

'Colombo calls for a comprehensive effort to move Europe ahead' from Europe (30 January 1981)

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Colombo calls for a comprehensive effort to move Europe ahead

As we said yesterday, the speech delivered in Florence yesterday by the Italian Foreign Minister, Emilio Colombo, is, as attentive reading confirms, a political document of the greatest interest. Mr Colombo posits the view that the urgently needed efforts to give fresh impetus to European unification should be comprehensive, covering economic, political, and institutional aspects of the Community, as well as even security.

A fresh move ahead must come quickly, even if only to bring to fruition what has been achieved in theory: "If we do not act swiftly, we are in danger of losing what we have already achieved."

Taking a close look at the document, the following points become clear:

- Mr Colombo in several places speaks of "getting back" to the ideas and values which originally lay behind the European venture. This shows that, whatever has been learnt from experience, the motivation which derives from awareness of our cultural and political unity still stands. No change of course is therefore called for. On the contrary, the EEC pact should be "renewed", which means that everyone should find once again the political will with which he set out.
- Europe reflects an idea, but it should also help "to solve actual problems, everyday problems". This is the way to secure broad support. The first thing is therefore that unless we make full use of existing potential, the idea of integration will remain an illusion. We must go "far beyond" what we have already achieved, without thinking in terms of a two or three speed Europe. An "immense effort to transform" the Community must be made. In this respect, the 30 May mandate involves more than just juggling with the figures or improving the agricultural policy. Things have to be taken step by step. But the process should not be allowed to degenerate into seeking item-for-item trade-offs or into partial paralysis.
- Making full use of existing potential means economic integration. We welcome Mr Colombo's clarity on this: economic integration is a necessary condition for developing political union, though it is not sufficient in itself. It is wrong to think Europe's problems can be solved by jumping the gun. We are aware, as Mr Colombo himself noted, that with all its frameworks of privileged relations with other countries in the world (the Lomé Convention, the Mediterranean agreements, and the agreements with ASEAN and various Latin-American countries) the Community has not managed to increase its potential for political influence. This is because "the European Community has not actualised itself in terms of integration".
- Economic integration, according to Mr Colombo, is not enough to advance further. It should be supported by a political and institutional plan. This seems to be the crucial question. Yet at the same time it is a vicious circle which sets everything off course: without a solid institutional framework there cannot be a sufficient degree of credibility; and without credibility, any effort to take an active part in world affairs is illusory. We should point out that that the original plan was based on a comprehensive view of things. But there was nothing abstract about it, because the aim was to "organise" everyday reality through institutions with a broad range of responsibilities. Mr Colombo says: "Let's not be afraid to change the Treaties if that is what is needed to make the institutions work as they should." In line with this approach, he also suggests that ties should be established between the national parliaments and the European Parliament, so as to provide an opportunity for EP resolutions to be written straight into national law.
- Europe will then be able to take a major step forward. But the choices have to be made now. What decisions are taken will determine "the future nature of the Community and its ability to survive as a Community involved in a process of political unification and political integration" by developing the

elements of a foreign policy which “are fundamental to a common security policy”. Security policy is currently tied to the Atlantic Alliance, but this does not prevent Europe from making a coordinated and effective contribution to its own security, bearing in mind the aim of scaling down the balance of forces towards general disarmament.

The debate has begun. It should not be allowed to drag on too long.

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