

## Address to Memorial Service for John Pinder, 25 April 2015

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I am here not only for my personal friendship with John Pinder but also to witness the close relationship between the Italian and English federalists. Lucio Levi and Giorgio Anselmi, the present President of the Movimento Federalista Europeo (MFE), asked me to bring you, the friends of John, their greetings.

I dare say that in Europe you cannot find two federalist organizations with so a long and close connections as the English and the Italian federalist movements. Let me recall what John writes in his book (with Richard Mayne) on the history of Federal Union and our common roots.

“Spinelli had been liberated in 1943 from Ventotene, an island off the coast between Rome and Naples, after sixteen years as a political prisoner under Mussolini’s fascist regime. His fellow prisoner Ernesto Rossi was a friend of Luigi Einaudi, the great liberal economist and first President of the post-war Italian Republic. Spinelli described in his memoirs how he and Rossi, in Ventotene, came to receive the writings of the contemporary British federalists: ‘Requested by Rossi, who as Professor of Economics was authorized to write to him, Einaudi sent him two or three books on English federalist literature which had flourished towards the end of the thirties as a result of Lord Lothian’s influence. Apart from Lionel Robbins’s book *The Economic Causes of War*, which I subsequently translated and which was published by Einaudi, I cannot recall the titles or authors of others. But their analysis of the political and economic perversion that nationalism leads to, and their reasoned presentation of the federal alternative, have remained to this day impressed on my memory like a revelation. Since I was looking for mental clarity and precision, I was not attracted by the foggy and contorted ideological federalism of a Proudhon or Mazzini, but by the clean, precise thinking of these English federalists, in whose writings I found a pretty good key to understand the chaos into which Europe was plunging and for devising alternatives’ “.

The second event I like to remember is about the campaign for Britain in Europe, when the personal friendship between John Pinder and Altiero Spinelli produced substantial political achievements. The year is 1968, when de Gaulle was still in power and, as it is well known, he opposed not only any federalist project but also the entry of Britain into the EEC. In March, George Brown was replaced by Michael Stewart as Foreign Secretary and in July, the Federal Trust organised a week-end conference bringing together some people from France, Germany and Italy. “John Pinder wrote a substantial paper for it, entitled ‘The time has come for a more radical European policy’, in which he argued that Britain should propose a European Political Community, its scope was to include foreign policy and security, defence technologies and monetary policy, with institutions that would become federal by the end of a transitional period. The EEC would continue and would merge with the EPC once the veto on British entry was removed. The proposal was designed to outflank the General’s impregnable position in the EEC, and his veto on British membership, by launching a community and eventually federal project in important fields where the EEC was not active. Altiero Spinelli, who was then a frequent participant at the Federal Trust’s conferences, responded enthusiastically”.

Encouraged by this, the British federalists, with Ernest Wistrich, persuaded George Brown to promote the project. “It was in Rome in November 1968 that George Brown really connected Spinelli. Spinelli arranged meetings for him with the principal party leaders ... Nenni expressed complete agreement and stressed that the Labour Party and the Italian

Socialist Party should work together to this end. A few days later the prevailing government crisis was resolved by reshuffling jobs in the Italian government and, according to Spinelli with whom Nenni had a long talk, Brown's words were 'strongly in his mind' when he decided to accept the post of Foreign Minister, in which he would be able to follow up these ideas with the Labour Government. Immediately afterwards, Nenni asked Spinelli to become his adviser on European affairs". The following part of this story is well known: in 1969 de Gaulle resigned; as a consequence also the Anglo-Italian declaration changed its original meaning and scope, but it retained a commitment to support direct election to the European Parliament.

The third event I like to remember is John's speech at the international convention in Milano, in 1993, on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the MFE. In his speech John explained in few, precise words why the British and Italian federalists share, notwithstanding historical differences, common culture and values, the real basis of their political action. After having defined Spinelli a political genius, John said: "this genius needed, however, the representatives of a certain Italian political culture to ensure the success of his efforts. This culture and these people were the *fortuna* which was the essential complement of *virtù*. The political culture was already evident in the Risorgimento. ... Between the two World Wars the federal idea was supported by Einaudi, Agnelli, Cabiati, the Rossellis, Don Sturzo, Turati and many others. Then there was the reaction against fascism which had definitively demonstrated the dangers of nationalism and of the cult of absolute national sovereignty. In August 1943, when the MFE was founded, I was about to enter the British Army to take part in resistance to Nazism and fascism, organized by my national state. At the same time, many Italians were about to join the resistance against their own state. This contrast explains, at least in part, why it was easier for Italians to understand the need to limit the sovereignty of the nation-state. Italian political culture and political conjuncture were both favourable to federalism. Not less important was the great *virtù* of so many Italians who were ready to commit themselves to the federalist struggle. Their *fortuna* lay in the *virtù* of Spinelli". In the conclusion of his speech, John described concisely the content of the federalist struggle after the Maastricht Treaty. "The citizens do not like to be governed in obscure ways. Perhaps, with the single currency and general codecision, i.e. European democracy, we will have a federal union *de facto*. But for the big majority of citizens, all this is incomprehensible. The citizens will not know how they are governed at the European level until there is a constitution which makes it all clear. It is probable that the political will to make the necessary reforms will not be generated unless it is focused on constitutional project". Indeed the MFE started immediately a Campaign for a European federal constitution and after some year the UEF adopted the same stance. In December 2000 the great demonstration of Nice was the climax of the federalist action for the European constitution. This struggle was lost. Today we see clearly the consequence – the growth of nationalist and anti-European parties – caused by the inability of the national governments and European institutions to provide a federal constitution for the EU. John was right: "The citizens do not like to be governed in obscure ways".

I cannot end this remembrance without adding a further reason of my personal gratitude to John. When I was President of the MFE and of the Altiero Spinelli Institute in Ventotene, the Institute had difficulties to finance the seminars on "The Future of the European Union". These difficulties were overcome thanks to the generosity of John and of the James Madison Trust. All the federalists, young and old, have something to learn from John's exemplar commitment to the federalist cause.