Altiero Spinelli and European Unification

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1- From Communism to Federalism

Altiero Spinelli was born in Rome on August 31st, 1907, and died in that same city on May 23rd, 1986. On the occasion of his 100th anniversary, I intend in these pages to sketch the essential elements and guiding thread of his fight for Europe's unification.

Spinelli is rightly considered, together with such statesmen as Robert Schuman, Alcide De Gasperi, Konrad Adenauer, Paul-Henri Spaak, and the inventor of the European Communities system Jean Monnet, to be one of Europe's most important fathers. From 1940 on, he totally dedicated his life to the fight for European federation, and gave a key contribution to the development of the European unification process.

In the first stage of his political experience however he was a militant of the communist idea, and not of supra-national federalism. In fact, when he was very young Spinelli participated in the anti-fascist underground activities of the Communist Party of Italy of which he was the youth-sector Secretary for Central Italy. Due to such an activity he was arrested in 1927 at the age of 20 and kept in jail until 1937 when he was then sent to confinement at first on Ponza island and later, from 1939, to the nearby island of Ventotene from which he was freed in August 1943 thanks to the collapse of the fascist regime. His last years in jail and early years in confinement saw his transition from communism (he formally left the Communist Party in 1937) to federalism.

In addition to his conviction that the ideal of social justice (passed on to him by his socialist father) could only be realized through the establishment of a communist regime on the model of the Soviet revolution two other important reasons for Spinelli’s initial adhesion to communism must be underlined.

First, he was attracted by communism's specifically cosmo-political vision: that is to say, by the idea that it was the right choice for all the peoples of the world and the indispensable basis for the unification of mankind. In comparison with cosmopolitan ideas of liberalism, democracy and socialism, the communist ideal looked to him more consequential, both for the anti-nationalist position taken during WW1 by the social-democratic factions that gave birth to the communist movement; and for their strict anti-colonialism. Finally he was attracted by the Communist International’s world-party structure of which the national parties were branches--whence the name Communist Party of Italy instead of ‘Italian Communist Party’ that it took during WW2. Spinelli stated many times that the enduring imprint he received from his communist experience...
precisely a radical anti-nationalism, and this too was the fundamental inspiring element for his choice of federalism.

A second fundamental motivation for Spinelli’s choice of communism was, as for many other young people of that time, the perception that of all the anti-fascist movements the communists were the ones that were fighting with the greatest commitment and courage against the regime imposed by Mussolini. His experience as a “professional revolutionary” stamped on him forever the idea that whoever takes upon himself the political commitment to change the world and purge it from its evils must do so thoroughly and organize his life according to his political commitment without expecting easy and rapid success and without ever getting discouraged in the face of the worst hardships and defeats.

As to his withdrawal from communism and embracing federalism, here also two fundamental points must be noted. The aspect had to do with the lessons drawn from the Soviet experience. Spinelli realized that pursuing social justice outside a political and institutional liberal-democratic framework could only lead to a political system in which the communist ideal would become the ideological cover for a totalitarian, stringent and dehumanizing dictatorship. The ideal of social justice, therefore, cannot be achieved without liberal and democratic principles and must be conceived to be the necessary complement of such principles. For this reason he moved closer to liberal socialism which at that time in Italy had its key reference point in Carlo Rosselli and his *Giustizia e Libertà (Justice and Liberty)* movement. In order to avoid degenerating into totalitarianism democracy had to be founded simultaneously on the liberal guarantees and on public intervention in the economic and social sphere in order to pursue solidarity and equal opportunities for all, without which liberty would remain a privilege of the few and political equality would be basically formal (1).

The second point is his awareness of the necessity to go beyond the limits of liberal, democratic and socialist ideologies. The fact that the movements inspired by those ideologies, which up to the beginning of the 20th century had led to progress in Europe and the world, had nevertheless been unable to prevent the World Wars and the totalitarian flood, meant that there was something seriously inadequate in their premises. Such inadequacy was found by Spinelli to be their inability to understand that the fundamental obstacle to progress had become, in the 20th century, the absolute sovereignty of nation States, and that overcoming this problem through federalism, starting with Europe, had become the priority political task.

Having reached this conclusion, Spinelli dedicated the rest of his life to the federalist struggle, becoming a “professional federalist”. The key moments in his federalist activities were then: the drafting in 1941, together with Ernesto Rossi and with the contribution of Eugenio Colorni, of the Ventotene Manifesto, which constitutes the veritable founding document of the struggle for
Europe's federal unification; the foundation in Milan in August 1943 of the Movimento Federalista Europeo (MFE), which consistently played a central role at the European level within the militant federalist organizations as a whole; the direction of the MFE, except for a two-year break, until 1962, and taking a key role from 1949 to 1956 in the Union of European Federalists which provided the liaison between the national federalist movements in Europe; his promotion and direction, between 1956 and 1962, of the Congress of the European People; his foundation and direction, in the period 1963-1970, of the Italian Committee for European Democracy and of the Institute for International Affairs; his role as member of the Commission of the European Communities from 1970 to 1976; and his role as member of the European Parliament from 1976 to 1986. Spinelli's commitment to European unification was expressed through his various activities and roles, but despite the changing political realities faced by the federalist struggle the guiding thread running through his mission demonstrates a remarkable continuity.

In attempting to reconstruct the essential lines of this guiding thread and to sum it up in a single formula, one can say that with Spinelli the concept of a European federation evolved for the first time into a genuine political program. On the one hand an organic connection was established between the necessarily theoretical, extremely rational and far-reaching statement of the reasons for European unification and the federal institutional form it must take and, on the other, the rigorous strategic principles that must guide the actions aiming at the realization of such a supra-national federalism.

Let us, then, consider the theoretical aspect first, and later the strategic lines of Spinelli's federalist theses.

2: The priority of the European Federation

On the theoretical aspect, Spinelli's fundamental contribution was rooted in his conviction that the construction of the European federation, as the first and irreplaceable historical stage on the road to the world federation, must be the primary political objective of our time: the pre-condition, that is to say, if we are to avert the end of civilization, a return to barbarity, and perhaps the end of mankind itself. Such conviction can be schematized in two arguments. The first is to go beyond the internationalism characteristic of the great ideologies which, from the end of the 18th century-- i.e. from the American and French revolutions—set in motion processes which profoundly changed the structures of the modern State. These ideologies are liberalism, democracy and socialism (in the social-democratic and communist versions) which have their direct or indirect roots in the emancipating and universalist thrust originating in the Enlightenment. The internationalist component of these ideologies finds its expression in their cosmopolitical
vision which sees the values of liberty, equality and social justice as universal principles, potentially valid for the whole world, and also in their theory of the primacy of domestic policy.

This affects their approach to international relations and therefore to the causes of war and the means of achieving peace. If war is essentially linked to the specific internal structures of the States, the elimination of war and the establishment of a system of durable peaceful relations between States can, consequently, only come from going beyond those internal structures.

Liberal, democratic and socialist ideologies widely differ in singling out which internal structures should be considered as the root cause of power politics. In brief, liberal thought finds the fundamental cause of war in the aristocratic and absolutist political structure as well as in mercantilist and protectionist economic organization, and therefore it expects that establishing representative governments (based on restricted suffrage) and separation of powers on the one hand and the development of international free trade on the other will cool down the States' bellicose tendencies. Democratic thinking points to the governments' authoritarianism and therefore sees peace as the automatic consequence of popular sovereignty. Finally, socialism regards the exploitation of workers peculiar to modern capitalism as the basic cause of imperialism and war, and therefore emphasizes the struggle for social justice. For the social-democratic tendency that means the establishment of the welfare state in a liberal-democratic framework, whilst communists aim for the complete abolition of private ownership of the means of production and the dictatorship of the proletariat as the way to overcome the class struggle and simultaneously establish peace.

The common core running through the internationalist approach, whether liberal, democratic, socialist or communist, consists of a belief that a world of such States--ruled by either liberal, democratic, socialist or communist ideas—could bring about the elimination of the phenomena caused by power politics resulting from the still incomplete, or non-universal, application of the State's internal organizational principles forged by such ideologies. The federalist criticism of internationalism is based on Kant's discourse On Perpetual Peace (2), which to the cosmopolitical vision adds the lesson of political realism. In it is an awareness of the indissoluble link between power politics and the anarchical structure of the society of States which is brought about by their absolute sovereignty. It underlines that international anarchy, by upholding the primacy of each State’s security (that is to say, the law of raison d’état) over all other issues, represents an obstacle to the full realization of the principles supported by any great emancipation-pursuing ideology. Hence the conviction that, with respect to the aim of the construction of peace, the struggles inspired by internationalist ideologies are insufficient, because they essentially aim to
achieve domestic changes, while on the international stage their only organizational and institutional means of expression consists of a few international associations at the level of civil society and a handful of intergovernmental bodies such as the UN and previously the League of Nations.

Instead, to put an end to international anarchy it is necessary to pursue federal ties that eliminate the States' absolute sovereignty and aim for structurally-peaceful institutions in international relations with similar functions to those existing in domestic relations inside the States.

The second argument concerns the historical topicality of the construction of the European federation as the central problem of our time. In sum, Spinelli develops and brings to clearer conclusions the discourse started by Luigi Einaudi in 1918 (3) and treated in greater depth by English federalists in the 1930s, concerning the crisis of the national State as the root cause of the evils of that time, and discussing the construction of a European federation as the inevitable route towards the resumption of the progressive course of history. The concept of the crisis of the nation State which in federalist theory occupies the central place (where socialist and communist theory emphasize the crisis of capitalism) provides the leading thread permitting—in an era which has seen world wars and totalitarianism—the formulation of an original interpretation of the current crisis which accords with the global sense of contemporary history and yet differs from those proposed by other prevailing ideologies, overcoming the shortcomings that render them incapable of comprehending the centrality of the problem of the European federation.

In simple terms, the concept of the crisis of nation States in Europe is demonstrated by the contradiction between the historically-outdated dimensions of the sovereign nation States and—on the other hand-- the evolution of industrial production methods which, though exacerbated by protectionism, promote a growing interdependence across national boundaries and act as a motor towards the creation of State entities of continental dimensions, with a trend towards the unification of all mankind.

If, as Kant states, wars are generally the consequence of international anarchy, then world wars could be described in concrete historical terms as attempts by the continent's greatest power to provide, through the unification of Europe, an imperial, hegemonic solution to the need to enlarging the inadequate dimensions of national States which condemn them to decline. In this perspective, fascist totalitarianism seemed to be the anti-democratic, right-wing answer to the situation of rising economic and social chaos in the countries where the general phenomenon of the crisis of the nation State appeared in a particularly acute form, also because they lacked the ‘life support’ back-up of large colonial empires. The left-wing answer was communist totalitarianism which, however, did not meet with success in advanced Europe and on the contrary contributed to the victory of fascism.
But fascist totalitarianism was also seen as the indispensable instrument for a foreign policy of extreme expansionism, and fascist racism shows itself to be an ideology based on the permanent domination of one nation over other European nations. The disastrous consequences of the system of absolute national sovereignties show, in Spinelli’s opinion, that there is a structural incompatibility between that and a development leading to liberty, democracy and social justice. Hence his clear-cut statement that the establishment of the European federation is the primary political objective, the premise with respect to the struggles for the domestic modernization of national States. Hence his conviction that, after the defeat of fascism, unless the construction of the European federation is initiated, protectionist nationalisms and the endemic conflicts between national States will inevitably prevail again, and the liberal, democratic and socialist achievements will remain structurally precarious and risk being once more wiped out by totalitarianism. Based on these considerations, Spinelli arrives then to define -and this thesis constitutes the fundamental message of the Ventotene Manifesto: namely, a new dividing line between the forces of progress and those of conservatism. No longer is it a question of more or less democracy, more or less social justice, to be realized within States. The line now divides the advocates of absolute national sovereignty from the supporters of moving beyond this concept to the European federation.

The thesis emerging from the Ventotene Manifesto, that the contradiction between the States’ absolute national sovereignty and the supra-national dimension of the main problems caused by the growing tendency towards global interdependence of human relations beyond national borders is the crucial problem of our era, is for Spinelli the cornerstone of all his reflections on the fundamental questions of the contemporary world and of his commitment for the European federation as the supreme aim of political struggle.

3. The strategy of the struggle for European unification

Spinelli’s theoretical ideas on the priority of the European federation are accompanied by a strategic discourse indicating the directive lines to be followed if the struggle for the federation is not to be carried out fruitlessly but with a good chance of it having an influence on historical events. Such discourse is based on the conviction that national democratic governments are simultaneously the vehicles and the obstacles for the realization of European unification. They are the vehicles in two ways. Firstly, a peaceful and efficient European unification can only be achieved by those democratic governments freely agreeing to it, i.e. not on an imperial basis, which would produce democratically unacceptable, or in any case precarious, results. Secondly, the irreversible historical crisis of the European nation States and the collapse of their power as the final
outcome of the era of the world wars has produced an historical situation characterized by the alternatives “unite or perish” (as the French Minister of Foreign Affairs Aristide Briand had forecast in 1929), and this has inescapably pressured the democratic governments into pursuing a policy of European unification.

The democratic governments, however, are also obstacles to European unification due to the simple fact (already identified by Macchiavelli) that the holders of national power naturally tend to hold on to it. They therefore tend to put aside the objective of European federation—the only one leading to an efficient, democratic and irreversible unification, but implying the transfer of a substantial part of power from the national to the supra-national institutions—and orient themselves instead towards an international cooperation of a confederal type: that is, without any irrevocable transfer of sovereign powers.

That tendency, Spinelli states more precisely, is bound to manifest itself more strongly in the permanent bodies of executive power such as in high-level civilian and military bureaucracies than in relatively temporary political figures such as Heads of State and government or ministers. In fact, as a consequence of sovereignty transfers the former, being the natural depositories of nationalist traditions, would suffer a greater loss of power and status, with the exceptions, of course, typical of any sociological-type law. For the politicians the situation is not so rigid because they are the expression of democratic parties which have an internationally-oriented, hence more or less vaguely pro-European component in their ideological platforms, and because they have an organic relation with public opinion which, due to their experience of the tragedies caused by nationalism and the impotence of national States in coping with the fundamental problems of today's world, is inclined to look at the idea of European unity more favourably, in particular in countries experiencing to a higher degree the historical crisis of the nation State. This distinction is of a great importance, as we shall see further on, with regard to the procedures for creating the institutions of European unity.

However, the fact remains that, in the absence of new elements, the national democratic governments taken as a whole tend to agree only to a type of unification that does not imply an irrevocable transfer of sovereignty.

From this structural situation, three important implications follow regarding the federalist struggle. Firstly, the national governments could agree to federal unification only if there is a nucleus of federalist initiative independent of governments and national parties and capable of exerting such a democratic pressure as to compel them to do what they would otherwise not undertake of their own accord. From this idea came Spinelli’s commitment to build an organization of militant federalists (of which the MFE has always been the spearhead) with three important characteristics: it must be a movement having the European federation as its sole objective and aiming at involving, under the guidance of cadres independent of political parties, all the supporters of the European federation
whatever their ideological inclination so long as democratic; it must have a supra-national structure, i.e. be capable of uniting all federalists across national borders, giving them a supra-national discipline, and organizing political action at the European level; it shall try to establish a direct relationship with public opinion, and be able to mobilize it (without becoming a political party), so as to acquire sufficient clout to have an influence on the governments' European policy.

It must be noted that even when Spinelli ceased to be the top leader of federalist militants he remained always a close supporter of their organization which he considered an indispensable tool of the federalist struggle. On the other hand, his commitments other than the leadership of federalist militants always followed the principle of having a nucleus of federalist initiative independent of governments and national parties. This was true for the founding of the Initiative Committee for European Democracy (a sort of Monnet Committee at the Italian level) and of the Institute of International Affairs. This is also evident in his choice of joining first the European Commission and then the European Parliament in which he tried to take advantage of the relative but meaningful independence of both those bodies from national governments by launching, in conjunction with the federalist organizations, important federalist initiatives.

The second implication coming from the contradictory position of national governments towards European unification is the choice of the constituent-assembly method as an alternative to inter-governmental or diplomatic conferences. For Spinelli the crucial problem for the movement for European federation was to ensure that the creation of European institutions would be entrusted to an assembly composed of representatives of the citizens, which, in contrast to inter-governmental conferences, could take decisions by majority vote and in a transparent way, and also impose the rule of ratification by majority vote. As long as the last word is with the representatives of governments (structurally inclined to protect their national power) and as long as the principle of unanimity--that is, the right of national veto--prevails for ratifications, no truly federal choice will be possible. The model from which inspiration must be sought is the Philadelphia Convention of 1787 in which the principles of deliberating by the parliamentary method and ratifying by majority vote. By this means it gave birth to the first federal constitution in world history, namely the Constitution of the United States of America.

The third directive line of the federalist strategy devised by Spinelli is to take advantage of the contradictions present in the functionalist and gradualist approach to European integration. The founder of the MFE always saw the functionalist method--which postpones *sine die* the creation of a truly federal European system—as a means which national governments could combine their objective need (tied in with the choice to “unite or perish”) to put in place a policy of European integration with their in-built structural tendency to hang on to their own power. He constantly denounced as deceptive the conviction of those who, even in good faith, thought that the
A functionalist approach would lead to an almost automatic passage from economic to political integration and thus to a full federation. Nevertheless Spinelli always held that functionalist integration was destined to produce contradictions which federalists should exploit in their struggle to attain the federation.

These contradictions are essentially of two kinds. The first is represented by the precariousness and inefficiency of a functionalist unification. Functionalist institutions, based in the final analysis on decision-making by unanimity between the national governments, are in effect too weak and incapable of functioning effectively properly in those critical moments when the problems facing them are most grave. Consequently, the results reached when the going is smooth tend to be partially or totally jeopardized in more critical times. The expectations fuelled by the development of European integration give way to a sense of frustration which can be transformed into support for federal solutions. The second contradiction peculiar to functionalist integration is the democratic deficit, namely that important competences and decisions are transferred to a supra-national level with no effective democratic control in place at that level. Such a situation is bound to produce a degree of discontent in political parties and in democratically-orientated public opinion which can be directed towards the idea of supra-national democracy.

Spinelli’s view was that federalist strategy must be to strive constantly to exploit the contradictions inherent in functionalist and gradualist approach to integration and the crises that they inevitably bring, and—building on the pressure deriving from the mobilization of citizens—seize the initiative to demand a democratic constituent procedure aimed at obtaining a federal constitution.

4. Spinelli’s role in the integration process

Having clarified the guiding thread in Spinelli’s federalist action is clear, let us turn now to the key aspects which it contributes to the development of European integration. First we must underline the fact that Spinelli was the founder and for many years the leader of one of one the most important movements for European federation, the MFE, that he also led militant federalists at the European level and was later a key reference figure for them. I believe it is evident that the very existence of citizens’ movements for European unity is one of the main factors in the progress towards European integration. These movements not only launched the idea of European unification--and the Ventotene Manifesto was a document of key importance in this respect--, but that they have also transformed it a the permanent presence on the political scene. This political force exclusively committed to the ideal of European unity, has uninterruptedly kept alive the demands for a European federation and for popular participation in constructing it. Without that commitment, public awareness of the European integration process and its final goal would at best have been
only patchy. The pro-European political parties could not fill that gap, being mainly engaged in the struggle to achieve or manage power at the national level.

The impulse Spinelli gave to the existence of pro-European movements is clear, but we must also underline his key importance in promoting concrete federalist actions following the same rationale, albeit with suitable adjustments to suit the varying political conditions, working on the inherent contradictions in the functionalist and gradualist approach to integration, on the ensuing critical situations, and campaigning for the launch of a democratic constituent procedure which he saw as the only way of achieving the European federation. Such actions, undertaken as the leader of militant federalists or jointly with their organizations, never succeeded in attaining their ultimate objective, for the European federation still does not exist, but they did provide an undeniable and decisive contribution to the advancement of the European integration process.

Let us have a look to the most significant events.

The first to be mentioned is Spinelli’s campaign in 1950-1954 for a European Political Community. In that period the problem of Germany's economic and military reconstruction, promoted by the American government in the Cold War context, created a situation which made it possible for Jean Monnet to persuade the French government to propose establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and, soon afterwards, even the creation of a European Defence Community. But now the governments of the six founding countries of the European Community found themselves face by a deep contradiction, for it was inconceivable to create a European army without simultaneously creating democratic supra-national institutions able to integrate the foreign policies and overall economies of the participating States. This offered Spinelli, and the federalists under his leadership, the opportunity to bring pressure to bear through mobilizing public opinion and through a counselling action addressed to the most receptive elements of the political class, and thereby to convince the Italian government led by De Gasperi that the coal and steel sector should be placed together with the defence sector within the framework of a European Political Community of a federal type whose task would be, inter alia and in addition to unifying the States' foreign policies, to include also their economies. That project--worked out by the ECSC's parliamentary assembly (re-named for that task the ‘Ad-hoc Assembly’) which on that occasion played the role of a constituent assembly-- was never accomplished because in August 1954 the related European Defence Community (EDC) was narrowly rejected by an ad hoc majority composed of communists and Gaullists in the French National Assembly.

That federalist action had brought the participating countries to the threshold of a European federation and--albeit defeated--it exerted a remarkable influence on the advancement of European integration, as demonstrated in 1957 by the Treaty of Rome establishing Euratom and in particular the European Economic Community (EEC), an organization representing a big step forward from
the ECSC. In fact, faced with the disappointed expectations caused by the collapse of the EDC, and therefore of the European Political Community which would have envisaged the creation of a common market, the governments found it necessary to find at least a partial answer to satisfy those expectations. It must be recalled that the father of the EEC was the Belgian statesman Henri Spaak who, as the president of the European Movement and together with Spinelli, had played a key role in the fight for the European Political Community and had also presided over the ad-hoc Assembly which worked out that project. Also, the role of the Spaak Committee in the preparation of the Rome Treaties set a limit to the purely inter-governmental method in the construction of a united Europe.

The action for the European Political Community was followed by Spinelli’s initiative for the Congress of the European People. Spinelli was severely critical of the EEC. He argued in particular that its institutions were too weak to bring about the common market and that the idea of an automatic transition from economic to political integration was fallacious. This criticism was accompanied by the launch of a great popular campaign calling for a European constituent assembly to be directly elected by the citizens and mandated to draw up a draft federal constitution which would then be submitted for ratification by means of a European-wide referendum. It would come into force after approval by a majority of ratifying countries. The basic instrument devised by Spinelli to pursue that goal was the Congress of the European People on the model of Gandhi’s Indian National Congress. Following the American model primary elections would be organised in several European cities, thus giving birth to a permanent congress of representatives of the European people which, by extending its footprint to become ever more truly representative, could then force the governments to convene a federal constituent assembly.

Between 1957 and 1962, a total of 650,000 votes had been collected across Europe before the campaign was terminated. Although it had not achieved its goal, it nevertheless had great political significance for the European integration project and the need for popular participation. Even if only a small part of public opinion received the federalist message, this experience of the Congress of European People constituted the first example in history of a grass-roots political action able to grow in a unitary fashion in several European countries. It showed that if citizens were asked to express themselves in favour of a complete European unity and of popular participation in its construction, the answer was largely positive. The Congress of the European People therefore in effect anticipated and prepared the way for the direct election of the European Parliament.

It must be stressed therefore that the European Parliamentary elections, held for the first time in 1979, were made possible by the combined systematic actions of the federalists who saw in direct elections the way to transform the European Parliament into a permanent constituent assembly for
European unity. Of course the crisis in the EEC which occurred in the first half of the 1970s, as Spinelli had forecast, was also a contributory factor. Already at the inauguration of the EEC he had said very clearly that, given the weakness of its institutions, any progress towards integration attained during a favourable cycle would be jeopardized by a downturn in the economic and political situation. The crisis of the 1970s, which saw the prospect of a break-down of EEC integration, demonstrated that Spinelli was right. This was also demonstrated by the fact that it was only after institutional reforms in a federal direction had been put into effect with the direct election of the European Parliament that economic integration could take off again.

After the experience of the Congress of the European People, Spinelli partly changed his criticism of the EEC and became convinced that the EEC bodies that were independent of the national governments could constitute a support for the federalist initiative. Hence his decision first to enter the Commission and then, as an independent elected in the lists of the Italian Communist Party, the European Parliament. In all these positions his objective was always to initiate a democratic constituent procedure. His last great initiative to that effect was his activity as a member of the directly-elected European Parliament.

Convinced that the direct election of the European Parliament would create the premise for it to take up a constituent role, Spinelli became then the promoter of the great constitutional initiative that led to the Draft Treaty instituting the European Union, approved by the Strasbourg Assembly on February 14, 1984. That project, of a federal nature, followed the model of the Philadelphia Convention by including in particular a provision for ratification by majority vote, but this was not accepted by the national governments. Nevertheless, his role as a forerunner in the process of reforming the Community’s institutions is generally recognized. From the Single European Act and through the Treaties of Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice great progress in European integration has been made possible, and now finally the issue of the European Constitution has been brought on to the agenda.

The vicissitudes of the European Convention and its draft European Constitution demonstrate the enormous difficulties and the resistance still to be overcome in order to arrive at the European federal constitution which was the ultimate goal of Spinelli’s entire federalist activities. The issue is in any case still alive because European integration—to the advancement of which Spinelli has provided an invaluable contribution—is confronted by existential challenges that require Europe to become capable of completing its process of unification in order to make its own decisive contribution towards the development of a more just and peaceful world.

All those willing to commit themselves to that end will find in Spinelli an irreplaceable source of inspiration and will recognise that a reaffirmation to continue his work is the most concrete way of celebrating the 100th anniversary of his birth.
NOTES

(1)- It is to be remarked that the idea of a liberal and social democracy is an essential component of the federalist struggle. A supra-national federation is understood (as we will see further on) as the unavoidable basis of democracy, which in turn must be liberal and social for it to be a true democracy. This is what one essentially thinks of in speaking of the European political, economic and social model.


Additional Bibliography

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