Address given by Antonio Segni (31 March 1957)

Caption: On 31 March 1957, Antonio Segni, President of the Italian Council and, acting in that capacity, signatory, one week earlier in Rome, of the Treaties establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC or Euratom), delivers an address at the Adriano Theatre in Rome in which he focuses on the successive stages of European integration.

Source: SEGNI, Antonio. Per la Comunità economica europea, Discorso tenuto al Teatro Adriano di Roma il 31 marzo 1957. Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri (sous la dir.). Roma: Servizio dell'informazione, 1957. 20 p.

URL: http://www.cvce.eu/obj/address_given_by_antonio_segni_31_march_1957-en-491088cf-416e-4804-aac8-ce4d95f6708b.html

Last updated: 05/07/2016

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It is surely highly significant that the three Treaties — which will have a decisive influence on the history of Europe in the decades and, I should say, centuries to come — were signed in Rome, the city universally hailed as the cradle, the centre of European civilisation. For the purpose of the Treaties is to promote the economic development of that great civilisation so as to restore its political importance in the world.

Twenty-seven centuries ago, according to legend, Romulus traced the first outlines of a city, a modest city with nothing about it to suggest that in less than seven hundred years it would become the centre of a vast civilisation extending to every corner of the known world. If the small pastoral and warrior tribe that settled on the hills of Rome achieved such astonishing eminence in a few centuries, it was not by military might alone. The reason for its success was intimately and deeply bound up with the civilisation it had established and brought to the world, based on the ordered and civilised development of a state structure and on legal institutions to which we still subscribe.

That great Roman civilisation, classical civilisation as we call it, was not based on force and discipline alone. It was also founded on intrinsic ideas of progress, on profound principles of social and legal order, and nineteen centuries ago — when it was still marked by the character of its founders — Christianity transformed it into a universal civilisation. And here I should like to recall the words of the Belgian Foreign Minister, Mr Paul-Henri Spaak, who has contributed so much to realising the ideal of a new united Europe and to whom I extend the most cordial greetings. He said: ‘European civilisation is Christian civilisation.’

The sense of a new unity in the Roman and Christian world proved stronger than national boundaries and tribal differences. The idea, first of the Roman Empire and then of the Holy Roman Empire, lived on in the minds of the people. Developed by politicians and praised by poets, it expressed above all the need for unity felt by millions of people, who had been bound together for many centuries by the chance conjunction of the highly diverse elements that merged to form Roman civilisation and who were now truly one. These disparate tribes, Roman, Teutonic, Celtic and others, were united by a common faith, a common law, a common language and a common civilisation.

That civilisation appeared to be doomed when, for several hundred years, a resurgence of nationalist feeling threatened its unity, pitting the great powers against one another and culminating in the last two wars, which finally shattered the ideal and appeared to make Christian Europe truly the last handmaiden of civilisation. Yet, for centuries, every civilised movement in the world had been inspired, guided and directed by those ideas and principles. No civilisation had ever had such pervasive power.

We have witnessed the indisputable decline of that civilisation in the past 50 years and we are now seeking to revive it.

The sense of unity has returned after two wars between peoples belonging to the same civilisation, wars that may have unconsciously been intended to unify Europe but that deeply divided its peoples. It is at this point that there has been a renewed sense of sharing a common destiny, of belonging to the same tribe, the same civilisation. Attempts had also been made in the period between the two wars to revive this common civilisation and to prevent the disputes that had laid Europe waste and plunged it into grief and conflict.

I recall the words with which two great European statesmen, Aristide Briand and Gustav Stresemann, greeted the Locarno Pact.

Briand said that at last mothers would no longer have to tremble for their sons, because Europe would never again be devastated by war.

Stresemann, also a democrat, said the day he saw the nations reunited in a peace pact was the happiest day of his life. But what was missing then, and what we are seeking to establish today through victory and defeat, was that intimate sense of unity by which we pass from individual nations to a supranational order. The Locarno Treaty and the bilateral or multilateral non-aggression pacts were merely external

arrangements, which left the structures of the States intact; merely pieces of paper, to quote a cruel and cynical phrase that has passed into history. The Locarno Treaty was torn up, the bilateral and multilateral pacts too were torn up, because the States were still nation states with no intimate force to bind them together. Moreover, the structure of the pacts had proved to be highly ambiguous: for some an attempt to buy time, for men of good faith an illusion.

That was not the right path to take. Some other way would have to be found because European civilisation, the Christian civilisation that is Europe, was in danger. What is the essence of that civilisation? We have recently heard again from Spaak what Alcide De Gasperi said in 1953 — and even earlier — and what Ezio Vanoni said in 1947: the danger lies in the irremediable differences between our civilisation and the Communist world. Irremediable because our civilisation is based on man, seeks to value man and to recognise the dignity of man, and, as De Gasperi said, does not acknowledge the supremacy of the state or of any particular social class, but the supremacy of man and of human dignity.

Communism on the other hand, as Spaak says, is a way of life that is completely contrary to our civilisation. It is not a political order, it is not a way of life that is more advanced than any other, it is a way of life in which man is suppressed by economic totalitarianism, which leads to totalitarianism in every branch of human activity, even the most intimate, even the most highly intellectual: in culture, science and the arts. Vanoni said so in 1947. De Gasperi made the point even more clearly in 1953: ‘European society, despite many wrong turns and frequent differences, recognises that its origins, the course it has followed and the ways in which it has evolved, all mean that its centre lies not in the state, not in the community, but in man.’

Hence the profound, the irremediable contrast with that Eastern world which, as it were, confronts our civilisation, which threatens the European civilisation that has spread to every corner of the world and has preserved its fundamental nature by placing man first in every field of activity.

But we must recognise that Europe’s division into separate states is the decisive reason for its economic decline and thus the political decline of its civilisation.

It is also the reason for its present danger. It certainly cannot be said that European civilisation, with all its divisions, has failed to bear fruit, superb fruit, in science and the arts, in the past fifty years. One has only to think of Henri Becquerel, Ernest Rutherford, Pierre and Marie Curie, Enrico Fermi, Albert Einstein, great geniuses who opened the way for the work on the structure of matter, which may represent a threat to security now but will make an enormous contribution to human progress in the future as well as of great philosophers and thinkers such as Maurice Blondel and Benedetto Croce, and great writers and artists.

That old Europe, it must be said, even in its present depressed condition, even with the material damage suffered in two wars, has borne superb fruit in the arts, in science and in law, that is to say in the true attributes of civilisation. But what Europe lacks is precisely an economic base, divided as it is into so many separate compartments.

Fifty years ago, the United States of America was certainly less advanced than Europe from an economic point of view. I quote again from Mr Spaak’s speech: eighty years ago, a French worker and an American worker could buy the same amount of bread with an hour’s pay, but today an American worker is paid six times as much as a French one. This huge gap is due partly to 50 years of war but above all to economies withering in excessively narrow confines. When we think that our economies — including the highly industrialised Belgian and Dutch economies — are based on markets comprising a few million consumers, we see what an enormous difference, what an enormous discrepancy there is between the economies of large states with markets comprising some 150–160 million consumers and our own. Yet, Europe is making remarkable efforts. Just think, the six States of ‘little Europe’ produce more iron and steel than Russia. Russia produces 45 million tonnes of steel and 33 million tonnes of iron, compared with the 52 million tonnes of steel and 41 million tonnes of iron produced by ‘little Europe’, not counting Britain of course. But America, with more or less the same number of consumers as the six European countries, produces a good 70 million tonnes of iron and 106 million tonnes of steel. This enormous difference is not due to any lack of capacity, technical ability or intelligence, because we have all these qualities in Europe. It is due to the

restricted nature of the market. A car manufacturer like General Motors, which produces for a market of 160 million consumers, can charge very different prices from a European manufacturer with a market of 40 or 50 million consumers.

All this is not because Europeans are less intelligent or work less hard; it is because the technical and commercial structure of American industry is different from the structure of European industry. This was the basic idea, applicable not only to industry, that led us to conclude the Treaties. This was the driving force for signing them.

But the Treaties are much broader and far more important than that. As we shall see, they open the way for a merging of economies that goes beyond the purely economic sphere. They pave the way for a new supranational entity, with the result that, after the preparatory period of 12–15 years, every citizen of the six countries of Western Europe will feel at ease in any other country, will enjoy complete freedom of movement and freedom to conduct business, will be able to seek work in any country, and in this way — perhaps without our being aware of it — the European economic community will give rise to a social community and a feeling of social unity and of a common civilisation, which will in turn lead naturally to the formation of a political entity.

It has been discussed over the past few years whether we should begin by establishing political unity or economic unity. A pointless debate. If we pursue the course we have taken, the course of economic unity, there will certainly, inevitably, come a point when we shall establish a new supranational entity, a new State of Western Europe, a State in which there will be no shortage of intellectual resources and technical capabilities. A combined population of 160 million represents an economic and also a political force, and we have today taken a decisive step towards European unity or rather, I should say, towards the restoration of European unity. While we set about promoting progress to that end, we must thank Providence that we have succeeded in taking the first steps so quickly and our thoughts must go to those who supported the idea but died before they could see it realised.

In Italy, we must first remember our own De Gasperi, who always affirmed his faith in Europe, even when no one believed in it. And Carlo Sforza, his loyal collaborator. We have a duty to remember them and to record our gratitude for the work of these two great men who are no longer with us and whose work is being completed by others. And I should also like to mention our friend Schuman, the man who, with De Gasperi, gave the first impetus to European unity. Robert Schuman too must be remembered with gratitude.

I must now say a few words — possibly rather dry words — about the content of the Treaty, so that we all know what we have undertaken to do and can carry it through to the end.

There are two main Treaties, and there is also a third Treaty which is primarily of diplomatic value and which I shall therefore not speak about. The Treaty establishing the European Economic Community and the Euratom Treaty are both instruments of peace and progress. There was nevertheless a certain amount of intimidation before they were concluded, and you know about the public interference from Russia. But our consciences are clear because, in establishing European unity, we are making an essential contribution to our progress and above all to the progress of the working classes, and to democratic freedom. That is expressly stated in the preamble to the Treaty establishing the Economic Community. It states — and these are not formal words but a genuine reflection of the feelings of those who wrote them — that the Governments are ‘resolved to ensure the economic and social progress of their countries by common action to eliminate the barriers which divide Europe; resolved by thus pooling their resources to preserve and strengthen peace and liberty, and calling upon the other peoples of Europe who share their ideal to join in their efforts …’

Article 2 states that: ‘The Community shall have as its task, by establishing a common market and progressively approximating the economic policies of Member States, to promote throughout the Community a harmonious development of economic activities, a continuous and balanced expansion, an increase in stability, an accelerated raising of the standard of living and closer relations between the States belonging to it.’

The economic aim is combined with a social aim and that road will lead to political unification.

There has been sarcastic talk of ‘little Europe’. But to those who speak of ‘little Europe’ I would not mention the figures I have already quoted on iron and steel production. I would merely point out that, in the course of 20 centuries, the civilisation of ‘little Europe’ has spread throughout the world.

The first centre of that civilisation was the Mediterranean, and it was in fact Rome that extended it not only along the shores of the Mediterranean but also to the coasts of Africa and Asia, and other countries on the Atlantic coast of ‘little Europe’ later helped to spread it throughout the world. I recall the immeasurable glories of the six countries of ‘little Europe’ which are the true centre, the essential crucible of European civilisation. And they can be so again, if they are aware of the new entity we are establishing, if they increasingly feel that they are members of one society, bound together, for better or for worse: *bonis dubiisque rebus*. This new Europe will come about because it is founded on moral, religious and legal unity. We share a common civilisation from which we shall draw the strength to pursue together the course we have marked out.

To make it clear that the Treaty is not merely a customs union, I must read you Article 3, because people in Italy ought to know how essential this is and because critics might misrepresent it.

Since these Treaties are highly complex — the first containing 248 articles and the second, the Euratom Treaty, 222 articles — two or three articles ought to be known and disseminated. Article 3 reads as follows:

‘For the purposes’ [of this Treaty] ‘the activities of the Community shall include:

(a) the elimination, as between Member States, of customs duties and of quantitative restrictions in regard to the importation and exportation of goods, as well as of all other measures with equivalent effect;

(b) the establishment of a common customs tariff and a common commercial policy towards third countries;

(c) the abolition, as between Member States, of the obstacles to the free movement of persons, services and capital;

(d) the inauguration of a common agricultural policy;

(e) the inauguration of a common transport policy;

(f) the establishment of a system ensuring that competition shall not be distorted in the Common Market;

(g) the application of procedures which shall make it possible to co-ordinate the economic policies of Member States and to remedy disequilibria in their balances of payments;

(h) the approximation of their respective municipal law to the extent necessary for the functioning of the Common Market;

(i) the creation of a European Social Fund in order to improve the possibilities of employment for workers and to contribute to the raising of their standard of living;

(j) the establishment of a European Investment Bank intended to facilitate the economic expansion of the Community through the creation of new resources;

(k) the association of overseas countries and territories with the Community with a view to increasing trade and to pursuing jointly their effort towards economic and social development.’

If these aims are achieved — and I believe they will be achieved — we shall have established a new national unity. A new unity that will enable our civilisation to survive.

It is a work of peace and progress, in which we must have faith. Then, when the barriers have been removed, when every citizen of any of the six countries is free to pursue his own activity in another State, we will be able to say to one another — you will be able to say to one another, because the transitional period is 15 years and it would be rash of me to think I could live so long — that every citizen will feel he is a citizen of this new Europe.

It is a new family, a large new family that we are creating and, as members of the same family, they will all feel united in a life-long bond, as our Latin ancestors used to say, united in a common destiny.

Some critics consider the transitional period of 12 or 15 years too long, others think it is too short. This period is essential for the purpose of adaptation. What are the instruments of this economic adaptation?

Forgive me if I enter into a certain amount of technical detail, but it is necessary to do so. It is impossible for the six countries to abolish the customs barriers between them at a stroke; it is impossible because such an operation carries risks.

And the Treaty has a further consequence, namely the adoption by the six countries of a single customs tariff for third countries. This is an essential condition, because tariffs between the various European countries may be reduced and eventually abolished altogether within the time limit I have mentioned.

The abolition of quotas and the elimination of customs tariffs among the six countries will be gradual but will be completed within the transitional period. The definitive customs tariff applicable to third countries will be determined during that period but the unification of external tariffs will start at once.

The Treaty must not be judged in the light of the present situation. We must remember that everything will have changed in 15 years' time and the advantages and disadvantages cannot be judged on the basis of current positions. On the contrary, they must be judged and measured in the light of future production and future markets, of the situation presented by a common market of 160 million consumers compared with the current market confined to a few tens of millions of consumers.

But there are other aspects to the Treaty. I would mention only the Investment Bank and the fund for vocational training. These are two institutions that are of direct interest to us, because the Investment Bank is intended to operate particularly in less-developed countries, and while Western Europe is less developed than the nations of Northern Europe, Canada and the United States of America, for example, there are nevertheless areas within Europe that are even less developed, including parts of Italy.

The Bank will have an initial capital of a thousand million dollars, in which we have a 24 % share. Its purpose is to lead to a raising of the standard of living, to contribute to the development of depressed regions and economies. Our national policy will therefore receive a substantial contribution, not only in economic terms but also in technical support. To have a market of consumers who cannot buy is tantamount to having no market at all, so it is in the interest of the productive areas to develop the depressed ones, where they may find new buyers and new locations for production.

The other organisation of particular interest to Italy is the fund for vocational training, mentioned in Article 3. This is essential for a nation like ours, where delays in industrial development and also in certain farming methods have resulted in unemployment and created a vast pool of unskilled labour, which itself is the major cause of unemployment.

The provision on territories outside Europe, and particularly in Africa, was added to the Treaty at the meeting in Paris last February. It has been seen as a return to colonialism. Nothing could be further from the truth. Let us not forget that, twenty centuries ago, Africa was largely Roman. I do not say this with any nationalist claims in mind, but because that civilisation produced great saints like Saint Augustine and Saint Monica, lawyers and apologists like Tertullian. Those territories enjoyed the benefits of a civilisation that cannot be regarded as foreign to the European civilisation covered by the Treaty.

The overseas territories thus represent a return of European civilisation to areas where, in certain places, it had flourished up to the time of the Arab invasion.

I therefore put the case, not on grounds of political or economic expansion, not on the old colonialist argument, but for the expansion of a common civilisation that has been given fresh impetus.

Our task is not to colonise in the old sense of exploiting those territories, but to extend the benefits of civil and political progress to the peoples of Africa too.

As you will realise from what I have said, these organisations are highly complex and have an institutional structure of their own which represents the nucleus of what will be the new political structure of Europe.

Thus, the organisation will include an Assembly, consisting of 142 members elected initially by the parliaments and later by direct universal suffrage. We will have 36 representatives in the Assembly, the same number as Germany and France. The Assembly will have supervisory powers, I should say, but also real powers such as the power to adopt a motion of censure on the economic Commission which is crucial in the development of the Treaty. Then there is the Council, consisting of 17 members (Italy 4, France 4, Germany 4, Belgium 2, Holland 2 and Luxembourg 1).

The Council has important powers to take decisions (Article 145). It can determine the duties in the common customs tariff, for example (Article 20), and extend the duration of the stages of the transitional period.

The Economic Commission has its own power of decision and the power to make proposals for decisions of the Council. It consists of nine members, who will be chosen by common agreement among the six States on the grounds of their general competence and who provide the necessary guarantees of independence. This body is accompanied by the Court of Justice — consisting of seven members — which delivers a judgment if a State has failed to fulfil an obligation under the Treaty. The State is required to take the necessary measures to comply with the judgment of the Court of Justice (Article 171). You will tell me at this point that the judgments of the Court are purely theoretical because it lacks the authority to secure their enforcement. But we must remember that the organisation we are establishing will have moral, economic and political authority, and a State that is found to be at fault in respect of certain obligations will be placed in a political and moral position in which it will have to accept the judgment of the Court. But the Treaty is based on persuasion, on the need, on the determination to unite our destinies, and everyone will feel a duty faithfully to follow that path. Five years ago, I wrote: ‘Faith, belief in this new unity must arise in the collective consciousness before it can be enshrined in the Treaties,’ and the fact that the Treaties have been produced and signed in just over a year and a half from the theoretical Messina Declaration of June 1955 shows that this new European consciousness is no longer a dream but a reality.

This rapid progress, gathering pace towards the end, shows that the new consciousness comes from the people too — not merely from their governments — and none of us would have felt authorised to sign had we not felt the pressure of a common insistence, a common desire on the part of the peoples of Europe finally to succeed in rebuilding and strengthening Europe, which two terrible wars had brought from heights of political and economic power to the depths of destruction.

I do not propose to dwell on the other Treaty, the Euratom Treaty, which is important too but is concerned with a technical sector and particularly with atomic research. It has no war aims, if only because the research is so costly that if war aims were added to peaceful purposes, I should say that our economies would be unable to stand the strain. But Europe is ten years behind in this scientific sector despite the fact that European scientists, Ernest Rutherford, Marie Curie, Albert Einstein and Enrico Fermi, were the first to show the way. It is clear that in this field, we shall have to combine forces to find the vast resources required for research and it is equally clear that combined research will avoid wasteful duplication and enable scientists from the various countries to exchange notes and share the results of their studies. Research is always the fruit of collective work, gathered together at some point by a man of genius who sees its final implications. Article 2 of the Treaty sets out the aims to be achieved, namely to:

(a) promote research;

(b) establish uniform safety standards;

(c) facilitate investment;

(d) ensure the supply of ores and nuclear fuels;

(e) make certain that nuclear materials are used for the purposes of the Treaty;

(f) create a common market in nuclear materials and equipment;

(g) establish with other countries such relations as will promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

These aims seemed very remote last year, when the Italian Committee for nuclear energy was formed, but they have quickly become aims that can be pursued by dint of the common effort. This is a highly important Treaty, because the use of nuclear energy is crucial to the economy of the future, just as oil has been crucial to the economy of today.

The two Treaties have been signed and will be submitted to Parliament. Economic and political objections will be raised. We have a battle on our hands that can and must be fought, but it is a battle that we feel is decisive, not merely for the future of Italy but for the future of our civilisation.

The opposition and objections to these two Treaties are based on political rather than economic grounds. The Europe we want to raise to new heights is inevitably opposed to the Communist world. We quite properly consider that our civilisation has a right not just to survive but to teach others what true civilisation is. The battle will really be a battle to defend our common civilisation against oppression and obscurantism. We have shown courage and faith in our destiny by presenting the Treaties to Parliament immediately for approval. We have done what we considered to be in the interests of Italy and of Europe, in the interests of the development and progress of our working classes, in the interests of the security and freedom of all peoples, and I trust that Parliament and the Italian people will follow us down this road.