


Interview with Pasquale Antonio Baldocci: Italy and the European integration process (Scy-Chazelles, 4 April 2007)

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[Pasquale Antonio Baldocci] For the Italians, for us, it was quite normal, it followed the tide of history. All the more so, given that Italy was suffering from a certain fatigue. Firstly, there had been the drama of the Second World War, which had not at all been wanted by the Italians. As a result, Italy was getting over this drama and the beginnings of the Republic had been difficult. They had been difficult because we had a very powerful Communist Party. It was the strongest in terms of numbers and of means; it was the one that Stalin, first of all, and then his successors, counted on most in order to have a sort of Trojan horse in Western Europe. Then there was something else that was very much a distinguishing feature of Italy the Holy See. So what was the position of the Holy See towards Europe? I think it was favourable in the beginning, but with some reservations, because there was a desire to see a Europe that was Catholic and Roman. Naturally this did not please the French secularists, and perhaps it did not interest the Germans much. Nonetheless the Holy See was not unfavourable at the time, not at all; on the contrary, its view was rather that its principal enemy was the Communist Party, and the fact that there should be a non-Communist Europe one that might not be conservative, but at any rate rested on formations of parties that were centre parties this was certainly agreeable. Agreeable to the Vatican & despite the great difficulties besetting relations between De Gasperi and Pius XII, because at one point Pius XII had criticised De Gasperi for his tolerant attitude to the Left, and De Gasperi, although he was a convinced Catholic and very much a believer, had replied that he could accept such criticism as a Catholic, but not as the Italian Prime Minister. He said so very frankly to a pope who enjoyed an authority that was almost absolute, and whom I knew personally. He struck me by the strength of his personality and by the political aspect he presented as a pontiff; not as much as the penultimate pope did, but nonetheless he came very close.

The Italians were very favourable; they found in it the confirmation that Italy had regained its international role in Europe and that Italy was no longer considered second rate, as a second-rate State. Besides, Italy had signed the Treaty of Paris creating the Coal and Steel Community, so it was already in this mind-set & What was more, this would be signed in Rome. Therefore the Italians were most favourable, but a certain number of French were too, and we must not forget Benelux frankly, they were Europeans of the strictest persuasion. Benelux had already been a success, so this small model could be imitated; a model that had, of course, been put into effect by countries of very different dimensions and which already had a history of joint cooperation. They had also been occupied during the war. All that was important. Italy had been in the opposing camp, which placed it in a rather special situation. Germany as well, of course. Yet it should never be forgotten that this cooperation between Italy and Germany on the European level was also due to the fac

t that these two countries had shared a common history during the 19th century, that of unification, which drew them closer together, for better or worse, just as it had done during the Second World War. These two countries have often had a vision of Europe that is perhaps more federal, or at any rate confederal, than the others have had so far.