

THAT RAINY DAY IN ROME

Everybody knows the beauty that distinguishes the Eternal City. Rome, the cultural hearth of Europe and Christianity, a city with a precious history and a profound soul, a place that explode of life and in which thousands of things happen every single day. That day in Rome was a rainy Monday, spring had just begun and the sun up in the sky was hiding behind gray thick clouds¹. Some people think that when it rains Rome is even more beautiful, the rainfalls wash away the dirt accumulated in the busy messy streets and a new clean air can be breathed. That day of early spring of 1957, the rain didn't just mean a new air but it brought about an historical change that from Rome would have spread to the rest of Europe: the creation of the European Communities. By many the rain was perceived as a sign of luck since, by paraphrasing a well-known proverb about brides, "*sposa bagnata, sposa fortunata*" (wet bride, lucky bride), there was a good chance that the Rome Treaty would have been a success. Italians sometimes like to be superstitious.



Just few people knew at that time that, in the same day, another important deal was being bargained and sealed. This almost-secret agreement was between Enrico Mattei, the CEO of the national oil company ENI, and the government of Iran. It allowed the Italian company to exploit some of the biggest Iranian oil fields, on the basis of an agreement that was much more

¹ "*I Trattati di Roma, quel giorno del 25 marzo 1957*", La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno 24/03/2007, <http://www.lagazzettadelmezzogiorno.it/news/notizie-nascoste/59537/i-trattati-di-roma-quel-giorno-del-25-marzo-1957.html>

convenient than those made with the American and British corporations². Unfortunately, this ambitious treaty was not lucky enough and it contributed to lead to the death of Mattei in 1962.

Another influent Italian person was one of the most important characters of that rainy Monday. In the morning, the monument of Alcide De Gasperi, one of the founding fathers of Europe, received the visit of Adenauer and Spaak, the representatives of Germany and Belgium³. Of course, the figure of the Italian statesman was mentioned the whole day by the media and by every single foreign representative during the official speech.

That day the schools remained closed for a twofold purpose: it was a way to make aware the students of the importance represented by the treaties of Rome, an importance that would have resulted much deeper for the young generations, those that will benefit from an open peaceful and prosperous common house called Europe. Moreover, a huge number of students were invited by the Pope Pio XII to a gathering aimed at discussing the issues of the students' life⁴. Roughly 50.000 among students, professors and parents challenged the rain to meet the Pope that in his speech invited the youngsters to keep on studying seriously, through a systemic approach in order to be able of seeking and living for the truth.

The Roman Spring had not reserved the warmest welcome to foreign visitors arrived in the late afternoon on the square to which Michelangelo had imprinted the seal of the Renaissance, the Campidoglio. This did not prevent a crowd of curious people to gather in the square around the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius, whose outstretched hand upward seemed to pacify the city and the world. The rain came down with short intermittent bursts, wetting the flags of the six countries on the senatorial palace, while the plenipotentiaries came quickly from their limousines and a strong wind blew dark clouds from the sea towards the Roman countryside.

The solemn tolling of the "Patarine", the historic Capitol bell, made the announcement of the beginning of the ceremony. Police was keeping free a corridor to enable the representatives' cars to pass when, shortly before 18, ministers started arriving⁵. The scene, happening in a crowded square full of citizens of Rome, was simultaneously followed on television by many millions of Europeans,

² "I trattati e il resto", *La Stampa* 24/03/1957,
http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,1/articleid,0032_01_1957_0072_0001_14404952/

³ "Trattati di Roma, così nacque l'Europa unita", *Il Corriere della Sera* 27/02/2017,
<http://lanostrastoria.corriere.it/2017/02/27/trattati-di-roma-cosi-nacque-leuropa-unita/>

⁴ "Il Papa parla della scuola a 50.000 studenti medi", *La Stampa* 25/03/1957,
http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,7/articleid,0032_02_1957_0072_0007_13984824/

⁵ "I trattati del mercato comune e dell'euratom sottoscritti a Roma in una festosa cerimonia", *La Stampa* 26/03/1957,
http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,1/articleid,0032_01_1957_0073_0001_14073723/

indeed ideally by one hundred and fifty million in the “little Europe”, beneficiaries of the new Treaties on which that night the signatures were about to be placed.

In the Hall of Orazi and Curiazi, representatives of the six countries entered at 18 o'clock and seated around a table in walnut, covered with red damask arabesque⁶. The first signature on the first page of the thick volume bound in blue leather, containing the treaties for the Common Market and Euratom was put at 18.17 by the Belgian Foreign Minister, Paul-Henri Spaak. A moment before, closing the series of speeches, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, Luns, had made the first gesture of European solidarity: refusing to speak Dutch, a language that is legally official but hardly understandable to the others, to emphasize in French "the good wish that is given to the treaties by the city in which they have been signed, from which were built the political, legal and social aspects of our lives today, so that is to be hoped that the new Europe, we have created, could be united, prosperous and strong as it was in Europe under the imperial Rome Caesars”.

Adenauer, who had a fresh and relaxed face despite many hours of a difficult flight affected by bad weather, speaking in German, added that the Community is open to all the other European states which may join either unconditionally or by means of special agreements, as the UK was



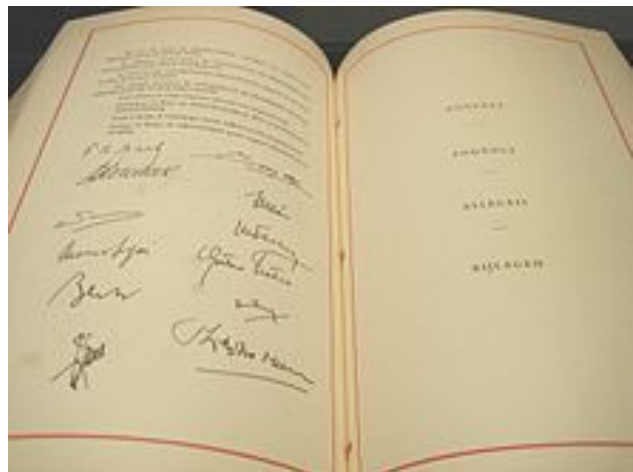
already thinking to do. “That Britain could join economically to Europe - he continued - has always been considered an illusion by pessimists; but even about the creation of the European Community the pessimists had made ruinous predictions. Of course, many challenges must still be overcome but, as a German proverb states, we must make sure that “trees wouldn’t prevent us from seeing the wood”, that is, the details of the critical issues that have to be overcome must not take away our vision of the already achieved great results.

After Adenauer, it was the turn of Spaak, the Belgian minister, that said: "I wish to emphasize the solidarity between peoples that on other occasions fought in bloody wars and who are now united, through the richness of their national peculiarities, for the defense of a human ideal. The memory of past misfortunes gave us the courage to forget old disputes”. In turn, Pineau stated that the two treaties will transform the living conditions of the

⁶ “I trattati e il resto”, La Stampa 24/03/1957, http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,1/articleid,0032_01_1957_0072_0001_14404952/

peoples of the six countries. The French minister said he hoped a speedy agreement with England, "without whose participation in Europe would be incomplete" without imagining the close return of De Gaulle to the French political scene as a radical opponent of the British accession into the Community. After Spaak, the wise Beck, with its twenty-seven years continuous presence in the Luxembourg government, stressed the importance of the new Community and concluded by saying a Cato's Latin well-known phrase: "*Ceterum censeo Europam esse aedificandam*" (Anyway, I believe that Europe has to be established)⁷.

The official speeches were followed by the signing ceremony where an institutional valet took to every Minister the big volumes that had to be signed while at the same time the Mayor of Rome delivered to each representative a gold medal. Right at 18.50, all the signs were already in the treaties, after less than an hour from the beginning of the meeting. In the evening, all the Ministers took part in a celebration at Palazzo Venezia with thousands of guests⁸.



Very few people knew anyway that almost all the volumes that were signed that day were empty. Indeed, some people afterward started calling the Treaties of Rome as “the empty treaties” for a twofold reason: they constituted the basic blueprint of the European project where a lot more had to be built on; secondly, all of them, except the French version, were literally empty as only the first and the last page were drafted. There is a simple reason behind this unusual curiosity: Germans asked at the last minute that the treaties were drafted also in German and not only in the language in which they had been negotiated, namely French. However, there was no time for translations, given that they should have been in Italian and Dutch as well, and therefore for the print of 128 pages in four languages. Eventually, it was decided to fill thick volumes only just with the first and last page

⁷ *Il cordiale salute degli statisti di sei nazioni*”, La Stampa 26/03/1957, http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,avanzata/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,1/articleid,0032_01_1957_0073_0001_14073726/

⁸ “I trattati del mercato comune e dell'euratom sottoscritti a Roma in una festosa cerimonia”, La Stampa 26/03/1957, http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,1/articleid,0032_01_1957_0073_0001_14073723/

on which the representatives would have put their signatures on a text that was actually blank sheets⁹. At the time, very few people were aware of the makeshift and no one would have noticed it.

Outside, a crowd was still standing under the rain waiting for the Europeans and national ministers. Newspapers of that day say that the only moment of dispute was the presence of a group of left-wing activists who distributed leaflets against an initiative which, especially according to the Communist Party, more than unite the continent tended to deepen the divisions between the socialist and the liberal Europe. The numerous police officers present in the square identified the militants and seized the leaflets immediately and no further protests were recorded¹⁰.

After that rainy Monday, from a Rome that came back to be the center of Europe for a day, the representatives brought back to their countries new hopes and more than an interrogative except for the feeling that Europe was finally following the path of actual unity and peace.

⁹ *“Roma, 25 marzo 1957: la solenne firma del Trattato inesistente”*, Il Sole 24 ore 25/03/2007, <http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/SoleOnLine4/Speciali/2007/europa-anniversario/Nascita-Cee-Roma-1957.shtml?uuid=05b2798c-d8a5-11db-bc34-00000e25108c>

¹⁰ *“La “piccola Europa” nasce oggi in Campidoglio”*, La Stampa 26/03/1957, http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,avanzata/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,1/articleid,0032_02_1957_0072_0001_16037720/