THE ORIGINS OF THE EUROPEAN PROJECT
AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR (1919-1930)

Antonella Braga ⋆

ABSTRACT

This essay deals with the development of European projects during the short but crucial period between the First World War and the beginning of the Totalitarian Age. Only after the Great War, in fact, the European unity became a subject of debate among politically committed intellectuals, economists, cultural magazines, militant movements and even among the most conscious personalities of the ruling political elites throughout Europe. This topic has already been discussed by a well-known historiographical literature. In particular, this essay will focus on some questions: why did the European unity became a subject of cultural and political debate after the First World War? Who were the main protagonists that took part in this debate all across Europe? What kind of European projects did they propose and why did they fail to prevent the violent return of nationalism from the end of the 1920s until the catastrophe of the Second World War? And, finally, how these projects, despite their defeat, did influence the birth of new pro-European and federalist projects during the struggle against Totalitarianism and the European Resistance? Even the authors of the *Ventotene Manifesto* learned a lot from these pioneers of the European project, considering both their far-sighted proposals and their limits.

⋆ Fondazione Ernesto Rossi - Gaetano Salvemini, Firenze; PhD student at the University of Lausanne. Address for correspondence: antonellabraga18@gmail.com; antonella.braga@unil.ch.

Introduction [1]

As Norberto Bobbio stated in 1973, the *Ventotene Manifesto* marked a turning point in the pro-European and federalist tradition, considering the creation of a European federation not as an abstract ideal but as a political priority goal to be achieved through specific political action.[2] To understand this new and original character of the *Ventotene Manifesto*, it is necessary to compare it with the previous European projects (i.e. 'projects for European unity'),[3] analysing the various forms and the historical context in which they were expressed.

However, it is not necessary to go back over the centuries to the various ideal projects of European unity, which were promoted by great isolated personalities since the beginning of the Modern Age.[4] We need to focus instead on the short but crucial period between the First World War and the beginning of the Totalitarian Age. As Matthew D'Auria and Mark Hewitson noted, "It could seem, precisely in this era of crisis, that Europe had either to perish or to become a 'project', a projection of itself. […]".[5]

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[1] Considering the intensity and complexity of the debate on Europe – both on the identity and crisis of European civilization and on projects for European unity – during the period between the two World Wars, I focused only on the first part of this crucial historical moment, i.e. on the years between the Peace Treaties after the First World War and the presentation of the Briand Plan (1919-1930). This period has in fact specific peculiarities compared to the following decade, which was characterized by the fight against Totalitarianisms and ended in the new global conflict. On the differences between these two periods cf. Visone (2015: 9-20 and 110-132).

[2] Bobbio 1975.

[3] It is necessary to distinguish between the concepts of 'idea of Europe' and of 'European project (i.e. 'projects that aim to build a united Europe'). In this essay I will not focus on the debate around the 'identity' and 'crisis' of European civilization, to which great intellectuals of different cultural sensitivities gave their contribution – such as Oswald Spengler, José Ortega y Gasset, Johan Huizinga, Stephan Zweig, Sigmund Freud, Ernst R. Curtius, Edmond Husserl, Heinrich and Thomas Mann, Paul Valéry, Julien Benda, Lucien Febvre, Paul Hazard, Christopher Dawson, Benedetto Croce – but on 'projects for European unity'.

[4] There is a very vast bibliography on the history of Europe as an 'idea' and as a 'project' over the centuries. In the list of references below I have tried to recall the most significant contributions, including the classical studies developed during the 1950s and 1960s (Bonnefous 1950; Curcio 1958; De Rougemont 1961; Barraclough 1963; Voyenne 1964; Chabod 1965; Duroselle 1965; Gouzy 1968). Among the most recent studies in different languages see: Malandrino and Quirico (2020); Morelli and Preda (2014); Boer (2012); Consarelli (2012 and 2003); Colombo (2009); Garcia Picazo (2008); Chabert (2007); Krüger (2006); Rolland (2006); Preda and Rognoni Vercelli (2005); Telò (2004); Tielker (2003); Mikkeli (2002); Pagden (2002); Bussière, Dumoulin and Trausch (2001); Melchionni (2001); Hersant and Durand-Bogaert (2000). See also: Wilson and van der Dussen (1995); Delanty (1995); Buck (1992); Heater (1992); Lützeler (1992).

[5] D'Auria and Hewitson (2012: 13).

Born from Enlightenment cosmopolitanism and having acquired a more political characterization in the second half of the nineteenth century, the European project in its current form was strengthened in the post-war period and developed into a plurality and variety of proposals, already studied by many historians.

As J.L. Chabot observed in his book titled *Aux origines intellectuelles de l'Union européenne*,[6] the importance of the pro-European debate during the years between 1919 and 1930 was documented by a great number of writings, books and articles on newspapers, cultural magazines, groups and movements, meetings, public events and debates within political parties, which were dedicated to the subject of European unity, not only across the European countries, but also in the United States of America.[7]

Certainly, during the war and also in the post-war period, the European projects were opposed by the increasing nationalist passions aroused by the conflict and by the belief that peace would be better guaranteed by a universal organisation based on the principle of national self-determination. However, throughout the 1920s and up to the early 1930s with greater intensity between 1924 and 1930, there was a public debate about the European union, which involved writers, journalists, politically engaged intellectuals, economists, politicians and even the most conscious personalities of the ruling political elites within the chancelleries of some Nation-States.

The topic of the birth and development of European projects during the 1920s has already been discussed by a well-known historiographical literature, mentioned below in the list of references.[8] In this essay, referring to this bibliography, I would like to focus on a few questions: why did the European unity begin to become a subject of cultural and political debate after the First World War? Who were the main protagonists that took part in this debate all across Europe? What kind of European projects did they propose? Why did they fail to prevent the violent return of national-

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[6] CHABOT (2005: 11-34).

[7] For an overview of the debate on European unity in the USA after the First World War cf. GREINER (2014).

[8] Regarding the projects of European economic and political unity in the interwar period, I refer in particular to: CHABOT (2005); RÉAU (2008); D'AURIA and HEWITSON (2012); MORELLI (2014); LACAITA (2017); DI MARTINO (2018); D'AURIA and VERMEIREN (2020, especially the chapter by Hewitson: 238-252). For the period of the 1930s cf. VISONE (2012a; 2012b and 2015). Useful information and references can be found in: SPIERING and WINTLE (2002); MUET (1997); STIRK (1989 and 1996); WILSON and VAN DER DUSSEN (1995, chapters by Boer and Bugge); DUMOULIN and STELANDRE (1992); BOSCO (1991); MALANDRINO (1988; 1990 and 1993); PEGG (1983); PISTONE (1975a); BRUGMANS (1970). See also the chapters dedicated to the interwar period in the following texts: BUSSIÈRE, DUMOULIN and SCHIRMAN (2006); DARD and DESCHAMPS (2005); FRANK (2004); MAMMARELLA and CACACE (2005); GIRAULT (1994); GIRAULT and BOSSUAT (1993 and 1994); VAUGHAN (1979).

ism from the end of the 1920s until the catastrophe of the Second World War? And, finally, how did these projects, despite their defeat, influenced the birth of new pro-European and federalist projects during the struggle against Totalitarianism and the European Resistance? That is, what is the legacy of the European projects of the 1920s?

To answer these questions, it is first of all important to underline the peculiar character of the First World War, which was not only a huge massacre, but also a crucial turning point in European history, which marked the beginning of the contemporary world.[9] In continuity with the logic of the European system of States, developed during Modern history, the First World War could be interpreted as a new attempt by the hegemonic State of that time (i.e. German) to unify Europe into a continental empire.[10] But, in great discontinuity with the past, between 1914 and 1918, the European States were not able to solve this new hegemonic attempt on their own, within the European system, using the traditional 'principle of balance'. For three long years the Nation-States of Europe sacrificed millions of men and enormous sums of money in a war that seemed endless. Hence, in 1917, a crucial intervention of a non-European power, the United States of America, was required to end the conflict.[11] As D'Auria and Hewitson noted, "1917 adumbrated the fall or eclipse of Europe, since it marked its incapacity – as a result of Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the United States' intervention in the First World War – to determine its own destiny".[12]

The Great War made therefore evident the economic, political and cultural decay of the European civilization and clearly showed the crisis of the old equilibrium system of European States, so well described by the historian Ludvig Dehio.[13] However, this system had begun to be eroded by the growing tensions among the European States after the foundation of German Nation-State in 1871. Located in the center of Europe, the German Nation-State was in demographic and economic expansion, looking for its own *Lebensraum* in the era of global economic competition and mo-

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[9] This is the well-known thesis supported by Hobsbawm (1995). On the 'tragedy' of the First World War from a European perspective see Adeline (2011).

[10] This thesis, which attributes the main responsibility for the outbreak of the First World War to the hegemonic aims of Germany, is however not universally accepted. See, for example, Clark (2012).

[11] On the USA intervention in the First World War see: Kazin (2017); Hannigan (2016); Ryan (2013); Doenecke (2011).

[12] D'Auria and Hewitson (2012: 13).

[13] Cf. Dehio (1995). On the historiographical work of the German historian L. Dehio cf. Pistone (1977).

nopoly capitalism.[14] Germany's hegemonic ambitions corresponded to the close economic interdependence among European States and to the real need to build a large unified market, able to compete with great States of continental dimensions, such as United States and Russia.

According to this interpretation, the First World War was the violent manifestation of the urgent need to unify Europe. As Luigi Einaudi said, the Great War was "the condemnation of European unity imposed by the force of an ambitious empire, but […] also the bloody effort to develop a political form of a higher order" above the Nation-States.[15]

1. Europe after the Great War: The principle of national self-determination

After the end of the war, shocked by the brutal violence of a total, technological and mass conflict, women and men across Europe questioned how to prevent the repetition of similar tragedies.[16] Unfortunately, just as the Europeans governments were unable to avoid war in 1914, they were also unable, in 1919, to build a post-war international order providing a peaceful answer to the need for European unity.[17] The war – defined by Pope Benedict XV as a "useless slaughter" [18] – was followed by an uncertain peace, which did not solve the problems posed by the conflict. On the contrary, it increased them, preparing the context for new violent crises, until the Second World War.[19]

Contrary to what happened in 1814 during the Congress of Vienna, the defeated States were not invited at the Paris Peace Conference, which lasted six months between January 18 and June 28, 1919. As Margaret MacMillan wrote in her books titled *Paris 1919*,[20] those six months really "changed the world" and influenced "the whole history of the twentieth century",

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[14] Cf. Dehio (1962).

[15] Junius [Luigi Einaudi], "La Società delle Nazioni è un ideale possibile?", *Corriere della Sera*, 5 gennaio 1918, now published in Einaudi (1986: 19-27).

[16] On the project of a new international order and on the attempts to build it cf. Gerbet, Ghebali and Mouton (1996). See also Tooze (2015).

[17] For a detailed analysis of what happened in Paris in 1919 and of the difficult peace process, cf. Steiner (2005).

[18] Benedict XV, *Peace Note*, August 1, 1917. Cf. Melloni, Cavagnini and Grossi (2020).

[19] On the widespread thesis that the interwar period was nothing more than a 'long truce' in a predominantly European conflict that began in 1914 and ended in 1945, see Traverso (2008).

[20] MacMillan (2003).

perhaps until today.[21] Many errors of perspective were made during the Peace conference, due to a tragic combination of the national selfishness of the victorious States and the naive idealism of the Wilsonian approach. The 'German question' was obviously at the core of the discussion, but there was not a clear perception of the crisis of the European system that German unification had made evident.

The French spirit of *revanche* imposed the humiliation of Germany, attributing to the German State all the blame and responsibilities of the war (article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles).[22] Heavy war reparations and obligations were therefore imposed on Germany, which lost many territories to the advantage of neighbouring States. The harsh conditions of peace produced the birth of nationalist and xenophobic movements in Germany, which were the roots of Hitler's rise.[23]

In this context, the democratic internationalism,[24] expressed in the 'Fourteen Points Speech' of 8 January 1918 by the USA President W. Wilson,[25] appeared weak and unable to overcome national contrasts. Wilson, inspired by Mazzini's theories,[26] believed that it was possible to eradicate war among European States and, at the same time, overcome German militarism and prevent the risk of a Bolshevik contagion from Russia, creating a new international order, founded on free trade system, multilateralism and national self-determination.[27]

For the first time in history, the principle of national self-determination became the basis of the international order.[28] The borders of each State

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[21] On the long-term consequences of the Peace Treaties after the First World War cf. SHARP (2011).

[22] Regarding the negative consequences of the French 'revanche' policy cf. SOUTOU (2015).

[23] On the anger of the vanquished after the First World War and on their desire for revenge against real or imaginary enemies cf. GERWARTH (2017).

[24] On the development of internationalist thought and movements between the two World Wars cf. SLUGA (2013) and LAQUA (2011). See also MAZOWER (2012).

[25] Wilson W., "Address of the President of the United States Delivered at a Joint Session of the Two Houses of Congress", January 8, in LINK (1984: 534-539).

[26] Within the extensive bibliography on Wilson and Wilsonianism especially in the field of foreign policy cf.: HANNIGAN (2016); BERG (2013); KENNEDY (2009); COOPER (2008); MANELA (2007); AMBROSIUS (2002 and 1987); KNOCK (1995); NINKOVICH (1993); SCHWABE (1985); LINK (1965); MAYER (1959). See also: ANIEVAS (2014); DEL PERO (2013); ROMERO (2003).

[27] The term 'self-determination' was not used in the famous 'Fourteen Points Speech' of January 8, 1918. Wilson introduced this formulation a month later, in his speech before the American Congress of February 11, 1918, when he solemnly declared: "Self-Determination is not a mere phrase. It is an imperative principle of action, which statesmen will henceforth ignore at their peril". Cf. THORNTVEIT (2011: 476-478) and CATTARUZZA (2019: 208-209).

[28] Although generally recognized and invoked as the foundation of the new international order, the right to self-determination was not formally included in the Covenant of the League

should therefore coincide with a specific nationality, so that each Nation would correspond to an independent and sovereign State. Referring to this principle, the political map of Europe was completely changed. After the collapse of the three ancient multi-national empires (Austro-Hungarian, Russian and Ottoman Empire), some new Nation-States (Poland, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, the Baltic Republics, Finland) were founded, moving national borders and displacing by force millions of people.

However, the difficulty of applying the principle of nationality was immediately evident, especially in the complex ethnical mosaic of Central and Slavic Europe: *Where does a nation begin and where does it end?*, that's the question.[29] Within their borders, the new Nation-States were, in fact, as multi-national as the ancient empires had been, with the aggravating circumstance that they refused to recognize it.[30] In the Paris Peace Conference, the principle of national self-determination was proposed as an instrument of freedom and emancipation of people.[31] But, in short time, the new Nation-States turned out to be more intolerant and violent against ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities than the multinational empires of the past had been towards the so-called 'oppressed nationalities'.

The search for ethnic-linguistic homogeneity led to the oppression of minorities and, in the most extreme cases, to their expulsion or extermination, as it happened in the Turkey of Mustafà Kemal (Ataturk) where Turkish nationalism oppressed the Greek, Kurds and Armenians minorities, already victims, the latter, of a genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman

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of Nations. Only in 1966, in connection with the processes of national independence in the colonial territories, this principle was included in the Charter of the United Nations and codified as a universally valid fundamental right. On the principle of self-determination in international law I refer to FISCH (2010) and CASSESE (1995).

[29] For a critical analysis of the concepts of Nation and Nationalism, cf. MERKER (2018 and 2001); ANDERSON (2016); HOBSBAWM and RANGER (2002); GELLNER (1997); HOBSBAWM (1991). Sill relevant is the conference entitled *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*, held by Ernest Renan at the Sorbonne on 11 March 1882 (RENAN 2019). For a critique of nationalism from a federalist point of view, see ALBERTINI (1980).

[30] Despite the declared principle of national self-determination, none of the new States born with the Peace Treaties were nationally homogeneous. Romania, doubling its territory and tripling its population, encompassed three million people who considered themselves non-Romanians but Hungarians, Germans, Serbs, Bulgarians, etc. One third of the population of Poland was not Polish, but was made up of Ukrainians, Germans, Belarusians. In Czechoslovakia the Czechs represented only 50% of the population, while the rest were Germans, Slovaks, Poles and Hungarians. The Romanian population was made up of 28% national minorities and Yugoslavia "was no less a mosaic of peoples than the old Habsburg monarchy had been". See CATTARUZZA (2019: 209). For an overview on the subject see ROSHWALD (2001); AYÇOBERRY, BLED and HUNYADI (1987); PEARSON (1983: 147-179).

[31] In the Peace Treaties the right to self-determination had been applied only to the victorious States, not to the German and Austrian people.

Empire between 1915 and 1916.[32] Even Italy applied a persecutory legislation against Slovenian and Croatian culture and language in the region of Venezia-Giulia and particularly in Trieste.[33]

Furthermore, thanks also to the principle of 'non-intervention', each Nation-State, endowed with absolute sovereignty, became the exclusive arbiter of its own destiny. Therefore, the fragmentation of Europe into 27 European sovereign States, armed against each other, increased the risk of new wars.[34]

2. The League of Nations and its limits

During the Peace Conference, US President Wilson proposed a universal international organization to prevent war by using the instrument of arbitration and by applying sanctions in the case of violations against the territorial integrity and independence of the member States.[35] In April 1919, the *Covenant* of the League of Nations was approved and the new international organisation began to work on January 1920.[36] For his role in the Peace Treaties, Wilson was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, but he failed to persuade the American Senate to support the resolution that committed the USA to join the League of Nations.

However, despite the great hopes raised by the new organization, the League of Nations soon showed that it was unable to guarantee the international order. The reason for this inability was not the lack of US participation, but the limitations of its own constitution. Since its inception, a debate developed throughout Europe about the characters and limits of the League of Nations, which also included discussion about a more closed European organisation.

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[32] On the history of the Armenian genocide I especially refer to Akçam (2006) and Flores (2006).

[33] For an overview on the forced 'Italianization processes' in the territories on the eastern Italian border cf. Pupo (2014); Vinci (2010); Cattaruzza (2007); Apollonio (2001).

[34] After the First World War in Europe the borders grew to almost 20,000 km. and the number of national currencies went from 14 to 27. In this context, between 1919 and 1939, while the industrial production of the USA grew by 150% and that of the USSR by 600%, in Europe there was an increase of only 40%. Data reported in *A Survey of Economic Situation and Prospects of Europe*, Geneva, Economic Commission for Europe, March 1949: 1-5; 10-12; 124-130, cited by Graglia (2017: 181).

[35] See articles 14, 15 and 16 of the League of Nations' Covenant.

[36] There are many publications on the history of the League of Nations. Especially I refer to Ikonomou and Gram-Skjoldager (2019); Marbeau (2017); Henig (2010) (1973); Gerbet, Ghebali and Mouton (1996); Walters (1952).

The Italian economist Luigi Einaudi, exponent of the Liberal Party, in some letters published in the daily *Corriere della Sera* in 1918 and 1919,[37] clearly explained the limits of the League of Nations, due to its confederal character. As Einaudi pointed out, the League of Nations was an alliance of sovereign States: each member State, in fact, maintained their sovereignty and the right of veto, not recognizing superior authorities. The League of Nations did not have its own financial resources, but depended on the member States for its functioning. Moreover, the League had no direct jurisdiction over citizens and no power to enforce its resolutions. The only instruments that the League could effectively use, besides the 'moral suasion', were economic sanctions and international arbitration, which could work as long as the Member sovereign States accepted them.[38]

Like Einaudi, even Lionel Curtis, exponent of 'The Round Table' Movement[39] and future member of the British 'Federal Union' movement,[40] believed that the historical example of the League of Nations was useful only because it showed the inability to act of the intergovernmental and confederal institutions, as had already happened in the case of the American Confederation of 1781.[41] The only possible alternative was therefore to follow the American example and create solid federal supranational institutions, referring to the USA Federal Constitution of 1789.

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[37] EINAUDI (1920). These letters were republished in various editions, cf. for example EINAUDI (1986), also containing the Einaudian economic-federalists writings of the period 1944-1945.

[38] Among the extensive bibliography on Luigi Einaudi's federalist thought, see: MORELLI (1990; 1999 and 2014); CRESSATI (1990 and 1992); BOBBIO (1993); MALANDRINO (1995); EINAUDI (2008); D'AURIA (2012); ROMANI (2017); SANTAGOSTINO (2017); BRAGA (2018: 7-97). See also MARCHIONATTI and SODDU (2010) and FAUCCI (1986).

[39] 'The Round Table' movement and journal, founded in 1910, claimed a closer union between Britain and the self-governing colonies, which Lionel Curtis believed could only be achieved by imperial federation. There is a large literature on 'The Round Table'. See in particular: MAY (2010); BOSCO and MAY (1997); HODSON (1981); KENDLE (1975).

[40] Federal Union was the first organized European federalist movement, born in the autumn of 1938 on the initiative of three young people: Charles Kimber, Derek Rawnsley and Patrick Ransome. It was joined by many well-known personalities, including William Beveridge, Lord Lothian (Philip Kerr), Lionel Robbins, Lionel Curtis, Barbara Wootton. Inside there were two currents: a globalist and a pro-European. On the history of the movement, cf. PINDER (1991) and MAYNE, PINDER and ROBERTS (1990). On the influence of British federalism on the development of the later federalist movements, see: GIULIANI (2016); BURGESS (2012; 2007; 1995); BOSCO (2009; 1989; 1988); HENIG (2007); ROSSOLILLO (1975). On the federalist debate in Britain between the two wars see also PREDA (1991).

[41] See CURTIS (1916). Lionel George Curtis (1872-1955) was a pioneer of international federalism. He advocated the conversion of the Empire-Commonwealth into a multinational federation, that, with the USA, would serve as a model for a united Europe and for world government. He founded the Round Table think-tank, the Royal Institute of International Affairs at Chatham House, and the Oxford Society. On his life cf. LAVIN (1995).

The criticism of the limits of the League of Nations was also supported by intellectuals of other Countries, such as the French Jean Monnet, who between 1919 and 1923 was appointed Deputy Secretary General to the League of Nations, and the Swiss economist William Emmanuel Rappard, co-founder and director with Paul Mantoux of the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva and, from 1920 to 1925, director of the Mandates Division of the League of Nations.[42] In his *Memoires*, Monnet concluded his reflections on the League of Nations arguing that the right of veto was the cause and at the same time the symbol of its impotence to overcome national selfishness.[43]

During the 1920s, many projects to reform the League of Nations were discussed, concerning different aspects of the organization and according to different institutional models, but they were all unsuccessful. In the following years, the League of Nations was not therefore able to stop the growth of military spending, nor to prevent local conflicts (Fascist attack on Ethiopia, Japanese attack on Manchuria, Spanish civil war), nor, finally, to prevent the outbreak of a new global war.

3. Economic interdependence and the need for European unity

When the weakness of the League of Nations became clear, many proposals were put forward for a closer European integration, both at economic and political level. In some case, these proposals concerned the creation of a single currency or a customs union; in other cases, they were related to the further achievement of a single market and a political union.

At economic level, as pointed out by the British economist John M. Keynes[44] in *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* in 1919,[45] the Peace treaties and the principle of national self-determination had aggravated the

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[42] See Rappard (1930 and 1931). William Emmanuel Rappard (1883-1958), Swiss professor of Economic History at the University of Geneva, was an internationalist, member of the *Association suisse pour la Société des Nations*. He supported the project of a European federation but later he became increasingly skeptical about the possibility of achieving it. On his life cf. Monnier (1995). On Europeanism in Switzerland, cf. Jílek (1990).

[43] See Monnet (1976: 91-115) and Preda (2017: 196-206). On Jean Monnet (1888-1979), creator of the European Community institutions and first president of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) from 1952 to 1955 cf. Mayne and Hackett (2019); Brown Wells (2011); Bossuat and Wilkens (1999); Roussel (1996); Duchêne (1994).

[44] Keynes was a former Treasury official during the First World War and financial representative for the Treasury at the 1919 Versailles Peace Conference.

[45] Keynes (1919). On Keynes's criticisms of the Paris Peace Treaties cf. Cohrs (2009) and Skidelsky (1989).

fragmentation of European market, building new customs boundaries and making the post-war recovery more difficult. Many intellectuals, economist and business men all across Europe underlined the gap between the European economic interdependence, produced by the industrial and technological revolution, and the existence of 27 separate sovereign Nation-States. They believed that only a continental unity would make possible the post-war economic reconstruction in order to compete with the United States and the British Empire.[46]

In Italy, Giovanni Agnelli (1866-1945), the founder of the Turin car factory FIAT, and the economist Attilio Cabiati (1872-1950) wrote a book titled *European Federation or League of Nations*?, published before the birth of the League of Nations in 1918.[47] Agnelli and Cabiati were very concerned about the economic and social consequences of army's demobilisation and reduction in arms production, which would have caused hundreds of thousands of unemployed. To avoid social instability and to restart the European economic system, they believed that it was necessary to expand the market at the European level and to build a European federation, with a central government endowed with full powers in foreign policy, defence, taxation and customs policies. Other competences had to be left to the Nation-States, which would exercise them according to their respective traditions.

Furthermore, only a European Federation could guarantee peace among European countries and, consequently, reduce military spending, eliminate the influence of the military groups and make the liberal-democratic institutions more solid. As the British economist Lionel Robbins pointed out, the international anarchy, due to the competition between different sovereign States, exasperated by the growing of their economic interdependence, was in fact the cause not only of the wars, but also of the crisis of the liberal-democratic institutions.[48]

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[46] There were many "proposals and agreements put forward by industrialists and financiers: Louis Loucheur's plan for a European customs union, presented to the League of Nations in September 1925; the International Steel Cartel between France, Germany, and Luxembourg, brokered by Emile Mayrisch in 1926; and the Franco-German trade treaty of 1927". (HEWITSON 2020: 236). Projects for European economic unity were also presented by the German Foreign Minister Walther Rathenau (assassinated in June 1922), the French politician Joseph Caillaux and the Hungarian economist Elmer Hantos. See CHABOT (2005: 59-61). On the projects of European economic union in a long-term perspective, see BUSSIÈRE, DUMOULIN and SCHIRMAN (2006).

[47] See AGNELLI and CABIATI (1918). For more information on this essay cf. MORELLI (2012 and 2014); MALANDRINO (1993 and 2005); CASTRONOVO (1993 and 2017); PISTONE (1975b); DELZELL (1960). On Attilio Cabiati cf. MARCHIONATTI (2011).

[48] See ROBBINS (1937 and 1939). Cf. also Montani's introduction to the Italian edition of Robbin's work in ROBBINS (1985). Lionel Robbins (1898-1984), professor of Political economy and then director of the London School of Economics (1929-1961), member of the Federal Union movement, made important contributions to the federalist thought in the years before the Sec-

In the age of the first globalization, the European States were not able to guarantee an autonomous economic development and the security of their citizens. In order to enlarge their economic area and to prevent external attacks and internal insurrections, the Nation-States increased their military forces, their control over citizens and protectionist policies in the economic field. Most of them became authoritarian. The first case was Hungary with the Horthy's regime in 1920, which preceded the rise of Fascism in Italy and of Nazism in Germany.

4. The spread of the pro-European idea among political groups

The project of creating a European union for peace, economic development and the consolidation of liberal-democratic institutions was supported not only by liberal thinkers, but also by Catholic and Evangelical groups, pacifist movements and women's associations.[49] In this short essay it is not feasible to mention the different positions taken by groups or individual intellectuals, activists and publicists on the question of European unity, interconnected with peace and the reform of the League of Nations, in the interwar period.[50] Since female protagonists have long been underestimated or forgotten, I would like to remember at least the commitment of two pro-European militants already active in the 1920s, the French journalist Louise Weiss (1893-1983)[51] and the German socialist Anna Siemsen (1882-1951).[52]

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ond World War. Starting from the observation that the internal market is regulated by the State while the world market is subject to international anarchy, he explained protectionism, nationalism and imperialism as a result of this situation, refuting the Marxist interpretation. For Robbins, only a world government could allow the balanced and regulated expansion of the productive forces and prevent the degeneration of economic conflicts into open wars. On his life cf. Howson (2011). On Robbins and the British federalists see also Levi (2008), chapter 6: "English Constitutional Federalism and the Crisis of the European System of States between the World Wars".

[49] Regarding the pacifist movements in the interwar period cf. Castelli (2015: 135-142); Costa Bona (2010 and 2012); Petricioli and Cherubini (2007); Giuntella (2001). See also Angelini (2012). The possible evolution of the League of Nations into a federation was supported at the General Assembly of the International Union of Peace Societies (Basel, September 1923) and then in the XXXI Universal Peace Congress (Cardiff, June 1936). On the debate at the Universal Peace Congress on the question of European unity see Guieu (2007: 387-406). On the pacifist commitment of women's movements cf. Pieroni Bortolotti (1985) and Suriano (2002).

[50] For an exhaustive overview of the debate on European Unity among intellectuals, militants and movements during the 1920s, I refer especially to Chabot (2005).

[51] Cf. Weiss (1969 and 1984). On Louise Weiss's pro-European commitment see: Denéchère (2019); Di Nonno (2017: 11-13); Manigand (2017 and 2003); Bariéty (2001); Bertin (1999); Fondation Jean Monnet pour l'Europe (1994).

[52] On the intellectual and political activity of Anna Siemsen cf. Lacaita (2021; 2016; 2013 and 2010). See also Bargen von (2017) and Di Martino (2018: 16-28).

During the First World War, Louise Weiss (1893-1983) was shocked by the absurdity of the violence and she began to think about building a common Europe to avoid new conflicts. After the war, she became a journalist and in 1918 she founded the journal *L'Europe nouvelle*, in order to support the cause of peace among European countries and the collective security system of the League of Nations. She wrote about the possibility of building a common European market, a single currency and a common cultural identity. In 1929 she supported the proposal of the French foreign minister Aristide Briand and in 1930 she founded the *Nouvelle École de la Paix*, working for the rapprochement between France and Germany as a cornerstone of European peace.

Her story is an example of the link between the Europeanism of the 1920s and the process of European integration after the Second World War. In 1979, at the age of 86, it was Louise Weiss who opened, as the oldest member, the inaugural session of the first European parliament elected by universal suffrage. During her speech, she expressed herself as follows:

The stars of destiny and the paths of written word have led me to this rostrum, and given me, as President for a day, an honour of which I would never have dared to dream and the greatest joy a human being can experience in the evening of life: the joy of a youthful vocation miraculously come to fruition.[53]

Eleven years older than Weiss, the German pedagogist Anna Siemsen (1882-1951), member of various pacifist, pro-European and feminist associations, socialist deputy in the Reichstag between 1928 and 1930, exiled to Switzerland after the rise of Hitler, began to develop from the late 1920s an original vision on the future of Europe that combined "economic unity, political federation and cultural autonomy".[54] In the 1930s, the European federation seemed to her the only possible way to overthrow totalitarianism and to achieve "social democracy".[55]

Siemsen's positions on supranational federation and social democracy were influenced by the Austro-marxist *Kultursozialismus* and in particular by the thought of Otto Bauer and Karl Renner.[56] Between the end of the Nineteenth and the beginning of the Twentieth century, inspired by the multinational experience of the Habsburg empire, the Austro-Marxists, es-

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[53] Fondation Jean Monnet pour l'Europe (1994: 483). The English translation of this passage from Louise Weiss's speech is quoted in Di Nonno (2017: 13).

[54] See Siemsen (1925; 1927 and 1928). On Europeanism between 1920 and 1970 in Germany cf. Conze (2005). See also Hiden (1993).

[55] See Siemsen (1937).

[56] Cf. Di Martino (2018: 27-28). On Siemsen's links with the current of Austrian Marxism cf. Bargen von (2017: 124-125); Lacaita (2010: 31 ff.).

pecially Bauer, had developed an "original theory on the link between so-
cial and national question and on the non-coincidence between Nation and
State, arguing their preference for a Multinational federal State".[57]

During the 1920s, the project of European unity has been discussed
within the various political parties, from conservatives to liberals, from
democrats to socialists and radicals.[58] However, only in rare cases,[59] pro-
jects of European unity were included in the official programs of political
parties, which were still oriented according to a national perspective. Ne-
vertheless, within the international organisations, founded (or re-founded)
in the interwar period to help similar political parties to coordinate their
activities, voices emerged advocating not only the cooperation among na-
tional parties, but also the pursuit of political institutions at the European
level. For example, the *Labour and Socialist International*, founded in 1921,
took a strong position in favour of the European Union in 1926 and also in
1930 towards the Briand Plan.

Continuing the tradition of internationalist pacifism, passed through
the experience of the First World War, the radical and social-democratic
parties played a leading role in spreading the idea of a united Europe dur-
ing the 1920s. As Corrado Malandrino noted, it is true that among social-
ists movements the chief interests was firstly the solution of problems
relating to social justice, with a certain undervaluation of the juridical
and institutional aspects; nevertheless, from the first post-war period, "the
same crisis of the European civilization and of the liberal institutions led
also many socialists to think openly in federalist and European terms".[60]
The project of European Unity, associated to the emancipation of the
working classes and to socialist internationalism, was therefore developed
within the social-democratic and reformist groups, especially within the
German and Austrian social-democratic parties[61] and in the French, Bel-

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[57] Cf. Moos (2017); Sandner (2005); Introduction by E. Collotti in Bauer (1979); Agnelli (1969).

[58] Exponents of the centre-right parties, more conservative than nationalist, and militants of the democratic, liberal-radical and socialist not communists parties supported the project of European unity. On the other hand, the nationalist and communist parties rejected it. See Chabot (2005: 23-36; 59).

[59] In 1925, at the Heidelberg congress, the German SPD (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands) included the construction of the United States of Europe in its program, cf. "Programm der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands beschlossen auf dem Parteitag", Heidelberg 1925: 12. Avalaible at: http://library.fes.de/prodok/fa99-07613.pdf (accessed November 10, 2021).

[60] Malandrino (1988: 509).

[61] The main reference was the thought of the German Karl Kautzky and of the Austro-Marxists K. Renner to O. Bauer. On Europeanism in German Left Parties, see Schiller (2007).

gian[62] and Italian socialist and radical environments.[63] Also the German socialist exiles as well as the British socialist movements have made an important contribution to the debate on peace and European unity.[64]

On the other hand, many revolutionary socialists and communists opposed the European project, thinking that first a social revolution was necessary. However, from 1923 to 1926 the slogan of the United States of Europe – launched by Trotsky during the war[65] – was officially adopted by the Comintern, despite Lenin's criticisms.[66] But, when the Stalinists also prevailed within the Comintern, this slogan was completely rejected and remained the counter-proposal of Trotskyist movement against the national degeneration of socialism and the Stalinist idea of "building socialism in one country".[67]

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[62] On Europeanism in Belgium in the interwar period cf. Dumoulin (1995); Duchenne (2002 and 2008).

[63] Here I can only mention some names of the most important radical and socialist exponents who supported the project of European unity in the interwar period: the French Aristide Briand, Édouard Herriot, Léon Blum, Paul Painlevé, Paul Boncour; the Belgian Emile Vandeverlde, Jules Destrée; the German Paul Lobe, Edo Fimmen, Wladimir S. Woytinsky; the Austrian Karl Renner, Otto Bauer. Among the Italian radical and socialist militants can be remembered Enrico Bignami, editor of the review *Coenobium*, Claudio Treves, Filippo Turati, Giuseppe Emanuele Modigliani, Gaetano Salvemini, Angelo Ghisleri, Alessandro Levi, Angelo Tasca, Giuseppe Faravelli, Olindo Gorni, Ignazio Silone and Carlo Rosselli for 'Giustizia e Libertà' movement. On pro-European and federalist voices within the composite Italian socialist and radical enviroments during the Interwar period see: Malandrino (1990); Merli (1993); Graglia (1996); Cherubini (2007); Anta (2012); Punzo (2017); Isoni (2017).

[64] On the link between British socialist movements and federalism I just refer to Castelli (2002 and 2004). For an overview on the German socialist exiles cf. Wilkens (2013) and Schilmar (2004).

[65] Cf. Trotsky (1914). Trotsky wrote about the United States of Europe even after the war (cf. Trotsky 1923; 1926; 1929). In the perspective of an international communist revolution, for Trotsky the United States of Europe were the instrument to fight the power of the USA, that was considered the "stronghold of capitalism". In 1929 Trotsky adopted the formula of the 'Soviet (or socialist) United States of Europe' and, in an article titled "Disarmament and the United States of Europe" (4 October 1929), he wrote that this formula "is precisely the political expression of the idea that socialism is impossible in one country. Socialism cannot of course attain its full development even in the limits of a single continent. The Socialist United States of Europe represents the historical slogan which is a stage on the road to the world socialist federation". See Chabot (2005: 62-63).

[66] At the beginning of the war, on 6 September 1914, Lenin himself put on a list the slogan of the 'United States of Europe' to mobilize the militants. But in March 1915 the slogan was rejected by Lenin. In an article published on 23 August 1915, he wrote that, under a capitalist regime, the United States of Europe were either impossible or reactionary. The article "On the slogan of the United States of Europe" is reported in Lenin (1966: 311-315).

[67] Comintern's draft programme – published in 1928 with the signatures of Nikolai Bukharin and Joseph Stalin – deleted all mention of the 'United States of Europe' slogan. On the theoretical reasons for the rejection of the slogan of the United States of Europe in the international communist movement cf. Monteleone (1975).

5. The birth of the first Europeanist Movements

In addition to the debate within various political parties, new move-
ments and committees were founded to spread the idea of European uni-
fication. Between 1919 and 1939, according to Chabot, a dozen of pro-
European movements developed. The three most important born in the
1920s were *Pan-Europa* (1923), the *Union douanière européenne* (1925) and the
International Federation of the *Comités de Coopération européenne*, which
united various committees set up in twenty countries on the model of the
Comité français pour la Coopération européenne founded in 1927 by the French
politician Emil Borel, a leader of the centre-left Radical Party.[68] The best
known among these groups was the *Pan-Europa* movement founded by the
Austrian Richard N. Coudenhove-Kalergi (1894-1972).

Coudenhove-Kalergi's book *Pan-Europa*, published in 1923, received
international acclaim and was followed by a manifesto in 1924.[69] In the
following years Coudenhove-Kalergi organized conferences in many Euro-
pean countries involving important politicians, parliamentarians and intel-
lectuals from different ideological backgrounds. After the rise of Hitler,
the Pan-European movement was banned and its leader went into exile
in France and then in the United States. During this period, Coudenhove-
Kalergi developed his ideas, before returning to Europe in 1946 and con-
tinuing the "crusade for Pan-Europe" until his death.

With a conservative view of Europe, Coudenhove-Kalergi aimed to
create close economic and political ties between European countries in an
effort to prevent further wars and defend European civilization from both
the materialism of the United States and the bolshevism of Soviet Russia.
He imagined a Continental Union without the communist Russia and the
imperial Great Britain, which had to be built gradually, creating a parlia-
mentary assembly and a customs union.[70]

The European Union had to guarantee unity but also respect national
sovereignties. Coudenhove-Kalergi therefore did not give clear indications
on the institutional framework that could make a political union possible.
He had not reflected on the American federal experience and the model
he proposed for Europe was not the USA Federal State but the weak Pan-
American Union. Even in the 'Pan-European Pact' – presented at the con-

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[68] On these pro-European movements cf. Chabot (2005: 43-52; 78-95).

[69] Cf. Coudenhove-Kalergi (1923 and 1943).

[70] On PanEuropa movement and its founder, see: Bond (2021); Pedretti (2018); Graglia
(2017); Prettenthaler-Ziegerhofer (2004 and 2012); Iannò (2008); Schöberl (2008); Orluc
(2007); Conze (2004); Saint-Gille (2003); Agnelli (1975); Kajima (1971).

gress of the Pan-European movement in Berlin on 25 February 1930 – the term 'federal' was used vaguely, reaffirming the intangibility of national sovereignties.[71] As Piero Graglia observed, it was a sort of "*à la carte* federalism" which, by renouncing the very principles of federalism (i.e. the overcoming of absolute State sovereignty) was good for everyone and was addressed indifferently to democratic and authoritarian governments.[72]

Coudenhove-Kalergi posed himself as an 'enlightened prophet' and his Europeanism remained elitist, rhetorical and somewhat confused, not going beyond some generic and non-binding formulas unable to change the *status quo* established at Versailles. However, with his relentless proselytizing until his death in 1972, he became a pioneer thinker of a united Europe, who already in the 1920s helped to highlight the crucial question of Europe's decline and the need for its union as a counterweight to Russia, China and the USA. He also helped to inspire the Briand Plan[73] and proposed some far-sighted projects, such as a pan-European public authority for coal and steel in 1923, but always without a clear institutional vision. As Churchill lucidly observed in 1930: "The form of his theme may be crude, erroneous and impractical, but the impulse and the inspiration are true".[74]

Despite the ambiguity of his proposal, Coudenhove-Kalergi managed to bring together different intellectuals and political figures, such as Konrad Adenauer, Edvard Beneš, Léon Blum, Aristide Briand, Paul Claudel, Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, Édouard Herriot, Paul Löbe, Salvador de Madariaga, Heinrich and Thomas Mann, Thomas Masaryk, José Ortega y Gasset, Rainer Maria Rilke, Jules Romains, Ignaz Seipel, Miguel de Unamuno, Paul Valéry, Stefan Zweig, Carlo Sforza, Francesco Saverio Nitti and many others. From 1924 to 1938, the Pan-European movement published a monthly magazine, *Pan-Europa*, and it held its first congress in Vienna on October 1926 with the participation of two thousand delegates from 24 different countries.

Although widespread, *Pan-Europa* nevertheless remained only a pressure group which involved economic, intellectual and political elites. It can be said that its diffusion was a sign that the European project was spread all across Europe within the elites, but that the ideas on the way how to achieve it were not so clear. Only in Great Britain, some authors, such as

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[71] The project is reported on Keller and Jílek (1991: 17 ff.).

[72] Graglia (2017: 195).

[73] Cf. Duroselle (1965: 276).

[74] See Churchill (1930). This sentence is quoted in Prettenthaler-Ziegerhofer (2004: 156). Churchill, who supported Pan-Europe activity, was in favour of a European Union, but without Great Britain. Cf. Anta (2007).

Lionel Curtis, Lord Lothian,[75] Lionel Robbins, discussing possible ways of reforming British Commonwealth, saving peace and governing international disorder, began to develop a clearer federalist vision that would lead years later to the birth of Federal Union movement.

6. GOVERNMENTAL INITIATIVES FOR THE EUROPEAN UNIFICATION: THE BRIAND PLAN

In the second half of the 1920s, during the so called 'Concord Years', when the Locarno Treaty (1925) and the Pact Briand-Kellog (1928) were signed, the idea of European unification developed also within the governments of the Nation-States and there were some first governmental initiatives for European unification. The first government who openly proposed the European union was France. After Édouard Herriot's speech in favour of European unity on 28 January 1925,[76] the first initiative promoted by a European government was taken by the French Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Aristide Briand, who was very concerned about Franco-German relations still poisoned by war reparations and by the question of the Rhineland and Saar.[77]

The socialist and radical Aristide Briand (1862-1932),[78] a protagonist of the French Republic and honorary president of the *Pan-Europa* movement, promoted an intense political and diplomatic action to build a new European balance system that could guarantee stability and peace after the disappearance of the great multinational empires. He strengthened the French influence in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (especially Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia and Romania) and began a dialogue with his German colleague, the conservative Gustav Stresemann (1878-1929), chancellor in 1923 and then foreign minister between 1923 and 1929.[79]

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[75] See KERR (Lord Lothian) (1928 and 1935). On Kerr's biography cf. BOSCO (1989). See also KERR and CURTIS (1923).

[76] Herriot's speech is published in *Journal Officiel*, Débats Parlementaires, 2e Séance, du 28 janvier 1925, Chambre des députés: 371. Herriot (1872-1957), leader of the Radical-Socialist Party, President of the Council from June 1924 to April 1925, promoted a rapprochement between France and Germany. Cf. CHABOT (2005: 64). See also HERRIOT (1930).

[77] For an overview on the question of war reparations see STEINER (2005: 193-201).

[78] On Briand's political action cf. BARIÉTY (2007); UNGER (2005) and ELISHA (2000).

[79] On Stresemann cf. KOLB (2003); WRIGHT (2002); KOSZYK (1989). On the European dimension of Gustav Stresemann's foreign policy see KRÜGER (2002); BAECHLER (1996); FREYMOND (1976).

Stresemann shared Briand's commitment to overcome Franco-German rivalry because he wanted to reintegrate Germany into international politics on a par with the victorious countries of the First World War. In his far-sighted vision, cooperation among European countries would benefit everyone and economic interdependence was the key to preventing war. His dialogue with Briand supported the mutual rapprochement between the two Countries.[80]

After the Locarno treaties, signed in October 1925 by Stresemann and Briand, with the guarantee of Great Britain and Italy, Germany was admitted to the League of Nations. It was the beginning of a short and intense, but illusory, period of detente and collaboration among the European countries. For this reason, the protagonists of the Locarno conference, Aristide Briand, Gustav Stresemann and Austen Chamberlain, were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.[81]

Riding the so-called 'spirit of Locarno', Briand together with the American Secretary of State, Frank Kellogg, promoted the Briand-Kellogg Pact (27 August 1928), to which about sixty countries adhered.[82] The Pact emphatically declared to "outlaw war", but without establishing sanctions for those who violated this principle.

In this context, convinced of the need for a closer link between European countries to remedy the defects of the Covenant of the League of Nations and to overcome the limits of the Treaties of Locarno, on 5 September 1929, Briand delivered a speech to the Assembly of the League of Nations, proposing to establish "une sorte de lien fédéral" among the European States. But his proposal was extremely vague, not at all 'federal', because he did not want to offend national sensitivities.[83]

Accepted with a certain coldness, Briand's proposal was however supported by the German Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann with an important speech delivered on 9 September 1929.[84] The core of Briand proposal was, in fact, the Franco-German reconciliation.[85] It was therefore decided that the France government would prepare a memorandum on the subject, gathering the comments of other Countries and presenting a final report to the next session of the Assembly of the League of Nations.

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[80] On the Franco-German rapprochement I just refer to OSTENC (2017); BARIÉTY (2011); SCHUKER (2000).

[81] On the diplomatic activity linked to the Locarno pact cf. JOHNSON (2004); KEETON (1987); JACOBSON (1972).

[82] On Briand-Kellogg's Pact cf. BOLECH CECCHI (2007).

[83] Aristide Briand's speech is reported in KELLER and JÍLEK (1991: 1 ff.).

[84] The full text of Stresemann's speech is reported *ibid.*: 3 ff.

[85] Cf. OSTENC (2017).

The *Memorandum on the Organization of a European Federal Union Regime*, the so-called 'Briand Plan', was presented by the French government on 17 May 1930 and proposed a European integration referring to the League of Nations confederal model, trying to bring together national sovereignty and collective security.[86] In the *Memorandum* the terms 'Union', 'Federal Union', 'Community' and 'Confederation' were used in an imprecise and alternating way to indicate the European association. As it was written in the text, the purpose was not to build a 'European unity', but a 'Union of sovereign States' in the economic and social field, without however affecting or undermining the sovereignty of the member States.[87] In this perspective, another contradiction of the Briand Plan was to imagine a European union (federal or confederal) that could unite both democratic and authoritarian countries, including fascist Italy.

Responses from European governments were sent in the following months and were not so encouraging. The Briand Plan was welcomed in France and in the countries of central and eastern Europe which were linked to French diplomacy.[88] It was also accepted with some reservations by the Belgian and Dutch governments which underlined the intergovernmental character of the future association, but it was coldly received in Italy by the fascist regime [89] and in Great Britain, whose government feared a continental French hegemony which could weaken the collective security system of the League of Nations.[90] Some governments also raised the question of the administration of the colonies in the future European organization.[91]

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[86] The full text of the plan can be found in KELLER and JÍLEK (1991: 37 ff.). The Briand Plan – whose draft was elaborated by Briand with the collaboration of Alexis Leger – defined the reasons and principles of the future European organization. The preface, that clarified the aims of the future Treaty, was followed by four paragraphs which respectively illustrated the characteristics of the pact to be established between the European states, the structure of the organization, the general principles to be followed and the areas of cooperation.

[87] Among the many publications on the history of the Briand Plan see OSTENC (2017); MASCHERPA (2011); BARIÉTY (2007); ROOBOL (2002); FLEURY and JÍLEK (1998); NAVARI (1991); VIGLIAR (1983); AGNELLI (1975); LIPGENS (1966). See also: CHABOT (2005: 185-198), chapter 3, "La Tentative Institutionnelle dans le cadre de la Société des Nations (Sept. 1929-Sept. 1932)".

[88] For an overview of the debate on the Briand Plan in some countries of Central and Eastern Europe cf. DOBRA (2011) e COSTEA (2004). See also BUSSIÈRE, DUMOULIN and TEICHOVA (1998).

[89] Regarding the Italian response to Briand Plan, on which Mussolini and the Foreign Minister Dino Grandi expressed different opinions, cf. COSTA BONA and TOSI (2007: 93-97); COSTA BONA (2012 and 2004); PETRICIOLI (1999). On the positive reaction, despite some criticism, of the exiled anti-fascist Carlo Sforza, former Italian foreign minister between 1920 and 1921, cf. GRAGLIA (2017: 193-195).

[90] For an overview of the English response to the Briand Plan cf. BOSCO (1998). On the relationship between Great Britain and France cf. BELL (1996).

[91] On the obstacle posed by the administration of the colonies to the achievement of European unity, see CHABOT (2005: 303-304).

Other criticisms came not only from governments but also from ethnic minorities.[92] Even in Germany there was a change of attitude after the sudden death of Gustav Stresemann on October 3, 1929. The attempt by the new German Foreign Minister Julius Curtius to reach a customs union with Austria through a separate agreement with Austrian Chancellor Johann Schöber marked a return to an attitude of mutual mistrust between France and Germany.[93]

Therefore Stresemann's death was a tombstone not only on the Briand Plan but also on the Franco-German reconciliation projects. Without the Franco-German alliance and without the support of the US government (then still isolationist), the Briand Plan had no hope of survival. However, a 'Study Commission for European Union' was established and worked for a couple of years until September 1932, without producing any results.[94] The first attempt promoted by a government to launch the European union completely failed and symbolically marked the end of the European projects born after the traumatic experience of the First World War.

Despite this defeat and the contradictions of his Plan, Briand neverthe-less clearly identified the two priority issues on the international level: 1) the keystone of world peace was European pacification which required a closer cooperation between European countries within the League of Nations; 2) Franco-German pacification was the keystone of European peace. It would have been on this basis that, in a completely changed historical context, after the Second World War, another French foreign minister, Robert Schuman, would have started the process of European integration.

However, Briand's proposal did not go beyond the intergovernmental method, hoping that intergovernmental institutions would then evolve to-wards supranational institutions under the pressure of the popular will for evident convenience and historical necessity.[95] It was an illusion, as the ex-perience of the Council of Europe after the Second World War would have shown.[96] In this sense, therefore, the Briand Plan is very distant from Jean Monnet's invention of the 'communitarian method' (*a transfer of power to*

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[92] Cf. GRAGLIA (2017: 192-193).

[93] France blocked Curtius's initiative judging it contrary to the League of Nations Cov-enant. On German foreign policy between Stresemann and the rise of Hitler cf. GRAML (2001). On the Foreign Minister J. Curtius cf. RÖDDER (1996) and RATLIFF (1990).

[94] On the work documents of the 'Study Commission for European Union', see KELLER (1991).

[95] "I know that I have the peoples behind me – declared Briand in 1929 – European feeling is a current against which one can do nothing." (quoted in HEWITSON 2020: 245).

[96] Cf. GRAGLIA (2017: 186-187).

common institutions), which was the beginning of the process of European integration.

Conclusions

Some historians have argued that the Briand Plan came too late. At the end of the 1920s, with the outbreak of the economic and financial crisis of 1929, the favourable climate regarding projects of European unity dissipated and gave way to pessimism. The economic depression had begun to drive out the ideas of solidarity and cooperation in international relations.[97] Adolf Hitler's rise to power in 1933 meant the definitive end of the European harmony. The resurgence of nationalism, the 'nationalization of the masses', the economic depression and the violent emergence of Totalitarianisms moved Europe to the tragedy of the Second World War. In the 1930s, democratic Europeanism was therefore defeated almost everywhere in Europe and survived only among anti-fascist exiles and in Switzerland[98] and Great Britain, where, in 1938, one of the first federalist movements, Federal Union, was founded.[99]

However, even if the Briand Plan had been proposed a few years earlier, it would probably not have had a different outcome. Historians have conflicting opinions on this issue and also on the Europeanism of the 1920s. Many scholars have argued that the pro-European intellectuals and movements of the 1920s and early 1930s were not able "to agree on a realistic programme of European cooperation or to convince governments to carry out their ideas".[100] Therefore, as Elisabeth du Réau observed, these "pioneers did not succeed in putting into effect the ideas and propositions surging up" during those years.[101] However, as Chabot has highlighted, the

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[97] Protectionist policies, trade and currency wars and monetary instability made not only plans for European unity but also economic cooperation impossible. This was not the case after the Second World War. After 1945 a new international monetary order was guaranteed by the Bretton Woods system, making the beginning of European economic cooperation possible. Within the limits of this essay, however, it is not possible to deepen the analysis of the economic and political differences between the two post-war periods.

[98] On Europeanism in Switzerland cf. Jílek (1990).

[99] On 'Federal Union' movement see note 40 above.

[100] Hewitson (2020: 239). As an example of this historiographical interpretation, Hewitson refers to Lipgens (1966). Reflecting on the translation of ideas into policies, Lipgens stressed the divisions, the lack of realism and the weak connection between the pro-European movements of the 1920s and the national governments, comparing them with the unity of purpose and greater realism of the pro-European movements of the Resistance. See also Lipgens (1982).

[101] Réau (2008): 72.

relevance of the debate promoted by intellectuals and pro-European movements in the 1920s is attested by the network of militants, interest groups, periodicals and newspapers with which political decision makers came into contact.[102] As Mark Hewitson noted, "it is, therefore, worth re-examining the relationship between the 'intellectual effervescence' and the harsh realities of policy-making of the post-war era" in order to see how these ideas and proposals have been received by ministers, officials, politicians and by the political parties.[103] As Hewitson stated: "The likelihood of European cooperation in the 1920s rested not on an intellectual effervescence or the Pan-Europa movement, but on the actions of the French and German – and, to a lesser extent, the British, Dutch, and Belgian – governments".[104]

The debate among historians therefore remains open. However, while recognising the sincere belief in a united Europe and the efforts made even at the institutional level, it cannot be denied that the pro-European projects of the 1920s had some fundamental flaws. It could be noted that, before the political climate changed so quickly at the beginning of the 1930s, the pro-European intellectuals, economist, politicians, who still represented a small minority of the society, had not been unable to give life to an effective political action. Even if some of them supported the construction of a federal Europe, in most cases there was still no clear awareness of the institutional ways to achieve European unity. Often the 'intellectual effervescence' ended in nebulous conceptions of a European 'identity' or 'crisis', in an abstract utopianism and in a rhetorical Europeanism.[105] The projects for European unity always remained vague, without explaining how it was possible to reconcile nationalism, Europeanism and internationalism. Only a few intellectuals were aware of the clear alternative that arose between the intangibility of the absolute sovereignty of Nation States and the construction of supranational institutions. But they were unheeded prophets.

More than by the rhetorical utopianism of Pan-European movement, the plans drawn up by political leaders, such as Briand and Stresemann, were influenced by the concrete need to cooperate at the European level to overcome the economic and material difficulties produced by the war. However, their plans, developed within the framework of the League of Nations and the 'Locarno system', failed to overcome either the intergovernmental method or national rivalries and hostilities to realize the crea-

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[102] CHABOT (2005: *passim*).

[103] HEWITSON (2020: 239).

[104] *Ibid.*: 243.

[105] Chabot wrote about a "confused strategy", characterized by intellectualism, heterogeneity and unrealism of purposes and inadequacy between means and goals. Cf. CHABOT (2005: 306-321).

tion of common institutions for economic and political cooperation at European level. In many case, in fact, "the willingness of governments to contemplate cooperation at the European level has been the corollary of perceived competing, often contradictory, national imperatives and interests".[106]

Nevertheless, intellectuals and political decision-makers, involved in this pro-European campaign to face the tragic legacies of First World War and the difficulties of the post-war period, had the merit of underlining the transformative effects of the first 'total war' in Europe.[107] They highlighted the irreversible crisis of the European system of States, drawing attention to the need for a closer economic and political union among European countries. As Chabot observed, the Europeanist pioneers of the interwar period had also the indisputable merit of having identified the "ethical dimension" of the European project. In their voices we find the spirit of European brotherhood that should accompany the process of economic and political integration.[108]

Certainly, the Briand Plan was not a 'matrix'[109] for the start of the future process of European integration. The generation of the 'founders' of the European Community reacted to the perceived failure of the previous generation, focusing on more realistic plans and cultivating links with governments.[110] However, it must be considered that there were many differences between the two post-war periods. The beginning of the European integration process after the Second World War could in fact benefit "equally from the self-destruction of European nationalism in a totalitarian guise"[111] during the second global conflict and from the USA support. These conditions were not present in the interwar period. In fact, the European projects of the 1920s took place in a 'hostile context' – excluding the brief period of relative detente marked by the 'Locarno spirit' – characterized by the apogee of nationalism and by USA isolationism.[112]

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[106] Hewitson (2020: 239).

[107] *Ibid*.: 249.

[108] See Chabot (2005: 326).

[109] However, Elisabeth du Réau noted that "the initiators of various movements of the interwar era played an active role after the Second World War", permitting – on certain occasions – "the experiences of the twenties [to] serve as a 'matrix'" (Réau 2008: 72). Members of the movements of the 1920s had experienced the possibility of decline and had, as a result, become more 'realistic'. Réau's quote is given in Hewitson (2020: 238).

[110] Cf. Chabot (2005: 325).

[111] *Ibid*.

[112] *Ibid*.: 291-306. On internationalist thought during the age of nationalism cf. Sluga (2013). Regarding the great interwar crisis and the collapse of globalization, see also Boyce (2009).

As Mario Telò noted, the 'Fortuna' (according to Machiavelli, "the objective conditions for political actions") did not helped Europeanism in the 1920s. In the inter-war transitional period, marked by the harsh consequences of the First World War and by the contradictions of the Peace Treaties, it was impossible "for the pro-European minorities to propose and jointly implement a European solution". And at the end of this decade (1919-1929), after the 1929 economic breakdown, "the confused Briand Plan had any chance at all".[113] Therefore, combined with the lack of 'Fortuna', the limits of political 'Virtù' ('the subjective conditions for successful actions') produced the failure of the pro-European projects of the 1920s.

What, then, was the legacy of the pro-European pioneers of the 1920s? In the following two decades, despite the triumph of nationalism, the awareness of the alternative between "s'unir ou mourir"[114] ("federate or perish") that had animated the first pioneers of European unity after the First World War did not disappear and resisted. Forced to go underground and strengthened during the harsh fight against Totalitarianism and the new global war, this new awareness has given rise to new pro-European and federalist projects.[115]

The pro-European militants and movements of the 1930s and 1940s drew useful lessons from the failure of the 'intellectualism' of the previous generation of Europeanists.[116] Even the authors of the *Ventotene Manifesto* themselves have learned a lot from these pioneers of the European project, both by critically highlighting their limits and by considering the few far-sighted proposals, such as the clear principles of British federalism and Luigi Einaudi's criticism of the League of Nations and of absolute State sovereignty's dogma.[117]

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[113] I refer to the draft text of the report presented by Mario Telò at the international Conference "The origins of the European project: Europe before the European project", promoted by Einaudi Foundation (Turin, 20-22 January 2021). See also Telò 2004, chapter 5 ("Dalla crisi del sistema degli Stati nazionali al fallimento dell'europeismo negli anni venti e trenta").

[114] The expression is used by many authors and in particular by Riou (1929: 186).

[115] On the pro-European and federalist projects of the 1930s, see Visone (2012a; 2012b and 2015).

[116] Chabot (2005: 325).

[117] On the influence of Luigi Einaudi and British federalist thought on the *Ventotene Manifesto* cf. Pinder (1998); Morelli (2009); Graglia (2008); Levi (2007); Braga (2007 and 2018).

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