

'Federalist action in the international arena' from L'Unità europea (May–June 1944)

Caption: In May 1944, the Italian underground periodical L'Unità europea, organ of the European Federalist Movement, highlights the efforts undertaken by European Federalists against Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy to achieve European unity.

Source: L'unità europea. Voce del movimento federalista europeo. Maggio-Guigno 1944, n° 4. Torino: Movimento. "L'azione federalista sul terreno internazionale", p. 1.

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Federalist action in the international arena

One year ago, in early May 1943, the first issue of *Unità Europea* was secretly published. It was a first call and the first sign from Italy of the attention that will have to be devoted to the issue of a Federal Union of the current sovereign nation states if Europe is to rise up out of chaos.

The end of July saw the publication of the second issue, which included a contribution by those who, on Ventotene, were the first of us to point the way to Federal Union. This contribution had secretly gone to the printers, but before going to press the newspaper was able to welcome the liberation of some of the political victims of fascism. The second issue was particularly important because it set out some of the fundamental requirements of European federalism. They included federal *citizenship*: a federal union should be a *res publica* of all the citizens of its member states, who should exercise political rights and control over the federal government *directly*, and not through each State. The first step towards a European federation should be the renunciation of the principle that a State should not become involved in the internal affairs of any other country (a principle that in Europe has been responsible for fascism and Nazism and various smaller political gangsterisms).

Very early in September, before the armistice and before the Germans had begun their systematic destruction and plunder of our country, the third issue was published. Anticipating imminent events, it issued a call for European unity and a partisan war: 'War on Nazism!'

Then, nothing more. The war on Nazism and its neo-fascist thugs and lackeys has been taken seriously by the federalists and has been hard fought, each of us organised as parties, bands or liberation committees that maximise the effectiveness of our personal contributions to the common fight. This has happened within Italy, now rebelling against its subjugation by the Nazis.

However, federalist action is either international or it is not: the touchstone, the yardstick for how far today's federalism has outstripped the utopian vision of Victor Hugo or Coudenhove Kalergi is precisely its capacity to generate and spearhead *concerted multinational political initiatives*. We are well aware that nationalist exasperation in the countries oppressed by the German nationalist and racist madness has been and is still a weapon for the allied nations. Those nations have all the more reason to use that weapon, after the French refusal in 1940 to *share* citizenship of the British Commonwealth must have shown men like Churchill, at once practical, positive and conservative, how unwilling the European nation states were to give up unlimited national sovereignty, even at the point of death!

In a certain sense, therefore, the most difficult job has fallen to our companions who, following information received at the federalist meeting from 27 to 29 August 1943, went abroad to begin the thankless task of laying the foundations, in an agitated atmosphere of nationalistic distrust, for the *practical* federalist political work that is European not just in intent but in reality.

We here have kept silent so far, until we can report on the preliminary outcome of our European work to Italian anti-fascist public opinion, which is still fundamentally *sceptical* about not only whether it is possible but even whether it is the right time to talk to Europe about federalism.

The outcome is at once modest and promising. European unity at this time is a reality: from Oslo to Tuscany, from Bordeaux to Warsaw, partisans are using the same methods to fight the same battle and are dying, often tortured by the same captors. Europe has been united *against* Nazi totalitarianism and *against* German nationalist and racial hegemony. For this unity to be maintained, all that is needed is to make it positive and constructive, to turn it into a united Europe *for a European federal union*, the only form of government that can overcome autarkical and totalitarian nationalism and can, through its stable and lasting institutions, attain the true, fundamental aims for which, partisans throughout Europe are fighting, discarding any residual rhetoric.

Those who are sowing the seeds of federalism in Europe are naturally, and increasingly destined to become, the *resistance and liberation movements* that exist in all the countries where guerrilla warfare and the

partisan struggle exist.

The beginnings of a common federalist work by our companions and the accredited representatives of resistance groups of other European countries are now a fait accompli. The preparatory meeting for the International Federalist Conference took place at the end of March in a neutral country. This was attended by three Italian representatives of the anti-fascist and anti-Nazi resistance, three representatives of the French resistance, two of the Dutch resistance, one Czech, one Pole, one Norwegian and a member of the trade unions International. Following a lively discussion, an intelligent solution could be found to the undeniable difficulty presented by the participation of a German delegate. On the one hand, nobody doubts that the European Federal Union should include a German people *purged* of its Nazi, hegemonic and totalitarian poisons, but for the time being it is an equally legitimate concern to protect from any sort of German contact the resistance movements engaged in mortal combat not only with the Nazis but also with its army and all the occupying forces in the various countries. The German delegate from the anti-Nazi resistance in Germany took part in the preparatory meeting until a draft federalist declaration was discussed, and he left when it was time to speak about the problems inherent in the various resistance movements in the occupied countries.

The first meeting is to be followed by a second, where the outline declaration reported elsewhere in the newspaper will be presented and a standing liaison committee will be formed.

The work done by the European Federalist Movement outside Italy does not end there: for the time being, we cannot report on the printing, preparation and distribution of pamphlets, the establishing of contacts that are bound to be of use in future and the whole delicate area of relations with official United Nations circles and with the major progressive forces that are not in government but are a hope for the future in the English-speaking world. The area we have examined is sufficiently important, however, if mainland Europeans are also to be the architects of the United Europe.

This issue was already being typeset when the electrifying news arrived that Rome has been liberated and the British and Americans have landed in Normandy. For Nazism and fascism, this is the beginning of the end. For Europe, it is the beginning of a period in which the prospects of uniting in a strong, glorious federation of free people's democracies will be greater than ever before in its history. For ourselves, it is an incentive to redouble our efforts, spurred on by hope.