

Address given by Paul-Henri Spaak (14 January 1964)

Caption: On 14 January 1964, addressing the Consultative Assembly of the European Council, the Belgian Foreign Minister, Paul-Henri Spaak, challenges the idea that the Community of the Six is a failure and calls for enhanced European unity.

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Address given by Mr. Paul-Henri Spaak, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium, to the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 14th January 1964)

[...]

Again — and I hope for the last time — I am going to warn those here who represent countries which do not belong to the European Community to beware once and for all of gambling on the failure of the Community of the Six.

[...]

Those who drew up the Rome Treaty — and I shall go on repeating this — did not think of it as essentially economic; they thought of it as a stage on the way to political union. For it is difficult to believe that six countries can combine their resources, opportunities and capabilities to a greater and greater degree, can integrate and dovetail their interests more and more, without one day setting up a political authority to crown this economic organisation. But I must admit that I am not content, or that I am no longer content, to accept this sort of historic fatalism and to say that things are bound to happen.

[...]

There were three points in the Fouchet Plan on which the Ministers were unable to agree: relations between a politically-organised Europe and the United States; relations between that political Europe and the European Community born of the Rome Treaty; and above and beyond all that — I say this because that is in any case how the story looks to me — the possibility of evolving ideas which could have led to a more complete and more perfect concept of Europe. I believe we are still faced with these three questions today.

[...]

Naturally, we realise that the European ideal — to which I still cling — the ideal of a Europe genuinely united, organised, and, to use the word people dislike, integrated, remains the only valid ideal. That does not mean that the European countries must coalesce into some sort of mixture in which they will lose their individual responsibilities and individualities; it means something that I believe to be plain common sense: that a great organisation cannot function without authority.

I have never understood how people can propose forms and methods for a European organisation which we would not accept at any price in our national organisations because we know they would render them incompetent, ineffectual and incapable of functioning. That is why my own deep conviction remains the same, that some day we shall have a properly organised Europe.

I realise, however, that this ideal is quite unattainable at the present time. It remains to be seen whether some compromise is possible between those who want the Europe hoped for by the pioneers of the European idea — De Gasperi, Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman, Adenauer — and those who believe that much slacker links would suffice to make a framework for Europe.

[...]

We were probably wrong in believing we could create a united States of Europe by the same means as the United States of America, that all that was needed was to draw up a federal constitution and present it to the different European States, as was done with the States of North America, and that thus, by their political accession, a new world would come into being.

I will not say we were very near success — we were far enough from it — but I remember one day in this very hall formally presenting to the French Minister for Foreign Affairs the federal constitution which the *ad hoc* Committee of the European Assembly had managed to draw up. That poor federal constitution sank without trace and was never heard of again; which makes me think we were suffering from illusions, that we

were too far ahead of ourselves, that our ideas were unrealistic. They may represent the reality of tomorrow but not the reality of today.

So I no longer believe that the united States of Europe can be created by the same means as the United States of America. But does that mean we should give up the idea of building Europe, of giving it institutions? Certainly not. Does not wisdom now dictate that we should try to profit by our own experience, cease harking back to history and look at what we have managed to do in Europe?

[...]

In politics, defence and culture, the three main fields mentioned, is it impossible to conceive of a communal political organ which would, in these fields, play the part that, *mutatis mutandis*, the European Community plays in the Common Market?

It seems to me it might be a useful compromise to give up, at least for the time being, all thought of a supranational structure, of organising really strong and effective institutions, and to recognise that there is a communal interest which is not opposed to the national interests, but within the concept of a united Europe is complementary and additional to them. I think the experiment is worth trying, or that it is at least worth thinking seriously along those lines. Obviously, if we are to agree to a compromise, it must be one which leaves us some hope.

From the very earliest days of the United Nations, I have not believed in the unanimity rule for international organisations. I have said so on dozens of occasions. The unanimity rule can lead only to frustration and ineffectiveness. There can obviously be no Europe that does not have authority in some fields, no united Europe without institutions or some form of organisation. I am convinced that Europe with its institutions will one day exist and that it will be powerful and strong.

That, Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen, is what I consider to be the situation today. Within the Community we have, I believe, taken an important step. After all, the Community remains the advance guard of the army which is working for the European idea, and it is impossible for the other countries, even those which do not share my ideas, to ignore it. Our Community has become so strong, it plays such an important part in commerce and economics, that everything it does affects the life of other European countries and that of the countries in the rest of the world. That is why, even in an Assembly like ours, which includes those committed to NATO and the neutrals, I feel it is neither useless nor unnecessary to tell you where we have to go to in our march towards a united Europe.

I retain my unswerving conviction that there will be a united Europe because there must be a united Europe, and because Europe will not recover her greatness and her power in the world, will not be able to give full play to her ideals, until the day comes when the whole strength of Europe is united.

[...]