

SPEECH BY

GIORGIO NAPOLITANO

FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE ITALIAN REPUBLIC
FORMER SOCIALIST MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT AND
PRESIDENT OF THE INSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



ON 24 MARCH 2017
IN ROME,
AT THE S&D GROUP
CONFERENCE
TO MARK THE SIXTIETH
ANNIVERSARY
OF THE TREATY
OF ROME



Group of the Progressive Alliance of
Socialists & Democrats
in the European Parliament



TOGETHER
A new direction for a progressive Europe
Stand up for our future!

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PREFACE

EUROPE IS AT A CROSSROADS

The forces of division are intensifying, fuelled by a social crisis that weakens the middle class and threatens the working classes, and by a democratic crisis that destabilises intermediary bodies, weakens political parties and undermines the institutions.

The rise of anti-Europeanism raises, for the first time, the question of the survival of the European project. There should be no fear in asking the question, **as the democratic and pro-Europe left has the answers and the political and intellectual strength to respond to it.**

There is no need to invent something new as it is enough to go back to the source of our commitment to Europe.

Giorgio Napolitano shows us the path to follow in his speech.

Firstly, we must stay faithful to our values. Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union refers to the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law, as well as respect for human rights.

In this context, we should heed the call of president Napolitano for the **member states and European political forces to achieve greater coherence**. It is untenable for certain member states, chiefly the Hungarian government, to engage in a systematic operation to sabotage the commitments undertaken in the areas of immigration and the right of asylum. Likewise, attacks on the rule of law and fundamental freedoms undermine the foundations of the Union.

Without consistency between our values and our acts, Europe will die. I would like to **confirm the commitment from the side of the Group of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament** regarding sanctions against the government of Viktor Orbán. Hungary is a great European country but its leaders cannot be allowed to take the process of European construction hostage for the sake of national 'party politics'.

President Napolitano also highlights an essential issue for our Europe. According to the president Emeritus of the Italian Republic, the current situation reflects an existential ambiguity in the European project as European leaders have never clarified the purpose of the integration process. In addressing this issue, **Giorgio Napolitano touches upon the theme of the transfer of sovereignty**. Here, in my opinion, is where the Gordian Knot of European construction lies.

We should clarify our position: **the aim of European construction is the creation, in the long term, of an embryonic form of a United States of Europe**; a political structure that is totally sovereign, founded on an ambitious principle of subsidiarity that can keep alive the diversity of the territories and states within the same political body.

The subject of the transfer of sovereignty brings us to the debate on the two-speed Europe. In his analysis, Giorgio Napolitano confirms our methodological approach: the question to be raised does not concern the speed but rather the direction of the integration process, the political form that we want to create. We need to first raise the question as to the 'nature' of Europe rather than the direction it should take.

In the turmoil caused by the crisis in 2008, considerable progress was made by European legislators, but that hasn't been enough.

Europe is an indispensable tool to win back our sovereignty. **The urgency of the situation leaves us no other choice but to advance** and in this task we, the pro-Europeans, need the foresight and the moral authority of figures such as Giorgio Napolitano.

Gianni Pittella

President of the S&D Group in the European Parliament



Giorgio Napolitano, born on 29 June 1925 in Rome, is a politician whose career is indivisible from the story of the Italian left.

His political struggle led him to the presidency of the Italian Republic from 2006 to 2015.

Napolitano was especially **active in the Communist resistance** during the regime of Benito Mussolini. His participation in the movement led him to become a member of the Italian Communist Party from 1945. A committed activist, he ran the party until the formation of the Democratic Party of the Left.

He was elected for the first time in 1953 as a member of the Chamber of Deputies representing Naples and **he became a member of the European Parliament from 1989 to 1992 and 1999 to 2004.**

A true European, his devotion to parliamentary democracy and strong contribution **to the rapprochement between the Italian left and European socialism**, made him a prominent figure in the Italian delegation in the European Parliament, especially when he chaired the constitutional affairs committee after being re-elected in 1999.

Today, at 92 years old, Giorgio Napolitano is the doyen of the Senate of the Italian Republic.

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Not long ago, I took part in an initiative worthy of great attention and respect: the 10-year anniversary of the death of an important Italian and European figure: Nino Andreatta, one of the most forward-looking, consistent and combative proponents of the Italian pro-European tradition. A figure who will be mentioned later on in my speech for certain points that he once made that I feel are still valid today.

In these days of institutional meetings and initiatives, of debates, of events – important due to their repercussions on public opinion – I feel I should start by taking stock of **the large-scale mobilisation of the media on the subject of 'Europe' on the occasion of the 60th anniversary**. It is important here to remember that a united Europe wasn't born on the 25 March 1957. The European Economic Community was born on that day, but the European project and the first steps towards European integration started to take shape at least seven years earlier with the Schuman Declaration. In 1950, Western Europe was experiencing serious difficulties, shared across the whole of a Europe destroyed by the war – from reconstruction issues to problems with the recovery of identity and of a role as individual countries and as a continent in a world that had suffered such a dramatic upheaval.

It was then, in May 1950, that the heads of government signed this first declaration – the Schuman Declaration – and soon after, a first Treaty establishing the first Community – that wasn't the European Economic Community but the European Coal and Steel Community. While this was indeed a legal act signed by heads of state, and thus an international treaty, it was also – as I have defined it – a creative constituent act that responded to a movement of ideas and to pressure and a demand from the general public.

THE EUROPEAN COAL AND STEEL COMMUNITY WAS AN INTERNATIONAL TREATY, BUT ALSO A CREATIVE CONSTITUENT ACT.

Here it would be useful to mention the steps that have already been taken that led to the development of this invention. In 1941, there was the Ventotene Manifesto, the Congress of Europe that was held in The Hague, and various other events that conveyed this drive to lay the foundations of a new Europe. A new Europe that would be born not as a simple commitment for national states and their respective governments to co-operate, but as an invention of a type of integration that – as we all now know – is different from mere co-operation. This integration was to be a real process, was to **produce institutions and decisions and – on the subject of the current controversies that will be the focus of my speech – these decisions, as written in the Schuman Declaration in reference to the ECSC, were to be binding for all states that subscribed to them.** Where it



THE SIX FOUNDING COUNTRIES DREW UP AND SIGNED THE TREATY FOR THE EUROPEAN DEFENCE COMMUNITY THAT SYMBOLISED A LANDMARK FOR ACHIEVING EUROPEAN INTEGRATION FROM A MILITARY PERSPECTIVE AS WELL AS BEING OF GREAT POLITICAL VALUE.



now seems that there is no longer a need for a Community framework, or when any semblance of a Community framework is trampled on, this was actually one of the foundations of the new reality that was being created. It was an extraordinary idea to envisage that these major European states could unite in this kind of reciprocal bond: of joint commitment, of policy framework, of values and aims, of shared decisions.

And so the road has been long. Almost alongside the treaty on the Coal and Steel Community, the six founding countries drew up and signed the Treaty for the European Defence Community that symbolised a landmark for achieving European integration from a military perspective, as well as being of great political value as it was into this draft treaty that Article 38 was inserted – setting out the creation of a European political assembly. This article was inserted into the draft treaty by a head of government and by a great Europeanist who worked together to draw it up. These two men were Alcide De Gasperi and Altiero Spinelli. Very different characters, vastly different ideas, but if you do as I did last Friday in the Senate when speaking **at the ceremony for the 60th anniversary of the Treaties** and go and read the speech that De Gaspari gave in November 1950, in that very same chamber in the Senate where we were sat with Tusk, Timmermans, Tajani and others, you will see how he supported the approval of a federalist motion by the recently reconstituted Senate of the Italian Republic.



On the other hand, the Schuman Declaration already stated that the aim was a European Federation. **Subsequently, the word 'federal' became an almost unmentionable bad word** and, as Jacques Delors said in his memoirs, was like a red flag to a bull. He waved it, this red flag, not only at the English but also at others who later became rather influential on this path to European integration and unity.

However, the EDC Treaty failed and therewith the probably premature aim of the start of political integration. A solution had to be found – even if it meant retreating – and the idea of an assembly and a European Political Community gave way to the idea of a **European Economic Community. It was a retreat but at the same time it was a great leap forward because from that moment on the Community began to take shape**; institutional links were designed, rules outlined, institutions strengthened. From there, all of us Europeans decided to start again and to give new momentum to what remained to be done.

Of course, there is a lot of work involved in emerging from a crisis. Indeed, I have had to insist on the fact that it is not a crisis that we have been experiencing for the past near-on ten years, but rather a series of crises: from the global financial crisis – ricocheted off the United States into Europe, and therefore the crisis that became the sovereign debt crisis in the eurozone, moving on to other manifestations of crises. The most recent crisis we have seen is the migration crisis, caused by an extraordinary, rapid, unmanageable flow

of asylum seekers and desperate people looking for a decent life in Europe, exiting countries marked by dictatorships or wars, as well as underdeveloped and poor countries particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

We have emerged from and are emerging from these crises. Several years ago we were optimistic: I remember a book published in 2012, with high-quality contributions, promoted by former president of the Council and full-time president of the European Council Van Rompuy entitled *After the Storm*. By 2012, some of the crises were partially resolved; however the migration storm was yet to hit, with the huge backward step in terms of our values and behaviours that it brought with it. This crisis is still ongoing and greatly concerns us in Italy as a European Mediterranean country and in terms of Euro-Mediterranean relations.



BY 2012, SOME OF THE CRISES WERE PARTIALLY RESOLVED; HOWEVER THE MIGRATION STORM WAS YET TO HIT, WITH THE HUGE BACKWARD STEP IN TERMS OF OUR VALUES AND BEHAVIOURS THAT IT BROUGHT WITH IT.



What subject has been discussed over the past weeks, even the past hours? That we are unable to emerge from these crises, that they are so intertwined that they are shaking up the foundations and political institutions of the European Union. Let's be clear: since Great Britain announced its exit from the European Union, none of the other 27 members of the European Union has been tempted by the British example – probably due to prudence and realism. On the contrary, they all reacted by reaffirming their unity. Great Britain thought it was dealing a fatal blow to a united Europe and the integration process, but that has not happened. We 27 have remained united. But we have remained united at the price of standing still, as has often been written (one of the first to write this was Habermas, one of the great critical but constructive minds in the European integration process). **And we have paid this price to what has been in part – and we have to say this in all frankness – a united facade.**



WE 27 HAVE REMAINED UNITED.



Indeed, when a country with a prime minister who is a leader of the European People's Party, Viktor Orbán, builds walls, erects barbed-wire fences and then unrealistically attempts to block entry onto Hungarian territory in every way possible, and finally sets up a special anti-immigrant guards corps whose only task is to chase down immigrants, what type of unity are we talking about? What type of European unity is this government part of? We should not forget that Article 7 of the Lisbon Treaty provides for the opening of proceedings that can lead to the suspension of the right to vote in the European Council for countries who systematically violate the fundamental principles and values of the European Union. Admittedly, these mechanisms jam, become difficult and arouse great concern. **We do not dare move forward to a consistent application of what everyone** – including the Hungarian government at the time – **signed up to with the Treaty of Lisbon.**

Hungary is an extreme case but we are seeing a significant increase in actions that do not respect the decisions taken by the European Council in the areas of reception and of respect for the right to asylum as a fundamental right established at the international level. In short, there has been much patience and much tolerance shown in the large European party that is the European People's Party. In fact, to my mind, clearly too much. A great deal of timidity because the myth was to remain united and a fearful inertia has been created among the 27. Suffice to remember that in June 2015 the latest version of the report of the five presidents of the European institutions was published, in which a roadmap – that is the term used – was established to deepen integration in all areas where this had become essential and urgent, especially in the area of the Economic and Monetary Union, setting out important measures such as the completion of the Banking Union. And it fixed the first stage, from 1 July 2015, to start implementing these measures, as well as the deadline for completing the first stage, set for 30 June 2017. As of today, there are just a few months left; and it has remained at a standstill because of resistance, discord, obstructionism from one part of the famous 27 who claimed to be united. At this point, some interesting new aspects come into play that we – including myself – have highlighted publicly. On certain occasions – at the summit in Malta in February and at the 'Big Four' meeting with Germany, France, Italy and Spain in Versailles in March – we have heard very determined words, primarily from the German Chancellor and the French president: "We must not stand still, otherwise the building may come crashing down". These are not words uttered lightly, nor are they words that downplay an already dramatic reality. Having announced as a result of this that there was a need to proceed with integration, **even if not all member countries were willing, interested or ready to take those steps, and therefore with a differentiation in the integration process**, the result has been to establish a heavy negative reaction and – if you will allow me to use this term – blackmail, in particular from the four Visegrad countries who now, unfortunately, have the current Polish government as their point of reference and driver.

This is the issue that is still at stake today, and that will be reflected in the declaration made public tomorrow on the occasion of the 60th anniversary. It is, quite frankly, baffling to think that there will most likely only be a faded echo of that strong declaration, to which Italy naturally fully adhered because otherwise it would not have been possible to have the signature of all 27. Here there is, of course, a need for discussion as there cannot be an attempt made to obtain a consensus and to endure the conditioning of countries, governments and political forces that joined the European Union in 2004 and that never incorporated the fundamental choices of European integration into their vision. We all know that the negotiations with these countries were long, even too long – but what was discussed was their legislation and their internal economic structure. There was no clarification regarding the fact that the Community idea and European construction would be based on freely awarding substantial shares of national sovereignty to the development of a shared and entrusted European sovereignty managed by Community institutions. The fact that these political forces, these governments and public opinion did not incorporate this vision at all has led to the consequences that we are seeing today.



WE MUST NOT STAND STILL, OTHERWISE THE BUILDING MAY COME CRASHING DOWN.



I am not keen on different formulas or the two-speed formula. Firstly, because there I see a lot of implications that are very difficult to unravel and secondly because the fundamental point is not the formula. Those who want to go further, more quickly and more consistently on the path of integration – ie on the path of relinquishing shares of national sovereignty to the European institutions – **and not return to the past**, making it very difficult to then collaborate on a declaration (such as the one to be published tomorrow), **well those people need to have the strength in themselves to truly mark a turning point in returning to the path of integration.**

In this respect, the position very clearly expressed by the president of the European Central Bank, Mario Draghi, in Ljubljana should be mentioned. His speech was extraordinary in cutting back every blade of grass of the populist and Eurosceptic, or Euro-destructive, propaganda, showing point by point how European integration has contributed to the development of freedom, of rights, of prosperity and of social relations, of social security, of the social safety net in our countries. The speech clarified the fact that **if it had not been for European integration, or if there had been no birth and subsequent development of the Community for the European Union, we would have remained poorer and more isolated.** It also highlighted how integration perhaps didn't exactly guarantee growth – actually this was a spontaneous process down to the people's fervent desire for reconstruction – but that growth was most certainly accelerated and strengthened thanks to integration.



**IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION,
WE WOULD HAVE REMAINED POORER AND MORE
ISOLATED.**



I believe that we are going through a difficult period. We should not insist on the 'faster' formula but should leverage what already exists as regards differentiated integration and even enhanced co-operation. This was the somewhat hypocritical formula in which many took refuge, after so many other formulae were concocted (concentric circles, the hard core and so on). Long before there was talk of enhanced co-operation, we had Schengen and the Maastricht Treaty, resulting in the single currency – another powerful transfer of sovereignty to the European level.



Indeed sovereignty over the governance of the currency was removed from national governments and from the dogma of the limitless absolute sovereignty of national states. There exists this fundamental reality, this great instrument that is the single currency. European Community policy is affirmed, the establishment of the Central Bank proceeds: and this has now become the linchpin, the mainstay of the further development of European integration towards its full political meaning. And what do they have to say, those who now protest because they do not want a second-division Europe and other foolish things? **When the monetary union was created, the doors were open to everyone:** anyone who considered themselves in a position to join the single currency was free to do so – and there would have been screening in place in this case. The countries that today ask for reassurance because they don't want to be pushed to one side simply didn't join the monetary union: they are not being excluded from anything, they have excluded themselves for reasons that we don't even want to censure; they have taken the path of less advanced integration or much slower integration. But no one is saying that we should regress. No, we must move forward along this path. Whatever is written in the Rome Declaration, this is the path we should take.

But I ask myself: who should take this path? Those who believe in it, of course – meaning the governments of the countries in the monetary union, the countries that have long-standing European credibility because they were the founding countries, and also some countries that entered at later dates for whom accession to the European Union has meant a great leap forward, both for them and for Europe as a whole. One of these is Spain, once Francoist, now a mainstay of European integration, particularly during the many years of the **extraordinary presidency of Felipe González, another of the great makers of Europe who led Spain's accession to the Union.**



**I DON'T BELIEVE, NO MATTER WHAT HAS BEEN SAID
AUTHORITATIVELY, THAT THE PROBLEM HAS BEEN
THAT PEOPLE SAID "EUROPE ASKED FOR IT".**



Unfortunately these states and these governments, with their merits and their acceptable level of European conviction, have been too timid, too ambiguous and too inconsistent; and today we are paying the price for this. There has not been enough commitment to valuing the history, experience, and achievements of European integration in the face of the populist Eurosceptic assault. There was no appropriate reaction and this opened the door to all types of distortion of the truth. Many took shelter and just as some progress was being made with decisions that appeared unpopular, blame came to be laid at the feet of the European Union. I don't believe, no matter what has been said authoritatively, that the problem has been that people said "Europe asked for it", or even going to Brussels to ask what Europe requested: this is a very rough and questionable depiction. The most common claim when returning from the European Council and when facing negative reactions and criticism of measures has been: "but this is what Europe wanted", making it all suddenly impersonal, without father or mother.



THE TREATIES HAVE ALWAYS TALKED ABOUT A CLOSER UNION AMONG THE PEOPLES.



And the **governments of too many European countries, including the most Europeanist, even the most important, have largely fallen silent**, creating profound failures. Furthermore, they have not had the courage to march along the path of closer integration, not only because of that phrase in the Treaties so hotly contested by the English in particular (in truth, the Treaties have always talked about a closer union among the peoples), but also out of fear of the meaning of closer integration at the level of sovereignty among European states.

The European Parliament, in a wonderful report on the Treaty of Maastricht by two important MEPs, the Greek MEP Tsatsos and the Spanish MEP Mendéz de Vigo, defined **the Union as a union of states and peoples, in a balance and trade-off between the national and supra-national dimension**. that Monnet so masterfully first foresaw and defined. This here is the responsibility of too many governments that I am not sure are ready to be shaken up. When I say governments, I inevitably also mean parliaments that have followed them (with some exceptions of course).

But I don't want to forget the point that most concerns me and that is the most decisive – that of political forces. Here I am referring to the political forces of the member countries of the Union, to all of the political forces with a sense of national and common European interest. Here I should point out that we have not always valued the fact that the forces of the left and of the European socialists have always been on the side of the European integration cause. **We must never forget this, dear friends of the Party of European Socialists, and we should be proud of our heritage and cultivate**

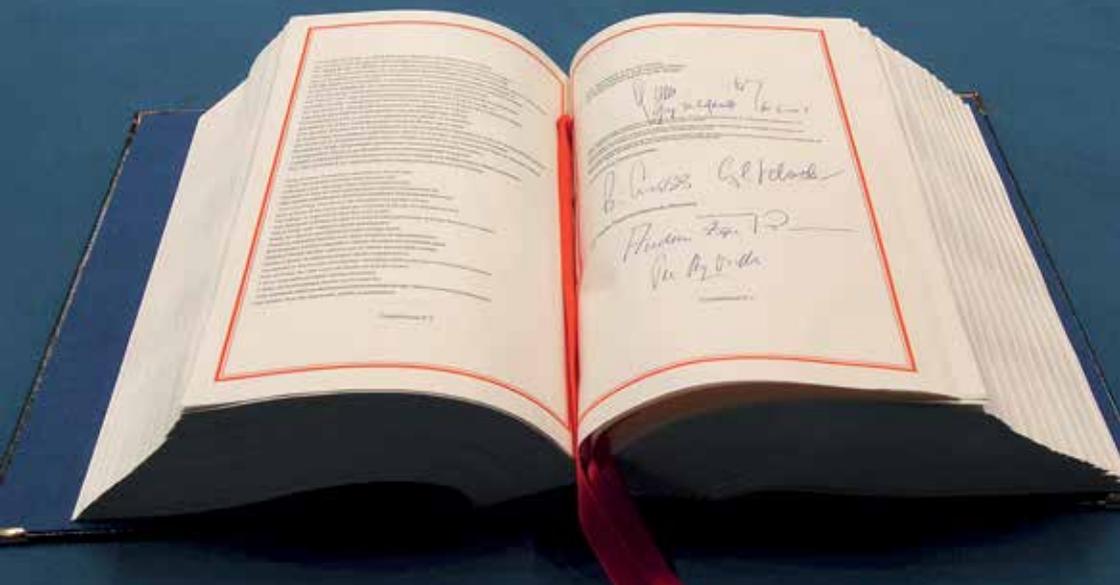
it and uphold it in a consistent manner. In the past, I wrote that the Party of European Socialists needed to be such, not only in name but in their actions, in the alignment of behaviours, in the debate of ideas and positions, and in a strong and consistent shared commitment.



THE PARTY OF EUROPEAN SOCIALISTS NEEDED TO BE SUCH, NOT ONLY IN NAME BUT IN THEIR ACTIONS.



Today we are still faced with this subject and the issue is complicated, not only because not enough attention is paid to this shared heritage, the experience of the European Union, but also because there is a complicated intertwining of the national perspective and the common European perspective. **In the documents of our founding fathers, it was always said that we need to reach a merging of interests, an identification of a common European interest.** Little has been done in this regard and what has been done has been done badly, because every so often concern about elections has prevailed and with it, responses to the specific problems and needs of the electorate, while European Parliament elections have never been enough to fill so many voids and omissions, and to balance these two levels. I was a member of the European Parliament for the second time for a period of five years from 1999 to 2004. It was a wonderful period, after a phase of flattening of the economy and, once again, of efforts to create a constitution for a united Europe. Work was done on the Brussels Convention and on the Constitutional Treaty, that was then rejected in two countries – and I cannot imagine that they are very proud of that – and then everything necessary was done to guarantee closeness between the European institutions and citizens.



We have a problem – and those of you who are MEPs know this better than anyone – of which I have personally been acutely aware: **what sort of relationship should exist between MEPs and the voters who sent them to Brussels and Strasbourg?** The digital relationship is insurmountable. Of course, there are modern and sophisticated media channels to set up communication networks. However, I have always insisted that if we want a parliamentarisation of the Union as a path to political integration – and therefore a parliamentary dimension in the Union that includes the European Parliament and national parliaments with a distinction made between their respective roles – **we need to find a way to organically link members of national parliaments and members of the European Parliament in each country.** I have been unable to come up with any other effective way. For many years, I was a member of parliament in Italy representing the constituency Napoli-Caserta that has about 2.5 million voters: I should have responded to everyone and naturally I could not have responded to anyone. With the very positive, and I hope recoverable, experience of the single member constituencies, I then had only 120,000 voters to respond to and it was much easier. But if I had worked in that constituency with an MEP, there would have been far better transmission of information, pledges and values.

We won't emerge from these difficulties – we must be careful – **by sniping at the European institutions and at European politicians**. We should also have a sense of the fatigue of governing. On many occasions, in difficult times and in one of my previous roles, I referred to the difficulties facing those who govern Italy. Here I should also refer to the difficulties facing those who govern Europe, particularly facing those who govern Europe in the two institutions that most clearly have a supra-national significance: the European Commission, at the level of governance, and the European Parliament, at the level of representation.

Representation that, I should point out, has acquired such strong powers as to leave me astounded when it is said that there is a democratic deficit in Europe, as if MEPs weren't directly elected by citizens or as if the European Parliament didn't have the powers and the role that it has acquired over the past 10 years.

I repeat, we cannot be uncritical supporters of what is done by the European institutions, but neither can we be prejudice-based sceptics, at times inclined to summary criticism. We should make proactive contributions, we Italians who believe in Europe, that are not merely contributions focused on our national needs – these should be looked at correctly, fittingly and constructively. But our ambition, as Italian, Spanish or French citizens, should be to make proposals that are in the European interest, for the advancement of the cause of European construction.



OUR AMBITION, AS ITALIAN, SPANISH OR FRENCH CITIZENS, SHOULD BE TO MAKE PROPOSALS THAT ARE IN THE EUROPEAN INTEREST, FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE CAUSE OF EUROPEAN CONSTRUCTION.

This point is also linked to how many of us there are in the European Union: we have known for a long time, dear friends, that we are too many and we are too different to be grouped together under the same institutional roof,



with the same rules, the same links, the same sense of solidarity and of discipline. In 1989, when I was elected to the Strasbourg parliament for the first time – I resigned after three years as I became president of the Chamber of Deputies in Italy – I can assure you that after the fall of the Berlin Wall, no plenary session in Strasbourg went by without discussion after discussion of the same point: what did we want at that stage for Europe, knowing that the liberated countries of the Soviet bloc were knocking on our door? Widening or deepening? The problem arose as a juxtaposition. Predictions were made as to what could and what did happen. A great Europeanist predicted it, a great socialist, François Mitterrand, who convened a conference in Prague in 1991 on the subject of ‘A European Confederation’. Then, and with total determination, he said: **“we should have the most open, inclusive and widest possible European Confederation; that will keep Europe united in some fundamental general areas, but within this confederation, a European Community should not only survive but strengthen and unite even more.”**

THIS, IN MY VIEW, WAS OUR MISSED OPPORTUNITY, AND IT IS DIFFICULT TO CLAW IT BACK WITH THE TWO-SPEED FORMULA AND EVEN WITH THE FAIRLY SIMPLE SOLUTION OF ENHANCED CO-OPERATION.

This, in my view, was our missed opportunity, and it is difficult to claw it back with the two-speed formula and even with the fairly simple solution of enhanced co-operation. And Delors was not even heard when he said: “let us distinguish between a great Europe that truly serves to preserve unity and the security of our continent for what must be done and protected jointly; and a unit, a Community that will be its heart, its narrowest heart.” We followed different paths and with the big reservation-free enlargement in 2004, we wanted full membership for all countries requesting membership and thus complete equalisation with the countries that were already members, first of the Community and later of the Union. I think that this gives cause for thought,

but today I want to say, modestly, what could be the path to take: concentrate on the Economic and Monetary Union that has, primarily, the power to drive monetary sovereignty, but also the capacity for shared governance of the European economy.

Let us move in this direction, **but let us truly focus our attention on European issues, even in national election campaigns**, as has not been done for a long time and was not done, if memory serves me correctly, in 2013. As far as Italy is concerned, it is always better for our own dignity to say that we won't be lectured to by anyone, even if sometimes we would do well to listen to the odd lecture because you would be in a position to teach us something of use. Nevertheless, while having and upholding our ideas and demands, we should still free ourselves – as we have started to do although to a still-too-limited extent – of handicaps, of burdens that drag us back decades in this, our blessed and loved country. You know what these are: the tremendous weight of our debt stock, as accumulated debt, and its relationship with the gross domestic product, as well as many other persistent difficulties and backward-facing issues which are the legacy of the last two decades of the past century. **Let us do it calmly: we are aware of what constitutes a fragility in our system, as well as of Italy's trust and standing** in Europe. We have won points back, particularly following the most critical moment in 2011 when Italy's shares in Europe dropped together with Europe's level of trust towards Italy.



LET US TRULY FOCUS OUR ATTENTION ON EUROPEAN ISSUES, EVEN IN NATIONAL ELECTION CAMPAIGNS.



Let us remember the lesson from an Italian, Beniamino Andreatta, who I mentioned at the beginning. This lesson shouldn't be difficult to take into consideration, I don't think. It was November 1989 and the Senate was debating the draft budget for 1990. Andreatta was the president of the



ENLARGE OR DEEPEN?



Senate's budgetary committee and gave a long speech – and I would like to share with you a couple of his points that I think are of crucial importance. He said that there was a maturity in the parliamentary opinion, on both sides, as regards the need to consolidate public finances and to tackle the disproportionate public debt, and he stated that: “by now, everyone who speaks on the budget starts off by saying that they understand the need to tackle these issues, but this is a kind of prologue in heaven. When we move on to examining the budget law article by article, **the prologue is forgotten** and all we hear are requests for an increase in spending”. Andreatta maintained, with a demonstration of the teaching, that “there is a misguided overestimation of the effect of the impact of public spending on growth. And what type of public spending? Because it could be said that spending for investment is one thing and capital expenditure another – to use the language of the budget law, and current expenditure another”. Then he finally added: “what do you want? Here in Italy, here in our Parliament, what prevails in the end is...” – he was a man of great irony – “...a stoic depiction of all spending as if it were all capital

expenditure while it is overwhelmingly current expenditure, expenditure to feed the demand from consumption and not to sustain the demand from investments". We should think seriously about these things. I am not making an oversimplified speech, but I also refuse to make a demagogic speech because demagoguery is an ugly beast, it always was for the left, until the left became a mature governing left in Italy. **It would be a disaster if we turned back from this historical, shared and extraordinary achievement by the European socialists and the European left.**

Thank you.

**IT WOULD BE A DISASTER IF WE TURNED
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EXTRAORDINARY ACHIEVEMENT BY THE
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ABOUT THE S&D GROUP

The Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (the S&D Group) is the second largest political Group in the European Parliament with 190 members from all 28 EU member states.

We stand for an inclusive European society based on principles of solidarity, equality, diversity freedom and fairness. We campaign for social justice, jobs and growth, consumer rights, sustainable development, financial market reforms and human rights to create a stronger and more democratic Europe and a better future for all citizens.

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