

Letter from Carlo Sforza to Paolo Emilio Taviani (Rome, 10 June 1950)

Caption: On 10 June 1950, Count Carlo Sforza, Italian Foreign Minister, together with Paolo Emilio Taviani, Head of the Italian delegation in the negotiations on the Schuman Plan, determines Italy's position in future negotiations of the Six.

Source: SFORZA, Carlo. Cinque Anni a Palazzo Chigi, La politica estera italiana dal 1947 al 1951. Roma: Atlante, 1952. 586 p. p. 303-306.

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Dear Mr Taviani,

If at this point I seek to confirm and clarify the reasons that have decided the Government of the Republic to give immediate support to the Schuman Plan, I have in mind the line of conduct and language to be employed by the delegates who will be accompanying you to Paris. It was quite clear to me from our talks, which led me to believe that you, with your economic background, would be the person worthy of leading the Delegation, that you shared our point of view.

All your colleagues must realise that, in the Schuman Plan, we are witnessing the first serious attempt to establish a supranational authority in modern Europe. This, in a Europe where there is a chance of settling once and for all the Franco-German differences that have caused so many wars, is one of the best guarantees we have at the present time. Italy has everything to gain from peace and everything to lose from war, and it must support the Schuman Plan to the best of its ability. You and your colleagues must naturally defend Italy's specific interests, and you will be able to do this more effectively as it becomes clear that we are not guided by preconceived ideas of self-sufficiency.

The Schuman Plan is, and must remain, the very opposite of a cartel: its aim is, and must continue to be, to provide Europe with steel, coal and ore at the lowest possible price.

We cannot know at this point whether the Schuman Plan, as now conceived, will be accepted or whether on the contrary it will in the end be side-tracked into some form of committee of government representatives, on OEEC lines, as London would like, which would be quite another matter. In any event, it is of capital importance that the Italian Delegation should not in any way appear to be responsible for any such change of direction. The effect on public opinion in Europe and America would be too serious and, as a matter of proper pride, we must not assume any such responsibility.

We must adopt a truly European attitude. Of course, if others seek to give the plan a national twist, our attitude will have to change, but it is essential that we should not be the ones to take the first step in that direction.

You and your colleagues must cultivate the best possible relations with the other Delegations and always encourage open-door contacts with the English. It is in our political and economic interest that Britain should eventually be a party to the agreement. When it becomes obvious that the agreement is on course, it will join; facts, hard facts, are what the English prize above all else. But it will be to our advantage for them to feel that we have always been very much in favour of their accession.

As to the Italian iron and steel industry, I can assure you that you will have French support in defending the reasonable interests of the industry. It will be one of the Delegation's principal tasks to keep up the promised French support for us. However, the purpose of the Conference — or of the first session at least — will be to define the constitutional charter of the new supranational body. Technical considerations and agreements will probably come later, and only then will the experts be needed. The European political problem will remain essentially a matter for you, as leader of the Italian Delegation.

In view of the novelty of the concept underlying the Schuman Plan — which is bound to upset the ideas of some technical experts and prompt invidious national comparisons — it is to be supposed that, politically, the Conference will be somewhat fluid, at least at first.

It is therefore clearly impossible to give detailed instructions now to the Delegation you are to lead. In general line with the present instructions, you, as leading delegate, are allowed full discretion to adapt your attitude to changing circumstances. As this is essentially a political matter, I have instructed the Italian Ambassador in Paris to keep in very close touch with you; it will be desirable for you to be in very frequent contact.

Yours, etc.,

Signed Sforza