

Address given by Carlo Sforza (11 July 1950)

Caption: On 11 July 1950, replying to criticisms levelled by opponents of the Schuman Plan, Count Carlo Sforza, Italian Foreign Minister, addresses the Italian Chamber of Deputies and emphasises the benefits to be derived by Italy from a 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. 306-310.

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‘Mr Gaspare Ambrosini himself explained, at the end of his speech, the Schuman proposal for coal and steel but I feel I should give you a short account of the Italian Government’s position. The function of foreign policy is to support and directly promote the country’s economic recovery, and we have left no stone unturned in our efforts to do so. You are aware of the active part Italy has played in the recent discussions on the coal and steel pool: our Delegation was led by Mr Taviani and I congratulate him on his work in Paris.

The essential points of the Schuman proposal, so readily accepted by Chancellor Adenauer, may be summarised as follows: establishment of an international authority independent of individual States; modernisation of production; equalisation of prices during the transitional period; creation of a restructuring fund for industries that have to reduce production; equalisation and improvement of wages and social benefits; application of a production and investment plan during the transitional period; free movement of coal, steel and iron ore; and lastly, abolition of any discriminatory practices and above all differential prices for coal and iron ore.

These premises have many implications for the Italian economy and our delegates are attending precisely in order to see that they are taken into account, asserted and defended. At present, everything is still fluid and under discussion, so I do not wish to anticipate now the technical arguments we intend to deploy to ensure that the economic structure of our country emerges from this pooling of resources strengthened, and in some sectors even rebuilt, and that we see an increase in the production and export of those finished and semi-finished products that constitute such an important item in our balance of trade.

I wish to speak now only about the initial political question, which has also been discussed in this chamber: namely, whether or not Italy should have attended the preliminary talks in Paris or, to be more precise, whether it should have attended them with the intention, as we for our part decided immediately, of participating informally. As we are concerned here not only with political issues but also with figures, I should like to start with two facts that should, of themselves, suffice to explain our position: (1) German and French coal and steel production combined represents more than two thirds of all coal and steel production in Western Europe; (2) the Italian iron and steel industry is now forced to produce with costs some 30 % higher than costs worldwide, and it is clear that this cannot continue indefinitely.

It is therefore plain to all, including us, that the Schuman project is of enormous importance to European integration and unification. In the long term, it cannot fail to have beneficial effects for all the participants, including us. It is clear, when it comes to facts and figures, that, in the particular situation in which the country finds itself in the respects I have just mentioned, Italy has everything to gain from the Schuman Plan so long as it takes due account of some of our particular provisos, which are non-negotiable. Is it conceivable that we, in the circumstances I have described, should seek to be self-sufficient in iron and steel in a world where liberalisation is the order of the day? To my mind, the very idea is ridiculous. Can we afford to give up exporting machinery, to stand aside from an arrangement that would supply us with raw materials at far lower prices than we currently pay? To my mind, it would be absurd. Can we risk seeing the Italian iron and steel industry bite the dust if, of our own free will, we cut ourselves off from the markets that supply the raw materials it needs? To my mind, it would be an act of folly.

That is why, although we are fully conscious of the duty of caution incumbent on those responsible for taking certain decisions, we could not in principle decline to be party to the agreement provided, of course, that it keeps to the conditions set out in the original draft, conditions which we regard as essential to our economy.

Some have sought to attack the draft agreement on the ground that the clauses providing for a supranational authority imply a loss of sovereignty. But, frankly, we must not allow ourselves to be frightened by words (I speak for those who desire to be frightened). What was the OEEC essentially, if not a delegation of each country’s sovereignty to a common ruling body? It may not have been explicitly stated at the time of establishing the Organisation but we were all well aware that that was what was happening. So why was the loss of a measure of sovereignty spelt out in such detail and publicised when it came to pooling coal and

steel resources but not in the case of the OEEC? It was precisely in order to make it clear that any danger, even an implicit or latent danger, that the pooling of those resources might degenerate into a monopolist and — and *pace* the Communists — capitalist cartel would not be tolerated; precisely because the loss of a tiny measure of sovereignty is synonymous with international management in the name of international interests, as against any private or partisan interests.

We therefore had no alternative but to respond in positive fashion to Mr Schuman's appeal. It is quite clear that Italy's inclusion in the Franco-German complex also represents an international advantage: conversely, it is equally clear that it would be a disadvantage for Italy not to be included, since that would mean barring it from the European consensus in which it already participates in so many ways.'