The Ventotene Moment – Justice, Liberty, and European Federalism in the Political Thought of Third Force Socialism (1929-1954)

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Abstract

How did Italian antifascist exiles seek to reconcile socialist and federalist ideals to envision a revolutionary reorganization of Europe between the interwar and early postwar periods? What significance does the Second World War hold in the evolution of this ideological and political enterprise? This thesis investigates how Italian socialist "heretics" articulated a vision for an antitotalitarian "Third Force" Europe predicated on radical democracy and a socialist economy. Central to this analysis is the *Ventotene Manifesto* (1941), authored by Altiero Spinelli and Ernesto Rossi, which called for the abolition of national sovereignty and the establishment of the United States of Europe. By tracing the *Manifesto*'s ideological roots in the interwar period, particularly through the influence of Giustizia e Libertà and figures like Carlo Rosselli, the research explores how the Italian exiles sought to transcend both fascism and Stalinist communism while navigating the tension between revolutionary elitism and democratic aspirations. The Second World War emerges as a decisive catalyst, giving rise to what this study identifies as the "Ventotene Moment:" a unique convergence of ideological ferment and political opportunity that enabled the refinement of their federalist-socialist vision. By recovering this neglected political tradition, the study sheds light on an overlooked chapter of European federalist thought and reflects on its complex legacy in relation to European integration.

Declaration

Translations are my own except when otherwise stated.

Acknowledgments

I was once told that it takes a village to raise a family, and I have come to learn that it also takes a village to write a doctoral dissertation. Over the last four years, I have tried to do both as best as I could, but I could not have done it without the people in my village, whose kindness has sustained me. For this, I consider myself incredibly fortunate.

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parents, and if I can express myself in semi-comprehensible English, it is also thanks to them. Above all, Gianna taught me what it means to be both an intellectual and a historian. She gave me the tools of the trade so I could walk on my own (though I somehow keep coming back for more help and inspiration!).

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In loving memory of my mother, Maria, and my grandfather, Domenico.

Abbreviations

CCF: Congress for Cultural Freedom

CDU: Christian Democratic Union of Germany

CFFE: Comité Français pour la Fédération Européenne

CIFE: Comité international pour la fédération européenne

CNL: Comitati di Liberazione Nazionale, National Liberation Committee

COMISCO: Committee of the International Socialist Conference

COPAI: Committee for the Congress of the Peoples Against Imperialism

CPSU: Communist Party of the Soviet Union

DC: Democrazia Cristiana, Christian Democracy

ECSC: European Coal and Steel Community

EDC: European Defense Community

EEC: European Economic Community

EPC: European Political Community

ERP: European Recovery Program

EU: European Union

FIAT: Fabbrica Italiana Automobili Torino

FU: Federal Union

GL: Giustizia e Libertà

GUE/NGL: United Left–Nordic Green Left

IS: Internationale socialiste

ISK: Internationaler Sozialistischer Kampfbund

KG: Kaffir Group

LF: Libérer et Féderer

LSI: Labour and Socialist International

MDR: Movimento per la Democrazia Repubblicana

MFE: Movimento Federalista Europeo, European Federalist Movement

MLN: Mouvement de Libération Nationale

MSUSE: Movement for the Socialist United States of Europe

MUP: Movimento di Unità Proletaria, Movement of Proletarian Unity

MUR: Mouvements Unis de Résistance

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NEC: National Executive Committee (Labour Party)

NGL: see GUE/NGL

OEEC: Organisation for European Economic Cooperation

ON: Ordre Nouveau

OSS: Office of Strategic Services

OVRA: Opera Volontaria per la Repressione dell'Antifascismo

PCI: Communist Party of Italy

PEN: "Poets, Essayists, Novelists" Club

POUM: Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista, Party of Marxist Unification

POW: Prisoner of war

PSDI: Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano, Italian Democratic Socialist Party

PSI: Partito Socialista Italiano, Italian Socialist Party

PSIUP: Partito Socialista Italiano di Unità Proletaria, Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity

PSLI: Partito Socialista dei Lavoratori Italiani, Socialist Party of Italian Workers

PS—SIIS: Partito Socialista—Sezione Italiana dell'Internazionale Socialista, Socialist Party—Italian Section of the Socialist International

PSU: Partito Socialista Unitario, Unitary Socialist Party

PWE: Political Warfare Executive

RSI: Repubblica Sociale Italiana, Italian Social Republic

SDAP: Social Democratic Workers' Party of Germany

SFIO: Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière, French Section of the Workers' International

SMUSE: Socialist Movement for the United States of Europe

SOE: Special Operations Executive

SPD: Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, Social Democratic Party of Germany

SVG: Socialist Vanguard Group

UEF: Union of European Federalists

UEM: United Europe Movement

WCC: World Council of Churches

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Introduction

I—The Heretics of Federalism and Socialism: The Ventotene Moment

"The dictatorial State of our time has overturned all human relations, reinforced all privileges, replaced freedom with partisan laws, equality with military-style discipline and castes. In place of spontaneous and creative associations, it has forcibly imposed a coercive association—cold, impersonal, invasive, tyrannical, inhuman—that destroys all social life."[1] With these words, Carlo Rosselli, writing from Paris in September 1934 while in exile from Fascist Italy, opened a piece titled "Against the State" in the journal of his political movement, *Giustizia e Libertà* (Justice and Liberty), which he had co-founded in 1929.[2]

Although at first glance this may seem like the tirade of a pugnacious anarchist, akin to those Italy produced in droves at the turn of the twentieth century, Rosselli was, in fact, a democratic socialist—or, as he described himself with a somewhat enigmatic formula that I aim to unpack in this work, a "liberal-socialist"—who held a deep conviction in both the necessity of social struggle and the sanctity of individual freedom.[3] His article was not a call to destroy the state at all costs but rather a critique situating the European nation-state as a historically specific organizational form, which reached its maturity in the nineteenth century, only to face a crisis point in the aftermath of the First World War.

A few years later, in 1941, from the remoteness of a small penitentiary island in the middle of the Tyrrhenian Sea, two antifascist prisoners, Altiero Spinelli and Ernesto Rossi, echoed Rosselli's words in their revolutionary *Ventotene Manifesto*. For them, the nation-state had been, in the previous century, merely an organ of society. Now it had transformed into an absolute institution, "the master of subjects bound to serve it." This institutional change, through which the

[1] Carlo Rosselli, "Contro lo Stato," *Giustizia e Libertà*, September 21, 1934: "Lo Stato dittatoriale dei nostri giorni ha stravolto tutti i rapporti umani, puntellato tutti i privilegi, sostituito la libertà con la legge faziosa, l'eguaglianza con la disciplina di caserma e le caste. Al posto delle associazioni spontanee e creatrici ha fatto subentrare a forza una associazione coatta, gelida, impersonale, invadente, tirannica, inumana che distrugge tutta la vita sociale." (All translations from Italian, French, and German are mine, except when otherwise noted).

[2] *Giustizia e Libertà* is italicized to refer to the journal, while non-italicized Giustizia e Libertà denotes the political group.

[3] Most recently, Matthew McManus sought to define liberal socialism as "committed to instituting a basic social structure securing the equal emancipation of all society's members as a basis for their shared long-term flourishing." Matthew McManus, *The Political Theory of Liberal Socialism* (New York: Routledge, 2025), 17.

state came to exert ever greater influence over society, was underpinned by a cultural and epistemological shift in its conceptualization. The state had come to be regarded as "a divine entity," with its fascist and Nazi incarnations seen as tragic offshoots of this chimeric absurdity. What, then, is a nation-state to do when it has outlived its own justification?[4]

The *Ventotene Manifesto*, again reiterating Rosselli's ideas, proposed a clear solution: what was necessary was "[the] definitive abolition of [the] division of Europe into national, sovereign States [and] a federal reorganization of Europe."[5] Furthermore, the *Manifesto* argued that this revolution "must be socialist, that is, its goal must be the emancipation of the working classes and the realization of more humane living conditions for them."[6] For Spinelli and Rossi, federalism and socialism were not separate endeavors but two sides of the same coin: only through a united Europe could true social emancipation be achieved, and only through social emancipation could a united Europe endure. Just as democracy had never been a singular concept, requiring an adjective to define its substance (liberal, social, or Christian) so too for Spinelli and Rossi, federalism could not stand alone; it had to be socialist to fulfill its revolutionary promise.[7] It is with this text that we witness the culmination of two ideologies—federalism and socialism—melding into a single revolutionary vision for the future of Europe.

The ideas of the *Ventotene Manifesto* might seem surprising to contemporary readers, who often associate the twentieth-century European left, both communist and socialist, with a strong reliance on the State as the primary agent of social and economic justice, rooted in a rigid interpretation of Marxism.[8] Yet Rossi and Spinelli were far from isolated thinkers. They emerged

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[4] Ernesto Rossi and Altiero Spinelli, "Il Manifesto-Programma di Ventotene," in *Quaderni del Movimento per la Federazione Europea* 1 (1943): 1-18, Historical Archives of the European Union, European University Institute (hereafter, HAEU), Fonds Ernesto Rossi, ER-26. "[…] padrone di sudditi, tenuti a servirlo […]."

[5] Ibid., "[…] la definitiva abolizione della divisione dell'Europa in stati nazionali sovrani" and "una riorganizzazione federale dell'Europa."

[6] Ibid., "La rivoluzione europea […] dovrà essere socialista, cioè dovrà proporsi la emancipazione delle classi lavoratrici e la creazione per esse di condizioni più umane di vita."

[7] Martin Conway, "Democracy in Postwar Western Europe: The Triumph of a Political Model," *European History Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (January 2002): 61.

[8] Looking at the social-democratic context, the state's role in actively managing capitalism to protect society and ensure greater equality is generally emphasized. See Sheri Berman, *The Primacy of Politics: Social Democracy and the Making of Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Much of the contemporary debate on the left is shaped by a conception of politics that centers the state as a driver of innovation and inclusivity, following a genealogy rooted in Marxist theory. For example, see Mariana Mazzucato, *The Value of Everything: Making and Taking in the Global Economy* (London: Allen Lane, 2018), and *The Entrepreneurial State: Debunking Public vs. Private Sector Myths* (London: Anthem Press, 2013). Similarly, Chantal Mouffe redefines the state as a contested site for democratic reform, advocating "radical reformism" over revolutionary approaches. See Chantal Mouffe, *For a Left Populism* (London: Verso, 2018).

as prominent voices in a broader, pan-European movement of "heretic" political actors and groups who envisioned an alternative path for socialism—a third way that rejected statism and the authoritarianism of traditional socialist models. I use the religious term heretics in the sense that, just as the Christian sects of the Middle Ages opposed Church overreach, they resisted the ossification of socialist doctrine into a rigid, Party-controlled system. More a "milieu" than a political organization, this movement transcended party lines and national borders, operating in a trans-political and trans-national space. In their vision, federalism and socialism were not contradictory but mutually complementary, the former dismantling oppressive sovereignties and the latter ensuring social justice in a liberated Europe.[9]

To understand their positions, we turn back to Rosselli's piece mentioned at the outset. Writing in the turbulent 1930s, Rosselli articulated a political vision that challenged the dominant paradigms of his time, arguing that socialism should not be conflated with statism. Instead, he drew on an alternative tradition rooted in the nineteenth century—one that decentered Marx by placing him alongside figures such as Proudhon, Bakunin, and revolutionary radicals of the Risorgimento like Giuseppe Mazzini and Carlo Cattaneo. This heterodox lineage stood in stark contrast to the state-centric orientation of the major left-wing mass parties.[10]

Like Rossi and Spinelli, Rosselli, too, envisioned a socialist federation of European dimensions, designed to curtail the unchecked power of nation-states and end the anarchic international environment in which they vied for power and resources. Alongside American-style capitalism and Soviet collectivism, the new European "Third Force", as they would come to call it, would be socialist—confronting class oppression as the central issue eroding the foundations of European polity—and federalist, recognizing the international arena as the battleground where political and social tensions escalated into devastating wars. Rosselli, Rossi, and Spinelli formed a loose intellectual lineage, bound less by doctrine than by a common resistance to authoritarianism and a shared search for democratic renewal. Rosselli's liberal socialism was an early effort to reconcile individual freedom with social justice. Rossi carried that vision to Ventotene and, in conversation with Spinelli, helped reshape it into a federalist proposal forged in the experience of

[9] I use the term "milieu" in reference to Stuart Hall's description of the New Left in his essay, "Life and Times of the First New Left," where he portrays it as a loosely organized space characterized by a lack of rigid structures, flat hierarchies, and an emphasis on participatory politics and intellectual exchange. See Stuart Hall, "Life and Times of the First New Left," *New Left Review* 61 (2010): 177–196.

[10] Rosselli, "Contro lo Stato." "Divisi sulla tattica, essi tuttavia concordarono nel levarsi contro lo Stato, strumento dell'oppressione di classe; contro lo Stato, nemico della Società."

confinement. Their exchange produced a new political language—neither statist nor nationalist but grounded in an ambitious institutional imagination.

By examining the ideas and actions of figures such as Rosselli, Rossi, and Spinelli, along with their comrades, the journals they produced, the organizations they founded, and the initiatives they sought to bring to life, this work aims to reconstruct a neglected political tradition centered on one of its most ideologically avant-garde groups: the Italian antifascist exiles.[11] As the birthplace of Fascism, Italy was the first to develop an organized and theoretically consistent antifascist movement. However, before the war, this movement could only emerge under liminal and extreme conditions—either abroad, where it became intertwined with the political and cultural contexts of host nations and collaborated with local antifascists, or in spaces of internal exile, such as islands or confinement areas ("confino") like Ventotene.[12] While antifascism also operated clandestinely within Italy, it was in these contingent spaces that intellectual and political exchanges could occur, allowing new ideas to be nurtured and circulated into print.

The reimagining of political subjectivity attempted by the Italian exiles became a collective experience, shaped by the networks, debates, and media through which these ideas circulated. Much like the nineteenth-century exiles, who often operated as part of loosely connected movements, the "Ventotene Moment" was shaped by the "groupness" of its key actors.[13] Their project was not the work of solitary thinkers but of a transnational, militant community, one that saw itself as a vanguard with a shared mission to redefine European politics. Importantly, this sense of groupness was not just forged in Ventotene—it had already drawn the attention of the fascist secret police (Organization for Vigilance and Repression of Anti-Fascism, OVRA), which recognized them as a coherent and identifiable threat. This collective nature was crucial to its identity: it was through journals, pamphlets, and underground publications that these ideas were articulated and then reinforced as a shared ideological project. As I will argue, the media they produced was not merely a vehicle for communication but an essential part of the movement itself,

[11] Martin Conway and José Gotovitch have emphasized wartime exile as a crucial element of European history that influenced the postwar settlement—not just a temporary political contingency, but a phenomenon with lasting implications. See Martin Conway and José Gotovitch, *Europe in Exile: European Exile Communities in Britain 1940-45* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001), 3–4.

[12] See Dana Renga, Elisabeth Leake, and Piero Garofalo, *Internal Exile in Fascist Italy: History and Representations of Confino* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019).

[13] I use *groupness* in place *identity* to highlight the contingent nature of "Third Force" socialists as a collective, following Frederick Cooper and Rogers Brubaker's critique of identity as analytically ambiguous. See Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 70–77. See also, Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004).

forging cohesion among exiles spread across different locations. Their publications, often produced in conditions of extreme constraint, were thus more than theoretical exercises; they were acts of political construction, shaping both the discourse and the social reality of the "Third Force" they sought to create.

Italian antifascists looked to the Risorgimento revolutionaries as an example of moral commitment and cosmopolitan solidarity. By the 1930s, however, their identity had undergone a profound transformation. The exiles of the Risorgimento, such as Mazzini, saw themselves as representatives of an emerging Italian nation, and appealed to humanitarian frameworks that linked national self-determination with broader liberal ideals. Their exile was transnational in scope but remained fundamentally centered on the unification of Italy as the fulfillment of a national destiny. Mazzini's Young Europe (1834) envisioned a continent of free and sovereign nations, united by shared ideals but never beyond nationalism itself.[14]

With twentieth-century exiles, by contrast, two distinct processes of denationalization were at play. First, there was the one actively pursued by the "Third Force" activists themselves, who sought to transcend national boundaries by envisioning a supranational, federal Europe. The exiles of the "Ventotene Moment" operated in a radically different political landscape from their Risorgimento forerunners, grappling with Italy's failure to achieve social justice and uphold local autonomies.[15] In their writings, Italy itself seemed to recede into the background, absorbed into a larger vision of a federal Europe. This shift was not merely political but conceptual: while they inherited elements of the Risorgimento exile tradition, they consciously distanced themselves from its nationalist framework, replacing it with a supranational, European horizon.

[14] On the nature of Mazzini's European vision, see Fernanda Gallo, "The United States of Europe and the 'East(s)': Giuseppe Mazzini, Carlo Cattaneo, and Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso," in *Europe and the East: Historical Ideas of Eastern and Southeast Europe, 1789-1989*, edited by Mark Hewitson and Jan Vermeiren (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2023), 133–162; Maurizio Isabella, "Mazzini's Internationalism in Context: From the Cosmopolitan Patriotism of the Italian Carbonari to Mazzini's Europe of the Nations," in *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Globalisation of Democratic Nationalism 1830–1920*, edited by C. A. Bayly and Eugenio F. Biagini (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press for The British Academy, 2008), 36–58; Karma Nabulsi, "Patriotism and Internationalism in the 'Oath of Allegiance' to Young Europe," *European Journal of Political Theory* 5, no. 1 (2006): 61–70.

[15] The issue of federalism and local autonomy continues to be central in Italian political discourse, although it has been appropriated since the 1990s by the hard right, particularly the Lega Nord (now Lega). See Christophe Roux, "Italy's Path to Federalism: Origins and Paradoxes," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 13, no. 3 (2008): 325–339. On federalism during the Risorgimento, see also Daniel Ziblatt, *Structuring the State: The Formation of Italy and Germany and the Puzzle of Federalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

Second, a historiographical and political process unfolded that uprooted Ventotene from its Italian context. By casting the island into Europe's mythical past and detaching it from the realities of Fascist Italy, certain narratives obscured Ventotene's specifically Italian dimensions.[16] Despite its material "Italianness," its symbolic significance was redefined through the rhetorical and ideological framing of Rossi and Spinelli's Europeanism. This reframing later enabled European Union (EU) leaders to appropriate Ventotene as a foundational site of European integration, instead of an intrinsically Italian space.[17]

By recovering the "Italianness" of the antifascist Italian exiles, this work offers an Italian iteration of a broader European narrative—a glimpse into a distant chapter of Italy's history when federalism took shape as a dissident idea. This shift occurred because the dominant narrative was that of the nationalist Risorgimento, which was later problematically reappropriated by Fascism.[18] Figures like Gaetano Salvemini warned that Mazzini's "utopian theocratic system" could be dangerous.[19] In a sense, for "Third Force" socialists there were almost two Mazzinis: one who embodied humanist ideals, Young Europe, and a vision of international solidarity, and another who was reinterpreted through a narrowly nationalist lens. The exiles sought to preserve the former, arguing that while Mazzini had been prescient about Europe, he needed to be reconsidered in the framework of a federated European future. At the same time, just as they placed Proudhon alongside Marx in an effort to counterbalance the ossification of Marxist doctrine, they invoked Carlo Cattaneo to temper Mazzini's nationalist mysticism. In Cattaneo, they found a rationalist

[16] Cf. Luciana Castellina, "Take Care of European Society and Commit to Building Agents of Change," in *Reclaim the Manifesto of Ventotene: What Future for the EU?* (Brussels: GUE/NGL group in the European Parliament—VSA Hamburg, 2018), 17.

[17] Ventotene was recently designated as the "Historical and Moral Capital of European Values" and received the European Heritage Label. See the entry on the *Culture and Creativity* page of the European Commission, https://culture.ec.europa.eu/cultural-heritage/initiatives-and-success-stories/european-heritage-label/european-heritage-label-sites/ventotene-italy; Eleonora Vasques, "Ventotene Nominated Historical and Moral Capital of European Values," *Euractiv*, accessed February 17, 2025, https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/ventotene-nominated-historical-and-moral-capital-of-european-values/; "Ventotene and Santo Stefano: Historical Capitals of Moral and Intellectual Construction of European Values," *The Federalist Debate*, July 2022, https://www.federalist-debate.org/archive/year-xxxv-number-2-july-2022/federalist-action/ventotene-and-santo-stefano-historical-capitals-of-moral-and-intellectual-construction-of-european-values.

[18] Giovanni Gentile crystallized the Fascist reappropriation of Mazzini in his 1928 essay "The Philosophic Basis of Fascism," *Foreign Affairs* 6, no. 2 (1928): 290–304. See also Simon Levis Sullam, *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Origins of Fascism*, trans. Sergio Knipe and Oona Smyth, Italian and Italian American Studies, ed. Stanislao G. Pugliese (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[19] Gaetano Salvemini, *Mazzini* (London: Cape, 1956), 85. The original Italian version was published as *Il pensiero religioso, politico, sociale di Giuseppe Mazzini* (Messina: Trimarchi, 1905).

and historically informed alternative, offering a vision of a federated Italy within a federated Europe.[20]

Antifascist exiles operated in a radically different historical framework in yet another way, shaped by the failures of interwar democracy and the imperative for a supranational response to totalitarianism. On a more theoretical level, the "heretic" exiles of Italian socialism made a profound contribution to the broader anti-totalitarian struggle by recognizing early on the parallels between right- and left-wing regimes—a uniquely twentieth-century predicament for which the heroes of the Risorgimento could offer little guidance. It is in this context that the concept of a European "Third Force" should be understood. This "Third Force" emerged from a fresh analysis of modern despotism, framing the Soviet experiment—particularly under Stalin—as an inherently authoritarian regime on par with what was unfolding in Italy, Germany, and later, Spain.[21]

Figures like the historian Gaetano Salvemini, himself an exile, provided enduring inspiration for the antifascist milieu examined here. Speaking in Paris in 1935, Salvemini denounced Soviet repression, asserting that "freedom means the right to be heretical, non-conformist in the face of official culture […]," and warning of the "moral degradation" totalitarian regimes inflicted on both intellectuals and workers. Confronted earlier than their European counterparts with the realities of totalitarian repression, Italian antifascists engaged with the cultural and political roots of this crisis with exceptional depth.[22] The "Third Force" thus became not merely an ambition to reshape Europe's political landscape, but a vision for a federated continent united under the principles of socialism. It required a new kind of political militant,

[20] Thanks to the first inspirer of GL, Gaetano Salvemini, and its first academic champion, Norberto Bobbio. See Carlo Cattaneo, *Le più belle pagine di Carlo Cattaneo, scelte da Gaetano Salvemini* (Milano: Treves, 1922), now in *Civilization and Democracy: The Salvemini Anthology of Cattaneo's Writings*, ed. and introd. Carlo G. Lacaita and Filippo Sabetti, trans. David Gibbons (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2006); Carlo Cattaneo, *Stati Uniti d'Italia*, ed. Norberto Bobbio (Torino: Chiantore, 1945); Norberto Bobbio, *Una filosofia militante. Studi su Carlo Cattaneo* (Torino: G. Einaudi, 1971); and *Il federalismo: da Carlo Cattaneo verso gli Stati Uniti d'Europa*, writings by Norberto Bobbio and AntonLuigi Aiazzi (Firenze: Loggia de' Lanzi, 1996).

[21] Cf. Enzo Traverso, *Il totalitarismo. Storia di un dibattito* (Milan: Mondadori, 2002); Simona Forti, *Il totalitarismo* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2004); Bruno Bongiovanni, "Totalitarianism: The Word and the Thing," *Journal of Modern European History* 3, no. 1 (2005): 5–17; Stéfanie Prezioso, "Antifascism and Anti-Totalitarianism: The Italian Debate," *Journal of Contemporary History* 43, no. 4 (October 2008): 555–572; S. Fedele, ed., *Antifascismo e antitotalitarismo: critici italiani del totalitarismo negli anni Trenta* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2009). The Italian theory of totalitarianism developed alongside its German counterpart. See especially William David Jones, *The Lost Debate: German Socialist Intellectuals and Totalitarianism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

[22] Gaetano Salvemini, 'La difesa della cultura,' *Giustizia e Libertà*, 1935. Speech delivered at the International Congress of Writers, Paris, 1935. "[…] libertà significa il diritto di essere eretici, non conformisti di fronte alla cultura ufficiale […]." The complete texts of the Congress are now available in *Pour la défense de la culture: les textes du Congrès international des écrivains. Paris, juin 1935*, edited and introduced by Sandra Teroni and Wolfgang Klein (Dijon: Éditions universitaires de Dijon, 2005).

willing to oppose authoritarianism in all its forms, even when doing so meant challenging their own ideological loyalties.

"Third Force" thinkers, such as Rosselli, Rossi, and Spinelli, emphasized the importance of developing democratic, egalitarian, and humane political frameworks, prioritizing both individual and collective well-being.[23] In a political landscape where socialist thought often revolved around party formation or the dynamics of geopolitical alliances, the "Third Force" stood out as a striking alternative. It rejected attachment to any rigid political teleology or the pragmatics of geopolitical strategy, and embraced, instead, a vision rooted in universal principles.

The most glaring example of this divergence came with the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939. While Communists responded with unquestioning loyalty, the pact plunged the philo-communist majority of the Italian socialists into despair and confusion. The "Third Force," however, never harbored the illusion of sharing a common cultural or ethical foundation with the Communists. For them, the pact exemplified Communist strategic ruthlessness: a stark reminder of Communism's readiness to subordinate principles to political expediency.

For "Third Force" socialists, allegiance was, above all, to personal and political duty and to a vision that transcended the dictates of any bureaucratic hierarchy, including that of a party. The party, like the state, was viewed as an instrument of human action—a tool to serve a greater purpose—not as a superior entity to which the individual or group could be subordinated.[24] This approach reflected a Kantian emphasis on ethical autonomy and universalism. It did not present socialism as a framework confined by structural or strategic imperatives but as prioritizing justice, solidarity, and freedom as intrinsic goals.[25] The "United States of Europe," as they envisioned it,

[23] No specific study is available on the emergence of the term "Third Force" (or its variants, "third way," "third front"). To my knowledge, Carlo Rosselli was the first to consistently use the term "third way" in the early 1930s to describe a political space alternative to Soviet-style collectivism and capitalist individualism. See Norberto Bobbio, *Le ideologie e il potere in crisi: pluralismo, democrazia, socialismo, comunismo, terza via e terza forza* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1981) Giovanni Spadolini, *Il partito della democrazia: per una storia della "terza forza" da Giovanni Amendola ad oggi* (Florence: Passigli, 1983); Lamberto Mercuri, ed., *Sulla "Terza Forza"* (Rome: Bonacci, 1986); Maurizio Griffo, *La Terza Forza: Saggi e Profili* (Rome: Castelvecchi, 2018).

[24] A vision best articulated and developed to its fullest philosophical conclusions by Simone Weil in her *Note sur la suppression générale des partis politiques* (1943), first published seven years later in *La Table ronde* 26 (February 1950). This essay captured and crystallized a political instinct that was widespread in the liberal-socialist left.

[25] A clear example is Leonard Nelson, founder of the German Internationale Sozialistische Kampfbund in the early 1920s, who sought to apply Kantian ethics to socialism, critiquing Marxism while advocating for a revolutionary "liberal socialism" grounded in justice, solidarity, and ethical autonomy. See R.M. Douglas, "No Friend of Democracy: The Socialist Vanguard Group, 1941–50," *Contemporary British History* 16, no. 4 (2002): 51–86.

thus became not merely a political aspiration but a profound philosophical commitment to a new vision of the common good.

The figures at the center of this study—exiles, political heretics, and revolutionary thinkers—were often driven by an intensity of belief, whether explicit or unconscious, that set them apart from conventional party politics. They saw themselves not merely as political actors but as members of an enlightened minority, entrusted with the mission of forging a new world. This characteristic placed them in a long historical tradition of sect-like movements, from early Christian communities to utopian socialists and revolutionary vanguards. In their conviction and self-perception, they resembled what Yuri Slezkine described as millenarian sects: radical, faith-driven groups that sought to bring about a total transformation of society, whether through religious revelation or political revolution.[26]

Given the tragic intensity of the political times, "Third Force" socialists accepted both the challenge and the strategic potential of sectarianism in political work. Recently, Maurizio Viroli has shown how early modern and Enlightenment Italian thinkers sought to suppress sectarianism, whether religious or ideological, because of its propensity to generate division, fanaticism, and civil strife. In stark contrast, socialist federalists embraced sectarianism as a necessary, if dangerous, form of political commitment capable of breaking through the paralysis of interwar Europe. Theoretically, they reimagined the sect not as a source of dogma but as a site of political heresy, a disciplined and ethical minority resisting the bureaucratic inertia and ideological rigidity of the mass party form.[27]

Altiero Spinelli serves as a particularly revealing example of this sectarian impulse. As an avid consumer of both religious and revolutionary texts, he recognized in them a shared prophetic tone and an urgent belief in the necessity of change. In his memoir, Spinelli stressed the *Ventotene Manifesto*'s kinship with these historical sects. Like the early Christians who believed in the imminent return of Christ or the communists who foresaw the inevitable collapse of capitalism, he and his comrades had assumed that Europe's reorganization into a federalist system would follow

[26] See Yuri Slezkine, *The House of Government: A Saga of the Russian Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).
[27] Cf. Maurizio Viroli, *Prophetic Times: Visions of Emancipation in the History of Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023).

naturally from the war's end. In hindsight, Spinelli acknowledged that they had succumbed to the same optimistic fallacy that had shaped past revolutionary movements.[28]

In the 1930s, the factional, elitist nature of these movements was not dismissed but rather exalted as an incubator for revolutionary ideas, in direct opposition to the clerks of communism, such as György Lukács—himself influenced by Weber's sociological analysis—who warned against the sectarian isolation of revolutionary groups. Figures such as the libertarian socialist Andrea Caffi, discussed in Chapter Two, seemed to embrace this paradox, recognizing that a small, determined group was necessary to sustain palingenetic ambitions in the face of skepticism and resistance. Viewed through this lens, the *Ventotene Manifesto* appears not merely as a political program but as a declaration of faith. An assertion that a radical reimagining of Europe was both necessary and possible in the unique circumstances created by the war, making it a "Ventotene Moment." Like the early Christian sects before them, Spinelli and his fellow federalists understood that the challenge was first to formulate a vision of the future, and secondly to keep the fire of belief alive until the moment of transformation arrived. [29]

The "Ventotene Moment" thus represents a revolutionary opening, one of those fleeting "moments of opportunity" where systemic crises, wartime dislocation, and ideological ferment create the conditions for radical transformation.[30] It functions as both a climax, in which historical contingencies make political rupture possible, and a discursive act, where revolutionary texts like the *Ventotene Manifesto* serve as performative interventions that seek to shape political reality. By articulating a socialist-federalist vision in the midst of war, Spinelli, Rossi, and their milieu attempted to forge a new political horizon beyond both the failed nation-state system and the authoritarianism of fascism and Stalinism. Their *Manifesto* was not just a theoretical critique but a strategic discursive maneuver, designed to galvanize a revolutionary vanguard and inscribe a new political subject—the European federalist socialist—into the historical process.

A further contextualization I undertake is to situate the Ventotene group against the diverse conditions intellectuals faced during the Second World War, inviting us to view their formation on its own terms, beyond subsequent teleologies of postwar reconstruction. While Julia

[28] Altiero Spinelli, *Come ho tentato di diventare saggio* (Bologna: Mulino, 1984), 311.
[29] Cf. György Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971).
[30] Cf. Gerd-Rainer Horn and Padraic Kenney, eds., *Transnational Moments of Change: Europe 1945, 1968, 1989* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).

Eichenberg's "London Moment" project, which analyzes how governments-in-exile forged political legitimacy during the Second World War, my use of "Ventotene Moment" follows a more "Pocockian" approach, which emphasizes contingent discursive formations and ideological shifts rather than state-centered exile politics. Unlike London's centralized exile networks, where diplomatic elites worked within institutional frameworks, Italian antifascists operated in precarious, multi-local settings (from Ventotene to Cairo) without even the possibility of a government-in-exile. Their experience highlights a leaderless, shifting political milieu that was neither state-backed nor institutionally anchored, making the "Ventotene Moment" not just a political exile episode but a rupture in the political imagination of wartime resistance forces.[31]

Although these figures are often celebrated as early visionaries of European unity, their story resists the narrative arc that links antifascist resistance seamlessly to postwar reconstruction. Theirs was not a prelude to success, but an improvised, internally fractured response to a political and moral crisis that offered no guarantees. Later triumphs—military, institutional, or discursive—can obscure the fragility and contingency of their efforts. This study, therefore, avoids reading the "Ventotene Moment" as the inevitable prologue to European integration, and instead treats it as a radical experiment born of disorientation, rupture, and the absence of clear horizons.

The stories of the figures discussed in this work resist the narrative arc that links antifascist resistance seamlessly to postwar reconstruction. Their political projects were not preludes to success, but improvised and internally fractured responses to a deep political and moral crisis, undertaken without certainty of outcome. As Marco Bresciani has recently argued, the retrospective triumph of 1945 often obscures the fragility and contingency that defined the interwar and wartime antifascist milieu.[32] This study, therefore, does not treat the "Ventotene Moment" as the inevitable prologue to European integration, but rather as a radical experiment born of disorientation, rupture, and the absence of clear horizons.

Though the Second World War provided the conditions for Europeanism to emerge as a widespread sentiment, peaking in the "Ventotene Moment," its intellectual and political origins

[31] Julia Eichenberg, "Macht auf der Flucht: Europäische Regierungen in London (1940-1944)," *Zeithistorische Forschungen* 15, no. 3 (2018): 452–473; Julia Eichenberg, *The London Moment: Governments in Exile in the Second World War*, *The London Moment* research project, accessed February 17, 2025, https://exilegov.hypotheses.org/. A more useful comparative model is provided by Conway and Gotovitch's in *Europe in Exile*, although here, Italy remains absent.

[32] Marco Bresciani, *Learning from the Enemy: An Intellectual History of Antifascism in Interwar Europe* (London: Verso, 2024). The book was originally published in Italian as *Quale antifascismo? Storia di Giustizia e Libertà* (Rome: Carocci, 2017).

must be sought in the ideological ferment of the interwar years, where federalist and socialist thought intersected in unexpected ways. The Italian invasion of Ethiopia (1935-1936) laid bare fascism's ambitions to be a solution to domestic pressures and challenges (in a way that threatened but also usurped socialist ideas) and, in parallel, a force with imperialist aspirations. It catalyzed a global anti-imperial antifascist movement, drawing in activists of color and colonial subjects who viewed the aggression as emblematic of the profound entanglement between fascism and European imperialism.[33] Against this backdrop, the most ambitious articulations of the European idea emerged, not within the regimented mass parties of the left, but in the heretical sects and dissident formations proliferating in the fragmented and embattled terrain of the democratic left in exile, which form the specific focus of this study. Members of Giustizia e Libertà, factions of the Italian Socialist Party, and its many splinter groups, embodied the "heretical, non-conformist" spirit praised by Salvemini.

The experience of the Spanish Civil War offered another decisive political lesson: Stalinism lacked a moral or even ideological core. It was a dynamic system that sustained itself by destroying the supposed enemies of socialism or communism and, when expedient, even its own members. This insight was foundational in shaping the political trajectory of the figures at the center of this study. For international socialists, the tragedy was clear: why should they fight alongside Stalinists if they stood ready to destroy them? Witnessing the purges, betrayals, and sectarian violence in the Republican camp vindicated their view of Stalinism. Soviet totalitarianism was indeed a mirror image of the fascist threat they were fighting. This anti-Stalinist stance fueled their advocacy for a new political framework beyond the constraints of both nationalism and party orthodoxy.[34] Championing the necessity of a European federation and proposing concrete plans to bring it to fruition, they transformed the democratic left, opening new spaces for political theorization and action. Their struggle involved the task of rebuilding a relevant socialist international movement after its collapse following the First World War, with European federalism as the minimum program around which to unite.

It was an uphill and ultimately unsuccessful battle to revolutionize the European political landscape, leaving a long trail of casualties in its wake. The first and most emblematic were Carlo

[33] See Giuliana Chamedes, "How to Do Things with Words: Antifascism as a Differentially Mobilizing Ideology, from the Popular Front to the Black Power Movement," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 84, no. 1 (January 2023): 127–155.
[34] Bresciani, *Learning*, 142.

Rosselli and his brother Nello, assassinated in France in 1937. By the early 1950s, the movement had exhausted its political capital. This was also a project that concealed an unresolved tension: while it sought to overcome the destructive logic of the nation-state, it risked reproducing its core features at a higher level. The federalist critique was animated by direct experience of the overbearing and totalising power of the state, particularly as it had hardened into its totalitarian form during the interwar decades. For the antifascist intellectuals examined in this study, European federalism offered a supranational framework through which the sovereign state could be neutralised. However, the vision advanced in documents such as the *Ventotene Manifesto* also revealed a paradox. The creation of a "United States of Europe" might eliminate war between European powers, but only by forming another geopolitical bloc operating in a lawless international system. In this way, the federalist solution risked postponing rather than resolving the problem of international anarchy. Its gestures toward a future global federation remained vague and deferred. This pointed to a symptom of a postimperial European imaginary that could no longer dominate the world but was unwilling to relinquish the grammar of power.

The aspirations for a socialist, federated Europe reached a significant peak during the Second World War. For a brief moment, the Europeanist momentum sparked by the *Ventotene Manifesto* and the political movement it inspired seemed to promise genuine transformation. The *Manifesto* itself emerged as the foremost symbol of European unification and remains a mythologised cornerstone of the European project, emblematic both of its utopian ambitions and its internal contradictions—above all, the unresolved tension between the nation-state and a post-national political imagination. Its authors, Spinelli and Rossi, are now celebrated as near-saintly figures in the history of the European Union, despite the stark disjunction between their visionary programme and the EU's eventual form.[35] The testament of "Third Force" socialism survives less in institutional memory than as a subterranean current within contemporary political culture.

[35] See Uffe Østergård, "Europe's Saints: The Official Construction of a History of the European Union," in J. Peter Burgess, ed., *Museum Europa: The European Cultural Heritage between Economics and Politics* (Kristiansand: Norwegian Academic Press, 2003), 31–66.

II—Historiography

Despite the enduring popularity and near canonization of the *Ventotene Manifesto*, the two main historiographical fields examined in this research—the history of Western European socialism and the history of early European integration and Europeanist ideas—offer little insight into the "Third Force" tradition. The scholarship in both areas is indeed vast, but studies specifically dedicated to the history of socialist Europeanism remain conspicuously scarce, not only in the Italian context but across the continent. In my view, the decline of "Third Force" socialism in the postwar period may partly explain this historiographical silence. There might also be a broader discomfort in addressing a political culture that lacks firm grounding in a single organized movement or a singular, iconic thinker. Defining the "Third Force" in clear terms is also challenging, as the concept took on various forms depending on the context in which it was employed. Consequently, in this work I adopted a contextualist approach, an "emic" perspective relying on the conceptualizations provided by the figures examined in each chapter rather than attempting to propose a universal definition.[36]

The multifaceted nature of the "Third Force" is best understood through the words of its representatives, which illuminate its ideological, ethico-normative, and strategic dimensions. Ideologically, Luciano Bolis saw the "Third Force" as an antitotalitarian stance rooted in democratic socialism, opposing both fascist and Marxist totalitarianism while rejecting imperialism "from any side." Ethico-normatively, Leo Valiani emphasized its commitment to "the development of global democracy and popular self-government" over "the nationalization of factories." Strategically, Altiero Spinelli argued that democracy could be achieved only through "a unity of the democratic peoples of Europe."[37] This conceptual complexity is matched by the impossibility of pinning down the 'Third Force' to any specific party. It was, instead, a political outlook that connected thinkers and activists across diverse groups and transcended state borders.

[36] The emic/etic distinction was first introduced by anthropologists such as Kenneth Pike in the 1950s to illustrate the differing ways cultural knowledge is constructed and understood. Later, intellectual historians, including Martin Jay, adopted this conceptual framework to analyze the interaction between distant cultural traditions. See Martin Jay, *Genesis and Validity: The Theory and Practice of Intellectual History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022), pp. 7, 18.

[37] Luciano Bolis, *Intervista sull'antifascismo*, ed. Piero Graglia, *Nuova Antologia* (January–March 1992): 252–70, at 264; Leo Valiani, *Tutte le strade conducono a Roma* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1983), 121; Altiero Spinelli, "L'Europa al bivio. Il Cominform," *Il Mattino del Popolo*, February 26, 1948, now in *Europa terza forza: politica estera e difesa comune negli anni della guerra fredda: scritti 1947–1954*, ed. Piero S. Graglia (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2000), 101.

The ideas and practices of "Third Force" socialists have often slipped through the cracks of a historiography of socialism that largely neglects the significance of internationalism and transnational networks, especially after the First World War.[38] Exemplary, in this sense, is Donald Sassoon's *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, which tends to disregard the function of internationalism for European socialists. Sassoon sees internationalism as a purely rhetorical tool that Socialist parties used for their propaganda. Similarly, in his comprehensive history of Western socialism, Geoff Eley examines internationalism in the twentieth century primarily through the lens of the Comintern, treating it as an offshoot of Russian national interests. This approach reduces the complexity of socialist internationalist ideas to a limited understanding of internationalism. In doing so, it neglects its broader implications.[39] Such a reductive approach oversimplifies the complexity of socialist internationalist ideas, ignoring both their broader implications and cultural significance. By framing internationalism so narrowly, we risk overlooking its transformative potential as a driving force in shaping the ideals and networks that transcended national boundaries.

One important exception in recent years, and a key inspiration for this research, has been the work of Talbot Imlay. *The Practice of Socialist Internationalism* demonstrated the enduring relevance of socialist internationalism from the 1910s to the 1960s. However, by only focusing on the three major Western parties (SPD, SFIO, Labour), Imlay overlooked a more extensive intellectual and political movement of nonconformist left-wing thinkers. These thinkers, although not aligned with these main parties, made significant material and ideological contributions to socialism.[40] Limiting the analysis to just three countries also risks absolutizing the notion of

[38] The few works available date back to the early 1980s or before and focus almost exclusively on the national context, paying scant attention to the supranational network existing among European socialists. See William E. Paterson, "The German Social Democratic Party and European Integration in Emigration and Occupation," *European History Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (October 1975): 429–41; Michael Newman, "British Socialists and the Question of European Unity, 1939–45," *European Studies Review* 10, no. 1 (January 1980): 75–100; Jonathan Schneer, "Hopes Deferred or Shattered: The British Labour Left and the Third Force Movement, 1945–49," *The Journal of Modern History* 56, no. 2 (1984): 197–226. The exception here is Mark Gilbert's "The Sovereign Remedy of European Unity: The Progressive Left and Supranational Government, 1935–1945," *International Politics* 46, no. 1 (2009): 28–47.

[39] See Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 2002. Other similar examples include Berman, *The Primacy*; Stefano Bartolini, *The Political Mobilization of the European Left, 1860–1980: The Class Cleavage*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000; Marc Lazar (eds.), *La Gauche en Europe depuis 1945: Invariants et Mutations du Socialisme Européen*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1996; Albert S. Lindemann, *A History of European Socialism*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1983.

[40] Cf. Talbot Imlay, *The Practice of Socialist Internationalism: European Socialists and International Politics, 1914–1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). An important predecessor to Imlay's work was Guillaume Devin,

socialism, even within the confined world of Western Europe. Perhaps the biggest weakness in Imlay's work is the exclusion of the socialist movements of southern Europe. While it is true that Italian socialists were unable to openly participate in the political life of their country from 1922 to 1943, this is precisely why many of them were forced to operate outside their homelands. They formed large groups of political émigrés in France, England, and Switzerland, significantly enriching the debates and political dialectics of international socialism.

Marco Bresciani has begun to close this historiographical gap by illuminating the significance of exile and the transnational networks of Giustizia e Libertà, framing antifascism as a plural and often contradictory field of political experimentation. While deeply indebted to his work, this thesis focuses more narrowly on a specific strand of Italian non-communist socialism, adopting a trans-partisan lens to trace a loose but coherent "groupness" around the idea of a "Third Force." This leads us to place different emphasis on critical historical turning points: for example, whereas Bresciani centers the Spanish Civil War as a key moment of ideological crisis and recomposition, I take Ventotene and the Second World War as the main vantage point for analyzing both interwar and postwar developments.[41]

Brian Shaev offered a detailed analysis of French and German socialists' commitment to internationalism and their efforts to create a unified European political community, particularly through "Third Force" politics after WWII. By the late 1940s, the SPD and SFIO had instrumentally adopted the "Third Force" concept to resist the emerging Cold War blocs, balancing domestic opposition to communism with resistance to a military bloc hostile to the USSR. Shaev highlighted the importance of these positions in postwar Europe, urging further comparative research, particularly on Italian and British socialists.[42] Meanwhile, Christian Bailey's *Between Yesterday and Tomorrow* sought to challenge the teleological and narrow historiography of European integration, focusing on diverse, interwar visions of European unity, especially among German socialists and the left-wing group Internationaler Sozialistischer Kampfbund (ISK). Bailey critiqued the postwar integration narrative for being overly centered on elite political

L'internationale socialiste: Histoire et Sociologie du Socialisme International, 1945-1990, Paris, Les Presses de Sciences Po, 1993.

[41] Cf. Bresciani, *Learning*, 138.

[42] See Brian Shaev, *"Estrangement and Reconciliation: French Socialists, German Social Democrats and the Origins of European Integration, 1948-1957,"* ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2014; Id., "Opposition et Réconciliation: Les socialistes français, les sociaux-démocrates allemands et les origines de l'intégration européenne," *L'OURS* 74-75 (2016): 79-88.

figures, advocating for a broader, comparative understanding of European integration that incorporates intellectual and grassroots contributions.[43] Shaev and Bailey's works provided valuable methodological and empirical support for my research, despite their limited genealogical examination of the ideological roots of "Third Force" socialism in the interwar period and its significance as a distinct theoretical approach to left-wing politics.

Another significant contribution is Jan de Graaf's *Socialism across the Iron Curtain*, which examines socialist parties throughout Eastern and Western Europe in the early postwar period. De Graaf's focus on national contexts and postwar reconstruction highlights how domestic concerns often overshadowed internationalist or European ambitions. The Socialist International served as a symbolic and organizational reference for socialist unity, but its practical influence in the immediate postwar years was limited and fractured. De Graaf's limited engagement with the prewar period leaves unexplored how earlier socialist debates shaped (or failed to shape) postwar strategies. At the same time, the minimal role of the European project in his analysis may itself be revealing, suggesting that many socialist parties were simply not deeply invested in European integration, prioritizing national recovery and political survival instead.[44]

After the pioneering work of Walter Lipgens, which focused on recovering the Europeanist thought of the anti-fascist Resistance during WWII, historians of European integration have largely approached the early phase of the European project through comparative overviews of national political dynamics.[45] In particular, the influential "realist" narrative introduced by Alan Milward in *The European Rescue of the Nation State* shaped the perception of the European project as only driven by narrow national economic interests.[46] Andrew Moravcsik's more nuanced liberal intergovernmentalist understanding in *The Choice for Europe* did not significantly alter this view,

[43] Christian Bailey, *Between Yesterday and Tomorrow: German Visions of Europe, 1926-1950* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013).
[44] Jan de Graaf, *Socialism Across the Iron Curtain: Socialist Parties in East and West and the Reconstruction of Europe after 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).
[45] See Walter Lipgens, *A History of European Integration, vol. 1, 1945-1947: The Formation of the European Unity Movement* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982). See also Walter Lipgens and Wilfried Loth, eds., *Documents on the History of European Integration*, 4 vols. (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1985–1991). Another dated but relevant book that provides insight into this inarticulate world is Willy Buschak, *Das Londoner Büro: Europäische Linkssozialisten in der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Amsterdam: Stichting Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, 1981).
[46] Alan S. Milward, *The European Rescue of the Nation-State* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992). See also Alan S. Milward, "Springs of Integration," in *The Question of Europe,* ed. Alan S. Milward (London: Verso, 1997), 5–20.

positioning Europe as the result of rational choices made by national leaders responding to economic interests that evolved slowly in response to structural incentives in the global economy.[47]

Ultimately, an approach predicated on strict national concerns tends to sideline transnational networks that extended beyond narrow domestic lines. It also overlooks the broader, more dynamic forces that propelled European integration—a project certainly shaped by economic calculus, but also by political imagination. Notably, the collective will of a continent striving to transcend its divisive past. Martin Conway's argument that Europeanization was not a singular or fixed trajectory but rather a historically contingent and plural process offers a useful corrective, highlighting how different forms of Europeanization developed in parallel, often outside dominant institutional and economic narratives.[48] In this framework, the role of smaller nations, too, which Moravcsik downplays, emerges as essential to understanding the multiple, competing visions of European unity that coexisted throughout the twentieth century.[49]

Wolfram Kaiser's pioneering work on Christian Democracy has reinvigorated scholarly interest in the political projects and ideas that shaped the early European project, with particular emphasis on the transnational networks of ideas and political practices that supported it.[50] While Kaiser's work has significantly influenced my research, his interpretation of European integration creates the impression that little occurred outside the Christian Democratic world. Moreover, surprisingly, his analysis overlooks the experience of Italian Christian Democrats, further contributing to the marginalization of Italy in the historiography of early European integration. In this context, Paolo Acanfora's recent work serves as an important corrective, bringing Italy's role in this critical historical process into sharper focus.[51] What Kaiser's work calls for, however, is a similarly comprehensive transnational history of the socialist counterpart—a gap that I hope this work will begin to address, laying a brick for its construction.

Regarding a more strictly intellectual history, the growing interest in the overlooked strands of Europeanism as an ideological tradition has prompted historians to revisit the forerunners of

[47] Andrew Moravcsik, *The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht*, (Ithaca: N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1998).
[48] Martin Conway, "Conclusion," in *Europeanization in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Martin Conway and Kiran Klaus Patel (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 271-277.
[49] Martin Conway, *The Sorrows of Belgium: Liberation and Political Reconstruction, 1944-1947* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1–12.
[50] Wolfram Kaiser, *Christian democracy and the origins of European Union*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
[51] Paolo Acanfora, *Miti e ideologia nella politica estera DC* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2013).

European federalism from the interwar years, such as Luigi Einaudi and Richard Nikolaus Coudenhove-Kalergi.[52] Notably, Mark Hewitson and Matthew D'Auria's *Europe in Crisis* explores the intellectual origins of European integration, emphasizing the continuity of interwar concerns about peace, German militarism, Soviet communism, and unrestrained capitalism. This volume illustrates that European federalism arose from long-standing debates and ideological currents, challenging the narrative of spontaneous antifascist initiatives and highlighting the intellectual foundations that shaped the European project.[53] Furthermore, *Europe in Crisis* assesses the continuities and discontinuities between the interwar and postwar periods, demonstrating that post-1945 integration was not a complete rupture from earlier political and ideological trends. Instead, the challenges facing postwar Europe often extended prewar concerns, with many key political and bureaucratic figures remaining influential across both periods. This perspective, which emphasizes both the transformative changes and the enduring influence of interwar political and cultural frameworks, is central to my own research.

Recent works in the history of ideas of Europe, such as Anthony Pagden's *The Pursuit of Europe* and Shane Weller's *The Idea of Europe*, provide deep historical analyses of Europe's conceptual evolution, tracing its roots back to classical Greece.[54] Despite differences in scope and tone, both ultimately seek to distill competing visions of Europe into a stable meta-concept. However, I believe that a narrower historical perspective may better emphasize the contingency of Europe's character and its shifting borders across rhetorical contexts. Broad analyses often obscure the contrasts between competing visions, failing to fully illuminate their inherent dissimilarities.[55]

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[52] See Menno Spiering and Michael J. Wintle, eds., *Ideas of Europe Since 1914: The Legacy of the First World War*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002; Elisabeth Du Réau, *L'idée d'Europe au XXe siècle: Des mythes à la réalité*, Bruxelles: Complexe, 1995; Michael J. Wintle and M. Spiering, *European Identity and the Second World War*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

[53] Mark Hewitson and Matthew D'Auria, eds., *Europe in Crisis: Intellectuals and the European Idea, 1917-1957*, New York: Berghahn Books, 2012.

[54] See Anthony Pagden, *The Pursuit of Europe: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021). See also Pagden's edited volume, *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Shane Weller, *The Idea of Europe: A Critical History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021). Other notable works include Geert Mak, *In Europe: Travels Through the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon, 2007); Perry Anderson, *The New Old World* (London: Verso, 2009); Meno Spiering and Michael Wintle, eds., *European Identity and the Second World War* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Eszter Salgó, *Images from Paradise: The Visual Communication of the European Union's Federalist Utopia* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017); Patrick Pasture, *Imagining European Unity since 1000 AD* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Gerald Delanty, *The European Heritage: A Critical Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 2018); Gerald Delanty, *Formations of European Modernity: A Historical and Political Sociology of Europe* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019);

[55] For example, unsuccessful visions may be discounted, making the work of scholars such as Gusejnova and Gosewinkel particularly relevant. See Dina Gusejnova, *European Elites and Ideas of Empire, 1917–1957*, Cambridge:

Furthermore, these works devote little attention to smaller, yet impactful, texts like the *Ventotene Manifesto*, mentioning them only in passing while focusing on canonical figures such as Immanuel Kant and Isaiah Berlin. I argue, however, that documents like the *Ventotene Manifesto* often wielded greater political influence in shaping recent history than the works of these more celebrated thinkers.

The historiographical treatment of documents such as the *Ventotene Manifesto* reflects broader trends in the study of socialism and Europeanist ideas. Histories of socialism have often overlooked the *Manifesto*'s strong socialist foundations, partly because its authors were unaffiliated with major Socialist parties in their country and espoused unorthodox, syncretic views that blended liberal and socialist principles. Meanwhile, historians of European integration interpreted the *Manifesto* mainly as an ideological precursor to postwar Europeanism—a starting point for a supposed trajectory toward European unification, culminating in the establishment of the first European institutions.[56] What I propose, instead, is that we analyze the *Manifesto* and the intellectual milieu from which it emerged as an attempt to reconfigure the European polity from a democratic yet revolutionary socialist perspective, deeply rooted in the cultural and political rhetoric shaped by the legacy of the First World War. Socialist Europeanism and the ideas of a "Third Force" largely represented the culmination and final chapter of that tradition. The failure of socialist federalists to realize their vision between 1945 and 1954 partly reflects their inability to adapt its message to the new realities of the postwar era.

III—Outline and Conclusions

The *Ventotene Manifesto* serves as a compass guiding this research and is addressed in Chapter One. By reconstructing the intellectual and political climate in which it was first conceived and examining the immediate effects of its circulation, I demonstrate how it embodied the aspirations of a generation of revolutionary thinkers and activists, inspiring actions across the continent. It also represented a pivotal attempt to provide theoretical clarity to a problem central

Cambridge University Press, 2016, and Dieter Gosewinkel, ed., *Anti-Liberal Europe: A Neglected Story of Europeanization*, Oxford/New York: Berghahn Books, 2015.

[56] Historian Antonella Braga referred to it as a "mythical rereading of the document." See Braga, "The Words of Ventotene: A Historical-Critical Analysis of the Ventotene Manifesto," in Robert Belot and Daniela Preda, eds., *Visions of Europe in the Resistance: Figures, Projects, Networks, Ideals* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2022), 291–317.

to Italian revolutionary culture since at least the mid-19th century, rooted in the ideas of Mazzini and Cattaneo. The concept of political language, as introduced by Pocock, is particularly relevant here, emphasizing it as a specialized vocabulary that shapes political discourses. Such languages are adopted by different authors, and travel between discursive contexts.[57] The *Manifesto* illustrates how the language of socialist federalism functioned as both a rhetorical tool and theoretical framework, marking the culmination of a longstanding vision that inspired postwar efforts to build a "Third Force" socialist Europe as an alternative to the emerging Manichaean dynamics of the Cold War.

Recognizing the *Manifesto*'s dual role as both a reflection of historical aspirations nurtured during the interwar period and a catalyst for postwar political efforts, this research adopts an unconventional chronology. In Chapter Two, I thus move backward in time to explore the emergence of "Third Force" ideas in the 1930s, with a focus on the "heretic" milieu of the Giustizia e Libertà group and their publications, contrasted against similar journals produced by members of the Italian Socialist Party in exile. As I argue, the methods later employed by Rossi and Spinelli, the language they articulated, and the connections they forged—both in Italy and across Europe—can only be fully understood when traced back to the interwar political climate. This period was marked by key milestones in the antifascist movement, including the rise of Hitler and the Spanish Civil War.

In Chapter Three, I trace the journey of the Giustizia e Libertà group to an unexpected setting: Egypt. There, a young member of the group, Paolo Vittorelli, endeavored to rebuild the organization after the German occupation of Paris had forced its members to disperse. This chapter explores how GL Egypt emerged as the only fully organized wing of the movement during World War II, operating semi-independently while receiving support from British forces. Despite scarce resources and numerous challenges, Vittorelli and his collaborators produced impactful antifascist publications, adapted GL's socialist and federalist ideals to the conditions of exile, and actively engaged with the broader antifascist milieu in the Middle East, thereby contributing a distinctive chapter to the development of "Third Force" socialist thought.

In Chapter Four, I return to Europe to examine the efforts of Italian "Third Force" socialists in Switzerland and their eventual return to Italy between 1941 and 1947, focusing on their

[57] See especially J. G. A. Pocock, *Politics, Language, and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989 [orig. pub. 1971]), pp. 3–41.

contributions to the resistance and their postwar vision of European unity. This chapter contrasts the federalist visions of two key groups: Ignazio Silone's Foreign Office of the Italian Socialist Party, which emphasized grassroots autonomy and decentralization—what I describe, using contemporary terminology, as "Proudhonian" federalism—and Altiero Spinelli and Ernesto Rossi's European Federalist Movement, which championed a centralized supranational European federation, characterized as "Hamiltonian" federalism. Their activities in Switzerland highlight the ideological diversity within antifascist circles and underscore the complexities of forging a unified vision for European federalism during and after the war.

Finally, in Chapter Five, I explore the efforts of European socialist non-conformists between 1947 and 1954 to establish an independent continental federation along "Third Force" lines, amid shifting political landscapes shaped by the Marshall Plan, Cold War tensions, and domestic challenges faced by socialist parties. The chapter examines how these non-conformists—particularly Italian figures like Altiero Spinelli, Ernesto Rossi, Paolo Vittorelli, and Ignazio Silone—navigated ideological rifts inside the leftwing camp, shifting alliances, and the growing dominance of technocratic and conservative approaches to European integration, ultimately revealing how their federalist ambitions were marginalized by the rising prominence of nationalist agendas and incrementalist approaches to unification.

Recovering and understanding the forms socialist federalism took, and the phases it underwent—even within a relatively brief historical period and specific milieu—is not merely an exercise in antiquarianism. Instead, it brings to light a bold and imaginative tradition that saw Europe as a space to pursue freedom, solidarity, and justice—not a battlefield between rival nation-states.

Ultimately, internal divisions, theoretical discrepancies, and an unreceptive political context undermined the possibility of realizing the "Third Force" dream of a Socialist United States of Europe, causing its legacy to fade from mainstream historical narratives. What is surprising, however, is that elements of this political and cultural tradition continue to endure, inspiring political action today, while at times being misappropriated by other political groups.

In this regard, my work also serves to complicate the contemporary appropriation of these ideas by European Union institutions, particularly their invocation of the *Ventotene Manifesto*. By disentangling these historical visions from current political frameworks, we can better grasp their

original aspirations, the challenges they confronted, and their potential to inspire alternative models of integration in the present day.

Chapter One—The Manifesto Moment: Ventotene in Context (1941-1944)

I— Jacobin Utopianism and European Unity

In 1941, Ernesto Rossi and Altiero Spinelli, two veteran members of the Italian anti-fascist opposition, collaborated on a pamphlet entitled "For a Free and United Europe, A Draft Manifesto."[58] The document became known as the *Ventotene Manifesto*, after the island in Southern Italy where the two were detained. The *Manifesto* called for the unification of Europe under a strong federal government—what the authors saw as the necessary steppingstone towards a future global commonwealth. According to Rossi and Spinelli, the war was giving rise to a revolutionary situation in which the defeated Axis powers would leave behind a material and institutional vacuum that Resistance groups must seize upon, imposing a new continental order, even by force if necessary. The creation of the "United States of Europe" would finally curb the absolute sovereignty of the nation-states responsible for the recurring European Civil War.[59] A federal system would secure peace through legal means and equality under a socialist economy. To achieve this goal, Rossi and Spinelli proposed the establishment of a revolutionary federalist party led by a cadre of militants willing to engage in the necessary political work. Crucially, the *Manifesto* foresaw that they envisaged such engagement even in the most challenging illegal situations.

[58] Rossi and Spinelli, "Il Manifesto-Programma di Ventotene," in *Quaderni*, 1 (1943), 1-18, HAEU, Fonds Ernesto Rossi, ER-26. This hectographed copy and a coeval printed copy, also published in Milan in 1943 on the *Quaderni,* are the earliest specimens of the *Manifesto* available today. The 1943 version contains only minor changes compared to the 1941 draft, according to the testimonies of the drafters. A second edition was edited and published by fellow Ventotene detainee Eugenio Colorni in 1944. See Ernesto Rossi and Altiero Spinelli, "Problemi della Federazione Europea," with an introduction by Eugenio Colorni (1944), now in Sergio Pistone, eds., *Il Manifesto di Ventotene* (Turin: Fondazione Luigi Einaudi, 2017). For an examination of the historiographical issue regarding the *Manifesto*'s editions, see Giulia Vassallo, "Il Manifesto di Ventotene: Premesse per un'Edizione Critica. Parte I. Problematiche filologiche e circolazione del documento," *Eurostudium*, 11 (2011), 4-125. The 1944 Manifesto, translated, is available on the Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe's website at: https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/the_manifesto_of_ventotene_1941-en-316aa96c-e7ff-4b9e-b43a-958e96afbecc.html (accessed October 4, 2024).

[59] On the "European Civil War," see Enzo Traverso, *Fire and Blood: The European Civil War 1914-1945* (London-New York: Verso, 2016).

Despite its revolutionary message, the *Ventotene Manifesto* is now celebrated by intellectuals and politicians across the political spectrum as a foundational text of the European Union.[60] But where does its true significance and impact lie? In the first part of this chapter, I seek to recover the essence of the *Manifesto* by closely analyzing its rhetoric and radicalism, situating it within the turbulent and rapidly shifting atmosphere of the antifascist resistance. Only by understanding it as a product of interwar revolutionary thought can we grasp its original significance, free from the current mythologizing of the European project. In the second part, I examine how Rossi and Spinelli turned to the manifesto format to propagate their ideas, drawing on a long tradition of 19th- and early 20th-century revolutionary manifestos. As a specific literary genre, the political manifesto served as a potent rhetorical tool, essential for articulating their radical visions amid the uncertainty of wartime Europe. Most importantly, it helped Rossi and Spinelli to give legitimacy to the efforts of the clandestine movement they sought to create.

According to several official narratives promoted by EU institutions, the ideal of continental unity began to take hold during the war years and their aftermath.[61] A range of Resistance groups, intellectuals, and political figures supported federalism to ensure stability on the continent, laying the groundwork for the launch of the European project in the 1950s.[62] The *Manifesto* has become central to this glorifying vision, symbolizing a purported connection between the wartime and postwar struggles for democracy. On the *Manifesto*'s 80th anniversary, Josep Borrell, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, gave a speech in Ventotene and declared that "the spirit of the *Manifesto* has not lost its validity." He was preceded by Ursula von der Leyen, President of the EU Commission, who praised Spinelli and Rossi as two of "Europe's

[60] The latest example being Commission President Ursula von der Leyen mentioning Ventotene in her June 2024 statement at the European Parliament Plenary, available at https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/statement-european-parliament-plenary-president-ursula-von-der-leyen-candidate-second-mandate-2024-2024-07-18_en (accessed October 4, 2024).

[61] In the 'History of the EU' section on the official European Union website, for instance, the timeline begins in 1945—marking the 'Stunde Null' of European integration. Available at https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/history_en (accessed October 4, 2024). Conversely, in the "History of Italy in the EU" section, the timeline begins in 1941 with the Ventotene Manifesto, "which laid the foundations for the process of European unification." See *L'Italia nell'UE*, available at https://italy.representation.ec.europa.eu/chi-siamo/litalia-nellue_en?prefLang=sv (accessed October 4, 2024). See also Bertrand Vayssière, "Le Manifeste de Ventotene (1941): Acte de Naissance du Fédéralisme Européen," *Guerres Mondiales et Conflits Contemporains*, 217/1 (2005), 69-76.

[62] See, for instance, the volume published conjointly by the European Observatory on Memories of the University of Barcelona's Solidarity Foundation and the Jean Monnet House of the European Parliament, edited by Michele Fiorillo, *Ventotene 80* (2021) commemorating the *Manifesto* as the first milestone in the establishment of Europe.

greatest visionaries" in the European Parliament.[63] In 2022, the European Parliament caucus "Spinelli Group" of MEP Guy Verhofstadt even attempted to follow up on the *Ventotene Manifesto*. The "Proposal of a Manifesto for a Federal Europe" advocated more effort on social cohesion, environmental sustainability, and an integrated social policy at the European level. However, the Proposal's cross-party approach, informed by a vague centrist outlook, failed to impact public opinion.[64]

The most recent instrumentalization of the *Manifesto* by various political groups is paradoxical when we consider the actual substance of its message.[65] Firstly, in contrast to the spirit of current Europeanists, Rossi and Spinelli's *Manifesto* sought a radical overhaul of the continent's political structures. The *Manifesto* outlined a palingenesis of the European polity by abolishing the division of the continent into sovereign national states.[66] The European government should be "endowed with well-defined and real powers" over defense, foreign policy, and economy, with only the latter currently being administered in partial autonomy by the European Union.[67] Secondly, Rossi and Spinelli envisioned a sudden revolutionary coup, presenting the states of the continent and their people with a *fait accompli* that could not be reversed. Notably, the European *demos* play a relatively passive role in the *Manifesto*'s vision, as the people of Europe are the recipients of the new system, not its makers. Establishing and organizing the United States of Europe falls entirely on the chosen few in the "revolutionary party," what Spinelli called, borrowing from Nietzsche, the "lawmakers of the future."[68]

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[63] Ursula von der Leyen's address is available on the website of the European Commission, see *State of the Union Address 2020*, European Commission, available at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_20_675 (accessed October 4, 2024). Josep Borrell's speech, "The Ventotene Manifesto and the Future of Europe," was delivered in August 2021, available at https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/ventotene-manifesto-and-future-europe_en (accessed October 4, 2024).

[64] See *Proposal of a Manifesto for a Federal Europe: Sovereign, Social, and Ecological* on the Spinelli Group's website, available at https://thespinelligroup.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/20220912_Proposal-Manifesto-for-a-Federal-Europe-political-social-and-ecological.pdf (accessed October 4, 2024).

[65] Historian Antonella Braga called it a "mythical reread of the document." See Braga, "The Words of Ventotene. A Historical-Critical Analysis of the Ventotene Manifesto," in Belot and Preda, *Visions*, 291-317.

[66] Rossi and Spinelli, "Manifesto-Programma," 9.

[67] Altiero Spinelli, "Le Pacte Federal Europeen," report prepared for the Third Congress of the Socialist Movement for the United States of Europe, Paris, November 5, 1949. International Institute of Social History (IISH, Amsterdam), Mouvement Socialiste pour les États-Unis d'Europe Collection, ARCH00907/1. On the issue of political unity in the EU party system agenda, see Christoffer Green-Pedersen, "An Ever-Sleeping Giant? European Integration on the Party System Agenda," *The Reshaping of West European Party Politics: Agenda-Setting and Party Competition in Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

[68] Spinelli, *Come Ho Tentato*, 303.

Rossi and Spinelli's *Manifesto* articulated a political philosophy and praxis I define as "Jacobin utopianism:" a revolutionary strategy led by an enlightened elite, aiming to impose a rational and just order even at the expense of democratic processes. The text captured a tradition of radical language and ideals inherited by the antifascist Resistance from Jacobinism, the left wing of the Italian Risorgimento, revised and updated by the heretics of 1930s socialism, particularly the Giustizia e Libertà group examined in Chapter II, and Bolshevism.[69] The federalists of Ventotene embraced these methods, privileging decisive action by a small sect of committed revolutionaries over mass democratic engagement to achieve rapid political transformation. This reliance on a revolutionary vanguard, in the Ventotene group's view, stemmed from the failure of parliamentary democracy to resist fascist subversion and the conviction that meaningful change necessarily had to pass through the hands of a select few. The *Manifesto*'s rhetorical force rested on a subversive vocabulary that suited the tumultuous times of war but is at odds with our post-revolutionary present.

As I argue, our understanding of the *Manifesto* is vitiated by the fabricated notion that it represents the ideological starting point of the EU instead of the closing chapter in the long history of European revolutionary thought. From a utopian and radical text born out of the Resistance, the *Manifesto* has become part of the established framework of regulating European affairs. However, the effort to infuse Europe with historical flair misfires into anachronism because it distorts the past on behalf of present political concerns and fails to recognize the inherent distance between the revolutionary imagination of WWII Resistance fighters and the context of present-day Europe.[70] Recognizing this distortion is crucial: reclaiming the *Manifesto*'s revolutionary critique exposes the limits of current European integration and revives debates on federalism's radical roots.

The appropriation of the *Manifesto* by EU leaders was partly facilitated by historiographical approaches that downplayed its interwar roots, as mentioned in the introduction. The emphasis on the ideological "pioneers" of Europe casts figures like Spinelli as the ideal forefathers of the EU. However, in reality, the influence of wartime federalists on the later launch

[69] On the influence of the Risorgimento on the Italian Resistance movements, see Claudio Pavone, *Dal Risorgimento alla Resistenza* (Rome: Bollati Boringhieri, 2010).
[70] For Gabi Zimmer of the European United Left group the *Manifesto*'s idea was "reinterpreted by the ruling elites as a justification for […] a neoliberal EU." See Walter Baier, Eric Canepa and Harris Golemis, eds., *The Radical Left in Europe – Rediscovering Hope* (London: Merlin Press, 2019), 172.

of the European project remains marginal and difficult to measure.[71] Most importantly, their ideas starkly contrasted with the pragmatic focus of the early European institutions, which prioritized economic cooperation over political unification.[72] By emphasizing the revolutionary thrust of the *Manifesto*, this chapter seeks to underscore the discrepancy between its vision and the material realities of the EU as it came to be, thus challenging a historiographical perspective that sought to integrate the *Manifesto* into an idealized and oversimplified narrative of the European project.

Moreover, situating the *Ventotene Manifesto* in its historical context reveals the fluid nature of Europe's identity and its changing borders, complicating attempts to encapsulate competing visions under a fixed overarching concept. Intellectual histories often emphasize major figures like Kant or Berlin, yet they frequently downplay shorter but influential texts such as the *Manifesto*. This neglect creates a disconnect between the document's institutional significance and its marginalization in Anglophone scholarship. A more complete understanding of European thought demands closer engagement with these works and their historical significance.[73]

Spinelli and Rossi's manifesto was one among many Europeanist texts written across the continent between the 1910s and 1940s by thinkers as diverse as Heinrich Mann and Jean-Paul Sartre.[74] These writings can be understood, among other things, as documents reflecting shared social and cultural anxieties, particularly the awareness that the nation-state was no longer capable of restoring the stability and peace Europe had lost.[75] The *Ventotene Manifesto* emerged from the same existential crisis that informed Ortega y Gasset's reflections in *The Revolt of the Masses* (1930). Ortega, who also came to the conclusion that "only the determination to construct a great nation from the group of peoples of the old continent would give new life to Europe's pulse," saw the disintegration of the nation-state as symptomatic of deeper social and cultural upheavals.[76] Similarly, in his 1933 *Discours à la Nation Européenne*, Julien Benda called for a Europe unified

[71] A complete list of the "European pioneers" is available on the EU's official website.
[72] In fact, Rossi and Spinelli's European Federalist Movement (MFE) strongly objected to the 1957 Rome Treaties establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM). See Sergio Pistone, "The European Federalist Movement's Criticism of the Treaties of Rome," *The Federalist*, 1-30 (1998), 18.
[73] Cf. Pagden's *Pursuit of Europe* and Weller's *The Idea*. See also Pagden's edited volume *The Idea of Europe.*
[74] On Mann's Europeanism see Ernest Schonfield, "The Idea of European Unity in Heinrich Mann's Political Essays of the 1920s and Early 1930s", in Hewitson and D'Auria, *Europe in Crisis*, 257–270. On Sartre, see Hugh McDonnell, 'Jean-Paul Sartre the European,' *Modern Intellectual History* 1 (2020), 147.
[75] Tony Judt has described their character as a "unity of sensibility". SeeTony Judt, with Timothy Snyder, *Thinking the Twentieth Century* (New York: Penguin, 2012), 214.
[76] Quoted in Josep R. Llobera, "Visions of Europe in the Dark Years: Julien Benda and José Ortega y Gasset," *The European Legacy*, 7/1 (1996), 2090.

by its shared spiritual, moral, and intellectual values.[77] Indeed, the idea of European unity in these texts is aspirational and rests on an acknowledgement of the profound and often irreconcilable differences determining its creation.

Starting from this premise, I aim to critically assess the *Manifesto* within an alternative history of political ideas, with particular emphasis on the evolution of socialist federalism during the interwar period. By reframing the *Manifesto* as a product of the political malaise and aspirations of the 1930s, I emphasize the role of democratic socialism in the intellectual genealogy of Europeanism and situate the *Manifesto* in the specific socialist tradition to which it belonged. General histories of socialism ignored the *Manifesto* (and socialist federalism more broadly) because it did not match the paradigm of the socialist mass party model centered on domestic politics. Situating the *Ventotene Manifesto* in the more intricate landscape of pre-war and wartime leftism sheds light on the developments and splits of socialist ideology and allows me to recover the sharp political edges of Rossi and Spinelli's text beyond the pieties of its present-day canonization as a sacred text of Europeanist values.[78]

In the last part of the chapter, I also explore the political manifesto as a distinct literary genre. In the long nineteenth century, the political manifesto became the propaganda device par excellence of revolutionaries, playing a crucial role in legitimizing the existence and values of clandestine conspiratorial movements. During WWII, the antifascist left reappropriated it to build momentum around its struggle, giving rise to what I call the "manifesto moment" between 1941 and 1944. By assessing the political manifesto as a specific genre, I show how Italian resisters and the Ventotene group purposefully reclaimed the linguistic and semantic traditions of the nineteenth-century manifesto to strengthen their revolutionary efforts.

II—Interwar Roots of the Ventotene Manifesto

In 1939, Ernesto Rossi and Altiero Spinelli were transported to Ventotene, a small island off the western coast of southern Italy, to complete their prison sentence for antifascist conspiracy. At the time, the island served as a place of detention for political dissidents known as "confinati"

[77] Julien Benda, *Discours à la Nation Européenne* (Paris: Gallimard, 1933).
[78] For an overview, see Charles F. Delzell, "The European Federalist Movement in Italy: First Phase, 1918-1947," *The Journal of Modern History*, 32/3 (1960), 241-51.

(confined). The confino policy was inherited from previous Italian liberal state practices. However, the Fascist "police confinement" assumed a more straightforward political nature, forcing individuals considered to be a threat to the regime to live in designated, remote locations across Italy as a form of internal exile.[79] The confino was institutionalized through the so-called "leggi fascistissime" (ultra-fascist laws) of 1926—in Spinelli's words, Mussolini's "decisive step towards totalitarian dictatorship." The law on public security expanded the application of the confino by circumventing the need for judicial process and effectively relying on administrative discretion.[80]

Historiography on Ventotene suggests that the confino areas emerged as politically fecund collective spaces for the antifascists.[81] Unlike in prison, the detainees had easy access to books and could interact with relative freedom, facilitating the development of an intellectual environment "livelier than anywhere else in the peninsula."[82] The lived experience of political repression, and the dialectical possibilities it engendered, under the *confino* system may have contributed to the stark political vision at the heart of the *Ventotene Manifesto*. *Confino* laid bare the contradictions of the nation-state: the same apparatus that claimed to protect national sovereignty also violently silenced dissent, surveilled its citizens, and criminalized political difference.[83] Nowhere was this more apparent than in the special regime of internal exile, where individuals were effectively rendered non-citizens solely on the basis of their political affiliations. In this context, the *Manifesto* emerged as both a critique of and an alternative to the sovereign state.

However, the intellectual and existential pressures of exile also laid bare the difficulty of imagining a political order entirely free from the logic of state sovereignty. While the *Manifesto* called for the transcendence of nationalism through a supranational European federation, it retained elements of the very statism it sought to overcome. The proposed United States of Europe risked replicating the centralized structure of the nation-state, even if moderated by subsidiarity. Moreover, it would still operate within a lawless international system. *Confino* did not obscure

[79] On the "confino", see Renga, Garofalo, and Leake, *Internal Exile*.
[80] Spinelli, *Come Ho Tentato*, 97.
[81] For a comparative perspective on prison camps under dictatorial regimes, see Andrea Gullotta, *Intellectual Life and Literature at Solovki 1923-1930: The Paris of the Northern Concentration Camps* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2018).
[82] Matthew D'Auria, "The Ventotene Manifesto: The Crisis of the Nation State and the Political Identity of Europe," in Spiering and Wintle, eds., *European Identity*, 141-58.
[83] See especially Ilaria Poerio, *A scuola di dissenso: Storie di resistenza al confino di polizia, 1926–1943* (Rome: Carocci, 2016).

federalist thought, but helped shape its contours—at once enabling a radical critique and revealing the limits of the available political imagination.

At the same time, we should not forget that the sectarian rivalries that bedeviled the antifascist milieu outside were also a feature of *confino* life. Ventotene was home to communists, socialists, and anarchists who slept and ate in different areas and received material as well as spiritual support from their respective political families. The federalists, too, created their own separate group after 1941.[84] Cross-party conflicts persisted during the war and informed the drafting of the *Manifesto*. In the case of Spinelli, his past in the Communist Party of Italy (PCI) was seen with suspicion by other political detainees, even if he had abandoned the Party and relinquished Marxism some years earlier.[85]

The members of the Giustizia e Libertà movement ("Justice and Liberty," GL), an anti-fascist organization that sought to synthesize liberalism and socialism, were especially mindful of the ideological and political barriers between the two groups. Ernesto Rossi, a leader of GL, encountered considerable opposition from his fellow GL members due to his collaboration with Spinelli. Working with "heretics" such as Spinelli carried material and emotional consequences, which only a few were willing to face. The confino was a space of political action breeding material and psychological dynamics that differed from other recognized loci of socialization for political dissidents, such as prison or exile. It offered more freedom of discussion that didn't necessarily align with party policies. However, this freedom came at a price. It could lead to social excommunication, even for recognized leaders like Rossi.

Altiero Spinelli (1907-1986) had joined the Communist Party in his teens. As he rose as a leader in the youth movement, he was arrested in 1927 and sentenced to sixteen years for conspiratorial work. During his detention, the news of arrests and trials of high-profile members of the Communist leadership made Spinelli grow increasingly skeptical of Bolshevism. His doubts were further exacerbated by the policies of the Comintern in the early 1930s, which the Italian communists seemed to follow unquestioningly. Their abasement before the "social-fascist" line, approved by the Comintern in 1928 and entailing the denunciation of social democrats as

[84] Spinelli, *Come ho tentato*, 268.
[85] Alessandro Coletti, *Il Governo di Ventotene: Stalinismo e Lotta Politica tra i Dirigenti del PCI al Confino* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1978). The Ventotene prisoners' memoirs indicate the persistence of political conflictuality. See Alberto Jacometti, *Ventotene* (Milan: Edizioni di Comunità, 1946); Giorgio Braccialarghe, *Nelle Spire di Urlavento*. *Il Confino di Ventotene negli Anni dell'Agonia del Fascismo* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1970); Riccardo Bauer, *Quello Che Ho Fatto. Trent'Anni di Lotte e di Ricordi* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1986).

collaborators with fascism, baffled Spinelli. Even more disconcerting was the complete *volte-face* after the Comintern's World Congress of 1935. Suddenly, Communists were now expected to form "Popular Front" alliances with the same antifascist parties they had, until then, virulently attacked.[86]

In Spinelli's words, intellectual subordination was the rock against which "the first part of [his] life shipwrecked."[87] The final straw came with the wave of Moscow trials. Spinelli presented a document to the Party in which he argued, among other things, that the "dictatorship of the proletariat" in Russia had turned into a "dictatorship of the Party." As a result, in 1937, he was expelled from the PCI for "ideological deviance and petit-bourgeois presumption."[88]

Although Spinelli had decisively broken with the orthodoxy of the PCI, his political imagination retained key structural affinities with the line articulated by Gramsci prior to his arrest in 1926. Not for nothing, it was under Gramsci's secretariat that the young Spinelli first truly felt part of the communist movement. It was Gramsci who recommended to the Party leadership that Spinelli be drawn into its organizational work. Although he had not known him personally, Gramsci's shadow remained a moral and political reference point, as Spinelli later recalled in his memoirs.[89] Both thinkers envisioned a tightly organized, conscious minority capable of educating and mobilizing the masses in preparation for a revolutionary rupture. This intellectual trajectory, later converging with Rossi's Jacobinism, shaped the *Ventotene Manifesto*'s call for a European revolutionary party, in which intellectuals were essential to fostering in the masses an awareness of their historical mission.[90]

Ten years older than Spinelli, Ernesto Rossi's early political interests were influenced by the humanitarian internationalism of Giuseppe Mazzini and the radical republicanism of the nineteenth century.[91] He volunteered to fight in WWI, viewing it as an extension of the struggle of the Italian Risorgimento against the despotism of the central European empires. For Rossi,

[86] For an introductory reading on Stalin's "Third Period" and the subsequent approval of the Popular Front strategy, see Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, eds., *The Comintern. A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996).
[87] Spinelli, *Come Ho Tentato,* 254. On Spinelli see especially Piero Graglia, *Altiero Spinelli* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2008).
[88] D'Auria, "Ventotene", 144.
[89] Spinelli, *Come ho tentato*, 101-3.
[90] For a discussion of the affinities between Gramsci's and Spinelli's thought, see also Ilenia Pasquetti, "Altiero Spinelli tra Gramsci, Nenni e Berlinguer: itinerari politico-intellettuali lungo la storia del Novecento," *Eurostudium*, October–December (2008), 42–60.
[91] Cf. Bayly and Biagini, *Giuseppe*.

defeating the Central Powers could lead to establishing liberal institutions across the continent, making the war compatible with democratic and progressive ideals. However, the trench experience and the disdainful stance of certain parties—especially the Socialist Party—towards veterans sharpened Rossi's nationalism, and after the war, he briefly collaborated with Mussolini's paper *Il Popolo d'Italia*. It was his encounter with the socialist historian Gaetano Salvemini that lifted him out of the fascist morass. Salvemini, a vocal advocate of democratic federalism in the tradition of Carlo Cattaneo, deeply influenced Rossi's thinking.[92] By 1922, Rossi was already penning articles for the leading publications of early democratic anti-fascism. In Florence, where he lived, he took part in various antifascist undertakings, such as the group "Circolo di Cultura" and the journal *Non Mollare* (Don't Give up), along with Salvemini and his friend Carlo Rosselli. In the late 1920s, he was active in Milan, setting up an early nucleus of Giustizia e Libertà.[93]

As further discussed in the following chapter, GL was founded in Paris in 1929 by a group of Italian exiles of liberal and socialist orientation. Its charismatic leader, Carlo Rosselli, wanted to unmoor socialism from the Marxist baggage that ballasted the programs of reformist and maximalist parties, as he theorized in his essay-manifesto *Socialisme Libéral* (1930).[94] This objective, however, was not uniformly embraced within GL, whose members ranged from liberal reformers to radical syndicalists, often with differing conceptions of what such unmooring should entail. Rosselli did not reject Marxist theory outright but valued its contribution within a broader history of socialist thought, in which Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's notions of autonomy and federalism came to play an increasingly significant role. Reacting to the rise of far-right movements across Europe, Rosselli recognized early on the international relevance of fascism and advocated, among others within GL, the idea of the United States of Europe as a way out of totalitarianism.[95]

Ernesto Rossi would not participate directly in GL's debate on federalism, as, by 1930, he was serving a twenty-year sentence for antifascist activities. However, echoes of the discussion

[92] Renato Camurri and Alice Gussoni, "Gaetano Salvemini: Profile of a Transnational Intellectual" *Modern Italy: Journal of the Association for the Study of Modern Italy*, 4 (2023), 279.
[93] Antonella Braga, *Un Federalista Giacobino: Ernesto Rossi Pioniere degli Stati Uniti d'Europa* (Bologna, 2007), 66-80. See also, Giuseppe Armani, *La Forza di Non Mollare: Ernesto Rossi dalla Grande Guerra a Giustizia e Libertà* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2004).
[94] Carlo Rosselli, *Socialisme libéral*, (Paris: Liberairie Valois, 1930); for the English version, see *Liberal Socialism* (1930), ed. Nadia Urbinati (Princeton: PUP, 1994).
[95] See Paolo Bagnoli, *The Liberal Socialism: Four Essays on the Political Thought of Carlo Rosselli* (New York: S.F. Vanni, 1999) and Stanislao G. Pugliese, *Carlo Rosselli: Socialist, Heretic, and Antifascist Exile* (Cambridge-London: Harvard University Press, 1999).

reached the walls of Rossi's cell and inspired the discussions of GL detainees.[96] The long period of imprisonment marked a shift in his vision, and he increasingly moved closer to Rosselli's leftist ideas. Rossi's radicalization reflected critical events in the second half of the 1930s that involved GL directly. In particular, the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 convinced GL's leadership of the impending showdown between democracy and fascism. Under the slogan "Today in Spain, tomorrow in Italy," Carlo Rosselli organized the first Italian volunteer battalion, hoping resistance against Franco would spark a revolutionary wave across Europe.[97]

The Spanish War was significant for more than one reason. The French and British policy of non-intervention in support of the Republicans contributed to the perception that the existing party system, even in democracies, was debased beyond repair and incapable of defending itself.[98] The socialist left, too, was not ideologically and strategically equipped to engage the totalitarian right. Socialism needed to be reimagined anew. Only a modern and dynamic socialist force could forge a democratic European order and overcome the weak post-WWI systems of liberal parliamentarism. Events in Spain also illustrated how capitalists would align with authoritarian governments to protect their interests, thereby exacerbating social and political instability. This realization informed Ernesto Rossi's critique of capitalism and his shift towards a kind of socialism tempered by liberal democratic principles. As Rossi would explain in 1945 to Marion Rosselli, Carlo's widow, "I have critically revised many of my economic positions and find myself much more to the left than I was in 1930. I am now truly a liberal socialist, that is, a non-Marxist socialist."[99]

The GL group around Ernesto Rossi interpreted the Spanish conflict—and the earlier Abyssinian crisis—as symptoms of a new unleashing of nationalistic passions that required an internationalist response.[100] As documented by his correspondence, Rossi's ideas on European federalism began to take shape during this period.[101] His reflections were influenced by the internationalist vision of the Italian Risorgimento, particularly the ideas of Carlo Cattaneo on the

[96] Vittorio Foa, *Il Cavallo e la Torre* (Turin: Einaudi, 1991), 68.
[97] Rosselli launched his appeal on the radio in Barcelona on 13 November 1936. Now available in translation in Stanislao Pugliese, eds., *Italian Fascism and Anti-Fascism: A Critical Anthology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 167-71.
[98] See Paul Preston, *The Spanish Civil War. Reaction, Revolution, and Revenge* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2007), 136.
[99] Rossi to Marion Rosselli, January 9, 1945. Now in Ernesto Rossi, *Epistolario 1943-1967. Dal Partito d'Azione al Centro-Sinistra*, ed. Mimmo Franzinelli (Rome: Bollati Boringhieri, 2007), 43.
[100] Braga, Rossi, 140.
[101] Ibid., 137.

federation of peoples, of which his friend Salvemini had been the most prominent interpreter on the left. Cattaneo had been among the first to call for the establishment of the "United States of Europe" in the context of the 1848 revolutionary period.[102] Although Rossi eventually renounced Cattaneo's intra-national federalism, where municipalities and regions were granted large autonomy, he maintained the same commitment to republican values and civic activism.[103]

In April 1937, Rossi asked his mother to request some books on the United States of Europe from Nello Rosselli, a historian and brother of Carlo. Rossi wanted to study the subject and needed some reference materials. He shared an outline of his survey with his mother, detailing a specific action program for exploring the problems of European federalism. Rossi thought that a robust legal, institutional framework with military deterrence would discourage despotic regimes from pursuing military aggression. Only in a pacified international environment would domestic reforms be feasible and lasting, allowing moves towards socialist policies. Therefore, continental unity should take priority over other national problems and be enforced as soon as the right contingencies occurred.[104]

Adopting Machiavelli's vocabulary, Rossi mentioned the American Revolution and Italian Unification as practical historical examples where the meeting between "fortune" (an exceptionally favorable moment) and "virtue" (of an enlightened minority) culminated in successful political change. The precedence accorded by Rossi to federal unification over concerns of socialist or democratic politics would become the central insight of the *Ventotene Manifesto*, distinguishing it from the programs of other revolutionary movements during the war. Rossi's letters reveal the direct connection between Europeanism during the interwar period and the wartime years.[105] This tradition had been sustained in GL's circle since the initial federalist discussions that took place between 1932 and 1935, which are the subject of Chapter Two.

As this section has sought to show, a loosely connected intellectual lineage linked Rosselli's early Europeanist theorizing and the broader vision of GL with the ideas taking shape in Rossi and, later, informing Spinelli's federalist project. Driven by a shared imperative to replace authoritarianism with a lasting democratic framework capable of securing peace, they came to

[102] Lucio Levi, "Ernesto Rossi and the Ventotene Manifesto," *The Federalist* 3 (1998), 214.
[103] On the distinction between supra-national and infra-national federalism in the context of the 1940s, see John Pinder, "Fédéralistes Hamiltoniens et Proudhoniens: Synergie, non Conflit" 30/2 (1988), 124.
[104] Ernesto Rossi to his mother Elide, April 30, 1937. Now in Ernesto Rossi, *Nove Anni Sono Molti: Lettere dal Carcere 1930-1939*, ed. Mimmo Franzinelli (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2001), 571-5.
[105] Braga, *Rossi*, 134.

view European federalism as the most viable solution. Rossi carried the GL legacy to Ventotene, but it was in dialogue with Spinelli that this vision gained greater coherence and urgency. Over time, federalism came to eclipse other political priorities, its conceptual sharpness shaped in part by the clarifying distortions of internal exile. World War II thus accelerated a theoretical rethinking of international politics that was already well underway. Rossi's encounter with Spinelli on Ventotene would prove pivotal to the definition of their federalist engagement. GL's leadership.

III—Revolutionary Federalism in the Ventotene Manifesto

In Ventotene, Rossi became the motor behind the first drafting of the *Manifesto*. He and Spinelli began discussing the Europeanist question along with a small group of confinati, including the socialist Eugenio Colorni and his German wife Ursula Hirschmann. Colorni became a crucial figure in the early federalist movement. A philosophy professor, he had collaborated with Giustizia e Libertà in Milan and Turin before leaving the country to work in Marburg. Ousted for his Jewish origins, he returned to Italy in 1933, where he drew near to the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) in Milan. When its leadership fell to the fascist police, Colorni became head of the clandestine office of the Party. Following the promulgation of the racial laws in 1938, he was arrested by the political police and sent to Ventotene. Acting as a bridgehead between GL and the PSI, Colorni embodied the cross-party world of heretic socialists that played an essential role in the development of the early federalist movement in the Resistance.[106]

Rossi and Spinelli's study of federalist theory accompanied the preliminary discussion on the *Manifesto*. From Turin, Luigi Einaudi, a prominent liberal economist and antifascist, fueled the group with first-hand literature. In the aftermath of WWI, Einaudi had written a series of articles discussing the limits of the League of Nations and calling European governments to renounce their absolute sovereignty. Einaudi's pieces, imbued with references to the American *Federalist Papers*, were then published as *Lettere Politiche di Junius* (Junius' Political Letters, 1920), but they saw little commercial success. In 1939, Rossi, having read the articles upon their release, was able to obtain a copy from Einaudi, whose international reputation and connections

[106] On Colorni see especially, Maurizio Degl'Innocenti, eds., *Eugenio Colorni dall'Antifascismo all'Europeismo Socialista e Federalista* (Manduria: P. Lacaita, 2010) and Fabio Zucca, *Eugenio Colorni Federalista* (Manduria: P. Lacaita, 2011).

offered a degree of protection from Mussolini. Einaudi's *Lettere* became central to Rossi and Spinelli's elaboration of the institutional problem in Europe.[107] Einaudi sought to challenge the liberal Kantian vision that increasing international economic relations would render war irrational. In his *Lettere*, he argued that a balance of power based on the absolute sovereignty of nation-states and unbridled economic competition would remain fragile, because it failed to address the anarchic nature of the international system. He advocated for a supranational federation capable of transcending national boundaries, providing a more stable foundation for peace. Translated in what would become the words of the *Manifesto,* the League of Nations could not guarantee international law without "a military force capable of imposing their decisions" while "respecting the absolute sovereignty of [its] member states."[108]

Einaudi also sent to Ventotene a few works of the British group Federal Union (FU). Formed in 1938, FU attracted several personalities of liberal and socialist persuasion, from Lord Lothian to Lionel Robbins and Barbara Wootton. FU's books would prove to have a lasting impact on Rossi and Spinelli, although the availability of these publications in Ventotene before 1941 remains unclear.[109] Either sourced directly from Robbins' *The Economic Causes of War* (1939) or mediated through Einaudi's correspondence with Rossi, the assumption that the anarchic political structure of the world was the fundamental disease of modern civilization became the central tenet of the *Manifesto*. The European nation-states operated like "lawless savages" in a Hobbesian state of nature. Totalitarianism and imperialism were reflections of this condition. The lawlessness of the international system, the *Manifesto* stated, "has led to the desire of each to dominate the others and to consider as its "living space" increasingly vast territories that allow it to move freely and to secure the means of existence without depending on anyone." Totalitarian states seized control of the domestic political and economic spheres to channel their resources outside. However, the same

[107] Gabriella Fanello Marcucci, "Rossi ed Einaudi, Due Vite in Dialogo" in Lorenzo Strik Lievers, eds., *Ernesto Rossi. Economista, Federalista, Radicale* (Venice: Marsilio, 2001), 235–44; Giuseppe Armani, "L'Incontro di Ernesto Rossi con Luigi Einaudi," *Il Ponte* 38 (1982), 151–61.

[108] Luigi Einaudi, *Lettere politiche di Junius* (Bari: Laterza, 1920). On the *Lettere* see also Matthew D'Auria, "Junius and the 'President Professor': Luigi Einaudi's European Federalism," in Hewitson and D'Auria, *Europe in Crisis*, 289-304.

[109] According to Spinelli's lists of "read books" and "useful books" compiled in the confino, he only read *The Economic Causes of War* in January of 1942, thus when the *Manifesto* was already circulating. HAEU/AS-0002/3-4, now in Altiero Spinelli, *Machiavelli nel Secolo XX. Scritti del Confino e della Clandestinità*, ed. Piero Graglia (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1993), 522-33. This conclusion is further supported by the study conducted by Antonella Braga on Rossi's papers. Braga notes that Rossi received a copy of *The Economic Causes of War* only at the beginning of 1942. Braga, "Il Contributo di Ernesto Rossi all'Elaborazione del Manifesto di Ventotene,' *Eurostudium*, January-March 2008, 37-72.

anarchic environment also forced democracies to compete in a similar pursuit of power on the international stage. In doing so, democratic governments, too, were driven to thwart individual liberty to enhance economic and military strength.[110]

The problem of peace required an epistemic reconfiguration of the political. In his 1944 introduction to the *Manifesto*, Colorni argued that progressive parties considered international solidarity a "necessary and almost automatic consequence" of achieving their domestic goals. However, this kind of internationalism had weak foundations.[111] Recent events showed that democratic or socialist states would not cooperate if their economic interests and chauvinistic tendencies persisted. It was imperative to address all political problems from a "new visual angle"—domestic tensions resulted from international frictions, not the other way around. For Colorni, democratic and socialist internationalism needed a stronger cosmopolitan orientation, which could take into account the interconnectedness and shared destiny of all humanity, transcending national boundaries and particularistic interests.[112] "The essential contradiction [was] the existence of sovereign states" operating in a situation of *bellum omnium contra omnes* with each other.[113]

The creation of the federalist state became, thus, for the Ventotene group the prerequisite of every discourse of social emancipation and political liberation. Building on Rossi's insights from 1937, the *Ventotene Manifesto* would crystallize federalism as a recognizable doctrine. For its authors, the "dividing line" between progressive and reactionary forces no longer depended on the degree of democracy or socialism to be established. Instead, it was based on the new division between those who viewed the acquisition of national political power as the primary goal of their struggle, and those who prioritized the creation of a supranational state.[114]

The *Ventotene Manifesto*'s all-out attack on nationalism, however, remained steeped in socialist discourse. The opening paragraph stated that the ideology of national independence, once "a powerful stimulus to progress," carried within itself "the seeds of capitalist imperialism."[115] As we have seen, according to Rossi and Spinelli, the aggressive quest for dominance in an anarchic

[110] Rossi and Spinelli, "Manifesto-Programma," 4.
[111] Colorni, "Problemi," 4.
[112] Braga called this change in perspective a "Copernican revolution, in the Kantian philosophical sense." See Braga, "The Words," 314.
[113] Spinelli and Rossi, "Manifesto-Programma," 3.
[114] Ibid., 10.
[115] Ibid., 4.

international environment was the leading cause of conflict. The *Manifesto* intertwined this perspective with a critical analysis of imperialism. Capitalism was examined as an underlying force exacerbating the tendencies toward colonial expansion and war. The inequalities it created within and between states led to external conflicts as states sought to stabilize their domestic economies and social orders by projecting power outward. For Rossi and Spinelli, bourgeois democracy had failed to prevent these outcomes because it was intrinsically linked to capitalist class interests.[116]

Interestingly, Rossi, Spinelli, and Colorni chose not to engage with the reflections of other prominent leftist thinkers. Most notably, Leon Trotsky, even before the 1917 revolution, had analyzed the European problem, arguing that only the socialist revolution could dismantle national barriers and unify Europe, thus preserving it from the tragedy of war.[117] After the failed revolutionary wave of 1917-21, Trotsky reintroduced the *United States of Europe* as a key slogan for the communist movement.[118]

Trotsky still believed that Europe's economic crisis and political instability provided fertile ground for socialist revolutions that could unify the continent, and even succeeded in persuading the Comintern to briefly adopt the slogan of the "United Socialist States of Europe" in 1924.[119] He emphasized the economic necessity of a federation, criticizing nationalism as an impediment to socialist progress. However, despite these affinities, Trotsky's vision never fully aligned with the federalist socialism of Rossi and Spinelli. For Trotsky, the creation of a European federation was secondary to the advent of socialism, whereas for the federalists of Ventotene, as we have seen, federalist revolution was the *conditio sine qua non* for establishing lasting peace and creating a socialist system. In my view, Rossi and Spinelli were eager to draw a clear distinction from pre-existing political theories and deliberately avoided acknowledging direct links with interwar ideas.

In fact, the idiosyncratic vision of Rossi and Spinelli set their brand of leftism apart from the mainstream currents of European socialism. The first part of the *Manifesto*'s section on post-war societal restructuring, attributed to Rossi, underscored the role of social policies in rectifying

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[116] Ibid., 8.

[117] Cfr. Leon Trotsky, *The War and the International* (1914) https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1914/war/index.htm (accessed October 4, 2024); id., *The Program of Peace* (1915-17) https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/fi/vol05/no09/trotsky.htm (accessed October 4, 2024).

[118] Leon Trotsky, "Is the Time Ripe for the Slogan: 'The United States of Europe?'" (1923) https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1923/06/europe.htm (accessed October 4, 2024).

[119] See Pierre Le Gall, 'L'U.R.S.S. et l'Unification Européenne: Remarques sur une Evolution Recente,' *Revue Française de Science Politique,* 1 (1967), 31.

market distortions through state interventions in the economy. The nationalization of the most potent economic conglomerates (electricity, steel, mining, and banking), the promotion of cooperative enterprises, the introduction of worker-share ownership schemes, and the enactment of agrarian reform were identified as the primary mechanisms for dismantling monopolistic power structures and redistributing large-scale land holdings. Economic forces should not dominate humanity; instead, they should be harnessed and controlled to serve society. "[…] the European revolution […] will have to be socialist; that is, it will aim to emancipate the working classes and create more humane living conditions for them."[120]

As Spinelli would write in a letter from Ventotene, "Our civilization has obliged us to struggle for the abolition of the privileges deriving from wealth."[121] However, he and Rossi rejected communist-style collectivization because it severely restricted individual freedoms. Its enforcement came with repression of dissent, with the central political authority using police control to eliminate opposition. Complete collectivization was also inefficient, leading to economic imbalances and even famines. Instead, the *Manifesto* advanced a mixed system whereby a socialized control of the main levers of the economy would balance private property to serve social needs, not individual greed.[122] Rossi and Spinelli believed that "the correct socialist solution was to determine the sector that needed to be socialized and the reasons for it, instead of planning everything."[123] Yet, as we shall see, while the aim for a mixed economy became a hallmark of postwar liberal socialist parties—particularly the Action Party, in which both Spinelli and Rossi were active—its contours remained vague and were never fully articulated in a convincing or cohesive manner.

The *Manifesto*'s radical leftism also extended to issues of tactical behavior. Spinelli carried some ideological baggage from his communist past into his federalist work, particularly Lenin's ideas regarding the role of a revolutionary elite in leading political struggles and administering power.[124] The federalists should "organize and guide progressive forces using all the popular

[120] Spinelli and Rossi, "Manifesto-Programma," 11.
[121] Altiero Spinelli, November 1941. The recipient of the letter is unknown. Spinelli responded to a comment on the *Manifesto* he received while still on Ventotene, which was signed "Considerations of a Trotskyist." Now in Graglia, *Machiavelli*, 97-104, at 99.
[122] Rossi and Spinelli, "Manifesto-Programma," 11-2.
[123] Spinelli, letter from Ventotene, undated, but 1944. HAEU/AS-0001/31. "[…] determinare il settore da socializzare ed i motivi della socializzazione, e non nel pianificare tutto."
[124] Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, "What Is to Be Done?" (1902) in Henry M. Christman, *Essential Works of Lenin* (New York: Bantham Books, 1966), 53-176.

organs which grow spontaneously."[125] The Leninist approach combined with Rossi's "Jacobin spirit," as Spinelli would later call it, to inform the "Jacobin utopianism" of the *Manifesto*. Rossi's Jacobinism involved consolidating power to pursue radical changes to society and government without compromise. It also meant a willingness to bypass traditional democratic processes in the name of expediency and necessity vis-à-vis a state of emergency.[126] In his *Prison Notebooks*, Antonio Gramsci—who had led the Italian Communist Party when Spinelli joined—referred to Machiavelli and Carlo Cattaneo as the first and second Italian Jacobins.[127] By this measure, Rossi can be considered the third "Italian Jacobin," his ideas tracing back directly from that tradition. His strategy reflected a calculated response to what he saw as democracy's failure to prevent authoritarianism, reinforcing his conviction that only an enlightened elite could enact lasting change.

As Ernesto Rossi would later recall, if the forces of the Resistance were to succeed in capturing power, they should autonomously implement the necessary structural reforms through a revolutionary dictatorship.[128] This, however, would not be a "unilateral dictatorship of the proletariat" but a union of all the progressive forces, "the most enlightened groups of the working classes," allied with intellectuals as well as businessmen and investors who wanted to free themselves from "the humiliation of servitude." Rossi and Spinelli's criticism of the communist regime was not that it had emerged from a dictatorship but that it could only function under a permanent despotic political regime.[129] "The democratic political method," they wrote, "will be a dead weight in the revolutionary crisis" as, in turbulent times, the masses are prey to the "gloomy tumult of passions."[130] Rossi and Spinelli's "Jacobin utopianism" posited the rule of the revolutionary government as a means to ensure quick and effective action. Only if the dictatorial phase were prolonged and legitimized by a delayed relinquishment of power by the ruling class, would it lead to totalitarianism.[131]

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[125] Rossi and Spinelli, "Manifesto-Programma," 17.
[126] Spinelli, *Come Ho Tentato*, 303-4.
[127] See Umberto Puccio, "Carlo Cattaneo Storico ed Ideologo della Borghesia e dello Sviluppo Capitalistico," *Studi Storici*, 4 (1970), 698-742, and Norberto Bobbio, "Della Sfortuna di Carlo Cattaneo nella Cultura Italiana," *Rivista Critica di Storia della Filosofia*, 2 (1970), 161-184.
[128] Rossi to Marion Rosselli, September 22, 1946. Now in Rossi, *Epistolario*, 66.
[129] Spinelli, *Come Ho Tentato*, 303.
[130] Rossi and Spinelli, "Manifesto-Programma," 15.
[131] Ibid., 18.

Rossi and Spinelli's revolutionary elitism ultimately rested on a pessimistic view of human nature, a negative anthropology, shaped by the catastrophic events in the European Civil War. The failure of the democratic forces to face the totalitarian threat prompted a harsh critique of socialist and liberal progressivism and the positive view they attributed to the role of the masses in political life. Here, Machiavelli was Rossi and Spinelli's master. The lesson of the *Prince* was that "men are […] so much dominated by immediate needs, that a skillful deceiver always finds plenty of people who will let themselves be deceived."[132] Rossi and Spinelli had seen Mussolini and Hitler deceive not only the upper and middle strata of European society but also part of the working class, thus debunking the socialist myth that the proletariat was naturally antagonistic to bourgeois society. A successful revolutionary group could not rely on the spontaneous action of the workers but should guide the burgeoning movement in the direction the federalists desired.

Machiavelli's anthropological pessimism combined in the *Manifesto* with echoes of the interwar debate on modern mass culture of authors such as Ortega y Gasset and Johan Huizinga, both influential amongst Giustizia e Libertà members, as discussed in Chapter II. In January 1945, Rossi wrote to Salvemini that he would never forget "that Fascism, and even more Nazism, were two typical mass regimes."[133] Political leaders could manipulate the masses by appealing to emotions and prejudices rather than public interest. The rise of the masses to power would lead to the neglect of individual rights and the principles of freedom and reason, resulting in irrationalism in culture and authoritarianism in politics. Rossi and Spinelli translated Ortega and Huizinga's ideas on elitism in culture and intellect to the political sphere. In so doing, however, they left the question of popular participation in the new polity open.[134]

In the Jacobin utopianism of the *Manifesto*, the tension between the aspiration towards a functioning democracy, the means required to achieve it, and the threat posed by the "unformed masses" to the stability of the new regime is unresolved. The transition from revolutionary dictatorship to democracy is left to the free initiative of the federalist party. The *Manifesto* indicated that there should be no fear that such a regime would descend into despotism if its society were not servile. The party was charged with ensuring that all citizens

[132] Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (1513), Quentin Skinner and Russell Price, eds. (New York, 2019), 60.
[133] Rossi to Salvemini, February 12, 1945. Now in Gaetano Salvemini, *Lettere dall'America*, Vol. 1, ed. Alberto Merola (Bari: Laterza, 1967-8), 99-100.
[134] On the popularity of the authors of the "culture of crisis" among GL, see the testimony of Foa, *Cavallo*, 65-6. See also Bresciani, *Learning*, 102-6.

could participate in political life, thereby fostering the growth of individual freedom. As these conditions were established, society would evolve, increasing its understanding of and commitment to the new order.

However, whether and when the revolutionary elite would relinquish power remained in doubt. According to the *Manifesto,* as the population began to identify with the principles of the new political order, the revolutionary party's role would shift from guiding to simply facilitating the functioning of free political institutions.[135] On these grounds, however, it is easy to imagine a scenario where the revolutionary cadres would refuse to waive control, justifying themselves with repeated states of emergency or the supposed political immaturity of the voting masses.

Furthermore, paraphrasing Lenin, the revolutionary dictatorship would be a means of administering the state *against* a section of society—against the bourgeoisie in Lenin's case, and, in the context of the *Manifesto*, against those who resisted federalism.[136] Opposition to the new European order would necessarily be vast, especially in the early phases of the transition from the old regime. How the revolutionary leaders would suppress dissent while gradually surrendering authority is an issue on which the *Manifesto* remained silent. This ambiguity regarding the transition to democracy reveals how "Jacobin utopianism" justified temporary authoritarianism, prioritizing revolutionary objectives over immediate democratic legitimacy.

Doubts about the democratic nature of the system proposed by Rossi and Spinelli are further justified by their reliance on the works of the "Italian school" of elite theory, particularly Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca, which they rediscovered in Ventotene. Mosca saw the emergence of a ruling elite—an oligarchy—as an inescapable feature of all societies. For Mosca, an oligarchy does not disappear over time; instead, it evolves and adapts to the changing social and political circumstances. It fulfils the functions of leadership and organization, which are essential for the functioning of any complex society. Its existence is not accidental but necessary, and it will not relinquish its position willingly.[137]

As for the Giustizia e Libertà movement before them, the Ventotene group's action-oriented approach, distilled in the *Manifesto*, argued for the necessity of a guiding elite during the emergence of a new civilization, yet it appeared to reject the danger of a permanently entrenched

[135] Rossi and Spinelli, "Manifesto-Programma," 18.
[136] Lenin, "The State and Revolution," in Id., *Essential*, 288.
[137] See Alfio Mastropaolo, "La Double Théorie de la Classe Politique de Gaetano Mosca," *Revue Internationale de Politique Comparée*, 11 (2004), 611-630.

ruling class. The lack of normative indications regarding how the power transfer from the revolutionary vanguard to the new democratic institutions would work created a gap for subjective interpretations. Rossi and Spinelli did not provide more clarity on this matter, despite their otherwise strong critique of the Bolsheviks' encroachment of power after the 1917 revolution.[138]

Already in the *Ventotene Manifesto*'s opening, Rossi and Spinelli stressed their obstinate political realism. In the first line, we read that according to the principle of liberty of modern civilization, "man must not be a mere instrument of others but an autonomous center of life."[139] This echoes the Kantian categorical imperative, which states that humans should never be used merely as a means to an end but always as an end in themselves. However, Rossi and Spinelli stretched the moral claim of Kant's principle to accommodate the requirements of their Jacobin utopianism. For them, the revolutionary party decided on the aims of the struggle, regardless of the opinions and aspirations of the rest of the population. Spinelli would clarify in his notes that man is simultaneously the means *and* end of political organization.[140] Revolutionary periods were "time for wolves," according to Spinelli, and not for collective deliberation.[141] Overlooking this "fact" of modern politics and bothering with democratic processes could be a fatal political sin.

History was not predetermined to guide humanity toward perpetual peace. Instead, it required the voluntary contribution of those with "firm ideals and specific proposals" to ensure the future success of democratic societies—individuals akin to the prophets described in the Bible.[142] Rossi and Spinelli used Gaetano Mosca's theory of the ruling class to break the teleological deadlock of liberal and socialist progressivism by affirming the pivotal role of the revolutionary elite in bringing about change. In Spinelli, this analysis was complemented by Nietzsche's vision of the overmen as cultural-political "legislators of the future" who reshape society by introducing new values, challenging the status quo, and leading humanity toward a higher state of being. In revolutionary times, the legislators should congregate in the vanguard party originally indicated by Lenin. As Spinelli would write in his notebooks, "political thought cannot escape from the

[138] Rossi and Spinelli, "Manifesto-Programma," 16. See also Spinelli, "Politica Marxista."
[139] Rossi and Spinelli, "Manifesto-Programma," 4.
[140] Altiero Spinelli, "Appunti su Politica, Potere e Disciplina," now in Graglia, *Machiavelli*, 183-8.
[141] Letter by Altiero Spinelli, recipient unknown, September 1942. Now in Graglia, *Machiavelli*, 156.
[142] Spinelli, *Come Ho Tentato*, 304.

current bottlenecks with an impossible restoration of collapsed mystical values, but continuing inflexibly on the cynical path of seeing things as they really are."[143]

In the *Ventotene Manifesto*, politically democratic projects and philosophically authoritarian principles coexisted. Rossi and Spinelli went beyond and expanded the concept of dictatorship inherited from the radical theorists of the Italian Risorgimento. Drawing on the tradition of Roman republicanism, the "Risorgimento dictatorship" was conceived primarily as a technical solution for the political-military confrontation in the struggle for independence. It did not extend to the imposition of new political values. In Mazzini's view, for example, a provisional authority should yield to a freely elected assembly or constituent process once it had defeated its opponent.[144] By contrast, Rossi and Spinelli's "legislators" must strive to impose their new civilizational ideals. For Spinelli, these principles "are a *prius* with respect to rational conduct, as in mathematics the axioms are a *prius* with respect to theorems." They couldn't be logically demonstrated. The ruling class could only assume these new values with an act of will and bestow them on the rest of the population.[145]

Spinelli (more than Rossi) theorized the revolutionary elite organized in the vanguard party as the modern embodiment of Machiavelli's Prince, tasked with governing the masses according to specific civilizational values.[146] By prioritizing the question of power over democratic issues, Spinelli arrived at conclusions like those expressed by Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks*, which, however, were published only after the war had ended. The underlying principle was that the ruling class self-preserved and reproduced itself, and the only way to bring about a political break was to substitute it with a new, more enlightened elite. The revolutionary group must define the cultural norms and ethical values with which it would challenge and eventually replace the existing hegemonic order. If the revolutionary party managed to gather "all the necessary forces" within the working class and its allies in the name of its new civilizational values, its struggle would be successful.[147]

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[143] Altiero Spinellim, "Quaderno appunti, Saggio sulla Rivoluzione Russa," 1941, HAEU/AS-0001/34. "Il pensiero politico non può uscire dalle strettoie attuali con una impossibile restaurazione dei mistici valori crollati […]"
[144] See Cesare Vetter, "Mazzini e il Problema della Dittatura," in Giuliana Limiti, eds., *Il Mazzinianesimo nel Mondo* (Pisa, 2009), 33-74.
[145] Spinelli, *Come Ho Tentato*, 303.
[146] Altiero Spinelli, "Saggio di Storia della Politica, Ovvero Machiavelli nel Secolo XX" (1943), now in Graglia, *Machiavelli*, 167-182.
[147] Altiero Spinelli's speech at the Third Congress of the Socialist Movement for the United States of Europe, Paris, November 5, 1949. HAEU, Fonds 'Mouvement Européen,' HAEU/ME—0087. The influence of Mosca's ideas was

Rossi and Spinelli would not relinquish their "Jacobin utopianism" even when the development of the war made the project of a revolutionary federalist party unfeasible. Following Mussolini's deposition and arrest in July of 1943, the major left-wing parties, including the Socialists, Communists, and the ex-members of Giustizia e Libertà (now in the Action Party) regrouped. It became evident that a small federalist party would not have the means and leverage to influence the political course vis-à-vis other more organized and recognized groups. In August, Rossi, Spinelli, and Colorni—finally free—joined other anti-fascist federalists in Milan to form the European Federalist Movement (Movimento Federalista Europeo, MFE). It was agreed that its members would infiltrate the existing left parties and secure leadership positions to stimulate support towards European federalism. They were required to "consider the discipline of the [federalist movement] higher than that of the parties."[148] The MFE adopted a new "federalism as a movement" tactic, seeking to pursue relationships at high political levels.[149] The documents approved at the Milan meeting, especially Spinelli's *Political Theses*, omitted to mention questions regarding plans for economic and societal reorganization that could alienate moderate and liberal groups—an omission that Rossi criticized.[150]

Despite these changing attitudes, the Jacobin ethos of the *Manifesto* continued to influence the work of the MFE until the end of the war. The federalists aimed to take advantage of the "wind of change" provided by the struggle of the antifascist Resistance in pursuit of their federalist utopia. The political situation remained fluid, offering plenty of leeway for change. The Allied powers were closing in on continental Europe, but it was still possible to imagine that the US forces would withdraw after their victory. In that case, at least Western Europe would remain free to merge into a new federation.[151]

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also visible in Gramsci's prison writings on the role of the revolutionary party. See Pier Paolo Portinaro, *Le Mani su Machiavelli: Una Critica dell'"Italian Theory"* (Rome: Donzelli, 2018).

[148] HAEU/AS-0001/31.

[149] See Graglia's introduction to Ernesto Rossi and Altiero Spinelli, *"Empirico" e "Pantagruel." Per un'Europa Diversa. Carteggio, 1943-45* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2012), 76.

[150] Altiero Spinelli, "Tesi Politiche" (1943). Spinelli's *Theses* were published along the *Manifesto* in the journal edited by Rossi *Quaderni del Movimento Federalista Europeo*, No. 1, s.l.n.d., and in *L'Unità Europea*, No. 3 (Milan), September 1943. Now in Edmondo Paolini, *Altiero Spinelli. Appunti per una biografia* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1988), 32.

[151] "Il Verbale della Riunione Costitutiva" (August 27-8, 1943). Now in Edmondo Paolini, eds., *Altiero Spinelli: Dalla Lotta Antifascista alla Battaglia per la Federazione Europea, 1920-1948. Documenti e Testimonianze* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996).

In August 1943 and January 1944, the *Ventotene Manifesto* was republished with only slight modifications from its original 1941 version that did not alter its content. Rossi and Spinelli wrote it at their most extreme isolation and reissued it as they sought to assert their role within the burgeoning Resistance movement. They deliberately chose the political manifesto format for its authoritative rhetoric. The circumstances of the war made salient its use, as it had been in 1848 for Marx and Engels. The following section shows how Rossi and Spinelli built on a longstanding tradition of political manifestos as a genre structured to produce political legitimacy and construct new identities by responding to rapid historical change.

IV—The Manifesto Moment, "A Dream of a Spring Dawn"

The political manifesto as a distinct literary genre had been part of the toolkit of the European revolutionaries since the late eighteenth century, starting with Sylvain Maréchal and Gracchus Babeuf's *Manifesto of the Equals* (1796). The exiles who established their secret societies in Britain, France, or the villages of the Swiss Alps triggered an intense circulation of political texts, which, in turn, fostered a process of Europeanisation of political activism.[152] Radical thinkers such as Mazzini, Lamennais, and Felix Pyat all published manifestos for their immediacy and emotional pull but also as a matter of expediency. Short and sharp, the wandering knights of the revolution could carry their manifestos across the continent with relative ease, translating and reprinting them as the contingencies required.[153]

Likewise, the founding members of the European Federalist Movement, operating in the strictest conditions of secrecy, would later rely on the manifesto for its illocutionary value, but also because it was easy to smuggle across borders. Colorni's wife, Ursula Hirschmann, stealthily transported the manuscript of the *Ventotene Manifesto* out of the island when Rossi and Spinelli

[152] Gallo, "The United States of Europe", 134.

[153] On Lamennais' manifesto "à la démocratie Européenne," see Florencia Peyrou and Juan Luis Simal, "Exile, Secret Societies, and the Emergence of an International Democratic Culture," in Joanna Innes and Mark Philip, eds., *Re-Imagining Democracy in the Mediterranean, 1780-1860* (Oxford: OUP, 2018), 206-30; on Felix Pyat's manifesto writing, see Atlanta Rae Neudorf, "Reconciling with Rupture: The Impact of Exile on Revolutionary Thought," *Journal of the History of Ideas* blog, December 15, 2021; on Mazzini's manifestos, see, Salvo Mastellone, "Mazzini's International League and the Politics of the London Democratic Manifestos, 1837–1850," in Bayly and Biagini, *Giuseppe Mazzini*, 93-104.

were still detained.[154] In Rome, Colorni would reprint it, while Ada Rossi, wife of Ernesto Rossi, and Fiorella and Gigliola Spinelli, sisters of Altiero, moved back and forth from Ventotene with their correspondence, written in small letters on thin cigarette papers.[155] Once in the hands of the antifascists operating in mainland Italy, the texts travelled across the continent, helping to forge the first links between Italian and European resisters.[156]

The political manifesto became the go-to literary device for the federalists exiled on Ventotene, seeking to make disciples from a place of isolation and deprivation. By replicating the stylistic and rhetorical features of its nineteenth-century predecessors, the *Ventotene Manifesto* heralded the emerging Italian federalist movement into the political battleground, publicly declaring its prerogatives and role. Rossi and Spinelli flashed their ideas like a flare amidst the left-wing Resistance milieu they aspired to lead. From this point of view, Giuseppe Mazzini's manifestos for his Young Italy (1831) and Young Europe (1834) movements had set a precedent. Mazzini, too, presented his brotherhood of revolutionaries as "guarantors of [humanity's] future," emphasizing their public and democratic activism against the secrecy of the Carbonari movement.[157] Furthermore, Mazzini's organizations became transnational propaganda movements, spreading on the continent the message of fraternity and unity of the people later inherited by Rossi and Spinelli.[158]

The *Ventotene Manifesto* had two direct nineteenth-century antecedents in Cattaneo's *On the Milan Insurrection of 1848* (1949) and Proudhon's *The Principle of Federation* (1863), both written in Paris by revolutionaries on the run. These two texts are the closest the nineteenth-century federalist tradition came to producing a manifesto. Cattaneo, the forerunner of Italian municipal federalism, concluded his memoir-manifesto with the warning that "we will have true peace when we have the United States of Europe."[159] In Proudhon's "truculent, overstated, and avowedly schematic" essay, federalism entailed a free and autonomous network between citizen-workers and provincial and municipal authorities, protecting individual autonomy and diversity from power

[154] After the assassination of her first husband, Eugenio Colorni, Ursula Hirschmann married Spinelli. See Ursula Hirschmann, *Noi Senzapatria* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1993) and Silvana Boccanfuso, *Ursula Hirschmann: Una Donna per l'Europa* (Genoa: De Ferrari, 2019).
[155] On the role played by women in the Europeanist movement, see Luisa Passerini and Federica Turco, eds., *Donne per l'Europa* (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 2013).
[156] Braga, *Rossi,* 273-90.
[157] Giuseppe Mazzini, "Giovine Europa – Atto di Fratellanza" (1834), now in Giovanni Spadolini, eds., *Per l'Unità Europea: Dalla Giovine Europa al Manifesto di Ventotene* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1984), 97-9.
[158] Gallo, "United States," 135.
[159] Carlo Cattaneo, *Dell'Insurrezione di Milano nel 1848 e della Successiva Guerra* (Brussels: Soc. Tip., 1849), 271.

centralization.[160] Domestically, Cattaneo and Proudhon wanted to break up the omnipotence of the state through decentralization and local autonomy. Externally, European federalism was another weapon that could bring down the unitary national state.

The conceptual structure of the *Ventotene Manifesto,* however, was more indebted to Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto*, the document by which "all preceding manifestos were retrospectively constituted as manifestos."[161] For Marx and Engels, class warfare culminated in the rise of a new society. Communism would replace bourgeois capitalism, which had exhausted its contribution to human progress. For Rossi and Spinelli, the same could be said of the nation-state vis-à-vis federalism. In the nineteenth century, the national ideal had helped overcome a "narrow-minded parochialism and generated a deeper sense of solidarity against foreign oppression." It was the historical product of communities of men who organized their lives collectively based on shared customs and aspirations. But now, according to the *Ventotene Manifesto*, the nation-state could not claim to represent ever more interconnected communities united by cultural and economic interests. Federalism represented the next higher stage of political development.[162] Like Marx and Engels before them, Rossi and Spinelli situated their *Manifesto* at the intersection between the old world bound to collapse and the coming revolution. They also underlined a breakthrough in political thinking: revolutionary federalism was to supersede the old, ineffective, internationalism "of a purely Utopian character."[163]

Furthermore, like Marx and Engel's text, the *Ventotene Manifesto* represented a collective demand and was published anonymously. Clearly, anonymity was first a strategic choice to protect the authors. However, it also reflected Rossi and Spinelli's willingness to speak for a broader movement they could only hope existed beyond their small island of detention. The political manifesto as a literary device was suited to this effort for its capacity to encapsulate and articulate a shared vision in a compelling and unified voice. The authors faded into the background, furthering a collective *esprit de corps*, which empowered Rossi and Spinelli's still-to-be-constituted movement. Their revolutionary federalism was a group product, and the *Manifesto*

[160] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *The Principle of Federation*, Richard Vernon, eds., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), xi.
[161] Martin Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution. Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes* (Princeton: PUP, 2006), 30.
[162] On the analogies between the two manifestos and the revolutionary duos Marx/Engels and Rossi/Spinelli, see Vassallo, 'Il Manifesto' Pp. 23-25.
[163] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), (London: Penguin Classics, 2002), 47.

crystallized the endpoint of a collective process while propelling a new political paradigm into the broader arena of antifascist Resistance.[164]

By 1941, the political manifesto had already become a well-established weapon in Italian politics. Various opposing factions had been issuing inflammatory statements to attack each other. Marinetti's 1909 *Manifesto of Futurism* became a prototype for twentieth-century overblown and violent rhetoric, which inspired Fascist language. Although not initially a political movement, Futurism developed a political agenda with two subsequent documents, prompting a battle of the manifestos.[165] In 1919, the fascist journal *Popolo d'Italia* published the *Manifesto of the Italian Fasces of Combat* (Manifesto dei Fasci Italiani di Combattimento), whose drafting followed a rally organized by Mussolini in Milan, with the participation of Marinetti. In 1925, Marinetti also signed the *Manifesto of Fascist Intellectuals,* launched by the philosopher Giovanni Gentile. This prompted Benedetto Croce—the doyen of Italian philosophical idealism—to respond with the *Manifesto of Antifascist Intellectuals*, signed, among many others, by the historian Gaetano Salvemini, Ernesto Rossi's mentor.[166]

As Mussolini tightened his grip on the opposition, the political manifesto became an instrument of clandestine leftist propaganda with strong symbolic significance. Giustizia e Libertà's 1932 *Manifesto of Justice and Liberty* honored the death in exile of Filippo Turati, a towering personality in Italian socialism. It was an opportunity to raise him alongside Jean Jaurès and Giacomo Matteotti in the "Pantheon of great spirits who gave their life to the Idea."[167] In GL's manifesto, these figures became examples in the fight against fascism, imbued with almost religious significance. Rossi and Spinelli's MFE would soon have its own martyrs. In June 1944, Rossi dedicated his book *The United States of Europe* to "Leone Ginzburg and Eugenio Colorni, leaders of the European Federalist Movement in Italy," both murdered in Rome in 1944 during the German occupation. The antifascist cult of martyrs served to overcome tragedy by transforming it into fuel for revolutionary action. The political manifesto channeled this energy in concise and

[164] On the understanding of ideology as a group product, see Michael Freeden, "Ideology and Political Theory," *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 1 (2006), 3-22.
[165] Filippo Tommaso Marinetti *et al.*, *I Manifesti del Futurismo* (Florence: Lacerba, 1914).
[166] On the "battle of manifestos" that took place on the fascist and anti-fascist press, see Stanislao G. Pugliese, *Fascism, Anti-fascism, and the Resistance in Italy: 1919 to the Present* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 12-13.
[167] "Un Manifesto di Giustizia e Libertà Diffuso Clandestinamente in Italia," *La Libertà*, 16 (1932), 3.

straightforward language. It inscribed the sacrifice of the antifascists in a broader narrative of rebellion and insurgency in which death was a rite of passage towards final victory.[168]

The shifting political balance during the Second World War engendered a genuine "manifesto moment" across the whole continent. The fragile European system seemed to collapse into a pre-legal state of anarchy, creating an opportunity for sweeping visions of a new continental order. Meanwhile, the Atlantic Charter—this "global manifesto of the New World Order"—raised hopes for a democratic victory and left open the possibility for an autonomous reconfiguration of the European polity after the conflict.[169] However, while the charter provided a top-down articulation of foundational principles and frameworks for cooperation, European resisters sought a platform that could broadcast their ideological goals and aspirations in a more horizontal and democratic manner, like a manifesto. Accordingly, manifestos cropped up across the continent, with the Italian and French left especially engaging in revolutionary federalist propaganda.[170]

While imprisoned under the Vichy government, Leon Blum, leader of the *Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière* (SFIO), wrote *À l'échelle humaine*, where he critiqued the failure of France's bourgeoisie to defend democratic institutions and advocated for a "super-state" that would guarantee peace. At its core was a federation of free and equal nations.[171] His ideas influenced the French resistance, as reflected in manifestos like the one drafted by Daniel Mayer for the SFIO in 1943, which called for integrating France into a European order.[172] Other groups, such as Albert Camus' *Combat*, similarly produced manifestos that supported supranational structures and social reforms, but often subordinated European unity to national liberation and the establishment of social democracy.[173] These French contributions echoed the federalist vision of the *Ventotene Manifesto*, highlighting a shared commitment to limiting national sovereignties and ensuring peace through federation.

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[168] Storeno (Ernesto Rossi), *Gli Stati Uniti d'Europa* (Lugano: Nuove Edizioni di Capolago, 1944), 2.
[169] Oona A. Hathaway and Scott J. Shapiro, *The internationalists: How a Radical Plan to Outlaw War Remade the World* (New York, 2017), 192.
[170] See Lipgens, *Documents*, Vol. 1, 264-361. In Britain, Federal Union member Barbara Wootton wrote *Socialism and Federation* (London, 1941), while the Independent Labour Party published F. A. Ridley and Bob Edwards' *The United Socialist States of Europe* (London, 1944). On the connection between Wootton and the Ventotene group, see also Alberto Castelli, *Barbara Wootton: tra socialismo e federalismo: aspetti del pensiero politico* (PhD diss., Università degli Studi di Perugia, 2000); idem, "Il socialismo fabiano di Barbara Wootton," *Italia Contemporanea*, no. 241 (2005): 491–507.
[171] Léon Blum, *À l'échelle humaine* (Lausanne: Mermod, 1945).
[172] "Manifesto of the SFIO" (1943), in Lipgens, *Documents*, Vol. 1, 304-6.
[173] "Manifesto of Combat", Lipgens, *Documents*, Vol. 1, 291.

However, it was the Italian exiles who played a leading role in rethinking federalism during this time, operating within broad transnational networks. In Toulouse, the Italian refugee Silvio Trentin published the manifesto of his resistance group Libérer et Fédérer, *Winning War and Winning Peace – WHAT WE Are, WHAT WE Want* in the summer of 1942. Unlike the *Ventotene Manifesto*, Trentin's text took inspiration from Proudhon's "integral federalism" and aimed to construct the new Europe by federating local "professional or spiritual communities."[174] Trentin's proudhonian federalism emphasized decentralized cooperation and autonomy as opposed to centralized supranational governance.[175]

Trentin's text was preceded by a similar manifesto, also prepared in Toulouse, by members of the Italian Socialist Party in exile: Andrea Caffi, Giuseppe Faravelli, and Emilio Zannerini. This manifesto, known as *The Socialists—War and Peace*, or more commonly as the "Toulouse Theses" (1940), called for a severe curtailment of national sovereignty and the redistribution of political power from the State to society. The Theses, aimed at decentralizing the organizational structure of European countries in favor of municipalities, regions, and workplace councils, all integrated into a continental federal framework.[176]

Both documents influenced the work of Ignazio Silone, the famous novelist and, during the war, head of the Foreign Center of the Italian Socialist Party in Zurich. Silone drafted his "Third Front Theses" to steer the Italian socialists towards a new vision of internationalism. For Silone, European federalism was the goal of the incoming revolution, around which the socialist movement could rebuild its political and ideological clout.[177] Like Rossi and Spinelli, Silone hoped for a palingenesis of continental politics, foreboding a thorough reconstituting of international relations. A mere metamorphosis of the old system, cleansed of fascist traces, would not do. The political order of yesterday was to be replaced if peace were to be secured. After September 1943,

[174] Silvio Trentin, "Gagner la Guerre et Gagner la Paix – Ce Que Nous Sommes Ce Que Nous Voulons," *Libérer et Fédérer*, July 14, 1942. On Silvio Trentin, see Fulvio Cortese, *Liberare e Federare: L'Eredità Intellettuale di Silvio Trentin* (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2016); Giuseppe Gangemi, "Silvio Trentin: Due Percorsi per la Democrazia e il Federalismo," *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia* 67, no. 2 (2012): 361-377; Iginio Ariemma, "Silvio Trentin, una Personalità 'Scomoda'," in *Resistenza e Diritto Pubblico*, ed. Fulvio Cortese (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2016), 3-8; and Frank Rosengarten, *Silvio Trentin dall'interventismo alla Resistenza* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1980).
[175] Paul Arrighi, "Silvio Trentin et le Mouvement de Résistance Libérer et Fédérer : De la Résistance vers la Révolution," in *Guerres Mondiales et Conflits Contemporains*, 226 (2007), 121-130.
[176] Andrea Caffi, "I Socialisti, la Guerra e la Pace" (1941), now in *Quaderni del Gobetti,* 1 (1958), and in *Scritti Politici* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1970), 239-307. On Caffi's federalism see Alberto Castelli, "La Scelta Federalista di Andrea Caffi," *Il Politico*, 4 (1997), 583-616. On Faravelli see Fabio Florindi, *L'Eretico. Giuseppe Faravelli nella Storia del Socialismo Italiano* (Rome: Arcadia, 2024).
[177] Ignazio Silone, 'Federalismo e Socialismo', in *L'Avvenire dei Lavoratori*, June 30, 1944.

Silone would work as the connecting link between Rossi and Spinelli, who had fled Italy, and the network of underground antifascists operating in Switzerland, making the European Federalist Movement a veritable transnational enterprise.[178]

However, as we will analyze in greater detail in Chapter IV, despite early federalist efforts by Rossi and Spinelli—centered on key meetings in Geneva and culminating in the 1945 Paris Conference—their vision for a united Europe was soon constrained by the emerging postwar order. The "spirit of Yalta" redirected political priorities toward national reconstruction, causing federalist momentum to fade. Spinelli distanced himself from the MFE, while Rossi withdrew from politics due to depression. They regained leadership of the Movement only in 1947 following the launch of the Marshall Plan, but by then, federalist ambitions had to align with U.S. influence and Cold War realities.[179] As a result, the MFE adopted a more moderate constitutionalist approach, abandoning the revolutionary aspirations of the *Ventotene Manifesto*.[180]

In 1941, from the remote and precarious vantage point of the small island of Ventotene, the collapse of the European political order under the weight of the German war machine evoked a return to a Hobbesian state of nature. The leftwing heretics of the European Resistance responded with a wide range of radical appeals inspired by a long tradition of political manifestos harkening back to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Federalism became a central element in recasting the left's international vision. However, as soon as the advance of the American and Russian forces on the continent made clear that no revolutionary effort would be tolerated, the internationalist dimension of the Resistance force receded, and, with it, the "manifesto moment" that had given voice and expression to it.

With the disappearance of a revolutionary perspective from Western Europe after WWII, the political manifestos also faded from sight. The Jacobin utopianism of the *Ventotene Manifesto* was thrown on the back burner by the leadership of the Movement and later used by the young of the MFE *against* Spinelli's new nonpartisan attitude to federalism.[181] For Ignazio Silone, speaking

[178] On Silone's political work in Switzerland see especially Deborah Holmes, *Ignazio Silone in Exile: Writing and Antifascism in Switzerland 1929–1944* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005) and Stanislao G. Pugliese, *Bitter Spring. A Life of Ignazio Silone* (New York: Straus and Giroux, 2009).
[179] See Altiero Spinelli, "La Ricostruzione Europea Secondo il Piano Americano," *Il Ponte*, March 1948. Now in Spinelli, *La rivoluzione federalista: scritti 1944–1947,* ed. P. Graglia (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996), 345-66.
[180] Graglia, *Spinelli,* 313.
[181] Spinelli, *Come Ho Tentato*, 365. In a letter of April 1945 to Rossi, Spinelli asked explicitly to leave the *Ventotene Manifesto* and two other essays written in Ventotene soon after "in the shadows because they only serve to create obstacles to our work." The letter is now in *Altiero Spinelli, La Rivoluzione Federalista 1944-1947*, ed. Piero Graglia, (Bologna, 1996), 244-7 at 246.

in 1947, the words of the *Manifesto* "recall[ed] a dream of a spring dawn." Although written just a few years prior, "compared to the present conditions, they seem much more remote."[182]

V—Conclusions

Historiography on the *Ventotene Manifesto* is unanimous in recognizing that Rossi and Spinelli produced a conceptual revolution by shaping federalism into a distinct ideology suited to drive political change in Europe—a theory of freedom that posited European unification as the prime mover of progress. Such a reading encourages an understanding of European federalism as the distinctive feature of the *Manifesto* that still speaks to our current political and social climate, unshackled by other considerations of economic or social nature. This analysis is reinforced by the following writings of the two authors, particularly Spinelli, which dropped mentions of a socialist economy or revolutionary dictatorship.

Current interpretations have skewed the ideological characteristics of the *Manifesto* by overlooking what its authors were trying to achieve with the document in the immediate context of the war. For Rossi and Spinelli, the *Manifesto* was the only available weapon in their "internal exile" on Ventotene to participate in the ongoing political warfare. With it, they aimed at subverting the conventional terms of leftist discourse by exposing the deficiencies of nationally oriented politics. Rossi and Spinelli were on the attack, not just against fascism but also against the feebleness and shortsightedness of the European left. If it is true that federalism was the *Manifesto*'s guiding lodestar, the logic of the document suggests that without a social-democratic economic and political structure, a united Europe would, in time, fall prey to the same capitalistic parasitic interests that had corrupted the functioning of democracy before. The *Ventotene Manifesto* called for a thorough recasting of the economic and social system, without which the logic of the entire federalist enterprise could not stand.

The revolutionary socialist ethos gave strength and added meaning to the *Manifesto* in the context of the war. Their federalism was revolutionary because it drew inspiration from a long tradition of radical thought that gave one final blast of fire during WWII and then burned out. Their revolution was federalist because any meaningful change must happen within the peaceful

[182] Ignazio Silone, "Missione Europea del Socialismo," in Ferruccio Parri, et al., *Europa Federata, introd. E. Rossi.* (Milan: Edizioni di Comunità, 1947) 37-53.

framework offered by a political and legal supranational structure. Federal unity would force the European nations out of the state of nature in which they competed like "lawless savages" and into a juridical state where rights would be secured, and justice administered.

The close reading of the *Ventotene Manifesto* in this chapter has sought to unpack and disentangle both the immediate aims of its authors and the weight of past traditions pressing upon it. Still, the *Ventotene Manifesto* remains elusive, difficult to pin down—almost an enigma. Stripped from its historical moorings, it drifts through contemporary discourse, celebrated but curiously unexamined. Now enshrined as a foundational text of the European project, it resists easy classification: radical and pragmatic, utopian yet strategic, deeply Italian in its intellectual roots yet universalist in its ambitions.

How did such a composite vision emerge? The *Manifesto* appears to challenge the dominant trajectory of Italian political thought, particularly the nation-centric legacy of the Risorgimento. Federalism was not necessarily an intuitive choice for an Italian revolutionary. If anything, modern Italian history suggests the opposite: a relentless insistence on national unity as the precondition for progress. But at the heart of an antifascist project, this dissident doctrine sought to dissolve national sovereignty in favor of a supranational order. How did this happen?

To unravel this puzzle, we must step further back—before Ventotene, before the war, into the 1930s. The federalist strand in *Ventotene* did not emerge in isolation. As this chapter has already suggested, it developed within an intellectual genealogy clandestinely taking shape in the anti-fascist underground, particularly amongst the Italian political exiles of Giustizia e Libertà in Paris. There, among socialist heretics and dissident republicans, the first real fractures appeared in the traditional alignment between socialism and the nation-state. It was also there that some began to imagine an entirely different future for Italy and for Europe. Understanding the *Ventotene Manifesto* requires understanding its origins in a world of exiles, conspirators, and ideological wanderers. This is where the story now leads.

Chapter Two: Federalism as an Antifascist Language and a Response to the Crisis of Socialism in Interwar Europe

I— Beyond Nation and Party

Although *The Ventotene Manifesto* remains one of the most influential documents in the history of European federalism, narratives of its origins often overlook the broader conditions and intellectual currents that made it possible.[183] To understand how the vision of Ventotene emerged, we must examine the trajectory of Italian federalism and, more importantly, the collective dimension of the movement that played a crucial role in shaping it: Giustizia e Libertà (GL). This chapter builds on Marco Bresciani's recent intellectual history of GL, which reconstructs the group's internal debates and antifascist pluralism. However, while Bresciani situates federalism among the many competing ideological strands within the group, I focus more directly on the federalist-socialist perspective. In my view, federalism stands out as GL's most significative response to the crisis of democratic socialism and the challenge of constructing a supranational political alternative. I trace how this perspective, although fragmented and contested, contributed to shaping the intellectual horizon from which wartimes socialist federalism would later emerge.

GL was a network of ideologically diverse antifascist exiles and socialist heretics, the so-called *fuorusciti* (literally, "those who have gone out") who, in the 1930s, sought to reimagine the political and economic order of Italy and Europe beyond both capitalism and Bolshevism. The federalist socialism they espoused in the early to mid-1930s prefigured the theories later developed by the Ventotene group in 1941–43, providing the necessary ideological foundation for the wartime federalist movement, as examined in Lipgens's work.[184] Far from being a movement led by a single figure, GL embodied a form of "groupness" that operated without a fixed hierarchy, fostering theoretical debates that challenged the dominant frameworks of the time.

[183] And tend to be flattened onto the figure of Altiero Spinelli. See, for example, *European Union*, "Altiero Spinelli," *European Union* (official website), accessed February 14, 2025, https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu/eu-pioneers/altiero-spinelli_en; and Anna Foa, "Spinelli, il Giusto che fondò l'Europa," *Gariwo*, January 22, 2024, https://it.gariwo.net/magazine/editoriali/spinelli-il-giusto-che-fondo-l-europa-27001.html.
[184] Walter Lipgens, "European Federation in the Political Thought of Resistance Movements during World War II," *Central European history* 1, no. 1, 1968 and id., *European Integration*, 1982.

Much of the socialist and federalist discourse before World War II took place on the fringes of traditional organizations such as the French, Italian, and German socialist parties, where groups like GL were especially active.[185] At the same time, GL's ideas deeply influenced Italian socialism, particularly after some of its members began to filter into the Italian Socialist Party in the latter half of the 1930s. Recounting its history is therefore essential to understanding the origins of European federalism and also the subsequent development of the "Third Force" left among Italian political exiles.

The peculiar path of Italian federalism presents a striking paradox. Given Italy's historical fragmentation, federalism might have seemed a natural trajectory for the country's political evolution. However, the post-Risorgimento state took a different course, consolidating power into a rigidly centralized structure. Italian federalists thus had to navigate a dual struggle: against fascism, and against a deeply entrenched nationalist model of governance. The interwar years proved particularly fertile for rethinking federalism, and groups such as GL looked for alternatives to the failing nation-state model. The federalism they envisioned was as much a social and economic program as it was a political project.

Fascism exacerbated this centralization, absorbing all aspects of political and economic life into the state, while socialism, divided between reformist inertia and Soviet-aligned revolutionary rhetoric, failed to mount an effective resistance. In response, members of GL developed the only credible alternative to the Cominternian antifascism of the Italian Communist Party, reimagining socialism as decentralized, democratic, and transnational.[186] Rejecting both Marxist orthodoxy and Stalinist centralism, GL championed workers' self-management, regional autonomy, and a United States of Europe, positioning federalism as the foundation of a new antifascist and socialist order beyond both capitalism and Bolshevism.

However, in articulating this vision, GL occupied a doubly marginal position: in the socialist camp, by rejecting Marxist dogmatism and an alliance with the Communists, and in the political tradition of the Risorgimento, as its legacy had been co-opted and distorted by fascism. This tension made GL's relationship with its own ideological inheritance somewhat uneasy. On the one hand, they sought to reclaim the Risorgimento's revolutionary impulse, and Carlo Rosselli

[185] Cf. Terence Renaud, *Restarting Socialism: The New Beginning Group and the Problem of Renewal on the German Left, 1930–1970* (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2015), 2.
[186] Prezioso, "Antifascism", 558.

explicitly invoked the Mazzinian imperative of "thought and action" (pensiero e azione) as a guiding principle.[187] But they did so in an era when fascism had recast Mazzini's legacy as the ideological foundation of its own nationalist mythology, forcing GL to navigate a complex and often ambivalent relationship with Italy's past.

Between 1932 and 1935, a debate unfolded in GL's theoretical journal, the *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà* (Notebooks of Giustizia e Libertà), concerning the group's ideological and organizational direction. GL members debated what form of socialism—or liberal socialism—the movement should embody and what type of struggle should follow from this theoretical position. What kind of society did they envision for post-fascist Europe? How did they conceive of a new international order? Moreover, should GL adopt the traditional structure of a political party, or remain a broad movement uniting activist of diverse political sensibilities under the banner of militant antifascism? And how should the group position itself in relation to other political organizations operating in exile, particularly the Italian Socialist Party? To address these and other questions, the *Quaderni* incorporated a polyphony of voices more than a unified melody, serving as an example of dialogical discursive interactions and open political theorization, in contrast to the monological and authoritative voice of the party line. [188]

The issue of political autonomy and federalism emerged in this debate as a defining feature of GL's ideological vision, drawing inspiration from a range of political sources, particularly Proudhon's mutualist theory and the lived experience of the Turin factory council movement led by Antonio Gramsci in the early 1920s. The autonomy–federalism dyad became central to a group that rejected the bureaucratic, hierarchical structure of the traditional 19th-century political party in favor of a more loosely organized federation of autonomous cells operating at the regional level.

Similarly, its vision for post-fascist Italy involved dismantling the centralized nation-state and establishing independent centers of political and economic self-administration. GL's commitment to autonomous political and economic practices became the ideological foundation around which its vision for the future political order would pivot. Anticipating and influencing the Ventotene group, GL adopted the slogan *United States of Europe* as both a rallying cry for a socialist continent and a minimum program for a renewed Socialist International. Unlike other

[187] Cf. Nicola Del Corno, *"I'm a Socialist": Thought and Action in Carlo Rosselli* (Milan: Biblion Edizioni, 2024).
[188] Cf. M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981; repr., 2004) and Freeden, "Ideology."

Europeanist plans popular at the time—chiefly Coudenhove-Kalergi's *Paneuropa*—GL's vision of a Federal Europe was not conceived as a bulwark against Soviet Russia but as an alternative "third force" that could develop independently of both capitalist and collectivist models and, if the opportunity arose, eventually integrate a democratized Russia.[189] Nonetheless, among the antifascist left, federalism sharpened the divide between GL and the Comintern-led Italian Communist Party, which firmly rejected European unification. The Italian Socialist Party, always seeking closer ties with the communists, largely followed suit, though with significant exceptions.

While GL provided a crucial ideological backdrop for the Ventotene group, its internal coherence should not be overstated. Throughout its existence, GL remained a loosely bound network animated by a shared antifascist ethos and a general sympathy for socialism and federalism, rather than by a unified political programme or strategic vision. As this chapter will show, within the GL "milieu" tensions abounded between proponents of liberal-socialist reformism, anarcho-syndicalist leanings, and early federalist experimentation. This ideological heterogeneity never fully coalesced into a singular political doctrine or practice, as it would happen with Ventotene. What held the group together was a common rejection of totalitarianism and a commitment to transnational solidarity, but the exact shape that solidarity should take remained contested.

The influence of GL on the Ventotene group should be understood as a shared political sensibility rooted in a search for supranational alternatives to fascism and communism. Spinelli and Rossi's positions can be traced more closely to the strand of GL associated with Carlo Rosselli, especially his emphasis on internationalism and federalist socialism. However, here too, we should resist the temptation to draw too direct a line. As argued in Chapter One, Spinelli and Rossi operated with a sense of intellectual autonomy that precludes reading Ventotene as the straightforward realization of a Rossellian project. What connected them to Rosselli was not a shared political blueprint but a resonance in moral and political style. It was a matter of family resemblance more than direct inheritance. Not incidentally, Rossi had been one of the key figures in shaping that family from the very beginning.

[189] On Coudenhove-Kalergi, see Dina Gusejnova, "Europe To-Morrow: The Shifting Frontiers of European Civilization in the Political Thought of Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi," *İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyoloji Dergisi* 38 (2018): 227–253; and *Id.*, *European Elites*, 69–97.

While the material traces of GL's impact on Ventotene remain elusive, contemporary observers—most notably Guglielmo Usellini—saw Rosselli's supranational and internationalist orientation as key. It stood in contrast to the more internally focused federalisms of Andrea Caffi, Leone Ginzburg, or Silvio Trentin discussed in this chapter, and offered the most direct ideological bridge.[190] The influence of GL on Spinelli and Rossi thus flowed less from any single blueprint of federalist structure than from Rosselli's capacity to recast socialism as a transnational democratic project.

Moreover, a close reading of the *Quaderni* reveals significant variations in tone and emphasis across different issues and contributors. Some pieces foreground federalism understood as strong supranational governance and a structural response to nationalism. Others prioritize class struggle and the defense of local liberties. The tensions between Proudhonian and Hamiltonian models of federalism, discussed in later chapters, are already present here, albeit *in nuce*. These antinomies reflect the range of ideological positions across the movement. At the same time, they showcase the absence of a stable consensus on what federalism entailed in practice. GL's ideas were rich, unsettled, and open to radical reconfiguration. It was this possibility of reconfiguration that the Ventotene group sought to realize.

Recognizing this internal complexity is essential for understanding the originality of the Ventotene project. Spinelli and Rossi did not simply inherit a tradition. They selectively recomposed elements of GL's worldview into a new and synthetic vision shaped by the specific conditions of wartime confinement. The "Ventotene Moment" should was not the linear outcome of GL's project, although it is doubtful that it could have emerged without the intellectual and political humus of the interwar period. It was a contingent ideological formation. It arose from that milieu but cannot be reduced to it. Accurately reframing GL's role in this history clarifies the distinctiveness of federalist socialism and highlights the creative potential of exile as a setting for political transformation.

GL's trajectory in this period also exemplifies a broader political outlook that shaped socialist thought across Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. Its legacy lies in its influence on Italian politics. But it also rests in its articulation of a transnational and federalist alternative to both capitalist and communist hegemony. This ambition extended well beyond the Italian context,

[190] See Piero Graglia, "The Cultural Roots of Ventotene's Manifesto: The Spinelli's Perspective," *Annals of the Fondazione Luigi Einaudi* 55 (2021): 49–62, at 57.

informing wartime debates on European unity and the future of a democratic and libertarian left—one that sought to move beyond orthodox Marxism without necessarily rejecting Marx altogether.

For this reason, it is crucial to acknowledge that the pejorative designation *fuorusciti*, a term the members of Giustizia e Libertà appropriated from fascist discourse to define themselves, is historically significant in identifying them as political exiles from fascist Italy.[191] Yet, it risks obscuring the broader international resonance of their ideas. The cultural and political malaise that pervaded European life from the turn of the century formed the milieu in which GL members operated and to which they sought solutions, aligning them with the wider efforts of an entire generation of socialist non-conformists grappling with the decline of revolutionary energy in socialism, the imperialist crises, the failure of the Soviet experiment, and the rise of fascism. Andrea Caffi, the most heretical thinker of GL, described these issues as converging "into the single, complex problem of a European renewal."[192] Caffi invoked Proudhon and the pluralistic socialism that preceded the Second International, advocating for "total decentralization, a complete and definitive abandonment of state-worship."[193]

The novelist and socialist leader Ignazio Silone articulated this nostalgic political vision for the openness and ideological diversity of international socialism before 1889, characteristic of GL and other European groups. He suggested that had it "continued to exist within the socialist movement, it would have made it easier to resist both the bureaucratic paralysis of social democracy and the totalitarian involution of Bolshevism." Silone was particularly reflecting on post-World War I Italy and later Germany, where the left had succumbed to the myth of the dictatorship of the proletariat, "which led, after a disorderly struggle under false flags, to capitulation to fascism."[194] The shortcomings of the democratic left, unable to counter the political hubris of the communists—who had called for revolutionary upheaval despite the absence of the necessary conditions—ultimately cleared the way for fascism's triumph. For the heretics of socialism, the imperative was to start anew: to forge a political vision free from the scholasticism

[191] See Aldo Garosci, *Storia dei fuorusciti* (Bari: Laterza, 1953).
[192] Andrea Caffi, *Quadro del mondo intellettuale al principio del secolo*, 1915–16, unpublished manuscript, Archive of the Biblioteca Gino Bianco, Forlì (hereafter BGB Archive). "[…] l'unico e complesso problema di un rinnovamento europeo."
[193] Ibid., "[…] una totale decentralizzazione, un abbandono completo, definitivo della statolatria […]"
[194] See See Ignazio Silone's introduction to Angelo Tasca, *Naissance du fascisme: l'Italie de l'armistice à la marche sur Rome* (1938; Paris: Gallimard, 1967).

of party clerks and provide the theoretical clarity necessary to sustain the left in its antifascist struggle, even under the direst conditions.[195]

GL's radical attempt to forge a new socialist movement by rethinking its ideological foundations is perhaps best symbolized by the flame emblazoned on its logo. It burned brightly and loudly in the 1930s, both in the heated debates among its members and with other political groups. During this period, GL was the only antifascist force capable of directly challenging the PCI, both as an organized presence in exile and through its clandestine struggle in Italy. Crucially, at a time when Comintern-aligned antifascism demanded ideological conformity, GL stood apart as a genuine alternative, advancing a political vision that rejected both Stalinist orthodoxy and the inertia of traditional socialism.[196] Its flame also blazed on the battlefields of Europe and in the countries occupied by the Fascists and Nazis, who slaughtered many of its most prominent leaders and thinkers, particularly its charismatic founder Carlo Rosselli and his brother Nello, who were killed by French *cagoulards* in 1937. By the end of the decade, GL, in its earliest incarnation, had been reduced to cinders. But the fire that smoldered beneath the surface would be rekindled many times during the war and its aftermath, as the story of the Ventotene group testifies, and as we shall see in the following chapters.

II—Exile as Strategy: The Giustizia e Libertà Network and the Genealogy of Anti-Fascism

Between the late summer and early fall of 1929, Carlo Rosselli, Emilio Lussu, and Alberto Tarchiani—three Italian antifascists with long histories of political activism in Italy—began organizing the Giustizia e Libertà network from Paris, where they had taken refuge to escape persecution. In its early days, the movement's ideological contours remained fluid, encompassing Rosselli's heterodox democratic socialism, Tarchiani's more traditional liberalism, and Lussu's

[195] I use the term *clerc* not in the positive sense popularized by Julien Benda in *La trahison des clercs* (1927), but in Raymond Aron's negative connotation of the man of the church who goes out of his way to defend a doctrine or dogma. Aron employed the metaphor of the *clerc* to criticize intellectuals who, blinded by the myth of Russia and the idolatry of history, ended up justifying the crimes committed by the Soviet regime. See Julien Benda, *La trahison des clercs* (1927; Paris: Grasset, 1975); Raymond Aron, *L'Opium des intellectuels* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1955).
[196] Prezioso, "Antifascism", 558.

regional-autonomist socialism.[197] However, as Rosselli and one of his closest GL comrades, Aldo Garosci, would later recall in the pages of the *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà*, the name paid tribute to Michail Bakunin's *Libertà e Giustizia* (*Freedom and Justice*) association, founded by the Russian anarchist in Naples in the summer of 1865. Giustizia e Libertà thus signaled from the outset that its ideological foundations would extend beyond the Marxist orthodoxies of the Second International, reflecting instead a distinct sensibility toward a more libertarian socialist ethos.[198]

Initially, GL's avowed aim was to shake the already existing 'Concentrazione Antifascista' (Anti-Fascist Concentration) into action. The Concentration included the antifascist forces operating outside of Italy, except for the communists, but was considered politically ineffective.[199] It reproduced in exile the parliamentary coalition of leftwing parties that had unsuccessfully opposed Mussolini's grip on power between 1922 and 1925. Rosselli and the other *giellisti* (GL members), attacked the direct lineage that connected the faint-hearted parliamentarianism of these groups when they were still allowed to operate in the country, with the present unwillingness to elaborate plans and actions, even violent ones, to actively destabilize the Fascist regime. What's more, the leaders of the Concentrazione insisted on the transitory nature of fascism, while GL members were beginning to recognize its European dimension and political durability.[200]

The leadership of GL was composed of a new generation of political activists, shaped by the extreme experiences of the First World War and fascist violence. In 1924, the assassination of Giacomo Matteotti, the leader of the Italian social democrats, had marked a significant moment of crisis. Initially, the opposition withdrew from parliament to capitalize on the widespread outrage that had swept the country and to force Mussolini's resignation. After a brief period during which the Matteotti affair appeared to threaten the stability of the Regime, the situation took a dramatic turn. In January 1925, Mussolini assumed personal responsibility for the assassination in a speech

[197] The bibliography on GL and its founder Carlo Rosselli tends to overlap. For an introductory view of GL's ideological basis in English, see Joel Blatt's "Carlo Rosselli's Socialism," in *Italian Socialism: Between Politics and History*, ed. David Di Scala (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996) 80–99. To my knowledge, the only biography of Rosselli available in English is Pugliese's *Carlo Rosselli*. On the history of GL, other than Bresciani's *Learning,* Mario Giovanna's work was also very helpful. See, Mario Giovanna, *Giustizia e Libertà in Italia: Storia di una cospirazione antifascista, 1929–1937* (Turin: Bollati Bolinghieri, 2005).

[198] Cf. Carlo Rosselli and Aldo Garosci, "Libertà e Giustizia" e "Giustizia e Libertà," *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà* 2 (March 1932).

[199] On the *Concentrazione* see especially Bruno Tobia, "I socialisti nell'emigrazione. Dalla Concentrazione antifascista ai fronti popolari (1926-1934)," in *Storia del socialismo italiano*, vol. IV, *Gli anni del fascismo (1926-1943)*, ed. Guido Sabbatucci (Rome: Il Poligono, 1981), 3–175.

[200] For a firsthand account of these issues, see Garosci, *Fuorusciti*, 38–39.

to the Chamber of Deputies. This address marked the beginning of an all-out assault on the remaining vestiges of democratic public life in the country, culminating in the enactment of a series of exceptional laws known as the *Leggi Fascistissime* ("Ultra-Fascist Laws"). Mussolini's totalitarian turn was thus spurred by the killing of Matteotti, signaling the beginning of his complete consolidation of power. For the future *giellisti*, it was proof of the impossibility of fighting fascism through legal and parliamentary means. Harsh times required even harsher methods, supported by more radical ideas.[201]

For GL members, the leaders of the Concentrazione's fixation on viewing fascism as a passing aberration in Italian politics, along with their focus on preserving the old parties for their eventual return to the political scene, obstructed real action. GL's vision was grounded in a different understanding of the fascist phenomenon, rooted in a historical analysis of Italy's development inherited from the late 19th-century liberal left, and reinforced by the testimony of Gaetano Salvemini, the celebrated historian and doyen of Italian independent socialism.[202]

Many in GL viewed Mussolini's dictatorship as the outcome of a disordered and profoundly illiberal political system that had taken shape after the unification of Italy (1861–1871), a system that had failed to integrate the country's popular masses, further deepening the divide between the political elite and the living conditions of most Italians—faults that the First World War had only exacerbated. Accordingly, they did not view fascism as a temporary malaise that could be cured by simply deposing Mussolini, but as an integral part of the "autobiography of the nation," in the words of the liberal intellectual and fascist martyr Piero Gobetti. The entire structure of Italian parliamentarism was sick and needed to be uprooted. Nothing short of a political revolution could provide Italy with a sound democratic system.[203]

The structure of the Concentrazione, based as it was on a coalition of old parties, rested on unstable grounds. As Rosselli would explain in his articles for the *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà*—nearly a decade before similar reflections by Simone Weil—he had grown suspicious of

[201] The centenary of Matteotti's assassination spurred a wealth of publications. Among them, see Mauro Canali, *The Matteotti Murder and Mussolini: The Anatomy of a Fascist Crime* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024); Fabio Fiore, *L'affaire Matteotti: Storia di un delitto* (Bari: Laterza, 2024); Federico Fornaro, *Giacomo Matteotti: L'Italia migliore* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2024); Marzio Breda and Stefano Caretti, *Il nemico di Mussolini: Giacomo Matteotti, storia di un eroe dimenticato* (Milan: Solferino, 2024). The LSE has curated an exhibition of Matteotti's trial papers smuggled into London by Gaetano Salvemini: see Andrea Pisauro and Gianluca Fantoni, "The Murder of Giacomo Matteotti – Reinvestigating Italy's Most Infamous Cold Case," *The Conversation*, April 22, 2024.
[202] See especially Fernanda Gallo, *Hegel and Italian Political Thought: The Practice of Ideas, 1832–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025), 232–248.
[203] See Bresciani, *Learning,* 66-77.

the party form as an agent of revolutionary transformation, particularly in the unique political context of 1920s Europe. Rosselli had witnessed firsthand how the burden of bureaucratic infighting had weakened Italian socialism in the face of growing fascist violence in 1921 and 1922. Accordingly, GL would not be just another party in the Concentrazione, but a movement with an organizational and structural looseness that would make it more intellectually dynamic and better equipped to fight fascism on the ground.[204]

GL was inspired by the 19th-century tradition of political radicalism first established by Filippo Buonarroti, which linked revolution with conspiracy, and was later theorized by Lenin and, more notably, Georges Sorel, who provided the real revolutionary inspiration.[205] The group's ethos embodied a mixture of sectarian and elitist tendencies. On one hand, it was crucial to maintain the maximum degree of ideological and strategic flexibility, to avoid the ossification of the old parties and respond swiftly to the attacks of the Fascist police. On the other hand, the influence of the sociology of "elitism" elaborated by Mosca and Pareto at the turn of the century emphasized the necessity of a compact leadership and the role of revolutionary "active minorities" in shaping political action.[206] In its early form, GL would operate as a conspiratorial cell. The group would not seek to educate the masses about the task of revolution, but to wage an underground war against fascism.

As mentioned, the members of GL were so-called *fuorusciti*—a term of opprobrium deployed by the Fascists to denigrate anti-fascist activists who had fled Italy. By contrast, the more honorific *esuli* (exiles) evoked the pantheon of Risorgimento heroes, a legacy contested by both Fascists and their adversaries.[207] But the language of exile remained open to subversive reappropriation. Figures such as Salvemini embraced *fuorusciti* with ironical defiance, transforming the insult into a mark of distinction. In time, the *giellista* Aldo Garosci would inscribe it within the historiography of anti-fascist resistance abroad, ensuring that *fuorusciti* would remain indelibly associated with the experience of political exile in the struggle against Fascism.[208] However, this term captures only one facet of GL identity, deeply rooted in Italian history but

[204] Carlo Rosselli, "Pro o contro il Partito," *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà*, no. 8 (August 1933): 3–12.
[205] See Maurizio degl'Innocenti, *Carlo Rosselli e il socialismo liberale* (Manduria: Manduria-Roma-Bari, 1999), 74.
[206] Bresciani, *Learning*, 34 and 126.
[207] For a discussion of the meaning of *fuoruscitismo*, see Leonardo Rapone, "I fuorusciti antifascisti, la Seconda Guerra Mondiale e la Francia," in *Les Italiens en France de 1914 à 1940*, ed. Pierre Milza, special issue of *Publications de l'École Française de Rome* 94 (1986): 343–384.
[208] See Garosci, *Fuorusciti*, 7-8, and Gaetano Salvemini, *Memorie di un fuoriuscito* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1960).

insufficient to encompass the full scope of its members' vision. Their aspirations, both intellectual and political, extended beyond national borders, embracing the European and global dimensions of a democratic revolution.

In fact, the enforced transnationalism of Italian *fuorusciti* also shaped their embrace of Europeanism. Exile compelled the figures analyzed in this chapter to adopt a stronger European vision, influenced by the people they encountered, the national contexts in which they operated, and the work they were required to carry out. This, of course, came relatively naturally to many in Giustizia e Libertà—from Rosselli to Caffi—who, due to their upbringing, culture, and social background, already possessed a cosmopolitan outlook. At the same time, we must not forget that safe havens like Paris in the 1930s had become hubs for antifascist refugees and political exiles from across the continent, transforming them, in the words of Aldo Garosci, into a sort of "Nation-Europe."[209]

By 1929, Carlo Rosselli was already a well-known *fuoruscito* as well as the ideological and strategic mind behind the creation of GL. In Italy, he had been a young professor of economics and a pupil of Salvemini. He and his brother Nello came from a wealthy Jewish family of committed republicans and followers of Mazzini—the Italian revolutionary who had died a fugitive in the home of their great uncle, Pellegrino. As seen in the previous chapter, the Mazzinian ideological legacy carried a revolutionary vision that extended beyond Italy, aspiring to a Europe united under the principles of "equality and brotherhood of peoples."[210] The "Jacobin utopianism" I referenced when discussing the Ventotene group was certainly present in Carlo, whose impetuosity and intellectual force were well known to his collaborators. In the early 1920s, Disillusioned with the conservatism and corruption of Italian liberals, he gravitated toward Filippo Turati's reformist Partito Socialista Unitario (Unitary Socialist Party, PSU), which had broken away from the more radical Italian Socialist Party. It was Matteotti's assassination in June 1924, however, that ultimately convinced Carlo to join the PSU.[211]

Carlo Rosselli gained prominence on the Italian left, first by co-founding the journals *Non Mollare* (Do Not Give Up) in 1925 with Ernesto Rossi and Gaetano Salvemini, and later *Il Quarto*

[209] Quoted in Alessandro Isoni, "Socialismo, federalismo, Stati Uniti d'Europa: Carlo Rosselli di fronte alla crisi della civiltà europea," *Itinerari di ricerca storica* 31, no. 1 (2017): 75.
[210] See Giuseppe Mazzini, "Patto di fratellanza della Giovine Europa" (1834), now in *Id.*, *Scritti: politica ed economia*, vol. 1 (Milan: Sonzogno, 2008), 87–89.
[211] See Pugliese, *Rosselli*, 34-5.

Stato (The Fourth State) in 1926 with the socialist leader Pietro Nenni—both of which were swiftly shut down by the Fascist political police.[212] These publications embodied Rosselli's uncompromising spirit, as he openly advocated for armed resistance against the Fascist regime. His reputation was further cemented in 1926 when he orchestrated the escape of Filippo Turati to France.[213] Arrested for his role in the operation, Rosselli was tried alongside Ferruccio Parri (another future leader of Giustizia e Libertà) but ultimately acquitted. The trial only enhanced his status as one of the most charismatic figures of Italian antifascism.[214]

In 1930, a few months after the creation of Giustizia e Libertà, Rosselli shook European socialism by publishing in Paris his most famous treatise, *Socialisme Libéral* (*Liberal Socialism*). Written during his confinement on the Aeolian Island of Lipari, off the northern coast of Sicily, the draft of *Liberal Socialism* was smuggled out by Rosselli's wife, Marion, hidden between the strings of an old piano. More than a courier, Marion Cave Rosselli played a crucial role in the antifascist struggle, both as an organizer and as part of a transnational network of antifascist women who mobilized support across borders. Her arrest following Carlo's escape from Lipari to Paris in 1929 sparked a significant outcry in Britain, where feminist and antifascist groups pressured Italian authorities for her release. The pressure was ultimately successful, and she was freed at the end of August 1929, after the campaign escalated to involve the Italian ambassador in London, who, though reluctant, was forced to intervene due to the widespread British outrage over the arrest of an Englishwoman with family in Britain.[215] As seen with the women operating around Ventotene in the previous chapter, these networks, often marginalized in male-dominated antifascist circles, played a key role in sustaining the movement. They actively participated in political and strategic discussions, provided logistical support, facilitated clandestine communications, and ensured that the plight of exiled activists remained in the international spotlight.

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[212] See Mimmo Franzinelli, ed., *Non mollare (1925)*, with essays by Gaetano Salvemini, Ernesto Rossi, and Piero Calamandrei (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2005).

[213] The socialist leader and future president of the Italian Republic, Sandro Pertini, recalled the adventurous expatriation of Turati in "L'espatrio di Filippo Turati nella testimonianza di Sandro Pertini", in *Sandro Pertini. Combattente per la libertà*, edited by S. Caretti and M. Degl'Innocenti (Manduria-Bari-Roma: Piero Lacaita Editore, 2017).

[214] Francesco Altavilla, "Il processo di Savona," *Diacronie* 14, no. 2 (2013), accessed February 4, 2025, http://journals.openedition.org/diacronie/178; https://doi.org/10.4000/diacronie.178.

[215] See Isabelle Richet, "Marion Cave Rosselli and the Transnational Women's Antifascist Networks," *Journal of Women's History* 24, no. 3 (2012): 117–139. On Rosselli's escape from Lipari, see his account in "Fuga in quattro tempi: Lipari 1929," in Carlo Rosselli, *Opere scelte* (Turin: Einaudi, 1973), 511–525.

Rosselli's *Liberal Socialism* was a full-scale assault on the Marxism professed by the Italian communists and socialists. The failure of the Italian left in resisting the attack of fascism in the early 1920s fed Rosselli's critique. The crude radicalism of the Communists and the maximalist faction of the Italian Socialist Party had alienated the *petite bourgeoisie*, driving it into the arms of the Fascists. Conversely, the rigid parliamentarianism of the reformists, led by Turati and Claudio Treves, resulted in passivity at a moment when resistance was most urgently needed. Yet at the heart of Rosselli's argument was a theoretical rather than merely practical critique. However divergent their responses, both factions of Italian socialism—Communist and reformist—drew from the same intellectual tradition inherited from prewar socialism. Their differences emerged from competing interpretations of the same Marxist canon: the communists from the Bolshevik dispensation of Lenin in the early 1900s; the reformists from the scientific positivism of the late 19th century, and the dispensation of Eduard Bernstein in the late 1800s.

On the contrary, Rosselli repudiated the idea that Marxism and socialism were synonymous. He called for a socialism that could complete the task that 19th-century liberalism had left open: to go beyond civil rights towards the realization of those social rights which alone could ensure true justice and liberty. In the words of Rosselli, "socialism, as the dynamic champion of the most numerous, miserable, and oppressed class, is the heir of liberalism."[216] His socialism would not be erected on the ashes of bourgeois liberalism as the communists imagined, nor would it penetrate its political institutions and participate in its slow but unavoidable overturning, as the reformists attempted to do.

For Rosselli, liberalism was not a programmatic political utopia but rather a method and a spiritual attitude. In his own words, liberalism was the "complex of rules of the game that all the parties in contention commit themselves to respect."[217] In contrast, socialism was the guiding ideal, the vanishing point toward which political action would converge: "Bourgeois freedoms must be abolished so that proletarian freedoms, the only ones with universal value, can arise."[218] Although *Liberal Socialism* never became the foundational text of GL, and Rosselli would later revise many

[216] See Carlo Rosselli's "Thirteen Theses" on liberal socialism, published as an appendix to *Socialismo Liberale* (1929) (Turin: Einaudi, 1973), 178. "Il socialismo, in quanto alfiere dinamico della classe più numerosa, misera, oppressa, è l'erede del liberalismo." (My trans.)
[217] Rosselli, *Liberal Socialism*, 94.
[218] Carlo Rosselli, 'Liberalismo Rivoluzionario', in *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà*, N. 1, Jan. 1932, pp. 25-29. "Bisogna abolire le libertà borghesi perché possano sorgere le libertà proletarie, le sole aventi un valore universale." (My trans.)

of its assumptions, it provided the group with a strong ideological reference point and cemented Rosselli's role as the movement's leading figure.[219]

The initial nucleus of GL (and a large part of those who would join later) comprised a generation of young, educated men who, like Rosselli, had shared the experience of the trenches during WWI. As we have seen in the case of Ernesto Rossi, they had been radicalized first by the corruption and ineptitude of the Italian parliamentary regime, whose great chastiser had been Gaetano Salvemini, and later by the advent of Fascism.[220] The so-called "generation of the trenches," stretching back to Mussolini's cohort in the 1880s, shared certain common psychological traits: a deep spiritual connection to the cause of the Risorgimento, a disdain for the stagnation of Italian parliamentarianism, and an aspiration for profound moral and political renewal. Their socialism—including that of the young Mussolini—was shaped more by the voluntarism and radical trade unionism of the French theorist Georges Sorel than by the writings of Karl Marx. Many among them were also deeply influenced by the fragmentation of Italian socialism between 1915 and 1921.[221] As with their peers in France or Germany, the "lost generation" of WWI had been exposed to the same extreme events, giving way to what sociologist Karl Mannheim would describe as "a similarly 'stratified' consciousness."[222]

However, we should be careful not to conflate shared generational dispositions with individual political trajectories. The war bred similar aspirations in the minds of many young men, but it is how these aspirations were declined politically that made a difference. Mussolini would theorize the emergence of a new aristocracy of men forged in the extreme conditions of the frontline. Bravery and a taste for violence were the essential features of Mussolini's "trenchocracy." Class origin, democratic principles, and internationalism did not belong in his worldview.[223] GL founders such as Rosselli and Lussu also partook in the *élan vital* that defined

[219] On Rosselli's conception of socialism, see also his brief text 'I miei conti con il marxismo' (My reckoning with Marxism), published as an appendix to the Italian edition of Liberal Socialism.
[220] In 1910, but re-edited in 1919, Salvemini published an essay titled *The Minister of the Underworld*, in which he vehemently attacked the liberal Prime Minister Giovanni Giolitti and his corrupt electoral policies, particularly in Southern Italy. See Gaetano Salvemini, *Il ministro della mala vita e altri scritti*, edited by Ennio Corvaglia (Bari: Palomar, 2006).
[221] See Marco Gervasoni, *Georges Sorel: Una Biografia Intellettuale. Socialismo e Liberalismo nella Francia della Belle Époque* (Milan: UNICOPLI, 1997).
[222] Cf. Karl Mannheim, "The Sociological Problem of Generations" (1928), in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, edited by Paul Kecskemeti (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952).
[223] For Mussolini's original 1917 article on *trenchocracy* in translation, see Benito Mussolini, "Trenchocracy," in *Fascism*, ed. Roger Griffin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 28–29. On Mussolini's political outlook after

their generation and maintained an elitist approach to politics, wary of the political agency of the 'passive masses' that the Italian left had struggled to control. Nevertheless, they never abandoned the centrality of the democratic question in European politics or the challenge of how to transform what they perceived as an undifferentiated mass into a multiplicity of conscious individuals and groups.[224]

GL brought together socialists, radical democrats, republicans, and liberals disillusioned with party politics but motivated by a will to action rooted in the vitalism of Henri Bergson and the revolutionary syndicalism of Sorel. The element that bound them together was their complete rejection of any historical determinism: change would come at the hands of those who fought for it, or it would not come at all. But the republican-democratic revolution remained the central precondition of all GL's actions, as was the ambition to bring European societies together. Furthermore, the role of women was never subsidiary but complementary to that of men in GL. In contrast, in the fascist *Weltanschauung*, women played merely a social function (mothers and spouses) without contact with (nor even the possibility of intervention in) the political sphere.[225] Finally, the internationalist perspective of the movement was in open conflict with the chauvinism of fascist nationalist mythology.

Propelled by a strong commitment to political activism at a time when other parties of the left struggled for survival, GL rapidly expanded its ranks between 1929 and 1931, absorbing activists and intellectuals of different ages and political sensibilities. A discussion emerged on the pages of the bulletin *Giustizia e Libertà*, putting the spotlight on the issue of the organizational structure of the movement. First published in Paris in November 1929 as *Giustizia e Libertà. Movimento Rivoluzionario Antifascista* (Revolutionary Antifascist Movement), the bulletin was the movement's first official organ, outlining its ideological foundations and political objectives. It included GL's first program and served as an early rallying point for exiled liberal-socialists.[226] Already in its first issue, Rosselli had called on the democratic, republican, and socialist forces to

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WWI and his conceptualization of the *generation of the front*, see Marla Stone, *The Fascist Revolution in Italy: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2013).

[224] See Paolo Bagnoli, *Italia eretica: un paese civile tra politica e cultura* (Florence: European Press Academic Publishing, 2003), 95.

[225] See Stanislao G. Pugliese, "Women of Justice and Liberty," in *Rosselli*, 173–76. On the role of women under Fascism, see especially Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). See also Barbara Spackman, *Fascist Virilities: Rhetoric, Ideology, and Social Fantasy in Italy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

[226] Bresciani, *Learning,* 34.

"set aside party membership [...] and create a unity of action" around GL's revolutionary movement.[227] Later on, Rosselli's skepticism towards the party as a means for concrete political action gave way to a more pragmatic attitude. In 1931, GL formed an agreement first with the Socialist Party, then with the entire Concentration, becoming its operational arm inside of Italy.[228] The time was ripe for a more thorough reflection on the political and strategic aims of the movement, as well as on the nature of its ideological foundations. The question of federalism would take center stage in the ensuing debate. However, to grasp fully the depth and complexity of this debate, it is first essential to situate GL's ideological position in the broader Italian and European socialist framework, where questions of federalism, democracy, and revolutionary strategy were being redefined amid the shifting political landscape of the period.

III—Giustizia e Libertà in the Socialist Camp

What was the relationship between GL and the Italian Socialist Party and why is it relevant to the overall history of socialist federalism during the 1930s and early 1940s? Despite their ideological differences, the borders between GL and the PSI tended to be porous, with members such as Giuseppe Faravelli taking part in both groups and others moving from one group to the other during the interwar years.[229] In 1933, Faravelli discussed the new program of the PSI on the pages of GL's *Quaderni*, insisting on the "at the same time revolutionary and liberal function" of its socialism.[230] Angelo Tasca, a former member of Gramsci's *Ordine Nuovo* group in Turin, was also writing articles for the *Quaderni* on the political situation in Spain and Germany. In 1935, he would rejoin the Socialist Party as well as the French SFIO. In the pages of their journal, *Politica Socialista*, Tasca and Faravelli—along with Giuseppe Saragat—advocated a form of humanistic and federalist socialism that was influenced by GL's theoretical framework but retained a strong Marxist orientation.[231] In 1934, they saluted GL's discussion on federalism in the *Quaderni*, an

[227] Carlo Rosselli, "Non vinceremo in un giorno, ma vinceremo," *Giustizia e Libertà. Movimento Rivoluzionario Antifascista*, no. 1 (November 1929). "[...] archiviamo per ora le tessere dei partiti: e creiamo un'unità di azione."
[228] Bresciani, *Learning*, 35.
[229] On Faravelli, see especially Florindi, *L'eretico*.
[230] Giuseppe Faravelli, "Il programma del P.S.I.," *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà*, no. 6 (March 1933): 35–40.
[231] Cf. *Politica Socialista: Rivista Teorica del Socialismo Italiano*. Milan: Feltrinelli, 1966.

issue they would also embrace during the war.[232] Eugenio Colorni was closely associated with GL but joined the PSI in 1935, becoming the head of its clandestine organization in Rome. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Colorni later played a crucial role in shaping the ideas of the Ventotene group in the late 1930s and wrote an important introduction to the first edition of the *Manifesto di Ventotene*.

Silvio Trentin was a scholar of administrative law and a former member of the radical and social-liberal Social Democracy party.[233] During his long French exile in the 1930s, he wrote for the *Quaderni*, later becoming one of the leaders of GL. Drawing inspiration from the federalist ideas of nineteenth-century thinkers, from Proudhon to Carlo Cattaneo, Trentin elaborated a fundamental critique of the monocentric state.[234] The roots of tyranny, he maintained, were in the centralized, unitary, and authoritarian nation state. Fascism was only "the most extreme expression of integral mono-centrism."[235] In place of centralized rule, Trentin proposed the adoption of an intranational federation of councils, among which to distribute state power. As seen in the previous chapter, during the war, in Toulouse Trentin created the socialist movement Libérer et Fédérer, which participated in the French resistance with a program for European unification.[236]

This brief overview of the socialist camp highlights both the prominence of the federalist and Europeanist question during this period and the fact that, for many Italian antifascist leaders, a phase of political activism within GL—or an open-ended collaboration between the two movements—served as a rite of passage before joining the Socialist Party. But what was the meaning of their experience in GL? Although it would be reductive to pin down many different personal experiences to one single interpretation, I believe that those who participated in the activities of GL brought inside the socialist camp a broader understanding of the socialist tradition (unrestricted to a continuous exegesis of the canonical Marxist texts), an openness to the role of the middle-classes, and finally, a different internationalist outlook.

After the assassination of the Rosselli brothers in 1937, which opened a period of political and organizational crisis for GL, it was indeed to the leadership of the PSI, operating between

[232] "Le Riviste — *Giustizia e Libertà* (Nuova serie, n. 7-10, giugno 1933-febbraio 1934)," *Politica Socialista*, no. 1 (August 1934).
[233] See Lucio D'Angelo, "Democrazia sociale," in *Dizionario del liberalismo italiano*, tomo I, ed. Corrado Malandrino (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2011), 322–325.
[234] Silvio Trentin, "Attualità di Proudhon," *L'Avvenire dei Lavoratori*, April 15, 1944.
[235] Cited in Corrado Malandrino, *Socialismo*, 163.
[236] On Silvio Trentin, see also Corrado Malandrino, *Silvio Trentin: Pensatore politico antifascista, rivoluzionario, federalista* (Manduria: Lacaita, 2007).

Toulouse and later Zurich, that the torch of federalism was passed, as some of its members—such as Ignazio Silone—demonstrated a strong receptiveness to the ideas of the group. Therefore, it can be argued that in the first half of the 1930s, GL represented a training ground for ideas on federalism and autonomy that became part of the socialist lexicon during the war, and not just in Italy.

In the broader European context, the theoretical and practical efforts of GL, *mutatis mutandis*, bore a closer resemblance to those of the Austromarxist tradition. Before the 1930s, Austromarxist thinkers Karl Renner and Otto Bauer had made a significant theoretical contribution to the question of territorial and cultural autonomy. Their autonomist vision arose from the urgent need to formulate a socialist response to the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire. For Renner and Bauer, nations were communities of character and destiny that should retain a distinct and autonomous legal personality within the framework of international law. After World War I, Bauer became the leading theoretician of the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Austria (SDAP). However, his emphasis on prioritizing cultural over political revolution—anticipating Gramsci's ideas on political hegemony—ultimately failed to counter the reactionary and fascist forces that took hold in postwar Austria.[237]

The Austromarxists' Neo-Kantian emphasis on subjectivity and human agency, along with their preoccupation with questions of nationalism and sovereignty, was passed on to a new generation of German-speaking revolutionaries whose trajectories mirrored those of GL members. In particular, the Internationaler Sozialistischer Kampfbund (ISK), led by the journalist Willi Eichler, carried the torch of humanist Marxism and federalism well into the 1950s. When Hitler's rise to power in 1933 forced the ISK to disband, its leaders relocated to London, where the group's leadership and its homonymous publication were taken over by the German journalist Mary Saran. Both the German and British cells of the ISK maintained strong ties with the Italian liberals and socialists who had been active in GL before the war.[238]

These groups occupied the vanguard of a discursive context in which GL's ideas were both situated and formed. The socialist Europeanism that emerged—endeavoring to secure peace

[237] See Helmut Gruber, *Red Vienna: Experiment in Working-Class Culture, 1919–1934* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 29–37; Ramón Maíz, "Federalism in Multinational States: Otto Bauer's Theory," in *The First World War and the Nationality Question in Europe*, ed. Xosé M. Núñez Seixas (Boston: Brill, 2021), 87–114.
[238] On the connections between the ISK/SVG and the European Federalist Movement, see, in particular, Francesca Lacaita, *Anna Siemsen. Per una nuova Europa: Scritti dall'esilio svizzero* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2010).

through the establishment of radically democratic supranational institutions—must be understood as the logical extension of this interwar intellectual framework they themselves helped articulate. In this interplay of different political languages, GL's *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà* assumed a formative role, providing a conceptual vocabulary that structured subsequent debates on federation, autonomy, and political agency. It is to the unfolding of this discourse that our attention must now be directed.

IV—"Whoever says socialism, says federation" – The case of the Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà

Writing in the early aftermath of the Second World War, the Russian-born Italian libertarian socialist Andrea Caffi revisited the issue of the nature and position of society in the modern, industrialized world—a question that had preoccupied him during the interwar period, first as a member of GL and later as part of the Italian Socialist Party. In "Mito e Mitologia" (Myth and Mythology, 1946) Caffi criticized the dogmatic rationalism and materialism of Marxism, which sought to eradicate the role of myth in society. For him, myth was an intrinsic part of human experience, offering a framework for communal identity, shared moral values, and a means of engaging with the inexpressible dimensions of human existence, including the political realm, that transcended mere rational calculation.[239]

Caffi argued that the negation of myth had inevitably led to a dehumanized society, vulnerable to totalitarian domination. Fascism and Nazism, he contended, had not transcended myth but had instead replaced organically evolved societal myths with artificial constructs of race and nation, designed for political control. In contrast, Caffi proposed what he called "society par excellence," in which individuals could experience a sense of belonging free from immediate material constraints—one infused with the authentic myth of "justice" as advocated by Proudhon.[240] Caffi's romantic cultural anarchism offered a distinct emphasis compared to the more pragmatic institutional imagination of other contributors.

Carlo Rosselli had, at least since *Liberal Socialism*, emphasized the centrality of the political myth in effecting real change. For Rosselli, the driving idea of the Italian revolution was

[239] Andrea Caffi, *"*Mito e Mitologia*"* (1946), *Tempo Presente* 4, no. 8 (August 1959): 598–611.
[240] Ibid., 600-1.

the "principle of liberty," a concept imbued with proudhonian semantic overtones.[241] As he wrote, the myth of liberty "radiates throughout [GL's] program: we demand the most advanced social transformations and justify them in the name of freedom: a freedom that is full, effective, and positive for all human beings, in all aspects of existence."[242] Years later, echoing the ideas of Caffi, Rosselli would describe the realization of this freedom as a struggle against "the despotic centralizing State" and in favor of "social federalism."[243] Unlike Caffi's metaphysical emphasis on myth and sociability, Rosselli sought to anchor his vision in concrete administrative reforms and federalist institutions.

What was key to both Caffi and Rosselli was the idea of disentangling society—the sphere of spontaneous human interaction—from the modern nation-state, which sought to control and regiment it. Orthodox Marxism, too, with its deceitful myth of the proletarian dictatorship, only reinforced the prerogatives of the State Moloch over society. As Silvio Trentin would later point out, the bourgeois revolution of 1789 and the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 had reinforced centralized power, stifling the aspirations of individuals and groups for autonomy. The roots of tyranny lay in the "integral monocentrism" of the state.[244] What was necessary, therefore, was to rethink the concepts underpinning socialism and to infuse Giustizia e Libertà with a new vision—one that combined socialism's pursuit of justice with the pillars of freedom and autonomy central to the liberal tradition. But even Trentin's critique of the unitary state was not framed in the same terms as Caffi's cultural pessimism or Rosselli's constructive federalism. For Rosselli and other giellisti, the myth of the United States of Europe functioned more as a general *idée-force* than as a concrete political blueprint. It served both as a catalyst for collective struggle and as a means of weakening the hold of Europe's nation-states. To foster this ideological renewal within GL and launch his federalist campaign, Rosselli founded the *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà* in 1932.

The *Quaderni* also served to clarify GL's position after its feverish activity between 1929 and 1931. Clamorous actions, such as Fernando De Rosa's attempted assassination of Umberto di Savoia, planned with Rosselli, had created friction in the Antifascist Concentration.[245] The

[241] See Proudhon, *The Principle*, 6.
[242] Rosselli, *Socialismo*, 176. "Il mito della libertà irradia tutto il nostro programma: noi reclamiamo le trasformazioni sociali più avanzate e le giustifichiamo in nome della libertà: di una libertà piena, effettiva, positiva per tutti gli esseri umani, in tutti gli aspetti della esistenza."
[243] Rosselli, "Contro lo Stato". "In luogo dello Stato dispotico accentratore, un federalismo sociale."
[244] Silvio Trentin, *Stato-Nazione-Federalismo* (Milan: Casa Editrice La Fiaccola, 1945), 153.
[245] *Giustizia e Libertà*, "Il Gesto di Bruxelles," no. 6 (November 1929): 2.

Concentration opposed violent acts, as did Gaetano Salvemini, while GL members saw them as necessary to their struggle.[246] Moreover, as GL grew in number and absorbed more socialists, tensions over its identity inside of the group intensified, making a space for theoretical debate and collective reflection essential.

The first issue of the *Quaderni*, published in January of 1932, opened with a tentative "revolutionary program", drafted by Rosselli. It was followed by a long editorial note offering further clarification on its meaning. The initial phase of the movement, claimed Rosselli, had proved successful in creating awareness on the necessity of the revolutionary struggle among the antifascists operating in Italy and abroad. However, the time of "negative antifascism" was over. What was needed now was to "specify the political physiognomy of the movement."[247] The antifascist revolution envisaged by Rosselli called for profound economic and political transformations. The revolutionary government and the local revolutionary committees would form a Constituent Assembly with the task of giving shape to the new order of the Republic. The land would be handed over "to those who work it" and all the main industries would be socialized and administered by workers' committees,

> The administration of the socialized companies will not be taken on by the State, but by autonomous, non-bureaucratic bodies, directed by technicians with the participation of worker representatives and employees, consumers and public bodies involved. […] The organization of the new state will be based on the widest autonomies. The functions of the central government will have to be limited only to matters affecting national life. The principle of autonomy is one of the guiding principles of the revolutionary movement "Giustizia e Libertà."[248]

[246] On the debate in *Giustizia e Libertà* regarding the use of violence, see "Gaetano Salvemini e Carlo Rosselli: Terrorismo, cospirazione antifascista e terrore di Stato: opinioni a confronto," in *Gaetano Salvemini: ancora un riferimento*, edited by G. Pescosolido (Manduria-Rome: Lacaita, 2010), 219–249.
[247] Carlo Rosselli, "Il programma rivoluzionario di Giustizia e Libertà" and "Chiarimenti al programma", in *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà*, no. 1 (January 1932): 1–20.
[248] "Schema di Programma", 8. "La gestione delle aziende socializzate non sarà assunta dallo Stato, ma da organismi autonomi, non burocratici, diretti da tecnici con la partecipazione di rappresentanti degli operai e impiegati dell'azienda, dei consumatori e degli enti pubblici interessati. […] L'organizzazione del nuovo stato dovrà basarsi sulle più larghe autonomie. Le funzioni del Governo centrale dovranno limitarsi alle sole materie che interessano la vita nazionale. Il principio dell'autonomia è uno dei principi direttivi del movimento rivoluzionario "Giustizia e Libertà"." (My trans.)

From this point on, 'autonomy' became the watchword of the *Quaderni* and the central idea around which all the different groups of GL seemed to converge. The influence of the proudhonian tradition of the libertarian left, championed by the small faction around Caffi, and the revolutionary tradition of the Turin factory councils, upheld by the Turinese wing of GL provided the necessary theoretical foundation for an alternative revolutionary leftism. The centralized powers of the State were to be taken apart and diffused: to cooperatives of producers and consumers or similar workers' associations for the proudhonists, to the factory councils in the Soviet-inspired theorizations of Antonio Gramsci in Turin.[249] This convergence masked significant divergence: the Proudhonian model favored by Caffi emphasized voluntary association and pluralism, while the Gramscian legacy in Turin prioritized the factory council as a site of revolutionary discipline.

A third and no less significant influence was British guild socialism, which Rosselli had studied at the London School of Economics in 1923–24. At the time, he was a young assistant professor of economics with a strong interest in the Labour left. Drawing inspiration from the medieval guild system, in which associations of craftsmen regulated their trades, protected members' interests, and maintained quality standards, guild socialists such as A. R. Orage and S. G. Hobson advocated for the control of industries by democratic workers' guilds, aiming to combine economic efficiency with individual freedom and collective self-management. Rosselli found in guild socialism the technical framework for a plan of socialization that would ensure maximum autonomy for individuals and free social groups, a concept elaborated in a particularly detailed manner in the works of G. D. H. Cole, whom Rosselli had met in London.[250] We should note here that Rosselli's guild socialism, with its technical and programmatic orientation, differed both from Caffi's Proudhonian suspicion of institutional blueprints and from the Gramscian vision of the factory council as a disciplined nucleus of revolutionary transformation.

The new ideas that Rosselli was introducing into GL's outlook were not all imported from abroad—some had deep roots in Italy's own socialist tradition. His collaboration with the journal of the socialist reformists *Critica Sociale* before his arrest and exile, under the direction of Filippo

[249] See Ames Martin, "Liberty and Discipline: Gramsci and the Factory Council Movement," in *Piero Gobetti and the Politics of Liberal Revolution*, Italian and Italian American Studies (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
[250] During his period of study in London, he also met Friedrich Adler, then the secretary of the Socialist International. He also got to know the Webbs and joined the Fabian Society. See Nicola Del Corno, "'Una traccia di sangue inglese nelle mie vene': Carlo Rosselli e l'Inghilterra," *Rivista Storica del Socialismo* 2, no. 1 (2017): 43–65.

Turati, was crucial, as it was on its pages that socialist Europeanism first emerged in Italy. In 1919, the rise of the new Communist International compelled the socialist left to seek alternative routes to internationalism.[251] The reformist and pacifist Italian socialists thus made the slogan of European federalism their own: "The workers embrace the idea of the Federation, which is a convergence towards the idea of the International."[252]

In fact, by the mid-20s, the whole Socialist left—reunited in the newborn Labour and Socialist International (LSI, 1923)—seemed to look favorably upon the possibilities offered to international politics by the League of Nations. However, the supranational turn in Socialist politics did not last long. With oppositional parties outlawed in Italy and the German socialists soon neutralized by the Nazis, the British Labour Party remained the leading force behind the LSI. In 1931, the Labour PM Ramsay Macdonald joined the Tories and Liberals and formed an austerity National Government to face the economic depression following the sterling crisis. The result was a series of painful cuts in government spending that became known as the "great betrayal."[253] Macdonald's betrayal marked the beginning of a troublesome period for Socialist internationalism. The Socialist parties that had a stake in national governments (such as the Labour and the Scandinavian) focused on domestic politics and tried to limit the influence of the International.[254] After the crisis of WWI, 1931 became the second watershed in the history of socialist internationalism.

By the time Rosselli penned GL's new "revolutionary program" in 1932, the rising tide of fascism had put center stage the need for a strong internationalist response. Not only was the socialist left unable to meet this challenge, but any prospect of collaboration with the Communist world was also foreclosed. The 1928 VI Congress of the Comintern had sanctioned the doctrine of "socialfascism", later reiterated by the X Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Stalin accused the European socialist parties of constituting not so much "the right-wing of the proletariat" as "the left-wing of the bourgeoisie", which alternately

[251] Alain Bergounioux, "L'Internationale Ouvrière Socialiste entre les deux guerres," in *L'Internationale Socialiste*, ed. Hugues Portelli (Paris: Éditions de l'Atelier, 1983), 23–42.
[252] See, for example, Claudio Treves, "L'a priori della federazione europea," *Critica Sociale*, October 16–31, 1918. Arguably, the first to discuss the need for political unification of the continent was Leon Trotsky in a pamphlet published at the outbreak of World War I. See Leon Trotsky, *Der Krieg und der Internationale* (Munich, 1914).
[253] See Austen Morgan, *Ramsay MacDonald* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 200–237.
[254] Leonardo Rapone, "La crisi finale dell'Internazionale Operaia e Socialista," in *I Socialisti e l'Europa*, *Annali della Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini e della Fondazione di Studi Storici Filippo Turati* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1989), 37–43.

used fascism and social democracy as instruments of popular oppression and communist persecution.[255] With socialist internationalism at its lowest point, Rosselli reacted by turning the old slogan of Turati – the United States of Europe – into one of his an *idée-force*, a myth that could inspire practical action and allow GL to "control the revolutionary situation of tomorrow."[256]

According to Michael Freeden, the world of ideologies is a continual series of challenges to the inertia of established ideological macro-families.[257] Rosselli's "revolutionary program" cut two ways. It aimed to shake up the antifascist scene, which had not yet made sense of the international character of fascism and the threat it posed to Europe. But GL was also challenging the PSI's ossified and dogmatic Marxism. It did so by recuperating the vision and the language of socialist traditions alternative to Marxism, which Marxism had overshadowed, but that had continued to exist, such as Proudhon's libertarian socialism, and Guild socialism's pluralist theory of the State. In Rosselli's plans, socialist federalism would resurrect a moribund internationalism and preserve peace abroad while guaranteeing freedom and full political representation at home.

Rosselli's ideas were, thus, part of a broader debate on the role of the revolutionary left in confronting the rise of fascism. In contrast to the impotence of the Italian socialists, who chose to vacate Parliament in protest after the Matteotti murder in 1924, Rosselli advocated for a new, revolutionary and proactive left, free from the sectarianism that had plagued previous years. Anticipating a distinction that would later become central to the federalists of the *Ventotene Manifesto*, he redrew the political divide, distinguishing between "reactionaries" and "revolutionaries,"

> It is easy to see how the division between these two positions no longer coincides with the traditional division of groups and parties; each party has its revolutionaries and conservatives […] Each party is by now intimately split along a horizontal line which often makes the identities of party cards and finalistic faiths fallacious.[258]

[255] The impact of the doctrine of social fascism on the morale of European socialists was incommensurable. On the direct experience of an Italian communist who decided to leave the Party, see Paolo Spriano, "L'esperienza di Tasca a Mosca e il 'socialfascismo,'" *Studi Storici* 10, no. 1 (January–March 1969): 46–82.
[256] Quoted in Pugliese, *Rosselli*, 168.
[257] Michael Freeden, "Confronting the Chimera of a 'Post-Ideological' Age," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 8, no. 2 (2005): 256.
[258] Carlo Rosselli, "Chiarificazione," *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà*, no. 2 (March 1932).

By repositioning the boundaries of what really constituted revolutionary antifascist action, Rosselli sought to elevate the struggle against the fascist dictatorship beyond the class-based framework in which the parties of the left remained entrenched. He argued that securing a socialist future—or indeed, any future—for Europe depended on the prior defeat of Fascism, coupled with the implementation of a democratic revolution. Recognizing a strong bipartisan dimension within antifascism, he sought to unite all leftist forces willing to place the struggle for a new democracy above rigid class interests. By redefining the fault line between progressivism and reaction in terms of antifascist struggle and radical democracy, Rosselli was, to some extent, not only overshadowing but also fundamentally rethinking the centrality of class warfare.

Although he remained convinced that the "proletariat" was the driving force of revolution and the custodian of the future republic's political values, his faith in the working class was tempered by an awareness of the fluidity of political allegiances in times of crisis and the role other social groups could play in the revolutionary process. The upheavals of fascism had demonstrated that political identities were not fixed: the lower classes, too, could be drawn to fascism, while a wavering lower middle class, driven by fear and insecurity, could shift its support to whoever promised economic and institutional stability. Rosselli recognized that overly strident class-struggle rhetoric had, in 1922, alienated crucial sectors of society, inadvertently driving them into the fascist camp—a dynamic he feared might soon repeat itself in Germany.

It is scarcely surprising that Rosselli's position should have provoked tensions with those socialists more resolutely attached to the established categories of class politics. Rodolfo Morandi, a close collaborator of Rosselli since the *Quarto Stato* days, eventually broke with Giustizia e Libertà due to his unwavering socialist class orientation. In September 1931, he published an op-ed in *Avanti!* titled "The Italian Revolution Must Be a Socialist Revolution," foreshadowing his departure from the group to join the Socialist Party.[259] Morandi's departure, like Chiaromonte's later disillusionment, underscored the fragility of any stable ideological consensus inside GL.

Conversely, Rosselli's stance resonated with other socialists and former communists who had witnessed firsthand the failure of the revolutionary *Biennio Rosso* of 1919–1920. Only a few years later, Ignazio Silone would articulate a similar perspective in the PSI's newspaper,

[259] Rodolfo Morandi, "La rivoluzione italiana dovrà essere una rivoluzione socialista," *L'Avanti!* (Swiss edition), September 26, 1931.

> The proletarian parties [can] play the game of big capitalism by pushing back the democratic classes and parties with the spectre of the red dictatorship towards the reactionary bloc. Thus […] fascism was born between 1919 and 1921 […] In particular, the socialists must avoid that their plans for the transformation of the country's economic structure contain a threat of proletarianization for the middle classes. We must abandon the naive abstract and anti-economic projects of socialization to the bitter end and acquire a more updated notion of the capitalist economic reality and its hidden levers of control.[260]

The notion that, in the prevailing political circumstances, the task of antifascist revolution ought to supersede the imperatives of class warfare entailed a redefinition of what it meant to be revolutionary. In this context, the familiar labels of maximalism and reformism began to lose their explanatory power. The categories through which revolutionary identity had hitherto been understood were rendered increasingly inadequate. This intellectual and political disposition was by no means confined to GL; it was shared, albeit in varying forms, by a broader constellation of socialist groups across western Europe, all grappling with the exigencies posed by the fascist challenge and the recalibration of revolutionary purpose it demanded. Hard-pressed by Fascist and Nazi militias, the German Neubeginnen and ISK, like GL, realized before others the magnitude of the threat that fascism posed to the entire continent. The "class against class" rhetoric of the communists and the all-out pacifism of the reformists would not be conducive to meaningful changes. Any significant transformation would come only by radical opposition at the hands of a transnational and inter-classist coalition of progressive forces.[261]

Such a position was precluded to the communists by their participation in the Russian-led Comintern, whose policy of uncompromising class struggle reached its peak between 1928 and 1935. When finally, the Comintern opened to the Popular Fronts, Germany had already fallen into the hands of the National-Socialists. In France, the momentary success of the Popular Front in stemming the tide of right-wing insurrection vindicated the position of the socialist leader Jean

[260] Ignazio Silone, "Alcuni dati del problema politico italiano," *L'Avanti!*, later published in *Romanzi e Saggi*, vol. 1 (Milan: Mondadori, 1998–99), 311–314. "I partiti proletari [possono] fare il gioco del grande capitalismo respingendo con lo spettro della dittatura rossa i ceti e partiti democratici verso il blocco reazionario. Così, […] nacque il fascismo tra il 1919 e il 1921 […] In maniera particolare, i socialisti devono evitare che i loro piani di trasformazione della struttura economica del paese contengano una minaccia di proletarizzazione per i ceti medi. Noi dobbiamo abbandonare gli ingenui astratti e antieconomici progetti di socializzazione ad oltranza ed acquistare una nozione più aggiornata della realtà economica capitalistica e delle sue occulte leve di comando." (My trans.)
[261] Cf. Terence Renaud, *The Making of a Radical Tradition,* Princeton: PUP, 2021, 82-6.

Zyromski and his Gauche Révolutionnaire. All these groups shared a common perspective in foreign politics: a federated socialist Europe would be the first concrete step to achieving a global internationalist project. Thus, complete autonomy from the communist sphere was the precondition for developing a federalist outlook, even for strict Marxist groups like Gauche Révolutionnaire and Neubeginnen.[262]

As previously mentioned, inside GL, Andrea Caffi was the first to offer a comprehensive assessment of the issues of autonomy and federalism. Caffi epitomized the romantic transnational revolutionary. Born in Saint Petersburg in 1887 to an Italian family, he was drawn to socialism in high school and actively participated in the 1905 Revolution alongside the Menshevik faction. His activism led to two years in Tsarist prisons, after which he fled Russia, beginning a lifetime of wandering across Europe that would only end with his death in 1955.[263]

After studying in Berlin and Paris, he volunteered to fight in World War I with the Italian Army, driven by his opposition to German imperialism. He initially welcomed the Russian Revolution of 1917 with enthusiasm, but his first-hand experience of Bolshevik rule quickly disillusioned him. In 1923, while in Moscow, he was arrested for political opposition, an event that shattered his faith in Lenin and the Bolsheviks. This experience profoundly altered his perspective on both the effectiveness and legitimacy of political violence.

In the mid-1920s, while residing in Florence, Andrea Caffi briefly engaged with *La Conquista dello Stato*, the fascist journal directed by Curzio Malaparte, whose early experiments with national-syndicalist thought briefly attracted a range of intellectuals seeking alternatives to liberal democracy. Caffi's involvement, however, was short-lived, as he became increasingly disillusioned with fascism's authoritarian drift and the violent means it employed to consolidate power. It was during this period that he established contact with the antifascist *Quarto Stato* group, drawn to its commitment to a democratic and socialist alternative. His association with *Quarto Stato* deepened his intellectual and personal ties with Carlo Rosselli and reinforced his break with fascist currents. Following the group's arrest, Caffi managed to escape repression by fleeing to

[262] On the divisions among the French socialist left in the 1930s, see especially Talbot Imlay, "Marceau Pivert and the Travails of an International Socialist," in *The Transnational Activist*, edited by Stefan Berger and Sean Scalmer, 141–164 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

[263] Scholarship on Caffi remains limited. For early works, see Gino Bianco, *Un socialista irregolare: Andrea Caffi, intellettuale e politico d'avanguardia* (Cosenza: Lerici, 1977). A more comprehensive biography is Marco Bresciani, *La rivoluzione perduta: Andrea Caffi nell'Europa del Novecento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009). See also Marco Bresciani, ed., *Cosa sperare? Il carteggio tra Andrea Caffi e Nicola Chiaromonte: Un dialogo sulla rivoluzione, 1932-1955*, preface by Michele Battini (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2012).

Paris. There, in the milieu of Italian political exiles and European intellectual networks, he resumed his collaboration with Rosselli, further developing the unorthodox political ideas that would shape their subsequent efforts against fascism.

Renowned for his vast erudition, Caffi could compose lengthy essays entirely from memory, a necessity given his chronic poverty—he often sold his books to pay rent. Indifferent to publishing and averse to salaried work, he never completed a book. In 1919, the newspaper *Corriere della Sera* sent him to Russia as a correspondent, but upon reaching Odessa, he joined the revolutionaries, unable to remain a mere observer amid the devastation of war and famine. This restless idealism made him a singular figure in antifascist circles. Letters from friends reveal deep affection and a sincere concern for his well-being.[264] The novelist Natalia Ginzburg later recalled, with both irony and warmth, that her brother Mario Levi, also a GL member, had befriended Caffi in Paris "and could talk about nothing else […],"

> [He] filled up reams of paper that he gave to his friends to read but never bothered to publish. He said that when someone had written something there was no need to publish it. To have written it and to read it to your friends was enough. There was no need for it to be preserved for posterity, because posterity didn't matter at all. What was actually written on those pages, Mario couldn't explain very well. Everything was written there, everything.[265]

Caffi's first contribution to the Quaderni, 'Views on the Russian Revolution', was an all-out accusation of the Bolshevik regime, guilty of having trampled on Russian society. Caffi rebuffed the opinion of the Austrian Marxists, who, although critical of the Soviet regime, did not wish for Stalin to be overthrown. For Otto Bauer and Fritz Adler, Soviet Russia contained an element of real socialism that was worth preserving. Instead, for Caffi, social justice without political freedom was simply an illusion. Russian Marxists found their political legitimacy in the

[264] Letters at the archive of the Gino Bianco Library reveal frequent appeals from friends urging Caffi to accept financial help or winter clothing. See, for example, Ignazio Silone's wartime letter: "Dear Mr. Caffi, with the audacity that only the unconventionality of these times justifies, I took the liberty of sending you, by one of the usual means, two thousand francs, which you will receive in these days" ("Caro Signor Caffi, con un ardire che solo l'originalità dei tempi giustifica, mi sono permesso di spedirle, per uno dei soliti tramiti, due mila fr., che riceverà in questi giorni"). (My trans.). BGB, Lettere 1, Appunti.

[265] Natalia Ginzburg, *Family Lexicon*, trans. Jenny McPhee (New York: New York Review of Books, 2017), 106.

acclamation of a disoriented and atomized mass, while true socialism should preserve the identity and the autonomous conscience of every person inside its social system,

> […] socialism derives its very name, its pathos, and its claim to "neo humanism" from the fact that it stood in defense of "society" against the inhuman devices of the "state order" and pursued the complete emancipation of society [...] from the coercive system, in which men only appear as numbers, "subjects", catalogue cards. And if socialism abandons this dominant motive, it will no longer find arguments or moral support for fighting the communist dictatorship.[266]

The moral gist of Caffi's anti-bolshevist stance thus came from his understanding of the primacy of society over politics. In his view, political institutions were a positive reality just like social institutions. However, the first should not crush the latter. Caffi mentioned Proudhon and the work of the sociologist of law Georges Gurvitch on legal pluralism: by limiting the prerogatives and functions of the state apparatus, forcing it to interpenetrate itself with "social law", it would be possible to make the various bodies of society coexist in a socialist commonwealth.[267] Real social democracy meant creating an association of autonomous social and political bodies: "Whoever says socialism, says federation or says nothing that makes sense." But the internal, infra-national federation, would only be the first step towards a broader, supranational, union,

> When Europe […] as a free confederation, a political and social organization superior to that which exists in Russia arises, then democracy and socialism will acquire a positive meaning and impose themselves on the open minds of the Russian proletariat.[268]

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[266] Andrea Caffi, "Opinioni sulla Rivoluzione russa," *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà*, no. 2 (March 1932): 101. "il socialismo deriva il suo stesso nome, il suo *pathos*, la sua gloriosa pretesa alla qualifica di "neoumanesimo" proprio dal fatto che si è eretto a difesa della "società" contro gli inumani congegni dell'"ordinamento statale" ed ha perseguito la completa emancipazione della società …dal coercitivo sistema, dove gli uomini non figurano che come numeri, "soggetti", schede. E se il socialismo abbandona questo motivo dominante, non troverà più argomenti, né morale sostegno per combattere la dittatura comunista." (My trans.)

[267] Gurvitch was a Russian-born French sociologist. In *L'Idée du droit social* (1932), he argued that the state is not the sole producer and enforcer of laws; social bodies that predate state organization also generate regulations that, from a sociological perspective, constitute law. See Alberto Scerbo, "Diritti sociali e pluralismo giuridico in Gurvitch," *Tigor: Rivista di Scienze della Comunicazione* 3, no. 1 (January–June 2011): 45–53.

[268] Caffi, "Opinioni", 111. "Quando […] nell'Europa costituita a libera confederazione sarà sorta un'organizzazione politica e sociale superiore a quella che vige in Russia, allora la democrazia ed il socialismo acquisteranno un significato positivo e s'imporranno anche alle menti aperte del proletariato russo." (My trans.)

As this brief overview illustrates, Caffi's federalism was the natural outgrowth of his socialism, nurtured more in the readings of Proudhon and Herzen than Marx. In *Principle of Federation* (1863), Proudhon posited that the antinomies between liberty and authority were historically and ideologically real and irreducible to any synthesis. The conflictual relationship between the exercise of political power and the free expression of the individual and society could never be fully resolved but only adjusted and regulated.[269] There was no ultimate end to strive for – neither communist paradise nor the natural extinction of the State, as Marx and Engels had prophesized. Therefore, no modicum of violence or abuse could be tolerated today based on a future higher good.[270]

For Caffi, the communist leadership in Russia was sacrificing the liberty and well-being of its people for the sake of their future generations. To use a metaphor, Stalin was the gambler of history, for whom a great win in an indeterminate future would pay off today's losses. The bitter irony, as Caffi perceived it, lay in the logic of this wager: the greater the violence accumulated, the larger the future reward needed to be to vindicate such sacrifices, thereby rendering the hoped-for redemption increasingly unattainable.[271]

Caffi's recuperation of Proudhon to the socialist tradition held a special political significance. First, it meant expanding ideological perspectives beyond the rigid boundaries of orthodox Marxism. The aim was not to reject Marx but to acknowledge that socialist philosophy had been shaped by a deliberately narrow interpretation—one that not only marginalized dissenting voices but also selectively interpreted Marx's own work.[272] Libero Battistelli, another contributor to the *Quaderni* whose words predate Silone's cited in the opening of this chapter,

[269] On Proudhon's politics, see Alex Prichard, "The Ethical Foundations of Proudhon's Republican Anarchism," in *Anarchism and Moral Philosophy*, edited by Benjamin Franks and Matthew Wilson, 86–112. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

[270] Recently, Michael Sonenscher has proposed a similar reading of Kant, arguing that his philosophy of history highlights the notion that past suffering is justified by a future good. Kant's idea of historical progress suggests that earlier generations bear the burden of hardship, while only later generations reap the benefits—an ethical dilemma that calls into question any justification of present violence for the sake of an ultimate historical *telos*. See Michael Sonenscher, *After Kant: The Romans, the Germans, and the Moderns in the History of Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023), 7–10.

[271] One could recognize in this metaphor an echo of Walter Benjamin's portrayal of the gambler as a figure of modernity, reflecting the spirit of the times. As Benjamin writes, the gambler "by constantly raising the stakes, in hopes of recovering what has been lost … steers toward absolute ruin." Quoted in Robyn Marasco, "It's All about the Benjamins: Considerations on the Gambler as a Political Type," *New German Critique* 45, no. 1 (2018): 1–22.

[272] Cf. Gareth Stedman-Jones, *Karl Marx: Greatness and Illusion* (London: Penguin, 2016), 4.

would later remark that if the Socialist Parties and the Socialist Internationals had not closed their doors to the followers and disciples of Babeuf, Fourier, Owen, Cabet, Proudhon, and others, socialism would have had the "breadth, variety, and flexibility that are indispensable to a political movement."[273]

By resorting to the libertarian strand of 19th-century socialism, GL created a connection with the spirit and ambitions of the First International, preceding the institutionalization and subsequent fossilization of the modern socialist parties. For example, Proudhon's *Principle of Federation* could serve as a proper political manifesto that might compete with the *Manifesto* of Marx and Engels, albeit with a clearer vision for a post-revolutionary political structure. By eschewing the teleological assumptions of Marxism in favor of an ongoing process of negotiation and balance between liberty and authority, Proudhon appeared to be the perfect anti-communist theorist.[274]

In 'Il Problema Europeo' (The European Problem), Caffi sketched what would later become the ideological underpinning of the federalism of the Ventotene group and the Socialist Party led by Ignazio Silone during the war. Europe, Caffi predicted, was destined to plunge into another fratricidal war. The excess of centralization and bureaucratization characteristic of the modern state made it impossible for its representative institutions to discern and address the problems of a society in rapid movement. After the First World War, a discrepancy developed between the monolithic, centralized state and a society radically altered in its essential needs and aspirations. As a result, the functioning of democratic and liberal states became paralyzed, paving the way for the rise of despotic governments.[275]

For Caffi, the issue of achieving a stable peace carried far broader implications than simply the immediate military defeat of fascism. At its core, the problem was how to disrupt the cycle of war, totalitarian decay, and the recurrence of conflict that was inherent in the operations of large, centralized states competing in a Hobbesian international "state of nature."[276] Caffi called for the grouping of a vast political international movement, broader than the socialist left, focused on

[273] Libero Battistelli, "Breve svolgimento di alcuni temi", *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà*, no. 7 (June 1933).
[274] See Vernon's introduction in Proudhon, *Principle of federation*, xi-xii.
[275] Andrea Caffi, 'Il problema europeo', *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà*, no. 3 (June 1932).
[276] On a similar note, commenting on the crisis set in motion by WWI, Hannah Arendt would later say that "the first explosion seems to have touched off a chain reaction in which we have been caught ever since and which nobody seems to be able to stop. The first World War exploded the European comity of nations beyond repair, something which no other war had ever done." Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1951), 267.

establishing the United States of Europe. The Italian revolution would, in this context, be framed as part of the broader European revolution.

Caffi was the political and cultural mentor of a small group of young exiles—Mario Levi, Renzo Giua and Nicola Chiaromonte. They affectionately called themselves "the gang" and shared with Caffi the aspiration to radically rethink socialism from its foundations. The "gang" was, by 1934, also active in Paris. It was the most transnational of the groups inside GL and looked with suspicion at the legacy of the Italian Risorgimento championed by other *giellisti*, and the feasibility of political violence. Its critique of fascism dug deep into the cultural crisis of European civilization since the late 19th century. A thorough reconsideration of its spiritual and cultural values was necessary to eradicate fascism. Accordingly, socialism – the most enduring legacy of the 1800s – needed to be rethought and adapted to the challenges of a massified society crushed by the expansion of totalitarianisms.[277]

Between 1932 and 1934, Nicola Chiaromonte was still operating clandestinely in Rome, where he coordinated the antifascist actions of GL. Contrary to Rosselli, he opposed the use of violence and tried instead to gather a small group of intellectuals dedicated to antifascist propaganda. From Caffi, Chiaromonte had absorbed an interest in the spiritual and cultural crisis of European civilization between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. The turning point of the First World War, which brought to light the misery and bewilderment of the European citizen in modern society, had been preceded by a prolonged erosion of social and cultural life.[278]

Drawing on Ortega's *Revolt of the Masses* (1930), Chiaromonte sanctioned the collapse of liberalism, the alienation of the "mass-man" and the disproportionate growth of the state-Moloch: the complete absorption of man and society into the mechanisms of the State, which had reached its apogee during the war. Fascism and Stalinism were continuing in the work of the wartime liberal state with the complete militarization and control of economic life and the absorption of private life into the public sphere. The individual, uprooted and disconnected from any meaningful

[277] On Caffi's "gang", see Gino Bianco, "Crisi con i novatori," *Critica sociale*, April 1963, reprinted in Gino Bianco, *Socialismo libertario: Scritti dal 1960 al 1972*, prefaced by Alan J. Day, *Quaderni dell'altra tradizione*, 5 (Una Città, 2011).

[278] On Chiaromonte, see Cesare Panizza, *Nicola Chiaromonte: Una biografia* (Rome: Donzelli, 2017); Cesare Panizza, "Trajectories of Political Exile in France and the United States: The Double Exile of Nicola Chiaromonte," *Annals of the Fondazione Luigi Einaudi* 54, no. 2 (December 2020): 179–194; Amanda Swain, "Utopia in New York: Nicola Chiaromonte and the New York Intellectuals' 'Superstition of Science,'" *Modern Intellectual History* (2024): 1–31.

social relationship, had neither the strength to oppose nor even the capacity to grasp its situation. Fascism and bolshevism condemned the individual to become a mere tool in the hands of the State or the Race. Here Chiaromonte anticipated the debate on totalitarianism which would be popularized by his friend Hannah Arendt after the Second World War. Caffi used a passage from Proudhon's *Contradictions Économiques* to deliver a similar point,

> "Communism is the economic idea of the state pushed to the point of absorbing the human person and its every initiative [...] it is the exaltation of the state, the glorification of the police"; therefore, the Communists "place all their hopes in the dictatorship; dictatorship that invades private life, social life, every manifestation of life."[279]

In his 'Letter from a young man in Italy', Chiaromonte mourned the liberal State of the early 19th century, whose "growth process" had halted. The "State-myth," conceived as a person, or "super-subject", a divinity and an idol, had taken its place. Fascism, Nazism, and Bolshevism were calling into question all the values that gave a structure to the political freedom and social justice system in Europe. In the face of totalitarianism, a return to the prewar institutions would be neither feasible nor desirable. Chiaromonte called for a complete "palingenesis" of European life into new political forms. In the early 1990s, political scientist Roger Griffin would identify the defining feature of fascism in what he called 'palingenetic ultranationalism', a combination of a total revolution in the political and social structure of the State to achieve a thorough national rebirth. In contrast, we could speak for Chiaromonte of a 'palingenetic anti-nationalism,' an equally radical revolution but aimed at overcoming the nation-state and founding a new public ethos.[280]

Chiaromonte's 'Letter' was followed, in the second run of the *Quaderni* in 1933, by another article in which he clarified the federalist nature of the new society he envisioned. In 'For an International Libertarian Movement,' autonomy became a central concept—not merely a regulative idea for the future institutional structure of the European federation, but a moral precept.

[279] Caffi, "Opinioni", 94. "Il comunismo è l'idea economica dello Stato spinta fino all'assorbimento della persona umana e d'ogni iniziativa… è l'esaltazione dello Stato, la glorificazione della polizia"; perciò i comunisti "ripongono tutte le speranze loro nella dittatura; dittatura che invade la vita privata, la vita sociale, ogni manifestazione di vita." (My trans.)
[280] Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991).

The refoundation of European civilization, he argued, had to encompass the individual, society, and political institutions,

> We must make of the question of anti-fascism something similar to that which Mazzini managed to make of the question of Italian unity. A problem concerning all human values, all ways of life, culture, economy, politics, art […][281]

Who would bring about this drastic upheaval in European life? Not the shapeless and disoriented masses, mystified by years of propaganda, but the cultural and political *élites*. The revolutionary movement's first task would be to form these *élites*, who would then educate and guide the masses in carrying out the revolution.

Chiaromonte's conception of the role of élites was in open contradiction to the political philosophy of his mentor and friend Caffi—though it bore similarities to the views of Rosselli and the more right-leaning faction of Giustizia e Libertà. As Chiaromonte would write years later, "If there was a central idea in Caffi's mind around which all the others naturally aligned, it was the idea of sociability: the Aristotelian *philía* as the foundation of social life."[282]

Human affection, brotherly love preceded and was at the base of the political and economic relationship inside any community of men, the polis or the state. Every form of associate life was anticipated by a spiritual solidarity based on disinterested love for the other. The *philía* would lead to the formation of small groups, such as Caffi's "gang", akin to the heretic religious sects of the fifteenth and sixteenth century, or the conspiratorial circles of the Russian populists of the nineteenth century.[283] For Caffi, real change could not come at the hands of professional revolutionaries, trained by the party—the 'revolutionary cadres' that Lenin had theorized at the beginning of the century.

Another member of the "gang," Natalia Ginzburg's brother Mario Levi, brought to Paris from his native Turin a distinctive interpretation of revolution, autonomy, and internationalism.

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[281] Nicola Chiaromonte, 'Per un movimento internazionale libertario', *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà,* no. 8 (August 1933). "Fare dell'antifascismo una questione analoga a quella che Mazzini riuscì a fare dell'unità italiana, una questione interessante tutti i valori dell'uomo, tutti i modi della vita, la cultura, l'economia, la politica, l'arte […]" (My trans.)

[282] Nicola Chiaromonte, "Introduction" to *Critica della violenza*, by Andrea Caffi (Milan: Bompiani, 1966), 5. "[…] se c'era nella mente di Caffi un'idea centrale attorno alla quale tutte le altre si ordinavano naturalmente , questa era l'idea di socievolezza: la philía aristotelica, fondamento della vita associata." (My trans.)

[283] See Bresciani, *Cosa sperare*, 52.

The recent history of Turin differed significantly from that of other Italian cities. The city was home to FIAT (Fabbrica Italiana Automobili Torino), Italy's largest automobile manufacturer and one of the biggest in Europe. Turin was one of the country's few truly industrial cities.[284]

During the *Biennio Rosso* of 1919–1920, revolutionary unrest engulfed the city. The local Socialist Party included some of the most promising and intellectually vibrant leaders of the time: Antonio Gramsci, Angelo Tasca, Palmiro Togliatti, and Umberto Terracini. Together, they founded *Ordine Nuovo* ("New Order," ON), initially a weekly review of socialist culture that soon became the newspaper of the factory councils. On the pages of *Ordine Nuovo*, Gramsci presented his distinctive interpretation of the role of the soviets within the broader context of Italian history. Drawing from an idealist reading of Marx, influenced by Benedetto Croce, he viewed the working class as the universal subject through which communism would be realized. For Gramsci, the autonomous factory councils were both a prefiguration of the future communist society and a crucial site of self-education for the working class, enabling them to develop the knowledge and power necessary for revolution.[285]

Another key concern stood at the center of Gramsci's vision: the need to link the workers' movement of emancipation with the mobilization of the peasant masses of Italy, especially in the South. The ideal that had animated Gramsci's *Ordine Nuovo* was to be the same that inspired *Giustizia e Libertà*: a deep integration of socialism, freedom, and radical democracy as the basis for addressing the enduring crises of the national question. Both movements, recognized in the failure to achieve a genuinely popular unification of Italy in the 1860s the root of the country's enduring political malaise. The workers had not been integrated into the political life of the country, and the South had been exploited for the economic benefit of the North. Gaetano Salvemini's themes recur throughout the pages of *L'Ordine Nuovo*, and Gramsci even proposed that Salvemini stand for election in Turin, where workers would have chosen him as a representative of the southern peasantry. As Manlio Rossi-Doria recalled, GL continued the

[284] Not much has been written about Mario Levi. For an outline of his biography, see Patrizia Guarnieri's notes curated for her project on Italian intellectuals exiled by Fascism, *Intellettuali in fuga*, https://intellettualinfuga.com/. Natalia Ginzburg includes affectionate sketches of her brother Mario in her autobiographical novel *Family Lexicon*.

[285] The bibliography on Gramsci is incredibly vast. For an introductory reading on his contribution to *L'Ordine Nuovo*, see Flavio Silvestrini, "Dopo la trincea: Gramsci, 'L'Ordine Nuovo' e la rivoluzione italiana," *Etica & Politica / Ethics & Politics* 14, no. 2 (2012): 150–96. For a broader discussion in English of Gramsci's key political concepts, see Peter Ghosh, "Gramscian Hegemony: An Absolutely Historicist Approach," *History of European Ideas* 27, no. 1 (2001): 1–43.

process began by Gramsci's Ordine Nuovo of critically rethinking the "Italian question" and formulating a new vision of revolutionary tasks.[286]

Also in Turin, Piero Gobetti, a young philosopher and journalist of liberal persuasion, founded the magazine *La Rivoluzione Liberale* (Liberal Revolution) in 1922, drawing partial inspiration from Gramsci's *ON*, for which he had worked as a theatre critic. Gobetti envisioned a liberal revolution that would awaken Italians to civic responsibility, independent thought, and resistance to authoritarianism. While he admired the worker councils and *ON* for their emphasis on self-governance and bottom-up political change, he did not share Gramsci's commitment to Marxism or the dictatorship of the proletariat. Although by 1925, the police had suppressed *La Rivoluzione Liberale* (and its supplement *Il Baretti*), and Gobetti was beaten to death by a gang of fascist thugs a year later, its influence on the liberal and socialist left in Turin remained central.[287]

The Turin faction of GL, led by the charismatic Leone Ginzburg and Rosselli's biographer, Aldo Garosci, absorbed the ideas of Gramsci and Gobetti on the role of factory committees. Ginzburg, born in Odessa to a wealthy Jewish Russian family that had emigrated to Italy after the October Revolution, became friends in Turin with a group of young aspiring intellectuals of radical and socialist orientation. This group would go on to form the leadership of the city's GL section and, after the war, would represent some of the highest expressions of Italy's cultural and political life. It included the aforementioned Mario Levi, the political scientist Norberto Bobbio, the trade unionist and politician Vittorio Foa, the writers Cesare Pavese and Carlo Levi, the musicologist Massimo Mila, and the historian Luigi Salvatorelli.[288]

A scholar and teacher of Russian literature, Ginzburg, like Caffi, symbolized the transnational ethos of the Giustizia e Libertà movement. Hunted by the police for his antifascist activity, persecuted for his Jewish origins, and frequently moving across borders to forge connections and coordinate political action, he embodied the intellectual and militant commitment of GL. His vision of federalism, inspired by the legacy of the factory councils developed by Gramsci and celebrated by Gobetti, placed freedom and autonomy at the core of his thought. These

[286] Manlio Rossi-Doria, "Il problema politico italiano e lo spirito del Partito d'Azione," *Quaderni dell'Italia Libera* (1944), reprinted in *QA: Rivista dell'Associazione Rossi-Doria* 3–4 (2008): 45–68.
[287] On Gobetti, see Niamh Cullen, *Piero Gobetti's Turin: Modernity, Myth, and Memory* (Oxford; New York: Peter Lang, 2011).
[288] See Florence Mauro, *Vita di Leone Ginzburg: Intransigenza e passione civile* (Rome: Donzelli, 2013).

were the most recurrent themes in his articles for the *Quaderni*. [289] Any meaningful revolutionary activity needed to start from the historical form of the revolutionary council, which by its very nature was the antithesis of the rationalizing centralism of every industrial civilization,

> In other words, federalism is becoming socialist and, shall we say, Proudhonian [...] but, in the meantime, it is proving more and more to be the only liberal form of our time, the formulation and defense of concrete freedoms [...][290]

For Ginzburg, as for his friend Mario Levi, the councils were the autonomous nucleus that could bring on the revolution, and around which the new society could be built. While aligned in their commitment to autonomy, his council-based federalism reflected a distinct trajectory from both Rosselli's Europeanism and Caffi's pluralist, society-first vision. As Ginzburg would write in 1934, the *Quaderni* were the place where GL should elaborate its plans for the future. Only the journal could accommodate a constant and thorough study of the Italian and European problems, incessantly adapting the program of GL to the "objective conditions" of the world.[291]

Thus, between 1932 and 1934, *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà* became the primary forum where federalism crystallized as a core tenet of GL's political vision. Its pluralism, however, often gave way to friction: Lussu doubted the European project, Caffi disdained violent activism, and Chiaromonte clashed with Rosselli over the role of political elites.[292] For Rosselli, federalism entailed dismantling the centralized nation-state and integrating it into a broader European structure, a "third force" capable of curbing its excesses. Caffi, in a more radical vein, argued that true European federation could only emerge through the internal dissolution of the nation-state itself—an organic process in which the state's coercive structures would give way to an association of autonomous social and political bodies. Meanwhile, the Turin group, led by Ginzburg, identified the factory councils, rooted in Gramsci's vision, as the nucleus of a new autonomous socialist democracy.

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[289] See especially, Leone Ginzburg, 'Gobetti e il significato della Rivoluzione russa,' *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà*, no. 5 (December 1933).
[290] Leone Ginzburg, 'Chiarimenti sul nostro federalismo,' *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà,* no. 7 (June 1933), 48-56; now in *Id.*, *Scritti* (Turin: Einaudi, 1964), 16-25.
[291] Leone Ginzburg, 'Ipotecare il futuro', *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà*, N. 10, Feb. 1934, pp. 73-76; now in id., *Scritti*, pp. 27-30.
[292] Emilio Lussu, "Lettera a Rosselli," *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà*, no. 9 (November 1933) and "Orientamenti," *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà*, no. 10 (February 1934).

The intersecting concepts of federalism, autonomy, and Europeanism had not yet been clearly theorized and remained in an embryonic, at times vague form. However, the seeds of future ideas—already explored in the preceding chapter—were germinating in the *Quaderni*. However, as Europe's political landscape descended further into turmoil, these theoretical debates would increasingly be overshadowed by the immediate necessity of confronting the fascist threat head-on—an evolution that would redefine the trajectory of GL in the years to come.

V—"The returning war" and the end of the Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà

1934 marked a turning point for European socialism. With Hitler firmly entrenched in power and no prospect of a meaningful popular uprising, the German socialists of Neubeginnen concluded that clandestine resistance in the country had become untenable.[293] In Vienna, the Austrian experiment in working-class self-administration was brutally crushed by Engelbert Dollfuss's fascist government. Meanwhile, following the withdrawals of Japan and Germany the previous year, the League of Nations increasingly appeared as a hollow shell, incapable of guaranteeing international stability. On the pages of the newly established weekly *Giustizia e Libertà*, Rosselli shattered any remaining illusions about the possibility of preserving peace on the continent.[294]

For GL, 1934 also sealed the breakup with the Antifascist Concentration. An article by Emilio Lussu in the *Quaderni* emphasized the role of the middle classes in the antifascist struggle, while chastising the old socialist leadership for succumbing to fascist violence. Pietro Nenni, head of the PSI, was trying to mend the relations of the Italian Socialist Party with the communists with the aim of an 'organic fusion' between the two groups. Lussu's inter-classism was, thus, not acceptable at this critical moment of transition and a rift inside the Concentration led to GL abandoning the organization.[295] The policy of the 'popular fronts' was on the horizon and the progressivism of GL could not settle with its 'negative antifascism'.

[293] See Renaud, *Restarting Socialism,* 45.
[294] Carlo Rosselli, "La guerra che torna," *Giustizia e Libertà*, Year I, no. 13 (August 1934).
[295] Emilio Lussu, 'Discussioni sul nostro movimento: orientamenti,' *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà*, no. 10 (February 1934) 58-72.

In the *Quaderni*, most of the articles published between the late 1934 and 1935 dealt with the fate of Red Vienna, the re-militarization of the continent, and the emerging challenges to the Spanish republic. Rosselli tried to close the ranks of the movement by radicalizing its message. The weekly *Giustizia e Libertà* now bore the title "Unitary movement of action for workers' autonomy, the socialist republic, a new humanism."[296] But the disagreements inside GL were coming to the surface. A heated debate on the meaning of the Italian Risorgimento and the role of political violence on *Giustizia e Libertà*, opened a breach between the group around Rosselli and the "gang" of Caffi and Chiaromonte, which led to their departure from the movement and later to a rapprochement with the PSI.[297]

By 1935, the *Quaderni* experiment had come to an end. In the final op-ed of the last issue, Rosselli reiterated the same principle that had guided GL since its founding in 1929: any effective antifascist revolution could not be entrusted to the old parties. The effort to rethink antifascism and socialism would continue, but the international context had changed drastically. The space for intellectual debate was rapidly shrinking. With the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Rosselli was immediately on the front lines, organizing a battalion of Italian volunteers alongside the anarchist leader Camillo Berneri. Chiaromonte, Giua, Lussu, and many other GL members also joined the Spanish front. Back in France, in 1937, Carlo and Nello Rosselli were assassinated by members of the right-wing militia *Cagoule*, presumably acting on orders from Galeazzo Ciano's fascist secret services.[298]

Yet, *Giustizia e Libertà* endured under the leadership of Lussu, Trentin, and Ginzburg. As a political journal, the *Quaderni* had been a space without a singular ideological voice; in this, we can see an isomorphism between GL's distance from large parties, dominated by charismatic leaders, and the *Quaderni*'s egalitarian, horizontal approach to political ideas. GL had no central ideological text, no single "great thinker"—not even Carlo Rosselli. This absence of doctrinal leadership was mirrored by the plurality of perspectives featured in the *Quaderni*, which ranged from libertarian socialism to more structured calls for supranational governance. The eclecticism of the *Quaderni* was likely one of the reasons for its endurance, with six new issues appearing during the war between 1944 and 1945. Most importantly, the federalist Europeanism and

[296] Bresciani, *Learning*, 162.
[297] Bresciani, *Cosa sperare*, 31.
[298] See Mimmo Franzinelli, *Il delitto Rosselli: 9 giugno 1937, anatomia di un omicidio politico* (Milano: Mondadori, 2007).

autonomism of the *Quaderni* would continue to shape the experiences of Italian antifascist groups in Switzerland, France, and Egypt, as we shall see in the following chapters.

VI-- The 'Heretics' of Socialism and the Political Journal

Attention to biographical aspects has been an integral part of this chapter, as the social and cultural background of socialist militants significantly shaped their theoretical output. At the same time, I draw on Michael Freeden's insight that ideologies are a collective product, which informs my decision to focus on the *Quaderni* as a site of shared intellectual inquiry.[299] As exemplified by the *Quaderni*, the collapse of the Second International gave rise to a critical federalist current within the independent left—one that would gain momentum in the second half of the 1940s. The socialist Euro-federalism of the interwar period was not the work of a few heroic intellectuals but of a transnational intelligentsia, united by a common commitment to internationalism, radical democracy, and social justice.

As a part of the left started to pursue a renewal of its ideological principles, the political journal better accommodated a dialogical process of intellectual creation as opposed to party orthodoxy. Unlike the political manifesto, which crystallizes the endpoint of a creative process, the political journal displays this same process to the reader: it records the making of an alternative political vision as work in progress. Furthermore, the political journal operates in the broad timeframe of ideological discussion and elaboration, contrary to the party newspaper, which reacts in the present to the constant flux of events.[300]

In the context of 1930s politics, the journal provided a space for exploring alternatives in ways that other media or the party congresses of the large mass parties of the left did not allow. The central committees of the communist parties exercised strict control over ideological discussion. Internal dissent and opposition were withheld from public view in the name of democratic centralism. Political bureaus tolerated freedom of criticism and personal opinions, if they remained behind the closed doors of party meetings. Once finalized and voted into the party

[299] Freeden, "Ideology and Political Theory," 12-3.
[300] On the central role played by the printed work in the world of the political emigration, see especially Simon Burrows, *French Exile Journalism and European Politics, 1792–1814* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, and Rochester: Royal Historical Society, 2000).

line, congress decisions should not be openly criticized or disallowed.[301] For the parties of the Comintern, the slogan of the United States of Europe was considered tantamount to anti-revolutionary and bourgeois Trotskyist propaganda, punishable by expulsion.[302] In the extreme political conditions of fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, being ostracized from the party meant losing the strategic and economic support necessary to survive.[303]

Although the big socialist European parties such as the German SPD and the French SFIO maintained a far greater internal dialectic and intellectual freedom than the communists, federalist ideas struggled to make inroads before the 1940s. The linguistic paradigms of western European socialism were still largely based on the interpretation and exegesis of the Marxist canon.[304] Marxism remained the theoretical foundation of the official belief system of these parties, for which international alliances should unite the world working class and not national political institutions.[305] Moreover, the myth of Soviet Russia as the beacon of the revolution persisted among the socialist parties well into the postwar year, and especially in Italy. There is no wonder, therefore, that for those parties that were trying to rebuild an alliance with the communist forces in the mid-1930s, endorsing European federalism would have meant drawing daggers with the Comintern world.

As I sought to demonstrate in this chapter, it was in the interstices of the mass socialist parties—or beyond their borders—where groups such as GL operated, that a left-wing federalist thought began to emerge. The tension between bureaucratic centralism and ideological pluralism led to the continual formation of oppositional factions. Since party structures often constrained intellectual freedom, dissenters either created splinter groups outside the main parties or formed dissident currents within them.

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[301] Lenin was the first to write about 'democratic centralism' as early as 1902 in his pamphlet *What is to be done?* 'Democratic centralism' was then adopted by the All-Russian Communist Party in 1921 to prevent the party from disintegrating into opposing factions. See, Archie Brown, "Communism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies*, ed. Michael Freeden, Lyman Tower Sargent, and Marc Stears (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 440.

[302] See Trotsky, "Is the Time Ripe."

[303] See Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 176-184.

[304] I borrow my understanding of "paradigm" from J. G. A. Pocock as a set of concepts and practices that form the way of viewing reality for a specific community in a limited temporal frame. See in particular, Pocock, *Politics, Language, and Time,* 23-9.

[305] For Norberto Bobbio, Marx never fully elaborated a theory of the State, leaving the Marxist parties unprovided with solid theoretical tools to develop a clear position towards institutional politics. See, Norberto Bobbio, *Né con Marx, né contro Marx* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1997).

As mentioned in the introduction, I chose to call the members of these groups socialist "heretics" because their opposition went beyond political choices or institutional positions. Their critique was aimed directly at the ideological core of the socialist parties. They identified the main obstacle to socialist progress in the ossified Marxist political culture. However, simply seeking to move beyond the constraints of Marxism would not have set them apart from other reformists of the 1930s, such as the *néo-socialistes* à la De Man.[306]

Unlike the *néo-socialistes*, the heretics of Giustizia e Libertà and other groups did not seek to go beyond (*au-delà*) the current form of socialism but to return to its spiritual core. Their aim was not to overcome an outdated ideology but to rescue a socialism they believed had gone astray. The heretics saw themselves as the true socialists—those who understood the original message of socialism and sought to dismantle the established orthodoxy in its name.

In their vehement denunciation of the Moloch of the nation-state, whose existence lay at the heart of the civil war rending Europe asunder, Rosselli, Caffi, and their comrades did not hesitate to invoke the renegades of the socialist tradition—from Proudhon to Bakunin, and even Marx himself—while also reaching back to the Italian radical example of Mazzini and Cattaneo. It was a hazardous undertaking, as heresies often are—fated either to be crushed or subsumed by the prevailing order. But despite its failure, it was an enterprise of remarkable intellectual vitality. The *Quaderni* became, in conditions of exile and material precariousness, the crucible for a collective rethinking of socialism's political language. In this way, the ideological legacy of the socialist heretics of the 1930s survived their first apostles, enduring in a form that left an indelible imprint upon the trajectory of European socialism.

VII—Conclusions

According to Italian political scientist Norberto Bobbio, federalist ideas flourished in the twentieth century in response to the inability of the modern nation-State to fulfill the tasks for which it was created. In international politics, it failed to maintain peace, while in domestic

[306] On Néo-socialisme, and more in general on the emergence of new political ideologies in France between the late 1800s and the first half of the 1900s, see Zeev Sternhell, *Ni droite, ni gauche: L'idéologie fasciste en France* (Paris: Seuil, 1983). See also Tommaso Milani, *Hendrik de Man and Social Democracy: The Idea of Planning in Western Europe, 1914-1940* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020).

politics, it kept the lower strata of society out of political and institutional life.[307] It was this set of crises, and the flattening of mass socialist parties on domestic national politics that stirred an ideological reflection on the nature of socialist internationalism.

Rosselli and the other members of GL used *Quaderni* to carve out a space for themselves both in the broader political arena and within the socialist milieu that Fascism was increasingly attacking. Much like the manifesto became a tool for political struggle for the Ventotene group, GL employed the political journal as a bullhorn from which to assert their presence in an ever-shrinking public sphere and influence the political discourse on the Left. In their vision, the *idées-forces* of federalism, autonomy, the United States of Europe, and, more generally, a political "third force" independent of both communist and reformist orthodoxy would unite the Left around a new vision. This perspective was less concerned with class issues and more focused on establishing a robust institutional framework that could safeguard individual rights. They believed that socialism could only thrive in a democratic system, free from the ever-present threat of Fascism that loomed large over European politics. The supranational orientation of Carlo Rosselli emerged as the most coherent bridge between the interwar debates of GL and the federalist horizon of Ventotene. However, the influence of GL on the manifesto was less a matter of theoretical continuity than of a shared commitment to reimagining socialism beyond national confines. The next chapters will trace the path left by GL's ideas as they traveled across Europe and beyond, exploring their influence and enduring legacy.

[307] Norberto Bobbio, "'Il federalismo nel dibattito politico e culturale della Resistenza,'" in *L'idea dell'unificazione europea dalla prima alla seconda guerra mondiale*, ed. Sergio Pistone (Turin: Fondazione L. Einaudi, 1975), 221–36.

Chapter Three – Europe Seen from Egypt: Giustizia e Libertà in Cairo and the Struggle for a Republic of Federations

I—Introduction

In the weeks following the collapse of France in June 1940, Emilio Lussu tasked the twenty-five-year-old Paolo Vittorelli with reorganizing Giustizia e Libertà in his native Egypt. A risky move—perhaps even precipitous—given the new German grip on the continent and the exodus of Italian exiles from Paris. Vittorelli was intelligent and determined, but he lacked real-world experience as a political organiser. But with France under the grip of the Wermacht and the *giellisti* dispersed across the world, he was one of the few still able to act.

Vittorelli had returned to Cairo just before Italy entered the war on a mission to establish a cell of GL in the region. Now, he watched as the British rounded up thousands of Italians, fearing them as potential fifth columnists. Perhaps surprisingly, Vittorelli managed to avoid internment only because he was an openly antifascist Jew. Supported by Lussu and cautiously cooperating with British intelligence services, Vittorelli then launched the *Corriere d'Italia*, the only Italian antifascist newspaper in the Middle East. These efforts coincided with a major turn in British wartime strategy, which worked in his favour. In July 1940, Churchill established the Special Operations Executive (SOE), followed by the Political Warfare Executive (PWE) in August. This move was intended to merge into a single framework covert action with elements of psychological warfare. Egypt, as a key British stronghold, became central to these efforts, particularly in relation to Italy. The potential of antifascist networks like GL began to be recognized by British intelligence, albeit with many reservations.

Scraping together what little he could—money, paper, a few comrades—Vittorelli managed to turn Cairo into a lifeline for GL. British backing, particularly through the SOE, provided critical logistical support and a degree of operational cover. However, it also imposed constraints. In Cairo, the giellisti walked a tightrope between commitment and compromise. On the one hand, they remained committed to their revolutionary antifascist program. On the other, they were tethered to the strategic interests of British officials. The SOE distrusted anything that

smacked of political extremism and preferred to keep GL Egypt focused on the war effort. For a small group such as GL Egypt, organizing was demanding. Despite these limitations, Cairo's *giellisti* published bulletins and journals and carried out propaganda efforts, including radio broadcasts. They endured until the end of the war, establishing a foothold for antifascism in the Mediterranean.

Paolo Vittorelli committed GL Egypt to transforming the war from a conflict of shifting alliances into an "ideological war." What they fought for was not the restoration of a pre-fascist order but a new federal unity of Europe. In his view, the demise of fascism meant more than just winning the war. It meant tearing up old blueprints and figuring out how to realize a "Republic of Federations," bringing together small, federated units across the continent.[308] The goal became to carve out a "Third Force," in which European unity would be rooted not in hegemony or a fragile balance of power but in a pluralist and democratic order. Thus, the war for Europe was not merely about territorial liberation; it was about constructing an alternative political framework in which democracy could be expanded beyond the constraints of the nation-state.

Paolo Vittorelli had absorbed the lesson of liberal-socialism and the democratic revolution from the *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà*. A few numbers of the journal had arrived in Cairo in the mid-1930s, smuggled under the sheets of Catholic missionary journals by a friend. Vittorelli embraced the principles of socialist autonomy and federalism, placing them at the center of his vision. At the same time, the geography of GL in Egypt—an antifascist enclave in a British-controlled colony, operating at the fringes of the war—gave these ideas a unique inflection. Vittorelli was an Italian who had never lived in Italy and a Jew in a Muslim-majority country. As such, he navigated the issues of exile, nationalism, and empire on a deeply personal level, and in ways that forced a rethinking of antifascism itself. His struggle was not just about resisting fascism but about redefining Italy from the outside. In doing so, Vittorelli imagined a different future for Europe.

To fully grasp the significance of this political project, it is thus also necessary to further stress the particularity of the vantage point from which it emerged. The liminal position of Vittorelli and GL engendered what I term "diasporic socialism"—a radical vision forged through both displacement and transnational engagement. For Vittorelli and the other *giellisti* in Cairo, Egypt was not just a place but a new visual angle, from which they could reframe antifascism

[308] Paolo Vittorelli, *Educazione all'autonomia, Giustizia e Libertà,* no. 7 (May 21, 1944).

beyond the boundaries of the nation-state. Vittorelli's mixed Jewish-Italian background, coupled with the layered colonial realities of Egypt, reinforced a commitment to solidarity across borders over exclusive national identity.[309]

By intersecting sources from the group itself with SOE documents, this chapter I seek to understand how a small group of liberal socialists, operating from an unexpected location, simultaneously embraced and reinterpreted GL's revolutionary outlook. In a sense, I use the Egyptian branch of GL in the same way that the SOE sought to: as a lens through which to interpret antifascism and its structuring language beyond its more familiar European frameworks. For SOE agents, GL Egypt was uniquely positioned, possessing the cultural capital and vocabulary that they lacked. Without them, British intelligence risked wandering blindfolded through a labyrinth of antifascist commitments it struggled to decipher—hence the curious comparison, in internal exchanges, between Vittorelli's group and the evangelists of the Oxford Group. This surprising misidentification speaks as much to the ideological lexicon of the SOE as to the ambiguity of the political world in which it operated.[310]

The SOE relied on GL Egypt to translate and mediate the complexity of Italian resistance. Likewise, GL Egypt can be our interpretative guide, making the ideological field of the anti-fascist world more legible. The way in which the SOE's compared GL to the Oxford Group underscores how the *giellisti* were perceived as a distinct social entity. Their "groupness" influenced not only external assessments but also their own self-awareness. GL Egypt had to forge its political identity first in opposition to fascism but also through the consciousness of being observed and categorized by external forces. This dynamic in turn influenced their self-perception and strategic positioning.

In fact, in Cairo, the *giellisti* encountered and engaged with non-European antifascists. In particular, links were forged with Egyptian intellectuals and antifascists from other Italian colonies such as Eritrea. Egypt functioned as a contact zone. During the war, it served as a space of

[309] The relationship between diasporic experiences and socialist engagement has been explored in a few academic studies. However, no comprehensive theoretical framework has yet been developed on the subject. See J. W. Huh, "The Harlem Renaissance in Translation: Socialism, Nostalgia, and the Multilingual Spaces of Diaspora," *American Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (2021): 597–617; A. Jašina-Schäfer and N. Aivazishvili-Gehne, *Migration, Post-Socialism, and Diasporic Experiences: Fragmented Lives, Entangled Worlds / Migration, Postsozialismus und Diaspora-Erfahrungen: Fragmentierte Leben, verflochtene Welten* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2024); and D. Renshaw, *Socialism and the Diasporic 'Other': A Comparative Study of Irish Catholic and Jewish Radical and Communal Politics in East London, 1889–1912,* Studies in Labour History LUP (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018; online ed., Liverpool Scholarship Online, May 23, 2019).

[310] The documents on the Vittorelli group are part of a subfile within the "Special Operations Executive: Western Europe" collection at the National Archives (TNA), housed in the HS/6 box.

ideological blending, international encounters, and periphery-driven global exchanges.[311] The mix of voices and encounters pushed their antifascism beyond Italy—and even beyond Europe. GL Egypt did not perceive these multiple affiliations as a limitation but transformed them into an intellectual advantage. It articulated a socialism rooted in autonomy and resistance to all forms of imperial domination, whether fascist, colonial, or monarchical.

The experience of GL Egypt suggests that operating beyond the structures of the nation-state was more than a practical condition dictated by specific historical contingencies. It also reflected a different way of understanding politics exposing the artificiality of national borders and the possibility of alternative political arrangements. At the same time, GL Egypt's story underscores the paradox of advocating for a "Third Force" federated Europe from the outside, while remaining entangled in British imperial rule. The *giellisti* in Egypt were aware of the contradictions inherent to European socialism and criticized its legacy of colonial complicity, but they did not develop a systematic anti-colonial program.[312]

What, then, did it mean for GL to reimagine Europe—not from its old capitals, but from the Mediterranean? Recently, Matthew D'Auria and Fernanda Gallo challenged fixed notions of Europe by framing the Mediterranean as both a historical and analytical space. Rather than a peripheral frontier, the Mediterranean emerges as a site of intellectual production and political movement.[313] As the story of Vittorelli exemplifies, Italians had long inhabited this broader Mediterranean, shaped by the legacy of the Ottoman and Habsburg frontiers, not merely as a consequence of Italian expansionist policies. In other words, the story of GL Egypt represents more than just a geography of antifascism; it speaks to a deeper reconfiguration of political identities, transnational solidarities, and the contested meanings of Europe itself.

North Africa and Eritrea were not just places where Mussolini displaced Italians. In these regions, antifascist networks took shape in complex colonial contexts. The trajectory of Vittorelli and GL Egypt highlights this shift, forcing a reconsideration of alternative forms of antifascism and socialism. David Armitage has observed that spatial perspective is among the last great

[311] Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone." *Profession*, 1991, 33–40.
[312] For discussions on the tensions between socialism and anti-colonialism, Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1918–1964* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); Anne Deighton, "Entente Neo-Coloniale?: Ernest Bevin and the Proposals for an Anglo–French Third World Power, 1945–1949," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 17, no. 4 (2006): 835–852; Talbot Imlay, "International Socialism and Decolonization during the 1950s: Competing Rights and the Postcolonial Order," *American Historical Review* 118, no. 4 (2013): 1105–1132.
[313] Matthew D'Auria and Fernanda Gallo, *Mediterranean Europe(s): Rethinking Europe from Its Southern Shores* (London: Routledge, 2023).

challenges for intellectual historians. Expanding our gaze to the "multiple Mediterraneans" allows us to remap socialist and antifascist thought during the war.[314] However, situating GL Egypt in this broader Mediterranean framework also raises fundamental questions about its political and ideological positioning. If the Mediterranean has often been framed as Europe's historical other—a liminal space between civilization and backwardness—did GL Egypt succeed in inverting this dynamic, or did it ultimately reproduce Eurocentric federalist rhetoric, only from a place of disadvantage? For instance, one of GL Egypt's members, Umberto Calosso, called for sweeping away colonial domination but framed this struggle through a Mazzinian lens (*mazzinianamente*) that presented national independence as a European export, not an autonomous decolonial movement.[315]

Calosso's writings and radio interventions rejected fascist imperialism while remaining rooted in a nineteenth-century revolutionary discourse. He sought to position Italian antifascists as mediators of liberation more than full participants in anti-colonial struggles. This tension between radical reimagination and inherited ideological frameworks mirrored GL Egypt's broader challenge: could it be that from Cairo, instead of Paris or London, the most radical rethinking of postwar Europe took shape? Or did its federalist vision remain bound by unresolved contradictions, particularly in its engagement with colonialism? And how did their elliptical view of Italy from Egypt, refracted through the Mediterranean waters, shape their vision of international solidarity and political belonging?

GL Egypt's story has barely scratched the surface of most histories of antifascism. Still, it deserves our attention as a relevant locus of political creativity, enriching the complex and nonlinear genealogy of "Third Force" ideas from the late 1930s to the postwar period. Through a biographical examination of Paolo Vittorelli, with a particular focus on his work in Egypt and his political connections between 1940 and 1944, I seek to uncover an overlooked dimension of antifascism. The experience of the *giellisti* in Egypt has been marginalized both for its perceived insignificance in the broader history of Giustizia e Libertà and by the limited understanding of the

[314] For an intellectual and political history of the Mediterranean, see Maurizio Isabella and Konstantina Zanou, eds., *Mediterranean Diasporas: Politics and Ideas in the Long 19th Century* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016); and Judith Tucker, ed., *The Making of the Modern Mediterranean: Views from the South* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019).
[315] Umberto Calosso, "Lettera di Subalpino," *Corriere d'Italia,* no. 55 (May 21, 1941).

Egyptian context. GL's life is often seen as concluding with the creation of the Action Party in 1943, while Egypt remains an underexplored setting in studies of antifascism.[316]

In recent years, Paolo Bagnoli—a personal friend of Vittorelli—has sought to shed light on the group's activities in Cairo and restore its significance in the history of antifascism. However, while various studies have examined the Italian antifascist milieu in Egypt, it is my impression that much remains to be explored.[317] In Walter Lipgens' *Documents on the History of European Integration*, Ariane Landuyt characterized GL Egypt's primary role as assisting Italian POWs, with its intellectual output largely limited to reiterating ideas already articulated in the 1930s in the *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà*.[318] This perspective, however, downplays the distinctive contributions and ideological developments introduced by Vittorelli and other *giellisti* in Cairo—perhaps unsurprisingly, given the broader lack of scholarship on non-Marxist socialist perspectives on colonialism.[319]

Under Paolo Vittorelli, Giustizia e Libertà transformed from a revolutionary cell into a diasporic socialist movement. It engaged in propaganda, political education, and the construction of a transnational antifascist identity instead of direct revolutionary action. The movement understood the struggle against fascism as part of a broader crisis of modern nation-states, necessitating a radical restructuring of sovereignty, autonomy, and democracy beyond national borders. Vittorelli's concept of "pluto-hierarchy"—which described the fusion of financial power and political authoritarianism—helped frame fascism not as an aberration, but as an extreme manifestation of deeper structures of domination. Finally, while both versions of GL opposed fascist totalitarianism and centralized authoritarianism, GL Egypt began to extend this critique to

[316] Bresciani, for example, mentions Vittorelli and the Egypt group only twice. See Bresciani, *Learning*, 159 and 193.
[317] See Paolo Bagnoli, *Un uomo nella lotta. Dalle carte di Paolo Vittorelli (1942–1947)* (Milan: Biblion Edizioni, 2020). Bagnoli also edited a selection of Vittorelli's articles taken from the *Corriere d'Italia*: Paolo Vittorelli, *Al di là del fascismo. Il "Corriere d'Italia": un quotidiano giellista in Egitto (1941): testi scelti con una testimonianza dell'autore,* edited by Paolo Bagnoli (Rome: ANPPIA, 2001); and curated the editions of Vittorelli's *Giellismo, azionismo, socialismo: scritti tra storia e politica: 1944–1988* (Florence: Polistampa, 2005), *Contro corrente* (Florence: Polistampa, 2001), and *Socialismo e Autonomia. Articoli scelti da "Nuova Repubblica" (1953–1957)* (Milan: Biblion, 2020). Works from other authors include Francesca Rondinelli, "L'antifascisme en Égypte dans les premières publications de *Giustizia e Libertà* (1940–1943)," in *Presses allophones de Méditerranée,* edited by Jean-Yves Empereur and Marie-Delphine Martellière, *Études Alexandrines* 41 (2017): 189–221; and Maria Serena Palieri, *Radio Cairo. L'avventurosa vita di Fausta Cialente in Egitto* (Rome: Donzelli Editore, 2018)
[318] Ariane Landuyt, "Ideas of Italian Exiles on the Postwar Order in Europe," in *Plans for European Union in Great Britain and in Exile, 1939–1945* (vol. 2), edited by Walter Lipgens and Wilfried Loth (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 1986), 493–94.
[319] I think, in particular, of works that deal with the period preceding the end of WWII. See for example, Paul Kelemen, "Modernising Colonialism: The British Labour Movement and Africa," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 34, no. 2 (2006): 223–44.

European colonialism itself. The role of imperial hierarchies in sustaining global inequality came to be recognized and assessed. However, this critique remained incomplete. While GL Egypt condemned fascist imperialism, it often stopped short of directly challenging British and French colonial rule. As a result, contradictions in their federalist and anti-colonialist outlook remained unresolved and at times unacknowledged.

II—Early Antifascism in Egypt (1935-1939)

After the outbreak of war in the fall of 1939, the French government, led by Daladier, tightened its control over Italian antifascists operating in the country. It was, in effect, an attempt to appease Mussolini and dissuade him from entering the conflict. GL had always operated in a precarious space between legal and clandestine activities. However, this further repressive turn rendered the political climate in Paris increasingly more difficult to navigate. It also limited the group's already meager financial resources.

Under these circumstances, the idea of sending Vittorelli to Egypt began to take shape. The Soviet Union was not yet involved in the war, and North Africa was expected to become the second most significant theater of conflict after Western Europe. The surviving leadership of GL saw the possibility of igniting a "democratic revolution" in Italy, with Egypt emerging as a potential staging ground for revolutionary operations. The country seemed well-positioned to serve as a hub for launching small commando teams, which could smuggle weapons and a trickle of funds to the southern shores of Italy.

The inspiration, surprisingly, came from Italian communists. Their cell in Egypt was already actively raising funds and recruiting new members from the Italian expatriate community. In the mid-1930s, Egyptian Communism remained, at best, fragmented and weak, primarily led by Jewish Egyptians and foreign-born Marxists. Lacking a unified party and with waning ties to the Comintern, it exerted little influence over labor and nationalist movements.[320] However,

[320] See Joel Beinin, *The Communist Movement and Nationalist Political Discourse in Nasirist Egypt, Middle East Journal* 41, no. 4 (1987): 568–84; Selma Botman, "The Ethnic Origins of the Egyptian Communist Movement," *Immigrants & Minorities* 5, no. 2 (1986): 193–203; and Rami Ginat, *A History of Egyptian Communism: Jews and Their Compatriots in Quest of Revolution* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2011).

growing antifascist sentiment and renewed intellectual engagement gradually revitalized the movement.

The Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 was a major catalyst for antifascist organizing in Egypt, igniting opposition across political movements, including nationalists and communists. Various left-wing political organizations had begun to gradually clump together, creatingan an active antifascist milieu well before 1940. Communists framed their opposition to Mussolini in terms of internationalist solidarity. They emphasized the global antifascist struggle over a specifically Egyptian nationalist position. This position contrasted with the response of nationalist movements, which viewed the Ethiopian crisis primarily as an extension of Egypt's own anti-colonial struggle.[321]

In 1936, the Italian Communist Party sent Velio Spano to establish a "Committee for the Defense of Ethiopia," which included Coptic Patriarch Johannes Lamba, Prince Omar Tussum, the nobleman Ismail Daud, and Abdel Hamid Said, the leader of the Muslim Youth, with lawyer El Milighi serving as secretary.[322] The Egyptian-born Dina Forti and Laura Levi worked with the Committee and would later collaborate with Vittorelli. However, the most significant of these organizations was the umbrella group Pacifist League, founded by the Swiss communist Paul Jacquot-Descombes. Under the later leadership of Marcello Leone, a Jew of Italian descent born in Cairo in 1913, the League expanded its network and influence, becoming a key player in the antifascist movement.

Leone was also the leader of the Democratic Union, a communist movement operating within the Pacifist League. His primary goal was to "Egyptianize" the Union, aligning with directives from the Lebanese Syrian Communist Party Saout el Chaab, with which he had previously been involved. By 1940, as Democratic Union became predominantly Egyptian, it transformed into a fully-fledged communist organization under the name Liberation of the People (Tahrir as-Shaab), making it the first communist movement founded in Egypt since the dissolution of the Egyptian Communist Party in 1923.

However, unlike the nationalist forces that also sought to mobilize mass popular support the communists remained largely confined to an elite social stratum, composed predominantly of

[321] Guido Valabrega, "Note sulla partecipazione di italiani ai movimenti antifascisti in Egitto negli anni trenta e quaranta," *Italia Contemporanea* 203 (1996): 293.
[322] Valabrega, 'Note', 293.

foreign-born or cosmopolitan intellectuals, professionals, and students. Early communist activism in Egypt was disproportionately led by Jewish Egyptians, Italians, Greeks, and Armenians, many of whom were educated in European-style institutions and maintained transnational ideological affiliations.[323] The involvement of the communists with prominent figures in the Muslim and Coptic hierarchies further indicates that, despite their rhetoric of proletarian revolution, they mostly relied, perhaps uncomfortably, on alliances with segments of the Egyptian elite, particularly those with anti-colonial leanings. It was the Ethiopian crisis of 1935, provoking widespread condemnation across Africa and the Arab world, that created an opportunity for these alliances to converge in opposition to fascist Italy.

The communists' attempts at proletarianization and "Egyptianization" during the late 1930s and 1940s were largely unsuccessful in bridging the gap between their elite social status and the broader nationalist and labor movements.[324] Their ideological commitments, too, often placed them in tension with the nationalist struggle, as their internationalist perspective sometimes clashed with the pressing demands of indigenous anti-colonial movements. This structural contradiction undermined the communists' capacity to integrate their movement into the broader revolutionary landscape. As a consequence, their anti-imperialist rhetoric proved ultimately ineffective. Unlike the nationalist movements that could claim an organic connection to the local populace, the communists operated in a restricted sociopolitical sphere, their activism shaped as much by their elite positioning as by their ideological commitments.[325]

The Democratic Union also attracted members of the Italian community, including Raymond Aghion and Raoul Curiel. Curiel, in particular, served as a link to al-Jama'a al-Fann wa al-Hurriyya (Art and Liberty Group), a movement founded by his brother Georges. Art and Liberty emerged in December 1938 as a modernist art collective, and its founding manifesto, *Long Live Degenerate Art*, written by the poet Georges Henein, was both an antifascist declaration and a call to defend artistic and human freedom.[326] Although aligned with the Democratic Union, the group remained critical of Stalinism, with its members leaning toward libertarian socialism and

[323] Botman, "Ethnic Origins", 193.
[324] Beinin, "Communist Movement", 570.
[325] Botman, "Ethnic origins", 195.
[326] On Henein, see Pascale Roux, *Georges Henein: Écritures polémiques* (Dissertation, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3, 2009); Sarane Alexandrian, *Georges Henein* (Paris: Seghers, 1981).

anarchism. As we will see, this ideological disposition facilitated a connection with Giustizia e Libertà Egypt, which would take place in the years that followed.[327]

Thus, Vittorelli did not end up operating in a void nor invent antifascism in Egypt. An antifascist environment, mainly revolving around the communist camp, already existed. It had been prompted by the anti-colonialist agitation spurred by the Ethiopian crisis of 1935 and combined Arab elements with the Italian and Jewish diasporas. Starting from the war in Abyssinia and the extensive condemnations it received in the African world, part of the Italian minority in Egypt became active in antifascist politics, distancing itself from the relative consensus garnered by the regime in Italy with its colonial enterprise. The challenge for Vittorelli was to create a movement that would operate independently of the communists, while collaborating with the antifascist forces already existing in the country.

To understand why Vittorelli arrived in Egypt—and what he hoped to achieve—it is crucial to trace the biographical and political journey that shaped his strategy. His presence was not incidental; it was the result of a broader ideological trajectory that positioned him at the intersection of antifascist struggle, socialist thought, and revolutionary pragmatism. Before assessing his role in Egypt, we must first examine the forces that molded him into the figure who sought to navigate and redefine the complex political landscape of antifascism in Egypt.

III—Paolo Vittorelli: Giustizia e Libertà, Anti-Fascism, and the Politics of Identity

Raffaele Battino, the future Paolo Vittorelli, was born in Alexandria, Egypt, on July 9, 1915, in a bourgeois family of the Jewish religion that considered itself culturally Italian but also spoke French at home. His father, Amedeo, grew up in Pisa before studying law in Athens and moving to Egypt amid its economic expansion. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 had drawn European communities to Egypt, leading to the establishment of Mixed Courts in 1875, which

[327] Laura Galián, "La respuesta al fascismo en Egipto (1930–1948): antifascismo, anticolonialismo y antimperialismo," *Ayer* 124, no. 4 (December 2021): 53; Laura Galián Hernández and Costantino Paonessa, "Caught between Internationalism, Transnationalism and Immigration: A Brief Account of the History of Anarchism in Egypt until 1945," *Anarchist Studies* 26, no. 1 (March 2018): 29.
On Art and Liberty, see Sam Bardaouil, *Surrealism in Egypt: Modernism and the Art and Liberty Group* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2017); and Maria Francesca Rondinelli, *Histoire littéraire, artistique et culturelle de la naissance des avant-gardes surréalistes en Égypte francophone, des années 1920 aux années 1940* (Dissertation, Université Grenoble Alpes, 2016).

governed civil disputes involving foreigners. While these courts facilitated European settlement and trade, Egyptian nationalists viewed them as an infringement on sovereignty, leading to their eventual abolition under the 1937 Montreux Convention.[328]

Vittorelli attended Italian schools in Alexandria, graduated from the French School of Law in Cairo, and completed a PhD at the Sorbonne. Much of what we know about his political education during his university years comes primarily from his 1981 memoir, *L'età della tempesta* (The Age of the Storm). His first exposure to socialism came through reading *Le Populaire*, the French newspaper edited by Léon Blum. Blum's daily opinion pieces captured his imagination for their clarity and insight—especially in contrast to the dullness of the fascist papers available in Alexandria at the time. Vittorelli and his small circle of friends, which included Renato Mieli, the future journalist and editor of the Italian Communist Party's *L'Unità*, were also drawn to the communist-leaning weekly *Vendredi* and the magazine *Regards*.

It was Renato's brother, Edwin Mieli, who introduced Vittorelli to GL. Sometimes in the early-1930s, Edwin brought to Alexandria a few copies of the *Quaderni of Giustizia e Libertà* from Milan, where he had come into contact with a member of the group, Mario Paggi. Hidden between the covers of catholic missionary journals, Edwin Mieli also carried three volumes published by the French antifascist printing company Valois: the first french edition of *Socialisme Libéral* by Carlo Rosselli, *Anti-démocratie* by Silvio Trentin, and *Nos Prisons et Notre Evasion* by Francesco Fausto Nitti—three foundational texts of the early Giustizia e Libertà movement. As we have already seen with the Ventotene group and GL, such acts of clandestine circulation were not merely practical measures but integral to the strategy of antifascism. Ideas, to be effective, had to move; their power lay in their ability to cross borders, defy surveillance, and spur new thought across distance.

Particularly struck by Rosselli's analysis of the international situation, Vittorelli sought out additional GL publications through his grandmother and aunt in Paris. His encounter with GL's ideas, though tentative at first, would ultimately change the course of his life. The first decisive step came when he wrote to the group's headquarters in Paris to formally declare his adherence: "From that moment on, I considered myself a member of Giustizia e Libertà." In practical terms,

[328] Nathan J. Brown, "The Precarious Life and Slow Death of the Mixed Courts," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25, no. 1 (1993): 33.

this commitment led him to alter his academic plans—he chose to complete his studies in Paris, where GL had its headquarters, and not in Italy, which had been his initial preference.[329]

Upon his arrival in Paris in March of 1937, Vittorelli visited the offices of GL on 129 Boulevard Saint Michel, opposite the Jardin du Luxembourg, where he met Alberto Cianca, one of the founders of the movement and member of the Central Committee. The day after, he finally ran into Carlo Rosselli, with whom he discussed the situation in Spain. For Vittorelli, joining GL also meant departing from Communism, towards which he had slowly veered while still in Egypt. By discussing the role of the Communists in the Spanish Civil War with Rosselli, Vittorelli came to view the dictatorship of the proletariat as incompatible with a democratic and socialist revolution. He saw Stalin's repression in Spain as a direct consequence of the Soviet totalitarian mindset and rejected the idea of a violent shortcut to the anti-fascist struggle. Consequently, he resolved that he "would not become a Communist."[330]

As Vittorelli recalled years later, it was in Paris, meeting the men of GL, "who had changed my life," that he discovered the dangerous allure of political activism. As for many antifascists, it was a period of grave economic hardship and even solitude, but the sharing of the ideals of "justice and liberty" with his new comrades—whose work he had learned to cherish from Egypt—gave a deeper meaning to his ideological convictions and, ultimately, to his life. In his words, he had tasted what Gabriel García Márquez called "the golden poverty." In Paris, he felt at home, and also acquired his *nom de plume,* which would later become his *nom de guerre*—and ultimately, his legal name. This was when and where Paolo Battino became Paolo Vittorelli, at the suggestion of Aldo Garosci.[331]

Vittorelli met with Rosselli on numerous occasions, but tragically, their final encounter occurred during the commemoration of Antonio Gramsci on May 22, 1937. Gramsci, who had died just weeks earlier as a result of his long detention in fascist prisons, was honored by Rosselli as a living hero, martyred for his convictions—a tribute Vittorelli fully embraced. Just as Rosselli saw in Gramsci a model of intellectual and moral steadfastness, Vittorelli, in turn, saw in Rosselli the ascetic revolutionary heir to Gramsci, an unwavering adversary of Mussolini's tyranny. A similar, but perhaps even more tragic fate befell the leader of Giustizia e Libertà. Barely weeks

[329] Paolo Vittorelli, *L'età della tempesta* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1981), 19.
[330] Vitorelli, *Tempesta,* 28-9.
[331] Paolo Vittorelli, *L'età della speranza: Testimonianze e ricordi del Partito d'Azione* (Scandicci, Italy: La Nuova Italia, 1998), 2.

later, on June 9, 1937, fascist gunmen of the Cagoule ambushed and assassinated Carlo Rosselli and his brother Nello. Their deaths marked the end of GL's first "heroic" phase and the beginning of a more turbulent period under Emilio Lussu's leadership.

The murder of the Rosselli brothers also signaled the start of Vittorelli's clandestine work as he was sent to Italy to reconnect with underground members of the movement.[332] Thus, in the late spring of 1938, as a twenty-three-year-old, Vittorelli visited "his" country for the second time after a brief family vacation as a child. It is worth recounting the episode of his first day in Rome for the impression it left on him of the character of Italian fascism. He arrived in the capital right when Adolf Hitler was visiting the country. Walking through the city center, he noticed that on the top of the lowest buildings of Via Nazionale lay fake facades that made all the palazzi look even. Via Della Conciliazione, on the other hand, was adorned on both sides of the street with two long lines of marble columns—though, in reality, they were made of nothing more than papier mâché. Mussolini wanted to impress Hitler, who dabbled in architecture, but couldn't afford to actually renovate the city. This otherwise ridiculous charade carried a clear political lesson for Vittorelli: Mussolini now sought to court the Führer's approval. The Third Reich was taking over fascism, imposing its policy of rearmament and provocation at an increasingly relentless pace, placing Mussolini under mounting pressure.[333]

Vittorelli spent the entire summer in Italy, reconnecting with GL militants who had managed to avoid the net of the OVRA, the political police. He also visited Giovanni Gentile, the most important figure in Italian idealism besides Benedetto Croce and the intellectual mastermind behind the philosophy of Fascism. Forgotten by the fascist leadership and shunned by international academic circles, Gentile was a spent force. In Vittorelli's words, "the living Gentile was dead."[334] It was a metaphor for the exhausted revolutionary push of Fascism. However, the situation for the Italian antifascists in the country was dire, with the eyes of the political police strained in their direction. The last part of the summer was spent in Florence in a failed attempt to resurrect the antifascist network existing in the city before the 1936 wave of arrests. Vittorelli managed to leave the country when the OVRA was about to wrap its tentacles around him. He narrowly escaped

[332] Vittorelli, *Tempesta*, 29.
[333] Vittorelli, *Tempesta*, 43-46.
[334] Vittorelli, *Tempesta*, 61.

arrest at the Florence train station, and by the time of the signing of the Munich Agreement of September 1938, he was back in Paris. He would not see Italy again before the summer of 1944.

IV—Giustizia e Libertà Between Crisis and War: Political Realignment from the Rosselli Assassination to the Fall of France

The looming threat of war set the pace for Vittorelli's return to Paris in the fall of 1938. Giustizia e Libertà required a second political and theoretical renewal, following the first marked by the *Quaderni* in the early- to mid-1930s. The assassination of the Rosselli brothers deprived the group of its most charismatic figure and political ideologue. Despite GL being organized as a non-hierarchical network of activists, the weight of Carlo Rosselli was undeniable, especially in bridging the differences between the socialists and the more liberal-leaning faction. Emilio Lussu now endeavored to move the group further to the left, following a path that Carlo Rosselli laid out beginning at the time of the Spanish Civil War. A significant step was the 1938 merger with Ferdinando Schiavetti's Azione Repubblicana Socialista (Socialist Republican Action, ARS), another group of the non-conformist antifascist left.[335]

In the same year, a congress held in Paris gave GL a more pronounced socialist orientation, which led to a rift with the remaining liberal faction. Alberto Tarchiani withdrew, while Lussu, himself never sympathetic to communism, emerged as the chief architect of the movement's stronger socialist identity that nonetheless allowed for tactical collaboration with the communists. At his request, GL appended the subtitle "Movement of Socialist Unification" to its name. This new designation aligned with Carlo Rosselli's final writings before his death, which called for the unity of all left-wing groups into a single party. For Vittorelli, Lussu's leadership became a steppingstone in his own rise inside GL; he replaced Tarchiani as a central committee member, while Schiavetti assumed the role of foreign political commentator for the group's journal.[336]

GL's new leadership, led by Lussu alongside Schiavetti and Silvio Trentin, leaned towards potential connections with the communist camp. Influenced by Austromarxist leader Otto Bauer, Lussu embraced the idea that one could distinguish between the USSR—viewed as the pinnacle

[335] Nicola Tranfaglia, "Tra Mazzini e Marx. Ferdinando Schiavetti dall'interventismo repubblicano all'esperienza socialista," *Rivista di storia contemporanea* 13, no. 2 (1984): 219.
[336] Bresciani, *Learning*, 147; Vittorelli, *l'Età della Tempesta*, 35.

of socialist consciousness—and the Stalinist regime, considered a temporary deviation, not an inherent feature of the Soviet system. Like Bauer, Lussu was optimistic that the USSR could follow a process of democratization once external pressures from capitalist powers subsided, and he believed that fascism would drive the impoverished and oppressed middle classes toward the revolutionary party, thereby bolstering its ranks.[337] In contrast, other GL members, such as Aldo Garosci and Franco Venturi, were more indebted to the anti-tyrannical thought of the French philosopher and historian Élie Halévy. Halévy's 1936 *L'Ère des tyrannies* critiqued the tendencies of both fascist and socialist movements towards statism and centralized control, an analysis that ultimately convinced many in GL against a full-fledged alliance with the communist camp.[338]

In this debate, Vittorelli sided with Lussu. As he would later recall in his memoir, on a hypothetical spectrum ranging from maximum to minimum openness to collaboration with the communists, he sat to the left of Lussu, while Garosci and Venturi were on the opposite side.[339] It was to the more radically left-leaning interpretation of GL's politics that Vittorelli remained faithful at this time. The shift towards the left generated by Lussu would continue to inform Vittorelli's work in Egypt. This alignment was not merely tactical but rooted in his conviction that the anti-fascist struggle required the widest possible front, even if that meant working with communist forces he did not entirely trust.

However, the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in August of 1939 would put a halt to any possibility of rapprochement with the communists, catching Lussu off guard. The Pact generated an earthquake inside the European left, which did not leave GL unscathed. Lussu's openness to communist collaboration became untenable, and a more thorough redefinition of the group's ideology became necessary. A Program Reform Commission was established to redesign GL's positions considering the recent upheavals in international politics. It completed its task in March of 1940. The results reached by the Commission were published in the thirteenth number of GL's *Quaderni*, which, however, would never see the light of day due to France's tightening

[337] Lussu articulated his thought on the political and cultural role of communist Russia in the European revolution in a series of articles published in GL's weekly paper between the end of 1937 and the fall of 1938. On Otto Bauer's position see Otto Bauer, *Tra due guerre mondiali? La crisi dell'economia mondiale, della democrazia e del socialismo,* introduction by Enzo Collotti (Turin: Einaudi, 1979); Giacomo Marramao, *Austromarxismo e socialismo di sinistra tra le due guerre* (Milan: La Pietra, 1977); and Mark E. Blum and William Smaldone, *Austro-Marxism: The Ideology of Unity* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016).
[338] Élie Halévy, *L'ère des tyrannies: Études sur le socialisme et la guerre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1937).
[339] Vittorelli, *Tempesta*, 168.

censorship on political publications. Copies of the journal would later be sequestered by the Vichy police.

According to Vittorelli, these discussions built upon themes already central to GL's political worldview, further reinforcing their socialist connotation. Drawing on the experience of the *Quaderni* a few years earlier, greater emphasis was placed on developing new mechanisms for public participation in the management of both society and the state. This included strengthening the autonomy of locally organized communities, from the municipality to the region, and advancing the concept of a "federation of autonomies" encompassing factory councils, trade unions, local communities, and collective farms—conceived as part of a broader European federation. These ideas had already germinated in the *Quaderni* and later publications by GL's left wing, particularly through the work of Silvio Trentin. His vision of "Proudhonian" federalism, combined with a commitment to radical revolutionary socialism, was now gaining traction in the movement. In the *Quaderno*, the myth of the independent communes of the late Middle Ages was explicitly likened to the Paris Commune's revolutionary experiment in self-government in 1871, reinforcing a historical lineage of localist, anti-centralist socialism that distinguished GL's position from both fascist nationalism and Soviet-style statism.[340]

The missing *Quaderno* also contained the first draft of Carlo Levi's *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, an account of his years of *confino* in Lucania, Southern Italy, which would later become a literary success after the war. During his forced exile to the depths of the Italian South, Levi—born into a wealthy Jewish family of the Turin bourgeoisie—discovered a civilization profoundly different from the industrialized North: that of the southern peasants. This was a world seemingly outside of History and progressive Reason, shaped instead by ancient local traditions.[341] Levi's experience in Lucania brought renewed attention to the long-existing inequalities of rural Italy and opened new socio-political ground for GL, broadening the movement's focus beyond urban workers and the lower middle-class to include the southern peasantry and the structural neglect that defined their condition. As we will see in the next chapter, this shift challenged earlier

[340] Vittorelli, *L'Età della Tempesta*, 196.
[341] Carlo Levi, *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* (Turin: Einaudi, 1945).

priorities in the antifascist movement and laid the foundation for a more inclusive and regionally attuned politics.[342]

According to Vittorelli, Levi's initial chapters in the *Quaderno* were more analytical than the later published version of the book. His early draft was a theoretical reflection on the impoverished South, depicting it not as an organic part of the nation but almost as a colony subjugated by the North following Italian unification in 1861. This interpretation closely paralleled ideas developed by Antonio Gramsci during his long imprisonment. However, Gramsci's writings on the subject would only be published after the war. Levi's experience among the people of Lucania shaped his vision of a "Republic of autonomies," a concept in which the commune emerged as the primary political-administrative unit, better suited to human scale governance.[343] Others in GL shared Levi's analysis of Southern Italy's quasi-colonial status, a radical take on the issue of *meridionalismo*. Lussu reached similar conclusions through his study of Sardinia's history, while Ignazio Silone—a *fellow traveler* of GL who grew up in the rural society of the Abruzzo region—developed comparable ideas in his work, which will be discussed in the next two chapters.

When Vittorelli left Paris for Egypt in the early spring of 1940, he brought along the ideas developed by the Program Reform Commission and the thirteenth *Quaderno*. Soon after his departure, German troops attacked the western front and began penetrating France. The Italian antifascists fled Paris in great haste, and the group of GL dispersed to the earth's four corners. It was an authentic diaspora, which ended only when, towards the end of the war, they all reunited again in Italy. Alberto Cianca and Aldo Garosci managed to reach Casablanca and, from there, the United States. In New York, they contributed, with Salvemini and other Italian exiles, to establish the antifascist movement the Mazzini Society.[344] Others spread between north and south America, Switzerland or continued their activities from southern France.

Bresciani argues that the fall of France in June 1940 marked the end of GL as a centralized and coherent political organization. However, the experience of its Egyptian chapter tells a different story. Vittorelli's expedition was supposed to last no longer than a few weeks. However, unable to return to Europe, he would spend the following four years in his native country. From

[342] On the political relevance of the historical plight of the rural south, GL's master was again Gaetano Salvemini; see Damiano Lembo, "Tra l'Italia e l'Europa: la proposta federalista di Gaetano Salvemini," *Politics. Rivista di Studi Politici* no. 14 (2020).
[343] Vittorelli, *L'Età della Tempesta*, 197.
[344] Archival fonds of the Mazzini Society are held at the Istituto Storico Toscano della Resistenza e dell'Età contemporanea (ISRT) as a subfolder of the *Giustizia e Libertà* fonds (AGL), Florence, ISRT/AGL/MS.

there, he organized a political movement that, although numerically small, maintained a remarkable level of political organization and activity, arguably more structured than other GL offshoots in exile, particularly in the Americas.[345]

V—Giustizia e Libertà's Underground Press. The Battle for Italian Minds in British-Controlled Egypt

Vittorelli's arrival in Egypt coincided with the appointment of British Colonel Cudbert John Massie Thornhill as head of overt and covert propaganda in the Middle East and East Africa. Thornhill had remained stuck in Egypt while transiting towards the Persian Gulf. He was supposed to monitor Russian operations over the oil pipelines in the region while a British war against Russia was still deemed possible. However, Italy's entry into the war spurred his superior, General Archibald P. Wavell, to put Thornhill in charge of propaganda activities amongst Italians in Egypt. When Mussolini declared war on Britain and France, British authorities confined all adult male Italians in prison camps as potentially dangerous aliens—Vittorelli was spared detention for being a Jew.[346]

Vittorelli and Thornhill met for the first time on June 12, 1940. Vittorelli was teaching public law in the French public school in Alexandria and at the Ecole Française de Droit in Cairo. He was trying to put together a group of antifascist activists through his old connections, especially the communist Renato Mieli, but with scant success. Through the French ambassador in Cairo, he managed to get in touch with the British military authorities and Thornhill. Thornhill had no knowledge of the Italian situation nor spoke the language. However, his opinions on how to conduct the propaganda war were of crucial importance to Vittorelli. He saw the fascist front as a coalition of reactionary forces. Hence it must be attacked from the left by financing and organizing left-wing movements.[347]

[345] Bresciani, *Learning*, 184.
[346] On the connections between Italian antifascists and British military authorities in Egypt, see especially Nicola Cacciatore, "Missed Connection: Relations between Italian Anti-Fascist Emigration and British Forces in Egypt (1940–1944)," *Modern Italy: Journal of the Association for the Study of Modern Italy* 24, no. 3 (2019): 265; and Salvatore Lombardo, *Prigionieri per sempre: Politiche di propaganda e storie di prigionia italiana tra Egitto ed India* (Ariccia: Aracne Editrice, 2015).
[347] Vittorelli, *Speranza*, 10.

The opportunity came with the creation of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) in July of 1940, followed by the Political Warfare Executive (PWE) in August. Churchill wanted to merge into a single organization the existing SIS sections tasked with covert operations (PWE) and espionage and propaganda (SOE) directed at enemy countries. Thornhill, who had previously worked for the so-called "Electra House" department for propaganda, became the head of the J-Section of the SOE in Egypt, dealing with Italy.[348] The SOE paid particular attention to the great number of POWs and civilian internees detained in various camps throughout the British Empire. Indeed, the most striking element of the British imprisonment system was the geographical dispersion of the inmates, scattered throughout the Empire, from colonies to dominions: North Africa, East and West Africa (especially Sudan and Kenya), South Africa, India (including Ceylon), Australia and Great Britain up to smaller units in Jamaica, Gibraltar, Persia, Iraq, Canada and Italy.[349]

Thornhill's first move was to acquire the *Giornale d'Oriente* (Journal of the East). The Giornale was an Italian-language newspaper, the official organ of the Italian regime since the beginning of the 1930s for the Italian-speaking North African colonies. In Thornhill's plans, Vittorelli would become the editor of the *Giornale*. However, the editorial board went to two members of the local Anti-Fascist Committee, Maurizio Boccara and Gino Rocca. According to historian Salvatore Lombardo, Boccara and Rocca wanted the *Giornale* to follow a markedly antifascist line, characterized by strong slogans against Mussolini and the regime. For Vittorelli, this attitude would alienate those Italians who were still fascists or apolitical instead of luring them to the Allies' side. As expected by Vittorelli, the *Giornale* proved unsuccessful, and copies were burned inside the camps by Italians anxious to show their loyalty to a regime still appearing solid and durable.[350] Vittorelli, too, refused to collaborate with Boccara and Rocca. As he would later explain in a letter to Emilio Lussu, he meant to approach Italian POWs with caution, bearing in mind that they had been exposed to fascist disinformation since they were born. Moreover, he

[348] On the SOE and Italy, see especially Roderick Bailey, *Target: Italy: The Secret War against Mussolini, 1940–1943* (London: Faber and Faber, 2014).
[349] Salvatore Lombardo, *Politiche di propaganda britanniche e storie di prigionia italiana tra Egitto e India* (Dissertation, University of Pisa, 2012), 7. For an extensive study of the situation of the Italian prisoners and POWs during WWII, see Flavio Giovanni Conti, *I prigionieri di guerra italiani, 1940–1945* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1986).
[350] Lombardo, *Politiche*, 40-41.

wanted to expand his work to Italy, directing propaganda efforts to specific nerve centers and underground resisters inside the country.[351]

Vittorelli decided to launch an alternative to the *Giornale*: a more flexible information bulletin titled *Bollettino di Notizie dall'Italia e dall'Estero* (News Bulletin from Italy and Abroad), which quickly became a key component of Giustizia e Libertà Egypt's propaganda efforts. Cairo's position as a British stronghold made it a crucial node for both antifascist organizing and psychological warfare against Mussolini's forces. In September 1940, Italian troops led by Governor-General of Libya Rodolfo Graziani advanced through Cyrenaica's northern coast into Egypt, capturing Sidi Barrani—a symbolic victory that emboldened Mussolini's ambitions in North Africa and reinforced the fascist narrative of military prowess. Against this unfavorable background, the *Bollettino* aimed to counteract Mussolini's momentum by projecting the inevitability of British military supremacy and eroding Italian soldiers' confidence in Fascism at a critical juncture in the war.

The *Bollettino* followed the editorial line of *Radio Cairo*, a British-backed radio program hosted by the communist-leaning writer Fausta Terni Cialente and supported by the Ministry of Information. *Radio Cairo* attacked fascist leaders as corrupt opportunists who exploited power for personal gain, framing Italy's alliance with Germany as a betrayal of its Catholic heritage and warning that a German victory would bring nothing but devastation. The aim was to discredit the regime's leadership by exploiting the moral and political vocabulary through which Italians understood loyalty, patriotism, and national interest.

At the same time, both the *Bollettino* and *Radio Cairo* stopped short of attacking the monarchy, also reflecting the strategic calculations of the British establishment, which saw the House of Savoy as a necessary stabilizing force for postwar Italy. This compromise—directing revolutionary rhetoric at Mussolini's regime while sparing the monarchy—illustrates the constraints of Vittorelli's position. His work, though born from the intellectual traditions of Giustizia e Libertà, was ultimately shaped by the geopolitical realities of wartime Cairo, where antifascist ambitions intersected with British imperial strategy.[352]

[351] The letter to Lussu (in translation) is dated April 10, 1942, TNA / HS6 / 82. On the same note, Paolo Vittorelli wrote a memorandum for the British authorities in October 1940, detailing his plans for Italy. TNA, HS6 / 82, To J from DH113, September 20, 1942.

[352] Emmanuela Carbé, "Fausta Cialente, Paolo Vittorelli e l'esperienza antifascista in Egitto," *Autografo* 65 (2021): 41–54.

GL's Cairo-based antifascism was both radical and constrained, striving to reshape Italy's future while operating within the confines of a colonial present. The *Bollettino* was conceived and directed by Vittorelli, an Egyptian-born Jew who had scarcely set foot in Italy yet found himself working in coordination with British authorities to influence the political consciousness of an Italian audience. Though deeply ideological, Vittorelli's stance was inevitably shaped by the geopolitical realities of wartime Cairo, where antifascist aspirations were entangled with British military and political interests, forcing a delicate balance between revolutionary ideals and imperial pragmatism.

Nevertheless, the *Bollettino* proved an immediate success among Italian prisoners, serving as a vehicle for antifascist ideas as well as a means of putting "diasporic socialism" into practice, showcasing Vittorelli's editorial skills. Unlike with the *Giornale d'Oriente*, Italians could now receive reliable information on the progress of the war, free of abrasive antifascist slogans. Moreover, they could read the paper without fear of retribution from the fascist representatives imprisoned in the camps. The British victory in the Battle of Sidi Barrani in early December 1940 forced the Italians into a hasty retreat, which cost them control of Cyrenaica. The battle boosted the bulletin's sales, as the Italians wanted to know what had happened from dependable sources. British successes also led to a substantial increase in the number of prisoners of war, with approximately 135,000 Italian soldiers captured between December 1940 and January 1941. The *Bulletin* now reached a weekly circulation of 25,000 copies and was avidly read by the prisoners. The success of Vittorelli's publication motivated the British authorities to close the *Giornale d'Oriente* for good in February of 1941.[353]

Riding the wave of British military advances in North Africa, Thornhill and his collaborator and advisor, the British writer Freya Stark, drafted a memorandum for the Foreign Office on the use of Italian prisoners for antifascist political work. Their central premise was that Italy would eventually have to accept a separate peace, and former prisoners would return home. A carefully selected group of veterans, they argued, should then seize power *manu militari* with the assistance of British armed forces, installing a new democratic—but above all, pro-British—ruling class. Their proposal envisioned the formation of a Free Italian Force composed of Italian prisoners, designed to win the sympathies of antifascists without being overtly politicized. The Foreign Office deemed the plan feasible, and Churchill personally expressed his support for the

[353] Lombardo, *Politiche*, 45-46.

initiative. However, by the spring of 1941, it had become clear that the SOE's ability to persuade Italian POWs to switch sides was minimal, while efforts to train operatives for deployment in Italy proved unsuccessful.

At the beginning of the year, the SOE had facilitated the dispatch of a group of twelve antifascists from the Mazzini Society of New York to India on a covert political warfare mission. The aim was to indoctrinate Italian POWs with anti-fascist propaganda, enlist them into a Free Italian force to fight alongside the Allies, and potentially deploy them for covert operations in Italy. However, the mission was plagued by misunderstandings, internal rivalries, and poor planning. The volunteers, recruited hastily from the group in New York, were physically unfit, politically divided, and inadequately trained for intelligence work. Some were deemed "absolutely useless [...] ignorant, stubborn, mistrusting fellows."[354] Once deployed in Indian POW camps, the mission quickly collapsed. The Italian prisoners, largely uninterested or hostile to the propaganda, reacted negatively—at one camp, the Mazzini operatives were even attacked with stones. The British military and intelligence services soon lost patience, and the mission was disbanded, with some operatives interned or sent back to the U.S. while others remained stranded in India.

The Indian fiasco revealed the limits of ideological assumptions in British political warfare. The SOE operated on the simplistic belief that Italian Americans in the Mazzini Society were inherently "tough" antifascists and that Italian POWs could be easily converted. This misreading of antifascist identity, shaped more by Hollywood stereotypes than by political analysis, led to a fundamental disconnect between SOE strategy and the practical realities of resistance.[355] The episode unveiled British intelligence's inability to decode the psychological and political armor of Italian prisoners and exiles alike. Recognizing this failure, some within British intelligence eventually grasped the need to collaborate more closely with Italian antifascists, such as Vittorelli's group, who could provide a more nuanced interpretative key to the situation. However, this realization did not come immediately; other missteps and miscalculations would follow before British intelligence fully adapted its approach.

In April 1941, the SOE parachuted Fortunato Picchi—an Italian antifascist who had previously been detained on the Isle of Man—into Italy to reestablish contact with local resistance

[354] Quoted in Kent Fedorowich, "'Toughs and Thugs': The Mazzini Society and Political Warfare amongst Italian POWs in India, 1941–43," *Intelligence and National Security* 20, no. 1 (2005): 147–72, at 164.
[355] Fedorowich, "Toughs and Thugs", 153-4.

fighters. Shortly after landing, Picchi was captured and executed by the fascists. His swift demise underscored the dangers of infiltration missions and led British intelligence to reassess the viability of using foreign operatives without meticulous preparation. This failure had a chilling effect. It discouraged many Italians from engaging in direct action and forced the British to finally shift their approach. With infiltration proving unreliable, greater responsibility was now placed on the antifascists already operating in Egypt, even at the cost of further politicizing propaganda efforts. This change in strategy provided Vittorelli with the opening he needed to establish his Italian-language newspaper, embedding GL Egypt more deeply into the wartime information war.[356]

VI—A Newspaper at War: The Corriere d'Italia and Its Role in British Antifascist Efforts

Between late fall 1940 and early 1941, the British launched a successful counteroffensive in Cyrenaica and Tripolitania. As a result, the number of Italians interned in Egyptian camps, such as Helouan and the Mustapha Barracks, steadily increased. Seeking to co-opt Italian prisoners and exiles, British authorities granted greater autonomy to antifascist groups. Churchill approved the formation of an Italian Free Force.

For Vittorelli, the pivotal moment came in February 1941, when the *Giornale d'Oriente* ceased publication. Thornhill transferred control of the journal to Vittorelli, who transformed it into the *Corriere d'Italia* (Courier of Italy). Information about the newspaper's establishment and activities comes primarily from Vittorelli's second memoir, *L'Età della Speranza* (The Time of Hope), as well as from letters he exchanged with fellow members of Giustizia e Libertà and British officials. Notably, two letters—one addressed to Emilio Lussu (March 1942) and another to Bruno Pierleoni (February 1943)—offer valuable insight into Vittorelli's motivations in taking over the *Corriere*.

In his letters, Vittorelli explained to the two senior Giustizia e Libertà members how the creation of the *Corriere* marked the culmination of a broader set of initiatives he had undertaken since arriving in Egypt. His efforts began with an unsuccessful attempt to take over the *Giornale*

[356] Mireno Berrettini, "'Set Italy Ablaze! Lo Special Operations Executive e l'Italia 1940–1943,'" *Italia contemporanea* 252–253 (September–December 2008); idem, *La Resistenza italiana e lo Special Operations Executive britannico (1943–1945)* (Florence: Le Lettere, 2014).

d'Oriente, followed by the launch of the *Bulletin*. Through this publication, he established contact with Italian internees, most notably Stefano Terra, a former GL member from Turin, who later collaborated with the *Giornale*. Then, in late 1940, Vittorelli sought to persuade British military authorities in Egypt to launch a raid on "those islands used as prisons" to free antifascists confined there. Reports of GL members imprisoned in Ventotene had reached Cairo, but the available information proved too limited to convince the British to take action.[357]

Separated in part from the rest of the movement, but "perhaps more strongly organized than anywhere else," they had to establish almost independently the programmatic and tactical foundations of their action. Vittorelli explained that, for the internal Italian program, they adhered to the *Ideological Charter* approved at the 1938 Conference and the principles discussed in Paris during the winter of 1939-40 by the Study Commission for program reform mentioned above, thus emphasizing their alignment with the socialist autonomist line of Trentin and Lussu. On the international level, they collaborated with United Nations authorities in the direct fight against Fascism. Finally, Vittorelli lamented the absence of a representative element of an active antifascist movement within Egypt.

By Vittorelli's own admission, the group's activities reached their peak during the first five months of the *Corriere d'Italia*. He managed the journal alongside his brother Joe (Giovanni) and two Italian editors-translators, Acco and Garbati. The head reporter was Emilio Millul, a Jewish officer from Pisa who had been expelled from the army due to racial laws. In many ways, it was a small, tightly knit operation—more a family affair than a formal newsroom, bound together by shared antifascist convictions, and the urgency of the fight.

With the support of British authorities, Vittorelli arranged for two prominent Italian antifascists to relocate to Cairo. One was Umberto Calosso, a professor of Italian literature who had collaborated with Gramsci's *L'Ordine Nuovo* in Turin before fleeing Italy and joining *Giustizia e Libertà* in Paris. In 1936, Calosso took part in the Spanish Civil War alongside Carlo Rosselli, writing frontline reports for the *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà*. After Franco's victory,

[357] Both letters, translated for the British SOE, and dated April 10, 1942 and February 19, 1943 respectively, can be found in TNA/HS/82. The original letter addressed to Pierleoni, in Italian, is held at the Spadolini Foundation – Nuova Antologia in Florence; now also in Bagnoli, *Un uomo*, 66-75.

he returned to Malta, where he held a chair in literature at Saint Edward's College. With assistance from the Special Operations Executive (SOE), he traveled from Malta to Cairo in April 1941.[358]

The second antifascist was Enzo Sereni, the most prominent Italian Zionist of his time. Sereni led an adventurous life. Born into a distinguished Jewish family—his father served as the attending physician to King Vittorio Emanuele III in Rome—he abandoned an academic career to pursue a radically socialist approach to Zionism. In 1927, he made *Aliyah*, relocating his family to Palestine, where he played a key role in founding the Givat Brenner kibbutz.

As an emissary for the socialist trade union Histadrut, Sereni traveled across Europe between 1931 and 1934, facilitating Jewish immigration to Palestine. His work later took him to the United States and, eventually, the Middle East. While in Iraq, he decided to join the Giustizia e Libertà group in Cairo. Sereni had known Vittorelli since their time in Paris and had longstanding ties to GL, a movement in which his brother Enrico had also been active.[359] Sereni explained to Vittorelli that, despite his deep involvement in building a Jewish homeland in Palestine, as a Jew of Italian origin, he saw his foremost duty at that moment as fighting against fascism—believing that the fate of the Jewish people depended on its defeat.[360]

Supported by Calosso, Sereni, and Stefano Terra—who had been released from the internment camp—Vittorelli transformed the *Corriere d'Italia* into a fully-fledged newspaper. The *Corriere* featured international news, political commentary, and a rich literary section. One of the most striking aspects of the *Corriere* was its strong cultural and literary character. Notably, the newspaper published high-quality contributions from some of the most significant figures in Italian literature, including Corrado Tumiati, Giani Stuparich, Dino Buzzati, and Corrado Alvaro.[361] While the front page covered major events of the war, often accompanied by an editorial—usually

[358] The available bibliography on Umberto Calosso is relatively limited, and, to my knowledge, no works on him have been published in English. For an introductory overview of his life and contributions, see Marco Brunazzi, ed., *Umberto Calosso, antifascista e socialista: Atti del convegno storico-commemorativo di Asti, 13-14 ottobre 1979* (Venice: Marsilio, 1981). Also of interest is Norberto Bobbio, "Umberto Calosso e Piero Gobetti," *Belfagor* 35, no. 3 (May 31, 1980): 329–38.

[359] The best work on Enzo Sereni is Ruth Bondy's *Enzo Sereni: The Emissary,* first published in 1978. I use the Italian edition, *Enzo Sereni: L'Emissario* (Aosta: Le Château, 2012). On Sereni's politics, see also David Bidussa's "La nostalgia del futuro," in *Politica e Utopia: Lettere 1926–1943,* by Enzo Sereni and Emilio Sereni, edited by David Bidussa and Maria Grazia Meriggi (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 2000), VII–LXVII; and Carlo Ghisalberti, "Antifascismo e Sionismo in Enzo Sereni," *La Rassegna mensile di Israel* 74, no. 1 (2008): 209.

[360] Vittorelli, *Al di là*, 15.

[361] Bagnoli, *Un uomo*, 36.

penned by Vittorelli—the second page focused on local news and included transcriptions of the latest broadcasts from Radio Cairo.

Calosso and Vittorelli also played an active role in *Radio Cairo*, which remained steadfast in its original editorial line: condemning the fascists for plundering Italy and ultimately selling the country out to the Nazis. Even if the Axis were to win, the war would only bring devastation to Italy and cement German domination over Europe. The only viable path forward was to force the regime's collapse, negotiate a separate armistice with the Allies, and establish a new democratic system. *Radio Cairo* portrayed the fascists as traitors to their own country, mere pawns in the hands of "German imperialism." It called upon "the workers of Italy, the petty bourgeoisie, and intellectuals" to "unite to free our country from these scoundrels who have betrayed us." Acts of "disobedience, […] revolt, and sabotage" were presented as the means to deliver the "fatal blow that will spell [the regime's] downfall."[362] Thus, in these appeals, we can already discern, in *nuce*, the three defining characteristics of the Italian Resistance after 1943, as identified by historian Claudio Pavone: a war of national liberation, a civil war, and a class war.[363]

Radio Cairo painted the fight with the Fascist regime as a struggle for the liberation of the country from a foreign power. The fascists were the fifth column of German military power. The image of national liberation was borrowed from the rhetorical tradition of the populist Italian Risorgimento of Garibaldi more than the aristocratic Cavour.[364] The fight should be waged "from below"—by the working and middle classes—"to above" against the treacherous fascist plutocracy. The "institutional question" regarding the continued existence of the monarchy, however, remained unaddressed.

Vittorelli's editorials closely aligned with the stance of *Radio Cairo*, which, it is important to recall, predated the creation of the *Corriere*. At the same time, he more explicitly championed the idea of a "democratic revolution," a concept developed by Giustizia e Libertà in the 1930s. As he explained in his letter to Pierleoni, GL Egypt's political stance was shaped by the final phase of Carlo Rosselli's thought before his assassination, as well as by the hard socialist line advanced by the Trentin-Lussu faction in its aftermath. Autonomy and federalism remained the group's

[362] "Radio Cairo," *Corriere d'Italia,* year 1, no. 6 (March 23, 1941). The complete collection of the *Corriere d'Italia* can be found at the Istituto Storico Toscano della Resistenza e dell'Età contemporanea of Florence (hereinafter ISRT).
[363] Claudio Pavone, *Una guerra civile: Saggio storico sulla moralità nella Resistenza* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1991).
[364] Umberto Calosso, "Radio Cairo – Messaggio della sigla di Subalpino," *Corriere d'Italia,* no. 48 (May 13, 1941).

guiding principles, yet they were forced to maintain a low profile to avoid jeopardizing their relationship with the British authorities.[365]

The *Corriere d'Italia* ran from March to December of 1941. Its existence depended on GL Egypt's collective endeavor and on the favor of the British SOE operating in Egypt. During the summer of that year, these two elements began to unravel. The launch of Operation Barbarossa on June 22, 1941, liberated the communists from the stigma of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and gave new luster to their antifascist credentials. The communists who had collaborated with GL, particularly with Radio Cairo, broke their relationship and continued their political activities in competition with the group. It was not just a political setback for Vittorelli, but a personal blow. He had known and worked with people like Renato Mieli from his youth.

On the same day, Vittorelli was preparing to launch an appeal on *Radio Cairo* for antifascist unity that was censored before airing. Due to a slip-up of the chief editor, a transcription of the appeal appeared on the 25 of June in the *Corriere*. Vittorelli called for the intellectuals, peasants and workers to join the antifascist struggle, using explicit socialist rhetoric ("Workers of the world unite"). He anticipated the political line agreed upon by Italian communist, socialist and GL leaders in occupied France a few months later. The message caused the British authorities to suspend Vittorelli and shut down the "Propaganda Coordinating Committee" formed by Calosso, Enzo Sereni, Vittorelli and Fausta Cialente the month before.[366] At the same time, Umberto Calosso began taking decisions independently of other GL members. He tried to form a united front with the Christian Democrats of Don Luigi Sturzo, and chastised Vittorelli for refusing to embrace his staunch anti-communist line. The two broke their relationship and Calosso left Egypt for London, awaiting a passport to reach the US and restart his academic career there.

In September of 1941, Thornhill was replaced by lieutenant-colonel De Salis, who took a much more skeptical view of the group. The documents of the SOE held at the National Archives testify to the deterioration of the relationship between Italian antifascists and British military authorities. Vittorelli had neither "the background nor the personality to inspire the necessary confidence and drive" to conceive of a plan and direct operations inside Italy.[367] Furthermore, the SOE attacked Vittorelli for trying to operate outside of the tutelage of the British intelligence

[365] Letter addressed to Bruno Pierleoni, February 19, 1943. TNA / HS / 82.
[366] Vittorelli, *L'Età della speranza*, pp. 14-15. See also, Carbé, 'Fausta Cialente', 45.
[367] TNA, HS6 / 82, D/H V (Lt Col James Pearson, Head of the Balkan and Middle East desk) to DPA, May 15, 1942.

service. A fair charge, considering that Vittorelli always tried to play down the support received from the British.[368]

The disagreements with De Salis led Vittorelli to leave the *Corriere* in late September of 1941. In November, the British authorities arrested Enzo Sereni for using counterfeited documents. Ironically, the documents came from the British Foreign Office, supposedly to allow Sereni to travel through the Middle East without impediment. Devoid of its leading editors and writers, the *Corriere* continued its publication until the end of December and was then terminated. The *Corriere d'Italia* had followed a compromise line: appease the Italians in Egypt to draw them towards the antifascist front and tone down the socialist revolutionary character of GL to assuage the SOE authorities. Despite the journal's success and impact on Italians, the strategy did not yield results. Vittorelli and GL Egypt's efforts to build a solid antifascist coalition in the country by recruiting internees and POWs from the British camps had failed. However, their work would continue, aided by the replacement of De Salis in late December of 1941 and by the willingness of the SOE to recruit a workforce for covert operations inside Italy.

VII— Becoming the "Kaffir" group and the Special Operations Executive in the Middle East

In early 1942, the German counteroffensive against the British Army in North Africa rendered Egypt unsafe for Giustizia e Libertà members, prompting the SOE to transfer them to Palestine. Their temporary exile lasted until the Second Battle of El Alamein in October of that year. Documents from this period reveal the SOE's efforts to determine what role GL Egypt—codenamed "Kaffir" (Arabic for "unbeliever")—could play in the Italian theater.[369] Despite some tensions between the SOE and the Italians in late 1941, the Kaffir group remained highly regarded. One British assessment described them as "the most satisfactory group of Italian collaborators that we have in the Middle East." The SOE's failure to identify and train Italians for covert operations

[368] TNA, HS6 / 82, Major C.L. Roseberry to Lieutenant Skeeping, July 10, 1943.
[369] The origin of the name "Kaffir" is uncertain: for the Oxford Dictionary of English, it is "an insulting term used by some Muslims for non-Muslims." SOE members might have picked it up to single out the non-Arab identity of the group.

in Italy itself made it increasingly willing to work alongside organized antifascist groups.[370] For GL Egypt, the closure of the *Corriere* stripped away the last constraints on its fundamentally socialist identity. No longer needing to accommodate the expectations of the SOE or the sensitivities of Italian internees, the group adopted a more outspoken and assertive political stance.

The SOE tried, unsuccessfully, to use one of Vittorelli's brothers, Joe (codename "Kaffir II"), to establish an Italian newspaper in Turkey analogous to the *Corriere d'Italia*. Paolo Vittorelli wanted to call it *Nuovo Risorgimento*, but it never came to fruition as Kaffir II was unmasked as working for the SOE. As we have seen, other plans to operate in India under the supervision of Thornhill and to organize a group of Mazzini Society members in North Africa did not go through. SOE's policy was now "to assist, and, if possible, develop any subversive group in Italy irrespective of their political creed."[371]

It meant Italianising operations, which presupposed a more significant development of contacts with internal dissidents to conduct a careful preliminary investigation on collaborators. Major Cecil L. Roseberry, now head of the J Section in Cairo, expressed this new approach in a telegram sent in August 1942 to Major Dolbey of the D/H section (Balkans and Middle East).[372] Vittorelli and his closest collaborator, Stefano Terra, seemed suited to open up new channels with resisters operating in the country. But where was the Kaffir group positioned politically? According to the documents, the SOE did not have a clear picture of the matter. As late as September 1942, Roseberry sent Dolbey a message describing the political orientation of the group:

> We have had some difficulty in defining exactly the program of Giustizia e Libertà […] the present programme of the KG [Kaffir Group] is rather hazy and fluid. It could be defined as a sort of political Buchmanism, calling to all classes of society, but with a slight bias towards the poorer classes. Terra and his friends talk and act like left-Wing Socialists. Kaffir and his brother are apparently much more to the Right, and very near in their ideals to the Liberals. […] We can be sure, however, that we shall find that men who believe in the GL movement are sincere idealists, of a rather pleasant type.[373]

[370] TNA, HS6 / 82, D/H 236 to J, July 31, 1942.
[371] TNA, HS6 / 82, DPA Director (Directorate of Policy and Agents) to DHV (James Pearson), May 14, 1942.
[372] See Berrettini, ''Set Italy ablaze!', 418.
[373] TNA, HS6 / 82, To J from DH113, September 20, 1942.

It is unclear to which program Roseberry was referring. At that moment, the group was not producing anything due to its forced exile to Palestine. It is interesting, however, that Roseberry compared Kaffir to the Oxford Group, an evangelical Christian movement founded at Oxford University in 1921 by Frank Buchman. Perhaps, Roseberry confused the inter-classist message of Vittorelli with the anti-sectarian ecumenism of the Buchmanites. At the same time, we have already noted how Vittorelli and the rest of the group were actively diluting their political message to appease the SOE and the Italian internees. Terra was possibly considered to the left of Vittorelli due to his participation to *al-Majalla al-Jadida* (The New Magazine) directed by Ramses Younan of the Art and Liberty group, an artistic movement whose politics bordered socialist-anarchism. According to Roseberry, it would prove "extremely difficult to know beforehand the political persuasion of" Giustizia e Libertà, whose other members were scattered around the world and could not agree on a shared platform.

The SOE, and Major Roseberry in particular, were keen on entrusting the work with Italian resisters to Emilio Lussu, whom they considered the most authoritative and charismatic of GL's leaders. Lussu had spent part of 1941 moving from Portugal to Switzerland with his wife, Joyce. They helped fellow antifascists to reach Morocco and from there the Americas.[374] According to historian Roderick Bailey, the British had identified their potential interlocutor in Lussu since 1940, when his brother-in-law Max Salvadori introduced him to a member from Section D. However, Lussu obstinately sought to act independently of the SOE. He opposed the creation of an 'Italian National Committee' (a provisional government from abroad) by the Mazzini Society because it would only be able to operate with British backing. Lussu's idea, shared by Vittorelli, was that only the Italians could extirpate fascism from the country. Numbed by years of political indoctrination and propaganda on the "perfida Albione" (perfidious Albion), Italians would not accept a new government imposed by the British from above. Instead, Lussu planned to ignite an uprising in the country starting from his region of Sardinia, which, he thought, had never definitively bowed to Mussolini.[375]

[374] Joyce Lussu recounted their experiences during the war in her memoir, *Fronti e frontiere* (Rome: Edizioni U, 1945).
[375] Bailey, *Target: Italy*, 94.

The agreement with the Foreign Office failed on the issue of borders. Lussu wanted the Allies to preserve Italy's territorial integrity, colonies included. His position on colonial matters was shaped not by imperial ambition but by the belief that it was Italy's responsibility to relinquish what he saw as a burdensome legacy. Lussu identified with the struggles of the colonized, a perspective rooted in his early political experience with the Sardinian Action Party, which he had led before the Fascist regime's rise. As he wrote as early as 1933 on GL's *Quaderni*, the Italian government had found its natural colonies in the southern regions of Italy, such as his Sardinia.[376] But Italy should disengage from its overseas territories independently from foreign powers. The duty of the antifascist movement, under penalty of hostility from the Italians, was to operate on a national footing: "No one should be given the pretext of saying in Italy that antifascism is being sold to the British".[377] However, in the spring of 1942, London rejected Lussu's requests for a formal commitment on Italian borders.

While Lussu was in the United States to re-establish relations with Giustizia e Libertà members, Vittorelli wrote him a letter regarding his role in Egypt. According to Vittorelli, "there existed vast possibilities of action from Cairo." But they needed to maintain a network with all the GL groups. They had no contact with the members of the Mazzini Society in America, who did not seem to cooperate very well amongst themselves. Vittorelli asked if Cianca and Magrini (alias for Aldo Garosci) could come to North Africa to help. Most importantly, Vittorelli told Lussu that "as administrator of the movement [he was assuming] the title of C.C. [member of the Central Committee] and I should like you to delegate to me officially the direction of action in the Middle East, already assumed by me in fact."[378] The letter was held by the SOE until May, when the Directorate of Policy and Agents encouraged the Head of the Balkan and Middle East desk James Pearson to send it along. Lussu was also asked to respond to Vittorelli in encouraging terms, which he did on the thirteenth of June.

Lussu regarded Vittorelli as "well-meaning and intelligent but inexperienced and lacking in organizing qualities." According to a report from the J Section, Lussu would "employ him to

[376] Emilio Lussu, "Federalismo," *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà,* no. 6 (March 1933).
[377] Quoted in Silvia Ballestra, *La Sibilla. Vita di Joyce Lussu* (Rome: Laterza, 2022), 87. The story of his relationship with the British authorities is in Emilio Lussu, *Diplomazia clandestina, 14 Giugno 1940 – 25 Luglio 1943* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1956): "A nessuno dovrà essere dato il pretesto di dire in Italia che l'antifascismo è venduto agli inglesi".
[378] TNA, HS6 / 82, Vittorelli to Lussu, April 10, 1942, in translation.

write an article but not to edit a newspaper."[379] Quite a surprising judgement for somebody who had managed to run a newspaper of outstanding quality under challenging circumstances. Nonetheless, as Pearson would write to the Directorate, Lussu could not stop him from taking over the reins of the group.[380] Lussu's letter reached Vittorelli, still residing in Palestine. It confirmed that he was in contact with all the other members of Giustizia e Libertà, including Ferdinando Schiavetti. For the time being, Vittorelli should consider himself head of the "Comitato Centrale of Giustizia e Libertà."[381] He was tasked with continuing to work on creating a political vanguard that could get into action at the right moment.

Lussu set some essential points that should guide the work of the Kaffir group. First, Britain and the Allies must ensure Italian territorial integrity if the Axis was defeated. Second, the Allies must relinquish their trust in Marshal Badoglio and support a popular revolutionary, republican, and democratic movement "(Republic – Socialist Republic – Separation of Church and State)." Finally, GL had merged with ARS, and Schiavetti "is one of our top leaders. The question of autonomy, of which Schiavetti was never aware, must remain an internal question, a trend, not a basic, general, obligatory law for everyone."[382] If Vittorelli took to heart the first two points in Lussu's letter, it would be difficult to argue that he agreed to put aside the issue of autonomism.

Vittorelli returned from Palestine to Cairo after the British victory in the Second Battle of El Alamein and resumed his journalistic activity. The fortunes of the Kaffir group continued to follow the events of the war. The landing of the Allies in North Africa at the beginning of November 1942 opened new scenarios. If an intervention in Italy became far more likely, the ensuing military occupation of southern France by Germany further complicated the position of GL members still residing on the continent. Toulouse, home to Silvio Trentin and the nerve center of antifascist operations in the region, was abandoned in a rush. In addition, at the Casablanca Conference of January 1943, the Allies insisted on a policy of "unconditional surrender" for the Axis powers. It was a punitive stance for Italy, which made it more difficult for the Kaffir group to convince their fellow Italians that it was in their interest to cooperate with the Allies.[383]

[379] TNA, HS6 / 82, from J, May 15, 1942.
[380] TNA, HS6 / 82, D/H V to DPA, May 15, 1942.
[381] The letter, in translation, is in TNA, HS6 / 82, Simon (Lussu) to Kaffir I (Vittorelli), June 16, 1942.
[382] Bagnoli, *Un uomo*, 63.
[383] Bailey, *Target: Italy*, 283.

The SOE tried to soften the intransigence of the Casablanca agreements by making the Italians active subjects in the war and not mere objects of Allied victory.[384] Given that only a handful of Italian antifascists lived in the UK, there remained two possible doorways into Italy: Switzerland, which will be the subject of the following chapter, and Egypt. Filippo Caracciolo, Consul of Lugano, became the intermediary between the SOE and the members of the newly constituted Partito d'Azione (Action Party), heir to Giustizia e Libertà.[385] In Cairo, Vittorelli and the rest of Kaffir opened a Press Agency that would publish works of renowned antifascists, as well as of the members of the group. For Vittorelli, it was the beginning of a new editorial adventure. In August of 1943, he launched another bulletin of information in Italian and French, which was later followed by the weekly *Giustizia e Libertà*, and finally by a new series of the *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà*.

The first turning point in 1943 was the signing of a pact of united action between representatives of the Action Party, the Communist Party, and the Socialist Party. It was the prelude to the creation of the National Liberation Committee (CNL) later in September, following the Armistice signed by Marshal Badoglio with the Allies. A comprehensive outline of the situation of the *giellisti* at that moment was traced by Alberto Cianca in a letter to Vittorelli. Cianca, exiled in the U.S., had put great hopes in the feasibility of a National Italian Committee forming a provisional government backed by the United States. However, the promise of territorial integrity and political independence could not be kept by the Allies, and the option vanished.

Despite the missed opportunity, the task of the *giellisti* remained to turn a war of alliances into an "ideological war," "a war for the unity of Europe and its federation with the rest of the world rather than a "legitimist" war for the restoration of a past." GL should now merge with the various groups that had sprung up in Italy since the late 1930s, such as the Action Party and the Liberal-Socialist Movement (an offshoot of GL, formed by young Italian antifascists). At the same time, a United Front with the Communists should be avoided: "we must take great care to preserve

[384] Berrettini, '*Set Italy ablaze*,' 424.

[385] The Action Party was founded in Italy in July of 1942 from the merger of different anti-fascist groups of the socialist and republican traditions. Its initial program echoed that of Giustizia e Libertà and included: republicanism; local autonomy; the nationalization of large industrial and monopolistic complexes; land reform; trade union freedom; political and religious freedom; the creation of a European federation. Despite the numerous disputes between the republican and socialist wings, the republican and anti-Badoglian prejudices never failed. The bibliography on the Partito d'Azione in English is almost nonexistent. For an introductory history of the party, see Giovanni De Luna, *Storia del Partito d'Azione* (Turin: UTET, 2006).

our ideological approach intact, which is the only one capable of truly opening up the third front."[386]

The last period of existence for GL Egypt was characterized by an increasing commitment to journalistic output, culminating in a new series of *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà* in June of 1944. It was also a time of deep personal frustration for Vittorelli, his brothers, and Stefano Terra, who could not seem to obtain a clearance to reach Italy. The Allies had landed in Sicily in July of 1943, bringing about a political upheaval that had led to the deposition of Mussolini, the signing of the Armistice by the Badoglio government, and, finally, the birth of the puppet regime Repubblica di Salò, controlled by Germany. The Italian resistance movement had come to life, and the Action Party was partaking in the government from the south of the country. The members of the Kaffir group could only watch from a distance while the "democratic revolution" they had worked four years to prepare was taking place.[387]

Vittorelli concluded his first memoir, *L'età della tempesta* (The age of storm), at the end of his stay in Egypt. The second memoir, *L'età della speranza* (The age of hope), began when together with Stefano Terra, he finally managed to embark from Port Said to Italy. Hope, however, was not a positive and liberating sentiment. On the contrary, many concerns weighed him down. He feared that, after fascism, there would be neither a democratic season nor a change of the ruling class as he believed it should happen. In the April of 1944, Palmiro Togliatti, leader of the Italian Communist Party, had returned from Moscow. At the instigation of the Soviet Union, he sought a compromise between the antifascist parties and the monarchy and Badoglio to form a national unity government. The representatives of all the political forces present in the National Liberation Committee would participate, but the "institutional question" regarding the monarchy was postponed to the end of the war. For Vittorelli, it meant renouncing one of the most significant points of his political struggle, and that of his party. No one could predict if the possibility of a democratic revolution was still open.[388]

Upon his return to Italy, Vittorelli became a member of the central committee of the Action Party. Its most prominent military leader, Ferruccio Parri, became the first Italian Prime Minister

[386] Bagnoli, *Un uomo,* 82-87. "[trasformare] guerra per l'unità dell'Europa, e la sua federazione con il resto del mondo, anziché in guerra "legittimistica" per la restaurazione di un passato." "[…] bisogna avere cura profonda di conservare intatta l'impostazione ideologica nostra, che è la sola capace di aprire realmente il "terzo fronte".
[387] See Paolo Bagnoli's preface to *L'età della speranza*, ix.
[388] Vittorelli, *L'età della speranza*, p. 24.

representing the National Liberation Committee on June 21, 1945. However, already by December, the Parri government was finished, consumed by tensions between the antifascist parties. Finally, in October of 1947, the Action Party was dissolved. The socialist and republican wings of the Party could not reach political reconciliation, and the two factions flowed into the Italian Socialist Party and the Republican Party. As discussed in the last chapter, Vittorelli continued his political activity in parliament with the socialists until the beginning of the 1970s.

VIII—Antifascism, Federalism, and Socialism in Giustizia e Libertà Egypt

As we have seen, Paolo Vittorelli's efforts were shaped by a complex interplay of intellectual traditions and personal convictions, chief among them the heterodox socialism of the late Carlo Rosselli. This socialism was grounded in a profound belief in individual human worth and autonomy—an inheritance from Greek rationalism—while also infused with a deep-seated idealism that Rosselli himself traced to his Jewish heritage, what he called "the messianism of Israel."[389] This notion resonated deeply with Vittorelli, shaping his own political and philosophical outlook. The connection between secularized Jewish identity and Italian antifascism is indeed significant. Historian David Bidussa has argued that we should speak of Jewish antifascisms in the plural, acknowledging the diverse regional experiences of Jewish communities in cities such as Rome, Livorno, and Florence (the Rosselli family's hometown). These variations, Bidussa suggests, shaped distinct antifascist responses, highlighting the intersection of local Jewish experiences with the broader currents of resistance against fascism.[390]

With Vittorelli, however, his sense of belonging to the Jewish people took on a more universalistic aspect, transcending his immediate attachment to Italy. As Battino noted in one of his final, unpublished writings, being born a Jew had historically meant living in ghettos, "waiting for liberal ideas to come and take off some of [the] shackles." But, he questioned, was this really a tragedy? After all, those who were not born a minority, who had not experienced persecution, "lazily sit in their majority position and marginalize from their place those who disturb their interests." In short, they fail to grasp and partake in the deeper, redemptive trajectory of history.

[389] Rosselli, *Liberal Socialism,* 6.
[390] Sereni, *Politica*, xxiv-xxv.

Vittorelli invited a broader reflection on the Jewish condition, which seemed rooted in the melting pot context of diaspora communities in Egypt, where its antifascism was shaped by transnational, transracial, non-Italian Jewish influences. "In the color of their skin, in the language they speak, in the religion they pretend to practice, in the class to which they were born or in which they managed to penetrate," members of the majority "seek a justification for the superiority of which they are not intimately convinced." Then perhaps it was not a disaster to be born a Jew. "Whoever descends directly from the relatives of Christ, from whom no more than sixty generations divide us, retains something messianic in their genes."[391]

This passage highlights the origins of Vittorelli's political consciousness. He understood the persecution of the Jews in profound historical and political terms, while still retaining a strong, though not explicit, religious dimension. In his view, the Jewish community was ostracized and exploited by a majority composed of "sycophants, torturers, or debt collectors"—individuals united by superficial cultural and religious markers that served to perpetuate the oppression of the minority.

Oppression fostered in the Jews a consciousness of perfect equality between all humans, regardless of race or religion. Vittorelli's vision of history was influenced by the messianic promise of redemption—an element he found secularized in Rosselli's *Liberal Socialism*. For Vittorelli, socialism carried a trace of "the messianism of Israel [...] a sense of justice [that] is entirely down-to-earth; there is a myth of equality and a spiritual torment that forbids all indulgence."[392] These elements would become defining features of the socialism advocated by the GL group in Cairo, which broadens the topography of Jewish antifascism, as outlined by Bidussa, to the African shores of the Mediterranean.

Vittorelli's humanist and universalist outlook deeply informed his political vision, which centered on the creation of a socialist democratic regime committed to genuine inclusivity and active participation. He believed that the experience of oppression could sharpen awareness of justice and human dignity, and that building a truly equitable society required a thorough

[391] Quoted in Bagnoli, *Un uomo*, 21. "Chi non nasce minoranza, chi non vive perseguitato […] si accomoda pigramente nella sua posizione di maggioranza, emargina dal proprio cospetto chiunque turbi i suoi interessi […] E nel colore della propria pelle, nella lingua che parla, nella religione che finge di praticare, nella classe nella quale è nato o in cui è riuscito a penetrare ricerca una giustificazione di superiorità della quale non è neppure lui intimamente convinto. E allora non è forse una sciagura il nascere ebreo. Chi discende direttamente dai parenti di Cristo, dai quali ci dividono non più di sessanta generazioni, conserva nei propri geni qualcosa di messianico."
[392] Rosselli, *Liberal Socialism*, 6.

transformation of political institutions to guarantee broader representation. This belief led him to reject both the rigidity of traditional liberal democracy and the authoritarianism of state socialism. In their place, Vittorelli advocated for a model of governance rooted in autonomy and federalism, where power would be decentralized and vested in local representative bodies and self-governing institutions.

These ideas, which had taken root within Giustizia e Libertà since the mid-1930s, became increasingly central as the movement moved away from its nineteenth century liberal heritage. Within this framework, socialism was conceived not merely as an economic doctrine but as a vehicle for reconstructing democracy on a more expansive and inclusive basis, capable of transcending national boundaries and laying the foundations for a post-fascist international order. In contrast, the national parliaments that emerged from the French Revolution ultimately enshrined freedom as the privilege of one class over another. They proved incapable of addressing the complex web of collective interests and economic activities within a given society or safeguarding its plural liberties. As a result, democratic institutions needed to be fundamentally reshaped. Centralized power had to be dismantled and redistributed among local representative bodies and autonomous economic entities operating from the ground up.

As Vittorelli argued in the group's weekly publication, *Giustizia e Libertà,* "the trade unions and the chambers of labour already form a new parliament of the working class […] It is, therefore, only a matter of recognizing and organizing a phenomenon that already exists in embryo […]." In domestic politics, autonomy and federalism emerged as the guiding principles, standing in opposition to the bureaucratization and centralization of the state.[393] On a supranational level, European federalism provided the normative framework for a post-fascist international order. The imperialist and nationalist models of the past had created a system of lawless, anarchic international relations dominated by economic and military superpowers. In their place, geographically and culturally linked territories should unite to form new political structures, laying the groundwork for a gradual and incremental movement toward a world federation.

In 'Guerra civile in Europa' (Civil War in Europe), penned for the *Corriere,* Vittorelli outlined a historical analysis of the deeper causes of the war, a perspective he would later refine

[393] Paolo Vittorelli, "Educazione all'autonomia," *Giustizia e Libertà,* no. 7 (May 21, 1944), p. 4. "I sindacati e le camere del lavoro formano già da sé soli un nuovo parlamento della classe operaia… Si tratta perciò solamente di riconoscere e di organizzare un fenomeno che esiste già in nuce." (My trans)

in subsequent articles. He argued that the conflict was not merely a struggle among Great powers but rather the final convulsion of a process of national liberation that had begun in the eighteenth century. Hitler, he contended, was acting in service of the entrenched forces of German imperialism—specifically, the plutocratic Junker class. Their objective was clear: "Eighty million Germans must […] control […] one hundred and twenty million Europeans." Rather than completing the process of self-representation and self-government initiated by the national revolutions of the previous century, Nazi Germany sought to impose a feudal, hierarchical European order—a system of political domination structured atop a rigid hierarchy of classes and races.[394]

In 'Federalismo,' Vittorelli drew an even starker parallel, likening Europe's predicament to the American Civil War: "Even Europe now has two opposing camps, like the United States in 1864—those who want to abolish slavery and those who want to create it instead." The "European question," as he framed it, operated on two levels. On the one hand, German aggression represented the desperate attempt of a fading imperial order to cling to power—an order built on national and racial subjugation. On the other hand, the destruction wrought by German expansionism across Europe was the consequence of internal political and social imbalances within Germany itself. The Junker plutocracy manipulated the state to serve its own interests, fueling wars of aggression and championing the "sacred egoism" of the German nation. In Vittorelli's analysis, national borders functioned primarily to uphold the power of what he termed the Junker *pluto-hierarchy*—a sociological concept he developed to describe the fusion of political and economic power unique to Nazi and Fascist regimes. The resulting state of international anarchy, he argued, stemmed from a failed attempt at political modernization and unresolved class conflicts, further exacerbated by racial ideology.[395]

Vittorelli engaged critically with Lenin's *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, a text that had influenced many in Giustizia e Libertà, including Rosselli and Lussu. Like much of the revolutionary socialist and communist left of the time, he acknowledged that imperialism was rooted in the expansion of domestic monopoly capitalism, with competing national economies vying for "economic territory" on the global stage. However, Vittorelli also introduced key

[394] 'Guerra civile in Europa', *Corriere d'Italia*, N. 5, March 27,1941.
[395] Paolo Vittorelli, "Federalismo," *Corriere d'Italia,* no. 6 (March 23, 1941). "Anche l'Europa conosce due campi avversi come gli Stati Uniti, nel 1864: coloro i quali vogliono sopprimere la schiavitù e quelli che invece la vogliono creare." (My trans.)

distinctions that set his analysis apart. Unlike Lenin, he rejected the deterministic materialism inherited from Marx, which viewed economic development as the primary driver of historical change. While he recognized unfettered capitalism as a fundamental force behind German and Italian imperialism, he also attributed their expansionist policies to historical and cultural dynamics that could not be reduced to a mere stage in economic progression. In his view, the European civil war of his time was not an inevitable consequence of capitalist contradictions but the result of specific political failures.[396]

Vittorelli traced these failures back to the post-World War I settlement. The Versailles order, guided by Wilson's Fourteen Points, was founded on the principle of nationality. However, its main achievement was not the resolution of national conflicts but rather the accelerated fragmentation of the old multiethnic empires. The newly created nation-states inherited deeply entrenched ethnic and territorial disputes, and no clear mechanism existed to resolve them. The continual redrawing of borders, the rise and fall of states, and centuries of conflict meant that no single European map could truly reflect the aspirations for self-determination of its peoples. This unresolved instability fostered persistent tensions between neighboring countries, perpetuating cycles of nationalism and conflict that would inevitably culminate in another war.[397]

Vittorelli's dual perspective on the war—both political and socio-economic—led him to advocate for a federalist and socialist solution. He was particularly inspired by the formation of the Polish-Czech Coordination Committee, which sought to explore the possibility of a confederation between the two nations. For Vittorelli, such regional alliances could serve as the foundation for a broader European federation. This would be rooted in existing economic and cultural ties, not in imposed ideological constructs. He recognized that national differences were deeply embedded in history and could not simply be erased by abstract political formulas. Attempting to force an immediate unification of the entire continent would be both impractical and counterproductive. Instead, he envisioned a gradual process of integration, one that leveraged existing cultural, political, and economic affinities. In this vision, Italy would play a crucial role as a bridge between Western and Eastern Europe, positioned at the heart of the Mediterranean's economic and cultural networks.

[396] Vittorelli, "Federalismo."
[397] Paolo Vittorelli, "L'Italia nell'Europa centrale," *Corriere d'Italia,* no. 138 (August 21, 1941).

> A very close, organic understanding between Italy and Yugoslavia must be imperative to our future foreign policy. A foreign policy that must […] be increasingly integrated into our general politics, with an ever more organic unity, of a federative type, between Italy and our Balkan neighbors.[398]

Similar ideas permeated the projects envisioned at the same moment by other heretical socialists of GL who contributed to the *Corriere d'Italia*. Particularly significant was Nino Levi's proposal for a "Mediterranean Federation." Born in Venice in 1894, Levi had been a law professor and a leading figure in the revolutionary wing of the Socialist Party. Between 1919 and 1922, he served as head of the socialist administration in the province of Milan and represented Italy in the Second International. Following the rise of fascism, he emigrated to the United States, where he played a key role in establishing the Mazzini Society. At the time of his sudden death in April 1941, Levi was preparing a speech for a gathering of representatives from Mediterranean nations—including Italians, Spaniards, Tunisians, Egyptians, Arabs, Turks, and Greeks—where he intended to outline his vision for regional cooperation. His unfinished notes were later published in *Quaderni Italiani*, an offshoot of the *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà*, edited in Boston by the Italian architect Bruno Zevi.

In Levi's words, continents did not, by necessity, form geopolitical units. Moreover, "Europe [was] not a continent" its eastern borders being particularly difficult to define. Instead, for historical reasons, Italy was part of that "Mediterranean civilization" under attack from German barbarism: "it is a vital interest for Italy and her Mediterranean neighbors to combat the threat of Nordic domination and a totalitarian doctrine that professes the utmost contempt for the Mediterranean peoples." This Mediterranean civilization, Levi argued, had to be defended against German aggression and also against Italian imperialism. Mussolini's envisioned new order was grounded in a hierarchy of cultural and racial superiority, underpinned by economic exploitation—

[398] Paolo Vittorelli, 'L'Italia nell'Europa centrale', *Corriere d'Italia*, N. 138, August 21, 1941. […] una strettissima, organica intesa tra l'Italia e Iugoslavia dev'essere un principio imperativo della nostra futura politica estera. Politica estera che deve […] sempre più integrarsi nella nostra politica generale, con una unità sempre più organica, di tipo federativo, tra l'Italia e i nostri vicini balcanici.

an Italian *Mare Nostrum* stretching from the Balkan coasts to the colonies of North and West Africa.[399]

Nino Levi did not specify the "unassailable values" of the true Mediterranean civilization, a concept that, while recurring in the cultural and political discourse of Giustizia e Libertà, remained loosely defined. Nor did Vittorelli go into too many details regarding what made the Italian and the Yugoslav cultures more easily assimilable than others in Europe. D'Auria and Gallo argue that the Mediterranean tends to be a 'liquid' concept. What can or cannot be considered forming part of the Mediterranean remains historically provisional, and no definition fails to be controversial. In Levi's case, a sort of 'European Southernism' seemed to be in action. He presented a powerful, if intangible, picture of the Mediterranean basin as the cradle of a more democratic and just system of relations. A historically marginalized Mediterranean Europe set against an aggressive horde coming down from the North of Europe.

Levi's use of the term 'barbarism' produced this effect: identifying two geopolitical entities representing value systems engaged in a fight to the death—a quasi-Schmittian opposition between friend and foe. Levi's political ontology entailed a new sensibility towards a European federation. Not unlike Vittorelli, he was reasoning on a geographical and cultural scale beyond the limits of Western Europe—which, in contrast, was the standard framework for most federalist plans before and during the war. By directing attention toward the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe, Levi reoriented the spatial imagination of European unity, challenging the prevailing assumption that Europe's future could be conceived solely through its western core.

Discussing the post-imperial order for figures like Levi and Vittorelli inevitably meant confronting the question of colonial territories. During the war, early efforts toward a United Socialist States of Europe (USSE) sought to address this gap. Figures like Fenner Brockway of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and Marceau Pivert in France integrated anti-colonialism into their federalist visions, emphasizing that Europe's post-war reconstruction could not be separated from the fate of its colonial possessions. Their efforts, though marginal within mainstream

[399] Levi's notes appeared in the first issue of the *Quaderni Italiani*, published in Boston in January of 1942. Now also in Walter Lipgens (eds.), *Documents in the history of European integration*, *Vol. 2: Plans by Exiles from the Axis Countries*, Berlin, New York, De Gruyter, 1986, pp. 510-2.

socialism, echoed Levi and Vittorelli's insistence on a broader, more inclusive international order.[400]

While Italian antifascist exiles in London and New York debated how to reclaim the Italian state and its place in Europe, GL Egypt moved through the layered colonial realities of Cairo, where the struggle against fascism was inseparable from British imperial rule. Vittorelli's socialism took shape in this environment, engaging with European antifascists as well as Middle Eastern and African intellectuals, whose critiques of colonialism made visible the limitations of traditional European socialist thought. This experience fostered a *diasporic socialism*, extending beyond the framework of national liberation and imagining a transnational and anti-imperial socialist future.[401] However, it remained only a partial attempt. The contours of the Mediterranean or Italo Balkan federation remained vague, as did the role of the colonies. Who would become part of the federation? What would happen to the colonial and mandate territories? This ambiguity was due, in part, to the contingencies of the war, which prevented GL from formulating detailed plans.

Federalism was, for Giustizia e Libertà Egypt, a battle cry more than a schematic program. It is plausible that, at this stage, Vittorelli and his group avoided pressing the colonial question too insistently, given their economic and strategic reliance on the goodwill of the British authorities. To better understand this gap, it is necessary to further examine the intellectual roots of the group's internationalist vision and attempt to read between the lines. Vittorelli's new federalist order opposed the triad of race, nation, and empire that formed fascist cosmology.[402] Democracy, justice, equality, and freedom were the cardinal values of the future socialist union. His vision appeared to point toward colonial emancipation, though it was not ultimately grounded in an explicitly anti-colonial sentiment.[403] Despite his particular origins—being a Jew of Greek nationality who grew up in Egypt—his politics were firmly rooted in the Italian cultural tradition as reinterpreted by Giustizia e Libertà in the 1930s. GL tried to fuse the ideas of Mazzini on the Giovine

[400] Early plans for a socialist and anti-colonial movement in Europe were laid during the war by Fenner Brockway and Marceau Pivert, as evidenced by their correspondence. See *The Papers of Fenner Brockway*, GBR/0014/FEBR 14, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge; *Fonds Marceau Pivert*, 559AP/41 and 559AP/44, Archives Nationales, Paris. See especially, Anne-Isabelle Richard, "The Limits of Solidarity: Europeanism, Anti-colonialism and Socialism at the Congress of the Peoples of Europe, Asia and Africa in Puteaux, 1948," *European Review of History* 21, no. 4 (2014): 519–537.
[401] Galián, *"*La respuesta," 55.
[402] Paolo Vittorelli, "Il discorso del Duce," *Corriere d'Italia,* June 12, 1941.
[403] With few important exceptions. However, one only needs to think of Fenner Broackway, berated by the Independent Labour Party for participating in the communist-leaning League against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression in the 1930s, to understand how undeveloped anticolonialist thought was in the socialist left.

Europa (Young Europe), of national societies acting in unison through a European "Central committee," with the autonomist socialism of Proudhon and the British *guildists*. This was the vision that Vittorelli inherited and sought to uphold.

This becomes evident in the writings of Umberto Calosso, who argued that antifascist revolutionaries should help "sweep away the last remnants of colonial domination" and grant the colonies not a diluted form of democratic citizenship, but rather "that Mazzinian national independence that we will champion all over the world."[404] Mazzini predicated the struggle for independence and emancipation of peoples from their subjection to absolute regimes. The struggle against European imperialism and autocracy that substantiated GL Egypt's anti-colonial position, although revamped through the libertarian socialism of Proudhon and classist internationalism, remained anchored to axioms belonging to nineteenth century Europe.

Surprisingly, Vittorelli's diasporic experience did not result in a political sensibility as radical as that of other intellectuals of his generation with colonial backgrounds (think of Camus or Orwell). Instead, he shaped his cultural and political identity around Italian culture, perhaps even more so than other members of GL who were born and educated in Italy. This was an "imagined community" in which he would actively partake only after the war.[405] Vittorelli's post-imperial vision remained anchored in European and Italian criteria, though he extended them to the non-European sphere as well.[406] Perhaps his diasporic socialism was more closely tied to his secular Jewishness as a humanitarian ethos and to his perception of Italy as a place of belonging than to the more explicit anti-colonialism that shaped the trajectories of other intellectuals with similar backgrounds.

Compared to the activities carried out in Egypt by the Italian communists examined above, Vittorelli and GL Egypt's attitudes reveal a further weakness. Despite the internationalist orientation of its politics, GL's Egyptian chapter did not try systematically to attract autochthonous activists. The *Corriere* was aimed at the Italian community in Egypt and the Italian POWs. GL was oriented towards bringing the "democratic revolution" to Italy, even as a springboard for the

[404] Umberto Calosso, "Lettera di Subalpino," *Corriere d'Italia,* no. 55 (May 21, 1941). Calosso wrote the article for the *Giustizia e Libertà* journal in 1936, protesting against the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. It was republished in the *Corriere* with the text of an episode of *Radio Cairo* on the same topic, also by Calosso. "[…] daremo alle colonie, non una sofistica fallica corale cittadinanza democratica, ma semplicemente quella indipendenza nazionale di cui saremo mazzinianamente paladini in tutto il mondo."
[405] On imagined communities, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).
[406] Cf. Paolo Vittorelli, "Fascismo Asburgico," *Corriere d'Italia,* no. 54 (May 20, 1941).

future European and then global revolution. The focus on Italy hampered the possibility of developing a thorough post-colonial thought at a conjunction when socialism internationally needed to address the issue.[407]

Finally, Vittorelli's federalist/autonomist vision was not merely a strategic response to the crisis of European nationalism but also a reflection of his broader ideological commitments. His political thought was shaped by an attempt to transcend the binaries of liberalism and Marxist determinism, seeking a synthesis that balanced individual autonomy with collective solidarity. This intellectual orientation led him to align with figures such as Lussu and Cianca, who sought to chart a distinct path for GL beyond both communist orthodoxy and traditional socialism.

Vittorelli cherished Lussu and Cianca's indications. The weekly *Giustizia e Libertà* and the *Quaderni* he edited testify to his effort to elucidate the ideological position of the group—a *third way* opposed to the Italian Communist Party and its Marxist foundations. Indeed, Vittorelli had followed the same line since the inception of the Kaffir group in June of 1940. Although he collaborated with the communists in Cairo, he never failed to emphasize the difference between their positions and those of GL. Thus, understanding the political orientation of Vittorelli and the Kaffir group requires acknowledging the ideological *fil rouge* that connects the *Corriere d'Italia* to the later *Quaderni*.

Vittorelli wrote emphatically on the correlation between Marxism and totalitarianism. In 'L'economia totalitaria' (The totalitarian economy), published in the *Corriere* between March and April of 1941, he examined Marx's economic thought. In his view, Marx's "economicism" and "productivism" were the primary source of present economic totalitarianism. From the moment the proletariat had waged its war according to Marxist principles, the whole political class struggle had narrowed down to a struggle for the implementation of economic demands. The practical outgrowth of this theoretical posture was, on the one hand, the Soviet system, in which every contradiction was attributed to technical problems in economic management. Everything depended on administering the economy of the State correctly. And since the Party was more technically competent in discerning the interests of the working class, its dictatorship was legitimate.

The other side of the coin was "planism." De Man's ideas led to the creation of a managed economic sector and the reabsorption of unemployment through a policy of major public works. But this implied a forced transformation of the "natural course of the economy," not the

[407] See Imlay, "International Socialism," 1105.

introduction of a new economic and social system. Above all, it meant the "suppression of economic freedom, the autonomy of producer or consumer groups, the constant control of the state over most of private life, and, therefore, the impossibility of any individual initiative."[408]

It is evident how Vittorelli's analysis of Marxism was greatly indebted to the experiences of the *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà* in the early 1930s. It was through the *Quaderni* that he first discovered GL while he was still living in Egypt. We find echoes, in these articles, of Rosselli's critique of Marxism in *Liberal Socialism*. The search for a "third way" beyond the dyad of socialist maximalism and reformism stemmed from Vittorelli's critique of Marx and Engels. In an article written for the weekly paper *Giustizia e Libertà* in May of 1944, his object became the *Anti-Duhring* of Engels. Engels took a radical stance regarding the problem of the State and government in Marxism. He posited that by socializing the instruments of production, the communist revolution did not just make every class disappear. It also made governing superfluous. Given that government and politics were inseparably connected, for Vittorelli, Engels rejected politics tout-court. However, this was an absurd proposition.

The concept of politics was not contingent. It corresponded to a natural human activity, "the activity of men united in a group who establish the laws of their mutual relations and those of the relations between group and group." Therefore, the State would vanish only if men no longer had social relationships and lived "in the blessed State of nature."[409] On the contrary, the political void left by the absence of political relations made room for the totalitarian presence of the Party, which became necessary to administer the economy. It was not by chance that the *Anti-Duhring* had been a source of inspiration for *The State and Revolution*, where Lenin postulated the necessity of a dictatorial phase before the completion of the communist revolution.

As we have seen, for Vittorelli, the only way to guarantee human freedom and social justice was establishing a radically autonomous "Republic of federations." To the State's total control of the economy, he opposed the free activity of the cooperatives and the independent economic enterprises; to the national trade unions, the Factory councils; to the national parliament, the free

[408] Paolo Vittorelli, "Aspetti dell'economia contemporanea. L'economia totalitaria," *Corriere d'Italia,* no. 10 (March 26, 1941); no. 11 (March 29, 1941); no. 13 (April 1, 1941); no. 14 (April 2, 1941). "[…] la soppressione della libertà economica, dell'autonomia dei gruppi di produttori o di consumatori, il controllo costante dello Stato, sulla massima parte della vita privata, e, quindi, l'impossibilità di qualsiasi iniziativa individuale."
[409] Paolo Vittorelli, "Introduzione all'autogoverno," *Giustizia e Libertà,* no. 8 (May 28, 1944). "[…] una ben definita attività umana, l'attività degli uomini uniti in un gruppo che stabiliscono le leggi dei loro reciproci rapporti e quelle dei rapporti fra gruppo e Gruppo."

communes and municipalities. In 'Educazione all'autonomia' (Education to autonomy), Vittorelli rejected the old "bourgeois liberties." The new revolutionary freedom required the active participation of citizens in public affairs. This was a precondition for the safeguarding of the common good and for one's fulfilment as a human being. On one level, it was necessary to form the citizen of the new Republic. But this education could not be conceived solely as a pedagogical process: it must be a revolutionary conquest,

> A real revolution is, in fact, necessary to obtain for the masses - what, belonging to everyone, will no longer be a privilege - the privilege of freedom.[410]

Vittorelli recognized that political antagonism was an inevitable and indelible part of human life. Breaking down the centralized power of the State into as many nuclei of self-government as possible, made this persistent conflictuality at the same time manageable and conducive to progress. Whereas Marx associated the principle of democracy with the disappearance of conflict, Vittorelli, indebted to Proudhon, recognized democracy as a form of conflict. It was what Miguel Abensour would later define "savage democracy:" a political system that comprehended conflict "as the originary source of an ever-renewed invention of liberty."[411] In 'Contro Corrente' (Against the grain) Vittorelli wrote,

> No system can ever prevent the existence of conflicts of interests or ideas between individuals or groups; if these conflicts were to fail, humanity would no longer live human but vegetative life; that is, he would let himself live, no longer participating in the always contradictory process of his life.[412]

Totalitarianism denied individual and social independence in favor of imperialism, "we believe that small, enlightened nuclei can break the granite cortex with which totalitarianisms of

[410] Paolo Vittorelli, 'Educazione all'autonomia', *Giustizia e Libertà*, N. 7, May 21, 1944.
[411] Miguel Abensour, *Democracy against the State: Marx and the Machiavellian Moment* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011), 105.
[412] Paolo Vittorelli, *Contro Corrente* (Cairo: Edizioni di Giustizia e Libertà, 1944), 176. "Nessun sistema potrà mai impedire che esistano conflitti di interessi o d'idee fra individui o gruppi; se questi conflitti venissero a mancare, l'umanità non vivrebbe piu vita umana ma vegetativa; si lascerebbe, cioè, vivere, senza più partecipare al processo sempre contraddittorio della sua vita."

all colors envelop the popular masses."[413] For Vittorelli, the struggle against fascism was not just a battle against dictatorship but a deeper fight to redefine democracy itself—one that rejected both the hierarchical structures of nationalism and the bureaucratic control of state socialism, envisioning instead a radically decentralized, autonomous, and federated future where political participation and social justice were inseparable.

IX—Conclusions

The experience of *Giustizia e Libertà* in Egypt is a largely overlooked but crucial chapter in both Italian and European political history. It was a paradoxical case: unmistakably Italian, yet profoundly shaped by transnational experience. As I show in this chapter, Cairo was more than just an accidental refuge for Vittorelli and his comrades; it turned into a kind of laboratory for political and intellectual experimentation, where antifascism, federalism, and socialism were reimagined through the lens of exile.

Three central themes emerge from this story. First, GL Egypt embodied and significantly developed the tradition of "Third Force" socialism, which first emerged in the early 1930s—particularly in the *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà*—and was later incorporated into GL's political program as it shifted leftward under Rosselli's guidance. As a result, GL Egypt positioned itself between communism and liberal democracy, advocating a revolutionary yet pluralist socialism capable of transcending the totalitarian drift of 20th-century politics.

Second, this was a geographically liminal story that challenges conventional narratives of Italian exile and political thought. Nineteenth century exiles sought to unify Italy through nationalist insurrection. Vittorelli and his comrades, instead, envisioned themselves as carrying out a "democratic revolution" that extended beyond the nation-state, for a unified Europe potentially encompassing Mediterranean and global realities. Still, there were contradictions—perhaps inevitable ones—in this vision. The *giellisti* of Cairo openly opposed fascist imperialism and hoped to sketch a democratic future for Italy. At the same time, their engagement with colonialism, especially British and French rule in the Middle East, was far more cautious, even limited. Certainly, Vittorelli and his comrades operated within a structure that, while providing

[413] *Ivi*, p. 190. "Siamo convinti che la formazione di piccoli nuclei illuministi è capace di spaccare la corteccia granitica di cui i totalitarismi di tutti i colori stanno avvolgendo le masse popolari."

them with protection and resources, also constrained their ability to challenge imperial hierarchies outright. At the same time, their limitations were not merely structural but also ideological and theoretical, rooted in a political tradition that often overlooked the colonial question.

A final crucial dimension of GL Egypt's project was its engagement with federalism, a dissident thread in Italy's political history. In the nineteenth century, figures like Carlo Cattaneo had advocated for a federal Italy, but nationalist unification ultimately prevailed. The *giellisti* in Cairo, however, saw federalism as an alternative both to nationalist centralization and to authoritarian socialism. Taking cues from older currents like autonomy and even Proudhon's federalism, they envisioned a model that rejected both the rigid structures of the nation-state and the hierarchical tendencies of centralized governance. The *giellisti* of Cairo didn't dream of building another monolithic state, nor of a top-down bureaucracy run from above; rather, theirs was a vision for grassroots, transnational federalism aimed at reconstructing democracy from the bottom up.

This concern with democracy was not fully articulated in a single manifesto or ideological treatise. Unlike the communists, who had a clear party structure, or even the Ventotene federalists, who produced a founding text, GL Egypt operated more like a *think tank*—intellectually bold, but pragmatically constrained by the limits imposed by British authorities. Their strength lay in their ability to function as an incubator for new ideas as opposed to a rigid political movement. This explains both their resilience and their ultimate political weakness: they were successful as thinkers, but not as political change-makers.

Nevertheless, their work anticipated many of the postwar debates on European integration and social democracy, even when their ideas were overshadowed by the geopolitics of the Cold War. The Italian resistance movement, to which they had contributed from afar, ultimately managed to produce a democratic republic. It did not, however, achieve the radical transformation the *giellisti* in Cairo had hoped for. The legacy of Vittorelli and his comrades endures as a testament to the impossibility of reducing antifascism and its ideological output to simple theoretical or geographical frameworks. In the early 1940s, Egypt became a space where diverse ideological currents, anti-colonial struggles, and transnational encounters converged, pushing their political imagination beyond the confines of Italy. From the cafés of Cairo to the prison camps of British North Africa, the members of Giustizia e Libertà Egypt articulated a vision of resistance that transcended national borders. This evolution sets the stage for the next chapter, where the

Swiss context becomes a crucial arena for rethinking Europe's future amidst the competing pressures of postwar reconstruction and Cold War alignments. The tension between nationalism, democracy, and international solidarity, central to GL's work in Cairo, would find new expressions and challenges in this radically different setting.

Chapter Four–Convergence and Collision: Switzerland at the Crossroads of Federalism (1941-1947)

I – Introduction

The "Third Force" milieu did not emerge fully formed but was instead shaped through the contingencies of war, exile, and political reinvention. As seen in the previous chapter, Egypt provided a setting where the discursive imagination of Giustizia e Libertà in the 1930s was both absorbed and reinterpreted. Switzerland, too, became a crucial site where "Third Force" socialists, drawing on similar traditions, sought to articulate a language of federalism suited to the realities of total war and its uncertain aftermath. Here again, resistance was military and clandestine, and simultaneously intellectual and strategic: federalism, socialism, and democracy had to be reimagined not as abstract ideals but as practical alternatives to fascism and the emerging polarization of the Cold War.[414]

During the Second World War, Switzerland became both an observatory and a battleground of political ideas, a liminal space where exiled antifascists of all persuasions debated how to defeat dictatorship and, most importantly, what should replace it. For antifascist movements chased and persecuted across Europe, Switzerland functioned both as a site of material refuge and as an intellectual terrain upon which competing genealogies of political thought—socialist, liberal, and federalist—converged, collided, and recombined. For Italian exiles in particular, Switzerland held a dual significance: as a transhistorical space of asylum, evoking the Risorgimento migrations of Mazzini, Cattaneo, and Felice Orsini, and as a locus where the federalist aspirations of an earlier epoch could be reinterpreted in light of successful federalist practices.[415]

The broader history of political exile—spanning from Lenin to Bakunin and Luxemburg, as well as the clandestine circles of the present—formed the larger background against which the

[414] Cf. Prezioso, "Antifascism", 556-7.

[415] On the experiences and significance of Switzerland for Risorgimento exiles, see Fabrizio Panzera, "Gli esuli italiani nelle città svizzere tra Otto e Novecento," in *Città e pensiero politico italiano dal Risorgimento alla Repubblica,* ed. Robertino Ghiringhelli (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2006), 321–323; Sandro Fontana, "Carlo Cattaneo e l'Europa," in *Cattaneo e Garibaldi: federalismo e Mezzogiorno,* eds. Assunta Trova and Giuseppe Zichi (Rome: Carocci, 2004), 167–192; Elisa Signori, "Mazzini in Svizzera," in *Mazzini, vita, avventure e pensiero di un italiano europeo,* ed. Giuseppe Monsagrati and Anna Villari (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 2012), 39–47; Fernanda Gallo, "The United States of Europe" and Idem, "The Risorgimento," in *Hegel and Italian Political Thought*, 109–146.

Italian heretics of socialism reformulated the meaning of resistance, sovereignty, and European unity. Prior to and during the First World War, Switzerland had been a crucial hub for political exiles, particularly Russian revolutionaries and socialist dissidents.[416] The Zimmerwald Conference of 1915 epitomized its role as a center of socialist internationalism, positioning Switzerland at the heart of transnational revolutionary networks. Moreover, discussions at Zimmerwald were permeated by the idea of a federated Europe, echoing debates among socialists of various nationalities and currents during the first year of the war.[417] This role, however, shifted dramatically after 1917, when the Russian revolutionaries departed to carry out the October Revolution, symbolizing the end of Switzerland's prominence in socialist agitation. In the postwar period, Switzerland transformed into a focal point of liberal internationalism, as Glenda Sluga has shown.[418] Geneva's emergence as the headquarters of the League of Nations reoriented the country's international identity toward global governance structures that often obscured earlier radical traditions.

At the same time, the history of socialism in Switzerland did not simply vanish; during the Second World War, socialist federalists found themselves navigating this altered landscape, in which their vision of a democratic, supranational federalism stood in tension with the liberal institutionalism now dominant. As the Italian novelist and socialist politician Ignazio Silone later recalled, wartime Switzerland was once again "a meeting point for militants of the clandestine movements," illustrating the coexistence—and often the friction—between revolutionary activism and establishment diplomacy. These overlapping but distinct political currents highlight Switzerland's complex international role, where competing visions of federalism and internationalism continued to evolve in parallel.[419]

This chapter examines how the Swiss environment shaped plans for postwar Europe by focusing on two key groups: the Centro Estero (Foreign Center) of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), which Silone helped lead, and the European Federalist Movement (MFE) of Altiero Spinelli and Ernesto Rossi. Both articulated projects aimed at superseding the nation-state and reconstituting

[416] See Michael Brie, *Rediscovering Lenin: Dialectics of Revolution and Metaphysics of Domination* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 4-5.
[417] Corrado Malandrino, *Fermenti europeisti e federalisti tra guerra mondiale e primo dopoguerra*, *Il Politico* 53, no. 3 (147) (luglio–settembre 1988): 483–510, at 487.
[418] See especially Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), chap. 2, "Imagine Geneva, Between the Wars," 39–65.
[419] Ignazio Silone, "Nel bagaglio degli esuli," in Giuseppe Faravelli et al., eds., *Esperienze e studi socialisti in onore di Ugo Guido Mondolfo* (Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1957), 301–15.

European sovereignty on federal lines. The first task of this chapter is thus to reconstruct the political and rhetorical strategies through which these groups formulated their visions of federation. How did their ideas evolve, and how did the specific conditions of Swiss exile—its networks of antifascist activism, its transnational intellectual exchanges, and its peculiar legal and political constraints—shape the language in which their aspirations were conceived and expressed? To what extent did their arguments respond to the exigencies of exile itself?

Beyond tracing this evolution, this chapter also seeks to assess the validity of Silone's claim that, in Switzerland, "political affinities easily prevailed over ideological differences." Rather than taking this assertion at face value, I argue that Swiss exile constituted a space of both convergence and contestation, where competing traditions of liberal-socialist and socialist federalism were not merely refined but reconfigured in response to the conditions of exile itself. The ideas explored in previous chapters, rooted in the interwar elaborations of Giustizia e Libertà and shaped in the secluded atmosphere of Ventotene, found in Switzerland an intellectual setting in which they could reach full theoretical maturity. However, this very process of refinement led the two groups down distinct ideological paths, giving rise to two adjacent but not easily reconcilable traditions of federalism, which came to be described as "Proudhonian" and "Hamiltonian," and which tended to collide after the war. As mentioned in the introduction, scholars of federalism tend to bundle together different left-wing movements that espoused federalism in their wartime programs, giving the impression of a unified political sensibility. In reality, however, federalism meant different things to different groups, rendering collaboration a precarious effort.[420] Seen in this light, the distinct "groupness" of the MFE and the Foreign Center serves as a compass, orienting us toward a deeper understanding of how competing interpretations of federalism emerged in exile and later shaped the contours of postwar federalist politics.

Silone's Centro Estero, building on the legacy of Andrea Caffi and Silvio Trentin, developed a decentralized, bottom-up approach to federalism, emphasizing the primacy of local and regional autonomies. This vision was also informed by his *"Meridionalist*" perspective, akin

[420] For a distinction between the two schools, see Pinder, ""Fédéralistes Hamiltoniens et Proudhoniens": 112. The idea of a distinct *théorie proudhonnienne* of federalism has existed at least since the 1930s, as discussed in Yves Simon, "Note sur le fédéralisme proudhonien," *Esprit* 5, no. 55 (April 1, 1937): 53–65. The concept was later systematized by Bernard Voyenne in *Histoire de l'idée fédéraliste*, particularly in vol. 3, *Les lignées proudhoniennes* (Paris: Presses d'Europe, 1973). For a discussion of Hamiltonian federalism, see Christophe Parent, "The Philosophical Foundations of Federalism," in *Comparative Federalism: Federalism and Internal Conflicts*, ed. F. Mathieu, D. Guénette, and A.-G. Gagnon (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024).

to that elaborated by Carlo Levi, as discussed in the preceding chapter. Meanwhile, Rossi and Spinelli's Movimento Federalista Europeo advanced a more centralized model, envisioning a strong federal state capable of curbing the nationalist rivalries that had fueled war. Despite these differences, they remained engaged in dialogue and cooperation. What exile in Switzerland had rendered possible was a moment of enforced proximity in which two otherwise divergent traditions of federalism were compelled to articulate their visions in relation to one another. The intellectual pressures of war and displacement did not resolve their differences. Conversely, they ensured that both groups sharpened their respective projects while borrowing elements from each other. In this way, exile did not erase ideological divisions but forced both movements into a shared space of innovation, where practical imperatives drove them toward a synthesis not of principles, but of action, informing federalist mobilization in the postwar order. For this reason, this chapter also follows the paths of these two groups as they returned to Italy at the end of the conflict, where the ideas forged in exile would be tested in the realities of reconstruction.

The case of Italian political émigrés operating in Switzerland also offers valuable insight into the transnational dimensions of antifascism during the war and the broader significance of political exile. In the key centers of Lugano, Zurich, and Geneva, different generations of antifascists from across Europe found themselves working together, often for the first time. The motivations that had led them to the radical choice of uncompromising opposition to dictatorship, despite the grave risks to their safety, varied significantly. So too did their political ideas and visions for the future. Alongside the temporal divide that separated older and newer waves of political emigration, an ideological fault line emerged, at once keeping some groups apart and fostering unexpected alliances that cut across both political traditions and national boundaries. However, while historians and political scientists have increasingly emphasized the transnational and transtemporal nature of fascism as a historical and political phenomenon, the same level of attention has not been devoted to the complexity and breadth of the antifascist experience beyond the national framework during the war.[421] The intricate networks of solidarity, debate, and

[421] See, among many recent works, Federico Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism: Ideology, Violence, and the Sacred in Argentina and Italy, 1919–1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Arnd Bauerkämper and Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, eds., *Fascism without Borders: Transnational Connections and Cooperation between Movements and Regimes in Europe from 1918 to 1945* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017); Christian Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler: The Forging of the Fascist Alliance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); Jorge Dagnino, Matthew Feldman, and Paul Stocker, eds., *The 'New Man' in Radical Right Ideology and Practice, 1919–45* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019). For a discussion on the applicability of fascism to current political events, see Federico Finchelstein, *A Brief History of Fascist Lies* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2020); Ruth Ben-Ghiat,

ideological cross-fertilization that defined wartime antifascist exile remain an underexplored dimension of twentieth-century political history.[422]

Groups such as the MFE and the Socialist Foreign Center were determined to seize the opportunity that the fall of the Nazi-Fascist regimes would provide. Their ultimate goal was to bring about a "democratic revolution" (*rivoluzione democratica*) in Europe through the federalist option while preventing a return to the prewar era of ineffective parliamentarianism.[423] With this objective in mind, Switzerland became a crucible of political realignment, as socialist factions—revolutionary, democratic, and liberal—experimented with new forms of association that carried profound implications for both the material struggles and ideological contestations of the Resistance.

In the closing phase of the war, a constellation of "Third Force" leftists emerged in Switzerland both as a response to and a product of the fragmentation of traditional socialist parties across Western Europe. The idioms of their international—and internationalist—imaginary, first forged in the ideological battles of the 1930s, did not merely gesture toward federalism as a pragmatic solution but positioned it as the constitutive principle of a new continental democratic order. In seeking to rearticulate the very terms of European political life, they aimed to lay the foundation for an imminent moment of constitutional creation, driven by the will to build a federal state as the most suitable instrument for European civilization today. In their vision, the dissolution of older institutions created space for new configurations of sovereignty and authority, as well as for a redistribution of power and resources that would fundamentally reshape society.

Swiss exile marked a moment of openness, exchange, and transformation—a period in which federalist ideas crossed ideological boundaries and acquired new dimensions through intellectual cross-fertilization. Switzerland itself represented parallel and often incompatible ideological strands, in which socialist and liberal languages coexisted but never fully merged. The federalist movement made its strongest impact during this period, shaping broader political debates

Strongmen: Mussolini to the Present (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2020); Enzo Traverso, *The New Faces of Fascism: Populism and the Far Right* (London–New York: Verso, 2019).

[422] Notable exceptions include the special issue of *Contemporary European History* curated by Hugo García, "Transnational Anti-Fascism: Agents, Networks, Circulations," *Contemporary European History* 25, no. 4 (November 2016): 563–72, and *Anti-Fascism in a Global Perspective: Transnational Networks, Exile Communities, and Radical Internationalism*, edited by Kasper Braskén, Nigel Copsey, and David J. Featherstone (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2021).

[423] Ignazio Silone, "Per la Federazione Europea: Compiti e responsabilità dei socialisti inglesi," *L'Avvenire dei Lavoratori*, May 30, 1944.

while also prompting its key figures to rethink their own positions. Life in exile—unmoored from the nation-state—pushed them to develop new political interpretations grounded in the transnational realities they inhabited. It was in this context that some of the most significant new publications and theoretical interventions emerged, shaped by the sustained engagement between socialist federalists of different persuasions. Far from a time of mere consolidation, Swiss exile represented the movement's most dynamic and generative phase, when competing visions of European federalism were redefined in ways that would reverberate well beyond the war years.

This chapter is structured in three main sections. First, it traces the development and evolution of Silone's Centro Estero and the *Europa Socialista* group, examining their organizational strategies and political trajectory. Next, it follows the parallel path of the MFE, highlighting its distinct approach to federalist activism. Finally, I analyze the theoretical contributions of both groups, assessing how their experiences in Swiss exile shaped competing visions of European federalism, sovereignty, and democracy in the postwar order.

II – Searching for a Third Way: Ignazio Silone and the Italian Socialist Party's Foreign Office in Zurich (1941 - 1944)

The chaos unleashed by the outbreak of war brought about a reorganization of the Italian Socialist Party. After the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in August 1939—which the Communists accepted uncritically—the PSI's Central Committee forced Pietro Nenni to step down as party leader and relinquish his role as director of its official newspaper, *L'Avanti!*. Nenni had been the chief architect of the 1934 Pact of Unity of Action with the Communist Party, a move that had long been met with resistance from large sections of the PSI. His position had now become untenable, particularly as he continued to advocate for the formation of unified socialist-communist groups. As a result, the party's anti-Communist wing, led by Angelo Tasca and Giuseppe Saragat, was strengthened and formally promoted to the party secretariat. Under Tasca's leadership, the PSI adopted a stance that was openly hostile to Soviet communism and increasingly skeptical of the politics of the Popular Fronts.[424]

[424] See Giuseppe Tamburrano, "Survival in Defeat: Pietro Nenni," in di Scala, *Italian Socialism*, 68–69; and Alexander De Grand, "To Learn Nothing and to Forget Nothing: Italian Socialism and the Experience of Exile Politics, 1935–1945," *Contemporary European History* 14, no. 4 (November 2005): 544–45.

In the summer of 1940, following the debacle of the French army and the advance of the German offensive, the leadership of the PSI decided to dissolve its Paris headquarters. While Tasca, also a member of the SFIO, ultimately chose to join Marshal Pétain's collaborationist government, the leadership of the Party was transferred to the Socialist Federation of the South-West in Toulouse.[425] However, as political activity became increasingly dangerous for Italian refugees, even in Vichy-controlled territory, the Toulouse headquarters were also forced to close. Responsibility for the party's legal and organizational continuity then fell to the Swiss-Italian Socialist Federation. Olindo Gorni, a socialist and agronomist who had emigrated to Geneva in 1924, proposed the creation of a special commission—the Foreign Center—under the leadership of Ignazio Silone. Its purpose was to coordinate the political activities of Italian Socialist refugees and to guide and support the clandestine groups operating inside of Italy.[426]

The choice of Silone was influenced by considerations of location, political orientation, and cultural prestige. By that time, he had already been living in Zurich for several years. A former prominent member of the Italian Communist Party throughout the 1920s, he was expelled in 1931 for his criticism of Stalin's authoritarian methods—a fate that Altiero Spinelli would share a few years later. Wanted by the Fascist political police and without political backing, he fled to Switzerland, where he embarked on a new chapter of his life. In exile, stripped of party ties yet firmly rooted in his convictions, Silone transformed from a disciplined cadre into an independent thinker—one whose words would ultimately wield more power than any political position could grant him.[427]

During his early years in Swiss exile, Silone successfully reinvented himself as a writer while continuing to intervene as a political commentator. His first two novels, *Fontamara* (1933) and *Bread and Wine* (1936), achieved both critical and commercial success, cementing his cultural

[425] Giovanni Faraboli, a trade unionist with reformist beliefs, led the Federation of the South-West and firmly advocated for the Socialist Party's autonomy from the Communists. See Ferdinando Leonzio, *Segretari e leader del socialismo italiano* (Catania: ZeroBook, 2017), 85, 400. On Angelo Tasca, see especially Alexander De Grand, *Angelo Tasca: Un politico scomodo* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1985); and idem, *In Stalin's Shadow: Angelo Tasca and the Crisis of the Left in Italy and France, 1910–1945* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1986).

[426] See Corrado Malandrino, *Socialismo e libertà: Autonomie, federalismo, Europa da Rosselli a Silone* (Milano: F. Angeli, 1990), 190.

[427] Biographical works on Ignazio Silone remain relatively scarce. Notable studies in Italian include Vittoriano Esposito, *Ignazio Silone: la vita, le opere, il pensiero* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Urbe, 1985); Francesco De Core and Ottorino Gurgo, *Silone: l'avventura di un uomo libero* (Venice: Marsilio, 1998); and Bruno Falcetto's biographical introduction to *Ignazio Silone. Romanzi e Saggi* (Milan: Mondadori, 1998–1999). The only full-length biography in English is Pugliese's *Bitter Spring*.

prestige within antifascist and literary circles. Both works showcased the plight of the rural poor of southern Italy, thrusting the issue of *Meridionalismo* (southernism) onto the international stage and portraying rebellion not as a matter of party allegiance but as an act of moral conscience.[428] For an exiled militant cast out from the political arena, redemption did not come through ideology but through literature—an extraordinary reversal, especially considering the extreme precarity of Silone's arrival in Switzerland.[429]

Silone was welcomed into Zurich's engagé intelligentsia, which gathered around figures such as Aline Valangin—a psychologist, pianist, and writer—the bookshop of publisher Emil Oprecht, the Café Odeon, and the private library of the 'Museum Society.' His time in Swiss exile (1931–1944) became a period of extensive transnational networking and intense literary productivity. Among the many intellectuals he befriended were Bernard von Brentano, Bertolt Brecht, Thomas Mann, and Robert Musil. By 1933, he was living in the home of Marcel Fleischmann, a wealthy art dealer who provided refuge and support to exiled artists, further securing his position within Europe's antifascist cultural milieu.[430]

Silone agreed to run the Foreign Office on the understanding that his political outlook would inform its activities. He thus opposed any fusion with the Communists and drafted a new program. The document, titled *Tesi del Terzo Fronte* (Theses of the Third Front), was later published on August 1, 1942, in the newspaper of the Italian Socialists in Zurich, *L'Avvenire del Lavoratore* (The Future of the Worker), and stands as the manifesto of Silone's federalist outlook. He called for the formation of a "popular front" in each country, driven by spontaneous domestic forces, to defeat fascism autonomously without relying on foreign intervention. In the aftermath of the war, this would lead to the creation of a Europe of the peoples founded on a socialist basis.[431]

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[428] *Meridionalismo* refers to the body of political, economic, and intellectual thought addressing the socioeconomic disparities between northern and southern Italy. On the liberal democratic left, Gaetano Salvemini especially championed *meridionalismo*, analyzing the structural inequalities and systemic neglect that hindered southern Italy's development within the national framework. See Arturo Colombo, "Gaetano Salvemini fra meridionalismo e federalismo," *Il Politico* 79, no. 1 (2014): 123–36.

[429] For an exhaustive overview of Silone's novelistic production, see Luce D'Eramo, *Ignazio Silone* (Rimini: Editori Riminesi Associati, 1994).

[430] During the 1930s, Zurich became a transnational center for refugees from Italy, Spain, Germany, and Russia. Particularly after 1933, the diaspora of German anti-Nazis flooded Switzerland. See Holmes, *Ignazio Silone in Exile* and Sergio Soave, *Senza tradirsi, senza tradire: Silone e Tasca, dal comunismo al socialismo cristiano* (Turin: Nino Aragno Editore, 2005), 255–301.

[431] See Ignazio Silone, "Terzo Fronte," *L'Avvenire del Lavoratore*, August 1, 1942; later reprinted in *L'Avvenire dei Lavoratori* as "I socialisti italiani, la guerra e la pace," March 15, 1944. The entire collection of *L'Avvenire dei Lavoratori* has been republished by Stefano Merli and Giulio Polotti in *L'Avvenire dei lavoratori (Zurigo-Lugano, 1944-1945)* (Milan: Istituto Europeo di Studi Sociali, 1992).

As Silone explained in a 1941 speech in Zurich—later reported by the Swiss journalist and Europeanist François Bondy in *The New Republic*—the "Third Front" was more than just a strategic option. It entailed fostering a domestic front of popular civil disobedience alongside the military efforts of the American and Soviet armies. More fundamentally, however, it was a fight to preserve the "vestiges of Christianity, humanism, and democracy on which we can later build and rebuild."[432] For Silone, the struggle between fascism and liberty was not merely a military contest; at stake was the very spiritual and cultural soul of Europe, to be safeguarded through a third independent bloc beyond the polarities of fascism and communism.[433]

In December 1942, Swiss authorities arrested Silone, Gorni, and other members of the Foreign Center under accusations of engaging in communist and anarchist activities. For political refugees, it was illegal to engage in politics, as the Swiss were afraid of retaliation from other countries that would compromise their neutrality. The immediate cause was the confiscation of six thousand copies of a *Manifesto for Civil Disobedience* issued by the group, and advocating the cause of the Third Front and concluding with the rallying cry: "Long live Socialist Italy! Long live the United States of Europe!".[434] Silone was initially threatened with deportation, but his sentence was later commuted to internment. While under arrest, Silone was forced to draft a confession admitting his involvement with the socialists. In this document, he first employed the term *liberal-socialism*, borrowing from Carlo Rosselli, to define his political stance. His *Memoir from a Swiss Prison* (1942) emerged from this period, encapsulating his reflections on democratic socialism, political persecution, and the need for a humanist alternative to both fascism and communism.[435]

Silone's arrest placed him under strict surveillance by Swiss authorities, restricting his ability to engage in political activities openly. Nevertheless, he remained active in anti-fascist intellectual circles and maintained contact with Italian and European resistance networks. Although Swiss authorities were aware of his activities, his international reputation and literary standing afforded him a degree of protection. Silone's partner, in particular, the Irish journalist Darina Laracy, made several trips to Bern to meet with Allen Dulles of the OSS (Office of Strategic

[432] A position he shared with Angelo Tasca, as evidenced by their correspondence. Cf. Angelo Tasca to Ignazio Silone, March 31, 1940, *Fonds Ignazio Silone* (IS), Folder 5, no. 59, Fondazione di Studi Storici "Filippo Turati" (henceforth FSSFT), Florence.
[433] Ignazio Silone, "The Things I Stand For," *The New Republic*, November 2, 1942.
[434] "Manifesto per la disobbedienza civile," *Il Terzo Fronte. Organo del Partito Socialista Italiano*, December 1, 1942. Extracts appeared in *Socialist Commentary* as "A Call for Civil Disobedience: Manifesto of the Italian Socialist Party."
[435] Ignazio Silone, "Memoriale dal Carcere Svizzero," now in Id., *Romanzi e Saggi*, 1392–1412.

Services) to coordinate potential antifascist activities from Switzerland. As Darina would later recall, she took on the role of a 'courier' for the Foreign Center, given Silone's inability to travel. Like many other women involved in clandestine activities, she saw this task as her "personal contribution to the antifascist struggle." However, much like Ursula Spinelli and Ada Rossi, Darina's role extended beyond political liaison work; she also played a key part in shaping Silone's intellectual development and expanding his network of contacts. The invocation of civil disobedience permeating Silone's *Manifesto* was, for example, borrowed by Darina from Nehru's autobiography.[436]

The fall of Mussolini's regime in July 1943, followed by the German occupation of Italy in September, heightened the urgency for anti-fascist exiles in Switzerland. Dulles went so far as to speculate that Silone could lead a government-in-exile from Tripoli, an idea Silone refused. Mostly, the shifting landscape facilitated broader alliances among socialists, liberals, and federalists, fostering new strategic collaborations.

As we will see, Rossi and, later, Spinelli managed to flee Ventotene and reach Switzerland around this time, where they sought to build the transnational network of federalists they had first envisioned from the isolation of the *confino*. Silone provided them with their first important contact with the political milieu in the German-speaking canton of Zurich and quickly joined their European Federalist Movement (MFE). Thus, in the fall of 1943, a long period of collaboration between Silone and the MFE began—one that would extend well beyond the end of the war. However, from the outset, this collaboration was marked by a critical stance. Silone's federalist ideas were more distinctly socialist than those of Rossi and Spinelli. They also reflected his unorthodox political outlook. Silone aspired to something broader and deeper than political transformation: a broader spiritual regeneration of the continent, rooted in a religious ethos, as seen in his *Theses*. Spinelli later recalled that he "sensed in Silone, alongside his political solidarity, a […] diffidence towards a view of federalism, which he considered too political and therefore too limited." However, at this stage, their idiosyncrasies remained confined to the realm of collaborative dialogue.[437]

[436] See Michele Dorigatti and Maffino Maghenzani, *Darina Laracy Silone. Colloqui* (Zevio: Perosini Editore, 2005), 54–63.
[437] Spinelli, *Come Ho Tentato,* 63. "Percepivo in Silone, parallela alla solidarietà politica, una sorda diffidenza verso una visione del federalismo secondo lui troppo politica e perciò troppo povera." (my trans.)

Around the same time, Silvio Trentin was organizing the Libérer et Fédérer (LF) group in Toulouse. LF was an anomaly within the French Résistance—it was the only movement that combined the fight against the Germans and the Vichy regime with a vision for postwar reconstruction that challenged the centralized model of republican France. Trentin brought to LF the legacy of integral federalism, inspired by Proudhon, which had found fertile ground in Giustizia e Libertà during the 1930s.[438] Before him, Andrea Caffi had already attempted to introduce the Proudhonian line into the PSI with his so-called *Tesi di Tolosa* (Toulouse Theses) of January 1941.[439] Silone, for his part, was perhaps less committed to the federalist dogmatism of the Ventotene group than to ensuring that this faction of socialism could overtake the pro-communist one inside the PSI.

The arrival of Rossi and Spinelli in Switzerland coincided with the peak of Silone's federalist propaganda efforts at the Foreign Center. In the summer of 1943, the clandestine PSI group in Rome—led by Eugenio Colorni, who had also departed from Ventotene—merged with Lelio Basso's Movement of Proletarian Unity (MUP) and a faction of young socialists operating in the city to form the Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity (PSIUP). Pietro Nenni became its secretary, though the debate over unity of action with the Communist Party was postponed until after the war. Colorni's federalist ideas had the potential to bring about a thorough renewal of Italian socialism, but only if Nenni's pro-communist wing could be held at bay.

From Zurich, Silone's Foreign Center sought to influence the debate on the Party's orientation, primarily through *L'Avvenire dei Lavoratori* (*The Future of the Workers*)—the new name of the long-standing journal of Italian socialist expatriates in Switzerland, of which Silone had become editor. He explicitly adopted the slogan "to liberate and to federate" from Trentin's *Libérer et Fédérer* and, from the pages of *L'Avvenire*, presented federalism as the culmination of a victorious liberation movement and the most suitable form of political and administrative self-government. "To liberate and to federate will be the rallying cry of the next European revolution."[440]

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[438] On Trentin, see Rosengarten, *Silvio Trentin,* and Paul Arrighi, *Silvio Trentin : un européen en Résistance, 1919-1943*, Portet-sur-Garonne : Loubatières, 2007.

[439] See Ariane Landuyt, *Un tentativo di rinnovamento del socialismo italiano: Silone e il Centro Estero di Zurigo*, in *L'emigrazione socialista nella lotta contro il fascismo (1926–1939)*, edited by Gaetano Arfé et al. (Florence: Sansoni, 1982), 71–104.

[440] Ignazio Silone, 'Federalismo e Socialismo', in *L'Avvenire dei Lavoratori*, June 30, 1944. "[…] il federalismo è il coronamento di un vittorioso moto liberatore e rappresenta la forma più adeguata di autogoverno politico e amministrativo. Liberare e federare sarà la parola d'ordine della prossima rivoluzione europea." (My trans.)

L'Avvenire became the bullhorn for the kind of "integral federalism," primarily inspired by Proudhon, as touched on earlier. Articles by Italians associated with the Foreign Center, such as Olindo Gorni and Giuseppe Faravelli, sought to piece together ideas on the supranational federation of peoples and proposals for intranational self-government. Federalism, they argued, must be established both within each state and among states; European integration could not rest on a precarious alliance of sovereign nations.[441]

Simultaneously, Silone used *L'Avvenire* to promote new ideas emerging from Britain, where the Federal Union movement, just before the outbreak of the war, had invigorated the federalist debate. The journal prominently featured Labour-affiliated thinkers, particularly Barbara Wootton, whose *Socialism and Federation* was published in translation by the Ventotene group.[442] However, *L'Avvenire* gave even greater prominence to the ideas of Harold J. Laski and G. D. H. Cole, who, in Silone's words, were supplanting Karl Kautsky as the central figures of renewal in democratic socialism.[443] Their vision, shaped by the experience of Guild socialism, emphasized internal decentralization as an essential foundation for a future federation. This aligned closely with *L'Avvenire*'s outlook and was perceived as part of a broader effort to steer European socialism in a less statist direction.

Following the liberation of Rome in June 1944, however, it became clear that the future of Italian politics would be determined on the ground, compelling Silone to return after fifteen years of exile. With the backing of the Allied authorities and support from the PSI's leadership, Silone and Darina were flown to Naples on an American military plane in October. His return was motivated by a desire to translate the federalist and democratic ideas he had developed during his Swiss exile into concrete political action, particularly in the reconstruction of Italy's socialist movement. Upon his arrival, he joined the leadership of the PSI and began editing the roman edition of its newspaper, *L'Avanti!*, positioning himself as a mediator between the party's diverging factions while advocating for a more Europeanist and liberal-democratic direction. After the liberation of the country in the spring of 1945, he was elected to the Constituent Assembly and,

[441] See Eugenio Colorni, "Per gli Stati Uniti d'Europa," *L'Avvenire dei Lavoratori*, February 11, 1944; Alessandro Levi, "Il pensiero federalista di Carlo Cattaneo," *L'Avvenire dei Lavoratori*, August 31, 1944. See also Olindo Gorni's document, "I socialisti italiani vogliono un regime pienamente democratico," January 1942, now in Merli and Polotti, *L'Avvenire*, 42–46.
[442] Barbara Wootton, *Socialismo e Federazione* (Lugano: Nuove Edizioni di Capolago, 1944).
[443] Ignazio Silone, "Problemi attuali del socialismo europeo," *L'Avanti!*, November 5, 1944 (Rome).

in 1946, launched *Europa Socialista* (*Socialist Europe*), which functioned both as a journal and as a distinct current within the Italian Socialist Party.

The idea of a fully-fledged Europeanist journal had long been in gestation, as evidenced by his exchanges with Nicola Chiaromonte in the late 1930s, in which they discussed—but never realized—the creation of a journal titled *Europa*.[444] As a political grouping, *Europa Socialista* advocated for a socialist federalist vision, emphasizing decentralization, European integration, and a clear break from communist influence. Like its predecessor, *L'Avvenire dei Lavoratori*, the journal sought to expand the intellectual horizons of Italian socialism by publishing a wide range of articles and essays from leading European leftist thinkers, including Harold Laski and Georges Gurvitch.

On a more strategic political level, the *Europa Socialista* groups adopted a pragmatic yet ambitious approach, inspired by the evolving dynamics of international politics. Many socialist parties, from France and Belgium to the Netherlands and Sweden, were now part of the coalitions leading their respective governments. It was therefore essential to unite the forces of European socialism, now in a position of power, under the banner of a new International and to work toward the continent's political unification. With the old canons of maximalism and revisionism fading into relative oblivion, *Europa Socialista* declared that "all the socialist parties are fighting today for the conquest of the democratic State and the immediate implementation of radical structural changes."[445] The group's reading of the situation was perhaps overly optimistic, but not unfounded.

Silone was now placing his bets on the British Labour Party, which, in the early postwar period, included many high-profile members interested in "Third Force" ideas and the possibility of a Europeanist effort to maintain a degree of independence from both the US and Russia. These stirrings of independent leftism culminated in the publication of the *Keep Left* pamphlet in early 1947 by Richard Crossman and a group of Labour backbenchers, advocating that the Attlee government pursue a third way between the two superpowers. Meanwhile, the party's left wing, led by Brockway in collaboration with his comrade Pivert from the French SFIO, was working to

[444] Nicola Chiaromonte to Ignazio Silone, January 30, 1936, FSSFT/IS/2/4.
[445] Ignazio Silone, "L'Internazionale Socialista," *Europa Socialista* 1, no. 1 (March 1, 1946). "[…] tutti i partiti socialisti lottano oggi per la conquista dello Stato democratico e l'attuazione immediata di radicali cambiamenti di struttura." (my trans.)

establish the Movement for the Socialist United States of Europe, an initiative aimed at regrouping socialist forces across the continent.[446]

From the pages of *Europa Socialista*, Silone welcomed the agreement reached between the main socialist parties of Europe on the path toward reconstituting the Socialist International. On May 15, 1946, the British Labour Party invited the PSIUP in London, along with representatives from France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, and Switzerland, to establish an International Liaison Committee uniting socialist parties across different countries. This committee was tasked with convening and organizing a World Congress no later than 1947. Silone hoped that, now that socialist parties across Europe shared a common democratic outlook, securing control of the state and implementing radical structural reforms would be within reach. He saw the sidelining of maximalist and pro-communist factions as a necessary step toward future European integration.[447]

Silone and the *Europa Socialista* group thus sought to unify the fragmented socialist forces across Europe under a common platform that prioritized democratic renewal and national sovereignty, free from the constraints of both emerging Cold War alignments and entrenched conservative interests. Their vision rested on the conviction that Italian socialism must break away from the dual pressures of great-power politics and the Church's historical alliance with economic oligarchies. To this end, Silone addressed the April 1947 congress of the Action Party (heir to Giustizia e Libertà) as "a comrade among other comrades," calling for the unification of all socialist forces in the country. This commitment to an independent, pragmatic socialism was reflected in Silone's belief that the intellectual and political leadership of the socialist movement had shifted westward—from the doctrinaire traditions of German Marxism to the more action-oriented approaches of British Labour, Scandinavian social democracy, and the socialist movements of France and Belgium.[448]

However, as discussed more thoroughly in Chapter V, Silone's hopes were soon dashed by the realities of socialist internecine strife. In 1947, the PSIUP split. The more communist-leaning

[446] See Benjamin Heckscher and Tommaso Milani, "Transwar Continuities: The Mouvement Socialiste pour les États-Unis d'Europe (MSEUE) and Socialist Networks in the Early Cold War," in Mélanie Torrent and Andrew J. Williams (eds.), *European Socialists Across Borders: Transnational Cooperation and Alternative Visions of Europe After 1945* (University of London Press, 2025), open access: https://read.uolpress.co.uk/read/european-socialists-across-borders/section/160264c2-4757-44c1-89d6-807609921bcf; and *The Labour Party and European Integration: A Biographical Approach*, edited by Matthew Broad and William King (Bristol University Press, forthcoming 2025).
[447] Ignazio Silone, "L'internazionale socialista," *Europa Socialista*, Year I, no. 1 (March 1, 1946); and "Partito in Formazione," *Europa Socialista*, Year II, no. 11 (January 1947).
[448] Ignazio Silone, "Le condizioni della rinascita," *Europa Socialista*, Year II, no. 8 (April 13, 1947).

faction, led by Pietro Nenni, became the Italian Socialist Party (PSI). The social-democratic current, led by Giuseppe Saragat and Giuseppe Faravelli, went on to form the Italian Democratic Socialist Party (PSDI). *Europa Socialista* chose not to align with either party but instead merged with other independent left-wing movements to establish the Unione dei Socialisti (Union of the Socialists, UdS). The UdS would further evolve into the Unitary Socialist Party (PSU), with Silone briefly serving as secretary. However, when the party was later absorbed into Saragat's pro-government, pro-NATO social-democratic faction, Silone decided to resign. Announcing his withdrawal from active political life, he declared his intention to pursue his struggle as an independent writer.[449]

In just a few years, the space for political action that had first opened for Silone during his years in vibrant atmosphere of the Swiss exile had significantly narrowed, both nationally and internationally. His hopes for socialist federalism had collided with the political, economic, and social complexities of a continent still grappling with the fallout of the war. The end of the conflict did not mark the "zero hour" he had envisioned; instead, the pressures of the Cold War and his inability to steer the PSIUP toward a clearly independent path led to a deep wave of disillusionment, further reinforcing his longstanding skepticism toward party politics.[450] As we will see, Silone remained active in Europeanist networks, particularly those linked to the European Federalist Movement and the Movement for the United Socialist States of Europe. However, his departure proved decisive for *Europa Socialista*, which, unable to sustain the loss of its most prominent figure, soon disbanded.

III – The European Federalist Movement in Switzerland (1943-1947)

Everything changed for the Ventotene group on the night of 24–25 July 1943, when Mussolini was forced to step down as Head of the Italian government following a vote of no confidence by the Grand Council of Fascism. Immediately afterward, King Victor Emmanuel III had him arrested and imprisoned in the Gran Sasso mountains in central Italy, marking the start of a confusing and unpredictable phase that lasted until the signing of the Armistice with the Allies by the new government of Marshal Badoglio on 8 September. This was soon followed by the

[449] Ignazio Silone, interview by Hal Draper, "My Political Faith," *Labor Action* 20, no. 5 (1949): 6–7.
[450] Ignazio Silone, "Ideologie e politica," *Mercurio*, Year II, no. 6 (6 February 1945).

German military occupation of northern Italy and the establishment of a puppet regime: the Repubblica Sociale Italiana (RSI), headed once again by Mussolini.[451]

For Altiero Spinelli and the other detainees in Ventotene, Mussolini's fall finally opened the door to their release. For Ernesto Rossi, however, it was a lifesaver. Along with two other members of Giustizia e Libertà, Riccardo Bauer and Vincenzo Calace, he was awaiting trial in Rome for an alleged bomb attack dating back to 1928. A guilty verdict would likely have meant execution. Rossi and Spinelli managed to reach Milan at the end of August to participate in the founding meeting of the Movimento Federalista Europeo (MFE) at the home of chemist and socialist activist Mario Alberto Rollier.[452]

One of the first decisions of the group was for Spinelli and Rossi to move to Switzerland, which was relatively easy to reach from Milan with the help of the socialist underground operating along the border.[453] Switzerland was chosen for practical reasons—but also for what it symbolised. Historically, Switzerland had been a safe haven for Italian political émigrés since the conspiratorial and revolutionary period of the Risorgimento. It carried weight as a symbol too, its successful federal structure serving as a model for the future organization of Europe. In Rossi's words, it was "a country organized in a federalist form, which could represent the organization of tomorrow's Europe in miniature."[454]

Moreover, following Mussolini's rise to power, opponents of the regime had sought refuge in Switzerland, as did German anti-Nazis after 1933. Rossi's former mentor, Luigi Einaudi, was now living in Basel, while Egidio Reale, a member of the Action Party and a committed Europeanist, resided in Geneva. The country's existing network of Italian political circles and associations would provide Rossi and Spinelli with logistical and financial support, as well as

[451] See Philip Morgan, *The Fall of Mussolini: Italy, the Italians, and the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[452] On Rollier, see Cinzia Rognoni-Vercelli, *Mario Alberto Rollier, un valdese federalista* (Milan: Edizioni Universitarie Jaca, 1991). The meeting was attended by 31 people. The majority of participants belonged to the socialist cadres of the Action Party and had entered politics in the 1930s within the ranks of the *Giustizia e Libertà* movement, including Leone Ginzburg, Vittorio Foa, Franco Venturi, and Manlio Rossi Doria. Representing the Socialist Party were Eugenio Colorni, Lisli Carini Basso (wife of Lelio Basso), and Luisa Villani Usellini (wife of Guglielmo Usellini).

[453] On the network of antifascists who organized the movement of people along the Italian-Swiss border, see the testimony of another socialist leader of *Giustizia e Libertà*, Leo Valiani, *Tutte le strade*, 104–108.

[454] Rossi's letter to Spinelli, February 10, 1945. See Rossi and Spinelli, *"Empirico" e "Pantagruel"*, 303. Luigi Einaudi also praised the Swiss model in a pamphlet written in 1943, *Di taluni insegnamenti della Svizzera nel momento presente*, later reissued in Luigi Einaudi, *La guerra e l'unità europea* (Milan: Edizioni di Comunità, 1948).

connections to the European Resistance.[455] Ignazio Silone also played an important early role in the early stages of the MFE in Switzerland. He arranged for the Zurich-based Christian-socialist journal *Der Aufbau* to publish MFE materials in German.[456] He also served as the key link between the MFE and French and German antifascists operating in Switzerland, as well as with the socialist Barbara Wootton of *Federal Union*.

Through Silone, Rossi and Spinelli also met François Bondy, a Swiss citizen of Austrian origin, and René Bertholet, a Swiss collaborator of the German Internationaler Sozialistischer Kampfbund (ISK), both of whom embraced the MFE wholeheartedly. Bertholet later linked the Italian federalists to the British branch of the ISK, the Socialist Vanguard Group, and its journal *Socialist Commentary*, edited in London by Mary Saran. Finally, Bondy and Egidio Reale established ties with two representatives of the French Mouvements Unis de Résistance (MUR) in Geneva: Jean-Marie Soutou of Free France and Jean Laloy. Soutou, the father of future historian Georges-Henri Soutou, was part of the editorial team of *Esprit* and a member of the Amitié Chrétienne group, formed during the war in Lyon and inspired by the ideas of the *Esprit* movement. Back in the 1930s, *Esprit* had been central in keeping the principles of integral federalism alive in Europe, albeit not always from a leftwing perspective.[457] After the war, several *Esprit* members—including its leading thinker, Alexandre Marc—would collaborate with Spinelli and Rossi in the creation of the European Union of Federalists.[458]

By November 1943, the MFE's presence in Switzerland was thus firmly established. Moreover, Rossi and Spinelli's long-standing ambition to forge transnational ties with Europe's federalists was beginning to materialize through the networks of the antifascist resistance. As evidenced by the individuals mentioned above, the first members and allies of the MFE in Switzerland came from a wide political range, spanning from left-leaning liberal sympathizers to committed socialist revolutionaries. Among them were also non-conformist intellectuals from the

[455] On the network of political, humanitarian, and labor associations of Italians in Switzerland, see Toni Ricciardi, *Associazionismo ed emigrazione: Storia delle Colonie Libere e degli italiani in Svizzera* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2013); and Cinzia Rognoni-Vercelli, "Europeismo e federalismo tra i fuorusciti antifascisti (Svizzera 1943–1945)," *Il Risorgimento* 53, no. 1 (2001): 5–32.

[456] On the work of Silone for *Der Aufbau*, and more in general for the Swiss socialist press, see Holmes, *Ignazio Silone*, 123–46.

[457] See Undine Ruge, in *Anti-liberal Europe*, 91–94, and Martin Conway, in the same volume, 183.

[458] On Soutou, see Georges-Henry Soutou, "Jean-Marie Soutou (1912–2003): Un diplomate atypique face à la construction européenne," in André Liebich and Basil Germond, eds., *Construire l'Europe. Mélanges en hommage à Pierre du Bois* (Geneva: Graduate Institute Publications, 2008), 113–24; Michel Winock, *Histoire politique de la revue Esprit, 1930–1950* (Paris: Seuil, 1975).

Esprit group such as Soutou, whose engagement stemmed from a personalist tradition that rejected both capitalist liberalism and Marxist materialism. Their presence underscored the MFE's capacity to attract individuals for whom federalism represented more than politics—it was a moral answer to Europe's civilizational collapse. This ideological diversity was facilitated by Rossi and Spinelli's more pragmatic approach, which prioritized federalism over socialism, opening the door for broader alliances.

The high point of Rossi and Spinelli's efforts was reached in Geneva, where the MFE organized a series of meetings at the home of Dutch Protestant pastor Willem Visser't Hooft between March and May 1944. [459] Before the outbreak of the war, Visser't Hooft had served as general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC). After relocating to Geneva, he played a crucial role in assisting refugees from Nazi Germany and maintaining communication between churches in occupied territories. As he later recalled in his *Memoirs*, Rossi and Spinelli had no difficulty enlisting his support, as their proposals aligned with "the thinking and planning we had done in the ecumenical movement." While they unanimously rejected Hitler's vision of European unification, they also viewed it as a challenge to articulate a more just and cooperative alternative.[460]

Visser 't Hooft regarded it as a matter of some consequence that, despite the absence of sustained contact before 1944, the various movements of the European Resistance independently arrived at the conviction that some form of federal union was imperative. In convening these meetings, they undertook not merely the repudiation of an imposed and spurious ideology but the affirmation of principles constitutive of a future European political order.[461] Bertholet, Bondy, Laloy, Ragaz, Reale, Rossi, Soutou, and Spinelli participated as representatives of their respective national parties and movements, seeking to establish a unifying force that would encompass the full spectrum of European antifascism.[462]

The meetings concluded with the establishment of a provisional liaison committee in Geneva, the Comité provisoire pour la fédération européenne, and the approval of a draft

[459] See Filippo Maria Giordano and Stefano Dell'Acqua, eds., *Die Welt war meine Gemeinde. Willem A. Visser't Hooft, A Theologian for Europe between Ecumenism and Federalism* (Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2014), 231–51.
[460] Willem Adolph Visser 't Hooft, *Memoirs* (London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), 177.
[461] Visser 't Hooft, *Memoirs*, 177.
[462] Rossi and Spinelli participated on behalf of the Italian Action Party, the Liberal Party, the Social-Christian Party and the Republican Party (See *L'Unità Europea* No. 4, Milan, and No. 5, Geneva).

manifesto, the *Déclaration des mouvements de Résistance et de libération européens*.[463] The declaration was then circulated for approval among resistance groups in as many countries as possible. It received several significant endorsements, though fewer than anticipated. The Socialist Vanguard Group, Libérer et Fédérer, and the editorial group of *Revue Libre* (*Franc-Tireur*) expressed their support, as did the Italian Action Party, along with the Liberal and Christian-Social parties.[464] The Mouvement de Libération Nationale of Lyon also approved the declaration.[465]

Rossi and Spinelli published the *Declaration* in French in their newly established journal, *L'Unità Europea* (European Unity), an enterprise that now assumed the dual role of forum and instrument in the pursuit of the federalist cause amid the volatile landscape of the Resistance. If the manifesto had laid the ideological foundations, the journal became the principal means by which their federalist vision might take root in a continent still in the process of defining its political future.[466] What made this moment so decisive was that political engagement remained unmoored from the constraints of established party structures. In this space of contingency, *L'Unità Europea* could function not merely as a vehicle for persuasion but as an intervention in the very process by which political futures were being imagined and contested.[467]

The French and Italian socialist parties, however, did not respond to the MFE's appeal. In a letter to Rodolfo Morandi, who had attended the MFE meetings as an "observer" for the PSIUP, Pietro Nenni stated that the movement's position on the role of the USSR in a federalist system that included capitalist powers remained unclear. For this reason, the PSI could not agree to join the committee.[468] Further complicating the situation, the MFE's key contact within the PSIUP in

[463] The Declaration was preceded by a preliminary draft declaration ('Declaration I'), a "short message of solidarity" prepared at the rendezvous of May 20. The Declaration (I) was sent to all the Resistance movements represented at the meeting along with Declaration (II), and a letter written by Spinelli, indicating the establishment of the *Comité Provisoire*, and asking for a statement of agreement. Both the Declarations and the accompanying letter are now available in Lipgens, *Documents*, pp. 674-682. An English version of the Declaration appeared on *Europe Speaks* (October 11, 1944), and on a volume edited by the Federal Union, *Resistance Speaks*, *United States of Europe*, Croydon, 1945.

[464] The letter of the SVG was published on *L'Unità Europea*, No. 6, September-October 1944, p.5.

[465] The Mouvement de Libération Nationale (MLN) was formed in February of 1944 to combine the MUR of the Southern Zone with three groups in the Northern Zone - Défense de la France, Résistance, and Lorraine. Many involved in the MLN would join the Democratic and Socialist Union of the Resistance (UDSR) after the war. See Wieviorka, *Histoire*, pp. 319-322.

[466] Rossi, writing under the alias *Empirico*, wrote to Spinelli (*Pantagruel*) in August 1944, "Maybe the war will be over in a month. Meanwhile, the official statements on the postwar international order are increasingly disastrous. We must therefore do everything to accelerate our work." Rossi and Spinelli, August, *"Empirico",* 170.

[467] See *L'Unità Europea: 1943-1945. Ristampa anastatica dell'Unità Europea clandestina* (Milan: Fondazione Europea Luciano Bolis, 1983).

[468] Pietro Nenni to Rodolfo Morandi, May 14, 1944. Cited in Rognoni Vercelli, 'Europeismo e federalismo', p. 27.

Italy, Eugenio Colorni, was shot and killed by members of the fascist Milizia in Rome at the end of May, just days before the city's liberation. It was a grim omen for a movement that had placed so much hope in the socialists.

Given the challenges in advancing their internationalist efforts, Altiero Spinelli and Guglielmo Usellini–a socialist intellectual and early member of the MFE–returned to Italy in the summer to join the Action Party and the PSIUP, respectively.[469] As the war neared its final stage, Spinelli became convinced that the federalist cause required maximum pressure on national parties. With Soutou back in France, only Rossi and Bondy remained in Geneva to keep the MFE afloat.[470]

The only promising development came from France, where members of the Mouvement de Libération Nationale (MLN) in Lyon had formed the Comité Français pour la Fédération Européenne (CFFE). The committee was led by the former communist André Ferrat, editor of Lyon Libre, alongside Albert Camus, working for Combat, and Gilbert Zaksas of Libérer et Fédérer.[471] The CFFE sent a declaration of the group to Geneva, along with a copy of the MLN's *Programme*, whose section on international policy was modeled after Spinelli's *Theses*.[472] This contact with the French Europeanists was of crucial importance to the MFE. It recognized that if the CFFE could spread its message inside the Maquis, it would have a far greater impact on European politics than a group of refugees in Switzerland or two Italian political parties could ever hope to achieve.

Spinelli saw in this group of the French Resistance the last opportunity for European federalists to influence the course of continental politics, as the freedom of action of the Resistance movements was rapidly diminishing. He reacted enthusiastically to the CFFE letter—signed by Jacques Baumel, André Ferrat, André Malraux, and Pascal Pia—inviting him to the first

[469] On Usellini, see C. R. Merlo, "Il contributo di Guglielmo Usellini," in *Europeismo e federalismo in Piemonte tra le due guerre mondiali e i Trattati di Roma (1957)*, edited by Sergio Pistone and Corrado Malandrino (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 1999), 235ff; Cinzia Rognoni Vercelli, ed., *Guglielmo Usellini. Un antifascista precursore dell'Europa unita (1906–1958)* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2007).
[470] Spinelli to Rossi, June 7, 1944. In Rossi and Spinelli, *"Empirico"*, pp. 114-121.
[471] The bibliography on the CFFE is rather scarce. An interesting contribution came from the Vice-president of the UEF France Jean-Francis Billion, 'Albert Camus et le Comité français pour la Fédération européenne', *Fédéchoses*, No. 151, March 2003, https://www.pressefederaliste.eu/Albert-Camus-et-le-Comite-francais-pour-la-Federation-europeenne .
[472] The Programme of the MLN appeared on *Europe Speaks*, October 11, 1944. The Déclaration du comité français pour la fédération européenne (juin 1944) is available on the website of the Centre virtuel de la connaissance sur l'Europe.

Conférence fédéraliste in Paris (22–25 March 1945). Without hesitation, he left Milan for Paris with his wife, Ursula Hirschmann, to assist in organizing the conference.[473]

The conference was a success in terms of attendance and culminated in the creation of the Comité international pour la fédération européenne (CIFE). For Spinelli, however, it also marked the realization that the "spirit of Yalta" was permeating French politics. The conference participants were too preoccupied with domestic concerns, and the work of the Comité soon stagnated.[474] Under the protection of the Allied powers, Charles De Gaulle was steering the forces of the *Résistance* toward the restoration of France's old state structures in an effort to reclaim its former grandeur. Only Camus's *Combat* opposed this resurgence of nationalism, but its voice remained isolated.[475] Disillusioned by the conference's outcome, Spinelli returned to Milan in the summer of 1945 before relocating to Rome, gradually distancing himself from the activities of the MFE. Rossi, too, withdrew from active politics, succumbing once again to one of his recurrent episodes of depression.

The new secretary, Umberto Campagnolo, kept the MFE alive and active between 1946 and early 1947, laying the groundwork for the emergence of the international grouping Union of European Federalists (UEF). Campagnolo attended a meeting in Basel with Europa Union leaders Léon van Vassenhove and Hans Bauer, where they agreed to establish an international liaison committee to coordinate the various European federalist movements. They also decided to convene a congress in Switzerland with other Europeanist groups to draft the statutes of the new organization.[476]

The congress took place in Hertenstein, near Lucerne, with 119 participants, including members of the Comité international pour la fédération européenne (CIFE), Union Fédérale

[473] The letter listed the invited participants, including members of the ISK, Mary Saran of the Socialist Vanguard Group (also representing Labour), Allan Flanders for the Trade Union Congress, André Philip and Daniel Mayer of the SFIO, Albert Camus and other *Combat* members, as well as antifascists from Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Norway. Italy was represented solely by the Action Party. Dated "fin décembre 1944," the letter appears in Rossi and Spinelli, *Empirico*, 289. The final participant list differed: the SFIO was represented by Vincent Auriol, Renée Blum, Charles Dumas, Daniel Mayer, and Andrée Marty-Capgras, while British attendees included John Hynd (Labour), Brailsford (*New Statesman and Nation*), and George Orwell (*Tribune* and *Observer*). Willi Eichler represented the German socialists. Though Ignazio Silone is mentioned, historian Piero Graglia suggests he likely did not attend.

[474] Ferrat, Camus, and other leading members would withdraw from its activities due to the lack of a successful strategy for creating a European federation. See Lipgens, *Documents*, Vol. 3, 'The Struggle for European Union by Political Parties and Pressure Groups in Western European Countries' (Berlin-New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1988) 37.

[475] Ibid., pp. 413-4. Spinelli also commented on the influence of De Gaulle on French politics in his letter to Rossi and Valiani of March 15, 1945. In Rossi and Spinelli, *"Empirico"* pp. 319-322.

[476] See Rognoni Vercelli, 'La prima organizzazione, 59-60.

(Belgium), Europeesche Actie (Netherlands), led by Henri Brugmans, the MFE, and Europa Union.[477] The attendees agreed on a twelve-point program, which was made public on September 19, 1946—the same day Churchill called for "a sort of United States of Europe" in his famous speech at the University of Zurich.[478] The program incorporated key ideas that had been central to MFE propaganda since its inception. Article 4 urged member states of the European Union to "transfer part of their sovereign rights […] to the Federation," while Article 2 emphasized that the Federation should have "a democratic structure beginning at the base" and the authority to resolve "any differences that may arise among its members."[479] Thus, though Rossi and Spinelli had temporarily withdrawn, their vision remained deeply embedded in early European federalist efforts.

As we will discuss more thoroughly in the following chapter, the Hertenstein meeting, followed by the Luxembourg Conference (1946), and the Amsterdam Conference (April 1947) led to the creation of the Union of European Federalists (UEF). The UEF adopted a program based on the Hertenstein resolutions, with the MFE becoming its Italian section. Between August 27 and 31, 1947, the UEF held its first official congress in Montreux, organized by Henri Brugmans and Alexandre Marc. Delegations from sixteen countries attended, including Winston Churchill's United Europe Movement, represented by Duncan Sandys. The Montreux Congress marked the formal consolidation of the UEF, which later participated in the Congress of Europe in The Hague (1948).[480] By then, Spinelli and Rossi had regained control of the MFE, encouraged by the Marshall Plan and its potential for European integration. Speaking in Montreux, Spinelli reaffirmed the need for a united Europe as the foundation of a "free, democratic European civilization."[481]

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[477] See Lipgens, *History*, p. 300.

[478] Raymond M. Jung d'Arsac, a young member of Europa Union, recalled the coincidence of the publication of the program with Churchill's speech in 'Churchill and Hertenstein', appeared on *The Federalist Debate*, No. 2, Year XX, July 2007.

[479] The Hertenstein programme is consultable here: Hertenstein Programme.

[480] See Denis de Rougemont, "Extracts from 'The Campaign of the European Congresses,'" *Government and Opposition* 23, no. 1 (1988): 113-4. For a study of Europeanism within the Conservative Party see Sue Onslow, *Backbench debate within the Conservative Party and its influence on British foreign policy, 1947-58*, New York, St Martin's Press, 1997.

[481] Altiero Spinelli's speech at the first UEF Congress, Montreux, 27 August 1947.

From its inception in 1943 as a bold but fragile initiative, the MFE navigated wartime exile, postwar disillusionment, and renewed momentum. Though it faced setbacks, its core ideas endured, shaping the foundations of the early European federalist movement. By 1947, with the creation of the UEF and growing international recognition, the movement had transitioned from a marginal resistance effort to a broad international organization, advocating for European integration and possessing the potential to leave a lasting imprint on the continent's political future, as we will discuss in the next chapter.

IV—The Languages of Federalism: Discursive Formations and Political Thought in Exile

Ignazio Silone's Proudhonian Federalism.

As the experiences of the Socialist Foreign Center/Europa Socialista group and the MFE demonstrate, federalism emerged as a key framework for Italian political exiles during the final phase of the Second World War, shaping their vision of the 'democratic revolution' they sought to achieve. Switzerland provided the necessary space and respite to refine ideas and strategies first conceived under the extreme conditions of political persecution. As the Allies gained a foothold on the continent and the Nazi-Fascist powers were forced into a defensive posture, exile transformed from a place of refuge into a breeding ground for the ideas that could shape the future European polity.

The two cases explored in this chapter also illustrate the precarious circumstances in which the Italian *fuorusciti* sought to intervene in the immediate realities of the antifascist resistance struggle. They attempted to impose the language and discourse of federalism on the groups and movements they believed would assume control of postwar European regimes. The story we have traced so far is one of significant collaboration, the establishment of international networks, and the forging of political alliances, all guided by a common purpose: the creation of an independent "Third Force" Europe.

At the same time, the Foreign Center/Europa Socialista and the MFE exemplify two divergent trajectories along which federalist thought could—and did—develop during this period. Drawing from the lexicon of the protagonists of this chapter, I have termed these two currents

'Proudhonian' and 'Hamiltonian.' Evidently, the distinctions between the ideological commitments and strategic orientations of the two groups, while analytically useful, were not always as sharply drawn in practice as the categories employed in this chapter might suggest. The imperatives of political action, particularly under the pressures of immediate contingencies, often compelled cooperation across these conceptual boundaries. And yet, these tensions were not merely circumstantial; they were embedded in deeper theoretical divergences that, as events unfolded, assumed concrete institutional and political form, shaping the evolution of federalist discourse and its contested role in the emerging postwar order.

For the socialists led by Ignazio Silone, these differences carried great historical weight and political significance becoming embedded in the long internal struggle between the pro- and anti-communist factions within the Italian Socialist Party. The *fronde* against Pietro Nenni's philo-communist line dated back to the late 1930s, particularly around the journals *Politica Socialista*, edited by Giuseppe Faravelli and Angelo Tasca between 1935 and 1936, and the second run of *Problemi della Rivoluzione Italiana* (*Problems of the Italian Revolution*, 1937–1938), also curated by Tasca. Both journals served as platforms for collaboration among socialists of various persuasions, including Silvio Trentin, Giuseppe Saragat, and Andrea Caffi. Their aim was a reassessment of the socialist tradition, advocating a departure from the mechanical application of Marxist theory in the Party's programs.[482]

It was in this milieu of socialist heretics (by then, Chiaromonte and Caffi had joined the PSI) that Silone slowly and tentatively reestablished contact with the socialist world, following his violent rupture with the Communist Party a decade earlier. During this period, Silone was developing ideas about the necessity of a new ethos for socialism, particularly in his novels—one rooted in the universality of human consciousness and a conception of justice that could be understood not only collectively but also as the ultimate expression of individual freedom. These ideas found fertile ground in Tasca, who, in their exchanges, employed the same vocabulary that appears in many of Silone's writings. Tasca emphasized the need to conceive of socialism within the limits set by "man himself," rather than by notions of social progress or industrial prowess.[483]

[482] See Marina Tesoro, *Dal repubblicanesimo al socialismo: la rivista "Problemi della rivoluzione italiana"*, in Arfé, *L'Emigrazione*, 184ff.
[483] Angelo Tasca to Ignazio Silone, March 31, 1940, FSSFT/IS/5/59.

In the summer of 1940, when the headquarters of the PSI moved from Paris to Toulouse, the group that took charge of the Party followed the political orientation inaugurated by Tasca, particularly under the leadership of his close ally Giuseppe Faravelli. Between the late 1930s and early 1940s, Toulouse had become a key gathering place for Italian expatriates. Heterodox socialists such as Trentin, Chiaromonte, and Caffi found refuge in the French city, where they exerted considerable influence on the ideological and strategic direction of Italian socialists in exile.[484] It was in Toulouse, in October 1941, that the "Committee of Action for the Unity of the Italian People," comprising members of the Communist and Socialist parties as well as the *Partito d'Azione*, issued an antifascist manifesto, widely regarded as the first truly "unitary" document of the Italian Resistance.[485] As in many moments we have encountered so far, it was in the margins—in exile, in clandestine meetings, in transient cities like Toulouse—that the ideological and strategic foundations of antifascism were forged and then continuously rethought and renegotiated.

In Toulouse, Caffi drafted a document that would prove highly significant for Ignazio Silone and the Foreign Center. His *Tesi di Tolosa* (Toulouse Theses) departed from the standard socialist interpretation of the war as a clash of interests among capitalist imperial powers, instead attributing the outbreak of conflict to the absolute sovereignty of independent nation-states, expressing, almost simultaneously, the ideas articulated in the *Ventotene Manifesto*. Caffi advocated for the creation of a federal union of European peoples while simultaneously calling for an internal counterbalance to state overreach. This, he argued, should be achieved through the empowerment of autonomous entities and associations of all kinds—political, economic, trade union, cooperative, mutualist—as well as local groups, to which numerous social and economic functions would be delegated and transferred. Citing Georges Gurvitch and G. D. H. Cole as his influences, Caffi articulated, in its most expressive form, the Proudhonian federalism that had been simmering since the early 1930s.[486]

Meanwhile, also in Toulouse, Trentin's model of 'integral federalism' sought to fuse Proudhonian principles with examples drawn from medieval communal traditions. Trentin thus

[484] Nicola Chiaromonte to Ignazio Silone, August 14, 1940, FSSFT/IS/5/65.
[485] Giorgio Galli, *Storia del socialismo italiano* (Bari: Laterza, 1980), 387.
[486] Andrea Caffi, *I socialisti, la guerra e la pace*, undated [1941], later reprinted in *I Quaderni del "Gobetti"*, no. 1 (1958), now in Andrea Caffi, *Scritti politici* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1970), 239–307.Pietro Nenni and Giuseppe Saragat responded with a second thesis (now lost), in which they called for a close alliance with the Communists. The veteran reformist leader Giuseppe Emanuele Modigliani authored a third and final thesis, aligning with the reformist tradition of absolute pacifism. See Landuyt, 'Un tentativo di rinnovamento', pp.79-80.

drew on the Italian Risorgimento federalist tradition of Carlo Cattaneo and Giuseppe Ferrari, whom he came to know through the works of Gaetano Salvemini.[487] Compared to Caffi, Trentin was more explicitly revolutionary, directly challenging capitalist centralization and even hinting at the possibility of an anti-capitalist bloc that would include Russia. The radicalism of Trentin's project lay in its insistence that democracy could only be realized when power was reclaimed "from below," through federated structures of collective self-governance—a vision that would come to define Libérer et Fédérer's political agenda and distinguish it from other federalist currents in the French Resistance.[488]

Caffi and Trentin provided the ideological foundation for Silone's *Thesis of the Third Front*. The program centered on political autonomy, self-government, and the socialization of key economic sectors. A third path had to be identified, both as an alternative to Communism and Liberalism and as a new strand within socialism itself. The "parliamentarian" and radical pacifism of the reformists had proven inadequate in resisting fascism, just as the revolutionary zealotry of the maximalists had failed. A third way was needed, combining radical democracy with revolutionary ideals to secure a peaceful future after the devastation of war. On the international level, Silone envisioned a socialist federation of "free peoples," rooted in local self-government and the emancipation of colonized nations, with particular emphasis on North Africa.[489]

Silone's concern for the colonial question was not widely shared in socialist circles at the time, with the notable exception of the parties affiliated with the so-called London Bureau. These included the Spanish Workers' Party of Marxist Unification (POUM), Fenner Brockway's Independent Labour Party, and Marceau Pivert's Parti socialiste ouvrier et paysan, which would later play a key role in the creation of the Movement for the Socialist United States of Europe and the Permanent Committee for the Congress of the Peoples Against Imperialism (COPAI). Silone insisted that "the workers' international could not be indifferent to the fate of colonial and semi-colonial peoples" and argued that the populations of the occupied territories would find support in

[487] See Giuseppe Gangemi, "Silvio Trentin tra pensiero e azione nella storia culturale dell'Italia unita," in Cortese, *Liberare e federare*, 37–56, at 48.
[488] See Trentin, *Stato-Nazione-Federalismo*, (1945).
[489] Ignazio Silone, "Terzo Fronte," *L'Avvenire del Lavoratore*, August 1, 1942

their struggle for liberation from "workers' and specialists' associations, as well as from the intellectuals of a free Europe."[490]

Silone's socialism, however, had a distinctly spiritual dimension, drawing from a millenarian and redemptive tradition of Christian inspiration rooted in the struggles of his native Abruzzo in southern Italy. The *cafoni* (peasants) of this impoverished region, overlooked by communists who prioritized industrial workers, became for him the quintessential exploited class whose suffering mirrored that of the colonized. Just as colonial subjects were subjected to imperial domination, the *cafoni* were trapped in a rigidly hierarchical order that left them politically voiceless. This perspective led Silone to develop a sensitivity to anti-imperialist struggles, alongside a deep skepticism of centralized power and a belief in local, organic communities as the true loci of political and human regeneration, distant from the vast and inscrutable power of the *metropole*.

These ideas recur in two other texts Silone wrote during this period: a leaflet clandestinely distributed in Italy, *Stop the War! Stop Fascism!*, and the *Manifesto for Civil Disobedience*, both printed in December 1942. As we have seen, the second of these texts led to Silone's arrest and detention. What is relevant for our discourse, however, is that during his long exile, Silone came to articulate a vision of revolution that was never merely a matter of replacing one ruling elite with another. Rather, he contended that "there is a real revolution when the most downtrodden and aggrieved element of a society becomes a value, and on that, in its image, the entire society reorganizes itself." This principle encapsulated, in essence, the philosophy that underpinned both his literary and political work: the radical humanism he had discussed with Angelo Tasca at the outset of the war.

Ernesto Rossi, Altiero Spinelli, and the Hamiltonian Path to European Federation.

The Movimento Federalista Europeo underwent a significant transformation after its founders left Ventotene. As described in Chapter I, it was originally conceived as a revolutionary party advocating for a socialist federation in Europe. However, it later evolved into a transnational resistance movement and a pressure group. Ideologically, the MFE distanced itself from the

[490] Ignazio Silone, "La sorte delle nostre colonie," *Avanti!* (Rome), March 25, 1945; and *Id.*, "Nel bagaglio", 304. "L'internazionale operaia, sia politica che sindacale, non può disinteressarsi delle sorti dei popoli coloniali e semi-coloniali."

radicalism of the *Ventotene Manifesto* of 1941, at least on paper, adopting a more ecumenical discourse that facilitated collaboration with a broader range of political movements.

Already at the first clandestine meeting of the Movement in Milan, Spinelli—along with Eugenio Colorni, Leone Ginzburg, Vindice Cavallera, and Franco Venturi—pushed to abandon the more politically controversial positions of his and Rossi's Ventotene propaganda to focus solely on federalism. Recognizing that a revolutionary federalist party, as envisioned in the *Ventotene Manifesto*, would be too weak to compete with reemerging antifascist parties, he argued that federalists should infiltrate existing groups and steer them toward the federalist cause. This required setting aside divisive economic and social issues that might alienate potential allies, including communists.[491]

We have seen how Spinelli succeeded in having his *Federalist Theses* approved as a founding document of the MFE. The *Theses* conveyed the federalist message with a strong emphasis on its goal to "impose, in the most imminent critical moments [...] the only political structure that allows for the free development of individual national civilizations, the flourishing of political freedoms, and the advancement of socialist institutions." However, what was missing was the Leninist revolutionary party envisioned in the *Ventotene Manifesto*. This new approach, more pragmatic than doctrinaire, suited Rossi and Spinelli's broader goal: forging a transnational and transpolitical movement within the Resistance, one that could transcend partisan divides and establish federalism as the common ground for Europe's postwar reconstruction.[492]

The Movimento Federalista Europeo came to champion what later became known in federalist circles as "Hamiltonian federalism," loosely inspired by Alexander Hamilton's writings in *The Federalist Papers*. This approach emphasized the necessity of a strong supranational central government and a hierarchical structure to manage continental affairs. The concept of "Hamiltonian federalism" originally described the ideological struggle between Jeffersonians and Federalists during the ratification of the U.S. Constitution (1789). It later gained traction in Europeanist circles as a model for a system in which a supranational government exercises direct authority over key policy areas, instead of sharing power equally with national governments.

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[491] 'Il verbale della riunione costitutiva', now in Edmondo Paolini (eds.), *Altiero Spinelli: dalla lotta antifascista alla battaglia per la Federazione europea: 1920-1948: documenti e testimonianze*, pp. 316-325.

[492] "Tesi del Movimento Federalista Europeo." HAEU/AS-3, *Projets et correspondance à propos du fédéralisme*. "[…] imporre negli imminentissimi momenti critici […] l'unica struttura politica che permetta il libero svolgimento delle singole civiltà nazionali, il fiorire delle libertà politiche, lo sviluppo delle istituzioni socialiste […]."

"Hamiltonian federalism" was seen as more than just a constitutional framework. It was a method of action, referring to the process of constitution-making itself. For Ernesto Rossi and Altiero Spinelli, the American experience provided both complement and materiality to the Mazzinian and Jacobin thrust explored in Chapter I. Years later, Spinelli would revisit the distinction between what he considered the two fundamental conceptions of federalist action. The first he described as "Girondin, Menshevik, or Jeffersonian," a view in which federalism emerges as the ultimate logical consequence of democracy and socialism. The second, which Spinelli supported, could be termed "Jacobin, Bolshevik, or Hamiltonian," an approach that sees federalism as the deliberate and strategic construction of a federal state, considered the most suitable instrument "for European civilization today." For Spinelli, democracy and socialism should be incorporated into federalism, but they were not its source. Instead, federalism was a distinct political project, requiring active leadership and institutional design rather than relying on an organic or inevitable development of democratic or socialist principles.[493]

The evolution of MFE doctrine in Switzerland reflected the shifting dynamics of global politics as the war progressed. Spinelli, in particular, utilized Leonhard Ragaz's journal *Der Aufbau* to signal a crucial shift in his federalist thought, marking a further departure from the revolutionary model outlined in the *Ventotene Manifesto*. Although he had initially envisioned transformation through an autonomous revolutionary movement, Spinelli—demonstrating the realistic and pragmatic vision that would define his postwar approach—began to frame political change as contingent on external structuring forces, namely British and American influence in postwar Europe.

This reformulation of federalist strategy also implied a recalibration of political agency: it was the geopolitical order shaped by the Anglo-American powers that would determine the conditions for democracy on the continent, not a revolutionary vanguard. A successful political movement like the MFE would thus need to mobilize its forces to steer the interests of the major powers in the postwar scenario. Waiting for antifascist forces to bring about change was a vain hope. The democratic, federalist revolution could still happen provided that the forces of the Resistance played their cards well.

Once again, Spinelli's argument rested on a fundamental skepticism toward mass political agency. Echoing classical republican and liberal concerns about the perils of unmediated popular

[493] Spinelli, *Diario*, 278-9.

sovereignty, he posited that Italy, like Germany, lacked the necessary civic education to sustain a functioning democracy. Only small elites, he argued, had preserved the ideal of freedom, while the majority remained susceptible to demagogic and illiberal movements. For Spinelli, the solution lay in federalism as a structural safeguard against the volatility of mass politics. Federal institutions, by constraining the power of national governments, would establish the necessary "insurmountable limits" to protect democratic development. His federalism functioned as a constitutional mechanism aimed at shaping at once political institutions *and* political culture itself. The creation of strong federal ties, he contended, would facilitate an organic connection between elites and the masses, allowing the principles of liberty and democracy to take root both in the civic consciousness of the Italian people and in the practice of their political leaders.[494]

The federalism of the MFE found precise formulation in Ernesto Rossi's 1944 pamphlet *Per gli Stati Uniti d'Europa* (For the United States of Europe), written in Geneva. Rossi strengthened the comparison to *The Federalist Papers* by explicitly contrasting the weakness of the League of Nations with Hamilton's critique of the fragile American Confederation of 1781. The League had failed because it lacked enforcement power. This insight stemmed from Luigi Einaudi's *Lettere Politiche di Junius* and strengthened Rossi and Spinelli's conviction that a European federation had to be supranational. A mere alliance or confederation would not do. Rossi's pragmatism underscored that, for the MFE, federalism was not a moral philosophy but a practical necessity. He praised the June 1940 Franco-British Union proposal as the moment when European unification descended from the realm of abstract theory to political reality. Finally, he acknowledged that the USSR would regard a European federation with suspicion, anticipating the Cold War dilemmas that would later shape the MFE's strategic considerations.

While Rossi did not explicitly attack Proudhonian or regional federalism, his arguments strongly favored a centralized, supranational model over local or voluntary federations. His federalist plan rejected the possibility of voluntary agreements modeled after the League of Nations, the reversibility of federal structures—arguing that the United States of Europe should function as a proper state—and excessive decentralization, which he viewed as economically detrimental. Rossi's argument was straightforward: a federation that lacked enforcement

[494] Altiero Spinelli, "Il problema politico italiano," *Der Aufbau*, no. 2–3 (January 14 and 21, 1944); later republished in *Italy's Struggle for Liberation* (London: International Publishing Company, 1944). Now in Graglia, ed., *Machiavelli,* 345–362.

mechanisms was doomed to fail, and decentralized or voluntary models would only perpetuate instability rather than resolve it.[495]

Rossi's pamphlet was published by the *Nuove Edizioni di Capolago*, a publishing house established in Switzerland by Silone, Odoardo Masini, Guglielmo Ferrero, Gina Lombroso Ferrero, and Egidio Reale. The initiative aimed to continue the legacy of the historic *Tipografia Elvetica* of Capolago, which had been a key publisher of democratic and liberal thought during the Italian Risorgimento. By that time, Silone was no longer directly involved in the publishing house, having shifted his focus to other projects, such as the *Ghilda del Libro*, which carried forward the mission of promoting democratic and antifascist thought.[496] Still, the publication of Rossi's work testifies to the political allegiance that united various strands of antifascist federalism in Switzerland. This shared commitment, however, did not wipe out ideological differences. As the European project gained momentum from 1947 onward, tensions between the MFE's "Hamiltonian" outlook and what Spinelli condemned as the "incoherent doctrinal mixture" of "Proudhonian" federalism resurfaced, stirring debates and infighting within the Third Force milieu.[497]

V—Conclusions

For the Italian antifascist *fuorusciti*, the time spent in Switzerland opened up new possibilities for influence and exchange. Counterintuitively, exile helped the MFE grow—and encouraged new exchanges of federalist thought across ideological boundaries. The harsh conditions of fascist persecution had already given rise to ambitious visions of postwar Europe, but in Switzerland, those visions didn't stay static—they shifted quickly in response to the war's changing intellectual and political terrain. As for the nineteenth-century heroes of the Risorgimento, Switzerland, once again a refuge, also mirrored the kind of institutions "Third Force" socialists hoped to build.

[495] Storeno, *Gli Stati*, at 15-9 and 25-8.
[496] Raffaella Castagnola, "Silone e le Nuove Edizioni di Capolago," in *Per una comune civiltà letteraria: Rapporti culturali tra Italia e Svizzera negli anni '40*, ed. Raffaella Castagnola and Paolo Parachini (Monte Verità: Centro Stefano Franscini, 2002), 125–38.
[497] Spinelli, *Diario*, 173.

As head of the Foreign Center of the Italian Socialist Party, Silone tried to pull together the threads of 'Proudhonian' socialism of the 1930s—borrowing from Andrea Caffi and Silvio Trentin—with new influences emerging from northern Europe, particularly Britain. Rossi and Spinelli, for their part, sharpened the MFE's theoretical focus, adopting an ecumenical, transpolitical approach to federalism. Their vision was anchored in a "Hamiltonian" model that prioritized the creation of a strong supranational federal state as the only viable path to securing lasting peace and stability in Europe.

Thus, a clear fracture existed between the two strands of federalist thought. While both visions sought to displace national sovereignty, only Silone's version genuinely challenged the legitimacy of centralised authority itself. Spinelli's version, however, raised a thorny question: whether his federalism merely reproduced the hierarchical structures of the nation-state on a broader continental scale. Silone's Proudhonian federalism aimed to overcome the political grammar of the nation-state altogether, though in the end, his project proved difficult to carry forward.

This was also a time of major shifts for the figures analyzed in this chapter, as their intellectual and political work underwent notable shifts. New publications emerged (*L'Avvenire dei Lavoratori* and later *Europa Socialista* for Silone, *L'Unità Europea* for Rossi and Spinelli) alongside the establishment of publishing houses. Amidst a landscape of political and institutional fluidity, for exiled antifascists, print was still the main way to get their ideas out, influence other groups and movements, and assert their ideological positions.

At the same time, these publications also became tools for internal disagreements and political reorientation, enabling their editors to challenge the established representatives of the socialist and federalist traditions and carve out new political spaces. The Foreign Center represented an attempt to unmoor the Italian Socialist Party from its perilous entanglement with the Communists, while the MFE sought to distance federalism from the ineffective federalist currents of the 1930s, giving federalism a harder political bite and a clearer strategy.

The socialist world, more broadly, was in flux—devoid of the old International and deeply divided over its stance toward the Soviet Union. For the Foreign Center group, the imperative was to realign Italian socialism ideologically and politically with the Western camp, looking specifically to the British Labour Party as a model, especially following its decisive electoral victory and ascent to government in 1945. The British connection was prominently reflected in the

pages of *L'Avvenire* and *Europa Socialista*. At the same time, as we have seen, the MFE was also committed to disseminating the ideas of Labour federalists, such as Barbara Wootton. These connections would prove crucial in the postwar period, when genuine international organizations of federalists began to take shape.

In sum, for Italian antifascists, Swiss exile was not merely a refuge but a critical site for the rearticulation of inherited ideological traditions. Confronted with the collapse of prewar political certainties, Silone, Rossi, Spinelli, and their collaborators did not simply sustain earlier positions but actively reformulated the conceptual vocabularies of socialism and federalism in response to new historical conditions. They weren't merely shifting tactics—they were rethinking politics at a conceptual level, forging new possibilities for socialist and federalist visions. The wartime exile of the *fuorusciti* should not be seen as a mere interlude between repression and postwar reconstruction but as a decisive moment in which competing political traditions were reinterpreted, generating conceptual innovations that would shape the postwar Europeanist discourse discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Five—The Struggle for a Third Way: Socialist Federalists and European Integration (1947-1954)

I—Introduction

Between 1947 and 1954, European socialist non-conformists made their final attempt to establish an independent continental federation along "Third Force" lines. Although the revolutionary spirit of Europeanism and the wave of activism it had inspired during World War II and its immediate aftermath had begun to wane, the Marshall Plan, grounded in the promise of deeper European economic and political collaboration, appeared to signal progress toward their goals.[498] During this period, the establishment of key institutions, and particularly the European Coal and Steel Community (1951), laid the foundation for what would later become the European Union.

Socialist non-conformists joined the effort to promote political integration but increasingly compromised their ideals in their struggle to transform aspirations into a tangible political agenda, ultimately failing to realize their vision of a strong federal state. While Europeanism largely followed a functional route emphasizing economic integration, this did not preclude significant political dimensions. The ECSC and, later, the European Economic Community (EEC), though framed around economic cooperation, carried profound political implications for both member and non-member states, reflecting the ambitions of many who supported them. The failure of the European Defence Community (EDC) in 1954, however, underscored the persistent tensions over sovereignty, and was a significant blow for "Third Force" federalists. As Altiero Spinelli would bitterly remark after the French National Assembly rejected the EDC Treaty, "I have dedicated fourteen years to the struggle for European Federation, from 1940 to today. I have left a mark on Europe's attempt to unite. And yet, everything ends in nothing."[499]

As Cold War tensions escalated and further restricted opportunities for creative political action, Spinelli and the other "Third Force" socialists, I argue, lacked a cohesive theoretical

[498] See Michelle Cini, "From the Marshall Plan to EEC: Direct and Indirect Influences," in *The Marshall Plan: Fifty Years After,* ed. Martin Schain (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 13–37.
[499] Altiero Spinelli, *Diario Europeo,* ed. Edmondo Paolini (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1989–1992), 205. "Ho dedicato quattordici anni alla lotta per la Federazione europea, dal 1940 a oggi. Ho lasciato un'impronta sul tentativo dell'Europa di unirsi. Eppure, tutto finisce nel nulla."

foundation to build the broad political support necessary to exert lasting influence over the continent's leading socialist parties. With the partial exception of the French SFIO, their efforts fell short of providing a compelling alternative capable of steering European socialism away from an increasingly unproductive acquiescence to the emerging bipolar status quo. The very "groupness" that had provided them with broad ideological flexibility and by which various actors from the British SOE to the Swiss police had identified them ultimately revealed its own fragmented nature. It highlighted the fragile and often overstated coherence of their political project beneath the perceived sense of unity and shared purpose.

For leftist parties, the need to win elections had become an immediate concern, particularly for socialist and social-democratic groups. At a moment when European politics was increasingly shaped by Christian Democrats and other centrist and conservative politicians, the left increasingly embraced a nationalist ethos. In Britain, the Labour Party, now in power, prioritized nationalization and social reform, narrowing the space for expansive European projects. The SPD's 1959 Bad Godesberg Program exemplified this shift, signaling the "nationalization" of socialism and a decisive pivot from internationalist aspirations toward domestic priorities, even when framed with supranational rhetoric.[500] The SPD came round to the idea of European integration along the lines pioneered by the CDU on the grounds that it was politically pragmatic, economically beneficial, and essential for West Germany's security and international standing.

Meanwhile, Churchill, now out of power, used European unity as a rhetorical tool of the conservative right, aligning the European agenda with non-socialist priorities. Already in 1946, Churchill vaguely called for "a kind of United States of Europe" and later helped establish the United Europe Movement with his son-in-law, Duncan Sandys. Churchill subtly positioned Great Britain as a benevolent observer, stepping into the background to facilitate a pragmatic alliance between France and Germany.[501] Churchill's heavy-handed intervention in European affairs made Labour's participation even more difficult, and with it, that of all the continental socialist parties that sought to avoid jeopardizing their relationship with the Attlee government.

Contrary to socialist aspirations, Europe embarked on a path of technocratic development, championed by the Christian Democrats and culminating in the signing of the Treaty of Rome in

[500] See Renaud, *New Lefts*, 200.
[501] Winston Churchill, speech delivered at the University of Zurich, September 19, 1946, accessed December 8, 2024, https://rm.coe.int/16806981f3, quoted in Michael Newman, *Socialism and European Unity.*

1957, which established the EEC. Left-wing opposition to this direction was encapsulated by Kurt Schumacher's scathing critique, labeling it with the infamous four Ks: "konservativ, klerikal, kapitalistisch, kartellistisch."[502] More ambitious projects—such as the proposal to transform the EDC into a European Political Community (EPC)—ultimately collapsed. The French rejection of the EDC delivered the final blow to socialist aspirations for a continental "Third Force" that would be both politically autonomous and economically prosperous.[503] The reconstituted Socialist International, meanwhile, had already been forced to settle for more cautious strategies, balancing the internationalist aspirations of some of its continental members with the skepticism of British and Scandinavian socialists. These efforts prioritized a loosely defined system of economic cooperation, described as "leading to the eventual freedom of circulation of persons and goods."[504]

The inability to present a viable plan for Europe's political integration signaled the decline of the "Third Force" vision, while paving the way for the rise of a more pragmatic, incremental approach to integration. It underscored the enduring challenges of reconciling national sovereignties with supranational ambitions and highlighted the difficulty of securing political will for bold, transformative initiatives. While the Treaty of Rome did not necessarily foreclose idealistic aspirations—functioning as a *traité cadre* rather than a detailed blueprint, thus allowing for varying interpretations—it nevertheless set in motion a process of institutionalizing mechanisms for cooperation. This process, later crystallized in the EEC, gradually sidelined the transformative projects of the immediate postwar period, relegating the dream of a politically united Europe to the realm of deferred aspirations.

This chapter examines how and why the revolutionary Europeanist spirit and federalist ideals lost momentum during this pivotal moment in European history. How did socialist non-conformists navigate the tension between advocating for European federalism and resisting the domestic turn of European socialist parties? Why did the democratic left fail to unite behind the "Third Force" vision, despite its apparent widespread appeal? To answer this, the chapter examines the often-overlooked contributions of Italian socialist non-conformists by tracing the trajectories

[502] Quoted Michael Newman, *Socialism and European Unity: The Dilemma of the Left in Britain and France* (London: Junction Books, 1983), 9.
[503] See Renata Dwan, 'Jean Monnet and the European Defence Community, 1950-54', *Cold War History*, Vol.1, No.1, August 2000, pp.141-160.
[504] 'SI circulars to the Study group on European unity, 1950', International Institute of Social History (IISH), Amsterdam, Socialist International Archives, Box 57, 'Sub-committee and "odd" circulars, 1950, including press releases and circulars to the study group on European unity'.

of the figures already discussed in this work. As I argue, their involvement in the federalist struggle was as significant as that of the French socialist left, despite the latter receiving far greater attention in historiography.[505] Italian socialist Europeanists operated on both domestic and international fronts, in the hope of harnessing the transnational network of federalists they had established during the Resistance. Their case is particularly noteworthy for the depth and sophistication of their federalist proposals, which, in my view, surpassed those of their European counterparts.

Their struggle went beyond the creation of an independent socialist movement dedicated to the federalist cause. "Third Force" activists fought to reshape European society in a way that recognized human beings in their entirety, free from dogmas and oppressive structures. The aim of socialism was to secure liberty and equality for all strata of society, thereby establishing the real rights of man. However, it was federalism that, in the words of Ursula Hirschmann, Spinelli's wife, emerged as "the most potent dismantler of totalitarian arrangements," providing the necessary framework in which democratic socialism could thrive.[506] Socialist federalists viewed their mission as an existential struggle. To safeguard human freedom against the pervasive nihilism of modern autocracy, this endeavor should transcend the more limited ambitions of the reconstituted parties of Western Europe. In this spirit, they sought to break free from the constraints and hierarchies of traditional leftist parties, which, as Ignazio Silone observed, "can become indiscriminate flocks of frightened individuals."[507]

Even so, as discussed in the preceding chapter, after the war, Italian socialist non-conformists had no alternative but to promote Europeanism by entering the reformed parties of the left. Altiero Spinelli and Ernesto Rossi, along with Paolo Vittorelli and Aldo Garosci, joined the

[505] See Wilfried Loth, *Sozialismus und Internationalismus: Die französischen Sozialisten und die Nachkriegsordnung Europas 1940–1950* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1977); Michael Newman, *Socialism and European Unity: The Left and the Integration of Europe since 1945* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1983); Christine Vodovar, *Le PSI, la SFIO et l'évolution des systèmes politiques italien et français de 1943 à 1956* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001); Gérard Bossuat, "Les euro-socialistes de la SFIO, réseaux et influence," in *Inventer l'Europe. Histoire nouvelle des groupes d'influence et des acteurs de l'unité européenne,* ed. Gérard Bossuat and Georges Saunier (Brussels–New York: PIE Lang, 2003), 409–31; Brian Shaev, *Estrangement and Reconciliation: French Socialists, German Social Democrats and the Origins of European Integration, 1948–1957* (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2014); idem, "Liberalising Regional Trade: Socialists and European Economic Integration," *Contemporary European History* no. 3 (2015): 359–83; idem, "Nationalism, Transnationalism and European Socialism in the 1950s: A Comparison of the French and German Cases," *European Review of History—Revue européenne d'histoire* no. 1 (2018): 163–82.

[506] Ursula Hirschmann to Ernesto Rossi, August 20, 1947. Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU), Ernesto Rossi fond, ER/59. "Lo smantellatore più potente di annidamenti totalitari è il principio federalistico." (My trans.).

[507] Ignazio Silone, "Promiscuità e Comunità," *L'Avvenire dei Lavoratori,* March 15, 1944: "Sappiamo che il partito, il sindacato, la cooperativa possono essere greggi promiscui d'individui impauriti".

Action Party, while Ignazio Silone and Giuseppe Faravelli remained in the PSIUP, aiming to steer these groups increasingly toward the European goal. By 1947, they became embroiled in a rapid and seemingly unstoppable fragmentation of the democratic left. The PSIUP lost its right-wing faction to Giuseppe Saragat's Italian Party of Socialist Workers (Partito Socialista dei Lavoratori Italiani, PSLI), while the Action Party (PdA) dissolved entirely. The democratic left transformed into an ever-shifting amalgam of parties and movements, each struggling with diminishing electoral support.

This fragmentation found a reflection in the proliferation of journals and newspapers, which became vital *fora* for Italian socialist non-conformists to amplify their voices in an increasingly saturated ideological environment. Unlike during the war, when much of their work had to be carried out clandestinely, in the postwar period these publications could be carried out openly. But this proliferation showcased the continuous splintering of the non-conformist left. Each journal or newspaper came to represent a specific faction or viewpoint in the socialist world. From *Europa Socialista* to *L'Italia Socialista*, *Iniziativa Socialista*, *Critica Sociale*, *Europa Federata*, *Il Ponte*, *Il Mondo*, and others, these publications illustrated both the effervescence and the setbacks of a movement struggling to find cohesion. This will be the subject of the first part of the chapter.

To their left stood Nenni's PSIUP, staunchly opposed to the Christian Democratic-led postwar governments and their pro-Western foreign policy. Like Schumacher's SPD, both parties centered their platforms on pronounced skepticism toward European integration and NATO membership, effectively precluding any meaningful influence on the trajectory of these policies.[508] Over time, both faced increasing electoral setbacks. What changed was how they opted to respond to these crises. Starting in 1953, the SPD embarked on a process of political introspection and revision, culminating in the formal abandonment of its residual Marxist rhetoric in the 1959 Bad Godesberg Program. This shift simultaneously marked the party's ideological transformation and signaled its embrace of the West European political and economic framework.[509] In contrast, Nenni's PSIUP (renamed the Italian Socialist Party, PSI, after the 1947 split) experienced a far more piecemeal and contentious shift. Although the Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956 began

[508] Cf. Shaev, *Estrangement and Reconciliation*, at 36, 127, 138, 154-5.
[509] Karim Fertikh, "The Godesberg Programme and its Aftermath," *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften,* no. 2 (2022): 189–207.

to create the first cracks in its rigid alignment with the PCI, it was only in the early 1960s that the PSI gradually moved away from that stance.[510] Unlike the SPD, this evolution did not occur through a single, landmark programmatic statement like Bad Godesberg. As a result, the largest socialist movement in Italy deferred its transition to a modern social democratic model and hindered the left's capacity to fully participate in shaping the early European project.

By tracing the trajectory of Third Force socialism during this period, this chapter also addresses the story of a broken promise. The spirit of the Italian Resistance, imbued with Europeanist aspirations, fell short of becoming a source of enduring political influence. Here, a comparison with France is particularly revealing. In France, the Resistance was quickly mythologized, becoming a cornerstone of the national liberation narrative and portraying the country as both cohesive and resilient.[511] The French Resistance avoided fragmentation by rallying under the leadership of de Gaulle, whose unifying presence helped present it as a credible and cohesive alternative during and after the occupation.[512] The SFIO was able to draw on this reservoir of political legitimacy, positioning itself as a central pillar of French democracy despite facing significant challenges from the communist left. Guided by Léon Blum's wartime ideas—including a staunch rejection of Soviet and French communism and an idealization of the Anglo-Saxon democratic model—the SFIO crafted its postwar domestic and foreign policies around the vision of a "Third Force:" a political space situated between the Gaullists and the Communists on the national level, while asserting independence from both American capitalism and Soviet collectivism on the international stage.[513] The alignment of domestic and international aims strengthened the French "Third Force," amplifying its voice as a bullhorn.

In contrast, the Italian resistance fighters experienced a more fragmented and less triumphant narrative. Despite their vital role in defeating nazi-fascism, Italy's liberation was perceived as externally driven more than self-determined. This lack of agency in shaping its own postwar destiny contributed to a diminished sense of autonomy. Italy was perceived as less successful in its democratization process compared to France.[514] On the left, the Italian Communist

[510] Although ironically the PSI found itself involved in national government, following the *apertura a sinistra* far earlier than the SPD. See Alessandro Giacone and Antonio Tedesco, eds., *Anima socialista: Nenni e Pertini in un carteggio inedito (1927–1979)* (Rome: Arcadia Edizioni, 2020), 7–48 and 49–88.
[511] Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), 815.
[512] Olivier Wieviorka, *Histoire de la Résistance, 1940–1945* (Paris: Perrin, 2013), 651–58.
[513] Newman, *Socialism and European Unity*, 19-21.
[514] John Foot, *Italy's Divided Memory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 7–9, and 146.

Party emerged as the dominant force, with no credible moderate counterbalance. The Action Party (Partito d'Azione, PdA), whose military presence was second only to that of the Communists, failed to transform its Resistance achievements into enduring political influence.[515] Nenni's Partito PSIUP played only a minor role during the Liberation, which may partly explain Nenni's persistent belief that the Socialists should remain tied to the Communists, aiming for eventual reunification.[516] The lack of recognition for the Italian Resistance forces diminished the influence of socialist non-conformists and constrained their ability to maneuver both domestically and internationally. The divergent experiences of resistance movements in Italy and France underscore the challenges of transforming the ideals of the Resistance into cohesive political outcomes. This became particularly in the context of emerging Cold War tensions.

At the international level, efforts to advance a Europeanist path for socialism through the Committee of the International Socialist Conference (COMISCO), an early, less formal incarnation of a reconstituted Socialist International, were thwarted by strong opposition from the British and Scandinavian parties, which staunchly resisted any significant ceding of sovereign power. By the late 1940s, the SFIO also chose to temper its Third Force ambitions, aiming to preserve its longstanding ties with the anti-Europeanist Labour Party.[517] In response to these obstacles, socialist federalists increasingly turned to alternative platforms such as the Union of European Federalists (UEF) and the Socialist Movement for the United States of Europe (SMUSE). These initiatives initially succeeded in creating a transnational and cross-party framework for cooperation among different strands of socialism and other progressive groups. However, as we will explore in the second part of this chapter, these efforts were ultimately hindered by deep ideological divisions and personal rivalries, which prevented the emergence of a unified vision for Europe's future.

In hindsight, Third Force socialists rightly identified the defining challenge of their era: the necessity for Europe to establish itself as an independent actor on the global stage. The reluctance to fully align with the American capitalist bloc was pervasive, and the urgency of organizing

[515] Cf. Giovanni De Luna, *Il Partito della Resistenza: Storia del Partito d'Azione 1942–1947* (Turin: UTET, 2021), 22.
[516] See the testimony of Mario Zagari, leader of the youth faction "Iniziativa Socialista" within the PSI and a fervent pro-European advocate: "Il Socialismo Italiano e L'Europeismo," in *I Socialisti e l'Europa,* 245–62; cf. Zagari, "Socialismo," 249.
[517] Cf. Zagari, 'Socialismo', 249.

Europe autonomously resonated broadly, even beyond the left.[518] However, the extent to which democratic socialism, as Wilfried Loth argued, played a significant role in driving the movement for European unification at this stage remains open to question. Its influence may have been limited, as more technocratic and politically conservative forces appeared to take the lead in shaping the process. Most of all, the European non-conformist left lacked the symbolic and material support of a "solid core" of the "Third Force," which SFIO leader Leon Blum identified in the Paris-London axis—a foundation around which other European states could rally.[519] Ernest Bevin's 1945 "unite or perish" speech, which Blum viewed as pivotal to this vision, ultimately proved deceptive.[520] French socialists worked tirelessly but fruitlessly to persuade the British Labour government to participate in the European project.[521] It was only after these efforts failed that Robert Schuman took the decisive step of initiating the Coal and Steel Union without British involvement.

In the challenging postwar period, socialist movements prioritized immediate domestic economic issues.[522] The tension between internationalist aspirations and national commitments loomed large—especially when foreign policies demanded a dilution of core political tenets. Labour MP William Warbey articulated this sentiment in a speech to the Third Congress of the SMUSE in 1949: "if [British socialism] must sacrifice the hard-won advantages of social welfare and fair competition to a capitalist economy, it would rather continue to struggle alone."[523] Socialist internationalism prioritized class solidarity and cooperation among states already under socialist governance, while federalism *qua* ideology, exemplified in the *Ventotene Manifesto*, placed European unification above all else. The *Ventotene* approach offered greater potential for political efficacy, but few socialists were willing to fully embrace it at the expense of their more

[518] Wilfried Loth, "Léon Blum und das Europa der Dritten Kraft," *Themenportal Europäische Geschichte,* 2006, www.europa.clio-online.de/essay/id/fdae-1339.
[519] Newman, *Socialism*, p. 6.
[520] See Hansard, HC Deb 23 November 1945, vol. 416, cols. 786–802. Available at: Historic Hansard [Accessed 6 December 2024].
[521] Cf. Sean Greenwood, *The Alternative Alliance: Anglo-French Relations before the Coming of NATO, 1944–1948* (London and Washington: Minerva Press, 1996); John W. Young, *Britain, France and the Unity of Europe, 1945–1951* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1984).
[522] See David Gowland, Arthur Turner, and Alex Wright, *Britain and European Integration since 1945: On the Sidelines* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2010); Erin Delaney, "The Labour Party's Changing Relationship to Europe: The Expansion of European Social Policy," *Journal of European Integration History* 8 (2002); Imaly, *Practice*, 309-358.
[523] EUI/ME/0366. "s'il doit sacrifier à une économie et à la concurrence capitaliste des avantages acquis de haute lutte, il préfère encore continuer à lutter tout seul."

traditional socialist commitments. In contrast, Christian Democrats, as Wolfram Kaiser notes, shared an ideological foundation that allowed them to operate more effectively on the European issue.[524] With a clearer, pragmatic vision for European unity, they could pursue federalist goals without compromising domestic agendas—a cohesion that "Third Force" socialists struggled to achieve.

Contra Brian Shaev, Talbot Imlay, and Christian Bailey, this chapter shows that only a small minority of European socialists viewed integration favorably, and even fewer were prepared to engage in meaningful sovereignty-sharing arrangements. Even when they expressed support for supranational collaboration, their statements require critical scrutiny, as they often hindered genuine federalist objectives. In the politically charged environment of the late 1940s, the concept of a socialist "Third Force" became emblematic of its semantic indeterminacy, taking on sharply contrasting interpretations. For some, it implied a strong, independent European political union, opposed to the USSR but aligned with the United States. For others, it represented a fully autonomous Europe rooted in socialist principles. Still, others sought to keep the door open to collaboration with the Eastern bloc, staunchly opposing what they perceived as American cultural and economic imperialism.[525] This intellectual indeterminacy ultimately underscored the absence of genuine and widespread political will.

By engaging with postwar politics in a loosely structured manner, both ideologically and organizationally, Italian socialist federalists and their European counterparts found themselves particularly vulnerable to the binary pressures of Cold War Manichaeism. Using a metaphor borrowed from Manzoni's *The Betrothed*, Spinelli described socialist federalists as "un vaso di terracotta in compagnia di vasi di ferro"—a fragile clay pot among iron vessels.[526] The creation of NATO in 1949 deepened this ideological divide. Disputes took on the character of personal feuds between proponents of the "Third Force" and other socialist leaders, while at times escalating into bitter confrontations within the "Third Force" milieu itself. As I examined the letters, diary entries, and articles of the protagonists to uncover their political ideas, I became increasingly aware of a deeper psychological dimension to their public behaviors—a character-driven dynamic that further weakened the effectiveness of their efforts.

[524] Kaiser, *Christian Democracy*, 230.
[525] See Gérard Bossuat, 'Les Euro-Socialistes de la SFIO: Réseaux et influence,' in Bossuat and Wilkens, *Inventer l'Europe*, 409–430.
[526] Spinelli, A. "Partito di realizzazioni." *L'Umanità,* May 10, 1947.

Despite this, it would be misleading to simply label "Third Force" federalist ideas as failures. In my view, reaching a definitive judgment on who "won" or "lost" during this period is a tortuous endeavor. From a broader historical perspective, the forward-looking vision of the "Third Force" socialists takes on renewed significance. "Third Force" proponents foresaw the dangers of a Europe constrained by external forces. Thus, while the Cold War era may have cast the Christian Democrats and Communists as the immediate victors, the deeper structural issues that "Third Force" socialists sought to address continue to haunt European politics today. Their struggle was not in vain; rather, it anticipated the very challenges we now face.

II—The Socialist Left and Europeanism: The Third Force in Cold-War Italy

In a 1981 interview reflecting on his early federalist militancy, Altiero Spinelli observed that, during the last year of the war and the first two years of the postwar period, the federalist idea had nearly vanished from the political horizon of the antifascist milieu. In Italy, Europeanist aspirations were upheld only by the Action Party, particularly its northern branch operating clandestinely under German occupation. Segments of the PSIUP also supported these aspirations. According to Spinelli, Europe had not reached a position that compelled its political parties and institutions to confront the question of a new international order. Instead, it had been "entirely conquered by Soviet and Anglo-American troops, who reinstated the old nation-states," as though this were a completely natural and automatic process. While these states were formally sovereign, they were, in reality, "controlled by the conquerors." In this context, constrained by the framework imposed by the victorious powers, the established parties of Western democracy found themselves preoccupied with the immediate challenge of regaining legitimacy by focusing on economic reconstruction and domestic elections.[527]

The revolutionary Europeanist spirit that had first emerged during the darkest years of the war failed to find a suitable outlet in the immediate postwar context, even within the transnational initiatives organized between Switzerland and France discussed in the previous chapter. Spinelli

[527] Sonia Schmidt, "Dal Manifesto di Ventotene alla fondazione del Movimento Federalista Europeo 1941–1943. Intervista con Altiero Spinelli" (1981), in Ernesto Rossi, Altiero Spinelli, and Eugenio Colorni, *Ventotene. Un manifesto per il futuro* (Rome: Manifestolibri, 2014), 45–56: "L'Europa è stata conquistata tutta dalle truppe sovietiche e americano-inglesi, che hanno ristabilito, come cosa che andasse da sé, gli antichi stati nazionali, formalmente sovrani, di fatto controllati dai conquistatori."

himself acknowledged that he remained in the Action Party "solely in an attempt to maintain a position of political strength, hoping that the time for Europe might return."[528] In fact, the PdA was the political force in which most Italian federalists regrouped during the final stages of the conflict. Not everyone, however, shared Spinelli's pragmatic view of the party as a vehicle for redeeming Italian democracy. Figures like Paolo Vittorelli, Aldo Garosci, Leo Valiani, and Emilio Lussu threw themselves into an ambitious, but uphill battle. They sought to challenge the conservative grip of the Christian Democrats and counter the Socialist Party's drift toward Communism in an effort to carve out a different path for Italy and Europe. However, only a year after the country's liberation from the scourge of fascism, their party began to crumble.

Paolo Vittorelli would later identify the February 1946 congress of the PdA as the defining moment that splintered the party, when deep ideological rifts—particularly between the socialist and liberal factions—became fully and irreparably revealed. Reflecting on this event in his memoirs, he described it as "the freest congress of all those held in Italy," but added a sobering insight: "One can also die from too much freedom, especially in a nation that, after awakening from the long night of Nazi-Fascism, begins to fear its own liberty. Our 'age of hope' was about to come to an end."[529] With the erosion of the PdA, the aspirations to refashion Italian political institutions and build a truly democratic system centered around the parties of the Resistance ultimately began to fade: "as a force determined never to abandon the field until final victory, on the institutional and political fronts, as well as the economic and social ones, the Resistance was dead and buried."[530]

The Action Party had emerged during the Resistance from efforts to unite progressive anti-fascist movements, notably the Tuscan Liberal-Socialists (Liberalsocialisti) and the surviving members of Giustizia e Libertà, especially its liberal faction led by Ferruccio Parri.[531] The later incorporation of GL's revolutionary wing, including prominent figures such as Lussu, Vittorelli,

[528] Schmidt, "Intervista," 59: "[…] solo nel tentativo di mantenere una posizione politica di forza in attesa che l'ora dell'Europa forse tornasse."
[529] Vittorelli, *L'Età della Speranza*, 130. "Era stato il congresso più libero fra tutti quelli che si celebrarono in Italia. Ma si muore anche per troppa libertà: specie in una nazione che, dopo essersi risvegliata dalla lunga note del nazifascismo, comincia ad aver paura della propria libertà. Stava per concludersi la nostra «età della speranza.»"
[530] Ibid., p. 130. "[…] come forza decisa a non abbandonare mai il campo fino alla vittoria finale, sul piano istituzionale e politico, su quello economico e sociale, la Resistenza era morta e sepolta.
[531] On the Action Party, see especially De Luna, *Storia*. On the Liberal-socialist movement, see especially Paolo Bagnoli, *Il Liberalsocialismo* (Florence: Polistampa, 1997). See also Aldo Capitini, *Aldo Capitini on Opposition and Liberation: A Life in Nonviolence,* ed. Piergiorgio Giacché (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing).

and Leo Valiani, led to a significant ideological shift, steering the movement further to the left.[532] Tensions between the PdA's liberal and socialist factions surfaced early, playing out already under Parri's national government in 1945. In particular, Lussu's calls for socialist unity clashed with Ugo La Malfa's more centrist vision, echoing the earlier antagonism that had divided Carlo Rosselli and Alberto Tarchiani in the mid-1930s. Following the collapse of Parri's government in December 1945 and his replacement by the Christian Democrat Alcide De Gasperi, the PdA's internal divisions intensified, reaching a breaking point in the February 1946 congress. The liberal faction, led by Parri and Ugo La Malfa, withdrew to form the Movimento per la Democrazia Repubblicana (Movement for Republican Democracy, MDR), effectively halting the PdA's political journey.[533] Thus ended the experiment, begun in 1929 by Carlo Rosselli, to merge the theoretical traditions of democratic liberalism and socialism into a new, more effective synthesis embodied by a political movement.

The dissolution of the PdA in October 1947 followed the Socialist Party's division into two antagonistic factions earlier that February. This would turn out to be the start of a long, and often bitter struggle inside the Italian left. Socialist autonomy from the Communist party, avoidance of power politics, European federation, and democracy both inside the party and the state remained daily topics of discussion.[534] New connections were forged or rekindled between the "heretics" of socialism who had been previously divided by party lines. These included figures introduced in earlier chapters, such as Paolo Vittorelli and Aldo Garosci, Altiero Spinelli and Ernesto Rossi, and Ignazio Silone, along with younger comrades like Mario Zagari, Leo Solari, and Matteo Matteotti of the Socialist Party's Youth Federation.[535] However, they faced widespread indifference within leftist ranks and bitter internal disputes. The generic Europeanism professed by many on the left until that point revealed its fragility in the face of the harsh material realities of reconstruction and the struggle to develop an autonomous foreign policy free from superpower influence. These conflicts undermined their efforts and exposed undying ideological differences among "Third Force" advocates.

[532] De Luna, *Storia*, 160 (digital pagination).
[533] De Luna, *Storia*, 646-653 (digital pagination).
[534] Vittorelli, *Speranza*, 86.
[535] Vittorelli, *Speranza*, 171. For a firsthand account of the rocky road traversed by the Socialist youth section in the Italian left, see Leo Solari, *I Giovani di 'Rivoluzione Socialista'* (Rome: IEPI, 1964).

The crisis in the PdA coincided with the split within the Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity (PSIUP), the name used by the Italian Socialist Party from 1943 to 1947. As we have seen, the leftist faction led by Pietro Nenni and Lelio Basso viewed a closer relationship with the Italian Communist Party as necessary to maintain working-class unity and counterbalance the rising influence of the Christian Democrats. On the other hand, Giuseppe Saragat's social-democratic wing sought a clear alignment with the Western bloc, seeing cooperation with the PCI as a step toward subordination to Soviet interests. This division culminated in the so-called Palazzo Barberini split in January 1947, where Saragat's faction broke away to form the social-democratic Partito Socialista dei Lavoratori Italiani (Socialist Party of Italian Workers, PSLI).

The majority bloc of the PSIUP under Nenni reverted to the original name Partito Socialista Italiano (PSI) and solidified its alliance with the communists, culminating in the electoral coalition known as the Popular Democratic Front for the 1948 elections.[536] The realignment of the Italian left had far-reaching consequences. Unlike in France, where the communists were excluded from government, but the socialist left in the SFIO retained its independence, in Italy, the PSI's collaboration with the PCI effectively bound the majority of the socialist movement to the communist bloc.[537] The largest socialist party in the country was, in this way, effectively excluded from government from 1947 to 1963. This fracture inside the left also marginalized anti-communist factions, diminishing their capacity to form a cohesive alternative to the Christian Democrats. Crucially, a PSI closely tied to the PCI was one where a "Third Force" vision could not take hold, as the party's foreign policy was subordinated to the PCI's Soviet-aligned priorities.

Despite the PSI's close association with the PCI, a majority of PdA's members voted to merge with the PSI. This choice was largely tactical, as the PSI was seen as the stronger party, offering former PdA members a platform to counterbalance the growing influence of the Christian Democrats while maintaining a socialist identity. There was hope that the PdA's radical democratic tradition could inject new energy into the PSI, enabling it to carve out a clearer position alongside the Communists.[538] Unlike Saragat's relatively small PSLI, Nenni's PSI remained a mass party, with a strong organizational base and electoral support. As Vittorelli would later recall, many in the PdA believed that the PSI "could have better fulfilled the role of democratic

[536] See Daniele Pipitone, *Il socialismo democratico italiano fra la Liberazione e la legge truffa* (Milan: Ledizioni, 2013), 24–33.
[537] Ibid. 24-5.
[538] Pipitone, *Socialismo*, 35-6.

stabilization, a role that the smaller democratic parties were no longer capable of exercising."[539] It was, however, a misplaced hope, as Silone remarked in a letter to his friend, the Liberal-Socialist intellectual Walter Binni. The leaders of the PSI, he observed, placed their hopes in the possibility of reabsorbing many of the splintering factions without changing their strategy: "and if they speak of unity, they neither believe in it nor truly want it."[540]

Doubts persisted about whether the PSI was truly fit for the role it appeared to have been assigned in the Italian political landscape. Some *actionists* (azionisti) viewed the Socialists' ongoing alignment with the PCI as a major obstacle to developing a democratic socialist agenda capable of engaging with the growing momentum for European unity. On the other side, at the helm of the PSLI were figures such as Saragat and Faravelli, who had been closely aligned with Giustizia e Libertà and its democratic revolutionary aims in the pre-war period, as discussed in Chapter 2. Consequently, some chose to align with the PSLI. Among them was Altiero Spinelli, who joined the social democrats early on, attracted by Saragat's anti-communist stance, which resonated with his vision of democratic socialism and support for western European integration. Even Ernesto Rossi, despite his personal lack of esteem for Saragat, would later run as an independent on the Social Democratic lists in the elections of April 18, 1948.[541]

In this fluid reconfiguration of the democratic left, "Third Force" ideas and European federalism struggled to find a stable foothold. Even the Action Party had never fully embodied the positions of "Third Force" socialists. Although the PdA had incorporated elements supportive of European unity, as a whole it never fully committed to a federal vision, prioritizing domestic reforms and democratic renewal instead.[542] A similar ambivalence characterized the PSIUP, which, as we have seen, had included strong Europeanist currents, particularly around Ignazio Silone's *Europa Socialista* groups, yet remained indecisive on the issue overall. Now, the PSLI seemed to promise a more decisively Europeanist stance.

On the other hand, however, aligning with Saragat's party was anything but a neutral decision—it entailed embracing collaboration with the Christian Democratic Party, ultimately

[539] Paolo Vittorelli, "Precedenti e significati dell'unità socialista," *Nuova Antologia* no. 1083 (March 1951): "un partito di massa... che meglio avrebbe potuto e saputo esercitare la funzione di stabilizzazione democratica che i partiti democratici minori non erano più in grado di esercitare."
[540] Ignazio Silone to Walter Binni, July 3, 1948, Fondazione di Studi Storici "Filippo Turati" (FSSFT), Florence, Fonds Silone Ignazio, Box 1, Folder 10.34: "[…] se parlano di unità, non ci credono e non la vogliono".
[541] See Rossi, *Epistolario*, xii.
[542] "I 'sette punti' del Partito d'Azione," July 1942, and "Punti programmatici fondamentali del Partito d'Azione," August 1944, Centro di Ateneo per la storia della Resistenza e dell'età contemporanea, Box 48, Folder 3.9.

leading the social democrats to join a government coalition in December 1947. Saragat's clear commitment to the Western bloc left many leftwingers uneasy—his strategy clashed with the old idea of an autonomous "Third Force" political space led by socialists, one that could operate independently of both the communists and the Christian Democrats. In a letter to Binni, Ignazio Silone described Saragat's reformism as "after-work club socialism," highlighting its compromising nature and inadequacy for achieving genuine social change.[543]

Figures such as Vittorelli and Silone thus initially refused to join either of the two socialist groupings, seeking instead to carve out a third option through other means.[544] This initially meant trying to influence the debate within socialist ranks through the creation of journals: a well-established tradition in Italian socialism, where different currents had historically grouped around publications. As seen in the previous chapter, Silone tried to build an independent movement around his *Europa Socialista*. In late 1947, Vittorelli and Aldo Garosci took over the publication *L'Italia Libera* (Free Italy), which had been the organ of the Partito d'Azione, and renamed it *L'Italia Socialista* (Socialist Italy).[545] The transition from *L'Italia Libera* to *L'Italia Socialista* was part of an effort to maintain a free-standing socialist voice, unaligned with either the PSI or the PSLI. In Vittorelli's words, the newspaper became a tool "to warn Italians of the dangers of Soviet expansionism and communist hegemony, and later, against excessive acquiescence to new military pact policies, resulting in a dialectical shift towards positions of Atlantic extremism."[546] Vittorelli and Garosci's approach was an ambitious political balancing act. The aim was to maintain equal distance from both the communists and the Christian Democrats. The two political families were not simply proponents of ideologies at odds with a fully developed democracy. They also represented the interests of foreign imperialist powers inside of Italy.

L'Italia Socialista became a central platform for discussions surrounding European federalism and socialism. As Ernesto Rossi would describe it to politician and industrialist Adriano Olivetti: "Garosci and Vittorelli have always followed a political line that corresponds to my thinking. No other newspaper in Italy does such an intelligent job of popularizing international

[543] "Socialismo demo-dopolavoristico." Ignazio Silone to Walter Binni, December 1949, FSSFT/1/81.
[544] Cf. Ernesto Rossi to Gaetano Salvemini, September 23, 1947, in *Ernesto Rossi e Gaetano Salvemini. Dall'esilio alla Repubblica: Lettere 1944–1957,* ed. Mimmo Franzinelli (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2004), 275.
[545] Pipitone, Socialismo, 38.
[546] Paolo Vittorelli, "La diaspora azionista (1947–1957)," in *Giellismo, azionismo, socialismo: Scritti tra storia e politica: 1944–1988,* ed. Paolo Bagnoli (Florence: Polistampa, 2005): "[…] mettere in guardia gl'italiani contro i pericoli dell'espansionismo sovietico e dell'egemonia comunista."

political issues from a federalist perspective; no other provides such a non-demagogic approach to internal political problems."[547] Rossi was referencing in particular the journal's acceptance of the recently announced Marshall Plan as a potential vector of economic growth for Europe and a means to achieve political unification. In an article titled 'The Socialists and the European Plan,' Vittorelli positioned the European integration project as central to socialist goals. He advocated for the creation of an integrated economic area that could transcend national sovereignties and serve as a foundation for broader political unification.[548] In particular, the supranational and programmatic nature of the European Recovery Program, which seemed to push Europe in the direction of a federation, was saluted with much acclamation by the journal, especially by Spinelli, while the PSI, along with the PCI, rejected it as a tool of American domination.[549]

This ideological divergence over the Marshall Plan reflected a deeper theoretical rift between socialism's emphasis on class politics and federalism's commitment to supranational governance. From a federalist perspective, even a socialist one like that of *L'Italia Socialista*, the Marshall Plan could become a catalyst for dismantling the entrenched system of nation-states, which federalists saw as a primary driver of war and economic inequality. Accordingly, the group of *L'Italia Socialista* embraced the Plan as an opportunity to redefine sovereignty in Europe, shifting the locus of power to supranational institutions that could foster political unification and collective economic growth. In contrast, the PSI, informed by a more orthodox Marxist framework, viewed the Marshall Plan as an extension of American capitalist hegemony, designed to subvert socialist aspirations by binding European economies to the interests of the United States. For the socialists of the PSI, the priority remained the transformation of national political economies to serve the working class. Federalists, on the other hand, argued that the Plan's supranational logic offered an unprecedented opportunity to harmonize European economic systems in a way that could facilitate the realization of socialist goals, not through revolution, but through the gradual integration of democratic institutions and collective governance.

[547] Rossi, *Epistolario*, 104. "Garosci e Vittorelli hanno sempre seguito la linea politica corrispondente al mio pensiero. Nessun altro quotidiano fa in Italia un'opera così intelligente di volgarizzazione di problemi di politica internazionale in senso federalista; nessun altro dà un'impostazione così antidemagogica ai problemi di politica interna."
[548] Paolo Vittorelli, "I socialisti e il piano europeo," *L'Italia Socialista,* July 9, 1947.
[549] "L'avvenire dell'Europa dipende soltanto dagli europei," September 2, 1947; Altiero Spinelli, "Europa al bivio. Il Piano Marshall," October 19, 1947, *L'Italia Socialista*.

Vittorelli's contributions frequently emphasized the need for a "Third Force."[550] Especially after the Czech coup of February 1948, any illusion that the USSR could play a progressive role in European politics quickly disintegrated. News of communist rule being established in Czechoslovakia provoked widespread fears of a Soviet advance into Western Europe, prompting many Europeans to call for U.S. military protection. The condemnation of Russian intervention was also an indictment of Nenni's PSI, which refused to denounce the act, aligning with the Italian communists. In an article published in February of 1948, Vittorelli argued that "the clash between the two blocs, drawing ever closer, risks being fatal without the immediate formation of an international third force strong enough to prevent it."[551] His writing reflected a growing concern with the geopolitical tensions of the Cold War and the belief that only a united Europe, constructed along socialist lines, could offer a viable solution. To this end, the journal did not limit itself to theoretical debates but was actively engaged with movements advocating federalism, as seen in its coverage of international congresses.[552] *L'Italia Socialista* closely followed the discussions, publishing key documents and appeals, thereby positioning itself as a mouthpiece for the federalist ideals circulating across the continent.

Under Garosci and Vittorelli*, L'Italia Socialista* emerged as a crucial forum for articulating a vision of a socialist Europe, distinct from the polarized world of the Cold War. The drawback for ambitious contributors to *L'Italia Socialista*, like Spinelli and Rossi, who sought more emphatically to influence the direction of Italian politics—particularly in a federalist sense—was the newspaper's relatively small circulation, which, as Rossi noted in a letter to Luigi Einaudi, the longtime federalist inspiration for the two Ventotene thinkers and now Vice President of the Council of Ministers and Minister of the Budget, was around 10,000 copies. *L'Italia Socialista* failed to move beyond its initial, narrow support base, consisting mainly of the Action Party circle

[550] Palmiro Togliatti was even offered the leadership of the Cominform by Stalin in 1947, although he refused it to continue his work with the PCI in Italy. See Silvio Pons, "A Challenge Let Drop: Soviet Foreign Policy, the Cominform and the Italian Communist Party, 1947–8," in *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943–53,* ed. Francesca Gori and Silvio Pons (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), 246–63.

[551] Paolo Vittorelli, "Le alternative della politica russa in Europa," *L'Italia Socialista,* February 29, 1948. "l'urto fra i due blocchi sempre piu` vicini rischierebbe di essere fatale senza l'immediata formazione di una terza forza internazionale abbastanza solida da gettare il suo peso per evitarlo […]".

[552] Cf. *L'Italia Socialista,* "L'avvenire dell'Europa dipende soltanto dagli europei," September 2, 1947; Gustavo Malan, "Cronache di Montreux," *L'Italia Socialista,* September 5, 1947; Ernesto Rossi, "I Federalisti Europei a Congresso," *L'Italia Socialista,* September 3, 1947; Gustavo Malan, "Federalisti e unionisti generici all'Aja," *L'Italia Socialista,* May 14, 1948.

and aligned intellectuals.[553] Most importantly, it continued to struggle with a lack of funding, which ultimately led to the necessity of closing down the paper in early 1949.[554]

Other journals and groups of the independent left included *Critica Sociale* (Social Critique, CS), the historic publication representing Italian reformism, as well as *Iniziativa Socialista* (Socialist Initiative, IS), connected to the Socialist Youth Federation, both of which promoted the unification of the continent, backed by the material help provided by the ERP. *Critica Sociale*, led by Ugo Guido Mondolfo and Giuseppe Faravelli, joined Saragat's PSLI after the 1947 split, in alliance with the revolutionary left-wingers of *Iniziativa Socialista*.[555] The young leaders of *Iniziativa Socialista* had been politically shaped by Eugenio Colorni in Rome before his assassination in 1944, absorbing his federalist vision. Despite their uncompromising Marxist stance, they viewed the ERP as part of a European project that aimed to transcend national sovereignties, believing it could serve as a tool for advancing socialist internationalism.[556]

As the leader of the PSLI, Saragat also strongly backed the Marshall Plan and the broader ERP, considering it essential for Italy's post-war reconstruction and future stability. In the party's paper, *L'Umanità* (Humanity), Saragat argued that the economic assistance from the United States would be instrumental in rebuilding Italy's shattered economy, securing a democratic framework for the country and the continent at large.[557] Thus, despite their ideological differences, all these factions in the PSLI seemed to converge on recognizing the Marshall Plan as a crucial opportunity for Italy and Europe, tying it to their broader vision of European unity. However, this early hope for unity proved misplaced, as subsequent events shattered the fragile consensus. Divisions soon emerged, particularly concerning the definition and role of a "Third Force" in both domestic and foreign politics.

[553] See Daniele Pipitone, "'Italia Socialista' fra lotta politica e giornalismo d'opinione," *Annali della Fondazione Einaudi* 45 (2011): 81.
[554] Ibid., 122-3.
[555] See Michele Donno, "Il piano Marshall e la «parabola terzaforzista» del Partito socialista dei lavoratori italiani," *Ventunesimo Secolo* 6, no. 13 (June 2007): 154.
[556] Mondolfo, "L'ora della decisione".
[557] Donno, "Il piano", 159-60.

III—The Splintering of the Third Force: Federalist Strategy versus Socialist Tradition

At first glance, there seemed to be consensus on European unity—but deeper ideological splits quickly came into view. The primary dividing line lay between Saragat's PSLI and the rest of the unaffiliated democratic socialists. Unsurprisingly, when it came to Europe, Spinelli voiced the PSLI's realist line with sharp clarity. Spinelli viewed the Marshall Plan as a crucial opportunity for Europe to assert its autonomy *within* the U.S.-led alliance. He believed the recovery program was necessary, but only if Europe established a strong supranational authority to administer it politically, not just economically. He believed only a "United States of Europe" could stop totalitarianism from rising again. Furthermore, Europe must federate to avoid either renewed U.S. isolationism or American hegemony over Europe.[558] In a letter to Saragat, he expressed his full agreement with the idea of rebuilding a democratic Europe under the framework of the Marshall Plan. He thought this could finally give the PSLI "the political momentum it previously lacked."[559]

Not everyone agreed with Spinelli—his stance stirred up real debate among socialists. One notable discussion, in particular, with Tito De Stefano, editor of the Venetian *Il Mattino del Popolo* (The Morning of the People), gave Spinelli a platform to present his vision clearly. De Stefano challenged Spinelli, arguing that the U.S. alliance threatened to subordinate Europe to American capitalist interests. Spinelli, by contrast, defended a more pragmatic approach, asserting that the U.S. alliance was necessary for Europe's recovery and a step toward the creation of a federal Europe, ultimately capable of standing on its own as a "Third Force" between the two superpowers.[560] In Spinelli's view, hoping Europe could act on its own while the confrontation between the U.S. and Russia kept escalating was wishful thinking. The continent was still grappling with economic devastation and Germany remained under joint occupation. Furthermore, the division of Europe into two blocs had by now become an established reality, and attempting to keep the door open for collaboration with the communist East was, at this point, futile. The argument laid bare Spinelli's habit of always choosing pragmatism over orthodoxy. For him, arguably more than anyone else in the socialist federalist camp, European unification was the

[558] 'L'avvenire dell'Europa dipende soltanto dagli europei', *L'Italia Socialista,* September 2, 1947, not signed.
[559] Spinelli to Saragat, October 1947. Spinelli's letter was included by his wife Ursula in a letter to Ernesto Rossi from October 11, describing the couple's stances on international politics. HAEU/ER-59.
[560] See Spinelli, "Discussione sulla Terza Forza", in *Europa Terza Forza*, 101.

ultimate cause, with all other concerns considered secondary and contingent upon achieving this goal, "a center of action and attraction in its own right."[561]

Spinelli's ability to adjust, both intellectually and strategically, allowed him to respond quickly to international shifts and adapt his tactics accordingly. He was quicker and clearer in recognizing that aligning with the Western democratic camp was a sensible choice, particularly to benefit from the material and institutional support of the USA.[562] In this, he most closely resembled Saragat, although for Saragat, anticommunism had by then become his primary ideological driver, as he worked to distance the PSLI from the PSI and expand the grip of the party on Italian politics.[563] Both were willing to set aside long-held ideological tenets of socialist political tradition, particularly the opposition to collaboration with a power perceived as imperialistic, if it meant advancing their higher goals. At home, this meant backing the Christian Democrats—even if it ruffled feathers on the left. The goal was to bring the DC's populist left-wing current closer to the progressive democratic aims of the socialist left.

Spinelli contrasted the Italian situation with France, where Blum was building a government of the "Third Force" as an alternative to Gaullism on the right and communism on the left. In Italy, however, the third option would have to emerge under the umbrella of American support, in collaboration with the democratic left in the Christian Democratic Party, to prevent the reactionary and undemocratic right wing of the DC from threatening Italian democracy and its place inside the Western realm.[564] Navigating between the Scylla of ideological purity and the Charybdis of political pragmatism, Spinelli used federalism as his compass, seeking to balance U.S. influence (through the Marshall Plan) while steering Europe toward unity. However, as with Odysseus, Spinelli's cunning sometimes led him astray, undermining the political cohesion essential for his success.[565] His boldness came at a price: he began to lose touch with the broader left. This shift that ultimately eroded his political influence.

Spinelli's willingness to collaborate with the Christian Democrats also reflected his limited commitment to socialism *per se*. In a letter to Rossi in August 1947, Ursula Spinelli reaffirmed the principles first articulated by her husband and Rossi in the *Ventotene Manifesto*. She argued that

[561] Spinelli, *Diario*, 29.
[562] Ibid., 66.
[563] Pipitone, *Il Socialismo*, 287.
[564] Altiero Spinelli, "Un Altro Passo Verso l'Unità," *L'Italia Socialista*, May 18, 1948.
[565] John Pinder, "Altiero Spinelli's European Federal Odyssey," *The International Spectator* 42, no. 4 (2007): 491–505.

both left- and right-wing blocs were fundamentally reactionary. The real conflict remained that between totalitarianism and democracy.[566] Altiero Spinelli viewed efforts toward socialist unity pursued by *L'Italia Socialista* and other groups as fundamentally toothless, given the absence of a cohesive socialist policy. Instead, he sought to rally a diverse constellation of leftist forces around the necessity of forming a constructive democratic coalition. This alliance, he argued, should include Christian Democrats from the party's left wing (Giovanni Gronchi, Domenico Ravaioli), socialist autonomists (Ivan Matteo Lombardo, Aldo Garosci), and liberal republicans (Giulio Carandini, Ugo La Malfa).[567]

The Spinellis conceived the "Third Force" as broad in scope, not just domestically. They viewed European federalism as the only sturdy vessel to navigate Cold War waters, with Italian domestic politics playing a secondary role. At a time when the inclusion of Eastern European countries in the federalist project was still under debate, particularly among the left, Spinelli had no qualms about aligning himself with the leadership of the Union of European Federalists (UEF), especially Henri Brugmans, who believed that the European project had to begin in the West. This position, which, as we will see, emerged at the Montreux Congress of the UEF in the summer of 1947, strengthened Spinelli's convictions.[568] Inside the European Federalist Movement, Spinelli's position caused a stir—some even called it a "scandal."[569] Rossi and Spinelli had only recently regained control of the MFE from the radically left-wing group around Umberto Campagnolo.

However, Ursula Spinelli's criticisms were really directed at Ignazio Silone in his role as a member of the MFE. It was in the federalist organizations that the differing views amongst socialists Europeanists caused more discord. Although Silone held orientations akin to those of the Spinelli-Rossi bloc, he was accused of being too compromising toward the socialist camp on the federalist issue. In the run-up to Montreux, Rossi also rebuked Silone's stance in the MFE in a letter to Ursula. Silone warned against leaning too far toward the right-wing vision of figures like Coudenhove-Kalergi or Churchill. He viewed them as a mere guise for blatant anti-communism. He also contended that the MFE should avoid treating Europe's division as an irreversible reality, instead advocating for keeping a door open to the East.[570] For Rossi and Spinelli, instead, the MFE

[566] Ursula Spinelli to Ernesto Rossi, August 20, 1947. HAEU/ER-59.
[567] Spinelli, *Diario*, 27.
[568] Address given by Henri Brugmans (Montreux, August 1947)
[569] Ursula Spinelli to Ernesto Rossi, August 20, 1947. HAEU/ER-59.
[570] Ernesto Rossi to Ursula Spinelli, August 13, 1947. Now in Rossi, *Epistolario*, 87.

should no longer conceal the existing conflicts in the socialist camp but instead use the federalist issue to exacerbate them and create a new grouping much more aligned with their Europeanist commitments.[571]

Rossi and Spinelli's criticism of Silone showed just how frustrated they were with the socialist left's ambiguity regarding the European question. Their comments were often marked by disparagement and disapproval. Much like how harsh criticism is often directed at those we care for the most, Rossi and Spinelli attacked their political side, believing it was falling short in facing the greatest challenge of the era. In a public speech reported on *L'Italia Socialista*, Rossi described federalism as "the modern translation of that internationalism which has always been, and still remains [...] one of the essential aspects, one of the most progressive demands of modern socialism." But the socialists needed to accept that they had to move away from the old internationalist idea that the socialist revolution had preeminence over federal unification. If socialism had to come first everywhere, they feared, neither goal would ever come. Instead, "it would lead to a third world war, resulting in the unity of Europe under the hegemony of the victorious state."[572] Rossi was repeating the old lesson presented by Eugenio Colorni in his introduction to the 1944 edition of the *Ventotene Manifesto*, a lesson that the left continued to sideline.

In contrast to Spinelli and Rossi's federalist "maximalism," a figure such as Ignazio Silone remained deeply committed to socialist ideology, particularly its ethical and moral dimensions, which he saw as essential to its true purpose. As expressed in a piece for the journal of the Italian anarchists *Volontà*, Silone grappled with the contradictions between his commitment to socialism and the practical realities of international politics. He remarked on the moral compromises that socialism would need to make to avoid being swallowed by either the capitalist West or the Soviet-dominated East.[573] Spinelli and Rossi could advocate for a strong alignment with Western powers without feeling that they were sacrificing their core beliefs. Silone, on the other hand, struggled to square his socialist convictions with the compromises collaboration with capitalist systems required. As he later confessed in a letter to the American writer and political commentator Walter

[571] Rossi to U. Spinelli, August 13, 1947.
[572] Ernesto Rossi, 'Socialismo e Federalismo', *L'Italia Socialista*, February 8, 1948. "[…] il federalismo […] può considerarsi oggi la traduzione, in termini moderni, di quell'internazionalismo che è sempre stato e resta ancora […] uno degli aspetti essenziali, una delle esigenze più progressive del socialismo moderno." "Arriveremmo ad una terza guerra mondiale, che porterebbe all'unità dell'Europa sotto l'egemonia dello stato vincitore."
[573] Ignazio Silone, "Messa a punto," *Volontà* 2, no. 2 (August 1947).

Lippmann, the "unfortunate fact" that for a large portion of Italian public opinion, "there has arisen the myth of a close solidarity between the USA and the Right" deeply concerned him.[574] This sensibility drove his need to position himself and his political allies in an almost impossible balancing act between collaboration with the Western bloc and maintaining a credible left-wing posture.

The distinction between Silone, and more broadly, those who chose to remain outside the PSLI and PSI, and the older federalists of Ventotene, had already become clear during a conference on European federalism organized by Ernesto Rossi in Rome in October 1947. Rossi intended this event to build momentum for his and Spinelli's efforts to reclaim leadership of the MFE. The *Europa Federata* conference was attended by prominent intellectuals from the Italian antifascist milieu and key figures involved in postwar reconstruction, including Ferruccio Parri, Piero Calamandrei, Luigi Einaudi, Gaetano Salvemini, and Silone. Rossi opened the conference by reiterating the core idea that had inspired the early days of the Movimento Federalista Europeo during the Resistance: "The dividing line between progressive and reactionary forces today runs between federalism and nationalism. The imperatives of international politics now outweigh those of domestic politics."[575] Rossi emphasized that only those willing to engage internationally to promote the creation of a political federation in Europe could claim to pursue truly progressive and democratic politics.

In contrast, Silone's speech was entirely focused on socialism as the driving force "for the reconstruction and unification of our Continent." For Silone, addressing the current challenges from a European perspective necessitated "an appeal to socialism; [...] a call to remind socialism of its history, its nature, and its true mission."[576] Like Rossi, Silone acknowledged that concrete initiatives for European unity or the federation of European peoples could render the traditional labels of 'right' and 'left' in political parties increasingly arbitrary. However, he also invoked the revolutionary spirit that had animated socialist federalism during the Resistance, drawing extensively from Eugenio Colorni and even quoting Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the father of nineteenth century socialist federalism. For Silone, socialist unity was a necessary foundation for

[574] Ignazio Silone to Walter Lippmann, April 24, 1949, FSSFT, *Fondo Silone Ignazio*, Box 11, Folder 23.
[575] Parri et al., *Europa Federata*. 8-9. "La linea di divisione tra forze progressive e reazionarie passa oggi fra federalismo e nazionalismo."
[576] Parri et al., *Europa Federata*, 47-8. "[…] la ricostruzione e l'unificazione del nostro Continente." "[…] un appello al socialismo […] richiamare il socialismo alla sua storia, alla sua natura, alla sua vera missione […]"

the success of European federalism. However, his intervention left the challenge of reconciling these two objectives in a practical and cohesive socialist movement unaddressed.

Silone envisioned socialist unity in a broader sense, one that transcended the confines of formal organizations. His experiences during the interwar period and involvement with the PCI had left a lasting impact, instilling a deep skepticism toward political parties, which he viewed as fertile grounds for moral corruption, blind adulation, and abuses of power that stifled individual freedom. This disillusionment led him to explore alternative avenues for political engagement, most notably through literature.[577] As already mentioned, in the early 1930s, Silone had gained international recognition for his novels, which seamlessly combined social criticism with humanistic themes. His literary fame continued to grow as he emerged as a leading advocate for democratic socialism. His critiques of Stalinism and totalitarianism aligned him with influential intellectuals such as George Orwell and Arthur Koestler.[578] However, Silone's socialism was fundamentally rooted in spiritual concerns over strictly political ones.[579] His call for a renewed approach to politics conveyed a sense of moral urgency that often clashed with the compromising nature of party politics. This attitude frequently irked ultra-pragmatists like Rossi and Spinelli.

In a 1949 speech at PEN International, Silone underscored the need to prioritize society's welfare over electoral maneuvering, highlighting a profound tension in his thought. While his ecumenical vision of socialism sought to transcend rigid political frameworks, he acknowledged that party structures remained essential for articulating, and then advancing, political objectives.[580] In fact, Silone devoted the final years of his political life to the effort of regrouping the democratic left. In 1948, he participated in the creation of the Union of Socialists (Unione dei Socialisti, UdS). The group emerged around Ivan Matteo Lombardo, who had left the PSI after its decision to run with the PCI on a unified ticket for the April 1948 national elections.[581] The UdS absorbed many figures from the constellation of Italian liberal and democratic socialism who had remained unaffiliated, including Paolo Vittorelli, Aldo Garosci, Tristano Codignola, and Piero Calamandrei. All shared a strong socialist federalist vision, which shaped the party's positions. In this context,

[577] See especially Ignazio Silone's chapter in *The God That Failed: Six Studies in Communism,* ed. Richard Crossman (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), 76–115.
[578] Maria Nicolai Paynter, *Ignazio Silone: Beyond the Tragic Vision* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 125–27 and 159–61.
[579] See, for example, his speech at the First Congress for Cultural Freedom in Berlin in 1950, as reported in *Lotta Socialista,* August 5, 1950.
[580] Ignazio Silone, "La società è il nostro destino," *Il Ponte,* October 1949
[581] Pipitone, *Il Socialismo*, 43-7.

the Party sought to revive the "Third Force" vision in its original left-wing incarnation. Their goal was to establish a "third bloc" of peaceful, socially democratic nations that would remain independent of the escalating Cold War confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union.[582]

For die-hard socialists like Silone, or Vittorelli and Garosci, the European "Third Force" vision was underpinned by a symmetrical understanding of domestic politics. This perspective postulated the necessity of a fully independent socialist group: broad enough to challenge the communists for the working-class vote on the left and strong enough to operate independently from the Christian Democrats on the right. With this set goal, in late 1949, the UdS absorbed more disillusioned members of Italian socialism, including committed Europeanists Giuseppe Faravelli, Ugo Guido Mondolfo, and Mario Zagari, who had resigned from the PSLI in protest against Saragat's increasingly pro-government orientation, especially regarding the emerging issue of NATO. Renamed the Unitary Socialist Party (Partito Socialista Unitario, PSU), Silone and Lombardo's movement launched yet another "Third Force" initiative.[583] However, the unity proclaimed in the party's name remained largely rhetorical.

After its failure in the 1948 elections, the PSI underwent a leadership reshuffle, with Nenni being replaced by the autonomists Alberto Jacometti and Riccardo Lombardi. Silone believed it was the right time to reunify the socialist movement by reestablishing ties with the PSI, though not with the PSLI. As Silone's collaborator Tristano Codignola observed in a private letter, any willingness to negotiate with Saragat's PSLI would be "disastrous" for the efforts to recompose a fully independent socialist movement.[584] The sheer popular magnitude of the new political axis, centered around the PSI and PSU, would naturally attract the PSLI without requiring any compromise with its ultra-centrist line. However, Jacometti's tenure as Secretary was brief; he was soon replaced by Nenni, who reinstated his old pro-communist stance. In less than a year, Silone's efforts collapsed, leaving a legacy of internal divisions. Vittorelli and Garosci disapproved of Silone's increased openness to dialogue with the PSI and saw the potential of a fully independent "Third Force" as exhausted. They accused Silone and Codignola of trying to undermine the cohesion of the democratic left, leading to a temporary break in their collaboration.[585]

[582] Pipitone, *Il Socialismo,* 176.
[583] Pipitone, *Il Socialismo*, 217-225.
[584] Tristano Codignola to Ignazio Silone, April 1, 1950, FSSFT, Silone fond, Box 12, Folder 74.
[585] Ignazio Silone to Walter Binni, August 26, 1948, FSSFT, Silone fond, box 1, folder 10.39.

Silone's tactics during this period made him appear untrustworthy or inconsistent to his fellow socialists. Ernesto Rossi even coined the term "siloneggiamento" ("silonizing") as a metaphor for obstructing crucial political decisions.[586] The North Atlantic Treaty brought the tension between Silone's "spiritual socialism" and the more pragmatic wing of the Italian left to breaking point. Saragat sought to guide the PSLI towards a favorable stance on the Treaty, connecting the military alliance to the need for a federal European structure.[587] Spinelli also considered NATO "undoubtedly a second great opportunity for unification" following the launch of the Marshall Plan.[588]

Conversely, Silone expressed a clear opposition to military pacts and emphasized that the role of Italian socialism was to advance a genuinely European policy rooted in socialist principles.[589] Debates inside the PSU grew increasingly fraught, leading Silone to leave the movement in the summer of 1950 to give the rest of the movement free rein to determine its position on the issue. Ultimately, the PSU was compelled to reckon with the unyielding logic of the new geopolitical landscape, gradually reconsidering its increasingly isolated stance and accepting the Atlantic Pact. This process culminated in its unification with the PSLI to form the Socialist Party—Italian Section of the Socialist International (Partito Socialista—Sezione Italiana dell'Internazionale Socialista, PS—SIIS) on May 1, 1951.[590] Silone's moral rigidity effectively bypassed the necessary acknowledgment of political compromise, but it was he who ultimately paid the price.

At the time of the merging of the two sections of Italian democratic socialism, Silone had re-entered the Party, eventually gravitating toward a more pragmatic approach. His reconsideration coincided with a new phase for Italian socialism, one in which European federalism had to be sacrificed on the altar of domestic political cohesion. The dream of a socialist-driven unification of the continent had lost much of its early post-war momentum. Economic initiatives like the European Coal and Steel Community gained prominence, but these were rooted in the functional

[586] Riccardo Bauer to Ernesto Rossi, January 3, 1948. HAEU/AS-11.
[587] Pipitone, *Il Socialismo*, 71.
[588] Altiero Spinelli, "Un'Europa da farsi," *Il Mondo,* May 21, 1949: "Il Patto Atlantico è indubbiamente una seconda grande opportunità di unificazione."
[589] Pipitone, *Il Socialismo*, 176.
[590] Pipitone, *Socialismo*, 240.

approach, stressing sectorial cooperation over socialist federalist ideals.[591] Most importantly, they had been supported by Christian Democratic leaders more than social democrats.[592]

Even bringing up the viability of a "Third Force," while the PS-SIIS was attempting to consolidate its electoral base after years of fragmentation, risked reopening old wounds. Neither the pragmatists like Rossi and Spinelli, nor the idealists like Silone, or to a lesser extent Vittorelli and Garosci, had succeeded in promoting a compelling vision for Italian socialism centered on the European project, around which the independent left could unite. The debate over the Atlantic Treaty finally pointed to Saragat's use of Europeanism as a façade for his ambition to firmly align Italy with the Western bloc, with no room for compromise with the East. By then, Saragat had become a staunch "Cold Warrior", and any European option could only happen alongside a close economic, diplomatic, and military collaboration with the US.[593]

Consequently, discussions on federalism in Italian socialism faded, signaling the end of efforts, first seen during the antifascist resistance, to reshape the European polity and establish an independent "Third Force" aligned with a strong, domestic left-wing bloc. Italian socialist federalists would have to wait until the 1960s to see a revival of Europeanist interest, driven by the success of early economic integration initiatives such as the ECSC and the European Economic Community. These supranational agreements showed that economic cooperation could support a modern welfare state without radical political upheavals or compromising national priorities.[594]

The European question, while largely avoided in Italian domestic politics, remained significant on a transnational level. Ironically, the same individuals divided by fierce party disputes at home continued to find some common ground in the Movimento Federalista Europeo. Through this organization, they collaborated with major international movements advocating European federalism, such as the Union of European Federalists and the Mouvement Socialiste pour les

[591] See Kiran Klaus Patel, *Project Europe: Myths and Realities of European Integration,* trans. Meredith Dale (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 105-7.
[592] See Kaiser, *Christian Democracy*, 245.
[593] Saragat was more of a Cold Warrior compared to other European socialist figures like Schumacher or Mollet, as identified by Brian Shaev. Unlike Schumacher and Mollet, who were initially hesitant about joining an anti-USSR military alliance, Saragat had no such reservations. See Shaev, *Estrangement*, 151.
[594] Pietro Nenni began to embrace European integration in the early 1960s, after the PSI collaboration with the PCI ended following the 1956 Hungarian invasion. During Nenni's tenure as Vice Prime Minister (1963–1968), Altiero Spinelli served as his advisor. For more on this, see Giovanni Scirocco, "Il PSI dall'antiatlantismo alla riscoperta dell'Europa," 135–204, and Piero S. Graglia, "Altiero Spinelli tra atlantismo e Terza Forza: De Gasperi, Eisenhower, Nenni (1948–1969)," 293–330, both in Piero Craveri and Gaetano Quagliariello, eds., *Atlantismo ed europeismo* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2003).

États-Unis d'Europe. Beyond Italy, efforts to establish a political structure for the continent persisted in their original form until 1954, though they were marked by intense disagreements and declining effectiveness. It is to this broader context that we now turn.

IV—Transnational Efforts and Contested Visions: Rekindling Federalist and Socialist Ties.

The establishment of the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) in 1948, spurred by the launch of the American Marshall Plan, felt like a step forward in fostering European unity.[595] By encouraging intergovernmental collaboration on economic reconstruction, the OEEC offered a working structure for cooperation among Western European states.[596] To many Western socialists, it seemed a worthwhile instrument for pushing European integration forward. That said, only a handful—mostly Italian—called for real "federal power."[597] Against this backdrop, initiatives like the First Congress of the Union of European Federalists in Montreux and public support from prominent political leaders such as Winston Churchill, Konrad Adenauer, and Alcide De Gasperi took center stage. Montreux marking the first major international event in which Rossi and Spinelli actively participated. Their professed goal was to reassert their influence in international federalist politics. Montreux was preceded by a trip taken by Altiero and Ursula Spinelli to England and France to gauge the sentiment on European unity and revive old connections.

At first glance, Britain seemed to have potential for European collaboration. But appearances can deceive. In early 1947, the first meeting of the Provisional Committee of Study for the United Socialist States of Europe, which later morphed into the Movement for the Socialist United States of Europe, was held in London, chaired by Bob Edwards of the Independent Labour Party.[598] In the summer of that year, a group of Labour backbenchers published the "Keep Left" pamphlet, urging the Attlee government to support a "third force" independent of both the U.S. and the USSR, reflecting widespread interest in international cooperation within the Labour

[595] Kaiser, *Christian Democracy*, 3.
[596] Patel, *Project Europe,* 37.
[597] Mario Zagari, 'Il Socialismo Italiano e L'Europeismo', in *I socialisti e l'Europa*, 251.
[598] 'Comité d'études et d'action pour les États Unis Socialistes d'Europe, Réunion du Comité International, 1947', HAEU/ME0368.

movement.[599] In London, Altiero Spinelli met with the key figure behind "Keep Left," Richard Crossman, as well as John Parker of the Fabian Society, Denis Healey, John Hind, Miss Josephy of Federal Union, publisher Victor Gollancz, and representatives of the Socialist Vanguard Group (SVG). However, Crossman poured cold water on Spinelli's hopes of gaining Labour support for European integration. He acknowledged the risks his country faced due to its heavy reliance on America but wrote off the idea of a European policy for Britain. Crossman warned that even hinting at shared sovereignty would be a political no-no. It would be seen as undermining the economic progress made by the Bevin government so far, a view echoed by both Healey and Parker.[600]

France proved no easier. The Spinellis arrived hopeful, but what they found wasn't promising. The federalist landscape had shifted significantly since their last visit in 1945. They had hoped to rekindle ties with their old acquaintances from the French Resistance, who might have gained influence in the country's political life, and, through them, infuse federalist ideals into the left-wing parties. However, their friends who had been most sensitive to federalist issues such as André Ferrat, Pierre Brizon, Albert Camus, and François Bondi, remained on the political sidelines, hesitant to commit and "rather skeptical" of the Spinellis' plans.[601] The couple found a shared federalist impulse with Alexandre Marc, leader of the nascent UEF, though, unlike them, he remained committed to keeping the door open to Eastern countries. As for the rest, the kind of federalism professed by members of the traditional parties appeared more like a façade for national positions than a genuine internationalist commitment. Ursula concluded her letter to Rossi with a caustic remark about their upcoming mission in Montreux: "Will we succeed, or will we be drowned out by more or less generic professions of faith?"[602]

Rossi's response to Ursula revealed his skepticism toward the Italian federalists as well, with Silone being again the primary target of his criticism. As discussed, Silone wanted the MFE to reject Churchill's anti-Russian agenda and by refusing to accept the division of Europe into two opposing blocs as inevitable. The upcoming Congress should sanction an amicable stance towards the East, using language that could still invite democratic forces in countries like Poland,

[599] See Schneer, *Hopes*, 207-8.
[600] Ursula Spinelli to Ernesto Rossi, August 6, 1947. HAEU/ER-59.
[601] Ursula Spinelli to Ernesto Rossi, August 6, 1947. HAEU/ER-59.
[602] Ursula Spinelli to Ernesto Rossi, August 6, 1947. HAEU/ER-59. "Ci si riuscirà o si resterà sommersi da professioni di fede più o meno generiche?"

Czechoslovakia, and Romania to participate in federal unification. Rossi, perhaps more attuned to the geopolitical constraints of the time, took a markedly harder line. A European federation could not be open to collaboration with Russia because it was not a democratic state. Rossi was "uncomfortable" with the idea of advocating for a European bloc while leaving the boundaries of the federal union undefined, accusing Silone of attempting to "have one's cake and eat it too."[603] This accusation would resurface frequently during this period, undoubtedly rooted in Silone's often inscrutable and ambiguous positions.

Things didn't get any easier in Montreux, where new tensions flared up. The official launch of the Union of European Federalists was strongly influenced by proponents of the Personalist Movement, which Spinelli opposed. Personalism sought a "third way" between liberalism and socialism, emphasizing the transcendental dignity of the human person in contrast to materialist ideologies. Its principal inspirator. Applied to federalism, it championed decentralized democracy and community autonomy, proposing a "proudhonian" federated structure in which power would be distributed across intermediate political bodies such as the city or the region.[604]

At the Montreux Congress, the influence of Personalism was evident through the participation of French thinkers such as Robert Aron and Alexandre Marc from the group *La Fédération*, the Dutch intellectual Hendrik Brugmans, and the Swiss Denis de Rougemont. They advocated for an integration model that emphasized the pooling of national powers at local and regional levels, and paid less attention to the establishment of a strong centralized federal government. Rossi and Spinelli, however, resolutely opposed this vision as utopistic. Spinelli harbored a particular disdain for the "integralist" approach, which he described in his diaries as hodgepodge of "Catholic personalism, Proudhonian syndicalism, and fascist corporatism."[605] Unfortunately for Spinelli, the Montreux Congress kicked off a long fight between the "fédéralistes proudhoniens," led by André Voisin, a key figure in *La Fédération*, and Spinelli's "fédéralistes hamiltoniens," who campaigned for the creation of a strong supranational European government

[603] Ernesto Rossi to Ursula Hirschmann, August 13, 1947, in Rossi, *Epistolario*, 47.
[604] See Benedetto Zaccaria, "Personalism and European Integration: Jacques Delors and the Legacy of the 1930s," *Contemporary European History* 33, no. 4 (2024): 982–1001; Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle, "Aux origines du personnalisme," *Cahiers Mounier* no. 2 (2015): 83–97. The groundwork for the UEF was laid at a 1946 meeting in Hertenstein, Lucerne, where the Europa Union movement convened and founded the UEF. Earlier that year, the *Rencontres Internationales* (Geneva) had explored the idea of a "European spirit" amid the postwar turmoil. This gathering featured leading intellectuals such as Julien Benda, Georges Bernanos, Karl Jaspers, and Georg Lukács. It creating momentum for federalist ideas and attracting the attention of elite circles to the European problem.
[605] Spinelli, *Diario*, 173. "[…] incoerente mistura dottrinaria di personalismo cattolico, di sindacalismo proudhoniano e di corporativismo fascista."

with extensive powers. In the end, it was Voisin's more nebulous vision that carried the day. He successfully managed to get a UEF statute approved, culminating in a contentious statement: "True democracy must be an articulation of solidarities, rising from the base to the summit, and harmoniously organized at every level."[606]

Even so, their presence on the international stage paid off. It enabled them to regain a seat at the table in the federalist movement. In particular, Spinelli's alignment with Henri Brugmans' "starting from the West" policy presented at the Congress positioned him as a central figure in the emerging movement. This reacquired political capital helped them to regain control of the Movimento Federalista Europeo in Italy, which had become the Italian branch of the UEF. At the Milan Congress of the MFE in February 1948, Rossi's minority motion, opposing the inclusion of states with authoritarian governments in a future European federation, prevailed over the motion of Secretary-General Giacomo Devoto. Devoto's more open approach towards cooperation with the eastern bloc led to accusations of him being an "agent of the Communist Party."[607] Instead, the congress formally rejected the involvement of countries beyond the Iron Curtain, solidifying its commitment to Western alliances.[608] Once again, Rossi and Spinelli's won the argument. But in doing so, they burned more bridges than they crossed, especially with the left.

Behind the decision to draw a clear line between the Western and Eastern camps lay not merely practical necessity but a foundational principle of Rossi and Spinelli's federalist ideology. On a theoretical level, as Rossi argued, federalism properly understood required supranational representation for the peoples of Europe, not their governments or states. This mechanism could only function if citizens across all participating states enjoyed the freedom to elect their representatives and take part in the institutional processes of the federal government. Authoritarian regimes, by their very nature, were incapable of fulfilling these prerequisites and would instead insist on retaining unchecked power to appoint representatives to the federal state. In effect, this meant placing the old nation-state back at the steering wheel, undermining the entire premise of supranational governance and democratic representation.[609]

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[606] 'Resolution on General Policy (Montreux, 27–31 August 1947),' CVCE.eu, accessed December 7, 2024, https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/resolution_on_general_policy_montreux_27_31_august_1947-en-0c7f2f03-2bbc-4d3e-9084-a1a6c745a21a.html.
[607] Ursula Spinelli to Ernesto Rossi, January 4, 1948. HAEU/ER-59.
[608] 'Notiziario per la stampa,' February 17, 1948. HAEU/ER-30.
[609] Ernesto Rossi, "Andiamo al congresso di Milano," *Mondo Europeo*, February 15, 1948.

Rossi (and Spinelli) envisioned a federalism grounded in a democratic foundation, without which participation in the European Commonwealth would be unfeasible. This stance, deeply rooted in the genetic code of the MFE since World War II, was already explicitly articulated in the *Ventotene Manifesto*. It reflected the more teleological aspect of Rossi and Spinelli's vision. In their conception of progress, history advanced through distinct stages, moving from national to supranational democracy, rather than through successive modes of production or class dominance as outlined by orthodox Marxism. As already mentioned, however, Rossi and Spinelli's historicist understanding of supranational democracy did not fully escape the conceptual framework of the sovereign state. Although the two rejected nationalism, their project risked reproducing its dynamics. Their federal Europe still bore the fingerprints of the old state model, with central authority progressing in fixed stages. Their federalism harbored a paradox that was never fully addressed: it called for the overcoming of sovereignty while remaining conceptually confined by its institutional legacy.

Following the June 1948 Congress, at which Altiero Spinelli was elected Secretary-General of the MFE, he and Ernesto Rossi introduced a new bold and more "Hamiltonian" strategy: lobbying for the creation of a supranational constituent assembly to advance European integration. In Italy, they reconnected with a few key political contacts, leveraging relationships formed during the interwar and wartime years with notable figures such as Luigi Einaudi, now President of the Republic, and Carlo Sforza, Foreign Minister in De Gasperi's government, to advance their federalist vision. 1948 marked the beginning of what could be described as the "constitutional phase" of the Rossi-Spinelli duo's federalist efforts. During this period, they sought to act as "counselors to the prince" after the earlier revolutionary phase had proven ineffective.[610] On the international level, this approach involved using the MFE as a Trojan horse to penetrate the Union of European Federalists and steer it towards their top-down constitutional project. Spinelli strove to position himself as a key figure in Europeanist politics, thereby gaining a stronger voice to promote the MFE agenda.

Despite growing disillusion with the socialist movement, Spinelli insisted that the socialist elements in the MFE including himself, Rossi, and Silone, participate in the April Conference of Socialist Parties in Paris. The conference gathered socialist delegates to discuss a common approach to the Ruhr issue. Proposals for the creation of a supranational authority to administer it

[610] Graglia, *Spinelli*, 383.

would be advanced. Spinelli noted in a letter to Rossi and Silone that the conference would center on efforts by the French, Belgian, Dutch, and Italian socialists to push a federalist perspective against resistance from the British and Nordic socialists. It was crucial for the Italian delegation to present a clear federalist position to counter the nationalism of the Labour Party. To support this effort, Spinelli prepared a statement that he shared with André Ferrat to ensure wide distribution in Italy and France ahead of the conference.[611] Despite resistance from the British and German delegations, the French, with Blum in the lead, managed to get a resolution through that emphasized European economic integration and the creation of supranational political authorities.[612] Spinelli seemed genuinely encouraged, marking one of his increasingly rare approvals of actions taken by European socialists.[613]

The next significant milestone was the Congress of Europe, scheduled to take place in The Hague in May 1948, organized by the International Committee of the Movements for European Unity and presided over by Winston Churchill. The event brought to light the incompatibility of British collaboration on Europe between the Conservatives and the Labour Party. As early as January, Conservative M.P. Robert Boothby had warned Duncan Sandys, Churchill's son-in-law and one of the principal organizers of the Conference, that the "Socialist colleagues here in London" would likely boycott the event. Boothby expressed confidence that the Labour Party had not yet made a firm decision either way, but he cautioned that if the impression of non-participation gained traction, it might lead foreign Socialists to reconsider their involvement. He urged Sandys to reach out to Labour and Trade Union leaders to encourage their participation.[614] Despite Boothby's efforts, the NEC of the Labour Party forbade attendance by parliamentary members. This opposition was driven by concerns that Churchill would dominate the event and a lingering desire for the Labour government to assert Britain as a major power unconstrained by continental issues.[615] For the socialist federalists, this would, in time, prove to be the most challenging obstacle to overcome. Labour represented the successful democratic alternative that Western European socialists could offer in contrast to the Soviet experiment, and its stance had the potential to make or break left-wing support for the European project.

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[611] Altiero Spinelli to Ernesto Rossi and Ignazio Silone, undated but spring 1948. HAEU/AS-11.
[612] Imlay, *Practice*, 323.
[613] Altiero Spinelli, "Internazionale e Stati Uniti d'Europa," *L'Italia Socialista*, April 29, 1948.
[614] R. J. G. Boothby to Duncan Sandys, January 16, 1948. Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge, *The Papers of Lord Duncan-Sandys*, GBR/0014/DSND 9/1/6, *Hague Congress: Correspondence and Papers, 1948*.
[615] Schneer, *Labour*, 69-70.

The question of whether to participate in The Hague Congress and in what capacity was a significant dilemma also for the UEF. De Rougemont described the decision as "dramatic," reflecting the weight of the choice.[616] Should they collaborate with Churchill's United Europe Movement (UEM)? Or should they steer clear to avoid the danger of being reduced to mere pawns in conservative machinations? Ultimately, the UEF chose to participate, though their collaboration was marked by caution. Even a degree of pessimism. The Congress of May 1948 was unprecedented in its scope, gathering political leaders, intellectuals, and advocates for European integration. Key political figures included French representatives like Paul Reynaud and Pierre-Henri Teitgen, German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, and Italian Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi. For their part, Spinelli, Rossi, and Garosci carried the banner of Italy's left-liberal tradition that had been active during and after the war—fractured though it already was. Among its distinguished members were figures like Piero Calamandrei, Tristano Codignola, and Ivan Matteo Lombardo.[617]

Among the socialists, R. W. G. Mackay was one of the most outspoken and committed advocates for a strong European government. Going against the prevailing sentiment in his party, he pushed for a supranational authority with real powers to prevent another war on the continent. Mackay rejected the "illusions" of past approaches, such as collective security agreements and disarmament pacts, which he saw as ineffective.[618] He led the charge for the federalist faction against the unionists, including Churchill, who leaned toward a confederal model emphasizing intergovernmental cooperation. The differences between the ambitions of the UEF—advocating for an *États Généraux* of Europe, an assembly composed of delegates representing various sectors of society—and the objectives of the Unionists highlighted a fundamental tension in the early vision for European integration.[619] But the federalist camp itself remained divided along the previously mentioned lines: the more numerous "integralists" or "Proudhonians," represented by figures such as Alexandre Marc, and the "Hamiltonians," led by Spinelli and Rossi.

[616] de Rougemont, 'The Campaign", 336.
[617] The complete list of the delegations to The Hague Conference is in GBR/0014/DSND 9/1/6, *Hague Congress: Correspondence and Papers, 1948*.
[618] 'Congress of Europe. Plenary Session, Vol. II: Political Committee', GBR/0014/DSND 9/1/6, *Hague Congress: Correspondence and Papers, 1948*, at p. 15 and pp. 60-61.
[619] See Sergio Pistone, *The Union of European Federalists: From the Foundation to the Decision on Direct Election of the European Parliament (1946–1974)* (Milan: Giuffré, 2008), 42.

In the end, it was the moderate Unionists who came out on top. The Joint Committee formed for the Congress adopted what political leaders and parties deemed feasible: a political resolution emphasizing economic integration, the harmonization of social legislation, and the establishment of a European Court to safeguard human rights. The approach was pragmatic—starkly so. For the federalists, it stood in contrast to everything they had worked for, chiefly a European assembly vested with constitutional powers.[620] Federalist ideals were only superficially reflected in the resolution, with limited references to the transfer of sovereign rights to a collective authority and the recognition of common citizenship without compromising national identity.[621] The political resolution employed the ambiguous phrase "union or federation" to outline Europe's future.[622] Churchill's proposal for a "Council of Europe" set in Strasbourg, too, remained vague, potentially a consultative body with no real powers, composed of national parliamentary appointees. It was, for better or worse, the triumph of unionism. The federalists were left to contend with unfulfilled aspirations for transformative integration.[623]

Despite the setback for the federalists, Spinelli, surprisingly, still sounded optimistic. The most promising aspect of the European Assembly proposed at The Hague was its origin in national parliaments, ensuring it would not merely function as a private congress addressing public opinion. Instead, it would establish a democratic legal continuity, linking citizens, who elect parliamentary representatives, to the delegates elected to the European Assembly in Strasbourg.[624] For the federalist movement, it was crucial to seize this opportunity to secure the greatest possible autonomous power for the Assembly. Spinelli wholeheartedly championed this cause from that point forward, particularly after the Belgian socialist Prime Minister, Paul-Henri Spaak, was elected as its president.[625]

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[620] Patel, *Project Europe*, 123. See also Michel Guieu and Christophe Le Dréau, *Le Congrès de l'Europe à La Haye* (Brussels and New York: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2009).
[621] Patel, *Project Europe*, 35.
[622] Congress of Europe, *Political Resolution of the Hague Congress (7–10 May 1948)*, London-Paris, International Committee of the Movements for European Unity, pp. 5–7, accessed December 2, 2013, http://www.cvce.eu/obj/political_resolution_of_the_hague_congress_7_10_may_1948-en-15869906-97dd-4c54-ad85-a19f2115728b.html.
[623] On the triumph of the conservative vision, see also Marco Duranti, *The Conservative Human Rights Revolution: European Identity, Transnational Politics, and the Origins of the European Convention* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).
[624] Altiero Spinelli, 'Poca Europa a Strasburgo', *Il Mondo*, August 13, 1949.
[625] Altiero Spinelli, 'Lettera Federalista Nr. 1', *Bollettino del Movimento federalista europeo*, No. 1, July 6, 1948.

Spinelli convinced the UEF to launch a Europe-wide petition for the swift approval of a "European Federal Pact."[626] The petition was to be addressed to the Strasbourg Assembly and national parliaments. This initiative, undertaken in close collaboration with Spaak, advocated for the transfer of national sovereignty to a supranational European federation through democratic means, ensuring that the Assembly could act as the foundation for a genuinely united and federal Europe. The federalists aimed to demonstrate that it was possible to transition from the "current state of anarchy" to a federation by convening an assembly of representatives. Relying on traditional diplomatic conferences meant putting narrow national interests in the middle, once again.[627]

Spinelli also worked to advance his Federal Pact through the socialist network. The MSUSE, now rebranded Socialist Movement for the United States of Europe (SMUSE) under the moderate leadership of the French André Philip, became the go-to platform for socialist federalist advocacy, particularly as Comisco grappled with British and Scandinavian euro-skepticism.[628] In the SMUSE Bulletin, Spinelli highlighted the Federal Pact, framing the constituent path as the cornerstone for achieving social democratic progress across Europe.[629] Later, at the third congress of the Movement in Paris, Spinelli sought to rally French support by invoking the historic struggle of Socialists during the Dreyfus Affair. Citing Jaurès' decision to lead the fight for the democratic Republic, Spinelli ended with a stirring question: "Are we capable of rallying and mobilizing enough socialist and non-socialist elements to create the initial nucleus of the United States of Europe?"[630] The most contentious aspect of his speech clearly lay in the call to mobilize non-socialist groups, particularly the Christian Democrats. While Spinelli stuck with working alongside European socialists, he firmly believed *they* should align with his federalist vision. He was unwilling to compromise this goal to accommodate socialist demands.

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[626] Altiero Spinelli, 'L'Europa Scucita', *Il Mondo*, November 26, 1949.
[627] Aldo Garosci, 'Convegno sul Lago', *Il Mondo*, May 12, 1951.
[628] 'Rapport de l'assemblée générale du comité d'étude et d'action pour les États-Unis socialistes d'Europe — Puteaux — 22 juin 1948', HAEU/ME-0087. The most detailed study of SMUSE is Benjamin Heckscher, *The Socialist Movement for the United States of Europe: Transnational Socialism and the Launching of the Early European Institutions* (PhD diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, 2020). See also Heckscher and Milani, "Transwar Continuities" in *European Socialists,* digital edition, https://uolpress.co.uk/book/european-socialists-across-borders/.
[629] 'Le Pacte Fédéral Européen, rapport par A. Spinelli', *Bulletin du Mouvement Socialiste pour les États-Unis d'Europe*, July 1949, No. 1.
[630] 'IIIème Congrès, Paris 5,6,7 Novembre 1949', IISH/ARCH00907/3, p. 19ff.

At the Paris conference, Ignazio Silone took a more guarded position. Like Spinelli, he belonged to both the UEF and the SMEUE. But unlike Spinelli's unwavering commitment, Silone's tone was more hesitant. He spoke of a "general decline of European socialism." The cause, in his view, was what he called the *nationalisation du Socialisme*. Silone compared it to the bureaucratic takeover of industry: a shift that drained socialism of its ethical force, its capacity to transform. Altiero Spinelli had called for pragmatic measures. Silone, instead, mourned the loss of socialism's moral and revolutionary essence, cautioning against dismissing autonomous socialist ideals as mere utopianism. While Spinelli rallied his audience by invoking Jaurès' legacy and urging broad political collaboration to establish the foundation of a federal Europe, Silone focused on the need to reconnect with workers directly, arguing that the Movement's actions should be rooted in socialism's enduring principles.[631] Silone's intervention, marked by his distinctive literary flair, appeared more suited to a session of the Congress for Cultural Freedom or PEN International, organizations known for their intellectual and cultural focus on human rights, freedom of expression, and the moral dimension of political engagement. In a forum dedicated to developing practical socialist policies, however, his remarks came across as misplaced and presumptuous. This only reinforced Spinelli's observation that, for Silone, federalism operated merely as an extension of his socialism, not as an autonomous transformative force capable of fundamentally reshaping it.[632]

Around this time, an irreconcilable rift began to emerge between Spinelli and Rossi on one side, and Silone on the other. As discussed, for many "Third Force" activists in Italy, socialism and federalism no longer seemed to function as complementary principles, as they once had in the aspirations of *L'Italia Socialista*, *Europa Socialista*, and other democratic leftist groups. Instead, they survived as two distinct and increasingly divergent paths for constructing a system alternative to capitalism and communism.[633] Internationally, this division was most evident in the decline of the vision for a fully Socialist Europe, underscored by the self-imposed restraint of André Philip's SMUSE. Some, like Rossi and Spinelli, set aside the socialist question altogether, doubling down on their Europeanist efforts through the MFE and UEF. Others, such as Vittorelli and Garosci, almost entirely decoupled their work for the MFE from their socialist militancy in Italy, where the

[631] 'IIIème Congrès, Paris 5,6,7 Novembre 1949', IISH/ARCH00907/3, p. 19ff, 12.
[632] Spinelli, *Diario*, 34.
[633] Pipitone, *Il Socialismo*, 179.

question of European federalism was becoming increasingly contentious, especially in light of debates surrounding the Atlantic Treaty. Silone, in contrast, drastically veered toward a "third way," reframing his political concerns through the lens of a cultural battlefield.

By late 1950, Silone was leading the newly founded Italian Association for the Freedom of Culture (Associazione Italiana per la Libertà della Cultura, AFC), which operated within the broader international network of the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF). Established earlier that year in Berlin, the CCF brought together prominent Western intellectuals as a forum for anti-communist writers and artists to promote democratic ideals and freedom of expression.[634] From this point onward, Silone's politics would primarily manifest in this cultural milieu. The cultural sphere offered greater flexibility for his ecumenical vision of socialism, which the grind of party politics no longer seemed capable of accommodating.

At the Berlin conference, Silone gave a pointed address on the meaning of totalitarianism, reiterating his belief that the duty of free intellectuals was to defend society against the state, or, as he put it, "setting limits on politics." His words echoed Carlo Rosselli's 1934 reflections on the European revolutionary tradition of figures like Proudhon, Bakunin, and even Marx quoted in the introduction of this work: "Divided on tactics, they nonetheless agreed in rising against the State […] the enemy of Society."[635] For Silone, the space outside the control of the state and beyond politics as party practice was the realm of literary and artistic creation. It was in this space that the work of intellectuals could achieve genuine political significance and exert meaningful influence.[636]

Silone's growing disillusionment with party politics was clearly reflected in his literary work from this period. His first postwar novel, *A Handful of Blackberries* (1952), continued to explore the tension between personal duty and collective responsibility, a theme central to his earlier writings.[637] However, his engagement with Christian humanism and his examination of moral dilemmas now increasingly adopted a more universal tone, transcending immediate socio-political concerns. Silone denounced ideological orthodoxy as a corrupting force that undermined

[634] See Daniela Muraca, "L'Associazione italiana per la libertà della cultura: il caso italiano e il Congress for Cultural Freedom," *Storiografia* 11 (2007): 139–60.
[635] Carlo Rosselli, 'Contro lo Stato', *Giustizia e Libertà*, September 21,1934.
[636] Ignazio Silone, "Conferenza a Berlino al 'Congresso per la libertà della cultura'," *Lotta Socialista*, August 5, 1950. "[…] porre dei limiti alla politica"
[637] Ignazio Silone, *Una manciata di more* (1952; Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1993), 4.

moral integrity and falsified authentic human existence.[638] Although his immediate target remained the Communists, this work made plain his contempt for party obligations and hinted at a libertarian-anarchist perspective. One of the central elements of the story in *A Handful of Blackberries* is the farmhouse *Casale*, overseen by Zaccaria. The *Casale* functions almost as a rural anarchist commune, embodying a collective, anarchic spirit of defiance.[639] This supra-political universe mirrored the interests Silone increasingly pursued as he stepped back from active party engagement. As for the MFE and EUF—he stepped back. His letters slowed, then stopped altogether.

Silone had been a central figure in socialist Europeanism since the middle of the Second World War. As previously noted, he played a pivotal role in connecting the newly formed MFE with other European resistance groups and actively participated in early postwar activities, including direct involvement with *Europa Socialista*. His gradual estrangement from federalist initiatives deeply frustrated Rossi and Spinelli. Silone's international prominence, which rivaled that of other non-conformist socialist authors like Albert Camus and George Orwell, was also a setback for the federalist movement. At a time when the MFE/UEF was striving to gain maximum visibility for its Federal Pact campaign, Silone's withdrawal felt like a quiet betrayal—or worse, a deliberate one.

Rossi and Spinelli's disappointment with Silone shaped their response to the Federal Pact campaign in Italy. All roads led to Palazzo Sistina, in Rome, where the campaign finally made its big debut on November 4, 1950. Luigi Einaudi, by now President of the Italian Republic, and Alcide De Gasperi, attended the event alongside other prominent figures in Italian politics and culture, signing the petition. For the MFE, and Spinelli in particular, the event marked the successful culmination of a year of intense persuasion and propaganda efforts. It also achieved significant international resonance.[640] However, two notable absentees were Ignazio Silone and Giuseppe Saragat, despite their prior assurances of attendance. Silone's absence, in particular, was a personal affront to Spinelli, who had viewed his support as crucial to the campaign's legitimacy. His judgment of Silone was unflinching, even cruel. He saw in him "the ambition of an impotent man who wishes to control any initiative but, being incapable of doing so, is consumed by the

[638] Cf. Paynter, *Beyond,* 125.
[639] Silone, *Manciata*, 4.
[640] Nicoletta Mosconi, "Constituent Strategy and Constitutional Gradualism," *The Federalist: Journal of Federalism* 45, no. 3 (2003): 158.

desire to ruin the initiatives of others." He further called Silone a man "corroded by self-love and envy of those who are strong," citing his veto of Irving Brown and François Bondy's proposal to co-opt Spinelli into the committee for the Berlin Congress of the CCF.[641]

Spinelli attributed Silone and Saragat's absence to personal motives, but also to a deeper ideological issue. He argued that socialism had become "the great reactionary force of Europe," and "a movement culminating in nationalist degeneration, aiming [...] at the complete unification of society and state."[642] Paradoxically, Spinelli was distancing himself from socialism for reasons similar to those Silone had explored in his literary work. For both, socialism, as manifested in party politics, was becoming (or at risk of becoming) a totalitarian force, confining individual freedom to ideological constraints and petty tactical maneuvering. Ironically, however, Spinelli regarded Silone as the very embodiment of this degeneration of socialism.

Meanwhile, above the fray of the infighting within the MFE and the UEF, the European project began to follow an alternative path. The Schuman Declaration of May 1950 set in motion a vision for European integration rooted in a functionalist strategy, prioritizing economic cooperation over political integration and formalized in the 1951 Treaty of Paris. The establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community turned the tide in integration efforts, though it did not align with the broader political ambitions envisioned by "Third Force" federalists.[643] Still, Spinelli and Rossi saw a glimmer of hope. Maybe the ECSC could serve as a springboard for advocating a more comprehensive political structure.[644]

International developments catalyzed the UEF's campaign for a European Constituent Assembly, formally launched at the International Conference of Lugano in April 1951.[645] Rossi and Spinelli worked relentlessly to build political support, focusing particularly on France and Germany. Spinelli engaged directly with figures like Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet, hoping to capitalize on the momentum of the ECSC and advocating for the transformation of its institutions into a genuine federal structure. However, 1951 also highlighted the widening rift between federalists and socialists, with leaders like Guy Mollet favoring limited economic agreements and

[641] Spinelli, *Diario*, 64. "Si tratta dell'ambizione di un impotente, che vorrebbe aver lui in mano le fila di qualsiasi iniziativa, e che, non essendone capace, è preso dal desiderio di rovinare le iniziative altrui." "[…] roso dall'amore di sé stesso, e dall'invidia per chi è forte."
[642] Ibid., 64. "[…] movimento che porta a compimento la degenerazione nazionalista, mirando […] all'unificazione completa fra società e stato."
[643] Altiero Spinelli, "Presupposti del successo," *Europa Federata*, July 15, 1950.
[644] Altiero Spinelli, 'La Nature des Institutions Supranationales de la CECA', August 1950, HAEU/AS-14.
[645] The documents of the Conference were published in *Europa Federata*, vol. IV, no. 45, April 30, 1951.

resisting federalist proposals. Aldo Garosci captured this transformation in the SFIO: "Blum was a federalist, and Guy Mollet was a federalist," but the day Labour, within Comisco, raised the issue of their unwillingness to concede to supranational sovereignty, Mollet shifted his focus inward, prioritizing specialized authorities in the hope of securing British participation.[646] Once again, Western European socialism was demonstrating its inability to unite behind a single banner, whether for deeper integration or functionalist initiatives. In so doing, it ended up ceding the political terrain to the Christian Democrats.

By this point, major international events were setting the pace. The outbreak of the Korean War, which intensified fears of communist aggression in Europe, accelerated a shift toward supranational solutions. NATO's growing support for West Germany's rearmament, encouraged by Eisenhower, underlined just how vital initiatives like the ECSC and, later, the European Defense Community were, particularly from the French perspective. Concerns over German economic and military resurgence often outweighed hesitations about ceding sovereignty, while at the same time presenting a pathway to resolve Germany's international isolation.[647] French Prime Minister René Pleven's early proposal for a unified European army under supranational authority embodied this push for integration as a means to address national challenges. Spinelli, with his characteristic bluntness, remarked on the opportunity presented by the crisis: "If the current tension lasts another six months [...] perhaps we might be able to create Europe."[648]

The Treaty establishing the European Defence Community was signed in May 1952 by the six founding states of the ECSC: Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. The creation of the EDC highlighted the increasing need for a political framework to govern and legitimize such supranational initiatives, as outlined in Article 38.[649] In Strasbourg, Spaak successfully proposed that the Parliamentary Assembly of the ECSC be reconstituted as a special body to draft a federal constitution, and the idea was publicly endorsed by Alcide De Gasperi and Robert Schuman. In September, the Committee of Ministers initiated the establishment of an 'Ad Hoc' Assembly to lay the groundwork for a European Political Community (EPC). For Rossi and Spinelli, this Assembly was intended to play a role similar to

[646] Aldo Garosci, 'Convegno sul Lago', *Il Mondo*, May 12, 1951.
[647] Newman, *Socialism,* 29.
[648] Spinelli, *Diario*, 66.
[649] See Martin Trybus, "The Vision of the European Defence Community and a Common Defence for the European Union," in *European Security Law,* ed. Martin Trybus and Nigel White (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

the 1787 Constitutional Convention. It remained to be seen whether the 'Ad Hoc' group possessed the decisive leadership and vision of figures like Hamilton, Randolph, and Washington.[650]

It was an uphill battle, with leftist federalist efforts relying on the fragile and economically strained ranks of the UEF, which frequently clashed with the SMUSE despite overlapping memberships.[651] What had once been a broad movement in the late 1940s had gradually fragmented, losing many key figures along the way, including Silone. Only a small core of dedicated individuals persisted: Altiero Spinelli and Ernesto Rossi in Italy, Paul-Henri Spaak in Belgium, and Henri Frenay and André Philip in France. Despite facing significant challenges, including internal divisions and strained relationships with their respective national parties, they persevered in their efforts. This group now looked outside the socialist camp to Jean Monnet, the architect of the ECSC to accomplish their constitutional project. Monnet had sought Spinelli's collaboration to shape the ECSC's supranational structures in line with federalist principles, and Spinelli had authored the speech delivered at the ECSC's inaugural session on August 10, 1952.[652] Now, Spinelli called on Monnet to lead the final, desperate battle for a European Constitution—an attempt of which "it could not be said that, if it failed, further attempts would still be possible."[653]

Amid mounting challenges, the 'Ad Hoc' Assembly completed its work on the constitutional project in March 1953. The draft treaty proposed merging the powers and competencies of the ECSC and the EDC into a unified framework, establishing a legislative and constitutional cornerstone for the European Political Community.[654] Spinelli regarded this achievement as potentially revolutionary for Europe. The Council of National Ministers retained substantial authority, but the proposed structures could lay the groundwork for future integrationist advances.[655] Undoubtedly, Christian Democratic forces, particularly De Gasperi and Schuman, had been pivotal in driving the federalist agenda. However, the initiative relied on the efforts of

[650] Spinelli, *Diario*, p. 149.
[651] In the ranks of the SMEUE, Philip supported the ratification of the EDC; see his report 'Les Tâches du MSEUE', May 1953, HAEU/ME-359/6.
[652] See Michele Fiorillo, "Beyond the Declaration: Spinelli, Schuman, Monnet and the European Federation's Foundation," in *Beyond Robert Schuman's Europe – Citizen's Ideas and Historic Perspective for a Better Union,* ed. Cornelia Constantin et al. (The Prof. Bronisław Geremek Foundation, 2020), 41.
[653] Altiero Spinelli, 'Rapport sur les travaux des sous-commissions de l'Assemblée ad hoc', December 1952, HAEU/AS-14. "[…] une tentative […] dont on puisse dire que, si elle ne réussit pas, il sera possible de tenter encore d'autres essais." (My trans.).
[654] Pistone, *Union,* 72.
[655] Spinelli, *Diario*, 170-1.

socialist figures, such as Spaak and Spinelli, who played critical roles in backing De Gasperi and animating the Committee of Study that underpinned the 'Ad Hoc' Assembly's work.[656] If the project proved successful, it would bear the distinctive mark of the European left.[657]

The task fell to the six national parliaments to ratify the EDC Treaty and initiate European political unification. However, the international scenario no longer looked favorable for the federalists. The death of Stalin and the subsequent end of the Korean War significantly eased Cold War tensions. Russia was now entangled in an internal power struggle, and no longer appeared to be as formidable a threat. In France, Pierre Mendès-France rose to the role of Prime Minister, driven by a promise to reopen the debate on the EDC in the Assembly and explore alternative solutions.[658] Spinelli foresaw that if Mendès-France succeeded in forming the government, it would spell the complete collapse of his vision for European unity.[659]

On August 30, 1954, Pierre Mendès-France successfully led the French Parliament to reject the EDC. In response, the British government intervened, proposing a system of alliances as an alternative.[660] Meanwhile, Konrad Adenauer rejected the Bonn Treaty, which had aimed to end Germany's Occupation Statute by integrating the country into Western Europe. Instead, he demanded full and unconditional sovereignty for Germany.[661] These events created a perfect storm, marking a devastating defeat for European federalists.

By October 12, Mendès-France had accepted the formation of a German army and secured a vote of confidence in the French National Assembly. The Socialists, enticed by minor concessions on wage policy, voted unanimously in his favor. So ended that dream of unity that had begun with the Marshall Plan in June 1947. Not with a rupture, but with a shrug. For Spinelli, integration was no longer a question of "if," but of whether it had ever been possible at all. Disillusioned, he declared the federalist movement as it had been conceived to be obsolete, lamenting that true federalists across Europe could be counted on two hands.

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[656] Cf. Daniela Preda, "De Gasperi, Spinelli e l'Art. 38 della CED," *Il Politico* 54, no. 4 (152) (October–December 1989): 575–95.
[657] On the drafting and significance of the European Political Community, see especially Richard T. Griffiths, *Europe's First Constitution: The European Political Community, 1952–1954* (London: Federal Trust, 2000).
[658] See Linda Risso, *The (Forgotten) European Political Community (1952–1954)* (paper presented at the European Foreign Policy Conference, London School of Economics, London, July 2–3, 2004), 6, http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/intrel/EFPC/.
[659] Spinelli, *Diario*, 200.
[660] Risso, *The (Forgotten),* 7.
[661] Spinelli, *Diario*, 204.

V—Conclusions

By 1954, the dream of a socialist Third Force was unraveling. Its continental ambition, once shared among Europe's non-conformist socialists, was slipping away. As I argued in the previous chapter, this deterioration stemmed from the failure to reconcile federalist ambitions with the entrenched national priorities of European leftist parties. What was lacking was also the ability to construct a cohesive theoretical and ideological foundation for uniting Western European socialism. The UEF faced a significant crisis and eventual split, only founding its feet again in the early 1960s. Meanwhile, the SMUSE pivoted toward functionalist integration efforts, most notably supporting the "Messina Project," which ultimately led to the Treaties of Rome in 1957.

As the broader European project advanced along technocratic and pragmatic lines under Christian Democratic leadership, the vision of a socialist federalist Europe faded, leaving behind a fragmented and largely unrealized aspiration. Hopes for continental unification persisted but transitioned from a federalist foundation to a looser Europeanist framework. After 1954, Altiero Spinelli adjusted his strategy, embracing grassroots activism through initiatives like the European People's Congress, which drew inspiration from Gandhian methods of mass participation. Ernesto Rossi, on the other hand, distanced himself from active federalist advocacy altogether.

In Italy, the connection between the MFE and the socialist left endured, kept alive by figures such as Aldo Garosci and Paolo Vittorelli. However, a broader rapprochement between the political left and the European project only began in the 1960s. By that time, Ignazio Silone had withdrawn from active politics, devoting himself to cultural debates through his journal *Tempo Presente*, co-edited with Nicola Chiaromonte.

In hindsight, while the Europeanist endeavor managed to adapt and thrive, the federalist-socialist synthesis envisioned by Spinelli and his contemporaries effectively reached its endpoint. From this moment forward, the story of Europeanism became one of pragmatic alliances and economic integration, severed from the idealistic roots of postwar socialist federalism. Nevertheless, the questions they sought to address are still with us. They underpin many of the challenges the European Union faces today. Revisiting the history of "Third Force" socialists from this period offers an opportunity to critically rethink the path Europe has followed and possibly to explore fresh solutions for its future.

General Conclusion

Throughout this work, I have emphasized the importance of understanding the "Ventotene Moment" not simply the brainchild of a few prominent minds. It makes more sense to see it as the outcome of a broader political milieu. The "groupness" of "Third Force" antifascist exiles, I argue, lay in their capacity to act in concert and foster a shared sense of purpose around the issues of European federalism and socialism. All this while maintaining a high degree of internal diversity and respect for individual differences. Negotiating political like-mindedness remained a work in progress, and not always a successful one. In the case study presented here, prominent political figures, along with lesser-known socialists and federalists, engaged in joint political work, publishing efforts, and debates that crossed borders. Out of this emerged not neat agreement, but a workable kind of solidarity. Shared goals took precedence over ideological agreement. At the same time, the group's perceived cohesion was reinforced by external observers. From the fascist political police to the British intelligence services, interested groups slapped vague or misleading labels on these circles (*fuorusciti*, *kaffir*, and so on), further sharpening their self-perception. Focusing on this process lets us look again, more carefully, at how federalist and socialist ideas interacted in mid-twentieth-century Europe beyond the confines of individual contributions.[662]

During the 1930s and 1940s, this diverse constellation of dissenters, leftist nonconformists, and antifascist militants sought to reconceptualize socialism and forge a renewed political praxis for a democratic Europe. In practical terms, its aim was to forge a "Third Force" independent of both American-style capitalism and Soviet collectivism. The heretics of socialism thus developed a multifaceted political language that drew on the vocabulary and rhetoric of nineteenth century radicalism and socialism, from Saint-Simon and Proudhon to Cattaneo and Mazzini. Their ambition was to break free from the doctrinal rigidity of mass parties, which had become paralyzed by the relentless and manipulative exegesis of Marx's texts, and to reclaim the ideological vitality of the First International. Accordingly, they restored Karl Marx to the socialist tradition as one

[662] In this sense, I sought to extend Rogers Brubaker's insights from *Ethnicity without Groups* and Cooper and Brubaker's *Colonialism in Question* to the realm of intellectual production and its history.

thinker among many, not an unassailable prophet, displaying a striking boldness of thought, opening the way to a wealth of new political configurations.[663]

Viewing the world through the perspective of "Third Force" socialists served to reframe the dynamics of interwar and wartime Europe beyond the familiar binary of communism versus fascism and the conventional nation-state focus, unveiling a far more complex and diverse political landscape. By centering their anti-authoritarian socialism and federalist vision, the emergence of a new democratic outlook on the left becomes evident, rooted in a reimagining of political subjectivity, collective action, and European unity beyond dominant frameworks. This perspective provides a more accurate understanding of how political alternatives developed during the interwar period and constitutes a crucial piece of the larger puzzle of Europe's non-conformist leftist movements. At different moments, scholars such as Terence Renaud, Anne-Isabelle Richard, Jonathan Schneer, Mark Minion, R. M. Douglas, Francesca Tortorella, Andreas Wilkens, Antonella Braga, and others mentioned in this work, have sought to illuminate this unorthodox political constellation. However, a comprehensive overview remains much needed.[664]

This is also the story of how "Third Force" socialists fought to impose their vision on a world ravaged by war, genocide, displacement, and persecution. My work has followed them as they organized political action and raised their voices in the antifascist movement in exile. They did so while operating under dire conditions. Some languished in internal exile, smuggling clandestine letters and manifestos from remote villages and island prisons. Others operated from Switzerland, Egypt, or South America, producing documents, periodicals, or radio programs, whatever means their conditions permitted and their moment demanded. In offering this contextualization, I have given particular attention to the forms of communication they chose and the moments in which they deployed them, emphasizing how each was not merely a conduit of discourse but a distinct mode of political action. Manifestos framed possibilities of rupture and journals sustained networks of debate, enacting resistance through their very materiality.

The trajectory of the "Third Force" is marked by tragic overtones. Many of the most brilliant minds of "Third Force" socialism fell at the hands of the fascists before and during the

[663] A position vindicated by the work of Gareth Stedman Jones, and more recently by Bruno Leipold. See Bruno Leipold, *Citizen Marx: Republicanism and the Formation of Karl Marx's Social and Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2024).

[664] In a way, Lipgens's *Documents*, along with their introductory articles, captured this broad European dimension but stopped short of analyzing its postwar legacy, while conflating diverse political sensibilities under the sometimes-ambiguous notion of Europeanism.

Second World War: Carlo and Nello Rosselli, Silvio Trentin, Leone Ginzburg, Enzo Sereni, Eugenio Colorni, to name but a few. It was a selection in reverse, a depletion of democratic socialism's vital energies at a moment when they were most needed. Were it otherwise, this story might have been a different one, one of greater success. Those who survived continued to fight for a socialist Europe, but with limited achievements. Among them, Altiero Spinelli stands as the most emblematic figure, for the unwavering persistence with which he sought to forge a federalist Europe and the mythopoetic narrative that later grew around him and the *Ventotene Manifesto*.[665]

I have argued that the *Ventotene Manifesto* should not be seen as a vague precursor to European integration but as the last specimen in the tradition of nineteenth and early twentieth century revolutionary thought. A tradition that, at least in the West, exhausted its momentum after World War II. Its call for a socialist and federalist transformation of the continent was neither an idealistic abstraction nor an accidental historical byproduct. Instead, it was the next step in a political effort that had long been underway, at least since the late 1920s. If today's European institutions invoke Ventotene while stripping it of its socialist core, it is not just a distortion of history but a loss of the radical democratic ethos that once animated the movement. This reappropriation also illustrates how the "groupness" of the Ventotene network established by Rossi and Spinelli has over time been stripped of its original life and soul and reduced to a hollow symbol that can be reshaped to serve present-day agendas.

The story of the Ventotene group (and more broadly about this loose collective of thinkers and political activists of the "Third Force") is remarkable not merely for their intellectual audacity. That, after all, had its limits. Even at its most revolutionary, the vision of a federated Europe presented in the *Ventotene Manifesto* remained embedded in the political epistemology of the state. The exiles of Ventotene could imagine abolishing sovereignty, but not the logic of sovereignty itself. What stands out is the moral fervor with which they sought to translate their theories into action. This was an uphill battle, not least because ideas forged in the fluid and unpredictable conditions of the 1930s and early 1940s did not easily adapt to the challenging landscape of the postwar period. In fact, as I have sought to show, the limited political impact of "Third Force"

[665] For a recent example, see this piece by former High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission Josep Borrell, which appeared on the blog of the European External Action Service (EEAS): Josep Borrell, "The Heritage of Ventotene: Let's Think Big Again for Europe," *European External Action Service* (EEAS), September 19, 2024, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/heritage-ventotene-lets-think-big-again-europe_en.

ideas was not just due to external obstacles. It also derived from the sometimes-contradictory nature of the democratic imagination nurtured by the antifascist milieu during this period. For many of the figures examined here (ranging from Carlo Rosselli to Nicola Chiaromonte and Spinelli himself) the "democratic revolution" they sought to bring about often remained an elite project, shaped in part by their bourgeois backgrounds in a largely rural and proletarian country. The implications of this top-down approach, reinforced by their disillusionment with mass politics during the interwar period, contributed to the political shortcomings they faced once a democratic parliamentary system was reestablished.

As the Cold War unfolded and power increasingly concentrated in a few dominant blocs bound to a centrist parliamentary course, it seemed there was no room left for small, heterodox formations, a perception that would persist until the 1990s.[666] Many abandoned their palingenetic hopes and withdrew into the narrower confines of national politics, as the great parties of the Left reclaimed the ground they had ceded. The space in which figures like Rosselli, Silone, and Vittorelli had once maneuvered rapidly shrunk. But this trajectory was not linear: the very marginality in which fascist repression initially forced these groups had become, in the 1940s, a source of renewed significance. As antifascists and Europeanists, these sects forged wider coalitions and briefly transcended their sectarian confines, offering a platform around which potentially larger movements could galvanize.

This brief resurgence, exemplified by the "Ventotene Moment," and the complex networks fostered by "Third Force" movements during the war make plain the limits of existing historiographical approaches. While scholars like Talbot Imlay, Brian Shaev, and Jan de Graaf have fruitfully explored international dynamics, their analyses remain largely framed through a national lens, privileging the role of formal party structures and their engagement with supranational institutions. Such an approach risks overlooking the more intricate transnational and transpartitical dynamics that animated the heterodox milieu. These groups operated across borders, ideologies, and institutional affiliations. By focusing on their fluid and often informal networks, this study reveals a political space that was neither strictly national nor easily contained within conventional party politics. Its failure was not a testament to its irrelevance but rather the result of material and ideological obstacles that thwarted a political project that could have been feasible

[666] Cf. Conway, "Democracy in Postwar Western Europe", at 60, 65, 79.

but ultimately was not: a dimension further obscured by teleological narratives that present the Europe that emerged as the only possible outcome.

It was only after 1945 that, like an inverted pyramid, this expanded network of groups and individuals composing the "Third Force" narrowed year after year, eroded first by the reassertion of mass-party politics and later by Cold War disillusionment. Some, like Silone, found refuge in culture, where their critiques of Cold War opportunism could still resonate, albeit at the price of political efficacy. Others, chief among them Spinelli, attempted to transcend the national framework altogether, seeking to build a transnational politics that would embed European unity in the institutional architectures of postwar democracy.

This essential inability to adapt reflects the deeply moral nature of the political outlook held by "Third Force" socialists, a nearly Kantian disposition that left a legacy still significant in a country often perceived as plagued by pervasive corruption, particularly in party politics. It was a commitment to an ethical law that emanates not from historical necessity, nor from national or tribal roots, but from the moral intuition of the individual. The duty to act justly, irrespective of personal cost and with no assurance of success was the principle that animated their politics, what Silone referred to as "the humble and courageous service of truth."[667] This is reflected in their seemingly paradoxical endeavor, but especially in Carlo Rosselli, to reconcile the principles of justice inherent in socialism with the liberal commitment to fairness and the inviolability of the individual, an effort aimed at transposing Kant's normative imperatives into the historical contingencies of the twentieth century. It is a mentality that left an indelible mark on Italian and European political culture, though not without severe limitations.

A Kantian ethos could sustain the dangerous clandestine militancy of the 1930s and the war, where moral conviction and intellectual rigor were essential tools of survival and resistance.[668] But in the postwar democratic order, where mass politics required broad electoral appeal and pragmatic compromise, it had little political currency and often revealed the elitist element mentioned above. Some "Third Force" advocates understood this. Spinelli, in particular, recognized that a purely ethical politics was inadequate. His response, however, was not to

[667] Ignazio Silone, "Sulla dignità dell'intelligenza e l'indegnità degli intellettuali," *La Fiera letteraria* (July 3, 1947).
[668] The most glaring example, though others could be mentioned, is that of Luciano Bolis. Captured by the fascist militias in Genoa in 1945 and almost tortured to death, he attempted suicide by cutting his throat, fearing that he would not be able to withstand the torture and betray the names of his comrades. See Luciano Bolis, *Il mio granello di sabbia* (1946; Turin: Einaudi, 1995).

abandon the ambition of a socialist Europe but to adopt an unforgivingly Machiavellian approach to achieving it. Even so, this more pragmatic approach, while effective in securing institutional footholds, could not fully overcome the contradictions inherent in a utopian project.

In this work, I have made large use of analogies from religious life and institutions to describe the mentality and actions of many "Third Force" socialists. Confronting a world saturated by politics, some, like Andrea Caffi, explicitly sought to recover the example of medieval conventicles and sects—small, self-sufficient communities where real human "sociability" could be cultivated, prefigurations of a political life scaled to human measure. But theirs was a social religiousness entirely immanent, anchored to the materiality of the world, lacking that higher inspiration which might have connected the work of this small band of heretics to a more universal set of historical or eschatological aspirations. It was precisely this absence, a binding vision of the transcendent, that made it difficult for them to speak to the broad masses.[669] Perhaps Caffi's stance resonates more with our postmodern condition, in which the comforting allure of grand historical narratives has faded, leaving in its place a quieter, but still elusive, longing for authentic human connection.

In the aftermath of war, this was the great advantage of the mass parties: they offered not just political programs but a promise of salvation, a vehicle of historical necessity through which the individual could submerge himself in the march of destiny. The party, whether socialist, communist, or Christian-democratic, seemed imbued with the authority to carry its adherents toward a redemptive future. Capitalizing on this moral authority and the sense of a collective mission, these parties conquered political and institutional ground, capturing the attention of historians such as Donald Sassoon, who were interested in tracking the trajectory of large movements wielding real, tangible institutional power. This was what "Third Force" socialists seemed to lack. Somewhat surprisingly, it is also why their message, unlike that of communism or Christian democracy, has survived the demise of the great mass parties of the twentieth century

[669] In this, the recent lesson of Richard Bourke on Hegel offers an instructive provocation. Whether or not we accept the premise that Hegel provides a higher plane upon which politics can be conceived, his work compels us to think beyond the parochialism of individual political outlooks. It forces upon us the question of whether political agency can be meaningfully theorized apart from the inner dictates of Kantian ethics—whether a purely moral politics, grounded in individual conscience, can ever sustain a vision capable of commanding broad allegiance. See Richard Bourke, *Hegel's World Revolutions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2023).

with a remarkable degree of relevance. It may hold even greater significance in our "post-political" world than it did in the "über-political" climate of the 1940s and 1950s.[670]

The ideological and discursive fluidity that characterized "Third Force" socialism in the interwar period also finds a parallel in the fragmented and decentralized discourse of contemporary social media. Much like the *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà* facilitated an open ideological space where competing socialist traditions could interact outside of rigid party structures, digital platforms today provide arenas where political identities are formed, challenged, and redefined in real-time. However, whereas the *Quaderni* aimed at a constructive synthesis of ideas, social media's algorithm-driven incentives often amplify division rather than consensus, privileging virality over depth. The struggle against ideological ossification that "Third Force" socialists waged in print now unfolds in an accelerated and chaotic digital landscape, where ideological heresy is simultaneously punished and commodified. This raises the question of whether the pluralistic ambitions of "Third Force" socialism could find new relevance in an era where ideological evolution is no longer confined to intellectual journals but plays out dynamically in the endless churn of online discourse.

But was it all, as Silone remarked, a "naive Utopia, bitterly paid for"?[671] Recently, Massimo Teodori has argued that the laic, antitotalitarian forces in Italy, marginalized in historiography due to the dominant influence of Catholic and Communist narratives, played a crucial role in defending democratic values and, despite their internal diversity and fragmentation, contributed significantly to Italy's cultural and intellectual landscape. Politically, the constellation of Italian "Third Force" parties and movements that emerged after 1945 would achieve significant civil rights victories. Especially during the 1970s, they secured landmark reforms in divorce (1970), family law (1975), and abortion (1978), despite the enduring resistance of Catholic and conservative forces.[672] By challenging the dominance of the PCI and the DC, its adherents laid the groundwork for a more pluralistic and adaptable democratic and socialist discourse. Even though their greater political ambitions were thwarted, their critiques of bureaucratic centralization, party

[670] For a conceptualization of the "post-political," see Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).
[671] Silone, "Bagaglio", 1215.
[672] See Massimo Teodori, "The Laity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Italian Politics*, ed. Erik Jones and Gianfranco Pasquino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 453–62, idem, *Controstoria della Repubblica: dalla Costituzione al nazionalpopulismo* (Rome: Castelvecchi, 2019). See also idem, *Storia dei laici nell'Italia clericale e comunista* (Venice: Marsilio, 2008).

orthodoxy, and nationalism remained highly relevant. The ideas of Rosselli, Spinelli, Silone and their comrades continue to surface in debates over the future of the European left, the role of federalism in an era of resurgent nationalism, and the relationship between ethics and political action.[673]

Other strands of "Third Force" socialism such as Regionalism, a persistent element in the group's ideological constellation, continues to resonate in contemporary political thought under various guises, from the libertarian municipalism associated with Murray Bookchin to movements advocating for economic and environmental justice, and Indigenous rights.[674] Different factions, shaped by *Meridionalist* concerns or the regional complexities of Italy, articulated distinct priorities, often expressed in what I have termed "Proudhonian federalism." Silone's trajectory exemplifies this tension: while deeply committed to the socialist internationalist project, his works remained rooted in the specificities of Italian regional life. The concept of a "cosmopolitanism of the poor" was deeply local, rooted in the experience of the southern Italian peasants. At the same time, however, it repositioned local struggles in broader European and global frameworks. Understood like this, Italian regional thought, often marginalized in mainstream historiography, provides valuable insights into global inequalities and decentralized political practices. This bottom-up orientation, informed by the group's experience in exile, opens new avenues for exploring how regional identities shape transnational political movements.

In recovering the history of Third Force socialism, this work has aimed to shed light on a neglected tradition, all the while challenging prevailing historiographies of both socialism and European integration. The tendency to view socialism through the lens of mass parties and state power has obscured the role of nonconformist and transnational movements, just as the dominant narratives of European unification have overlooked the radical currents that once animated it. By re-examining socialist federalism on its own terms, and not through the categories imposed by later political developments, we can better understand both its failures and its enduring significance. Its legacy demands to be taken seriously. It is not a mere footnote in the European

[673] See for example Walter Baier, Eric Canepa, and Haris Golemis, eds., *Transform! Yearbook 2019: The Radical Left in Europe – Rediscovering Hope* (London: The Merlin Press, 2019).
[674] See Cain Shelley, "Murray Bookchin and the Value of Democratic Municipalism," *European Journal of Political Theory* 23, no. 2 (2024): 224–245; E. Willis, C. da C. B. Garman, and S. Haggard, "The Politics of Decentralization in Latin America," *Latin American Research Review* 34, no. 1 (1999): 7–-56.

history, but a vital alternative to the cultural and political imaginaries that have shaped the continent since.

Rather than a fleeting experiment, the "Third Force" was a conscious attempt to rethink socialism beyond the constraints of party dogma and state centralization. "Third Force" socialists reimagined sectarianism not as dogma, but as ethical commitment, to overcome the paralysis of European politics. Only a disciplined minority could confront the inertia of mass parties. In their hands, the sect became a vehicle for political and moral clarity, not fanaticism. This was not only a reaction to the crises of the time but part of a more enduring necessity to reconcile socialism with democracy, federalism, and ethical individualism. At a deeper level, it registered a malaise that was both political *and* spiritual, stretching across generations shaped by the cataclysms of the First World War and its aftermath.

In 2018, left-wing intellectuals and activists, most notably figures such as Etienne Balibar and Luciana Castellina, and members of the European United Left–Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) group in the European Parliament have sought to reclaim the *Ventotene Manifesto*, aiming to revitalize its revolutionary Europeanist message while acknowledging the profound transformations that have occurred since the 1940s. Europe's colonial and neocolonial legacies, overlooked in the original text, are now recognized as critical issues, alongside global inequalities, climate change, and rising nationalism. This reclamation process underscores the need to rethink integration beyond neoliberal frameworks, and foster global solidarity, especially with the Global South.

However, my work suggests that expanding the focus to include the political context surrounding Ventotene reveals that many of these concerns were already present in the political imagination of "Third Force" activists. An unmistakable anti-imperialist ethos emerged, particularly through the efforts of the GL Egypt group, while Silone's universalized *Meridionalism* conceptualized the plight of the poor rural workers of Southern Italy as emblematic of the broader conditions of the Global South. Alternative institutional and economic visions advocating for economies structured *à l'échelle humaine* further enriched this political landscape. This is not to suggest that the "Third Force" provides direct solutions to today's challenges. On the contrary, any attempt to trace a political legacy rooted in the antifascist resistance should approach it holistically and avoid selective recuperation. The only meaningful way to engage with its political bequest is by acknowledging the full breadth of its traditions and messages. Ultimately, what truly endures

of the "Third Force" socialists are the questions they posed, their inquiries still unresolved and suspended in the long aftermath of the *Pax Americana*. Whether their vision retains any genuine vitality or can be grounded in a higher spiritual or universal ideal remains to be seen.

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