

THE CULTURAL ROOTS OF VENTOTENE'S MANIFESTO:  
THE SPINELLI'S PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Altiero Spinelli was one of the authors of the Ventotene Manifesto, may be the most cited document of the Italian/European resistance, and the less read in fact. This article helps to trace back several elements of Spinelli's vision at the base of the intellectual elaboration that resulted in the document, and also tries to delineate the Spinelli contribution to the document, taking account of some aspects of his political approach and formation.

It follows Spinelli through his reading of Hegel, Kant, Nietzsche, Mosca, Machiavelli and Meinecke, all authors read in prison and during the confinement. Spinelli adopted their views on power and revolutionary élites, confronting them with his political activism as a young Communist with a persistent penchant for a Leninist view of the importance of political leadership, "without losing sight of the values of civilization". The result can be considered, to some extent, critical. The vision enshrined in the Ventotene Manifesto represented a challenging attempt to redefine the categories of the political action, immediately provoking a wide debate in the non-communist areas of the antifascist movement.

**Keywords:** Altiero Spinelli, European Union, Ventotene Manifesto, Ernesto Rossi, European Federalism.

The problem of the intellectual and cultural roots of the Ventotene Manifesto is a little more complicated than it appears.

On the one hand we have in fact a sort of consolidated 'vulgate', which considers the transmission to Rossi and Spinelli of some articles written by Luigi Einaudi in 1918 as the origin of the federalist intuition later put on paper by the two authors of the *Manifesto*. In addition to Einaudi, the reading of the 'federal tracts' produced by the British Federal Union cluster

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during the 1930s is also presented as fundamental. In fact, while Einaudi is towering with his importance for providing a fundamental spur, British federalists need to be scaled back into two authors only, Lionel Robbins and Lord Lothian. Both Spinelli and Rossi translated – whether together or separately it is a matter on which the two do not agree in their writings – the work *The Economic Causes of War* by Robbins, and above all Rossi made it as one of the essential reference points of the reflection that lies at the base of the *Manifesto*. But other authors, belonging to the so-called group of the ‘Anglo-Saxon federalist School’ (Barbara Wootton, Ivor Jennings, Ronald Gordon Mackay, Kenneth Wheare, James Meade) were unknown to the Ventotene federalists, at least until 1944, when Spinelli and Rossi became acquainted with them at the League of Nations Library in Geneva.

There are, however, other factors to be considered besides the British federalists and Einaudi; factors less evident but quite present, which can be considered as possible elements of interest in defining the cultural roots of the *Ventotene Manifesto* (at least in Spinelli’s personal perspective, but also involving Rossi, fundamental character of the intellectual diarchy).

But first, who were the two authors of Ventotene’s manifesto, and what were the characteristics that differentiated them and not only united them?

First, it should be remembered that the Liberal-Salvemini Ernesto Rossi was 10 years older than Spinelli; in a way, Rossi acted as Spinelli’s older brother. Moreover, both Rossi’s letters to his mother and wife and Spinelli’s letters to his sisters and mother indicate the sense of novelty that accompanied their mutual acquaintance: Rossi presented Spinelli in enthusiastic terms, as the discovery of a nonconformist mind like his (a judgment that will be confirmed, after liberation, in his letters to Salvemini), while Spinelli, although not celebrating the new friend, makes clear references to the excellent companies that finally – compared to Ponza – he had found in Ventotene. The former young Communist revolutionary, who became an apostate after his expulsion from the party in 1937 immediately after his arrival in Ponza, discovered in Rossi in Ventotene a sort of Dante’s Virgil: a guide, an advisor but above all a book supplier.

We already know something about Rossi’s intellectual evolution in prison, his impatience with Crocian philosophy, his nonconformism and political radicalism, but thanks to Spinelli we also know what the duo read in Ventotene in preparation of the *Manifesto* drafting. Since moving to Ponza, finally free to write with less control than in prison, Spinelli began to note down the texts he read and that were provided partly by his family but above all, once in Ventotene, by Rossi (later also by Colorni). These ‘lists of books read’ are valuable; they are separated between Ponza and Ventotene and they can return a sketch of the intellectual path that Spinelli (and Rossi) experienced immediately after the transfer to Ventotene in 1939.

Imagine the context: 800 confined were free to swarm out of their barracks on the soil of Ventotene every morning – just over 1 square km the area allowed to the confined – under the watchful eye of 500 soldiers of the ‘volunteer militia for national security’ (Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale, MVSN), of about forty ‘Carabinieri’, and mixing with one thousand inhabitants. It was not an island; it was a hive.

In this context it was clearly difficult to elaborate clean, consistent and above all, confidential thoughts. The two authors of the *Manifesto*, who associated Mr. and Mrs. Colorni Hirschmann with their conversations, and a dozen others ‘nonconformists’ confined (which means non-communist socialists, some ‘giellists’ – members of the clandestine movement ‘Giustizia e Libertà’, of socialist and radical intonation – and some without parties) were forced to work largely individually, put together the pieces of the *Manifesto* with personal elaborations, and then collate them during long discussions without the comfort of being able to write at the same time (the confined, in public, could not use paper and pencil). This inevitably lead to a somewhat hopping elaboration, but the style certainly was bright. This is where the literary roots of the manifesto become fundamental, represented not only by the personal beliefs of the authors and their discussions and comparison but also by the philosophical, historical, and economic works that they read during the confinement.

First, Einaudi. Spinelli and Rossi read the book published under the pseudonym Junius (Einaudi 1920) in June 1940, adding, at Spinelli’s hands, a short note: “There are some interesting letters on the absurdity of the concept of ‘League of Nations’”, without adding anything else, as one would have supposed for a work that would later be considered the starting point of all the political reflection of the federalists in Ventotene.

For the federalists, Einaudi represented a brand-new enlightenment. His lucid criticism of the proposal of the League of Nations presented by Woodrow Wilson, an organization conceived without giving it the power to impose itself on its members, thus adopting not supranational but cooperative approach,<sup>1</sup> gave the federalist group an important basis for reflection to which was also added the knowledge of Hamiltonian federalism, which Spinelli later confirmed to have learnt by reading “two or three booklets of the English federalist ring that flourished at the end of the 1930s after the initiative of Lord Lothian”.<sup>2</sup> However, in his list of readings, such titles do not appear.

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<sup>1</sup> For a comment of Einaudi’s positions and critics see PISTONE (1975). Einaudi’s federalist papers are now published in EINAUDI (1986).

<sup>2</sup> SPINELLI (1999: 307).

It is likely that Spinelli would write down and record only the important readings, not the pamphlets or booklets; however, of that group, there are far more than two or three 'booklets' by the economist Lionel Robbins.<sup>3</sup> No other federalist author 'from the 1930s' appears on Spinelli's list. The titles of the other works of economics (made available to the confined thanks to the interest of Luigi Einaudi) also included three texts by R. Morandi,<sup>4</sup> G. Pirou,<sup>5</sup> H.P. Wicksteed,<sup>6</sup> A.C. Pigou,<sup>7</sup> P. Sraffa,<sup>8</sup> A. De Viti De Marco.<sup>9</sup> To cut it short, representatives of both the Italian anti-protectionist school and the one which later came into conflict with Keynes in the interpretation of social welfare problems in macroeconomic terms (in particular, Pigou).

However, it is the authors of the works of a 'political' nature who allow an interesting reading of Spinelli's intellectual training process and give rise to some considerations which may be useful for understanding the foundations of his political action.

Above all, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. The German philosopher occupies a special place in the memoirs of prison readings in the years 1931-1932 that Spinelli entrusted to his autobiography.<sup>10</sup> During the Ventotene years, the special preference previously given to Hegel (and, previously, during the years spent in prison, to Kant, but without any trace of direct influence on Spinelli of his philosophical 'europeanism') is based on a search for clarity and intellectual rigor which, not by chance, leads him to devote himself to the authors who were most involved in the study of the problem of power in the human community. It should not be forgotten that, immediately after concluding the drafting of the *Manifesto*, while Rossi dedicated himself to the study that would then converge in the short work *Abolire la miseria*, Spinelli launched himself into a 'politics' reflection that materialized in the short *Saggio di storia della politica, ovvero Machiavelli nel secolo XX*, in scattered *Appunti su politica, potere e disciplina* and in some unfinished notes entitled *Definizione dei concetti di libertà e autorità*.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> They were, in order: ROBBINS (1935: 223, read on June 1940); ID. (1932: XII-141, read on June 1940); ID. (1937: XV-330, read in October 1940); ID. (1940: 124, read in January 1942); in this list it would be placed also WICKSTEED (1933: XXX-398 and 399-871, read in April and October 1941).

<sup>4</sup> MORANDI (1931).

<sup>5</sup> PIROU (1938).

<sup>6</sup> WICKSTEED (1933).

<sup>7</sup> PIGOU (1939: 139, read in November 1940); ID. (1934: XVI-680, read in April 1942).

<sup>8</sup> SRAFFA, ROBERTSON and SHOVE (1937: 587-644, read in May 1942).

<sup>9</sup> DE VITI DE MARCO (1939: XXXII-419, read in April 1943).

<sup>10</sup> Cfr. SPINELLI (1999: 164-167).

<sup>11</sup> All these texts are now in SPINELLI (1999).

Hegel himself can also be considered in this key of reading; it should not be forgotten that Spinelli came from the youthful and religious experience of communism of the 1930s, and that while he rejected Marxism in its implications, first philosophical and then economic ones, he always maintained a strong sense of the role of professional revolutionary élites in political action and a marked consideration of Nietzschean overman powering as the rate of every change;<sup>12</sup> a conviction that then grafted onto the trunk of the rigorous philosophy of Hegelian history while drawing inspiration and stimuli from other authors.

We are thus faced with works by G. Mosca<sup>13</sup> – the theorist of the élites par excellence – by V. Pareto<sup>14</sup> and F. Meinecke.<sup>15</sup> The first two provided Spinelli and Rossi with the methodological tools to deal with the problem of the political direction of society – a problem which had changed in its fundamental data after the break-in on the scene of the history of the masses framed in totalitarian regimes. Meinecke, on the other hand, was one of Spinelli's most important authors in the Ventotene period; it was from reading his works that Spinelli and Rossi made suggestions for a non-reacting and conservative rereading of the will of the sovereign states to power. The *Machtstaatsgedanke* – the theory of the Power-state – which until then had justified in the thought of its German theorists the inevitability of the armed clash between nation-states, with the corollary of the militarization of the society and the productive apparatus of the state itself, it is interpreted by Spinelli and Rossi, in the *Manifesto*, in a diametrically opposed direction: they maintain the undeniable fact of the trend towards expansionism of the sovereign nation states. However, they point out that this situation should not be passively suffered but should be receding by eliminating the very cause of the condition of permanent conflict, i.e., the absolute sovereignty of the European States. The way forward was therefore not that of imperial conquest, but that of the federation to be established on a voluntary basis.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Spinelli expressed some interest on the father of contemporary psychoanalyses, Sigmund Freud, and he read *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse* (FREUD 1926: IV-494, read in November 1940); references to behaviors and psychoanalyses problems are frequent in the political letters by Spinelli and Rossi. Spinelli instead was not attracted at all by the literature dealing with the restlessness and anguish of the contemporaneity (Luigi Pirandello, Italo Svevo and Robert Musil, just to cite the most relevant authors of that tendency).

<sup>13</sup> Spinelli read by Gaetano Mosca, in July 1940, his most important work, the *Elementi di scienza politica* (MOSCA 1939: 464 and 242).

<sup>14</sup> PARETO (1921: 150, read in October 1940); ID. (1902: 406 and 492, read in June 1942); ID. (1923: CXVII-431, read in July 1942).

<sup>15</sup> Spinelli read one of the most relevant work by Friedrich Meinecke: *Cosmopolitismo e stato nazionale* (MEINECKE 1930: 221).

<sup>16</sup> This topic was considered by Spinelli in his "Gli Stati Uniti d'Europa e le varie tendenze

The curious thing that emerges from Spinelli's reading notes, regarding the theorists of the reason of State, is that only Meinecke appears in it, and no other author who addressed the problem and who has sometimes been remembered as instigator of the European federalists.<sup>17</sup> With regard to Niccolò Machiavelli, another great political theorist who Meinecke identified as the forefather of that school of thought that goes by the name of doctrine of reason of State, it must be said that his thought was already known by Spinelli and Rossi well before arriving in Ventotene and, although his works are not present in the list of 'books read' or in that of 'useful books', continuous are, in the writings of this period, the references to works such as *Il Principe* and the *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio*.<sup>18</sup>

Another interesting element that should be emphasized is the passion for Nietzsche that Spinelli experimented during the Ventotene years, a passion not very shared by Rossi. Spinelli, until reading a book by Förster, did not know the German philosopher;<sup>19</sup> but from 1942 to August 1943, the years in which his political design is specified, the attention to 'the scribe of chaos' grows and is defined in an irrevocable way: Spinelli reads in this order *Also Sprach Zarathustra – Aus dem Nachlaß 1882-85*<sup>20</sup> (1909: xxix-502, read June 1942); *Aurora*<sup>21</sup> (1927: 364, read November 1942); *Lettere* (1941: 310, read in May 1943) and finally *Zur Genealogie der Moral*<sup>22</sup> (1943: 184), the last book read by Spinelli before his liberation from the confinement.

Although a precise and punctual analysis of Nietzsche's influences, along with other authors, on Spinelli is probably not possible only with these scattered sources, it is also possible to put forward some hypothesis that may serve as a stimulus to a broader study on this aspect.

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politiche", one of the two fundamental federalist essays written in Ventotene and then published in Rome in 1944, edited by Eugenio Colorni (SPINELLI 1944).

<sup>17</sup> For instance, Leopold Ranke and Heinrich von Treitschke; but even other authors, considered fundamental to understand the *Manifesto*, like Alexander Hamilton, Max Weber, John Robert Seeley, were in fact unknown in Ventotene. In some cases, Spinelli met some authors translating their works: it is the case of Eduard Füter, whose main work *Die Geschichte der neueren Historiographie*, was translated into Italian but is not remembered in the Spinelli's books lists (cfr. FÜTER 1911).

<sup>18</sup> It must not be forgotten that when Spinelli decided, in March 1943, to write an "essay on the history of politics", he chose the title *Machiavelli nel secolo XX* (cf. SPINELLI 1993).

<sup>19</sup> FÖRSTER (1914: xi-592). So wrote Spinelli on his book list: "this book made me love Nietzsche, whom I still don't know" ("Questo libro mi ha fatto amare Nietzsche, che ancora non conosco"). In his autobiography Spinelli cited Nietzsche recalling his reading in the Civitavecchia prison (from 1932 to 1937), may be confusing different periods. Some references to Nietzsche also in a biographic note for Rossi, published in SPINELLI (1993).

<sup>20</sup> NIETZSCHE (1909).

<sup>21</sup> NIETZSCHE (1927).

<sup>22</sup> NIETZSCHE (1943).

Firstly, Spinelli's construction, as outlined through his essays on the 'history of politics' and the definition of the concepts of freedom and authority, and which accompanies and follows the drafting of the *Ventotene Manifesto*, is fundamentally skeptical of the founding values of the democratic and liberal systems of the 1930s and of the idea of the palingenetic value of the proletarian revolution. With the overbearing rise and consolidation of the Nazi-fascist regimes before his eyes, the attention of Spinelli, a former soldier of the communist revolutionary verb is not aimed at methods of reconstructing the past, but, with a behavior that seems cut out on the figure of Nietzsche's 'lawgiver of the future', seeks new ways of responding to the fundamental problem of conquest, maintenance, management of power, without losing sight of the 'values of civilization', which are mentioned at the beginning of the Manifesto, and placing himself in an openly polemical position with traditional political decisions.

This attempt, witnessed by the *Manifesto* but even more so by the "Federalist Letters from confinement" – the discussion that accompanied the dissemination of the Manifesto to confinement and on the continent<sup>23</sup> – leads to two results: on the one hand, the political forces being reconstituted were faced with an extremely precise analysis of the historical moment, difficult to be disputed without falling into the schemes, already considered almost by everyone inadequate, of fascism as a degeneration of a fundamentally healthy system.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, the fundamental message of the federalists, that of changing the very foundations of political action by taking over the size of the nation state, ran up against strong resistance on both the right and the left of the national political spectrum and was a threat to the interests of several international actors: the Soviet Union – which, precisely in the light of its foreign policy, had long since inaugurated the use of patriotic words – and the Western Allies.

European federalism, encountering such resistance, therefore failed in its work of infiltration and direction towards traditional political parties, unprepared to reconstruct on different bases the values and political behaviors swept away by Nazi fascism. Just as it failed in proposing international re-construction projects to the recovered European governments after the war, since they favored the functionalist economic option instead.

However, distrust of the democratic regimes of the 1930s is not the only distinctive feature of Spinelli's thinking. Another element which oc-

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<sup>23</sup> Now published in SPINELLI (1993). This provisional title (*Lettere federaliste dal confino*) had been chosen by the federalists themselves, to gather all the reactions received after the *Manifesto* drafting.

<sup>24</sup> By the way, during his period in Ventotene, Spinelli read – in August 1940 – Piero Gobetti (GOBETTI 1924) without noting anything interesting.

cupies an important place is the awareness of the importance of individual political action or at most of small, conscious, and prepared groups, an action which seems to be pre-eminent to that of the masses, which is more uncertain both in the organization and in the results. Here, too, one can see the influence of Nietzsche's individualism, but more properly it is the Leninist conception of revolutionary political action that emerges from the waters of oblivion in which Spinelli thought he had drowned it.

He himself, reconstructing for Rossi his personality in an "autobiographical note for Rossi after the curses made to him by various people"<sup>25</sup> of October 1942, had confided to his new friend that he had joined the Communist Party to be part of the clergy and not of the mass of worshippers, and never seriously believed in the myth of class struggle as the engine of revolution, citing in this regard a "long study of his – of 1934-1935 – in which he [showed] how the Bolsheviks [had] won because they had not [made] the class struggle".<sup>26</sup> It follows that Spinelli remained, even during his political activity, a 'steppe wolf' rather than a mass-drag; a cold analyst of historical, economic, international situations, but always reluctant to fall into the 'mass' dimension of the political struggle.<sup>27</sup>

This, while it was an inevitable consequence of the coherent and strict political construction, on the other hand implied not small consequences. European federalism was born at a time when, to repeat an expression by Simon Wiesenthal, "God was on holiday";<sup>28</sup> not only the god of the Jews, but every god to whom men could turn. The resulting disorientation – moral, philosophical, and political – led to the need to meditate clearly and rigorously on the tragedy of the collapse of European civilization. Spinelli brought to this his passionate Communist fighter attitude, Rossi his civil passion as a radical democrat: the Ventotene Manifesto brings together these two perspectives and, in a sense, represents a partial synthesis of them.

Partial because the length of the document, although significant, does not constitute a 'system'. But it highlights at least two interesting aspects: the persistence of a movement perspective (which in fact decays after just a year) and the criticism of the usual political categories in relation to bour-

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<sup>25</sup> Now in SPINELLI (1993).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> A clear change in Spinelli's perception about the role of the masses in the European unity political struggle happened with the publication, in 1978 – a decisive year in European and Italian history – of a pamphlet with a Leninian title: *PCI, che fare? Riflessioni su strategia e obiettivi della sinistra* (SPINELLI 1978: VIII-101).

<sup>28</sup> This quote comes from the short tale by Simon Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower* (WIESENTHAL 1970).



geois/proletariat dichotomy in the context of the class struggle. Perhaps the part that was most criticized by contemporary commentators was this transvaluation of the proletariat as a force not necessarily progressive but also conservative; the ease of also indicating the working class as a supporter of the system of interests linked to the existence of the sovereign State and interested in maintaining those interests; the accusation that “trade union and worker sectionalism” are playing into the nationalist bourgeoisie and that they are themselves, at the end of the day, interested in maintaining the system built by the class enemy.

However, these ideas had not been caught on the left (the left, of course, which did not brand Spinelli as a traitor to keep at a distance). Emilio Lussu, who had years before fervently launched the watchword of ‘Italian federalism’ within ‘Giustizia e Libertà’ (finding in Rosselli an interlocutor much more interested in the international dimension of any anti-fascist struggle) will note:

Moving on to Genoa, [Lino] Marchisio had told me about this *Manifesto* at length, and in Rome I had read some typewritten sheets that placed the European Federation as a premise of a wider world process, a guarantee of peace. The document, which was highly anti-authoritarian and anti-totalitarian, despite a socialist aspiration, seemed to me to be decidedly conservative. The Federation of European States was supported as a precondition for a gradual socialization process. It was putting the cart before the horse.<sup>29</sup>

However, others, such as Guglielmo Usellini, future President of the European Union of Federalists after World War II, and companion of the first political adventures with Spinelli and Rossi, three years after the drafting of the Manifesto recognized Spinelli’s intellectual debt:

Even when I read and had your Ventotene writings read, I noticed, in addition to the strength and correctness of certain approaches and the continuity of certain arguments, their capacity to induce the reader to a certain order and clarity in setting out his objections. Now I understand that you are the holder of that bite and I am pleased because, in addition to the rest, I believe that this, even in itself, is a very important and useful function in political life, especially in Italy. You’re

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<sup>29</sup> “Passando a Genova, [Lino] Marchisio me ne aveva parlato a lungo, e a Roma avevo letto alcuni fogli dattiloscritti che ponevano la federazione europea quale premessa di una più ampia federazione mondiale, garanzia della pace. Il documento, fortemente antiautoritario e antitotalitario, nonostante un’aspirazione socialista, mi era apparso decisamente conservatore. La federazione degli stati europei vi era sostenuta come pregiudiziale necessaria per un successivo graduale processo di socializzazione. Era mettere il carro davanti ai buoi”, Lussu (1968). Lino Marchisio was a medical doctor and one of the main figures of Ligurian anti-fascism as well as a protagonist of the political and cultural life in Genoa after World War II; for a biographical note see LEVI (2012: 193-194).

the shaker, the tonic, the face-slapper. You are the salter of many fish in barrels for which the time has come to get out of the closed and to show signs of reliving.<sup>30</sup>

And Leo Valiani too, a few months earlier, fascinated by the reading of the Manifesto and other federalist writings produced in Ventotene, wrote: “I read two of your writings two weeks ago (on European unity and the crisis of socialism) and the 1<sup>st</sup> federalist pamphlet. Today I see that in many discussions, in other times, you were absolutely right [...]”.<sup>31</sup>

The attachment finally achieved and declared towards the values of European civilization, borrowed both from the authors mentioned above and from the closeness with Ernesto Rossi, did not fundamentally change what remained the distinctive character – Leninist and Nietzschean – of all Spinelli’s political activity: to look for ways to intervene effectively on the scenario of political reality, modifying it until one achieves the intended purpose, if necessary by creating the political ‘fact’; all this is accompanied by an almost religious awareness of the election towards a goal which makes Spinelli and European federalism theorized by him and Rossi two elements difficult to break apart. This characteristic linked the federalist action of the early years to its most important protagonist (Rossi) and to the more irrepressible one (Spinelli), and meant that, when both – for different reasons – no longer had responsibilities in the movement, Spinelli did not always accept that the movement would take decisions and take up independent positions; similarly, on a different consideration of federalist engagement, the partnership with Rossi – not their friendship – was also severed during the years following the failure of the European Defence Community (1954). But talking about this would obviously take us too far.

All this has necessarily also influenced the character of the studies and research carried out so far on the history of the federalist movement and in general of the more radical pro-European movements; the reference to Spinelli, which is obviously necessary and pre-eminent whenever the history of contemporary European federalism is confronted, tends – in

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<sup>30</sup> “Già quando leggevo e facevo leggere i vostri scritti da Ventotene notavo, oltre alla forza e alla giustezza di certe impostazioni e alla pertinenza di certe argomentazioni, la loro capacità di indurre il lettore a un certo ordine e a una certa chiarezza nell’esporre le proprie obiezioni. Ora capisco che sei tu il detentore di quel mordente e me ne compiaccio perché, oltre al resto, ritengo che codesta, anche di per sé stessa, sia una funzione molto importante e utile nella vita politica, italiana particolarmente. Sei tu lo spoltronizzatore, il tonificatore, lo scapacciatore. Tu il salatore di molti pesci in barile per i quali è venuta l’ora di uscire dal chiuso e di dare segni di riviviscenza”. Letter by Usellini to Spinelli, February 25, 1944, conserved at the Historical Archives of the European Union, *ad nomen*.

<sup>31</sup> Letter by Leo Valiani to Altiero Spinelli, November 4, 1943, in *ibid*.

fact less and less in recent times – to acquire the reference character to the whole history of the political movement, thus losing sight of the meaning of the proposed measures. In other words, if the fact that Spinelli led his battle ‘for a different Europe’ over time in various roles which are not exactly compatible with each other, is understandable and must be interpreted by the biographer, this yardstick for a political movement would be unacceptable. Where the ability of the individual to adapt to the different political scenarios is an element which helps to define ‘the Spinelli man’ in his absolute dedication to the final objective, the same cannot be said of an organization called the European Federalist Movement – that has chosen a precise strategy of action and has the problem of training the militants and carrying them behind it, even when the tactical choices seem to be at odds with the starting premises.

After Spinelli, in more than forty years of multifaceted political action, converted the leaders – Parri, De Gasperi, Nenni, Berlinguer – to the idea of the federal union of Europe, thanks to his irrepressible passion and the rigor of his theoretical preparation (both in the federalist background, in the role of Commissioner in the Commission of the European Communities and, finally, in that of Member of the European Parliament), perhaps the time has come to re-propose strongly the federalist criticism of the national state, of power politics, of those philosophies that have been fed by it; but, above all, it is a question of seeking confrontation, and accentuating it, with other political tendencies and movements that are not sick with nationalistic regurgitations.

The roots of the *Manifesto*, so composite and original (Leninist revolutionism, democratic pragmatism, institutional constructivism) can still find a place in the discussions on the future of a body, the European Union, equally, on another scale, composite and original. Mario Telò a few years ago invented and promoted, making it familiar, a formula that goes beyond the ‘hard politics’ of realpolitiker: Europe as a civil power.<sup>32</sup> Others, as he himself will recall in his report, have used comparable formulae, such as the Kind Force Europe topped by Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa.<sup>33</sup> Personally, thinking of the *Ventotene Manifesto*, after a few years of sedimentation of studies that unfortunately I must define as youthful, it seems to me that we can talk about a scandalously lucid document. Such that we can confront the problem of international relations and the necessary internal structural reforms; with the problem of strength and with that of democratic consensus. Moreover, by proposing a firm point which, in that wording, is unique

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<sup>32</sup> See TELÒ (2006).

<sup>33</sup> See PADOA-SCHIOPPA (2001).

in the panorama of European democratic anti-fascism: the sunset of the national state as a model of natural organization, both in the field of international relations and in terms of internal organization. They do not invent federalism, the authors of Ventotene: they invent European federalism, a new dimension for the system born with Westphalia. The reality of Europeanist awareness of militant anti-fascism is not, moreover, a sentimental fact that ferments only in the heads of a few specialists in federalist militant historiography; it is an element that explains and accompanies the unstoppable upheaval of cultures, ideologies and doctrines linked to the cult of the national state. This change can be said to be over even if the rabid and irrational cones originating from nationalism seem to be constantly questioning the results achieved. And the *Ventotene Manifesto* is still standing there to recall all this.

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