The Genscher-Colombo Plan: A forgotten page in the European Integration History

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From the very infancy of the European Communities an economic dimension co-existed with strong political ambitions, in spite of the lack of provisions in the Treaties of Rome for the future establishment of a common foreign policy.

From the early 1960s, a European international profile slowly started taking shape. There are numerous examples worthy of mention, such as the Fouchet Plan and the Davignon Report. The latter set the stage for the establishment of the European Political Cooperation (EPC), an informal consultation mechanism among the Member States. Its inherent weaknesses notwithstanding, above all its intergovernmental nature, the EPC rapidly established itself as a mechanism that had the potential to foster the creation of new forms of coordination, and to slowly set in motion a process of harmonization of the foreign policy targets pursued by the Member States.

Still, historians, diplomats, and political scientists all agree in considering the 1980s as a phase of unprecedented political voluntarism and determination in setting the stage for further improvements in the conditions for political coordination. This essay has for its focus one specific initiative pursued by the Italian and the German governments in the early 1980s: the draft "European Act".[1]

It is important to acknowledge that this project has often been the subject of conflicting opinions regarding its provisions, their effectiveness, efficacy, relevance and impact on the specific needs required for successfully relaunching the integration process. Yet, despite its overall unsatisfactory outcomes, this proposal should nonetheless be considered as an integral part in the path which led to the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992.

Besides, within the framework of the relationship between Rome and Bonn, this period was, in many ways, a phase of unprecedented cooperation, and one of the few coherent attempts to realise a double dream: the dream of strengthening Italian-German cooperation so that it could also be one of the forces driving the revival of the integration process. It casts, therefore, fresh light on some specific aspects of the kind of Europeanism pursued by the Italian and the German governments which – it is reasonable to assume – had an impact on better known developments.[2]

1. This Act is better known either as the Genscher-Colombo Plan, in reference to the names of its supporters, the German and Italian Foreign Ministers, or, in France, as "project germano-italien". See ANF [Archives Nationales de France], série 5 AG 4, PM/8 [Archives de Pierre Morel], dossier 2, Ministère des Affaires étrangères, direction d'Europe: note sur le Projet Spinelli de Traité sur l'Union européenne, 02.02.1984 (the consultation was authorized by means of a "dérogation").
2. See, in particular, M.E. GUASCONI, *Il Piano Genscher-Colombo*, in: L. PICCARDO (ed.), *L'Italia e l'Europa negli anni Ottanta*, Franco Angeli, Milano, 2015, pp.33-46.

The Premises of a new idea

The joint Italo-German initiative had its roots in the convergence of two different backgrounds, namely the many economic and institutional bottlenecks affecting the EC at the beginning of the 1980s, and the slow but steady improvement of the relationship between Bonn and Rome. In order to grasp the meaning of the process leading to this project, it is advisable, as a first step, to identify and contextualise those trends that enabled the merging of the two backgrounds.[3]

At the beginning of the 1980s, a well-known German caricaturist captured the attention of the public with a play on words which mocked and exposed the state of growing fatigue affecting the European Communities. The word Europe was divided into its constituent letters. Each one of them was associated with an expression symbolising the political stalemates in which Europe was bogged down: E equated with "Euphorie" (high spirits), U with "Unmut" (bad feeling), R with "Resignation" (resignation), O with "Optimismus" (optimism), P with "Pessimismus" (pessimism) and A with "Apathie" (inertia).[4] Two recurring expressions had quickly come to dominate the German debate: the "Europamüdigkeit" and the "Eurosklerose".[5]

Certainly, the term "Eurosclerosis" is, at the very least, questionable, as it has often been used for political reasons to emphasise the divide between the stagnation of the 1970s and the achievements of the 1980s which marked the beginning of a "new" phase in the integration process.[6] Was this a myth forged for sheer political motives or rather a notion of some substance? The period from the late-1960s to the mid-1980s is conventionally referred to as an unfavourable context for further European integration, namely an era of eurosclerosis. It has often been argued that the initial successful integration experience encountered a stumbling block with the "Empty Chair Crisis" (1965).[7] The resulting "Luxembourg Compromise" allegedly changed European policy, with individual states having greater leverage and the Commission being forced to negotiate complex deals leading to overall meagre outcomes. More integration was also hampered by new states joining the EC at a time of recession and increasing economic threats.

3. See U. LAPPENKÜPER, *Hans-Dietrich Genscher-Emilio Colombo und der Kampf gegen die „Eurosklerose"*, in: M. GEHLER, M. GUIOTTO (eds), *Italien Österreich und die Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Europa: Ein Dreiecksverhältnis in seinen wechselseitigen Beziehungen und Wahrnehmungen von 1945/49 bis zur Gegenwart*, Böhlau Verlag, Wien, 2012, pp.225-242.
4. See H.W. LAUTENSCHLAGER, *Von der Genscher-Colombo-Initiative zum Vertrag von Maastricht*, in: K. KINKEL (ed.), *In der Verantwortung: Hans-Dietrich Genscher zum Siebzigsten*, Siedler Verlag, Berlin, 1997, pp.568 sqq.
5. This expression was probably coined by the President of the Kieler Institut für Weltwirtschaft, Helmut Giersch, who also made it popular with his namesake article published in *Wirtschaftswoche*, 12.08.1983.
6. High unemployment and slow economic growth all over Western Europe were considered two of its main features. See W. MARTENS, *Europe: I struggle I overcome*, Springer, New York/London, 2008.
7. See A. AWESTI, *The Myth of Eurosclerosis: European Integration in the 1970s*, in: *L'Europe en formation*, 2009/3, pp.39-53.

It would, however, be incorrect to affirm that the EC stood still throughout this entire decade. The integration project did continue in several areas, such as economic and judicial integration, through an increase in the size and in the inner complexity of the Commission, and also thanks to the introduction of direct European Parliament elections by 1979. Not only were these developments of significance in light of their intrinsic importance, but also because they laid the foundations for future steps, such as the introduction of a Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Economic and Monetary Union.

Furthermore, the so called "eurosclerosis phase" was also the stage for the creation of the EPC. This was an informal arrangement to allow a certain degree of coordination of the foreign policies of Member States through a six-monthly meeting of their Foreign Ministers. A rather flexible institutional structure was matched by an extensive flexibility in the agenda. This cooperation mechanism worked alongside the EC, the Commission was invited to express its opinion only if matters within its competencies were concerned.

Despite its many intrinsic limitations, the existence of a mechanism of political coordination did play an important role in fostering an atmosphere of greater trust and solidarity among its participants. Thus, it contributed to the success of the Conference of Helsinki; indeed, during these negotiations the EPC provided Member States with a framework to coordinate their efforts.[8] In reality, the actual workings of the EPC were less intergovernmental than its formal structure might suggest. The Commission's role was emphasised when political cooperation was in need of economic instruments in order to achieve foreign policy objectives, for instance in the implementation of restrictions against Moscow after the crisis in Poland (1982).

As a result, it cannot be stated that the experience of the Communities during the 1970s was one of full stagnation. The integration process did continue; it is, however, true that this it often continued unnoticed by public opinion. In addition, the rapid deterioration of the international framework, European inability to speak with one voice concerning, for instance, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the increasing number of trouble spots all over the world, suggested that the time had come for a leap in quality. More than a mere myth, the expression "eurosclerosis" was also a cry of alarm and it is from this perspective that it is to be used in this essay.

Within the ongoing debate, issues such as the lack of democratic legitimacy of the European decision-making process and the need for greater involvement of the European Parliament were increasingly raised.[9] Besides, mounting economic difficulties, especially the problem of the Community's budget and its own resources, had led in 1979 to the risk of a virtual paralysis in the normal functioning of the common mechanisms. At that time, two thirds of the resources on which the Community could

8. See M.E. GUASCONI, *L'Italia e la cooperazione politica europea nella prima metà degli anni Ottanta*, in: L. NUTI, M. GUDERZO, B. BAGNATO (eds), *Nuove Questioni di Storia della Relazioni Internazionali*, Edizioni Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2015, pp.57-80, here pp.59-60.
9. See U. ROSENGARTEN, *Die Genscher-Colombo-Initiative. Baustein für die Europäische Union*, Nomos Verlag, Baden Baden, 2008, p.11.

rely were absorbed by the CAP. Germany alone paid for approximately 30% of this budget.[10] The frequent use of expressions such as "Zahlmeister" in the German national debate and in the media gave voice to a growing discontent.[11]

Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher was fully aware of such risks, but he also feared that an EC where neither the Common Market nor freedom of movement had achieved full implementation, would be reduced to the level of a mere customs union.[12] Still, economic difficulties were not the sole source of inspiration for the speech he delivered in Stuttgart on 6 January 1981, on the occasion of the traditional FDP meeting, the "Dreikönigstreffen".[13] Genscher strongly felt the utmost importance of giving fresh impetus to Europe by putting forward reform proposals that also emphasised the political objective of European unification. The EC urgently needed wide-ranging political reform, to buttress its external projection and its influence on international changes:[14]

> "Europa braucht einen neuen politischen Impuls […] einen sichtbaren Schritt in Richtung auf die Europäische Union. […] Ist es nicht endlich Zeit für einen Vertrag über die Europäische Union? […] Ziele müssen sein: die Entwicklung einer gemeinsamen europäischen Außenpolitik, der Ausbau der Gemeinschaftspolitiken entsprechend den Verträgen von Paris und Rom, die Abstimmung im Bereich der Sicherheitspolitik, die engere Zusammenarbeit im kulturellen Bereich und die Harmonisierung der Gesetzgebung. Diese Forderungen sind alle nicht neu […] aber die Zeit ist reif, sie in die Wirklichkeit umzusetzen".[15]

Hans-Dietrich Genscher: The first steps towards a new idea. Stuttgart 1981

In order to provide the Member States with the tools to meet new challenges set by these changing international dynamics, the German Foreign Minister argued for

10. See W. WEIDENFELD, *Europäische Einigung im historischen Überblick*, in: W. WEIDENFELD/ W. WESSELS (eds), *Europa von A-Z. Taschenbuch der europäischen Integration*, Europa Union Verlag, Bonn, 2000, pp.10 sqq.
11. Other expressions were equally popular to convey this growing dissatisfaction such as "Melkkuh", meaning the Federal Republic as the dairy cow of the Community. See U. ROSENGARTEN, op.cit., p.18.
12. See the speech delivered by Genscher on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik* in: H.-D. GENSCHER, *Deutsche Außenpolitik. Ausgewählte Reden und Aufsätze 1974-1985*, 2nd ed., Verlag Bonn Aktuell, Stuttgart, 1985, p.246.
13. "Dreikönigstag" is the German word for Epiphany. As this meeting usually took place on 6 January it was called "Dreikönigsgespräch" (meeting of the Epiphany). Genscher's speech is, therefore, sometimes also referred to as "Epiphany Appeal".
14. According to French records, both this project and the initiative which Spinelli supported were based on similar assessments. The latter pursued, however, more ambitious objectives, whereas Genscher and Colombo confined their ambitions to a reform process enshrined into the existing treaties. See ANF, série 5 AG 4, PM/8, dossier 2, Ministère des Affaires étrangères, note du directeur des affaires économiques, Paris, 28.06.1984.
15. See H.D. GENSCHER, *Deutsche Außenpolitik*..., op.cit., p.306.

greater political cooperation, which could only be achieved through the creation of a European Political Union.

Prime aims on this path were the definition of a common European Foreign policy and the extension of the Community's powers into new areas, defence and justice included. Based on his wealth of experience, it seemed only logical for Genscher to assume that the EPC was, by its very nature, not an adequate tool to support the kind of cooperation which the new international scenario demanded from the EC to continue as a credible partner.[16]

In his 1981 speech Genscher indeed argued for political reforms which would remove the artificial distinction between cooperation within the European Communities and foreign policy coordination. Between the lines of this "Epiphany Appeal", it was not difficult to read the importance that the adoption of such reforms had for Bonn, as outpost of the Western bloc. More than other German politicians Genscher was extremely receptive to the political barometer of the other Germany, where he was born and where he had spent his early life.[17] His speech was, therefore, also inspired by the ambition that in the future the EC could be a magnet for the countries beyond the Iron Curtain.[18]

The choice of the location where the Address was delivered was not left to chance. On the contrary, it embodied great symbolic value, as it took place in the same town, Stuttgart, in the same building and even in the same room where, on 6 September 1946, the US Secretary of State had delivered the declaration which had paved the way for post-war (Western) German economic and political regeneration.[19] The occasion for the delivery of this message was the annual FDP meeting; Genscher, therefore, spoke in his capacity as Liberal leader and not as Foreign Minister. This specific choice might seem odd, unless we consider its background very carefully. More than just the above-mentioned European situation had induced him to take the decision to deliver this speech.[20] Firstly, he aimed to revitalize the interest of German public opinion in the European integration process, reawakening the interest of a population which, in the early Eighties, saw such a process as a synonym of uncer-

16. See H.D. LUCAS, *Politik der kleinen Schritten-Genscher und die neue Europapolitik 1974-1983*, in: K. KINKEL (ed.), op.cit., pp.85-113.
17. See H.D. GENSCHER, *Erinnerungen*, Siedler Verlag, Berlin, 1995, part I, chapters 1 and 2.
18. See Doc.253, Gespräch des Bundesministers Genscher mit dem italienischen Außenminister Colombo in Rom, VS-vertraulich, Rom, 11.09.1981, in: AAPD [Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland], 1981, Band II, Oldenbourg, München, 2012. p.1343.
19. See Hans-Dietrich Genscher's speech in Stuttgart, in: http://www.cvce.eu/obj/rede_von_hans_dietrich_genscher_stuttgart_6_januar_1981-de-73cd40b0-7dce-479b8c7c-8404afe7c69e.html (accessed 18.01.2017).
20. See PA AA [Politisches Archiv des Ausswärtigen Amts], B26, n.123280, 123281, 123282. See also ANF, série 5 AG 4, PM/8, dossier 2, Ministère des Affaires étrangères, direction Europe, comité interministériel, Note du directeur des Affaires économiques sur le plan Genscher-Colombo, 14.05.1982.

tainty, and which was sensible to the appeal of pacifist propaganda.[21] Secondly, the German Foreign Minister wanted to strengthen the influence of his own party, the FDP. In a period when tensions were increasing within the ruling coalition, he wanted to maximize its influence on issues such as European integration, over which the Christian Democrats had exercised a virtual monopoly from the 1950s.

At first Genscher's initiative faced opposition. Many members of his own government were sceptical about the possibility of giving birth to a European foreign policy which would include security elements.[22] Both Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and Defence Minister Hans Apel considered utopian to even think of a real security policy for Europe.[23] It was evident that Genscher needed the support of another European partner, but it is not evident why such a partner should have been Italy.

With the exception only of the De Gasperi era, Bonn and Rome had never shared bonds as strong as those existing between Paris and Bonn. However, by 1981 the Franco-German couple was going through a difficult time, partly as a result of François Mitterrand replacing Valéry Giscard D'Estaing as French President.[24] In a recently published book, the hypothesis has been formulated that in the 1970s the relationship with Paris had become a "domaine ultraréservé" of the Chancellor, with a consequent marginalization of the role of his Foreign Minister.[25] By assuming such a position as true, it would be easier to understand Genscher's interest in Italy as the most suitable partner for the initiative which he intended to take. Last, but not least, by 1981, Italian Foreign Minister Emilio Colombo had for some time represented a reference point and model for Genscher's European politics. Colombo's reputation as a supporter of European integration from its very first steps, and the role he had played as European Parliament President (1977-1980), made him a strategic partner who could give credibility and support to the process Genscher was so keen to launch.

The choice of Italy as a partner had not been the mere consequence of the inability to draw on the resources provided by a long-established partnership with Paris. Quite the contrary, this was, first and foremost, a choice made by Genscher for a specific interlocutor, Colombo, even if the path leading to a good understanding and a sound

21. See AMAE [Archive du ministère des Affaires étrangères], 1930inva, Direction Europe, Série Italie, carton 5331, Ministère des Relations extérieures, sous-direction d'Europe occidentale, Note sur l'Union européenne, 14.11.1981. See also Doc.253, Gespräch des Bundesministers Genscher mit dem italienischen Außenminister Colombo in Rom, VS-vertraulich, Rom, 11.09.1981, in: AAPD, 1981, Band II.
22. See U. ROSENGARTEN, op.cit., pp.42-46.
23. See W. LOTH, *L'Allemagne et l'Italie dans le processus de construction européenne: une coopération occasionelle?*, in: P. CRAVERI, A. VARSORI (eds), *L'Italia nella costruzione europea un bilancio storico (1957-2007)*, Franco Angeli, Milano, 2009, pp.455-466, here p.464.
24. Hubert Védrine gave strong emphasis to such difficulties in his Memoirs. See H. VÉDRINE, *Les mondes de François Mitterrand. À l'Élysée 1981-1995*, Fayart, Paris, 1996, pp.83-84, 128 and 120-121. See also PA AA, B26, n.123281, Fernschreiben aus RomDiplo, Deutsch-italienische Außenminister-Konsultationen, VS-NfD, 17.06.1981.
25. See M. WEINACHTER, *Valéry Giscard d'Estaing et l'Allemagne. Le double rêve inachevé*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2004, p.95.

agreement on the measures to be taken was not exactly strewn with roses.[26] Before embarking in such an ambitious project, it was, indeed, necessary to verify the conditions for a cooperation between the two countries. Their respective political aims had to be compared, the thorniest issues discussed and clarified.

Barely two weeks after the Stuttgart Appeal, Foreign Minister Genscher travelled to Rome. During his stay, he attended talks with President Sandro Pertini, more widely, with Foreign Minister Emilio Colombo.[27] Once potential reasons for mistrust had been removed, the discussion between Genscher and Colombo focused on the main subjects addressed in Stuttgart and on the definition of a common strategy. Three issues deserve special attention. Firstly, Colombo fully shared the judgment of the EPC that Genscher had expressed; its thorough reform was deemed to be an unavoidable step. Secondly, the Italian politician expressed his firm belief that a European Foreign policy could not exist if deprived of a security dimension. This was a strong *trait d'union* that linked the political analysis of Colombo to Genscher's political vision, but it was also an easy target for Member states who wished to reject their propositions. Last, but not least, between the lines Colombo also affirmed that he accepted the guidelines of Genscher's Appeal, as he himself was fully aware of the extent of the difficulties the Community was facing and had, therefore, been wishing to favour its revival. This statement hints at the fact that this initiative was taken on an equal footing, although the credit for having made the first move must be given to Genscher. Colombo did not, strictly speaking, join a German political initiative. Rather he agreed to share a negotiating track based on specific worries which he already harboured.[28]

This constitutes the general background to the declaration made by Colombo on 28 January 1981, delivered in Florence on the occasion of the inaugural session of the National Congress of the "associazione italiana per il consiglio dei comuni d'Europa".[29]

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26. In addition to Genscher's memoirs, see Doc.253, Gespräch des Bundesministers Genscher mit dem italienischen Außenminister Colombo in Rom, VS-vertraulich, Rom, 11.09.1981, pp.1340-1343. See also Doc.282, Gespräch des Bundesministers Genscher mit dem italienischen Außenminister Colombo in Rom, VS-vertraulich, Rom, 03.10.1981, p.1492, both in: AAPD, 1981, Band II.
27. See AMAE 1930inva, Direction Europe, Série RFA, carton 4907, sous-série 11-6, Télégramme n. 688, Visite de M. Genscher, 23.01.1981. See also Visita del ministro degli Esteri Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Roma, 21.01.1981, pp.358-359, in: 1981, Testi e documenti sulla politica estera dell'Italia, Istituto Poligrafico, Roma 1985.
28. See PA AA, B26, n.123281, Vermerk: Gespräch des Herrn Bundespräsidenten mit dem italienischen Botschafter, 30.11.1981. See also F. LAY, *L'iniziativa italo-tedesca per il rilancio dell'Unione europea. Origini sviluppi della Dichiarazione di Stoccarda*, Cedam, Padova,1983, pp.2-3. During the negotiation of the plan Lay was the closest advisor of Bruno Bottai, Italian director for political Affairs. He supports the hypothesis of a joint plan and identifies the origin of the Italian desire to give new momentum to the integration process in mid-1980 during the Italian rotating Presidency.
29. See AMAE 1930inva, Direction Europe, Série Italie, carton 5331, sous-série 11-1 11-6, Ministère des Affaires étrangères, Ambassade de France à Rome: Déclaration du ministre italien des affaires étrangères, Relance de la Construction européenne, Rome, 02.02.1981. See also HAEU [Historical Archives of the European Union], Box Emanuele Gazzo, Agence Europe, Discours d'Emilio Colombo, 21.01.1981.

Emilio Colombo in Florence. A further step towards a new proposal

As for the Stuttgart speech, the choice of the occasion for the launch of this appeal was not left to chance either. Colombo started with a well-chosen reference to Europe's ability to enhance local strengths, which was more than just a tribute to the hosting institution. Thus, he showed a marked awareness that further European developments needed a skilful combination of top-down and bottom-up strategies, namely an impetus from above associated with greater local sensibility. According to Colombo, a reform process could not otherwise succeed.

The key-note of the Appeal by Genscher was its ideal dimension, whereas the key-note in the speech by Colombo was, mainly, its gradualism, but this was no obstacle in Colombo's vision to the implementation of a set of three kinds of reforms, as proposed in the Stuttgart Appeal: a common Foreign policy, a Security policy and the definition of an institutional framework enabling Europe to react appropriately to new international challenges.[30] The Italian politician shared, as the ultimate goal, the creation of a political union, but, given the circumstances, he also believed that prudence and gradualism were required. Therefore, he favoured an approach which would take full advantage of the existing treaty provisions, before proposing the signing of a new legally binding text.

In addition, Colombo also emphasized the importance of extending the powers of the Community to the cultural dimension, thus allowing a future harmonization of the different European legislations in the field of education. By contrast, concerning the economic dimension, a comparison of the two speeches shows a greater divide. Both agreed that market rules alone could not set the conditions for the economic development they called for, although Colombo placed more emphasis on economic aspects and argued for better coordination and measures which would strengthen competitiveness.

As the speeches suggest, both Genscher and Colombo placed a strong emphasis on foreign policy, though with somewhat different nuances; and yet, their propositions were more than just a means of merely revitalising and boosting foreign policy coordination. They were a significant input towards far-reaching institutional change, even though, at the beginning of 1981, neither Italy nor Germany had a well-structured plan, rather a clutch of ideas which would spark a debate on the methods and objectives of a reform process.

Proposals regarding more efficient foreign policy coordination were neither the sole objective pursued, nor a "bait" to lure fellow Member States into discussing far-reaching institutional changes. All issues addressed in Stuttgart and Florence were an integral part of the process of transformation which Europe had to undergo in order to achieve a more credible external and internal profile. These profiles were consid-

30. Domestic needs had a certain influence both on Genscher and on Colombo in promoting a process of European reform. See, in particular, PA AA, B26, n.123280, Politischer Halbjahresbericht ITALIEN II 1980, VS-NfD.

ered two sides of the same coin, as they were both in need of a more efficient apparatus and of less problematic day-to-day Community working. A strong emphasis on better foreign policy coordination could, however, at least at first, appear as the "bait" to lure a "tired" public opinion, worried about increasing international trouble spots, to support proposals which would guarantee greater stability and make it aware of the real advantages of further integration.

Between winter and spring 1981, against this background of innovations and contradictions, of European ambitions and national concerns, of leaps forward and conflicting visions, the negotiations for the European Act were able to commence.

From Stuttgart to Stuttgart (1981-1983): Ambitions and contradictions, new impetus and old obstacles standing in the way

By February 1981, Italy and Germany had started negotiations at a national and at a bilateral level to fill the ideas sketched in Stuttgart and Florence with specific contents. In mid-March 1981, a group of senior officials from both Foreign ministries was constituted. It was under the guidance of their respective Directors-General, Bruno Bottai for Italy and Franz Pfeffer for the FRG.

Domestically, both Foreign ministries were engaged in a debate, from which the Italian result was a programme-based document. It devoted equal attention to two sets of problems. On the one hand, the necessity to give birth to a common Foreign policy and to engage in consultations on issues of security was taken into account. The objective of a political union was correlated with a set of specific economic provisions, this being the first step towards a future Economic and Monetary Union. On the other hand, Italian negotiators also wanted to raise the question of eventually extending the EC competencies to higher education.[31]

These general aims were followed by a list of measures deemed necessary to transpose the set objectives into reality. The European Council would be the main body responsible for giving political direction, and its links with the Communities had to be deepened. The importance attached to both the General Affairs Council and the rotating presidency was stressed, the efficacy of the latter would be enhanced through the establishment of a permanent secretariat. The extension of the powers of the Parliament in terms of enhanced cooperation with – and control over – the EPC was recommended. Moreover, the possibility of introducing a parliamentary vote of confidence on the appointment of the Commission President was also raised during preparatory work. Lastly, Italy deemed it advisable to suggest a substantial reduction of the unanimity requirement in the decision-making process.

Paragraph 5 of the Italian proposal was fully devoted to the economic dimension. Further steps in the field of more economic and monetary integration were presented

31. See F. LAY, op.cit., pp.12-13.

as the precondition for a future European Political Union. The results achieved to date through the EMS were assessed as insufficient. It was therefore proposed that Member States would from then on commit themselves to agree on binding targets in the fields of decisive anti-inflation strategies, common wage and employment policies, better deficit control, and effective growth policies.

The joint initiative would take the form of a declaration with a revision clause, namely a clause allowing, five years after its adoption, for an assessment of how much progress had been made and for the potential to draw up, in close cooperation with Parliament, a new treaty. Thus, the results achieved up to that point, both politically and economically, would be formalised.

The German Foreign ministry, for its part, also committed itself to drafting proposals, but, unlike Italy, three different documents were drawn up. The first, cherished by Genscher, was an ambitious draft Treaty; the second consisted of a less ambitious set of measures for a draft declaration, very similar in content to the Italian project; whereas the last paper can be viewed as a document of minimums, lacking in substantial contents.

The draft Treaty proposed the creation of a European government joined by a Parliament with co-decision rights, which would contain the seeds of a bicameral Parliamentary system.[32] It reflected a keen interest, particularly on the part of Werner Lautenschlager, the closest advisor of Minister Genscher, in an enhanced cooperation in the field of justice, and in the possibility of supporting further development of the EMS with a view to the future establishment of an Economic and Monetary Union.

By contrast, the draft declaration was less ambitious, insofar as it only suggested better coordination among the existing bodies in a coherent institutional framework. The EPC would also be subjected to a reform process providing it with a more efficient operational structure. The decision-making bodies of the EC and of the EPC would be brought under the responsibility of the European Council. Thus, German negotiators intended to ensure coherence and consistency between the objectives of the European Foreign and Economic policies. The European Council would be called upon to serve the integration process in the dual function of decision-making body of both the EC and the EPC by providing general political direction, and also by taking binding decisions. The European Parliament would be endowed with the right to discuss foreign policy issues, while the European Council would transmit a report to the Parliament soon after its appointment and at the end of its term. It was, however, unclear how security issues could be part of a future European common foreign policy.[33] In sum, the first German proposal, the draft Treaty, was very keen on the economic dimension, cherished by the Italian partner, but it was so ambitious that it reached the point of worrying Rome, where the hypothesis of the immediate signature of a new Treaty was met with hostility. On the contrary, the second German proposal

32. See E. GADDUM, *Die deutsche Europapolitik in den 80er Jahren: Interessen, Konflikte und Entscheidungen,* Schoeningh Verlag, Lübeck, 1994, pp.213 sqq.
33. See U. ROSENGARTEN, op.cit., pp.35-42.

was more in tune with the programme-based document drawn up in Italy, but it was deprived of any significant reference to the economic dimension.

Although by July 1981 the two countries had achieved a general understanding on foreign policy issues, imbalances in the fields of culture, education, research, and, above all, the economy were far from being solved.[34] The Roman proposals for binding principles in the field of economic policy coordination put great strain on Genscher. In all likelihood, the German Minister was receptive to the Italian reasoning, however he was still aware of the tough opposition in the ranks of his government.[35] This was confirmed by the reserved attitude which Chancellor Schmidt adopted during the most critical time in the negotiations, between summer and autumn 1981.[36] The German Cabinet meeting called for 18 September 1981 was no exception to this picture. Genscher submitted both the draft Treaty and the draft declaration. It was only after a long debate that he received a mandate from his government to negotiate with Italy, according to the guidelines of the draft declaration. The ambitious draft Treaty had been put aside. In addition, during this ministerial gathering the proposed declaration underwent another review process where further cuts were made. This particularly applied to security policy aspects. The idea of establishing a Council of Defence Ministers was definitively abandoned. Genscher and his supporters were nonetheless able to consistently and successfully put the case for maintaining the principle of future cooperation on security issues, with the exclusion of strictly military aspects.

Several days after the official submission of the Act, when every detail had been settled, Schmidt and the government he led displayed unwillingness to provide more financial support for Europe. It was like putting a weapon into the hands of those European States which had denounced the plan as a mere display of rhetoric. But why did Helmut Schmidt act so reluctantly?

Over the years, several competing explanations, both of a technical and of a more political nature, have been provided to answer this question. Most noteworthy among them is the interpretation of his reluctance as a consequence of a cost-benefit analysis. In a period of economic downturn, Schmidt and the ministry of Defence were allegedly concerned about the cost and the technical feasibility of such an ambitious project. Secondly, unlike his successor at the Chancellery, he was never an unreserved supporter of European integration. Lastly, the competition between the Chancellery and the Foreign ministry also reflected a growing rivalry between their respective leaders, Schmidt and Genscher, which affected the negotiations. Still, other expla-

34. See PA AA, B26, n.123281, Gespräch des Bundeskanzlers mit MP Spadolini am Rande des Wirtschaftsgipfels in Ottawa, no date [probably June 1981].
35. See PA AA, B26, n.123281, Vermerk: Deutsch-italienische Außenminister Konsultationen, Bonn, 17.07.1981 and Vermerk: Gespräch Staatssekretär mit dem italienischen Botschafter, Ferraris, Bonn, 13.07.1981.
36. See PA AA, B26, n.123282, Vermerk über das Gespräch des Bundeskanzlers mit dem italienischen Ministerpräsidenten Spadolini beim Frühstück in Montebello am 20 Juli. 1981, 24.07.1981. See also AMAE 1930inva, Direction Europe, Série RFA, carton 4907, sous-série 11-6, Télégramme n.609, Visite du Chancelier Schmidt à Rome, 17.09.1981.

nations are also possible. This reluctance can be analysed not only on the grounds of the ongoing political-electoral struggle, and the opposition of the ministry of Defence, but also as a result of French reticence. Schmidt seemed to be more focused on the ongoing cooperation with President Giscard d'Estaing, than on any proposal for institutional reform the Foreign ministry might support.

Against this background Foreign Ministers Genscher and Colombo met in Rome on 3 October 1981 to finalise the details of their initiative. The discussions mainly revolved around three matters: the implementation of new voting rules, the interaction between Commission and Parliament, and how to deal with security issues.

The need to overcome the practice of the "veto right", which the Luxembourg compromise had adopted, was strongly supported by Colombo. In this regard, measures to narrow down the field of so-called "vital interests" were to be adopted.[37] Genscher was more elusive. He merely suggested making a distinction between the adoption of the European Act – where unanimity was the only possible way – and the day-to-day decision making-process – where alternative possibilities could be discussed. Colombo's approach was far more innovative. He recommended the adoption of more objective standards to define the notion of "vital interest". Finding an unambiguous definition would be the first step to restricting recourse to them. Accordingly, each Member State could appeal to a "vital interest" to block the adoption of a measure only after submitting a detailed written explanation. The decision would be put on hold until the next session, giving the opponent state time to reconsider its attitude. This would also be the opportunity for a wider discussion involving the European Parliament, thus the debate was likely to receive a great deal more media attention.

In the end, Colombo aimed to enhance transparency and provide for more discipline on the part of Member States. Here too, Genscher seemed to share the approach his partner upheld, but he was forced to walk a tightrope over the divide between Italian demands, which in many ways mirrored his personal approach, and the lack of backing by his own government.

As for security issues, both Genscher and Colombo shared the idea of avoiding any possible reference to the failed European Defence Community, which could seriously undermine their chances of success. Nevertheless, there were several discrepancies both between Italy and Germany and domestically, as the October 1981 meeting between the diplomatic Counsellor of the French embassy in Rome and Angelo Bernassola, DC member in charge of international issues, pointed out. Speaking on behalf of his party, and not of the Italian government nor the Farnesina, Bernassola remarked that the EC needed a more efficient administrative structure. He argued that security and defence issues could not be dealt with separately, even if the DC, unlike the PCI, did not consider it desirable to have a European defence policy to replace NATO. He showed appreciation for the German draft treaty, as in his opinion Colom-

37. See Doc.282, Gespräch des Bundesministers Genscher mit dem italienischen Außenminister Colombo in Rom, VS-vertraulich, Rom, 03.10.1981, pp.1492-1493, in: AAPD, 1981, Band II.

bo had also done; it was, however, not surprising that Colombo in his capacity as Foreign Minister had to be cautious and find a balance in the midst of diverging "moods" within the government and the different ministries.[38]

An overall agreement to include security issues in the initiative, with the exclusion only of military aspects, was not reached until the end of October 1981. It was supplemented by a more precise wording which was to be incorporated in the notes following the act. By contrast, controversial points concerning economic policy coordination, as had emerged during the meetings in Ottawa and Montebello in July 1981, had not been settled yet. Italian negotiators considered German proposals too vague to be acceptable and had therefore made provision for stricter discipline by proposing penalties for "undisciplined States". Even though Colombo probably sympathised with the domestic difficulties which his German counterpart encountered, he could not contravene the instructions received from his own government.

After lengthy discussions, the only way out of this impasse was found in a separate path, with Italy presenting its own economic document together with the joint Italian-German European Act. Such an imbalance was destined to give more weight to the oppositional stance adopted by other Member States.

The submission of the proposal. November 1981

On 12 November both proposals, the European Act and the economic declaration, were submitted to the Council, both of them officially presented as a joint Italian-German proposal.[39] The European Act was a solemn commitment to move towards a European Union. One of its prime aims was to buttress the role of the European Council as the main source of political directions for both the EPC and the EC. The establishment of a mechanism whereby the Member States could more rapidly convene meetings of the European Communities institutions in case of crisis was also deemed necessary.

Several points discussed throughout the previous months had been retained in the Act, such as the necessity of restricting the practise of the "veto right". The proposals to extend the areas of coordination to security, justice, and culture had also been retained. The creation of new ministerial Councils in the abovementioned sectors was therefore recommended. As for the European Parliament, it was recommended that the European Council should report to Parliament every six months, and also submit an annual report on progress towards the European Union. Henceforth, the European Parliament should also have the right to submit oral and written questions concerning all aspects of the European Union to the Council and to the Commission.

38. See AMAE 1930inva, Direction Europe, Série Italie, carton 5331, sous-série 11, période 1981-1985, Ambassade de France en Italie, Dépêche d'actualité, Point de vue de la Démocratie-chrétienne sur les aspects politiques de la relance européenne, Rome, 13.10.1981.
39. See F. LAY, op.cit., pp.121 sqq.

The most notable propositions concerning Parliament can be summarised as follows: This body should be endowed with the right to make recommendations to the European Council, the Council and the Commission. Resolutions of the European Parliament should be notified to the Council for discussion by it. Should Parliament ask for the Council's comments, the Council would have to comply with the request. Before the appointment of the President of the Commission, the President of the Council should consult the President of the European Parliament. Yet, the original proposal of a confidence vote on the appointment of the Commission President had not been retained. After the appointment of the President and the members of the Commission, an investiture debate would be held in which Parliament could discuss the Commission's programme. Before the accession or association of further States and before the conclusion of international treaties by the European Communities, Parliament would be consulted. Lastly, special legitimacy was attached to the deliberations and decisions of the European Parliament in the further development of fundamental human rights.

The economic declaration was bound to look short, succinct, and completely lacking in innovative contents by comparison. The paper merely called for a completion of the common market. Beyond the EMS, the Member States were called to achieve increasing convergence and a closer coordination of their economies. An almost as general adjustment of the agricultural policy and an improvement in the budgetary structure were, moreover, deemed necessary.

Struggle to survive

It could be expected that the United Kingdom would oppose the proposal from its very infancy, but, as far as France was concerned, the proposers of the Act harboured the hope that this influential Member State would be willing to negotiate.[40] It was, however, a misplaced trust, especially on the Italian side, as examination of the extensive French diplomatic documentation confirms.

Fears and worries among German senior officials that France might be reticent about joining forces proved to be true. In the 13 October memorandum, the French Minister with responsibility for European affairs, André Chandernagor, had already ruled out in advance any chance that his government would even consider "institutional proposals". At the most, France could support a project which would boost the European economy, even if nothing changed the determination of French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson to refuse binding commitments.[41]

40. See Doc.253, Gespräch des Bundesministers Genscher mit dem italienischen Außenminister Colombo in Rom, VS-vertraulich, Rom, 11.09.1981 and Doc.282, Gespräch des Bundesministers Genscher mit dem italienischen Außenminister Colombo in Rom, VS-vertraulich, Rom, 3.10.1981, both in: AAPD, 1981, Band II, München, 2012.
41. See U. ROSENGARTEN, op.cit., p.45.

The most innovative proposals of Genscher and Colombo had, one after another, been put aside with each passing month of negotiations.[42] After long discussions Italy and Germany had, for instance, agreed by mid-October to give up the idea that the European Parliament could have the right to express a no-confidence vote on the choice of the Commission President. The French records also emphasize that, in the end, the innovations in the field of culture were not significant and that cooperation on security issues had been narrowed down in the Act Italy and Germany had submitted. Nevertheless, the draft was still too ambitious in the eyes of their European partners. At first glance, the Act put together cultural cooperation and cooperation on security issues in an intergovernmental framework. Still, on a closer look, this was not an obvious conclusion. Paris feared, for instance, the possibility of having to deal with a permanent secretariat that was "susceptible d'évolution".[43] France was also suspicious of the German lack of economic flexibility. Fearing such a scenario, Genscher had made every possible effort to remove this obstacle, but the fact that Italy was left alone presenting its own declaration for economic policy coordination was a poor substitute for combined efforts. To make this picture worse, France seemed to look at the European Act through a sort of "deforming devise". In a note written by the Foreign ministry two days after the official submission of the joint-proposal, it was claimed that the Act was almost exactly the same as the draft, which France had informally received from Germany at the end of September. This statement automatically led to the conclusion that Bonn had played the leading role, whereas Italy had just added some final touches.[44]

On 19 November, aware of the difficulties which would be encountered, Colombo and Genscher had decided to travel to Strasbourg in order to vouch for their project in front of the Parliament.[45] This choice was seen as a minor revolution since, according to established practice, only the country holding the EC presidency had the right to address Parliament.[46] Socialist members of the Assembly were little convinced and all those who were in favour of Altiero Spinelli's efforts for institutional reforms were equally sceptical. The only remarkable exception to this atmosphere of general mistrust was the approach of the Liberal group. They were, indeed, in favour of what Genscher and Colombo recommended, but they also called for coordination with Spinelli. Even the then Italian Ambassador to Bonn, Luigi Vittorio Ferraris, expressed his extreme surprise that Genscher and Colombo did not seek the assistance of the Italian embassy to arrange a meeting with Spinelli.[47]

42. See AMAE 1930inva, Direction Europe, Série Italie, carton 5331, sous-série 11, Ministère des Relations extérieures, direction d'Europe méridionale, La politique étrangère de l'Italie, Paris, 12.11.1981.
43. See AMAE 1930inva, Direction Europe, Série Italie, carton 5331, sous-série 11, Ministère des Relations extérieures, direction d'Europe occidentale, Note sur l'Union européenne, Paris, 14.11.1981.
44. Ibid.
45. For Colombo's speech see F. LAY, op.cit., pp.131 sqq.
46. See U. LAPPENKÜPER, op.cit., pp.234-235.
47. See L.V. FERRARIS, *Deutsch-italienische Beziehungen in den 1980er Jahren. Aufzeichnungen aus italienischen diplomatischen Akten*, in: M. GEHLER/M. GUIOTTO, op.cit., p.250.

Was it an accident that this meeting never took place? Was it rather the result of Genscher's determination (which Colombo fully shared) to give priority to feasible targets without getting involved in grand designs for which it was too early?[48]

The first hypothesis is utterly unconvincing, whereas the second one might correspond to the perceptions of November 1981.[49] Still, a third explanation is also possible:

> "Bundesminister: Wenn wir uns um die europäische Identität bemühen, produzieren wir gleichzeitig ein Serum gegen den Neutralismus.
> Colombo: Das ist richtig, aber einige sind gegen dieses Serum immun. Das sind diejenigen, die europäische Pläne machen, um den Neutralismus zu fördern.
> Bundeskanzler: Denken Sie an Spinelli?
> Colombo: Ja.
> Genscher: Er wollte mich schon dreimal sprechen. Ich will aber nicht, dass dadurch, dass ich ihn empfange, unsere Initiative in ein falsches Licht gerät".[50]

Refusal to make contact with Spinelli can be considered as the result of a specific fear related to this "neutralism" which dominated Spinelli's approach to reform. Genscher and Colombo's ultimate goal was a more assertive Europe alongside the American behemoth. Any diversion from this target was considered both dangerous and harmful.

As a result of the 26 November London summit, Foreign Ministers were given a mandate for the examination of the submitted proposal. On this legal basis, Foreign Ministers meeting in Brussels on 4 January 1982 decided to set up a group of senior officials charged with the examination of the European Act draft. The senior official belonging to the country who had the rotating presidency, the Belgian Ambassador Philippe de Schoutheete, chaired this group. Other members were mostly Ambassadors or Directors-General for Political affairs, such as Bruno Bottai for Italy and Franz Pfeffer for Germany.

During the first few months the proceedings were kept to a tight schedule, so that the first interim report was handed over on 23 February 1982. In the light of mounting financial difficulties it was then agreed that proposals for both institutional and economic reform should be considered together. It was also agreed that senior officials would draw up a single document to submit to the next ministerial meeting. As for those aspects of the European Act concerning the powers of Parliament and of other

48. See Genscher's address to Parliament in Europe Archive 37 (1982) D55-59.
49. See the interview Bruno Bottai gave in Rome (17.02.1998), in: *Voices on Europe*, Oral History Collections, Historical Archives of the European Union, http://www.eui/HAEU/OralHistory/ (accessed 1.02.2016): «We always believed that Spinelli's proposal was useful, even necessary. Everyone of us had to play his part: We had to play a different role to that of the "Crocodile club". Certainly, Spinelli had to behave in an extremist way and it was good so. When he accused us diplomats to content ourselves with words, we very well knew that he was right, but we also were right to act that way».
50. See Doc.253, Gespräch des Bundesministers Genscher mit dem italienischen Außenminister Colombo in Rom, VS-vertraulich, Rom, 11.09.1981, pp.1342-1343, in: AAPD, 1981, Band II.

EC bodies, it was decided to resort to the support of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

It looked as if the group had good chances of completing its work by June. Nonetheless, against expectations, there was even less agreement about the contents of the new document submitted. When Copenhagen took on the rotating presidency during the second half of 1982 an already precarious negotiation deteriorated further. An overall feeling of mistrust adopted by the majority of Members States was a stumbling block. The United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark and Greece all rejected the initiative. Each of them opposed one or more of its proposals. Denmark, for instance, opposed every single aspect of the plan, whereas Ireland mainly feared the possibility of having a European Foreign policy that would include security issues.[51] Greece shunned every transformation of the EPC which could narrow down its freedom in pursuing its own international course. British opposition was broader and more complex. As a general rule, both the British government and the Commonwealth and Foreign Office had endorsed the creation of foreign policy coordination mechanisms among Member States since the 1970s, but what Britain actually had in mind was a quicker and more effective cooperation in an intergovernmental framework. Under no circumstances would London accept the establishment of a truly common European Foreign policy.[52]

In the end the proposal sunk into the quicksand of overall hostility. After months of pointless discussions, Genscher and Colombo held a bilateral meeting in January 1983. They agreed that negotiations had to be brought to an end, but it was not until spring 1983, while the Federal Republic held the rotating presidency, that they were able to save some of the contents of the joint proposal by giving them the form of a declaration of intent with no legal binding value.

Any reference to the signing of a future Treaty, to the establishment of a European Union, to a partial revision of the Luxembourg compromise had been taken out. Even the very word "act" had disappeared. The contents of the Declaration signed by the Ten on Sunday 19 June 1983, had been toned down compared with the compromise Italy and Germany had agreed on during November 1981. Compared with the original goals, these provisions were but a pale shadow of the targets which Genscher and Colombo had been pursuing.

51. See U. ROSENGARTEN, op.cit., pp.70-72 and M.E. GUASCONI, op.cit., p.68.
52. Christopher Hill spoke of a "British schizophrenia" to explain the approach of London. This expression indicated the combination of the search of a special relationship with Washington to discuss the most sensible issues with a limited acceptance of the EPC, both overshadowed by a certain nostalgia for the imperial past. In the eyes of many British officials, the EPC was a poor substitute for the lost British international influence. See C. HILL, *National foreign policies and European political cooperation*, G. Allen & Unwin, London, 1983.

Conclusions

A too ambitious plan for some, namely the majority of Member States, was a too timid approach for others looking for a decisive step in the direction of federalism. The initiative had been trapped in this net of contradictions, which had slowly released it into oblivion. There are several reasons why it failed. None of them, taken alone, can identify all the distinctive features of such a failure.

At all stages of the negotiation process, France tried to slow down the progress of the project. The French records present the EPC reform as one of the most controversial issues. France seemed to fear that such a reform would imply the disappearance of all distinctions between community method and foreign policy coordination, which, associated with a stricter voting system, could result in a sort of "droit de regard" of the European Parliament on Foreign policy.[53] An alarming first step in this direction could be the allocation to the Parliament of a no-confidence vote on the appointment of the President Commission. In the future it could lead to Parliament having a right of censure on Member States, a right of approving or refusing the signing of international agreements and even the right of passing resolutions on human rights.

Another cause for concern was the proposed extension of the powers of the Community into new areas: defence and justice. To achieve this target, Italy and Germany had originally proposed hosting regular meetings of Defence Ministers, which constituted grounds for mistrust in Paris.

At a closer glance, we can notice that both the Elysée Palace and the Quai d'Orsay not only mistrusted the set of reforms proposed by Genscher and Colombo, but they also feared the "side effects" of this path. Over time, the secretariat for policy coordination could, for instance, replace the rotating presidency and the Commission was very likely to insist on being part of it. Eventually, this internal change could lead to an unwanted (for France) transfer of powers from Member States to the EC in the field of foreign policy. Although France was sure that neither Genscher nor Colombo harboured such targets, the Court in Luxembourg might be tempted to use its increasing drive in this direction.[54]

Furthermore, the Court could also take advantage of these reforms to exercise its jurisdiction over areas on which Paris fiercely refused to surrender sovereignty. Even if the plan which Italy and Germany had submitted had no "federalist tones" – unlike the project supported by Spinelli – federalist temptations could reappear in the future if the course set by Genscher and Colombo was followed. In addition to this, Paris also feared that a successful initiative could contribute to a further rapprochement between Rome and Bonn.

53. See ANF, série 5 AG 4, PM/8, dossier 2, Ministère des Relations extérieures, direction d'Europe, Note du comité interministériel sur le projet Genscher-Colombo, confidentiel, Paris, 14.05.1982.
54. See Ibid., Ministère des Affaires étrangères, le directeur des affaires politiques, Problèmes européens, Paris, 01.06.1984.

Certainly, France alone cannot be considered responsible for the failure of the plan, however, its negative stance weighed heavily on the inconclusive results. Rome lacked the capacity and, in all likelihood, the desire to compete with Paris for the role of Bonn's main partner. This is not to suggest that Europe should be considered the sum of several different bilateral schemes of cooperation among Member States. It simply intends to point out that the EC was also the result of the Franco-German reconciliation and that the proper workings of this couple contributed to a successful integration process. The Franco-German couple alone could not advance the integration process, but its poor functioning could slow it down.

Another reason explaining the failure of the joint proposal was the necessity to fight on two fronts: against the mistrust of Member States and also against the project supported by Spinelli. This lack of coordination deprived the Italian-German initiative of important institutional support and, probably, it was also partially responsible for the failure of Spinelli's proposal.

If we now move from the European to the national level, we have to recall that both Germany and Italy had embarked on the joint initiative not only on the basis of European considerations, but also in light of specific domestic needs. Italy wanted to avoid an over-close bond between France and Germany and also feared being left on the outside of coordination schemes between these two countries and London.

Italian domestic political instability and economic imbalances between Rome and Bonn may also have contributed to these poor results, however their importance has too often been over-exaggerated. In the period considered in this essay, Italy had proved to be a reliable partner. Nobody in Bonn called into question Italy's Europeanism and the agreement which Genscher and Colombo had established could have been the first step towards improved coordination. Even economic imbalances would have not weighed so heavily, if Bonn had taken a different approach regarding economic integration; such an approach might have resulted in France embracing a less negative stance.

On the contrary, a complete lack of "timing" resulted in a heavier burden. By 1981, it was as if Italy and Germany had changed trains: they had abandoned their regional train to get on a high-speed one. This high-speed train had two different engine drivers. Each driver gave the train a different speed. At first, the government led by Schmidt had been reluctant to fully commit itself; this meant that the Italian engine driver wanted to go faster than his German colleague. This obstacle was removed in autumn 1982 after the German elections. Through Helmut Kohl and the new coalition he led, Genscher finally gained the backing his joint proposal had lacked. It was, therefore, not a coincidence that in October 1982 Colombo was the first Foreign Minister to travel to Bonn.

Despite this positive change, the "timing" was once again not in favour of the joint proposal. In autumn 1982, the Italian engine driver was forced to choose a slower speed than his German co-worker. Giovanni Spadolini and his government were facing major difficulties. Even the regular Italo-German summit had been postponed. Kohl's first official trip to Rome, on the occasion of the regular Italo-German summit,

therefore resulted in only a short visit.[55] Late in 1982 Spadolini was replaced by a coalition under the guidance of Amintore Fanfani. It barely lasted eight months. Shortly after the adoption of the Solemn Declaration in Stuttgart, Emilio Colombo left his post. The Genscher-Colombo combination also ceased to exist.

In all likelihood, a dramatic change in French politics also had a significant influence on the Italian-German relationship.[56] The existing Franco-German bilateral instruments of cooperation made it easier for these two countries to cooperate closely both at a bilateral and at a European level. The good chemistry soon to be established between Chancellor Kohl and President Mitterrand brought France and Germany even closer than before.

In spite of the aforementioned difficulties, the partnership between Genscher and Colombo was the expression of a long-term path of strong cooperation. From the Sixties, through the Seventies and up to the beginning of the Eighties, Italy and Germany had shared a very similar approach to European integration and had mostly worked in an atmosphere of mutual trust. When referring to the Italian contribution to European integration in the 1980s, it is customary to focus on the dynamic course pursued by Prime Minister Bettino Craxi (1983-1987) and Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti (1983-1989) at the Milan Council of June 1985.[57] This essay does not question such an approach. It rather points out that the 1985 turning-point had its roots in the changes of the previous years.

The disappearance of the "Genscher-Colombo" duo marked the failure of the double dream, namely the illusion that these two countries alone could provide Europe with the tools to overcome its deadlock. This did not, however, mean the end of Italian-German cooperation at a European level. On the contrary, historical analysis proves that exactly the opposite occurred. Unlike the bilateral cooperation, which evolved over the following years at a slower pace, Italy and Germany continued to cooperate closely, making a significant contribution to the process of European integration.

55. See PA AA, B26, n.124900. See also AMAE 1930inva, Direction Europe, Série RFA, carton 4907, sous-série 11, Ministère des Relations extérieures, Télégramme n.469, Sommet germano-italien, commentaire général, Rome, 02.05.1983.
56. See U. LAPPENKÜPER, op.cit., p.242; A. VARSORI, *L'Italia e l'integrazione europea, l'occasione perduta?*, in: S. COLARIZI, P. CRAVERI, S. PONS, G. QUAGLIARINELLO (eds), *Gli Anni Ottanta come Storia*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2004, pp.155-184, here p.168.
57. See M.N. GUALDESI, *L'Italia e l'Europa negli anni Ottanta. Tra ambizione e marginalità*, in: P. CRAVERI, A. VARSORI (eds), op.cit., pp.78-108; P. CALAMIA, *Il Consiglio europeo di Milano (28-29 giugno 1985)*, in: *Rivista di Studi di politica internazionale*, 3(2012), pp.353-360.