

Carlo Curti Gialdino, The Symbols of the European Union: the origin of the motto

Caption: In his book entitled The Symbols of the European Union, Carlo Curti Gialdino, Professor of International Law at the University of Rome 'La Sapienza' and Legal Secretary at the Court of Justice of the European Communities from 1982 to 2000, considers the origin of the European motto.

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[...]

2. The origin of the motto *United in diversity*

Commentators⁽⁷⁾ agree that the origin of the motto *United in diversity* for the European Union⁽⁸⁾ goes back to the competition among young people of the Europe of 15 organised in 1998 by the French journalist Patrick La Prairie, for the newspaper *Ouest-France*. The initiative, which was coordinated by the Caen Peace Memorial with the support of France-Telecom⁽⁹⁾, involved 40 newspapers from the Member States (in Italy: *La Repubblica*). Over 2 016 mottoes containing 400 000 words were received between September 1999 and January 2000, from 2 575 classes comprising a total of 80 000 young people aged between 10 and 19. The 15 national juries each selected 10 mottoes. Later, a media jury comprising representatives from the participating newspapers (including the Italian journalist Corrado Augias) whittled the mottoes down to a shortlist of seven⁽¹⁰⁾, from which a Grand Jury of eminent European personalities, chaired by Jacques Delors (with the former Foreign Minister, Susanna Agnelli, representing Italy), selected the winning entry; the latter Jury had recourse to a lexicometric survey carried out by Sofres. The winning motto was *Unité dans la diversité*, or ‘Unity in diversity’, devised by youngsters from Luxembourg, and Jacques Delors prefaced this by ‘*Europe:*’, aware that it was Europe’s task, and a particular challenge, to forge a connection between the two terms. At a ceremony held in Brussels on 4 May 2000, almost exactly 50 years after the Schuman declaration, in the Chamber of the European Parliament and in the presence of 420 children from 15 European classes, the motto was ‘handed over’ to Nicole Fontaine, President of the European Parliament, who also read out the Latin version, *In varietate concordia*.

However, the expression *United in diversity* had been in use for some time to convey the particular nature of the European idea. For example, the historian Jean-Baptiste Duroselle had used it in the mid-1960s, pointing out that ‘on the one hand it denotes the division of Europe into independent States in which *Rex est imperator in regno suo* and, on the other hand, the recognition by those States that they have general interests in common, at least in some cases [...]. They have to accept that there are certain written and unwritten rules which cannot be transgressed: that is the principle of “Unity in diversity”’⁽¹¹⁾.

At the end of the 1950s, Gaetano Martino was also thinking of a slogan to represent European unification when he used the term *In pluribus unum* to explain that ‘the political unity of Europe should be founded on its multiplicity and diversity’⁽¹²⁾. In this connection, Pietro Pastorelli observed that ‘Martino is acutely aware of the need to strike a balance between the diversities of the individual States, which, he says, are also an essential component of Europe and its heritage, and the common characteristics which mark us all as Europeans. Not a suppression of nationality therefore, but its enhancement through unity’⁽¹³⁾.

Furthermore, in early 1993, the so-called De Clercq report⁽¹⁴⁾ had proposed a new banner⁽¹⁵⁾ for the European Commission bearing the motto *In Uno Plures*, precisely to symbolise unity in diversity as opposed to the US motto *E pluribus unum*, which aptly conveys the melting-pot approach to the construction of the American identity⁽¹⁶⁾.

[...]

(7) E. de PONCINS, *op. cit.*, p. 77; J.-M. FAVRET, *L’Union européenne: ‘l’unité dans la diversité’. Signification et pertinence d’une devise*, in *Revue trimestrielle de droit européen*, p. 657, and *A Constitution for Europe*, a booklet put out by the European Commission, Luxembourg 2004, p. 11.

(8) *Unity in diversity* has been the national motto of Indonesia for some time (*Bhinneka Tunggal Eka*, in ancient Javanese); as from 27 April 2000, it also became the motto of South Africa (*‘ikee:/xarra/ike’*) in |Xam, an extinct Khoisan language. The term has also been used, since the 1990s, as the motto of the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages. *United in diversity* was also the slogan of European communism in the 1960s and 1970s, coined by Palmiro Togliatti in the famous *Promemoria sulle questioni del movimento operaio internazionale e della sua unità*, written in Yalta in August 1964 (for the text see *Rinascita*, 5 September 1964) ‘to indicate that national parties could follow their own specific paths, without undermining the basic unity of communism and the fundamental link with the USSR. This was a concept which remained valid for almost a decade, until the first glimmerings of Eurocommunism, as propounded by Berlinguer, Carrillo and Marchais; it was later modernised up to a point, but was never

completely retracted until the collapse of the entire system, slogans included' (A. RIZZO, *Europa futura un motto togliattiano*, in *La Stampa*, 14 July 2003).

(9) A website, 'http://devise-europe.org', operated by France-Telecom, came online in March 1998 to receive the suggestions from schoolchildren. The motto had to consist of a sentence of no more than 12 words, with an accompanying explanation of no more than 1 500 characters.

(10) The other six mottoes selected were 'Peace, freedom, solidarity', 'Our differences are our strength', 'United for peace and democracy', 'United in freedom' (proposed by students from the Istituto tecnico agrario di Matera), 'An old continent, a new hope', and 'All different, all European'.

(11) J. B. DUROSELLE, *L'idea di Europa nella storia*, Edizioni Milano Nuova, Milan, 1964, pp. 445-446. The words *United in diversity* were actually used as the title of a section of the volume *European Integration*, edited by C. Grove Haines, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1957, Italian translation by F. Mancini, *L'integrazione europea*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1957.

(12) Address to the European Parliament on 19 March 1958, in *Gaetano Martino. Dieci anni al Parlamento europeo (1957-1967). Un uomo di scienza al servizio dell'Europa. Discorsi pronunciati in seduta plenaria*. Texts edited by M. Silvestro, European Parliament, political series, POLI 116 IT, Luxembourg 2001, p. 13.

(13) P. PASTORELLI, *L'integrazione europea: aspetti storico-politici*, in C. ZANGHÌ (edited by), *Messina-Europa 40 anni dopo (1-2 giugno 1955 - 29-31 maggio 1995)*, Giappichelli, Turin, 1995, p. 88.

(14) W. DE CLERCQ, *Reflections on Information and Communication Policy of the European Communities*, Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, 1993.

(15) The word banner, derived from the verb to ban, denotes a form of advertising used on the World Wide Web. Typically, a banner is a thin rectangular box of 468 x 60 pixels, embedded in the top or bottom of a web page, bearing the logo or image, often animated, of the advertiser or his product. Clicking on the banner gives access to the web page for the advertisement or product. Banners can be compared to advertising banners hung in streets (or to printed advertisements), their aim being to attract the public's attention in a few words, or by using images which arouse interest, curiosity or shock.

(16) The European 'identity strategy' appears to differ from the American strategy. *Unity in diversity* and *E pluribus unum* are, in fact, the outcome of two different aggregation concepts. For the opposing theory, for which no reason is given, that the European motto 'not unintentionally calls to mind that of the United States', see N. VEROLA, *L'identità dell'Unione*, in F. BASSANINI, G. TIBERI, *La Costituzione europea. Un primo commento*, op. cit., p. 45.