

Introduction to the unofficial translation of “The United States of Europe and the Various Political Tendencies” by Altiero Spinelli, 1942

This is, to the best of our knowledge, the first English translation of Altiero Spinelli’s essay *“The United States of Europe and the Various Political Tendencies.”*

We approached this translation as non-professionals, moved by the conviction that Spinelli’s reflections on European unity and federalism remain profoundly relevant today. Given the current historical circumstances, we felt it was important to make this text accessible to a wider audience rather than waiting for an official translation. Nevertheless, we sincerely hope that such a professional edition will one day appear.

Our translation seeks to remain as faithful as possible to the original Italian text. We opted for a literal translation whenever this was compatible with clarity in English. In those cases where a literal rendering would have obscured the sense, we chose expressions that we believe best convey Spinelli’s intended meaning. We used some of the current AI technologies currently available online to help us, but we revised the text and had it subsequently double checked by other federalist friends.

We also included explanatory notes to clarify certain references that may be unfamiliar to readers who are not well-acquainted with Italian or European political history. In addition, we occasionally inserted supplementary information in brackets — for instance, original Italian names following their English equivalents — to ensure accuracy and context.

We hope this translation will help bring Spinelli’s thought to a broader audience beyond the Italian-speaking world.

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THE UNITED STATES OF EUROPE AND THE VARIOUS POLITICAL TENDENCIES

“Wir gehören zum Geschlecht, das aus dem Dunkeln ins Helle strebt”

[We belong to the generation that strives from darkness toward light]. - GOETHE

What the profound evil that undermines European society is, is now quite evident to all: it is modern total war, prepared and conducted through the employment of all existing social energies in individual countries. When it blazes forth, it destroys men and wealth; when it smolders under the ashes, it oppresses like an exhausting nightmare any other activity. No one today can console themselves with the lightheartedness of times past. “Fresh and joyous war” — that is, the intoxicating, brief, relatively inexpensive adventure — could fascinate thirty years ago light spirits who had not reflected on the enormous destructive capacities of modern technology and the brutalization of souls. The men of today, who largely see the scourge for the second time, know all the folly of that myth, and realize that the permanent danger of armed conflicts between civilized peoples must be radically eradicated, if one does not want it to destroy everything that is held most dear.

It may be useful to briefly indicate how men's ideas are generally oriented today around this problem, and what can reasonably be expected from these orientations, should they be able to realize themselves in effective institutions and works. We can group them, disregarding secondary nuances, around three typical directions:

1. **Racism**, which sees a way out in the establishment of the rule of the superior race over others;
2. **Democracy**, which sees in tyrannical regimes the cause of wars and counts on the peace that must accompany democratic restorations;
3. **Communism**, which considers capitalism as the culprit of conflicts and therefore demands its abolition as a necessary condition for peace among peoples.

After examining these three directions, we will try to indicate the path along which it will be appropriate to seek the solution most corresponding to the needs of European civilization.

I — RACISM AND EUROPEAN UNITY

1) To the naïve European who, without much thought, had believed that 19th-century civilization was the natural and spontaneous form of human activity, the emergence and dominance of the racist attitude seems like a bundle of absurdities, madness, and lies. In reality, the respect for mutual freedom based on legal equality is only the result of a complex historical process, through which the immediate impulses of the human spirit have been channeled toward goals different from their spontaneous inclinations. The civilized man is a complicated and fragile product. The greatest fruits of civilization are due to the iron discipline it imposes on the savage human spirit.

But when men are faced with problems whose solutions are of vital importance, and for which they cannot find answers due to resistance and the lack of adequate civil tools, that discipline may break, letting primitive forces resurface. These forces tend to solve difficulties through the violent imposition of their will.

If they prevail, they tend to organize all of society around the relationship between master and servant. The master autocratically decides what is to be done; the servant does what the master commands. Those who resist must be subdued, or, if they refuse to submit, destroyed. The one who subjugates thus asserts his personality and demands. The one who submits relinquishes his autonomy and chooses to preserve his life by making it depend on another, rather than losing it. This is the immanent law of the type of society based on the right of the strongest.

2) Through a centuries-long process, our civilization had legally abolished the relationship between master and servant and was searching for ways to abolish it in fact. However, in unexpected forms, it has reappeared from the depths with overwhelming force. The events through which this attitude has resurfaced, especially in Germany, may be examined elsewhere. Here, it is enough to note that it was not caused but merely occasioned by economic reasons among others.

The great crises after the war were among the most significant difficulties against which modern social discipline shattered, making way for the atavistic tendencies latent in the human soul. Once unleashed and affirmed, this conquering attitude becomes the center of impulses and actions, resolving issues it encounters according to its own inner nature. In modern society, the master-servant relationship is most coherently realized in German racism.

The racist myth, however inconsistent it may be in light of scientific knowledge, becomes the ideal criterion by which value hierarchies are established and humanity is divided into castes. All political, social, economic, and cultural energies that society had developed are transformed into instruments of domination by the masters. The country is organized into a sort of Spartan-style racist collectivism: a military structure aimed at maintaining distinctions between rulers and the ruled, preventing division among the former, and exploiting lower-grade servants for the benefit of the masters and the higher-grade servants — the so-called ruling people.

This ruling people is, in reality, itself a docile tool in the hands of the truly dominant castes and is used to subjugate other peoples. Beneath the Germans already stand, as lower-order servants, the Czechs, Poles, Jews, etc.¹ Domination and the consequent right to exploitation extend as far as power can reach. There is no room for scruples toward others because others are, by definition, either tools or obstacles, servants or enemies.

3) The absurd anarchy of Europe's international organization is the most favorable condition imaginable for the full expression of racism. It is naturally inclined to try to organize the continent and its colonial extensions as a field for exploitation by the dominant race. The contradictions arising from the existence of nation states would no longer exist in this scenario — but the solution would, for a whole era, consist of military colonization and exploitation of all Europe to the benefit of a single national community.

Speculating about the legal or economic forms that such an empire might assume is utterly pointless. Exploitation may take collectivist forms — the imposition of tribute on subdued communities — or capitalist forms — restrictive measures shaping the market in the desired direction.

Whatever the future developments of this regime may be, one thing is certain: its victory would mean the establishment of a caste-based civilization entirely different from the one Europe had been building up until now. The Nazi orientation might be implemented intelligently or stupidly, but it's worth noting that its goals are not inherently unachievable, and its methods can be coherent.

Therefore, one cannot reasonably expect it to collapse from internal contradictions. The profound meaning of today's war, beyond the particular political and economic issues it entails, is not that of a war between economic imperialisms, nor of a war among more or less aggressive nations. It is a war between civilizations — a war meant to decide whether our lives must or must not yield to that atavistic regression.

Anyone with some knowledge of the history of primitive peoples knows that this is their natural behavior. The hesitation to apply these categories to current events stems merely from the completely unjustified opinion that barbaric civilizations are necessarily tied to low levels of technical knowledge — and therefore are impossible today. In reality, they are tied only to very elementary spiritual attitudes and can perfectly coexist with airplanes and radio.

¹ The author [Spinelli refers to himself] wrote this in 1941. Today [1942], the list is worth updating: French, Belgians, Dutch, Danes, Norwegians, Yugoslavs, Greeks, Albanians, and Italians.

II — DEMOCRACY[†] AND EUROPEAN UNITY

1) The most common experience shows that man, when he finds himself involved in a situation that disrupts his traditional habits and presents new aspects, tends with extreme ease to deny the new problem, to reduce it to the old one, to reconstitute the ancient patterns of conduct, in which everything unfolded in a “reasonable” way, that is, restful. The will that seems directed toward creation is instead almost always turned toward the restoration of the already known.

One cannot treat this attitude with contempt, since it is the foundation of continuity in the life of individuals and groups. Nothing serious could be done if one pretended to start everything from scratch each time. Normally one appropriates a new experience by reducing it to motives and habits already known. But this orientation becomes completely absurd, and is no longer fed by reasonableness, but by nostalgia, when it tends to pursue ends and apply means which, by their nature and by the circumstances in which they can now be realized, inevitably lead to the ruin of what one would like to see consolidated.

To measure therefore the positive or negative value of this orientation, it is necessary to examine the coherence of its ends and means.

The most characteristic way in which this attitude presents itself today in political life is that of national democratic restoration, which would like to see re-established the two fundamental principles on which European civilization of the nineteenth century rested and developed, and which the course of events has caused to collapse: that is, the principle according to which every nation has the right to organize itself into an absolutely independent sovereign state; and that according to which man has learned to be more or less respectful of others' personality within the scope of existing laws, and to demand the same respect from others toward himself, and thus to develop his own personality in a free and spontaneous way, undisturbed as regards his individual needs, or in voluntary collaboration with consenting parties as regards collective needs.

2) Let us attribute for a moment to these restorers the maximum of intelligence and fortune in their eventual work. Let us suppose that they succeed everywhere in founding free institutions in the various states in which the feelings of traditional nationalities are respected in the best possible way; the sinister influences of particular groups are reduced to an insignificant level, so that the law can truly reign equal for all; all protectionisms and all migratory limitations between country and country are eliminated; all expenses for armaments are substantially reduced; the activity of the state is directed not toward external oppression, but toward the pursuit of the common interests of its citizens.

[†] Translators' Note: As is evident in the following paragraph, Spinelli refers to national democracy and democratic internationalism.

In such a hypothesis, a resumption would certainly be possible, for an entire historical epoch, of national democratic civilization, purified indeed of the serious flaws it had in the past. Note however that, in all this arrangement, the weakest point is that constituted by international organization. While in the national field the intelligent restorer understands that it is necessary not to rely simply on the good will of citizens, but provides for establishing a solid body of laws endowed with coercive power in order to restrain and direct individual activities, the relations between the various states remain based exclusively on the peaceful good will of each of them, in the assumption of a complete coincidence of the interest of individual states with the interest of the collectivity of states themselves.

But this assumption is not true; indeed, the contrary assumption is true. In the absence of prohibitions, it is quite possible to procure positions that represent harm to others and an advantage to oneself. For such an abuse to happen, it is not necessary to suppose a particular perverse will to domination; it is enough that a state thinks that its duty is not to provide for the welfare of all men, but for that of its citizens.

The nation state is built precisely for this purpose; it is organically unsuited to see the interests of all men. A thousand and one occasions would present themselves at every moment, in which the interest of particular geographical groups would be better favored by harming rather than respecting the interest of all other countries. Nothing would exist that could restrain from taking this path. But once taken, it would become almost impossible to extricate oneself from the mechanism that imposes on every state to defend the interests harmed by others' abuses, finally resorting to force to make them prevail.

The progressive militarization of individual countries would begin again, deadly for any healthy regime of freedom; the cycle already traveled twice between 1870[†] and 1914 and between 1918 and 1938 would be repeated. National democratic restoration would therefore rest, even in the best of hypotheses, on extremely precarious bases.

3) But we have in reality made the task too easy for the restorers, attributing to them an intelligence and fortune that cannot reasonably be expected. The actual data among which the restorers would have to move are such that the slide toward militarism would become not only very probable, but we can say, inescapable.

In the first place, they are not capable of taking the necessary measures to create perfect national democracies. To proceed with this work, they would have to know how to use, but not submit to, the particular pressures coming from below. By their nature, instead, they are led to make their own and express the spontaneous aspirations of the masses, to whom they appeal as sovereign.

If we analyze the main aspirations by which these masses are traditionally moved in the various European countries, we find that they are very susceptible to being influenced by patriotic, class

[†] Translators' Note: The year of the Franco-Prussian war.

or sectional motives. That is to say that they are ready to demand from their leaders the defense or realization of interests concerning the power and prestige of their country; or concerning the privileges of this or that class, or concerning the gains of this or that market group.

These interests may be founded or imaginary, but they are in any case always partial, and actually uncaring in the most absolute way of the true general interests, although often disguised as such.²

The democrats, eager to represent the popular will, would easily end up becoming, in their various tendencies, instruments of this or that particular group, aiming to conquer the direction of the state and employ its force to assert their own particular interests. But any exclusivism, economic, sentimental, or ideological, having at its disposal the unbridled weapon of the sovereign state would evoke analogous countermeasures from other states, rapidly poisoning the European atmosphere and again generating dangers of war.

Democratic mythology tends to believe that wars are due only to the shady interests of small minorities, that the great masses are fundamentally peaceful. Therefore, it is thought, when governments rest on them, the danger of wars will be practically eliminated. It was once affirmed that wars were caused by the particular interests of absolute kings³ and that they would disappear from the face of the earth the day when in all countries the peoples could assert their peaceful intentions.

Instead, it was seen that democracies, even the most respectful internally of the rights of their citizens, did not at all transport these virtues of theirs into relations with foreign countries, in which they remained selfish, disposed to exclusion and oppression of rivals. Even in them indeed, particularistic interests could very well assert themselves — sometimes of the entire geographical

² *Patriotic motives — namely, those most easily transformed into national arrogance and a tendency to oppress other peoples — are, in the modern era, the most deeply and powerfully felt. One of the most striking examples will suffice to illustrate this. On January 14, 1935, the inhabitants of the Saar were called upon to decide whether their country should remain under the administration of the League of Nations for another ten years, return to Germany, or be transferred to France.*

The people of the Saar were almost entirely organized workers, lovers of their freedoms, and largely Catholic. They had been thoroughly informed — through an intense anti-Nazi campaign conducted by numerous German exiles — about what an immediate return to Germany under Hitler's government would mean. A multinational force of Anglo-Italian-Dutch-Swedish troops ensured public order and offered the best guarantees for a secret vote.

The plebiscite yielded 476,089 votes for Germany, 46,613 for maintaining the status quo, and 2,083 for France. Nationalistic sentiment was so overwhelming that even the workers did not seriously consider the option of postponement — a choice that would have compromised nothing — and instead voted by a spectacular majority for immediate union with the Reich. In doing so, they chose the destruction of their trade unions, the persecution of their religion, and the loss of their freedoms.

³ *The modern translation of this democratic Manichaeism is the claim that wars are caused — if not by the greed of princes — by the greed of the capitalist oligarchy. The response provided here to that argument also applies to this thesis, which will be addressed in more detail in the following chapter.*

group, sometimes of more restricted groups,⁴ which ended up pursuing the policy of absolute kings.

The rapidity with which the new states arising from the French and Russian revolutions resumed in full the defensive and offensive foreign policy of their respective *anciens régimes*, barely masking them with new words, can be instructive.

It is not to be believed that there are strata of the population on whose aversion to war one can count as on a peculiar virtue. Pacifists are only the weak who know *a priori* that they will be beaten, or that they will be used as instruments of the strong for ends not their own, and who deplore, as can well be understood, this state of affairs. Those who dispose of force, if there is no superior law to impose discipline, are always inclined to use it to defend themselves, or to offend.

Therefore, even a people, a class or any social group, pacifist as long as it does not dispose of power, will be ready, when it holds it, to employ it to acquire or defend a privilege. And in this attitude lies the root of bellicosity.

4) In the second place, such a restoration, taking the sovereign nation state as its fulcrum, takes on a fatal turn for this fact alone, even apart from the democratic propensity to become the spokesperson for particularistic interests felt by the masses.

Speaking of the modern state, one must not only consider its possibility of abusing unlimited sovereignty. Even more, one must take into account the fact that around the state a very strong historical tradition has consolidated, which attributes to it a kind of mystical absolute value. The state must unconditionally obey the categorical imperative that orders it to assert and strengthen itself.

Modern civilization succeeded in taming feudal arrogance and rebelliousness only on condition of attributing all the unlimitedness of rights that were taken from individuals to the sovereign state organism that replaced them. It is interesting to note that precisely those countries whose regime arose from the feudal regime by direct descent, did not go through this phase of exaltation of the state, actually blunting it when it sought to impose itself; and they are therefore also the only countries that have not mystically attributed an absolute end in itself to the state, instead always conceiving it only as an instrument to realize common interests.⁵

⁴ Examples can be multiplied, drawn from both ancient and more recent history. Among the most egregious and intrusive cases of exploitation, one should recall: the policy of Athenian democracy toward its allied cities; that of Florentine democracy toward the surrounding countryside and Pisa; and that of the democracies of the Swiss cantons of Bern, Uri, Schwyz, and Unterwalden toward the territories of Vaud and the Canton of Ticino.

⁵ This, of course, did not prevent England from committing all kinds of abuses, which stemmed not from the civilizational structure of the state, but simply from the will to assert particular interests. However, it did hinder the emergence of the imperialistic sentiment — the kind that sees the state as a superior entity endowed with rights extending as far as its power reaches. England did, in fact, create the largest empire in the world, but at the same time — strange as it may seem — it is one of the countries least imbued with mystical imperialist power.

In all other countries, more or less, and prominently in France in the 17th and 18th centuries, and in Germany in the 19th and 20th, the state has undergone this savage deification, which had its incarnation in absolute monarchy. European democracies have limited themselves to restricting its omnipotence internally, leaving intact under every other aspect its transcendent absolute value, indeed strengthening it, by adding to it all the national passions that were increasingly developing, as ever wider strata of the people participated in the life of the state, seeing their own fortunes linked to its destiny.

Now, it is true that abstractly it is conceivable that democratic restorers can radically extirpate this tradition, and reconstitute nation states founded only on clear rational presuppositions, free from any mystical deification (although, if they were so free from the taboos of the sovereign state, one would not understand why they should feel so urgent the need to reconstitute it, despite its most evident inconveniences). But this radical reconstruction is not actually possible, if one reflects even slightly on the actual conditions that the restorers would face.

They count, as has been said, on re-establishing popular freedoms, although they know that not everyone will be disposed to respect the rules of the game. So rooted in them is the belief in the naturalness of the way of behaving of civilized man of the nineteenth century, so convinced are they that spontaneously the masses are capable of choosing the good way, that they naïvely believe it will suffice to carry out work of persuasion so that veils fall from eyes desirous only of seeing, and the necessary majorities are formed to make democratic mechanisms function.

But a fundamentally good man is an Enlightenment myth; the masses (peoples, classes and others) in which a universal mission mystically resides, are a Romantic myth; and neither of the two myths resists critical examination. The masses, of whatever social class, spontaneously are only capable of providing for their own immediate interests, resorting to oppression whenever conditions of success appear to them.

The civilized man who knows how to respect others' freedom and cooperate freely with others is perhaps the highest creation that the human spirit has managed to elaborate; but it is a fruit possible only if there is as a premise a framework of institutions that discipline his impulses.

Therefore the democratic restorer can indeed dream the rosiest pictures of masses freed from tyranny, which, perhaps committing some accidental error or terrorist act of just revenge, sovereignly establish to walk from the moment of liberation on the path of progress; but, as soon as he passes from dream to reality, he must already preliminarily rely on some solid institutions traditionally recognized and accepted by men, which can constitute the first necessary legal framework within which popular freedoms come to unfold.

The main organism that offers itself to him to be able to perform this function is the nation state. Far from destroying it radically, the restorer who wants to pursue a realistic policy must seek to save in critical moments all that it is possible to save of the state's strength, must support all the

pillars at the moment they threaten to collapse, if he does not want to see his dream completely shipwreck. Every other requirement passes into second place before this one.

This is the profound reason why German and Spanish democrats, to cite only the two most recent examples, have proceeded with such caution with respect to the traditional institutions of their states, leaving the essential apparatuses intact, despite their proclaimed aversion to them. And this is the profound reason why in other countries one sees the restorers turn anxiously, when they feel the storm approaching, to the most conservative institutions, for which they have no great sympathy, but which they must hope will remain standing, providing them with solid support.

Now a situation of this kind is really not the most propitious for coming to terms with the absolutist traditions that permeate every pore of the European nation state. These traditions may temporarily remain submerged by the popular tide, but will remain fixed in the way of thinking of the state bureaucracy, the armed forces, the magistracy, the schools, and will seek to reassert themselves at every opportunity, reconquering the lost ground, as the first subversive wave calms and men return to normal life, in which they again see the divinity of the state enthroned.

The history of the Weimar Republic can be taken as the typical case of the problems in which the national democratic restorer finds himself inextricably entangled. To give Germany a democracy, the democrats had to preserve the mechanisms of order: bureaucracy, magistracy, military cadres. And these then swallowed democracy.⁶

Nor should one forget, lastly, that a national democratic restoration would mean, given the political importance now assumed by large popular masses, a series of extensive measures in the direction of greater economic equality. But this implies a greater number of constraints imposed by central activity on the activity of individuals and groups, that is, a greater habit of discipline in peoples.

While therefore all the motives and occasions for international friction would remain standing, while one would have contributed to saving the very organization to which Europeans traditionally attribute the uncontested right to call them to fight and die, social transformations would be further developed that would enormously facilitate a very rapid total militarization of the various countries.

5) The absurdity of national democratic restoration leaps clearly to the eyes if all the preceding considerations are applied to the concrete German case, which constitutes the central problem of European life. In Germany, the geographical position, historical traditions, the real and imaginary interests of individual classes and of the entire people, the deification of state power, national pride,

⁶ For the history of this most instructive experience see ARTHUR ROSENBERG, *Geschichte der Deutschen Republik*, "Graphia" ed., Karlsbad, 1935. The difficulty that a democratic restoration has in coming to terms with the traditions of the modern state depends on the specific necessity in which it finds itself of saving institutions animated by a spirit that is not at all republican (that is, such as to conceive the activity of the state as a public service destined to satisfy citizen needs), but instead permeated with mystically imperial spirit (that is, such as to understand the activity of the state as an end to which subjects must lend their services).

the existence of a landed aristocracy and a vast class of officers accustomed to command, the habits of obedience of the people, would irresistibly push, in an international system of sovereign states, any regime to make use of war.

All these tendencies, even if they were momentarily repressed, would always remain very strong, even if a democracy were established in Germany, as happened in 1918; they would be so even if one artificially succeeded in breaking for some time, as some think, its state unity. The broadest concessions would not succeed in placating it, even if the political men of other states were so foolish as to show themselves generous, at the risk of seeing it shortly thereafter menacing in arms, more formidable than before. The suspicions and restrictions that would predictably surround it would only contribute to stiffening it in its aspiration to dominion. But with such a Germany, no other country could do without being militaristic.

One must be very naïve to believe, after having reflected on all these problems, that, once democratic nation states are restored, there is the slightest probability that they will set out and remain on a path of peaceful coexistence, at the end of which they arrive, in due course of time, at the political maturity necessary for all to be convinced of the convenience of a super-state institution, so that federation does not impose itself on free peoples, but is only the symbolic expression of the now innate capacity to live without wars.

All that sovereign states would know how to do in a moment of nausea for the horrors of war would be a new League of Nations, that is, an institution of only symbolic unity, devoid of any effective force, which would not remove even a crumb from their sovereignty, and in which the representatives of the powers would gather to make a show of peaceful intentions, until the moment when the occasion to fight again had arrived. And there would perhaps be again a series of disarmament conferences, which would revolve around the insoluble problem of managing to find formulas in which each state saw others' armaments diminished, without diminishing its own.

It is difficult to trace in the history of humanity another period in which civil habits were as widespread as in nineteenth-century Europe. The tragic agony of that epoch has few casual elements, and, almost as counter-proof of its inevitability, the same generation that saw the first catastrophe now witnesses its repetition.

Is there really nothing better to do than prepare to blindly retrace this cycle for a third time, accepting it as a fate from which one cannot seek to escape? Would it not be better then, despite an inevitable relapse into barbarism, to take the racist solution, which would in any case sweep away these absurdities?

The analysis of the restorationist orientation has thus led us to the conclusion that, being a prisoner both of the taboo of the sovereign nation state and of that of popular sovereignty, it has become intimately contradictory and is therefore absolutely incapable of inspiring the necessary industriousness and freeing humanity from the errors in which it struggles.

III — COMMUNISM AND EUROPEAN UNITY

1) The culture of individuals and the civilization of peoples is more elevated the richer it is in operating purposes, and the better it succeeds in making them coexist. For culture and civilization to progress, therefore, there is need on the one hand for the work of elaborating the instruments suitable for reaching determined ends, and on the other hand the work of harmonizing the various ends. The first task belongs to the intellect, for which the ends are presuppositions, and which must aim only at the logical rigor with which it makes its constructions. The second is the task of wisdom, which establishes the point beyond which it is no longer convenient to pursue a particular end, since otherwise other ends to which one is equally attached would be suffocated; and it seeks to concentrate attention on those that, in relation to the existing factual circumstances, acquire a central value, and around which the others are arranged and graduated in various ways.

Now, being coherent, although it is quite difficult, is infinitely easier than being wise, and it frequently happens that the crystallization of energies caused by the pursuit of a particular end makes the perspective escape to such an extent that it hides its connection with other ends. And since the importance and utility of an end depend precisely on this connection, the result of this consequentialist attitude is that, even if that specific goal is achieved, something deformed is obtained, unworthy of the effort made, and which does not contribute at all, as one would have wanted, to the elevation of human life.

The most conspicuous consequentialist orientation of our days in the field of politics is the communist one, which originally responds to the end of the working classes to free themselves from the misery in which they find themselves and thus have the opportunity to enjoy the fruits of civilization, from a large part of which they are excluded. It therefore responds to a need that has its natural place in the line of development of our civilization. This is not the place to deal with the origin and developments of communism as a whole, nor to ask ourselves whether the unilaterality with which it has determined its end or pursues it actually tends to produce the desired expansion of modern civilization. We are only interested in examining its position in the face of the problem of international anarchy.

It might seem that we have finally encountered men here who have glimpsed the solution. The communists have indeed been vigorously denouncing imperialism as the generator of wars for some time, they are not bound by national taboos, and they hope for the union of peoples. If, however, one examines their propaganda more closely, one discovers without possibility of equivocation that in reality the communists, like the democrats, have never seriously confronted the problem of international order, and hope that it will resolve itself on its own. Although it is evident that this problem has acquired central importance, and that it is its mode of solution that gives meaning to the other connected problems of our civilization, the communist consequentialist cannot manage to realize this and continues to believe that the central question is that of the abolition of capitalism. Once this is achieved, everything else would come by itself, almost by divine grace.

Socialist and communist internationalism is of the same type as the democratic one. Just as the latter believes that peoples will get along spontaneously provided that despotic regimes are eliminated, so the communists believe that the proletarians will abolish imperialism and wars simply by abolishing capitalism in their countries.

Let us indeed examine their attitude toward our question more particularly.

After the era of the formulation of the so-called “utopians”[†] who thought about the constitution of small autarchic communities managed collectively, socialist thought, broadening its horizons, arrived at the idea that only a collectivist organization embracing the entire humanity could function effectively. This idea was not, however, a real directive of action, but simply constituted the imaginary prolongation into the future of tendencies that were assumed without question as already operating irresistibly at that time. They had convinced themselves that the bourgeois regime was pushing in this direction, and that there was nothing else to do but proceed further. “The delimitations and antagonisms of peoples” — Marx wrote in 1848 — “are gradually disappearing, through the very development of the bourgeoisie, through freedom of commerce, through the action of the world market, through the uniformity of industrial production and through the conditions of existence that derive from it. Those differences and antagonisms will disappear even more through the effect of the supremacy of the proletariat. The combined action, at least of the proletarians of civilized countries, is a first condition of the liberation of the proletariat. As the exploitation of man by man is abolished, so will the exploitation of one nation by another cease. Once the contrast of classes within nations has fallen, the antagonism between the nations themselves will also end.”

As can be seen, the connection of ideas is as follows: 1) Existence of a bourgeois tendency toward the elimination of international contrasts; 2) Abolition of the contrast of classes within individual nations; 3) Consequent automatic perfection of that internationalizing tendency. The combined action of the proletarians of the main countries has only to walk on a road already traced. That no particular effort was needed to trace it is demonstrated by the fact that, although that concentration of action is considered as one of the first conditions, nevertheless Marx felt no contradiction in the affirmation that immediately precedes the quoted passage: “Since the proletariat of every country must first conquer political power, must rise to the national class and must constitute itself as a nation, therefore it is and remains still national, although it is such in a sense quite different from that of the bourgeoisie.”

2) The Cobdenist[‡] perspective, fully accepted by Marx, according to which the intensification of trade between peoples would have abolished national antagonisms, has proved wrong. It is true that great capitalist interests existed and still exist today, which are favorable to free trade, but the actual development has been a strengthening of national antagonisms, which have disturbed,

[†] Translators' Note: This refers to the various schools of thought known as “utopian socialism” which preceded Marx and other authors of the so-called “scientific socialism”.

[‡] Translators' Note: Named from the British politician Richard Cobden.

slowed down, and almost ended up destroying economic trade. This contrast between theory and general historical development has led socialists, and therefore communists, to revise their Cobdenist presupposition, but has not led to any substantial alteration in the actual line of conduct of proletarian movements.

It was established, as Europe began to cover itself with armaments, that there existed a different connection between capitalism and imperialism. This is not the place to criticize this theory that generalizes and gives the value of absolute law to particular cases of contingent significance, without deepening their analysis.⁷ We must however observe that in the face of the enormous importance given in all socialist literature to the danger of war and to the growing place that the internationalist theme took in its propaganda, there are no effective works of organized proletariat that have contributed to creating institutions capable of truly reducing the danger of war, while there are acts that have contributed, albeit involuntarily, to creating frictions that accentuate international tension.

But the theory of capitalist imperialism was not meant to serve to direct the efforts of the proletarians in the direction of the struggle against war. It was a propaganda tool aimed at attracting anti-militaristic forces to anti-capitalist ground. On one hand, there was awareness of the antithesis between military spending and social spending, and therefore the aim was to depress the former as much as possible; and on the other hand there was a more or less demagogic meeting of the inconsistent pacifism, characteristic, as has been said, of those who feel destined to be passive instruments and not active subjects of war policy.

3) The actual proletarian policy continued to remain in fact even after this theoretical correction a policy of national horizon, although the national states were becoming increasingly imperialist. This cannot be attributed simply to a casual myopia of the socialists, and much less, as has sometimes been said, to their "betrayal." The restriction to the national sphere is inherent in the actual direction of parties aiming at the establishment of collectivism. Every collectivist measure means in fact attribution of the management of some economic sector to the supreme political power, that is, to the power to which men recognize the right to legislate on their conduct.

Now in modern Europe the supreme political power is that of the national state. This fact necessarily marked the limits of the nation. There have always existed among socialists strong disagreements about the convenience of having the state take a gradually progressive series of collectivization measures, so as to give it a more and more socialist character, or the convenience of a radical transformation in this sense to be achieved by revolutionary means.

But these divergences, however important they may be under other aspects, are irrelevant as far as the question of the national or international character of the policy to be followed is concerned. Leaving aside the socialist tendency because it is much more incoherent, let us examine the

⁷ A good critique of this theory can be found in "The Economic Causes of War" by LIONEL ROBBINS (Macmillan, New York, 1940), which is especially recommended reading as an introduction to the study of problems regarding the federal organization of Europe.

consequent one of the communists. When in the course of the other war prospects of revolutionary action for the establishment of a socialist order opened up, the most rigorous politician of this tendency, Lenin, outlined the establishment of socialism in this way: "The avocation of economic life to the state, against which capitalist liberalism opposes resistance, is now an accomplished fact. Not only to the free competition, but neither to the dominion of trusts, syndicates and other economic monstrosities is there any symptom of return. *The issue lies solely in establishing who in the future will be the regulator of state production: the imperialist state or the state of the victorious proletariat?*"⁸

The socialist revolution would have been for him, in accordance with Marxist dialectics, the negation, but also the most radical continuation of war collectivism, already realized to a greater or lesser extent by existing regimes. Lenin envisioned at an accelerated pace and through a catastrophe, the realization of the same process pursued by reformist socialists. As an instrument of socialist realization, he could therefore see nothing other than the existing national state, which had already thus initiated the work of collectivization.

The communists assure, however, that once the bourgeoisie guilty of friction and wars is eliminated, national socialist states would find no difficulty in unifying and planning the world economy in a unified manner.⁹

But this assertion is not at all proven. Indeed, precisely the contrary is demonstrated.

In a collectivized economy, the state disposes of the main resources of the country and proceeds according to plans. Therefore, the necessary international exchanges and the necessary movements of workers could not take place spontaneously, instead based on negotiations and agreements between the various socialist communities. We are faced not with a case of simple competition in which the exchange rates between goods and wages are determined by the market in a univocal manner. The case of economic relations between socialist communities is instead of the type that economists have called competition between monopoloids. The exchange relations are indeterminate. Every richer and better organized community would tend to refuse to receive immigration from poorer countries and especially from those that would not know how to give themselves a satisfactory political order. In a capitalist regime, international tensions usually occur due to restrictions placed on trade; in regimes of national socialists, tensions would occur every

⁸ The words in quotation marks are Lenin's own. The passage is taken from the manifesto of the second congress of the Communist International of 1920 which, as is well known, represents Lenin's most mature thinking on the world socialist revolution. The ideas on state capitalism during wartime as a means to achieve socialism were written during the war.

⁹ This seems so obvious to them that in the above-mentioned manifesto, while the dictatorship of the proletariat is clearly conceived as the seizure of existing states by the proletariat, there is no explicit mention of the need to proceed with the formation of international political institutions; only in passing, speaking not of the fate of great peoples but of small ones, it is said that: "only the proletarian revolution can ensure a free existence for small peoples, liberating the productive forces of all countries from the constraints of national states, uniting all peoples in a compact economic cooperation, based on a general economic plan..." The impossibility of giving an international economic plan without having international political power escapes the communists, usually so sensitive in appreciating the central importance of political power in all matters of proletarian revolutions.

time the need arose to make an exchange between communities. Economic contrasts would be multiplied infinitely, transforming every commercial relationship with foreign countries into a question of international politics, and generating hatred between countries rich in raw materials and poorly supplied countries, between overpopulated countries and countries with low demographic density.

And there would not be only economic reasons to generate friction. One can suppose that communist states, arising from radical upheavals, would find themselves, at least at the beginning, completely free from the mystical imperial spirit inherent in all institutions of the modern state. But their base would still be the nation, albeit rid of the bourgeois, and the supreme task of the socialist state would remain that of providing for the interest of the inhabitants of the nation. The national differences of which European life has been woven for centuries, the contrasts for the delimitation of borders in zones of mixed population, the need that every national community would feel to have an independent outlet to the sea, etc., would not disappear because the various national communities had become socialist. To these traditional motives of friction would be added the new ideological dissensions that could arise between the communist rulers of various states, and which could no longer be liquidated with the ease with which the Third International now modifies the central committees of communist parties. It is not easy to imagine a peaceful coexistence, let us say, between a state directed by socialists and one directed by communists, or between a Stalinist communist state and a Trotskyist one.

Closing this brief survey of the international atmosphere in which national socialist states would live, we must say that the points around which irremediable contrasts can crystallize are innumerable, indeed they multiply; the means to resolve them, nonexistent. The conclusion to be drawn is easily imaginable: since the responsibility of imperialism does not necessarily go back to capitalism, the abolition of the latter does not suppress imperialism but simply removes from the number of factors that feed it some sinister capitalist interests, adding by way of compensation some specifically socialist interests.¹⁰

4) One could object that Lenin's perspective indicates a way, but not the only possible way for achieving socialism; and that the communists, not being prisoners of any nationalist prejudice, could also correctly set up the struggle in terms of international socialism and international political power, more corresponding to their internationalist sentimental orientation. In reality, there does not seem to be today among them the slightest attempt to initiate such an approach.

¹⁰ *The impossibility of making multiple sovereign socialist states coexist peacefully is identical to the impossibility of making multiple sovereign socialist communes coexist and cooperate. The communists have understood this second difficulty very well, have rejected communist-anarchist federalism and have fought it when — in Spain — it threatened to dissolve everything into a dust of small quarrelsome and jealous communities. In the case of coexistence between states, they instead assume the same seraphic optimism of the anarchists, and are sure that everything will go perfectly by itself, without need for the constraint of international law, as soon as the capitalist beast is destroyed. On the subject treated in this paragraph, regarding relations between independent socialist states, the fundamental work is: "Economic Planning and International Order" by L. ROBBINS (London, 1937), in which the thesis of the necessity of European federation is extensively developed from an economic point of view.*

Disoriented, like the democrats, by the events that have overturned all their traditional schemes and that force them to fight alongside none other than the two most capitalist states in the world, they too now take refuge on the line of resistance of national democracy, hoping for the reconstitution of democratic sovereign states. For them too, as for the democrats, although for different reasons, the national state is the necessary premise for achieving further ends. Strictly speaking, nothing could prevent them, or some of them, from recognizing that, since communism is realizable only on an international scale, it would be necessary to prepare to make plans to fight, if not for a single world socialist state — too difficult to build — at least for a European continental federation.¹¹ In reality, to move effectively to the terrain of federal struggle, the communists would have to subject all their orientation to a fairly deep self-criticism. This consists in a “*Fixierung*” [fixation] as Freud would say, of feelings, ideas, tactics, discipline, organization, around the problem of the struggle against capitalism. Everything that does not fall within these terms is subjected to violent deformation or is ignored. They know how to adapt mimetically to the strangest circumstances, but their reference point is always the same. However, seeing capitalism as the fundamental enemy to be eliminated implies proposing to transfer, as soon as the occasion offers itself, most of the means of production from private entrepreneurs to the state. And the only existing state is the national one. This closes them in a magic circle.

To succeed in understanding that the question of international order is connected with the problems of economic-social organization in a more complete way than they believe, that crystallization [fixation] should be broken. The central problem would become the problem of giving strength to the new international order, a matter that largely has nothing to do with the existence or non-existence of capitalism, but concerns political, judicial, administrative, military institutions to be created. They should no longer appeal only to anti-capitalist sentiments, since all free-trade forces would be favorable to the new order. The problem of collectivizations to be carried out would still exist, but as a problem framed among the others necessary for a more vital organization of European society, and no longer as the absolutely preeminent one. Even if in a more distant future, when the sovereignty of the new federal state had become a perfectly natural thing for everyone, as that of the national state is today, the problem should arise again of whether or not to entrust the federal state with the exclusive management of the entire economy, it is certain that such a question could not be effectively proposed for an entire epoch, in which the fundamental political task

¹¹ *An attempt to see things from this point of view actually existed, and the incomprehension it encountered in communist ranks is significant. Trotsky, already during the world war, had opposed what he called Lenin's "nationalism in reverse" and had proposed putting the Socialist United States of Europe on the agenda. In 1930 he wrote: "The hour of the disappearance of national programs struck definitively on August 4, 1914. The revolutionary party of the proletariat can only be founded on an international program corresponding to the character of the present epoch." In 1931-32 he proposed for Germany, which was then on the brink of catastrophe, a revolutionary plan according to which the central question should not be, as the communists maintained, the establishment of a Soviet Germany alongside Soviet Russia, but the union of the German and Russian economies. He realized perfectly well, however, that the major obstacle to this directive was in Russian national socialism, which could not admit to needing integration from outside. In this incapacity of Russian international socialism to meet the crisis of the German economy, the extreme difficulties of every kind appear typically (think only of that arising from the necessity of revising made plans and putting everything back into play) that present themselves if one wants to arrive at international socialism through national socialisms. The two paths tend irremissibly to diverge.*

would be that of consolidating the new broader sovereignty. The fusion of the various national economies into a single European economy could not be seriously addressed by thinking of superimposing a federal planning on the various national collectivisms, because this would presuppose an overpowering federal government. It would be necessary instead to leave free way to the spontaneous forces of commerce, and that is, it would be necessary to demolish a large part of the existing national collectivisms, to one of which the communists feel fundamentally bound, and, as for the others, they have always thought that it was simply necessary to push them even further forward in a collectivist sense.

Would the communists be capable of carrying out such a revision of all their directives? Note that it is not a matter of making a tactical policy. In our case this would serve very little. It is not in fact a matter of making proselytes by means of a flag good for attracting the naïve, to then proceed with the forces acquired to realize one's program of total collectivization as soon as they succeed in grabbing power. It is in fact a matter of understanding that precisely this program is inadequate to the end of European unity.

It will be well to indicate also what such a revision would imply for the country in which communism has power in hand. In Russia, developing the theme of European unity means making the Russian people take another step toward the sphere of European civilization, and therefore falls within the secular laborious Russian tendency to westernize itself. But it also means the necessity of dismantling a good part of the economic system created, and of the economic and political interests that have crystallized around it.

5) National collectivism is therefore not a remedy against imperialism. The theme is not exhausted, however, because it is still necessary to keep in mind that the tendency toward collectivism is not, as the communists believe, a specific tendency of the proletariat.

The proletariat, like all the poorer classes, has an interest in collectivization measures reaching only to the point where privileges, monopolies, and in general possibilities of exploiting to the exclusive advantage of individuals, and with damage to the collectivity, are suppressed. But, like any other non-parasitic class, the proletarians have an interest in being free to work and produce according to their choice, their capacities and at their risk.

The tendency toward total collectivism is instead profoundly inherent in the militarist state. A state, whose most important end is that of preparing for war and conducting it, cannot do without extending its hands to all the human and material resources it needs. It is known that Napoleon carried out many nationalizations, and planned many more, not to respond to the interests of the bourgeoisie, but in order to be able to dispose of greater resources to conduct the war. The only difference between Napoleon's times and ours is that war no longer requires only the commitment of a quota of the wealth of the men of a country, but practically the one hundred percent utilization of the resources of the country in which the state is sovereign; that is, it pushes toward the realization of a radical collectivism. The examples of the other war and of this one speak for themselves.

If we examine with an unprejudiced eye the history following 1918, we see that communism has indeed won only in one country, but that both in that one and in all the others in which it has not succeeded or has been repressed in the hardest way, nationalization has made notable steps forward,¹² serving to facilitate and strengthen militarist policies more and more. But this nationalization has had very little to do (except in the various petty propagandas) with the actual emancipation of the working classes. Even in Russia, where it has been realized more than elsewhere according to the views of the communists, since socialism has been built by them themselves, it has indeed contributed to making a very backward people progress, but not so much to making it progress in the sense of an elevation of the working classes as in the sense of greater military power. The loss of freedom of movement for workers and peasants, the growing differentiation between the standard of living of workers and that of the ruling bureaucracy, the harsh repression of every freedom, leave one very skeptical about the achievement of the first goal. The energy shown in holding out against Germany shows the achievement of the second.

The propagandistic motives on which the communists rely to gather sufficient forces to give assault to the capitalist citadel can be used with equal effectiveness by those who want to develop militarist collectivism, as the Nazis have shown in a most brilliant way. These latter can moreover, unlike the communists, double the effectiveness of their propaganda, adding to the anti-capitalist motives the national ones that turn out to be the most deeply felt by the modern masses.

But even if, despite the formidable competition of the propaganda of militarist collectivism, the communists could succeed in winning in a whole series of countries and in establishing proletarian collectivisms, they would have left absolutely intact the entire anarchic system of national states with their “sacred egoisms”, ending up themselves sliding inexorably onto the terrain of their adversary, militarist collectivism.

¹² *Communists and socialists, proclaiming themselves to be the sole depositaries of the collectivist idea, refuse to take National Socialist collectivism seriously, and continue to speak of Germany as a capitalist country, due to the fact that the former capitalist directors have remained at the head of various enterprises. But this only means that the Nazis found it convenient to utilize the technical capabilities of those people, and were so skilled as to succeed in this, leaving certain legal formalities alive. Any industrial director can however be deposed at a nod from the rulers. The state establishes what must be produced, determines costs, fixes selling prices and entrepreneurs' emoluments (except, naturally, their frauds, which can however also occur in the communist type of collectivism). It transforms them, in fact, into functionaries.*

IV — THE EUROPEAN FEDERATION

1) It may be that our civilization will not succeed in overcoming the current crisis, and that, after a long agony, it will give way to more primitive and crude formations. There is no providential plan, no historical necessity that imposes its further continuation. If it does continue, it will only be because men will know how to concentrate sufficient attention and efforts to identify the evils that undermine it and to implement the necessary remedies. And they will do so, if they care to preserve the main values that compose it. If no value is attributed to freedom, that is to a type of society in which individuals are not instruments of forces that transcend them, but autonomous centers of life; if no value is attributed to justice, that is to a type of society in which freedom is not reserved for small privileged minorities, but is an effective good, and not merely formal, available to ever wider strata — it is not worth bothering with the salvation of our civilization. It is not possible to demonstrate that these ends must be pursued, and we will therefore not attempt to assume the impossible task. “This discourse” — to use the words of Meister Eckhart — “is not said for anyone except for those who call it their own like their own life, or at least possess it as a yearning of the heart.”

But it is not enough to hold dear those values. One can hold them in an unreasonable way, not imagining their realization other than in old forms or in unilaterally consequential forms. In both cases the result is, as has been seen, negative, because one has not been able to discern the reasonable coordination of ends and the adequate construction of means.

In the continuously variable harmony of the multiple ends arising from the orientation of European civilization, from time to time some of them acquire preeminent importance, giving tone to all the others. Precisely because of the reciprocal relationship existing among all, it is not possible to proceed each time to exhaustively realize the central one, creating all the necessary arrangements to make it fully operative, and then gradually move on to the others. On the contrary, from the very way one works, a continuous shift in the order of values is born, and attention must be concentrated on another point. Thus, even before the civilizing task of absolute monarchies was exhausted, prior to the eradication of feudal anarchy and the establishment of the rule of law within individual nations, the need to make increasingly broader strata of peoples participate in the determination of the laws themselves became preeminent. And, having begun the formation of free political arrangements, the process against social inequalities was pushed to the forefront. But all this long and complex work has made the problem of international order extremely acute and the possibility of harmonious pursuit of other ends now depends on how this is resolved. To believe that the evil arising from international anarchy will heal itself, and that one should continue to deal with things according to the old order, is to practice ostrich[†] politics. Left to itself, international anarchy resolves into the destruction of modern civilization itself, and into the constitution of a militaristic empire based on the principle of the lordship of the victors and the servitude of the vanquished.

[†] Translators' Note: That is, burying one's head in the sand.

Not realizing this means behaving irrationally, or, to use a simpler word, stupidly.

Wanting to begin a rational examination of the problem of international order, it will be necessary to answer these three main questions:

- a) What are the arrangements necessary to eliminate the present international anarchy?
- b) Are there sufficient forces in society deeply interested in maintaining these arrangements?
- c) How is it possible to disengage them from old traditions that have proven inadequate and pernicious?

2) The evils of international anarchy do not stem from other causes foreign to the absence of international law, but precisely from this absence. To provide for the common interest, there must exist a special organism, capable of imposing the realization of that interest. If this organism is lacking, if the only existing arrangements are adequate only for achieving particular interests, then, unless one believes in divine providence, evidently it is not possible to avoid a course of things in which each provides for his particular interests, heedless of the damage he inflicts on others, so as to give rise to the emergence of friction and tensions, which cannot finally be resolved other than through recourse to force.

The elimination of these evils cannot therefore consist in anything other than the formation of institutions that elaborate and impose international law, which prevents the continuation of ends beneficial only to one nation, but harmful to others.

This solution appears self-evident whenever it concerns the internal order of a nation; but, as soon as it concerns international order, it seems strange, utopian, violating the deepest and most immutable human nature to the men of our nationalist era, and one ingeniously formulates sophisms to avoid confronting it. Men of the feudal era behaved in the same way with respect to the formation of national units, to whom only the order within the scope of castles, counties, communes appeared natural and obvious.

This international order can be created through an empire that reduces other states to its vassals. The law then is that imposed by the dominant state; the force necessary to impose the law is that of the state holding the empire. This is the most primitive method; more frequently realized in human history, and today we witness a large-scale attempt conducted with great coherence to realize it once again. If it is rejected, it is not because it makes use of violence to establish itself, but because for an entire era it would be based on violence, on the inequality of peoples, on their exploitation by the dominator, on the mystical exaltation of the empire, on its further tendency toward universal domination, on its permanent militaristic character.

But this order can also be created in a way more in keeping with our fundamental needs, through a federal arrangement, which, while leaving each individual state the possibility of developing its national life in the way that best adapts to the degree and peculiarities of its civilization, removes from the sovereignty of all associated states the means by which they can assert their egoistic

particularisms, creates and administers a body of international laws to which all must equally be subjected.¹³

The powers that the federal authority must have are those that guarantee the definitive end of exclusivist national policies. Therefore the federation must have the exclusive right to recruit and employ armed forces (which should also have the task of protecting internal public order); to conduct foreign policy; to determine the administrative limits of the various associated states, so as to satisfy fundamental national needs and to supervise that no abuses take place against ethnic minorities; to provide for the total abolition of protectionist barriers and prevent their reconstitution; to issue a single federal currency; to ensure full freedom of movement of all citizens within the borders of the federation; to administer all colonies, that is all territories still incapable of autonomous political life.

To effectively fulfill these tasks, the federation must have a federal judiciary, an administrative apparatus independent from that of individual states, the right to collect directly from citizens the taxes necessary for its functioning, organs of legislation and control based on direct participation of citizens and not on representations of federated states.

This, in brief, is the organization that can be called the organization of the United States of Europe, and which constitutes the indispensable premise for the elimination of imperialist militarism.

Given the preeminence that Europe still has in the world, as a center of civilization's radiation, and given that it has always been, with its internal struggles, the epicenter of all international conflicts, its definitive pacification, within the framework of federal institutions, would mean the greatest step forward toward world pacification that can be made in current circumstances.

3) Obviously it is not enough that an arrangement has intrinsic merits. For it to be realized, one must see if around it, as its permanent support, one can expect imposing vital forces to align themselves in modern civilization, not destined to dissolve rapidly; such that, to assert themselves, they feel they need that arrangement and are therefore disposed to act to keep it in force. It would be useless to build a building that no one would then be interested in preserving, even if, due to some favorable circumstance, sufficient forces were found to build it.

The investigation aimed at identifying these forces will not immediately give us an indication about the forces that will be willing to fight to realize the federation, since many individuals and groups, although objectively interested in its realization, might actually find themselves geared so tightly into other orientations of feelings and actions, as to continue along the path imposed by these, remaining indifferent, unaware and perhaps hostile to that path which would respond much

¹³ Given the frequency with which demagogic makes use of the absurd formula of the right of self-determination of peoples, going as far as the separation of the state structure of which they are part, it will be well to emphasize that the admission of such a principle is irreconcilable with the very idea of federation. It would in fact transform it into a renewed League of Nations, in which each state would still have, after adequate excitement of the national passions of its people, the right to refuse the common law, blowing up the entire edifice. The passage of sovereignty to the federal state should necessarily be irrevocable.

better to their deeper interests. This will constitute the subject of further examination in paragraph four. Here we only want to see if the federation, should it succeed in being created, is subject to remaining a matter interesting only a few political doctrinaires, and can instead truly become a public good, felt as such by large masses.

If we take a look at the field of European culture, we see that very broad intellectual strata have a spiritual formation determined by current predominant educations. Insofar as intellectual considerations prevail among them, they have a tendency toward nationalistic positions, as shown by the strong grip exercised in the field of average culture by chauvinistic and racist ideologies. But European culture has long since surpassed narrow national limits, and its flowering has a cosmopolitan character. The highest stratum of European culture is beyond any nationalism, and is indeed condemned to wither and perish if Europe continues on the path of nationalisms, since this course would deprive it of the nourishment of free worldwide exchange of ideas, and would prevent it from exercising its natural function of indicating to less educated strata the paths of spiritual elevation. The European federation would be the guarantee of intellectual cosmopolitanism, and of the possibility, for high culture, to exercise its guiding function. In this field, the federation could therefore count on the support of the highest and most fruitful element, and on the resistance of broad strata of the more mediocre element, destined to vanish when there would no longer be a nationalist political will interested in artificially forming spiritual attitudes no longer corresponding to the degree actually reached by the spirit.

In the political field, one must count on the hostility, which would not cease immediately with the establishment of federal unity, of those whose power is immediately connected with the existence of national states, and who would see their power abolished or substantially reduced by the reduction of their absolute sovereignty; we mean the current rulers, the upper strata of civil state apparatuses, and even more so the military ones. These constitute the most formidable obstacle, since they are the men who have the greatest experience in command and embody the strongest tradition in the European world. Even if removed from power, in the long run they would strive to arrest, if not actually destroy, the development of federal power. Behind them we find the parasitic or otherwise privileged strata of current society. Strictly speaking, they could maintain their situation in a federal arrangement as much as in a national state; but since a European federation is only realizable on the occasion of a revolutionary crisis and resting on revolutionary forces, that is founding its cause with that directed at directly striking all privileged positions, these classes (constituted by large landowners, by directors of companies that would be socialized, by high ecclesiastical hierarchies, etc.) would be induced to serve without question in the much more congenial ranks of national reactions.

These hostile interests, very strong at the beginning, when the loss of power would be recent and therefore more burning, and national idiocy still vigorous and more easily exploitable, would not find nourishment in federal life, and their curve would be progressively declining. National sentiments, in what they have that is healthy, would not necessarily be hostile. As it became clear how normal development of national needs would be guaranteed much better by an impartial

federal order than by the continuous reciprocal oppression of the various nations, national sentiments would lose their virulence and would end up coexisting peacefully within the federal sphere.

Interested in supporting European unity would instead be the progressive currents, as soon as they had glimpsed what fundamental guarantee it constitutes for their effective activity. The current development of militarism and national autarchies has directed toward unproductive warlike purposes an enormous quantity of resources; it has prevented the most fruitful deployment of all energies, and has pushed along aberrant paths, suffocated and completely paralyzed, the movements, especially those of the working classes, which could not be satisfied with accepting the existing social structure, but aimed to modify it so that it would satisfy their just demands. The European federation reduces military expenses to a minimum, thus allowing the use of almost all resources for purposes of elevating the degree of civilization. With the abolition of absurd autarchic barriers it allows an immense development of production, thus creating the necessary premise for a vital social transformation that is based on a high standard of living. It makes the current necessity of permanent despotic regimes disappear, leaving free play to social movements of emancipation.¹⁴

We see a similar spectacle if we turn to the field of economic life. Here too we would find a strong initial difficulty, destined however to disappear with time, from those who derive profits from national economic restrictions, that is from the directors of industries that profit from autarchies, and from those strata of agricultural and industrial workers whose earnings are elevated thanks to various protectionisms.¹⁵ Valid support for unity would instead provide those economic forces

¹⁴ *Another beneficial effect would be that of federation on social renewal movements; an effect that can only be mentioned in a note. Socialist movements have reached a dead end, not only because of the developments of militarist imperialism, but also because they are prisoners of their formula of collectivization of material means of production; collectivization proven harmful both by scientific analysis and practical experience. For the just demand of socialism — the emancipation of the working classes — to bear fruit, a revision of traditional ideas is necessary, so that one becomes aware of the limits of convenience of collectivization measures and the fact that it is necessary to correct the harmful effects of competition, but not destroy it, since together with it one would eliminate the means to determine in a more rational way the utilization of natural and human reserves. (Compare HAYEK, "Collectivistic Economic Planning," London, 1935). The development of a socialist idea that justly evaluates the function of free competition runs up against very heavy traditions, as long as the general course goes, due to militaristic demands, toward increasing collectivization. In such a case, for socialists of all tendencies, the path of least psychological resistance is that consisting in accepting that course, demanding that it be employed in favor of the working classes. Federation, instead creating an atmosphere of free exchange, naturally meets the process of elaborating more vital and fruitful socialist ideas.*

¹⁵ *Although it is not fashionable to place even groups of workers in the eventual reactionary ranks, this must be done. It is not likely that in European countries, except for some exceptional groups more deeply impregnated with category egoism, there would be many workers who would actually serve in them. But this is not because there are not several who participate in the profits of national restrictionism, but because a European federation, while forcing many of them to change their occupations, would offer overall advantages so superior as to counterbalance with interest the damages of the cessation of protectionism. Consider, however, to make a typical case, although not European, the immense reactionary resistance that American working masses would make to a policy involving the abolition of immigration restrictions. It should also be taken into account that European workers are, unlike American ones, too impregnated with progressive political ideologies to let prevail only the interests that would lead them to serve alongside the other classes found in the reactionary camp. A typical case of prevalence of ideal interests over material*

paralyzed in their initiatives by national restrictions, that is those entrepreneurs who do not count, to make their enterprises profitable, on subsidies and protectionisms, but on the existence of large and rich markets,¹⁶ and the workers desirous of regaining full freedom of movement, to go where work can be more profitable.

Concluding this rapid review, we can say that the European federation is not only a useful arrangement in abstract, but that there are today, and even more so in the future, forces and interests sufficiently broad and solid to keep it alive and make it function effectively.

4) There now remains to examine the political aspect of the problem. The European federation may be the most rational solution to the current chaos. There may be, once it has arisen, very strong social groups interested in maintaining it. All this evidently is not enough. The most rational solution would not succeed in asserting itself, if there were no forces to impose it. Very strong interests can remain inefficient, if they find themselves caught in a mechanism that directs them in a completely different direction. Is it possible that an occasion will present itself in which one succeeds in mobilizing sufficient forces to impose that solution? If this question can be given an affirmative answer, it is clear that anyone who cares about the fate of European civilization will have to set to work seriously along this line, whatever may be his ultimate prospects regarding the fate of humanity. If instead the answer will be negative, all the previous investigation will prove useless, and there would be nothing but to resign ourselves to a vain struggle, whose fruits would be invariably poisoned, and to withdraw disdainfully if one wants, but in any case steriley.

Indeed, the greatest difficulty inherent in the federal solution is not how to make it function effectively after it has arisen, but how to make it arise. The idea of federation is found, except in the case of Switzerland, completely outside European tradition. For many centuries Europeans have moved along the line of forming sovereign national states, and if sometimes the possibility of overcoming this line has flashed, it has always been by reconnecting to the even more ancient Roman tradition; and this or that stronger nation has attempted to build an empire, which is simply the ultimate logical consequence of the national principle. The greatest force available to anti-federal interests is precisely this national tradition. We have already seen in the two previous chapters how the same progressive forces have adapted to it, becoming its prisoners, so that even

ones in the working classes can be given by the favor shown for Lincoln's cause by the textiles of Manchester who, following their economic interests, should have participated for the slaveholders of the south.

¹⁶ Considering capitalism as a block provided with sufficiently homogeneous interests, and limiting these interests to the existing link between monopolistic capital and imperialist states, prevents socialist tendencies from objectively considering the function that would belong to capitalist forces in a federal order, and makes them erroneously maintain that this order presupposes the abolition of capitalism. In reality, only a part of capitalists is linked to the fate of national states. Notably important instead are the existing capitalist interests contrary to national autarchies (banks, export trade, producers of raw materials who find sufficient outlet only in a world market, producers who employ foreign raw materials, etc.). This mass of interests would rapidly increase in the sense of capitalism taken as a complex, as soon as the federal order were established. To it would essentially belong the task of transforming the anemic autarchic markets into a single rich continental market. If there were not the support of this free-trade capitalism with its unifying force, the federation would find itself having to solve bureaucratically the superhuman problem of unifying the *membra disiecta* [scattered limbs] of individual national economies.

the more recently formed traditions, democratic and socialist, accept the national terms of political struggle, move within them, and postpone to a nebulous future that commits to nothing, the overcoming of contradictions arising from the principle of national sovereignties.

The obstacle is in the force of inertia that pushes to continue according to directions already undertaken. To realize their interests, men develop laws, disciplines, habits, organizations, traditions. With the modification of actual interests, however, these social and psychological mechanisms do not automatically modify themselves, whose characteristic is precisely that of permanence. Even when they have become harmful, they continue to be preserved by the combined influence of those who, even if they are not or are no longer, cannot see how one could proceed otherwise. New and actual interests, not always having the force and clarity of ideas necessary to sweep away old traditions, make compromises, adapt to them, and often end up creating disciplines and traditions that give an irremediably fatal twist to their efforts. The past does not only nourish the present, but often suffocates and poisons it.

In support of particularistic conservative interests and spiritual laziness, intellectual ingenuity then intervenes, which sets about demonstrating the absolute value of what exists only because it exists. What has been the work of men, and can be undone by men, is converted into something that drags them along, willing or unwilling. One discovers innate qualities of dominion in the people launched into conquest. Or it is affirmed that one cannot do violence to the deep aspirations of peoples and classes, but only realize what is in their consciousness. Necessary courses in history are identified; tradition weighs like a nightmare on the living man and pushes him to proceed on a path that perhaps ends in an abyss, but which is the known, safe path traced by the ancestors. “*Weh dir, dass du ein Enkel bist!*” [Woe unto thee, that thou’rt a grandson born!]

This reasoning, profoundly reactionary, and theorized at the beginning of the last century, for explicitly reactionary reasons, we hear rattled off at every turn, in chorus, albeit with different intentions. This is proof, not as one deludes oneself of “historical sense,” but of historical obtuseness, of the degree to which one is prisoner, albeit unconsciously, of reactionary forces. To have historical sense means to understand that “the sabbath is made for man, and not man for the sabbath.”

Reasoning according to romantic pseudo-historicism, we should give an outright negative answer to our question: European federation is unrealizable because none of the traditional ways that direct the great social forces and contribute decisively to influencing the most conspicuous forms of their consciousness, moves in the direction of their realization. Or, to use a fashionable term, the idea of European federation is not a myth like that of the nation, democracy, socialism.

Despite everything that has been said so far in favor of federation, the federalist idea would have no serious probability of translating into reality, if it faced a world stably framed in traditional rules and organizations. Against their tremendous force of inertia, any propagandistic skill, any force of reasoning, any ardor of passion would be condemned to shatter. The same forces that should support it would remain prisoners of old schemes. European culture would continue to flourish

more or less, remaining, however, absolutely incapable of shattering nationalist pseudo-culture. Democratic forces would continue to attempt impossible compromises between free institutions and militarism; socialist tendencies would continue to aspire to socialisms converting into militaristic collectivisms. At the center of all this would remain imposing like a divinity the sovereign national state. The United States of Europe would continue to be a utopia, as they have always been until now.

For their realization particularly favorable circumstances are needed, in which the old traditions, the old schemes of conduct, following very serious events, have temporarily lost the grip they had on souls; circumstances that offer the federalist tendency the opportunity to impose, as the criterion of fundamental division of spirits, the attitude for and against European unity, to assume the direction of favorable forces, indicating with clarity and accomplishing with security the acts necessary to create the arrangements around which the interests indicated in the previous pages can remain firmly united. And only then, starting new disciplines and making new problems arise, would one come to create the new tradition and the new popular “myth” of European unity. To want it to exist preventively would mean wanting to put the cart before the horse.

Now this extraordinary circumstance is very likely to present itself soon. All the most recent events play in this direction.

Even at the end of the other war, it was felt that something serious needed to be done to avoid the repetition of the errors from which one had emerged. During its course, the necessity of conducting common actions had manifested itself to the various states, which could have been embryos of supranational political structures, such as unified command, common funds for exchange stability, distribution of available raw materials to make general productive efficiency maximum, etc. In both camps, the most energetic states, that is Germany and England, had constituted the backbone of entire coalitions of fighting states. And yet each country had spiritually fought for itself, for its own defense, for the satisfaction of its own ambitions. In every country, the eyes of the common man were permanently turned to what their own state was doing or not doing. The same characteristic of positional warfare assumed by the struggle between peoples made all attention concentrate on their own borders. The years of war had subjected each state to a harsh squeeze, but had, so to speak, even more isolated it from all the others and from the vision of the common interest of the various peoples. Each headed toward the post-war crisis closed in the national horizon.

Within each state the divisions created by the problem of political organization (democracy and authoritarianism) and those created by problems of property (socialism and capitalism) remained predominant. All these forces fought bitterly to create an authoritarian or democratic, capitalist or socialist state, but still always to make the sovereign state — the idol — more solid.

The proletarian movement that then occupied the foreground, and that could have decisively influenced international politics, found itself agitated and exalted by feelings of international solidarity especially toward the Russian revolution. The Russian invitation to constitute solid

revolutionary parties, capable of realizing a world revolution, was not however welcomed by the enormous majority of workers, who showed by facts that they sympathized with the Russian revolution, but wanted to continue their traditional politics in national terms. The Russian myth thus had, in the field of international politics, almost the only effect of raising palingenetic hopes, leaving completely in the shadows, throughout the critical period of the post-war, the question of the organization of peace in the world, and in particular on the European continent. Although this was actually the decisive thing, for the effects of future developments of humanity, it remained entrusted to the old statesmen who, one could almost say by professional deformation, were not capable of seeing anything other than the problems of national power, and of pressing to obtain, according to their ability and the forces they had behind them, within the limits of peace, succeeded to those of war, this and that advantage. Only very few understood the danger of the reconstitution of the absolute sovereignty of European states.¹⁷ Things being so, it is easy to understand how the need to give life to an international order produced only the abortion of the League of Nations.¹⁸

The current war has had a totally different course. Excluding England, half of Russia and some secondary western states, the entire continent finds itself, mostly directly and in a smaller part indirectly, under German domination. The ancient state structures are shattered or stand only in appearance. This state of things which, in case of German victory, would constitute the starting point of the German empire, would constitute in the opposite case, the most favorable situation for the assertion of the federalist idea. The current German yoke indeed pushes the various peoples to free themselves, but poses this need not as a particular need of each people, but as a common interest of all European peoples. Already now popular sentiments are losing their national narrowness: increasingly peoples follow with their hearts not the fate of their own flag, but the fate of the forces that fight for them, even if officially they are forces of an enemy country. All countries begin to realize that the problem for which one fights is a problem superior to that of the power of one's own nation. The military power of Nazism falling broken, all European countries would find themselves contemporaneously facing the problem of giving order to the continent. The gravity of the sufferings endured and the danger run of general enslavement, would make this necessity felt urgently. The problem of international order would loom over that of national order, to a degree which at the end of the other war was certainly not felt. One would not find oneself facing, solid and imposing, the sovereign national states to fascinate the attention of all, of the vanquished, the victors, the liberated, the tragic impotence of those idols. Reactionary nationalist tendencies, disguising themselves according to the passions of the moment, may try to yoke again to their cart the national passions offended by recent oppression; but they will not be able to monopolize them

¹⁷ In Italy especially notable were the political letters of Junius [Translators' Note: pseudonym of Luigi Einaudi (1874–1961), an Italian economist, journalist, and statesman who later served as President of the Italian Republic] published in "Corriere della Sera" of 1918-19 and reprinted in 1920 (Laterza, Bari). The VII and IX still deserve to be meditated upon today.

¹⁸ People of good sense foresaw, even before it was established, the absolute ineffectiveness of a League of Nations respectful of the complete sovereignty of individual states. In addition to the cited letters of Junius, see, for example, the biting judgment of Winston Churchill who was part of the British delegation at Versailles (cf. note on page 232 of "Guerra diplomatica" by Aldovrandi Marescotti, Milan, 1939).

outright at their pleasure. A federalist political movement could make their game fail, also addressing itself to those passions and trying to guide them toward a solution that does not ignore national sentiments, but rather gives them the way to manifest themselves freely. Given the freshness of the memory of war, the tone of the moment will not be that of an aggressive nationalism, but will be the desire to not see one's own nation oppressed again, and to find a way to live in peace with neighbors. The federal solution would meet this aspiration much better than the simple restoration of national sovereignties. The struggle would certainly be hard and would require energy and ability to reach the goal. If it were a matter of creating a unitary state, national sentiments would be collectively opposed and it would be difficult to mobilize sufficient forces to overcome them. But for a federal solution it would not be necessary to break national passions, but rather to rely largely on them preventing the reform of the link that now keeps them tied to nationalist forces. Finally, consider that, given the development of events, it is foreseeable that the definitive crisis will not come in isolation first in this and then in that country, but simultaneously throughout Europe, at the moment of collapse of the military power that now holds almost all of it subdued. This will enormously facilitate the coordination of propaganda and action in all countries.

The federalist idea, being thus placed on the agenda as that which would aim to resolve the most urgent of all post-war problems, and directly touching the national state, that is the organ toward which all traditional movements that mobilize the masses are oriented, could not fail to exercise a profound action of renewal and clarification on democratic and socialist aspirations. Even these tendencies will not present themselves, as they presented themselves at the end of the other war, with formed political frameworks, with organized masses, accustomed to following their directives, in a word with the strength of a consolidated tradition.

While the desire for freedom will be enormous, ideas on how to achieve it will be most uncertain. In everyone's minds will be vivid the memory of the corruption that lurks within national democracies, condemned to be a desperate union between democracy and militarism. We already see how this memory makes all democratic countries confused and uncertain. The federalist movement would have to gather the vital forces in this field as well. It should penetrate among the imposing but disorganized masses, indicating the only possible way to permanently realize that aspiration, and thus preventing their falling back under the sway of traditional national democratic paths. Here too it is not a matter of ignoring and opposing the demand for freedom, stirring in the hearts of peoples tired of totalitarian despotisms; it is not a matter of seeking other forces to oppose this, but of knowing how to direct existing aspirations.

And if, finally, one considers the socialist tendencies of the working classes, one sees that they are far from being satisfied, and that in the post-war crisis they will make themselves felt imperiously. But it is no longer a matter of passions already framed and directed toward precise aims. On the contrary. The old proletarian parties have been deprived of their traditional organizational grip on the masses, and experience in the period from 1918 to today has confused all their ideas and has made them most uncertain about the future path to follow. One need only compare, to take only the case of the most energetic of them, the sure confidence with which the revolutionary socialist

tendencies (that is, those who would soon become communists) declared during the other war that soon would come the hour of the establishment of socialism, and the caution with which communists express themselves today, who often use generically democratic words. This is due in part to tactical skill, and, having modified nothing of their fundamental conceptions, one would not understand for what reason they should not follow the same path of ultra-collectivization followed by Russia, should the opportunity present itself to them. But that they have felt the need to leave their views in shadow is a notable symptom of how much they themselves feel that their collectivism no longer corresponds to proletarian socialist aspirations. National collectivism (and practically, as we have seen, no other collectivism is possible today than that on a national scale) no longer has the charm of unknown things. Even the socialist aspirations of the proletariat will not find themselves at the end of the war already captured in the old schemes, and the federalist movement will be able to work effectively to direct them in the direction favorable to a European solution, advocating radical reforms and showing how they can truly bear fruit only in an environment freed from the imperialist nightmare.

Every country will have its particular problems to solve. To solve them all in a homogeneous and unified way, to coordinate all the most disparate movements, would be a desperate undertaking. But federalists should not propose this, since they do not intend to create a unified European state. The federalist idea, although profoundly innovative, is endowed with such elasticity as to allow it to become rapidly, in a revolutionary situation, the criterion for distinguishing existing political forces and passions, not opposing them, but impregnating them with itself and thus making them immune from the fatal deficiencies of old orientations. It will suffice that to these national, democratic, socialist forces and passions, profoundly disoriented, it knows how to show with intelligent work that, for the adequate resolution of their demands, an indispensable condition is the formation of the few, simple, easily comprehensible, solid and irrevocable federal institutions. It will not be necessary to worry too much about coordinating individual national problems. With the creation of the federation would indeed be created the internal order to which progressive forces would naturally coordinate themselves and from which they would receive their further imprint.

5) From what has been said it appears clear that the greatest difficulty to overcome in order to succeed is not the existence of old traditions; since these will present themselves broken and scattered, or at least uncertain and disorganized. The greatest difficulty is in the formation of the federalist movement. Without it, the extraordinary conjunction of favorable conditions would dissolve unused. What is required of active federalists is much more than what is required of the masses mobilizable in favor of European unity. It is indeed necessary that they understand, yes, the value of the demands for national independence, political freedom, social equality, but it is also necessary that they immunize themselves through serious self-criticism from all the fetishes, national, democratic, socialist — that is, from the traditional insufficient ways with which one has so far sought to satisfy those demands. If they have this immunity, they will be capable of taking

hold of the masses and guiding them toward objectives to which they have already been unconsciously predisposed by all historical events.

If they are instead prisoners of the various current fetishes and symbols, they will be absolutely incapable of fulfilling that function of direction, and will not have the open-mindedness and firmness necessary to keep the multiple forces united and to restrain them, when in their one-sidedness they threaten to make the goal fail; they will not be capable of giving order to the chaos of the masses, but will be swallowed up by it.