancellor Adenauer seemed to me to be a true statesman, a term that is too often applied, wrongly, to politicians who are merely clever and resourceful. A statesman is a man who reads in the book of destiny the right path to follow: that is what Chancellor Adenauer did when he opted definitively for the West. That is why I told him I hoped to see him soon in Rome, to study with the President of the Council and with me the best ways to secure peace between nations and freedom of conscience for mankind. I have reason to believe that the Chancellor welcomed my invitation.’