

LO SCRITTOIO DEL PRESIDENTE (1956)

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ABSTRACT

The essay is an early introduction to *The President's Writing Desk*, the collection organized by Einaudi at the conclusion of his presidency of the Republic. The real significance of the volume lies in the systematization of the Quirinale's role in Italian institutional life. In Einaudi's systematization, the main concern is evident: to make the presidency of the Republic the interpreter of the general interest of the country. This is in constant dialogue with representatives of the other powers. At a time when fundamental bodies such as the Constitutional Court, the Higher Council of the Judiciary and the Regions are still absent, the presidency of the Republic becomes the guardian of respect for the rights of freedom. There is much attention in Einaudi, for example, to freedom of movement within and outside the Republic. He is also a careful guardian of the prerogatives granted by the Constitution to the head of state, keeping his powers unchanged in order to transmit them to his successors. This is to safeguard the existing differences between the various powers and thus to protect pluralism and possible attacks on its functioning. For Einaudi it is vital to give foundation to the model of democracy that the country had given itself after the frightful prices paid to nationalist ideologies with the Fascist dictatorship.

Keywords: Presidency of the Republic, Government, Parliament, Europe, EDC, Rights of freedom.

What was the meaning and significance of the work that Einaudi published at the end of his presidential term? *Lo scrittoio del presidente* (*The President's Writing Desk*), the title chosen after a long correspondence with his son Giulio, the publisher, appeared in 1956 and saw father and son fully immersed in an incessant discussion on the title, the cover, the graphic choices, and the launch of the volume, to which they both attributed an institutional value of synthesis and clarification of the practice and methods

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of intervention of the presidential institution.¹ It was not merely a record of the president's work, an outline of his activities, but something more. It was a sort of orientation book intended to unveil the authentic nature that the representative of national unity had, according to Einaudi, been attributed by the constitutional charter. His relations with the other powers of the state, his contacts with Prime Ministers, ministers, Chambers of Deputies, Italian diplomats and the high public bureaucracy showed the maturation of his choices and his conception of the presidency of the Republic as a regulating power of the general interest, very careful not to invade the competences and spheres of others, but equally vigilant to ensure that not only were his prerogatives not impoverished, but that they were preserved intact. This, of course, was not in relation to the subjectivity of the Head of State in office, but because of the inescapable need to leave intact the powers that the Constitution entrusted to him, so that they could be entirely passed on to his successor.

In this sense, *Lo scrittoio* has been judged as a sort of balance sheet of Einaudi's activity at the Quirinale, using it as a measure of the effectiveness or otherwise of the *moral suasion* he would have carried out or as an illustration of his presidential policy, which was independent of that of the executive.² It was therefore often mistaken for a sort of original useless sermon within which his way of understanding the presidency of the Republic was synthesised, suspended between constricted notarial activity and vague aspiration to influence the course of events, conditioning their outcome. This gave rise to a veiled differentiation if not opposition between the lone professor-president and the rest of the political ruling class, in many interpretations punctuated from the outset by an uncommon mediocrity, with the sparse exceptions of a few exponents untainted by political professionalism. The valuable profile on President Einaudi that appeared in the two volumes on the Quirinale edited by Sabino Cassese, Alberto Melloni and Giuseppe Galasso gives us a measure of this. The author, Adriano Viarengo,³ former biographer of Cavour,⁴ takes up and adopts Riccardo Faucci's considerations. The late author of the most solid account of Einaudi's life believed that "most of Einaudi's advice to the executive had fallen on deaf ears to the point of becoming veritable 'useless sermons'", as Einaudi's partnership appeared "rather

¹ SODDU 2008: 151-185; 2015: 77-95; MURA 2025a: 232; TFE, ALE.

² BALDASSARRE and MEZZANOTTE 1985; FAUCCI 1986; GERVASONI 2015; RIDOLFI 2015; VIARENGO 2018; PERTICI 2024.

³ VIARENGO 2018.

⁴ VIARENGO 2010.

one-sided".⁵ In reality, this was not the case, it was not the expression of an irresolvable contrast between virtue versus fury, but the inevitable and legitimate divergence between various powers, different characters and non-coincidental conceptions, between the attempt at the democratic reversal of liberalism and therefore of the consciousness of their respective boundaries and the actual course of political cultures, with their total and religious burden, faced with the challenge of pluralist democracy, as manifested in the construction of the basic rules of the Italians' collective cohabitation.

To refer back to Carlo Levi's definition of Ferruccio Parri – a 'chrysanthemum above a dunghill'⁶ a term that condensed the many places of the forms of exercise of political power in Italian society – single and isolated subjects stood out, a few narrow circles alien to the deterrent Machiavellianism, considered one of the qualifying features of the political expression of the ruling classes lacking the necessary republican virtues.

In reality, *Lo scrittoio* moved in a completely different direction, visible only if one thinks back to the role that Einaudi played in the transitional phase between the Fascist dictatorship and the construction of democratic Italy. The Piedmontese economist, after the bitter discovery of the true nature of fascism, which in the turbulent trials of proto-democratic coexistence he too had mistaken for the cure to the imaginary disease of Bolshevik danger, had understood the inevitability of the marriage of liberalism with democracy.⁷ He was able to play the pre-eminent role he had among the liberals of pre-fascism precisely because he was able to reflect and rethink himself, ending up fulfilling on the liberal level the function that Salvemini on the level of democracy matured between the *Meditazioni e soliloqui* (*Meditations and Soliloquies*) of 1922-1923⁸ and the decisive years of exile spent in the America of Roosevelt and the New Deal.⁹

Einaudi came to the realisation of the inevitability of the arrival of mass democracy and at the same time considered it indispensable to surround it with a liberal vision and method, elaborating an all-round political thought in which economy, society, culture, politics, ethics, mentality were bound together in an overall and unified vision. Salvemini grasped, on the negative side due to the existential nightmare that was the formation of the totalitarian state for him and on the positive side due to his experience in

⁵ FAUCCI 1986.

⁶ LEVI 1989; BENFANTE 2020.

⁷ EINAUDI 2001; SALVADORI 2022; GIORDANO 2024.

⁸ SALVEMINI 2001.

⁹ SALVEMINI 2007.

Roosevelt's vibrant America, how crucial it was for democracy to feed on liberal methods, procedures, mentality and approach, so that democracy was nothing more than the extension of liberalism¹⁰ to all, releasing it from the shackles in which it had been held by the oligarchies. They both distanced themselves from Benedetto Croce¹¹ with regard to the analysis of fascism or, to put it better, they rethought post-fascist Italy in different terms, because they were both marked in their reflections by an awareness of the novelty of the non-relative totalitarian landing and its persistent conditioning.

For both of them, in the different forms they took between the two wars, it became a nagging issue. Restricting ourselves to Einaudi, we must bear in mind that after his hasty flight from Turin and exile in Switzerland, his reflection was centred on the dilemma of the characteristics of the democratic system, on the fears he clearly harboured and finally on the understanding of the ineluctable democratic landing place, given that the alternative was solely and exclusively totalitarianism in its many variants. Therein lay the value of his work during this phase based on the conviction that democracy could not but be founded on solid liberal foundations. He therefore committed himself with writings, speeches and with his presence at the Constituent Assembly so that these, as an expression of the boundaries and limits within which human action had to be contained while respecting the boundaries and limits of others, would condition democratic institutions.¹²

He saw the continental democratic fulfilment that the European Resistance¹³ achieved and, in particular, the sowing that it did by fostering the incubation of post-World War II democratic systems, especially where they had either not previously had any significant life or had died even before blossoming. The meaning of *Via il prefetto!*¹⁴ consisted in the understanding of the initiative from below by national communities as a rethinking of forms, ways, rules of collective cohabitation now founded on democratic mutual recognition. Einaudi placed the construction of post-fascist Italy in the more general re-founding of democratic Europe after the atrocious costs of totalitarian nationalism,¹⁵ seeing in the myth of the absolute sovereignty of states not only a political impediment to peace,

¹⁰ BUCCHI 2023; TORCHIANI 2024.

¹¹ ZUNINO 2003: 283-318; FRANZINELLI 2024.

¹² EINAUDI 1982, 2001.

¹³ WIEVORKA 2017.

¹⁴ EINAUDI 1944.

¹⁵ JUDT 2005; KERSHAW 2015.

but also a very serious obstacle to global interchange and to overcoming the fragmentation of Europe, as had punctually emerged between the two world wars, thus inspiring the theoretical elaboration, on the Swiss model, of European democratic federalism, and decisively influencing the reflection of the European federalists, starting with the Ventotene *Manifesto*,¹⁶ the accomplished expression of the encounter of liberalism with democratic reflection and practice.

More generally, Einaudi's decisive contribution consisted – both in his publicist activity and in his presence in the Commission of 75 at the Constituent Assembly and in the second Sub-Commission that outlined the institutions of the democratic republic – in recalling the vital necessity of the affirmation of the liberal method in the functioning of the democratic machine. This was not only with regard to the relations between the various powers, but in a more general perspective of which the constituents absolutely had to consider and be aware, since the institutions they outlined would continue to exist even after them. The constituent pact of Italy becoming a full participant in the ways of life of pluralist democracy involved the ties between generations, between the dead, the living and the unborn, which had to be constitutionally incorporated. Democratic systems, in fact, were nourished by the living, the living will. Hence the consideration of those who no longer had a voice and those who still did not. These foundations safeguarded against the dangers of 'totalitarian democracy': referring explicitly to Edmund Burke,¹⁷ Einaudi recalled on September 7, 1946, speaking during the work of the Second Subcommittee, that the living were necessarily related to the dead and the unborn. "In societies there are many forces that have the right to be represented. Some of these are even dead forces, they are forces of past generations, and not because they are such they do not have the right to have their voices heard – the romantic school said – in the present legislation".¹⁸ It was certainly his concern to preserve tradition and pass it on. But it also harked back to John Stuart Mill,¹⁹ that is, to the awareness of the evolutionary character of historical reality, which went far beyond the eternalisation of the present, lived from the conditioning of the past and, above all, preserved the future. Deleting the past that was in the past would have facilitated its return with pathological features and would have ended up hindering the future. It, too, claimed its rights before the 'general will' of the living, who

¹⁶ SPINELLI *et al.* 2017.

¹⁷ BURKE 2009.

¹⁸ SODDU 2019: 112.

¹⁹ GIORDANO 2024.

had to be aware that the community would continue its life after them. From his work as Constituent Assembly emerged, therefore, the complex, articulated, opposing thrusts of Einaudian liberalism, at once conservative and innovative, capable of assuming awareness of the transformations, not the least of which was the mass character of contemporary society suspended between totalitarian temptations and liberal approaches, and the indispensability, in the new economic and material world, of rapidly moving beyond the 'myth of the sovereign state'.²⁰

Lo scrittoio del presidente can only be understood if one considers this assumption and, at the same time, takes into account the reasons with which Einaudi in the 1946 referendum campaign motivated his vote for the monarchy. What undoubtedly counted was the bond and loyalty with the House of Savoy, which had led him to seek, above all with Princess Maria José, consort of the heir to the throne, a solution for the salvation of the crown.²¹ On the other hand, the economist's conservative concerns about the possible revolutionary effects that could have resulted from the fall, together with the fascist dictatorship, of the monarchical institution and its hierarchies should not be underestimated, so much so that he feared the possible revolutionary outcomes of the vague constituent assembly. His systematisation of that decisive phase of transition in the form of state and form of government with an eye to an impossible English way – impossible, because in the Italian case it had gone quite the opposite way, with the ruling classes terrified of the rise and full development of the political citizenship of the subordinate classes – was aimed at forcing the inevitable discontinuity into an evolutionary path. For in truth, it was precisely the monarchy's choice to rely on dictatorship for the transition to mass society that had ineluctably marked, precluding the ruling house from any positive and active role in the transition. Of that path he therefore tried to safeguard the deepest sense, with the awareness that the foundations were being laid for a new beginning, within which to safeguard that liberal spirit that had been laboriously affirmed in the course of the unitary event. Indeed, the highest institution was to be the essential instrument to safeguard "the guarantees of liberty for all citizens".

As justification for the monarchy, he posited his conviction that guarantees could only be offered by an institution legitimised by a different source than the elective system. The latter, in fact, could have run the risk of populist drifts, in the case of either the direct or indirect method. In the first hypothesis, because it would have risked the dictatorship of the

²⁰ EINAUDI 1945.

²¹ EINAUDI 1997: 28-29, 42-47, 146, 155, 210.

general assembly and thus a direct correspondence between its majority and the choice of the highest institution, in the second because it feared that in the actual concreteness of the Italian condition a South American drift would have prevailed. Which, in fact, did not play in favour of the maturity of republican citizenship. It risked being a tautology, however, in favor of an institution that, as in Pasolini's *June 10*, proclaimed itself a "forza del passato/solo nella tradizione è il mio amore" ("force of the past/only in tradition is my love").²² Einaudi, also, did not consider that, if this was true, the Savoy monarchy was only one of and not even the most deposited in the making of the nation. With it, in fact, cohabited the republican tradition that had accompanied and nourished the democratic perspective of the Risorgimento. In fact, the real precedent of June 2 lay, as Meuccio Ruini not surprisingly said at the Constituent Assembly, in the Roman Republic and in the testament of its democratic constitution. Therefore, even from this tradition,²³ not only not extraneous but propulsive to the national identification of the peninsula, could spring life and nourishment. Einaudi believed, on the contrary, that it was the exclusive prerogative of the monarchy, manifested in historical reality in the Savoy dynasty, which in his view had in some way continuously performed the historical function of defending the physical 'natural borders' of the country:

This source is a historical force consisting of traditions, of works accomplished in the past through centuries of struggle and which cannot be destroyed by mistakes made in a recent time, which is a moment in the life of peoples.

[...] This is the monarchy for which we vote; a monarchy that on ordinary days is the representative symbol of the unity of the fatherland and the concord of the citizens, surrounded by an austere court, whose members are chosen by the King and Queen after hearing the assent of the prime minister, and fulfils the office of guardian of the constitution and organ of the will of the people at supreme moments in the life of the nation, when other political forces prove incapable of expressing a stable government.²⁴

Removed was the fact that the Savoy monarchy had ended up indelibly wounding the democratic principle, privileging its oligarchic nature with the affirmation of the dictatorship of a populist agitator whose greatest achievement was a political socialisation that was necessarily authoritarian and hierarchical, in a word totalitarianly indifferent to the affirmation

²² PASOLINI 1964.

²³ GEUNA 1998.

²⁴ EINAUDI 1946.

of the good of the most, preserved in the guise of subjects who were prevented from becoming citizens. Mobilised politically, they remained suspended between the oligarchic dimension and the democratic landing place. Einaudi wrote that the rejection of the elective instrument for identifying the representative of the nation's sovereignty was in favour of another source of legitimisation, namely the 'historical force constituted by traditions, by works accomplished in the past through centuries of struggle and that cannot be destroyed by mistakes made in a recent time, which is a moment in the life of peoples'. In the mid-twentieth century, the problem of that historical force consisted in having missed the appointment with the democratic moment and having wanted to surround it with anti-democratic prerogatives, stifling and raping the freedom of most. It had not been an accidental, kinetic element, but the full expression of its intrinsic nature as a historical force that had rejected the present, seeking to safeguard the past and, in so doing, had not only led the young unitary creature to the mortal danger of its destruction, but had encapsulated the political mobilisation of the masses within illiberal, discriminatory, anti-democratic structures, mentalities, conceptions and practices.

Yet the reasons that he saw as underpinning the figure of the Head of State remained alive. Therefore, since the majority of Italians had chosen the Republic, it was necessary to give it the present and the future of that historical legacy, composed of broader and more comprehensive motives than those expressed by the Italian monarchical institution. If the dictatorship, according to the popular voice, had shown that the monarchical institute had consciously renounced protecting 'the guarantees of liberty for all citizens', nevertheless the question concerned and was also decisive for the Republic. Einaudi translated it, in his inaugural speech on May 12, 1948, into the "very new problem" of "making democratic systems last when no longer a small minority privileged people but tens of millions of citizens all equal before the law are called upon to vote and deliberate". He observed that 'universal suffrage seemed and still seems to many incompatible with freedom and democracy'.²⁵ It was on this decisive question that the post-war liberals were paralysed, after the perfection of universal male suffrage, the first structuring of a mass party system and the transition to proportional representation. There, however, those ruling classes stopped, with the only partial and isolated exception of Francesco Saverio Nitti's attempt.²⁶ The majority of the liberals of his generation had in fact ignored not only Piero Gobetti, but also Giovanni Amendola and

²⁵ EINAUDI 1956: 4.

²⁶ CROSTI 2024.

had thus contributed, by virtue of the actual state of the political cultures operating in public space, to the formation of the only experience of totalitarian democracy that had unfolded in the country, namely the fascist dictatorship. An anticipation, moreover, that would play a decisive role on a European and global scale and would shape the world between the wars in a reality dominated by profound unfinished transformations.²⁷

Einaudi was aware of the challenge that fascisms represented, but also of the fact that the formation of new world balances was accompanied on the European continent in the rethinking of its collective life. Einaudi contributed to this in the transition between fascism and post-fascism, not only internally, but also by giving greater political substance to the idea of Europe after the totalitarian attempt made by Hitler and his allies to reshape it. It was, on closer inspection, a solitary role not only among those who came from the pre-fascist period, but also in the universe of Italian liberalism, which allowed him, not by chance, to have a unique function among those generations and cultures, as shown by the progressively growing role – from the Bank of Italy to the Quirinale – that he played in the institutions.

Lo scrittoio del presidente also speaks of this work. Of the Pella government²⁸ he was, after De Gasperi's defeat, the creator and driving force, behaving according to the ideal type of the British monarch he outlined in May 1946:

The monarch is that institution that is never spoken of, of which it can be said that it is and must remain dormant, and only awaken at exceptional moments in national life, when it is clear that parliamentary institutions are unable to express new leaders, but the will of the people exists, there are clear unanimous currents that call for a change of course.²⁹

When that executive went into crisis, Einaudi found himself faced with the veto of the Christian Democrat parliamentary groups on the appointment of a minister they did not like: he dug his heels in, even though the renouncement of the Prime Minister from Biella got him out of the way. This is what happened in a clamorous even if apparently discreet manner – so much so that he did not mention it in *Lo scrittoio del presidente* – on the power of appointment of constitutional judges that the Constitution attributed to the Quirinal and that the executive tried to transfer to himself. He argued: "It is the duty of the President of the

²⁷ CHAPOUTOT 2013.

²⁸ EINAUDI 1956: 31-36; MAZZAFERRO 2022: 111-138.

²⁹ EINAUDI 2001: 207.

Republic to avoid precedents being set, in his silence or in his inadmissible ignorance of the event, thanks to which it happens or appears to happen that he does not pass on to his successor, free from any cracks, the faculties that the constitution attributes to him".³⁰

The ambition behind Einaudi's work was thus not to take stock of his seven-year term, an almost complacent underlining of his function, making its virtues stand out against the *politique politicienne*. In fact, *Lo scrittoio del presidente* constitutes a *unicum*, because it realises the completion and refinement of a broader reflection initiated by Einaudi. There are no deviations or discontinuities from his usual concerns about safeguarding the continuity of the national state, of which both the predisposition in favour of maintaining the monarchy and the opposition to the Constituent Assembly hypothesis were manifestations. At the same time, however, there emerged an awareness of an entirely new phase, whereby he understood the devastating threats posed by the persistence of the totalitarian nationalist mentality, rooted both in the exaltation of the absolute sovereignty of the nation state and in the obsession with regulatory control, aimed at limiting, containing and compressing freedom of action, and finally in espousing protectionist defence and exalting as a virtue the drama of global autarchy. They were, moreover, conditionings that continued to lurk in many character traits of republican legislation, so often strongly influenced by that near past. From this point of view *Lo scrittoio* constituted a substantial indictment of the more hidden and less obvious, but more resistant, aspects of the continuity of the state, very often having the face of repeated habits and mentalities that can be summed up in disgust, which is the other face of fear, of the full, free and conscious exercise of human activity.

Einaudi wrote that the book had "the sole intent of recording the reflections that at a certain date I was made to communicate to men, who always received them with the same spirit of collaboration and friendship, with which I had drafted them".³¹ In reality, Einaudi's reflections triggered by the exchange with other public authorities consisted in fixing the characteristics and forms of liberal democracy, in the awareness that the solution of continuity of the post-World War II period internally and its close connections with the outside induced a positive fixation of the democratic system's way of being. It was part of that liberal pedagogy that he carried out to prepare the conditions for an open society that, if we look closely, accompanied the democratic literacy that the parties, each according to their own culture and different intentions, conducted in

³⁰ EINAUDI 1956: 34; SODDU 1998: 124-127.

³¹ EINAUDI 1956: XVI.

that phase. In years of very bitter social and political conflicts, which were the outcome of the intertwining of the global framework determined by the Cold War and the first real test of coexistence between Italians and Italians, Einaudi understood his role as a continuous lesson on the fundamental principles that would have informed the collective life of democratic Italy, incorporating liberal vision and practice into it. This was his guiding thread.

This aspect is discernible from the order Einaudi gave to the topics he dealt with, organised into books. The opening was in fact dedicated to Italy, to constitutional and institutional issues and to the relations between the various powers. The second book expanded to the global and transnational picture, without neglecting the wounds opened by the lost war, starting with Trieste. He shed light on nationalism whose outcome had been to endanger the nation. He wrote: “With the renunciations (to Dalmatia) we had the natural borders, Trieste, Istria, Rijeka, the islands and Zadar. With the nationalists (of which the fascists were the screaming subspecies) we lost the rest and put Trieste in jeopardy”.³²

The core of the volume – from the third to the seventh book – outlined the decisive features of a market economy based on competition and oriented towards global trade after the autarkic closure between the two world wars. It dealt with some of its classic themes in the light of the forms that government and parliamentary action took in those early years: monopolies, protectionism, trade liberalisation, taxes, savings, public expenditure and enterprise, labour conflicts, flexibility or rigidity of the economy and labour, the agrarian question and reform. The eighth book was aimed at the defence and reinforcement of certain fundamental individual freedoms, surrounded by strongly authoritarian limitations,³³ the ninth, which concludes the work, was focused on the protection of the landscape and urban balance in times without laws to protect them.³⁴

The years of his presidency were those of the most intense manifestation of the internal effects of the global conflict, which conditioned the practice of democracy internally. In particular, they affected the nature of social clashes, but not only that, since at that stage the Consolidated Law on Public Security was in force within the framework outlined by the sentence issued by the Supreme Court on February 7, 1948, i.e. before Einaudi's election. As Achille Battaglia wrote in *Dieci anni dopo* collected by Calamandrei, in the absence of the Supreme Court, the distinction between

³² EINAUDI 1956: 90.

³³ SODDU 1998.

³⁴ PAOLELLI and MASCHERUCCI 2024.

prescriptive constitutional norms and programmatic constitutional norms made by the Court of Cassation rendered the rights of liberty evanescent and dependent on the judicial authority.³⁵ This was the scenario in which Einaudi operated. Having established the fundamental law of collective coexistence, it was necessary to lay the foundations of and put into practice *the* democratic system in the triple sense of the full definition of the rules, the functioning of the constitutional organs and the continuous operation in reality and in everyday acts. In this sense, he tightened the inseparable knot that intertwined liberal thought and action and democratic life.

Einaudi clearly extolled the distinction and separation of powers. He took note of the constitutional boundaries that informed presidential activity regarding the referral of laws passed by the Houses of Parliament, which were responsible for legislative initiative, and how to intervene in government-initiated laws. He thus gave “an interpretation that, perhaps, is broader than the letter of the Constitution, but which I believe conforms to the system desired by the Constituent Assembly: the politics of the country are the responsibility of the government that has the confidence of Parliament and not the President of the Republic”.³⁶

Parliament’s function as a place for dialogue, confrontation, discussion and the passing of laws was emphasised. It was irreplaceable precisely because its specific professionalism, namely political competence, was concentrated there:

The general assembly may have many faults, but it unquestionably has the advantage of recognising the principle that, if particular interests must be heard and if men with expertise must have their say, the decision must, however, rest with the politician with political expertise, which is a different kind of expertise from particular expertise.³⁷

It followed that the ways in which representation was formed constituted a prerequisite that qualified it, that certified its effectiveness. Einaudi’s predilection for majoritarianism with uninominal constituencies and a possible runoff if the 50%+1 is not reached is well known. Given the vast size of proportional constituencies, he believed that the uninominal constituency facilitated a more authentic and direct relationship between the elected and the electoral body and thus more effective representation. And yet, in the reality of the proportional electoral system within which the birth, infancy and youth of republican democracy took place, Einaudi

³⁵ BATTAGLIA 1955: 385.

³⁶ EINAUDI 1956: XIV. Italics are in the text.

³⁷ *Ibid.*: 18.

warned well in advance of certain inevitable degenerations that were only realised in the terminal phase of the Republic of parties. He warned of the need for single preference: "The aptitudes required of preference vote casters do not always coincide with those that should be proper to a deputy".³⁸ He also defined it as an outright fraud to establish a majority prize for cohesive lists that did not exceed 50%+1 of the votes:

The methods that enshrine the right of the majority to govern and the right of the minority to criticise are by definition said to be democratic or free, but a majority that is so only because a law has transformed it from a minority into a majority cannot fail to arouse the anger and aversion of the electoral body. To state in laws that 40 % equals more than 50 % is to say something contrary to the truth.³⁹

And he warned, at the conclusion of the discussion on the reform of the 1953 electoral law, that, in the case of electoral laws with a majority prize, this should never reach the two-thirds necessary to proceed with constitutional reforms so as not to have to submit them to the final vote in the referendum. "An electoral law that allows the majority government to govern does not contradict the constitution; however, it contradicts it if it deprives the minority of the right it indisputably has to effectively oppose reforms of the current constitution".⁴⁰ And indeed the real weakness of the De Gasperi-Scelba reform consisted precisely in the dangerous approach of the prize to that threshold.⁴¹

The construction of democracy was part of an experience of ideological conflict between open societies and closed societies, between societies governed by the principles of liberalism and totalitarian societies, as reasoned after the outbreak of the Korean War. These were modern 'wars of religion', all of which would end with the destruction of the adversary, yet other forms and modes of conflict would manifest themselves.⁴² Also on the basis of the near past, when it was totalitarian regimes that had triggered wars, public opinion in liberal democratic countries being very reluctant, he foresaw that a possible world conflagration in the time of the Cold War would only find an actor capable of activating it in the area "where there are no contrasts of opinion on the essential points of the dominant group's policy" and therefore "a mutation can occur suddenly, so that home and abroad the mutation itself is only known when it is a

³⁸ *Ibid.*: 21.

³⁹ *Ibid.*: 20-21.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*: 22.

⁴¹ SODDU 2017: 81-83.

⁴² EINAUDI 1956: 42-43.

fait accompli”.⁴³ It coincided at that time with the Soviet bloc, although the Cold War and the regimes of real socialism would be internally consumed, thanks certainly to the action of the dissidents but above all to the Gorbačëv factor.⁴⁴ That was an ideological and religious conflict, which was resolved peacefully. If anything, the dangers of war only increased after the collapse of the socialist ideology, and a rigid manipulative nationalism emerged in that reality, which is at the root of any will to *revanche*. As shown by the fact that even long-lasting democratic regimes saw illiberal, discriminatory and intolerant methods and practices assert themselves.

In Einaudi's view, sovereigntist nationalism had been responsible for the Second World War and had been the obstacle to European integration, in respect of which the moment in which Einaudi perceived the greatest potential for realisation was the attempt of the European Defence Community.⁴⁵ In his eyes it appeared to be the instrument for opening up to federation, indeed it was 'the necessary condition for federation'.⁴⁶ This was not only because of the institutions to which it would inevitably lead, but above all because on a supranational European level one of the decisive instruments of statehood, the organisation precisely of one's own defence. The European army was not a pretext, but a real need, dictated by the historical reality compounded by the destructive character of nationalisms, as the affirmation of fascisms and the charge of death and destruction that had marked them had amply shown the old continent. Added to this was the downsizing of Europe that their affirmation had accelerated, albeit concealed by the umbrella of protection offered by the United States:⁴⁷ "Europeans feel, with increasing anguish, that they cannot defend themselves alone; and they are convinced of the need to pool their means of men and arms if they are to resist the assault, from east or west, of huge human agglomerations, organised into powerful states".⁴⁸ The European discontinuity therefore descended from reality. The "true federation does not exist if the states that unite do not renounce part of their sovereignty and transfer it to the new federal entity. They can give up a little or a lot of their sovereignty".⁴⁹ Efforts made by post-war Europe

⁴³ *Ibid.*: 45.

⁴⁴ GRAZIOSI 2008.

⁴⁵ PREDA 1990.

⁴⁶ EINAUDI 1956: 70.

⁴⁷ KAPLAN 1999.

⁴⁸ EINAUDI 1956: 71.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*: 63.

to integrate only made sense if “those efforts did not stand on their own, but presupposed and implied a transition to political federation at a fixed and short term”.⁵⁰ It was, in short, necessary to ‘start with politics and not with economics’.⁵¹

And therein lay the point: “It is a gross mistake to say that one starts with the easiest economic aspect and then moves on to the most difficult political outcome. The opposite is true. You have to start with the political if you want the economic”, as, moreover, had been done with the *Ventotene Manifesto*. That document had intended to put an end once and for all to the season of nationalisms, which had emerged with unprecedented clarity as the breeding ground of old oligarchic practices that Europe had brought with it and that showed its growing incompatibility with increasingly intertwined mass societies. The survival of the sovereignty of nation-states and the consequent chauvinism it nurtured would in fact end up affecting the economic as well: in fact, “First live, even badly, and then get rich”.⁵² According to Einaudi, the Europe of 1945 looked a bit like Italy or Germany before unification. Yet it constituted a concrete, actual historical reality:

The European superstate is not something to be artificially created. Europe already exists; it exists as long as we live in isolation, in our sense of powerlessness, of despair; it exists in the growing hope of survival, of becoming us again, if united. We already look towards a new flag. One that will not nullify the old flags; on the contrary, it will save them. The national flags are destined to disappear if the new European flag is not added to them.

This was to be achieved through a gradual process that began with measures in favour of defence and would gradually expand, in the awareness that federation did not mean uniformity in a linguistically, culturally and religiously plural reality such as contemporary Europe was and is.

Another decisive issue was economic globalisation of which the liberalisation of trade, the fight against restrictions, quotas, customs tariffs, monopolies were decisive steps. These were all partial aspects that, when seen as a whole, qualified the links struck by Einaudi’s liberalism between economy, politics and society. It was in fact a global vision, indispensable to a country that had hitherto lived with unconfessed fear and a profound sense of inferiority its national existence in the world picture. The model that

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*: 68.

⁵² *Ibid.*: 69.

Einaudi proposed thus placed Italy, within the framework of political and military alliances and within bipolar globalisation, in market economies. To the nationalism that was an expression of the national wound he opposed – with the awareness that came from not having seen for time that totalitarianism lay behind nationalism – open society, the open economy, whose value and effectiveness was measured not by defending national poverty, but by building wealth in relations with others. Paradigmatic in this regard were his March 1949 remarks on the preparatory documents of the Italian delegation to the Annecy conference on the new customs tariff:

Quotas and licences are plague, cholera and cancer to the economic organism; but while waiting to be freed by virtue of some new invention from plague, cholera and cancer, one feels some relief if one knows that in the meantime we can at least be saved from pneumonia.⁵³

He took up issues that had run through his entire publicist activity. Thus, opposing and preventing competition from outside – the policy of duties, to be precise – only meant working to maintain ‘the bad organisation of national industry’. ‘If duty can serve any useful purpose, it is only that which tends to improve national industry; never that which serves to perpetuate its defects’.⁵⁴ It was to be granted exclusively to young industries in order to strengthen them and, above all, for strictly circumscribed, decreasing periods, until it was totally cancelled.

It is a serious mistake to present a customs tariff as a means of defence of nationals against foreigners. On reflection, the struggle is not at all between nationals and foreigners. Instead, the struggle is *exclusively* domestic. It is a struggle between the classes who succeed in obtaining the privilege of the duty against the other classes who are subject to the harm of the famine caused by the duty. The struggle is fought between Italians and Italians, between class and class, between region and region of same country.

The new Italy was born under a new star, which counteracted monopolies and monopolists, quota restrictions, opened up the economy to markets, stabilised the currency, renewed tax legislation, and intensified the possibilities of trade with communications.

Einaudi championed the right of citizens to freedom of movement within and beyond national borders, countering something archaic that was worse than serfdom, namely everything that had survived the fascist dictatorship of laws against urbanism and passport restrictions, building, brick by brick, an open society in the domestic, European and global dimensions. Finally, he profiled a country respectful of its heritage,

⁵³ *Ibid.*: 119.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*: 124.

countering, as in the battle he won, the tendencies to endanger it, but also the damage to health and the environment caused by industrial plants. These included his intervention to prevent the construction of a military airport from jeopardising one of the two great monuments of Byzantine art in the world: Sant'Apollinare in Classe in Ravenna, and his denunciation of the "thick yellowish cloud from the Pozzuoli Bagnoli area moving towards Vesuvius and making the horizon hazy",⁵⁵ glimpsed during a stay at Villa Rosebery.

This, in the end, was the sense of the *Scrittoio*: providing a reference text to guide the action of the Head of State, sovereign by democratic choice of Parliament and therefore elected by the representatives of the people and citizens and, at the same time, primary guarantor of democratic construction according to the spirit contained in the Constitution. Einaudi weaved the democratic orientation of an inwardly liberal sensibility that innervated the highest republican institution. It carried with it the defence of the democratic reality under construction and properly constituted a new beginning of collective life and thus also of the sovereign tradition. It reinvented itself and repositioned itself by grasping in the defence of the general interest and of the presidential prerogatives themselves, sometimes threatened by the bulimia of the executives, the reasons that nourished its prestige and credibility. A king who does not govern, but who guides those called upon to do so in the various spheres within the perimeters that the Constitution had given him. It was no coincidence that in his inauguration speech, the president of Langa himself fully understood that this reconstruction was taking place on the rubble: "Twenty years of dictatorial government had brought civil discord, external war and such material and moral destruction to the country that any hope of redemption seemed to be in vain".⁵⁶

From this came the foundations that forged the presidency according to the model indicated by Einaudi at the 1946 Liberal Party congress, with the British monarch in mind. In fact, with a few exceptions, identifiable in two phases – the travails of the enlargement of the foundations of the state with the long and arduous gestation of the centre-left and the long decade of the traumatic conclusion of the Republic of parties⁵⁷ – the presidents were secluded in the phases of effective functioning of the political system and gave impetus, restarting it, in those in which, on the contrary, the mechanisms had jammed. This is why the choice of presidents was not

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*: 641.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*: 5.

⁵⁷ SCOPPOLA 1996.

always easy and sometimes took place through long series of ballots, which may have seemed exaggerated to the most restless and anxious sectors of public opinion. And instead, precisely because of the pondering that they imply, they are a revelation of the awareness of the importance of meditating on the characters necessary at that historical moment for the possible elected. It is no coincidence that, to enter the Quirinal, one is not a candidate at all, but one is chosen.

Einaudi's work, moreover, was not academic or abstract but was the product of his work, of his persuasive action towards governments, ministers and the ruling classes in general, of the impulses offered, with strict respect for the spheres and limits that concerned each institution, of the complex, because democratically plural, institutional structure of the Republic. In which, as Salvatore Mura points out with regards to Einaudi, "the presidents – certainly not all in the same way, but with substantial continuity – have gone down in the history of Italy". The Sardinian historian described them as 'co-governors', or, in other words, guardians and interpreters, each with their own subjective sensibility and judgement, of the general interest which, throughout the various phases of the republican country's constitutional history, they were called upon to interpret and preserve.⁵⁸

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⁵⁸ MURA 2025b: 127; 139-144.

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