

The Origins of the European Integration: Staunch Italians, Cautious British Actors and the Intelligence Dimension (1942-1946)

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The idea of unity in Europe is a concept stretching back to the Middle Ages to the exponents of the *Respublica Christiana*. Meanwhile the Enlightenment philosophers and political thinkers recurrently advocated it as a way of embracing all the countries of the Continent in some kind of pacific order¹. Yet, until the second half of the twentieth century the nationalist ethos of Europeans prevented any limitation of national sovereignty.

The First World War, the millions of casualties and economic ruin in Europe made the surrendering of sovereignty a conceivable way of overcoming the causes of recurring conflicts by bringing justice and prosperity to the Old World. During the inter-war years, it became evident that the European countries were too small to solve by their own efforts the problem of a modern economy². As a result of the misery caused by world economic crisis and the European countries' retreating in economic isolationism, various forms of Fascism emerged in almost half of the countries of Europe³.

The League of Nations failed to prevent international unrest because it had neither the political power nor the material strength to enable itself to carry

¹ Cfr. Andrea Bosco, *Federal Idea*, vol. I, *The History of Federalism from Enlightenment to 1945*, London and New York, Lothian foundation, 1991, p. 99 and foll.; and J.B. Duroselle, "Europe as an historical concept", in C. Grove Haines (ed. by) *European Integration*, Baltimore, 1958, pp. 19-20.

² Cfr. Walter Lipgens, *General introduction*, in Lipgens (ed.), *Documents on the History of European Integration*, vol. 1, *Continental Plans for European Union 1939-1945*, Berlin-New York, De Gruyter, 1984, p. 8.

³ *Ibidem*.

out its decisions and enforce its will on nation states⁴. Facing these challenges in the Twenties and Thirties, Europeanist and even Federalist views flourished throughout all of Europe. Among them, the 1929 “Briand Plan” of Aristide Briand, the many “Pan-European” initiatives by Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, the pro-Europeanist writings of Luigi Einaudi to conclude with launch of British “Federal Union” in 1938. These ideas remained alive during the Second World War and in many quarters inspired the anti-Axis underground fighters including Italy especially.

As early as in 1942, undisputed Resistance leaders like Emilio Lussu, Leo Valiani, Aldo Garosci and Altiero Spinelli started liaising with the Anglo-Americans, in many cases making them aware of their Federalist principles. The British in particular showed the strongest interest towards these initiatives as confirmed by the fact that some of these Italians became full-fledged British agents in the ranks of the Special Operation Executive (SOE)⁵. There is also evidence of the British Labour Government’s persistent attention towards the Italian Federalism after 1945. On one hand the Foreign Office showed its interest in carrying on with the publication of the influential Italian Europeanist journal «L’Unità Europea»⁶. On the other, even after Victory Day, liaisons with former SOE’s Italian agents continued, as recently declassified evidences show in the case of Leo Valiani and others⁷. A substantial detail is that these Italians were mainly democratic with socialist leanings belonging to the non-Communist *milieu* and presumably this latter aspect facilitated the continuation of these liaisons under the Attlee Government. Moreover, British pro-Europeanist covert activities further expanded in the post-war.

One emblematic episode was the involvement of the British Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) in the setting up of the Independent League for European Cooperation (ILEC), a transnational pressure group devoted to the

⁴ Ivi, p. 19.

⁵ On the participation of Lussu and Valiani to SOE’s operations the best and most updated accounts are in Mireno Berrettini, *La Gran Bretagna e l’antifascismo italiano. Diplomazia clandestina, Intelligence, Operazioni speciali (1940-1943)*, Firenze, Le Lettere, 2010; see also Mauro Canali, *Leo Valiani e Max Salvadori. I servizi segreti inglesi e la Resistenza*, in «Nuova Storia Contemporanea», III (2010), pp. 29-64.

⁶ Particularly revealing in this respect are recently unearthed documents at the British National Archives (TNA) in Kew Gardens, London, which shed light on this aspect of British relation with Italian Europeanism. See TNA, F.O. 371/60673 folder named *Mario Alberto Rollier. Director of Italian Paper «L’Unità Europea»*.

⁷ On the intercession of British intelligence in favour of Valiani’s trip to Britain in the post-war see TNA, HS9/1569/4. This folder contains a letter dated 24 August 1945 and written by the HQ SOM (the headquarters in command of SOE in Italy) pressing the British consulate in Rome to hasten the concession of a Visa for the United Kingdom for the former SOE agent Leo Valiani.

promotion of a common area of free exchange in Europe and beyond⁸. Worth highlighting here is the evidence that as early as in 1942 under the command of the Labour Minister of Economic Warfare, Hugh Dalton, SOE precociously promoted the clandestine activities of several Italian Europeanists while also putting them in contact with representatives of the Labour establishment. This is probably why by 1945 for the whole non-communist Italian intelligentsia of Europeanist inclinations - mainly gathered around the “bourgeois” Italian *Partito d’Azione* - the British Labour Party had come to embody a solid international point of reference much more than the American Administration⁹. The latter, on the other hand, started to pour millions of dollar in favour of European integration only once the Soviet encroachment had fully manifested and therefore not until 1947¹⁰. It is regrettable that by then Britain was financially exhausted.

The immediate post-war era presented in effect several problems for the Europeanist impetus of the British Labour Government. A similarly difficult panorama, although for different reasons, emerged also in Italy. Certainly a combination of economic and financial problems, coupled with Cold War tensions, prevented the British Labour government from pursuing a more incisive pro-Europeanist foreign policy¹¹. However, differently from what assumed by orthodox historiography (as will be seen), the post-war Labour Government was not from the start blindly negative towards the idea of a European closer unity as against a supposed predilection for a favoured partnership with the United States. In the Eighties, thanks to the opening of governmental archives in several countries of Europe under the Thirty year rule, a more recent line of research has started questioning earlier assumptions. These readings have claimed that Labour Government was in fact much in favour of being part of some sort of formal or informal union among the Western countries of Europe. Given the fact that the Big Three victorious

⁸ Cfr. Thierry Meyssan, «Histoire secrète de l’Union européenne», Réseau Voltaire International, 28 juin 2004 <http://www.voltairenet.org/article14369.html>.

⁹ This is certainly the opinion of the official scholar of the Action Party Giovanni De Luna, *Storia del Partito d’Azione*, (History of the Action Party), Torino, UTET, 2006, p. 311.

¹⁰ In the exterminate historiography on the transatlantic dimension of the construction of Europe there is a general consensus that nothing significant came out from the Americans before of the launching of the Marshal Plan. See for instance Michael Hogan, *The Marshall Plan. American, Britain and the Construction of Western Europe, 1947-1952*, Cambridge, CUP, 1987. For a recent elaboration of this view see Mark Gilbert, *Partners and Rivals: Assessing the American Role in Antonio Varsori and Wolfram Kaiser (eds. by) European Union History. Themes and Debates*, Palgrave, Macmillan, 2010, pp. 171 and 177 and fll.

¹¹ See for all John W. Young, *Britain and European Unity, 1945-1999*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2000, 2nd edition (first edition 1993), p. 7.

powers now dominated the planet, British leadership of Europe seemed natural.

A strategy, in other words, that of the Labour leaders meant to face American and Soviet's competition with Europe at large, and Britain in particular, in the balance of world power. Yet, the British attempts in exploiting to this end the vast network of foreign clandestine contacts built throughout Europe during the Second World War remains one of the least addressed aspect of British foreign policy in this phase. Instead the new SOE's evidence, especially as declassified after 2008, as well as some overlooked British Foreign Office's papers concerning Italy give sustenance to the revisionist interpretation¹². The Labour government's strategy appears carefully tailored to involve the existing secret contacts abroad in building up a consensus in favour of its agenda including its European policy.

On the other hand, this was also the main aim behind the creation of the Foreign Office's first Cold War propaganda weapon, that is, the Russia Committee¹³. The Russia Committee's main targets of propaganda abroad were in fact various foreign European personalities either politicians or publicists who had previously served in SOE or had already secretly liaised with the British. The latter were entrusted with the goal of clandestinely disseminating in their countries suitable publicity to counter Soviets' propaganda against Britain¹⁴. An approach which considers the existence of these precocious and preventive connections can help to provide a new perspective to post-war Labour Europeanism. Why, otherwise, did SOE, under Dalton, spend so much effort in creating liaisons with Italian Europeanism? Why did the Labour Government bother to nurture these relations in the post-war?

Limits and limitations of traditional historiography

The historiography on the very embryonic steps of the unification of European comprises a disparate number of historical accounts stimulated by different national historiographical traditions which often have entertained only a partial

¹² At the British National Archives the collection *Special Operation Executive, Series 1, Special Operations in Western Europe, 1941-1948* includes thousands pages of documents concerning aspects of SOE activity in Italy. The sub-collection HS/9 includes instead, as mentioned, several previously withdrawn dossiers concerning Italian political personalities who were recruited by SOE during the WWII. Most of these Italians would cover important institutional positions in post-war Italy.

¹³ A good summary on the origin and scopes of the Russia Committee is in Raymond Smith, "A Climate of Opinion: British Officials and the Development of British Soviet Policy, 1945-1947", «International Affairs», vol. 64, n. 4, Autumn 1988 in particular p. 636 and fl.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

dialogue among themselves¹⁵. Moreover, more often than not European scholars have chosen to publish scholarship in their native language – especially, German, French and Italian – thus impeding a broader process of intellectual cross-fertilization. Even when addressing a short span of time as the years up to 1946 there is such an abundance of historical accounts of the most disparate nature which makes a synthesis very difficult¹⁶. Focusing prevalently on the main trends of Italian and British literature on early integration is therefore a deliberate choice to synthesise what would be otherwise too diverse. Yet, this delimited overview is significant enough since it contains the crux themes and debates which have informed the historiographical discourse.

In Italy, for instance, a “Federalist-centred approach” (derived from the tradition of the history of political thought) has prevailed and is still mainly adopted. Although a similar approach was initially also evident in Britain (as well as in the rest of Europe), more recent British scholars have consistently challenged the “Federalist school”, undertaking lines of research which have shown the flaws of this scholarship¹⁷. If we look at two of the most paramount Italian representatives of the Federalist school, Sergio Pistone¹⁸ and Lucio Levi¹⁹,

¹⁵ This is the opinion of Antonio Varsori in his recent attempt at a comprehensive survey of the history of European integration. Cfr. the Introduction to A. Varsori and W. Kaiser (eds. by), *European Union History: Themes and Debates*, Palgrave, Macmillan, 2010, p. 2.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ A concise but comprehensive account of this new trend of historiography is in Oliver Daddow, *Britain and Europe since 1945. Historiographical Perspective on Integration*, Manchester, MUP, 2004 in particular p. 122 and *passim*.

¹⁸ Pistone focuses on the investigation of the theoretical explanations offered as bases for the various Federalist theories in Europe from the eve of First World War (taken as *a quo* term) until today. Pistone’s analysis, in particular, focuses on those prominent authors, namely Luigi Einaudi, Altiero Spinelli, Ernesto Rossi, Lord Lothian e Lionel Robbins, who provided an innovative interpretation of the origins of the so-called ‘European crisis,’ prior and between the two World Wars. In Pistone’s view, the reasoning that these thinkers accounted for the European crisis appears to be well-equipped to contend with the explanations that different cultural-political traditions (the Liberal, the Democratic, the Communist) were offering at the time. Cfr. in particular S. Pistone (ed. by), *L’idea dell’unificazione europea dalla prima alla seconda guerra mondiale*, Torino, Fondazione L. Einaudi, 1975 and also S. Pistone (ed. by) *I movimenti per l’unità europea dal 1945 al 1954*, Milano, Jaca Book, 1992.

¹⁹ Levi’s work presents a more geo-political approach to the history of Federalism. Levi clarifies the elements that constituted an impediment in the immediate aftermath of World War I and allowed, instead, in the second, the beginning of the European integration. Until the second post-war, European statesmen were not inclined, in fact, to start a process of limitation of their own sovereignty, for this still contained, though with very clear evidence of decline, an autonomous position of power in the world. In subsequent years, beginning with the Second World War, European Federalism made manifest, instead, the inclination of several European countries to accept American leadership, though not separated by the attempt at developing a European *pilier* that would reduce the subordination of the Old Continent to the United States.

the efforts of Federalist theoreticians and pressure groups are seen at the core of the inception of the integration process. These personalities and groups built on the informal networks of pro-Europeanist anti-fascist exiles formed during and shortly after the Second World War in different countries of Europe²⁰. This milieu comprised, as will be discussed later, the 1943 Italian *Movimento Federalista Europeo* (MFE) set up underground by Altiero Spinelli and Ernesto Rossi in war-time Milan. It also included the European Union Movement (EUM) launched by Churchill between 1946 and 1947 in Britain, to name only two significant examples. Pistone and Levi highlight the mutual intellectual influences existing among Italian and British Federalist theoreticians and claim that they furthered discussion on Federalism, making possible for it to become a realistic political path.

This strand of research is still influential in Italy and in other words remains mainly concerned with the analysis of the intellectual influence of some Federalists – Spinelli first and foremost - on the strategy for the European construction. This is evident in some relatively recent studies by leading Italian historians in the field like Piero Graglia²¹. The same is true for authors like Daniela Preda, Cinzia Rognoni Vercelli and Antonella Braga²². The two massive 2005 volumes edited by Rognoni Vercelli and Preda, *Storia e percorsi del Federalismo: l'eredità di Carlo Cattaneo*, for instance, are a large collection of essays dealing with the life-time intellectual experience of Federalists of the calibre of Spinelli and Rossi as well as of personalities like Alcide De Gasperi, Mario Albertini, Eugenio Colorni and Celeste Bastianetto²³. The few essays devoted to other topics, i.e. the one about the British pressure groups of “Federal Union”,

L. Levi (ed. by), *Verso gli Stati Uniti d'Europa: analisi dell' integrazione europea*, Napoli, Guida, 1979. See also L. Lucio (ed. by) *Altiero Spinelli and Federalism in Europe and in the World*, Milano, Angeli, 1990.

²⁰ The best account of this Federalist *milieu* throughout the whole Europe is in the documentary volumes edited by Walter Lipgens and Wilfried Loth, *Documents on the history of the European integration*, Berlin; New York, De Gruyter, 1985-1988. See in particular, W. Lipgens (ed. by) *The struggle for European Union by political parties and pressure groups in Western European countries, 1945-1950*, Berlin-New York, Walter de Gruyter, 1988.

²¹ It would be impossible to make here a comprehensive list of the Italian studies on Spinelli which present this approach but a useful recent example is for instance Piero Graglia, *Altiero Spinelli*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2008.

²² Cfr. D. Preda (ed. by) *Altiero Spinelli ed i movimenti per l'unità europea*, Padova, CEDAM, 2010; Id., *Alcide De Gasperi federalista europeo*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2004; A. Braga, *Un federalista giacobino: Ernesto Rossi pioniere degli Stati Uniti d'Europa*, Milano, Il Mulino, 2007; C. Rognoni Vercelli, *Luciano Bolis: dall'Italia all'Europa*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2007; Id., *Mario Alberto Rollier. Un valdese federalista*, Milano, Jaca Book, 1991.

²³ C. Rognoni Vercelli and D. Preda, *Storia e percorsi del Federalismo: l'eredità di Carlo Cattaneo*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2005.

represent just an exception to what is prevalently a biographical account with an Anglo-Saxon style. Other works from the same authors follow the same pattern²⁴.

Federalist perspectives owed much to the fact that until the Seventies the original documentation concerning European integration was still classified. For two decades after 1945 political memoirs and pamphlets supplanted more proper historical works giving space to the perspectives of authors who were in reality the original protagonists of the Federalist “crusade” especially in Italy²⁵. In Britain, the content of these early chronicles consistently informed the subsequent scholarship because they propagated a set of myths on the origin and causes of integration that later authors felt compelled to contend²⁶. According to the British Federalist school, the post-war Labour Government and especially the Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin had been from the start firmly against any British involvement in the continental search of some form of cooperation and possibly unity.

The debate became bitter because, given Britain’s persistent aloofness from the first integrative steps, the Federalist crusaders translated their

²⁴ See above note 22.

²⁵ One emblematic example is Achille Albonetti’s 1960 *Preistoria degli Stati Uniti* (Milano, Giuffrè). This is a volume whose structural conceptualization is clearly influenced by the 1955 *Etats-Unis d’Europe ont commencé* written by the prominent promoter of the European integration, Jean Monnet. Likewise, several volumes of strong supporters and militants of Federalist ideals contributed to the initial bibliography on the subject. Among these, one should remember Altiero Spinelli and Ernesto Rossi’s 1944 *Problemi della Federazione Europea* (Edizioni M.F.E.); Spinelli’s 1944 *Il manifesto di Ventotene* (see edition edited by S. Pistone, *Il Manifesto di Ventotene*, Torino CELID, 2001), and *Manifesto dei federalisti europei* (Parma, Guanda, 1957); Spinelli’s 1953-54 *Lettere Federaliste 1953* (Edizioni M.F.E.) and finally, his 1960, *L’Europa non cade dal cielo* (Bologna, Il Mulino). Also worth mentioning are Aldo Garosci’s 1954 *Il pensiero politico degli autori del Federalist*, (Edizioni di Comunità); and Adriano Olivetti’s 1952 *Società, Stato, Comunità* (Edizioni di Comunità).

²⁶ Particularly influential British Federalist authors were those connected with the Federal Trust for Education and Research (the educational forum created by William Beveridge in 1945 in connection with *Federal Union* movement) like Richard Mayne and John Pinder. See for instance, R. Mayne, *The Community of Europe*, London, Victor Gollancz, 1962; Id., *The Recovery of Europe: from Devastation to Unity*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970; Id., *Postwar: The Dawn of Today’s Europe*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1983; or J. Pinder, *Britain and the Common Market*, London, The Cresset Press, 1961. Also prominent were Federalist journalists writing for the magazine «The Economist» like Christopher Layton or American Miriam Camps. See among others M. Camps, *Missing the Boat at Messina and other Times?*, in B. Brivati and H. Jones (eds. by), *From Reconstruction to Integration*, op. cit., pp.133-143, and Id., *Britain and European Community.1955-1963*, London, Oxford UP, 1964. Finally, there were the books from the “Euro-enthusiasts” in British political life among whom prominently Anthony Nutting, *Europe will not Wait: a Warning and a Way Out*, London, Hollis and Carter, 1960; or Robert Boothby, *My Yesterday, Your Tomorrow*, London, Hutchinson, 1962. .

disappointment into an angry discourse of “missed opportunities” for the country²⁷. This discourse adopted powerful vehicle-oriented metaphor of European boats, busses and trains leaving without Britain which signified variably the country’s economic decline, foreign policy drift and political misjudgement. Although in the immediate post-war years the European issue was not high in British popular consciousness, the skilful manipulation of language made such a powerful picture of missed chances that the concept spread in the media and public discourse²⁸.

The “Federalist school” has continued to be predominant in Italy also because of the limited acquaintance of Italian scholars with the far-reaching debate on the integrative process developed in the rest of Europe from the late Seventies onwards. Only a few Italian historians, among whom Antonio Varsori, Federico Romero, Ruggero Ranieri and Enrico Serra, became engaged with the debate aroused by this new scholarship²⁹.

As already noted, as a consequence of the opening of governmental archives in several European countries, in the Eighties a new line of research emerged, with British historians in the forefront of this revisionism. The new interpretation was also spurred by new European networks of scholars, among whom most notable is the Liaison Committee of European Historians, which was formed in 1983 with the institutional and financial support of the Community institutions³⁰. Through the European Commission’s support of the

²⁷ A concise account of the so-called “missed opportunity school” is provided by the historiographical synthesis of Oliver Daddow, *Britain and Europe since 1945. Historiographical Perspective on Integration*, op. cit., p. 59 and fll.; in particular as the author notes at p. 70: “Orthodox historiography is at root a political discourse originating from discontent with British foreign policy and was written with more than an eye on changing the future”.

²⁸ Ivi, p. 112.

²⁹ For a concise survey of European integration history as a sub-field of Cold War history in Italy and the scant participation of Italian historians to the genre see A. Varsori, *Cold War History in Italy*, in «Cold War History», vol. 8, issue 2, 2008, in particular pp. 162-163. Overall Varsori names only a handful of Italian scholars who became involved with the broader international debate spurred by the new scholarly interpretation in the Eighties. Among these the contributions by Ruggero Ranieri and Federico Romero in A. Milward et al., *The Frontier of National Sovereignty History and Theory 1945-1992*, London, Rutledge, 1992; Enrico Serra, *The Relaunching of Europe and the Treaties of Rome*, Brussels, Bruylant, 1989. For Varsori’s own contributions to the field see A. Varsori and W. Kaiser, *European Union History*, op. cit., pp. 240-241.

³⁰ The establishing of the Liaison Committee as an official body was advocated in Luxembourg during a massive “International Conference of Professors of Contemporary Europe” by the historian René Girault. The French scholar had already sponsored large European transnational networks especially in 1979-1980 when he had launched the international research project “The Perception of Power Politics in Western Europe” addressing the early integration history. The proceedings were published by Josef Becker and Franz Knipping, *Power in Europe? Great Britain,*

Liaison Committee and under the guidance of French international relation historian René Girault, several international conferences were held with the specific intent of reassessing the significance of the first integrative steps³¹. The establishing of the Liaison Committee coupled with an earlier initiative by the Community institutions, that is, the creation of the European Union Institute (EUI) in 1974, in the outskirts of Florence, which acted as a post-doctoral school and whose main focus was again on European Union history³². British economic political historian Alan Milward was one of the first academics to hold a chair at the EUI.

Revisionism also fed on the so-called “depolarization of Cold War historiography”³³. Going against previous readings, according to which the US and Soviet Union were the only protagonists in the emergence of the Cold War, the new historiography of the East-West conflict began to highlight the role played by Europe and especially Britain in its inception³⁴. The depolarization of the Cold War had an impact on the history of the construction of Europe and on British relations with it. Integration has been no longer interpreted as a direct consequence of the competition between the Superpowers but as an autonomous phenomenon. A new so-called “national interest school” of

France, Italy and Germany in a Post-war World 1945-1950, Berlin-New York, Walter de Gruyter, 1986.

³¹ A reassessment of the formative years was addressed in a number of conferences in the Eighties and early Nineties. Among the proceedings published in the first half of the Nineties see in particular Michael L. Dockrill and Anthony Adamthwaite, *Europe within the Global System, 1938-1960: Great Britain, France, Italy and Germany: from Great Powers to Regional Powers*, Bachum, Brockeyer, 1995.

³² Most notably the EUI sponsored a massive project of collective research in Europe for a large edition of documents related to leading - prevalently Federalist - European personalities, political parties, movements and national and transnational pressure groups and covering again the years of World War Second and the immediate postwar. The ensuing books were the abovementioned series of documentary volumes edited by German historian Walter Lipgens. Lipgens was the first to hold a chair in Modern European History at EUI, and after his death in 1984 he was replaced by W. Loth who in turn left his chair to British historian Alan Milward in the late Eighties.

³³ See on this Clemens Wurm, *Early European Integration as a Research Field: Prospectives, Debates, problems* in C. Wurm (ed. by) *Western Europe and Germany. The Beginning of European Integration 1945-1960*, Oxford, Berg Publishers, 1995, in particular p. 15.

³⁴ For historical overviews of this shift in interpretation see David Reynolds, *The Origin of the Cold War: The European dimension, 1944-1951*, in «The Historical Journal», vol. 28, n° 2, 1985, p. 499. See also Lawrence S. Kaplan, *The Cold War and European Revisionism*, in «Diplomatic History», vol. 11, n° 2, 1987, pp. 143-56; Donald C. Watt, *Britain and the Historiography of the Yalta Conference and the Cold War*, in *ivi*, vol. 13, n° 1, 1989, pp. 67-89.

interpretation dominated the Eighties³⁵. According to this school, pioneered by Alan Milward, European integration was neither the by-product of East-West confrontation nor the achievement of Federalist personalities and pressure groups but rather the goal wilfully pursued by European governments for their own self-interest³⁶.

The latter autonomously chose to build the European institutions because they perceived them as a way of resolving domestic problems at a larger European level³⁷. For instance, for France and Germany the integration became an instrument through which they recovered some of their lost power³⁸. France gained a share of German coal and steel industries and Germany was allowed to return to world politics. After Milward, revisionism was also initially spurred by works of authors like Victor Rothwell and Geoffrey Warner³⁹. Both authors claimed that Britain in the post-war had not been alien to the idea of a closer cooperation with the European countries. They deconstructed the consensus view according to which the alliance with the United States was the main goal of British post-war foreign policy-makers and especially of Ernest Bevin. The first target of the revisionists was therefore the Foreign Secretary who had been till then considered the father of Euro-Atlantic partnership and therefore quite inimical to the idea of closer integration with Europe⁴⁰. An opinion propagated also by the most important biographer of the Foreign Secretary, Alan Bullock,

³⁵ See on this periodization C. Wurm, *Early European Integration as a Research Field*, op. cit., p. 18 and ff.

³⁶ See most notably Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe 1945-1951*, London, Methuen, 1994; Id., *The European Rescue of the Nation State*, London, Rutledge, 1992.

³⁷ *Ibidem*. Milward's view is embraced in Clemens Wurm, *Early European Integration as a Research Field*, op. cit., in particular p. 19.

³⁸ See Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe*, op. cit., *passim* and 333-334.

³⁹ V. Rothwell, *Britain and the Cold War*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1982; Geoffrey Warner, "The Reconstruction and Defence of Western Europe after 1945", in Nevil Waites (ed. by), *Troubled Neighbours: Franco-British Relation in the Twentieth Century*, London, Weidenfel and Nicolson, 1971, pp. 259-292. See also by Warner, "The Labour Government and the Unity of Western Europe, 1945-1951", in Ritchie Ovendale (ed. by), *The Foreign Policy of the British Labour Government, 1945-1951*, Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1984, pp. 61-82.

⁴⁰ Two well received articles respectively of 1982 and 1984 by John Baylis had given academic voice to the view of Bevin as an inveterate Atlanticist. See J. Baylis, *Britain and the Dunkirk Treaty: the Origin of NATO*, «Journal of Strategic Studies», vol. 5, n° 2, 1982, pp. 236-47; and Id., *Britain the Brussels Pact and the Continental Commitment*, in «International Affairs», vol. 60, n° 4, 1984, pp. 615-29. The idea was propagated in subsequent literature for instance Mark Stephens, *Ernest Bevin, Unskilled Labourer and World Statesman, 1881-1951*, Stevenage, SPA Books, 1985, pp. 109-124; but also in Richie Ovendale, *The English Speaking Alliance: Britain, the United States, the Dominions and the Cold War, 1945-1951*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1985. Many others followed the same pattern of interpretation see again on this O. Daddow, op. cit., p. 95 and ff., and *passim*.

although the historian justifies Britain's defence retrenchment under American shelter as a matter of economic exigencies⁴¹.

Overall a more sophisticated scholarship emerged which asked new questions. How was it possible that Bevin and his Labour Cabinet colleagues had been so neglectful of the European dimension of British foreign policy⁴²? Instead of describing the inadequacy of British foreign policy, revisionists started to investigate their causes and consequences more thoroughly⁴³. They have given to British foreign policy a new perspective filling many of the gaps in the understanding of the stimuli behind the choices of British policy-makers⁴⁴.

A new community of diplomatic historians, in other words, started to claim that in the immediate post-war, even for Britain, it was in the national interest to be part of a more cohesive Europe. This line of research was significantly expanded, as already mentioned, by subsequent scholars, such as John Young and John Kent who created the "Third Force" paradigm for understanding Bevin's aim after 1945⁴⁵. This consisted in spurring some form of formal or informal alliance with the countries on the Mediterranean and Atlantic fringe of Europe with the goal of combining their national and colonial resources to cope with superpower competition⁴⁶. Western Europe's overseas possessions, particularly in Africa, were such that, if coupled with those of the British Empire, they would make it possible to avoid subjugation to the United States⁴⁷. Even better, it would permit a world "Third Force" to rise to a role of global leadership. Devised by Bevin and the Foreign Office in 1945, this policy was gradually gaining ground throughout 1946 until it reached its zenith in

⁴¹ Cfr. Alan Bullock, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary, 1945-1951*, London, Heinemann, 1983, pp. 41-42.

⁴² See for this claim Oliver J. Daddow, *Britain and Europe since 1945*, op. cit., p. 113 and fll.

⁴³ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁴ Ivi, p. 120-121.

⁴⁵ See in particular J. Young, *Britain and European Unity 1945-1999*, op. cit., *passim*, J. Kent and J. Young, "British Policy Overseas: The 'Third Force' and the Origin of NATO – in Search of a New Perspective", in Beatrice Heuser and Robert O'Neill (eds. by), *Securing Peace in Europe, 1945-1962: Thoughts for the Post Cold War Era*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1989, pp. 41-61; J. Kent, "Bevin Imperialism and the Idea of Euro-Africa, 1945-1949", in M. Dockrill and J.W. Young (eds. by), *British Foreign Policy, 1945-56*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1989, pp. 47-76. A new article of Geoffrey Warner also added to this new interpretation see Warner, "Ernest Bevin and British Foreign Policy, 1945-1951", in Gordon Craig and Frances L. Loewenheim (eds. by), *The Diplomats 1939-1976*, Princeton NJ, PUP, 1994, pp. 103-134.

⁴⁶ See for all J. Kent, "Bevin Imperialism", op. cit., p. 55. See also Klaus Larres, "A Search for Order: Britain and the origin of a Western European Union, 1944-55", in B. Brivati and H. Jones, *From Reconstruction...*, op. cit., in particular p. 73 and fll.

⁴⁷ See for all G. Warner, "Bevin and British Foreign Policy", op. cit., p. 112.

1947-1948, when, Kent and Young conclude, there was a “wide ranging consensus” among British policy-makers (and in the Conservative opposition), American State Department officials and established press organs⁴⁸. The endorsement of the “Third Force” interpretation was so intense that by early 2000 the missed opportunity metaphor was regarded with disdain by the academic community⁴⁹.

The Federalist debate in Britain and Italy between the interwar years and WWII

During the interwar period, both in Great Britain and Italy, outstanding political thinkers conceived the idea of superseding the nation state through the creation of a genuine political and constitutional Federation among the European countries. The crux of Federalist theory was that in light of recurring conflicts the institutional formula of Federation was the only means to put an end to international strife. In order to prevent each country from pursuing its own national interest, European institutions had to be reorganized with the power to transcend sovereignties. Some of the most influential writings were those by British authors of the calibre of Philip Kerr (later Lord Lothian), Lionel Curtis and Lionel Robbins⁵⁰. This literature added to that by the Italian Professor Luigi Einaudi⁵¹. These authors introduced the debate on the failures of the League of Nations, which had left intact the sovereignty of its member states, thus relinquishing the power to preserve order, prosperity and peace in Europe.

⁴⁸ See J. Young, *Britain and European Unity...*, op. cit., p. 1 and *passim*. See also on the consensus concept Kent and Young, “British Policy Overseas”, op. cit., p. 51.

⁴⁹ It would be impossible to list here all the main protagonists of this new generation of scholarship see on this the abovementioned good overview by Oliver Daddow, *Britain and Europe since 1945...*, op. cit., in particular p. 126 and *ff.*

⁵⁰ Belong to this intellectual enterprise the books by L. Curtis, *The Commonwealth of Nations*, London, Macmillan, 1917; Id., *Civitas Dei*, London (Allen and Unwin), vol. I, 1934; P. Kerr and L. Curtis, *The Prevention of War*, New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 1923; Philip Kerr, *Approaches to World Problems*, New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 1924; and most notably P. Kerr, *Pacifism is not Enough, nor Patriotism Either*, The Burge Memorial Lecture, London, OUP, 1935. A collection of the most sounding passages of these works are in John Pinder and Andrea Bosco (eds. by), *Pacifism is not Enough: Collected Lectures and Speeches of Lord Lothian (Philip Kerr)*, London and New York, Lothian Foundation, 1990.

⁵¹ Paramount were the two articles by Einaudi “La società delle nazioni è un ideale possibile?” (Is the League of Nation a feasible ideal?) and “Il dogma della sovranità e l’idea della Società delle Nazioni” (The dogma of sovereignty and the idea of the League of Nations) written by the Italian economist under the pseudonym “Junius”. They appeared in the Milan newspaper «Corriere della Sera», on January 5 and December 28, 1918. See on this, among many others, Charles Delzell, *The European Federalist Movement in Italy: First Phase, 1918-1947*, «The Journal of Modern History», vol. 32, No. 3 (Sep., 1960), pp. 241-250 (p. 241).

Drawing together the Kantian theory of international anarchy with the realist view of *raison d'état* as the main driving force in relations among sovereign states, these writers illustrated the damaging consequences of national sovereignty in the economic, political and social field. The remedy was perceived to lie in the institution of a Federal government which drew its institutional inspiration from authors like Alexander Hamilton, A.V. Dicey and John Stuart Mill⁵². Against this background in the Thirties many British politicians, from Winston Churchill to Clement Attlee and Ernest Bevin, welcomed the idea of creating a United States of Europe⁵³.

This early debate nurtured subsequent literature by other significant British protagonists from both the Liberal and Socialist milieu who gathered around the movement of "Federal Union" after its creation in 1938⁵⁴. Through the medium of "Federal Union" Lothian, Curry and Robbins's writings reached Italy and along with those by Luigi Einaudi they became the intellectual backbone of Italian Federalism⁵⁵.

"Federal Union" was the creation of three unknown British young men, C. Kimber, D. Rawnsley and P. Ransome, who in late 1938 established the movement under the influence of personalities like Lothian, Robbins and Curtis⁵⁶. Curtis in particular provided Kimber and his two fellows with a copy of the recently published path-breaking federalist pamphlet *Union Now* by American journalist Clarence Streit to acquaint them with the revolutionary

⁵² Cfr. John Pinder, "Federal Union, 1939-1941", in Walter Lipgens (ed. by) *Documents on the History of European Integration*, vol. II, *Plans for European Union in Great Britain and in Exile, 1939-1945*, Berlin and New York, Walter de Gruyter, 1986, p. 29.

⁵³ For a précis of Churchill's Federalist formula see Hugo Young, *This Blessed Plot. Britain and Europe from Churchill to Blair*, London, Basingstoke, 1998, pp. 10-25. Young also summarizes Attlee and Bevin's standpoints on the issue, see p. 25 and fl. See also John T. Grantham, *The Labour Party and European Union, 1939-1951*, PhD dissertation, Cambridge, 1977, in particular p. 16 and fl.

⁵⁴ One of the most complete account of "Federal Union" is in Richard Mayne and John Pinder, *Federal Union: the Pioneers*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1990; see also Andrea Bosco, "Federal Union e le origini dell'offerta di 'indissolubile unione' di Churchill alla Francia", (Federal Union and the Origin of Churchill's Offer of "Indissoluble Union" to France) in *Storia e Percorsi del Federalismo*, vol. II, op. cit., pp. 1139-1196.

⁵⁵ On their wide impact of the British authors in Italy see John Pinder, *Tre Fasi nella Storia...* (Tre Phases in the History of British Federalism), op. cit., p. 386. Particularly well received were the two works by Robbins *Economic Planning and International Order*, London, Macmillan, 1937; and Id., *The Economic Causes of War*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1939.

⁵⁶ See J. Pinder and R. Mayne, *Federal Union*, op. cit., pp. 10-11. On the early months of "Federal Union" see also A. Bosco, *Federal Union e l'origine...*, op. cit., pp. 1147-1167.

views of the American journalist⁵⁷. At the same time, Lothian and Robbins contributed to propagandize the activities of Federal Union within the British establishment. It resulted in the confluence of some of the finest British personalities into the movement⁵⁸. Among them were academicians like Ivor Jennings, William Beveridge, Norman Angel and Arnold Toynbee. Meanwhile also intellectuals and politicians like Barbara Wootton, Ronald G. Mackay and Konni Zillicus soon adhered⁵⁹. By the spring of 1940 Federal Union counted over eight thousand members which became twelve thousand the following year.

Apart from numerous branches throughout the major British cities, sub-branches were established in France, Holland, Belgium and Switzerland⁶⁰. Federal Union deplored the League of Nations, welcomed the creation of a European supranational and constitutional Federation endowed with a directly elected European parliament, an independent executive power, a Court of Justice and a police force⁶¹. That is, all those instruments able to curb the bellicose expansionism of the European nation state. The exact composition of the proposed Federation remained a matter of debate although the most popular option was the one which saw as prospective members Britain, France, Germany as well as the small democracies of Western Europe⁶².

No wonder, therefore, that the debate around "Federal Union" gathered momentum in Britain with the outbreak of the Second World War. In January 1940 the Foreign Office entrusted Arnold Toynbee and Alfred Zimmerman, who were both members of "Federal Union" as well as of the Chatman House think-tank (also known as the Royal Institute of International Affairs), to draft an *Act of Perpetual Association between the United Kingdom and France*. The document was intended as the constitutional nucleus of the prospective United States of Europe⁶³. An offer on this line was actually rejected by the French government on the eve of its decision to surrender to Germany⁶⁴. Nevertheless, as already noted, the alliance between Britain and France remained one of the central tenets of post-war British foreign policy. Around a prospective British-French

⁵⁷ Ivi, pp. 1152-1159. The pamphlet by Streit advocated the creation of a Federation which must include the North American states, the countries of Western Europe and those of the Australasia. See also on this J. Pinder, *Federal Union 1939-41*, op. cit., p. 29.

⁵⁸ See Bosco, *Federal Union e le origini dell'offerta...*, op. cit., in particular pp. 1147 and 1157-1158.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁰ On the membership, Ivi, pp. 1161-1165.

⁶¹ Andrea Bosco, *Federal Union e le origini dell'offerta...*, op. cit., pp. 1147-1167; pp. 1152-1153.

⁶² *Ibidem*.

⁶³ See Ivi, p. 1181-1191.

⁶⁴ See Ivi, p. 1145-1146.

axis, Bevin tried for some time to launch a distinctly British proposal for a cooperation or even economic unification of the Western countries of Europe⁶⁵.

In Italy during the Twenties and Thirties the federalist debate had centred on the writings of Einaudi but also on those of members of the “anti-fascist intelligentsia” who had gathered around the *Giustizia e Libertà* (Justice and Liberty) movement of democratic socialist Carlo Rosselli⁶⁶. While in exile from Fascist Italy prevalently in France, Switzerland and the United States, these Italians had kept alive the belief of Rosselli in a Europe-wide common fight against the Nazi-Fascism and in the creation of the United States of Europe. In the United States, the former Foreign Minister Carlo Sforza authored several influential books, among which, most notably, the 1930 *Gli Stati Uniti d'Europa. Aspirazione e Realtà* (The United States of Europe. Aspiration and Reality)⁶⁷. Sforza became the leader of the Mazzini Society, the anti-fascist coterie created in the United States by anti-fascist Harvard professor Gaetano Salvemini in 1939.

The Mazzini Society was also indebted to the inheritance of *Giustizia e Libertà* of which Salvemini had been one of the founders and therefore it embraced its longing for the United States of Europe⁶⁸. In a more immediate context the Mazzini Society's efforts were directed to obtain Allies' support for a *Comitato Nazionale Italiano* which would act as a sort of anti-fascist government in exile led by Carlo Sforza and devoted to the cause of Italian liberation⁶⁹. Among the goal that the American coterie wanted to achieve through Anglo-American aid was the constitution of a so-called “Italian legion” of anti-fascists to be delivered onto the peninsula in parallel with an allied landing⁷⁰.

Other Italian antifascist exiles had strong Europeanists leaning. In France the right-wing Socialist Claudio Treves and the Republican Silvio Trentin respectively animated the anti-fascist journal *La Libertà* in Paris and the movement *Libérer et Fédérer* in Lyon, while Ignazio Silone, also a right-wing

⁶⁵On the alliance with France among many others see Larres, “A Search for Order...”, op. cit., in particular pp. 77-82.

⁶⁶ Articles on the European Federation appeared frequently in the journal «Quaderni di “Giustizia e Libertà”» which Rosselli edited as an exile in France from 1932 to 1935 before being assassinated by Fascist emissaries in 1937. See C. Delzell, “The European Federalist Movement...”, op. cit., pp. 242-243.

⁶⁷ C. Sforza, *Gli Stati Uniti d'Europa. Aspirazione e Realtà* (The United States of Europe. Aspiration and Reality), Lugano, 1930.

⁶⁸ Cfr. Antonio Varsori, *Gli Alleati e l'emigrazione democratica anti-fascista (1940-1943)*, Sansoni, Firenze, 1982, in particular p. 39 and *passim*.

⁶⁹ Ivi, pp. 127-128.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*.

Socialist, established the fortnightly *L'Avvenire dei Lavoratori* in Zurich⁷¹. Relations between many of these exiled intellectuals, for instance Carlo Sforza and the Mazzini Society in the United States, and the British intelligence were prolonged and intense since the early Forties.

Italian Federalist Anti-fascism in the evidence about British Special Operation Executive

Details of the relations entertained between SOE and Italian anti-fascists either in the United States or in Switzerland are particularly detailed in the abovementioned SOE file folders which contain previously withdrawn dossiers. Among these dossiers the most informative are those concerning Leo Valiani, Emilio Lussu and Aldo Garosci. There are, however, several other dossiers concerning further Italian Federalists. This is the case for instance of the future influential Italian Ambassador in the United States Alberto Tarchiani of whom also there is trace in SOE files. Other Italians who appear in contact with British SOE during WWII like Ugo La Malfa, Alberto Cianca, Filippo Caracciolo, and Alberto Damiani in their capacities at that time as leading members of the Action Party also subscribed to the Europeanist crusade of the party.

Detailed relations of SOE with some of these Italians in the United States are also revealed in a document of American provenience dated March 1942. It reflects a mixture of strategic considerations and ideological predilection which were so typical of SOE's attitude in dealing with the patriots and that the Americans of OSS were quick to espouse as soon as they entered the conflict. The document sent by agent John C. Wiley to OSS's head William Donovan, asked the permission of "stepping in" in lieu of SOE in the backing of the Mazzini Society as a matter of great urgency⁷². According to the memo, "the British had since some time been paying a subsidy of approximately \$2.000 a month to various individuals connected with the Mazzini Society"⁷³. As the American agent emphasized the British behavior had reflected their belief that the Mazzini Society had "a representative character of the very best sort [...] In a conspicuous way, it symboliz[ed] the continued existence of free Italian sentiments in respectable quarters. [...] In fact, the most valuable human elements in the Italian picture [were] to be found grouped [there]"⁷⁴.

⁷¹ See C. Delzell, *The a European Federalist Movement...*, op. cit., pp. 242-243.

⁷² Cfr. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), RG 226, Entry 210, box 62 *Memorandum for Colonel Donovan* dated 6 March 1942.

⁷³ Ivi, p. 1.

⁷⁴ Ivi, pp. 1-2.

What concerned the American most, was the fact that after the United States' entrance into the conflict, the British (in accordance with US State Department) had believed it appropriate to terminate their subsidy within the United States territory therefore leaving the Mazzini Society in a financial vacuum. The agent claimed that if the Americans would not provide a substitute to British support this would result in an unfortunate situation for their relations with Italian antifascism in general and the Mazzini Society in particular. Thereafter the agent, clearly because of what had inferred from British attitude, started to commend the significance of the Mazzini Society to Bill Donovan.

He praised the Mazzini Society both as an indispensable conduit of information on Italy but more importantly as a valuable political tool. Since the Mazzini Society enjoyed the favour of millions of Italians outside Italy, the agent stressed, that its "influence in the conduct of the war and in the shaping of an eventual peace [would] be considerable"⁷⁵. Therefore, the agent believed that it would be an enormous advantage for the United States to replace the British in their role of financier as well as of patron of the Mazzini Society⁷⁶. Unquestionably this document is quite a tangible proof of the British goodwill towards the Mazzini Society and the Italian anti-fascism in general.

In 1943 after their return to Nazi-occupied Italy in consequence of the fall of Mussolini, several of the abovementioned Italian exiles started their underground battle within the Italian Resistance while continuing their Federalist propaganda. In so doing, they joined efforts with the group that meanwhile had conceived one of the most important Federalist document of the whole European Resistance: *Manifesto "Per un'Europa libera e unita"* ("For a Free and United Europe" Manifesto) (1940-1941). Written by Altiero Spinelli, Ernesto Rossi and Eugenio Colorni during their captivity on the Fascist prison island of Ventotene, the Manifesto drew its key inspiration, as already noted, from the writings of Lothian, Curties and Robbins.

In 1943 the *Ventotene Manifesto* became the programmatic document of the so called *Movimento Federalista Italiano* (Italian Federalist Movement) led again by Spinelli and Rossi. It had been established at the end of August of that year during a clandestine meeting in Milan in the house of Mario Alberto Rollier, another prominent Federalist, who would maintain a leading role inside the movement for many years. It also is worth mentioning Rollier here because there is evidence of continuing British attention towards Rollier's Europeanist activities even after the end of the conflict.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁶ Ivi, p. 3.

Finally, one last anti-fascist bastion of strong Federalist inclination was the *Partito d'Azione Italiano* (Italian Action Party, alias PdA) created underground in Italy in 1942 by some militants of the former *Giustizia e Libertà* and other who shared Rosselli's democratic socialist inclinations. There is also evidence that SOE kept a close eye on the Action Party's publicity as it appeared in the party's clandestine journal *Italia Libera*. In particular SOE's files contain copies of the *Manifesto* of the Action Party which came out in 1943 on *Italia Libera*. British intelligence also prepared some positive appreciation of the document for the Foreign Office as well as the translation of some of its parts. Nor did SOE forget to signal in its report to London the strong Federalist line of the Action Party with regard to post-war European relations⁷⁷.

The new intelligence evidence shows, in other words, that there was a consistent convergence between the British and the Italians at least as far as the non-communist Left was concerned from both sides. It seems that a thin but enduring thread was provided by the belief, common among a certain political milieu of the two countries, in the need of providing post-war Europe with new intellectual energies and original strategies of cohabitation for European people. As David Stafford, one of the leading historians of SOE, has pointed out with reference to SOE's central role in stirring Resistance movements according to British strategic thinking: "the theory of the "European Revolution" was already, long before the Soviet Union entered the war, common currency on the Left of the British political spectrum"⁷⁸.

SOE was created because it was believed capable of enhancing widespread revolt among the population of the Nazi-conquered countries of Europe. Stafford calls SOE the detonator factor of European popular uprising⁷⁹. This is also emblematically expressed in Churchill's famous remark on the occasion of SOE's creation on July 1940: "Now set Europe ablaze". The creation of SOE was the direct consequence of British military unpreparedness in 1939-1940, when the British Chiefs of Staff did not consider a major British land offensive in Europe feasible for several months to come⁸⁰. This was in fact before that the United States and Soviet Russia entered the war. Representing the principal strategic alternative to a more direct, as much infeasible, military

⁷⁷ The National Archives (TNA), *Special Operation Executive, Series 1, Special Operations in Western Europe*, document HS6 904/00035-00050. The folder contains copies of the Action Party's *Manifesto* as expressed through the «Italia Libera» the journal that SOE routinely sent to London for appreciation.

⁷⁸ D. Stafford *The Detonator Concept: British Strategy, SOE and European Resistance after the Fall of France*, «Journal of Contemporary History», vol. 10, n° 2 (April 1975), p. 208.

⁷⁹ Ivi, pp. 191; 199-200.

⁸⁰ Ivi, p. 193 in particular.

involvement, SOE was established amidst a lot of concerns. These regarded its more immediate objectives. It also had to do with the choice of a suitable chief for the organization. Even its political complexion was an underling issue.

It must be born in mind that SOE was conceived as an extension and a supplement to the activities of Ministry of Economic Warfare established in September of 1939. The latter's scope of carrying on "economic pressure" against the enemy through blockade, air bombing of strategic targets and sabotage was expanded to include the active role of the oppressed population of Nazi-occupied Europe. SOE's role was that of igniting the spirit of revolt of these potential resistance movements through any means. This meant not only to provide the European nationals with support in term of weapons and ammunition, albeit these were much needed, it involved the much more difficult task of providing the European patriots with same sharable political prospect for the future which would spark them into action irrespective of their nationality⁸¹.

Stafford, in other words, plays up the ideological dimension behind the creation of SOE. An interpretation which also explains why, in the end, Hugh Dalton was chosen to lead the organization. The choice of the ambitious Labour representative, already head of the Ministry of the Economic Warfare, meant that the new organization would prevalently count on the leftist forces of Europe for the implementation of its strategy. As Dalton himself declared in his memoirs the best energies for the kind of subversion required resided in his British constituents and their counterparts throughout Europe⁸². Their action should include methods like labour agitations and strikes, boycotts and riots as much as propaganda. It was Dalton's opinion that "SOE would be a *revolutionary organization*. Just as it was his opinion that SOE had as his field of operations a Europe's potentially open revolt"⁸³.

At the core of SOE creation, in other words, were ideological elements of such a strong force, that it affected all its structure and activities. This is part of the reason why SOE was not put under service control but was instead given to Dalton's command and its personnel were recruited as much among clerks and commercial travellers as among men who could understand the European workers' aspirations⁸⁴. Yet their goal should transcend national boundaries⁸⁵. Being conceived as a continent-wide fight, it was to contain some sort of supra-national aim. As again Dalton pointed out, "what was needed was an

⁸¹ Ivi, pp. 203; 208.

⁸² Ivi, p. 200.

⁸³ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁴ Ivi, pp. 207-208.

⁸⁵ Ivi, pp. 203; 208.

organization to coordinate, inspire, control and assist the nationals of oppressed countries who must themselves be the direct protagonists. We need absolute secrecy, a certain fanatical enthusiasm, willingness to work with people of different nationalities and complete political reliability”.

Could not the pursuit of such a common project for the European people start from an evaluation of the ideas that their own Resistance representatives had in mind? The significant interest that SOE showed for Italian Federalism as early as in 1940 seems to provide a positive answer to this question. On the other hand, British own acquaintance with Federalism at that time was enough to make them believe that Federalism could be a prospective founding value in the construction of a new European identity.

The content of much of the discussions which took place between the Italian intellectuals and SOE representatives; or the motivations which pushed SOE in heavily financing most of these personalities (emblematically Carlo Sforza's coterie of the “Mazzini Society”), add strength to the picture of SOE as motivated by this ideological tinge. Many further revealing episodes occurred between 1940 and 1945 when SOE started liaising with the Italian antifascists in order to find a strategy for bringing about the collapse of Mussolini's regime as a conduit to Italy's capitulation⁸⁶

This happened, for instance, when between 1941 and 1942 Emilio Lussu came into contact with SOE's emissaries first in Gibraltar and Malta and later in Lisbon and London⁸⁷. Lussu was a well-known antifascist exile of strong Socialist leaning who had fought in the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War. He had actively participated in the creation of the *Giustizia e Libertà* movement with Rosselli and later, in his native Sardinia Island, had also founded the Partito Sardo d'Azione (Sardinian Action Party) of Federalist orientation⁸⁸. Lussu was, along with Silvio Trentin, the Italian theorist of the Federal state who saw in decentralization and local autonomies, the solution to the problem of bureaucratic centralization of the authoritarian state. As already noted Lussu had originally come into contact with SOE in 1941. Since these very early contacts, the Sardinian intellectual had unfolded to SOE his original subversive scheme for Fascist Italy.

⁸⁶ Evidence of these connections are already contained in the recent volume by Moreno Berrettini, *La Gran Bretagna e l'antifascismo italiano...*, op. cit., *passim*.

⁸⁷ Cfr. TNA, collection *Special Operation Executive, Series 1, Special Operations in Western Europe*, document HS9/1569/4. This is a very large folder containing a lot of evidences concerning the cooperation between SOE and several Italian anti-fascist exiles, especially in the United States. It also contains information on Lussu's interaction with SOE.

⁸⁸ Berrettini, *La Gran Bretagna e l'antifascismo italiano...*, op. cit., p. 24 and fl.

In his strategy the subversion from inside of the country espoused his Federalist thinking and his wishes of bringing about the autonomy of Sardinia from the rest of the peninsula⁸⁹. According to Lussu, the Sardinia island should become the stronghold of an autonomist and anti-Mussolini rebellion under the lead of some Italian officers of the former Brigata Sassari (Sassari Brigade) who had fought with him during the First World War. This rebellion should be launched in parallel with an Allied landing in the Island which would help the insurgence to spread into the rest of the country bringing about the end of the regime and of the alliance with Germany. From a purely military point of view, as again noted by Stafford, since 1940 the islands of Italy and its southern shores had both become central in SOE's preparatory strategy, as they represented in fact potential targets of a subsequent Allied landing⁹⁰.

On the other hand, Lussu's plan, code-named operation "Postbox", was initially rejected by the British Foreign Office because of the demands the Sardinian had posed in return for his collaboration⁹¹. This comprised some political guarantees for Italy especially in the territorial sphere where Lussu pleaded the cause of the preservation of the Italian colonies and that of the *italianità* of Trieste. At the same time, there is evidence that during 1941 the cooperation was forestalled by Lussu's initial refusal to become an agent for SOE. Apparently Lussu retorted to the British that "no exponent of Italian antifascism would ever have accepted to become a British agents and thus serving a foreign power"⁹². On the other hand, there is evidence that no later than in January 1942 Lussu softened his position with respect to SOE's request of enrolment into its ranks. Probably financial reasons were at the core of Lussu's change of views in this respect⁹³. According to further documentation of SOE provenience, Lussu from 1942 became an "extremely friendly contact" of Baker Street (alias SOE headquarters).⁹⁴ Lussu thereafter offered SOE many useful links with prominent Italians both in the United Kingdom and in the United States; for instance with people like abovementioned Alberto Tarchiani at that time first secretary of the Mazzini Society and with the future Italian

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁰ Cfr. D. Stafford "The Detonator Concept: British Strategy, SOE and European Resistance", op. cit., p. 206.

⁹¹ See also the account of operation Postbox based on SOE's documentation in E. Di Rienzo, *Quando Emilio Lussu voleva regalare la Sardegna a Churchill*, in «il Giornale», 14 giu. 2010.

⁹² *Ibidem*.

⁹³ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁴ Cfr. TNA, *Special Operation Executive, Series 1, Special Operations in Western Europe*, document HS9/1569/4. See dossier on Lussu.

Minister Alberto Cianca. These two men paved the way into the inner entourage of the Mazzini Society for SOE⁹⁵.

Consequently, by 22 January 1942, Lussu's project was "being considered [in London] in the highest circles." The documents show that Lussu was considered as a personality of the "highest standing" by SOE and eventually he met with "ministers and senior officials like Clement Attlee and Stafford Cripps" in UK⁹⁶.

It confirms an early interest in the Left of the British political establishment, albeit not without some scepticism, in the belief which was central for Lussu (as well as for the greatest part of the Italian non-communist Left) in a possible gradual overcoming of the shortcomings of the nation state through a different political compromise among the European countries. No wonder then that personalities like Leo Valiani, Aldo Garosci, Ernesto Rossi and Altiero Spinelli whose faith in Federalism was even stronger than that of Lussu, were not only listened by the British but received ample material and moral support from SOE.

In sum what emerges from these files confirms what until today has been merely maintained in some personal chronicles or memoirs, which have unequivocally been rejected by traditional historiography. The essential role played by the non-Communists did not match with the prevalent national rhetoric according to which the Communists brigades were the real protagonists of the Italian Resistance. In the face of the radicalization of the political and ideological climate in post-war Italy, the "non-communist" Resistance was progressively discounted. Its role gradually faded away as dissonant with the national account of the valiant Brigade Garibaldi, the Marxist Partisan formations which unaided – or worse, even opposed by the Allies – distinguished themselves in the antifascist fight thus restoring morale to Italy.

The most revealing episode of SOE involvement with Italian Resistance leadership of Federalist orientation is that of Leo Valiani, even if there is no mention of this clandestine connection with SOE in his celebrated 1947 account of his antifascist experience, *Tutte le strade portano a Roma* (All Roads Bring to Rome)⁹⁷. Valiani published Europeanist articles and was acquainted to the inner

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, see Report on Lussu from 'J' dated 16 May 1942; and Dispatch from 'J' on 22 January 1942.

⁹⁷ L. Valiani, *Tutte le strade portano a Roma*, Roma, 1947. A full list of Valiani's own prolific writing, comprising over hundred publications, is in <http://www.fondazionefeltrinelli.it/feltrinelli-cms/cms.view?pflag=customP&id=FF9000000208&physDoc=208&munustr=055&numDoc=289>.

entourage of the underground Spinelli's Italian *Movimento Federalista Europeo*⁹⁸. Leo Valiani was, in fact, one of the main leaders of the Italian Resistance in Northern Italy in his capacity as representative of the Action Party within the CLNAI (Committee of National Liberation of Northern Italy) the clandestine body in charge of the antifascist movement in Milan. Later in the post-war he was a preeminent member of the Constituent Assembly for the Italian Republic as well as seven time deputy in the Italian Parliament. Valiani appears as a leading figure in any single account on the Italian Resistance not only because he was one of its main leaders but particularly because he presided at all the most important negotiation meetings between the Resistance leadership and the Allies.

Valiani attended, along with Ferruccio Parri (the future Italian Prime Minister in 1945), the very first one of this meetings held in Lugano on 3 and 4 November 1943. This was the first time after the Armistice when a small Italian Resistance delegation officially met the heads of both SOE and OSS, respectively John Mac Caffery and Allen Dulles. The second one of these meetings was held again in Switzerland between 23 and 29 October 1944 and it included, via a second small Italian delegation, the participation of Valiani and Alfredo Pizzoni, the then acting president of the CLNAI. The two, during a very sensitive phase of the Italian Campaign, were summoned in Switzerland by Mac Caffery and Dulles to ascertain if, in case of a potential untimely evacuation of the Germans before the arrival of the Allied armies in the North, the Italian Resistance leadership would be able to maintain 'law and order' within the movement and the population and prevent possible unpredictable civil unrests. According to Pizzoni's memoir, before the official meeting Mac Caffery requested to privately confer with Valiani since – as Pizzoni infers - the two men had already previously met⁹⁹.

Presumably, though, this was not the prevalent reason for the pre-emptive tête-à-tête between Valiani and Mac Caffery but rather the fact that SOE had long been covertly connected with Valiani.

Finally, Valiani and Giuseppe Cadorna (the General entrusted with the military command of CLNAI) again attended the third and last important meeting between SOE/OSS and the Italian Resistance leadership in Switzerland, held on 28 February 1945 in Berne¹⁰⁰. At that time, Valiani was also one of the

⁹⁸ See for instance Valiani's 1945 article in <http://patrimonio.fondazionefeltrinelli.it/new-feltrinelli/biblioteca/detail/FF9000000706/dalla-bomba-atomica-alla-federazione-degli-stati.html>

⁹⁹ A. Pizzoni, *Alla Guida del CLNAI (My Leadership in the CLNAI)*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1995, p. 82 and fl.

¹⁰⁰ See Luigi Cadorna, *La Riscossa. Dal 25 luglio alla Liberazione (The Redemption. From the 25 of July to the Liberation)*, Milano, Rizzoli, 1948, p. 223 and fl.

three Italian leaders in charge of a body created in February 1945 within the Resistance: the *Comitato per l'insurrezione* (Insurrectional Committee). It was a kind of insurrectional "Directory" established by the Communist, Socialist and Action Parties to direct the popular uprising which was meant to erupt in coordination with the final advance of the regular Armies in order to harass and disrupt the Germans. Yet, at the beginning of 1945 the Allied commands were eager to know if there were also further and unwelcomed aims behind the recent constitution of the *comitato insurrezionale*. The ultimate aims of the new committee were certainly a matter of concern for the Allies as this board comprised exclusively the Italian parties from the Left. Presumably, the situation in Italy must have appeared quite similar to the incidences that had recently occurred in Greece.

The new files from the SOE archives are quite explicit on the abovementioned Swiss meetings, particularly, on the history of Valiani's adherence to SOE. The Italian anti-fascist exile was recruited in Mexico by SOE in June 1943. The first reference to the inclusion of Valiani in SOE's projects is in a memorandum from SOE's Italian agent Max Salvadori addressed to "J", that is, C.L. Roseberry, head of SOE Station in London¹⁰¹. In the document Salvadori, alias Sylverston, who in 1942 had befriended Valiani in Mexico, not only suggested "J" to enroll Valiani into SOE but also to assist him in his wish to return to Europe to fight¹⁰². In the same memo Salvadori also mentioned - confirming earlier evidences - other prominent members of the American Mazzini Society, namely, Emilio Lussu and Alberto Cianca who, in their capacities of already friendly "contacts" of SOE, would be able to persuade at least 10 more Italians from the coterie to work for SOE. On the other hand, at the core of Salvadori's interest was Leo Valiani, alias Leo Weiczen or also Giuseppe Federico. Appreciation of Salvadori's memorandum in fact is stated in the following extract "Max is eager that Weiczen is sent here [in London] to work with him"¹⁰³. As a consequence of Salvadori's pressure SOE branch of New York had thus supported Valiani in obtaining a visa for the United States and later in August 1943 to embark on the warship S.S. Mosdale leaving from Halifax to London (many details on Valiani's trip across the ocean are in several SOE cypher telegrams to and from New York included in the file folder)¹⁰⁴.

¹⁰¹ See TNA, *Special Operation Executive, Series 1, Special Operations in Western Europe*, document HS 9/1305/ 6.

¹⁰² *Ibidem*.

¹⁰³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*.

Yet, Valiani's own SOE record sheet is even more detailed¹⁰⁵. The document undersigned on 14 August 1945 by SOE Lt. Col. Richard Hewitt (a prominent member of SOE in Italy) states that Valiani was, in fact, a SOE "agent" from 1943 until 25 July 1945¹⁰⁶. Specifically, the document reads "Valiani was infiltrated via Switzerland before the Armistice into the Milano area. He was engaged in Resistance activity of a purely political nature and was closely connected to the CLNAI. As such, he contributed to setting it up and its further work. He was responsible to 'Y' for reporting on his resistance activity and became one of the main Action Party leaders in Milan"¹⁰⁷. Finally, with regard to the liquidation matter concerning Valiani, the record sheet shows (in an appendix B) that Valiani undersigned a certification, after the Italian Liberation in Milan, declaring that "as from 25 July 1945 his association with No.1 Special Force is officially terminated and that he has no claim, financial or otherwise on No 1 Special Force in Italy or elsewhere in respect of himself, his relatives or his friends"¹⁰⁸.

On the other hand, as we will see, there is further evidence that the British commands were not at all inclined to hastily terminate their connection with Valiani. Indeed, the records demonstrate that SOE actively advised the British authorities to espouse and assist Valiani's expressed wish to visit the UK in the summer of 1945.

In truth, the work provided by Leo Valiani must have been quite important for SOE. As documentation reveals, Valiani (like his friend and colleague Max Salvadori) had acted as British 'watchdog' among the Italian Resistance. There is evidence that SOE always considered it important to confer with Valiani and thus he was always required to be among the participants of all the Resistance delegations in Switzerland. As another series of documents suggest, the last of the three aforementioned meetings was a matter of particular concern for the Anglo-Americans¹⁰⁹. Held in Berne on 28 February 1945, it was the first meeting to take place after the Greek Communist coup and during the time when the recently established comitato insurrezionale, dominated by the Italian leftist parties, was hectically preparing the national uprising with the supposed intention of disrupting the Germans. It seems likely that in a similar situation both SOE and OSS must have felt the urgent need to confer with their most pre-eminent Italian 'watchdog' alias Valiani. This

¹⁰⁵ See TNA, *Special Operation Executive, Series 1, Special Operations in Western Europe*. Particularly file folder HS 9/1569/4 includes a lot of further information of interest on Valiani.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁸ *Ivi*. See Appendix B.

¹⁰⁹ These documents are also contained in file folder HS9/1569/4.

urgency regarded the exigency of being reassured on the loyalty of the Italian Resistance to the Allies during weeks when both SOE and OSS were delivering tons of military aids to the Partisans. The extreme concern of SOE on the matter is confirmed by the fact that the Swiss meeting was preceded by an intense exchange of cypher telegrams among London, Berne and New York (where was the SOE branch which had originally recruited Valiani) in order to ascertain if Leo Weiczen was still a reliable agent¹¹⁰.

Consequently, in a dispatch from London to New York on 19 February 1945, the London Station wrote: "Leo Weiczen now working in occupied Italy. To our knowledge he was originally communist but understand that during his exile he had no association with the communists and only with Giustizia e Libertà [the movement forerunner of the Action Party] people. He is now [...] on central Liberation Committee in Northern Italy. Complications with Communists may arise and we wish to know whether we can rely on Weiczen. Report quickly please"¹¹¹. From New York, SOE replied on 20 February: "Subject [a pencil annotation on the cypher telegram adds the name of Weiczen] was specially recommended by Salvadori in whose judgment we have absolute confidence. Subject was not associated, repeat not associated, with the communists but on the contrary while in Mexico took a very definite anticommunist line. We feel you can have full confidence on him. You can obtain confirmation and all details of subject's activity in Mexico from Salvadori"¹¹². On the same day a further and last telegram from London to Berne stated: "Concerning Leo, New York telegraphed as following: while in America he never was in contact with Communists but rather adopted an anticommunist line. You can trust him"¹¹³.

Further evidence of Federalists' implication with the Secret Services of the United Kingdom

Aldo Garosci's codenames for SOE were Magrini, Ferry and Colombo. Like other Italian dissenters who became British agents he was first a militant of Giustizia e Libertà (the anti-fascist movement of Carlo Rosselli) and later a militant of the Partito d'Azione. In 1940, he had repaired to the United States where he was among the founders of the Mazzini Society and was one of the first Italians that SOE recruited via the American coterie. As his SOE record sheet reads: "Garosci [...] arrived from New York to the UK on 28 June 1943.

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*. All the cipher-telegraphs are in copy in the file folder.

¹¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹¹² *Ibidem*.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*.

[...] To be organiser-agent in Massingham commencing on July 1943”¹¹⁴. The document adds that after returning to Europe under SOE auspices, Garosci was recruited for operation “Arnold”. Consequently, he was parachuted down into the Rome area on 12 December 1943 in order to carry out subversive propaganda and resistance until the Liberation of the city. Afterward he was mainly engaged in political activities within the Action Party. Although the records stress that after the Liberation of Rome, Garosci loosened his association with SOE, he was officially discarded no sooner than the 27 September 1945. A last remark adds: “non-SIM agent” “recommended for reemployment and contact”¹¹⁵. Garosci’s profile is similar in many respects to that of many other SOE’s non-SIM Italian recruits. Like many of them, after embracing socialism at an early stage, Garosci gradually moved towards a more non-maximalist position and espoused the Europeanist crusade of the Action Party. In 1954, whilst a militant of the Partito Social Democratico Italiano (Italian Social Democratic Party) - which had broken with the Moscow-aligned Italian Socialist Party (PSIUP) of Pietro Nenni in early 1947 - Garosci published *Il pensiero politico degli autori del ‘Federalist’* (The Political Thinking of the Authors of the ‘Federalist’) which represented the first popularization of the pamphlet in Italy.

The records on Garosci show that the British were not at all inclined to hastily terminate their connection with him in consideration of a possible post-war re-employment. The same had been the case for Valiani. On 24 August 1944, the HQ SOM (the headquarters in command of SOE in Italy) addressed a letter of commendation about Valiani to the British General Consulate in Rome stating that

the above mentioned Italian [Valiani] has given most distinguished services in connection with Special Operations. [...] It is understood that he has recently made application in his capacity as a journalist, through the Press Attaché at the Embassy in Rome, for permission to visit the United Kingdom. It would be appreciated if all possible assistance might be given to him to achieve that end.¹¹⁶

Ernesto Rossi and Altiero Spinelli’s underground activities in Switzerland were also part of these intense clandestine exchanges, albeit in a relatively more independent capacity. As we have seen, during WWII neutral Switzerland became the crossroad where SOE liaised with its agents of foreign nationality.

¹¹⁴ See TNA, *Special Operation Executive, Series 1, Special Operations in Western Europe*, document HS 9/565/5, Garosci’s record sheet.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁶ TNA, *Special Operation Executive, Series 1, Special Operations in Western Europe*, document HS9/1569/4.

Rossi and Spinelli were other “contact or source” of SOE in Switzerland. Although there is no documentary evidence of their proper enrolment into the SOE ranks, following their footsteps in Switzerland we find them in contact with so many SOE agents that there is no doubt of their working under British auspices. Rossi, on the other hand, had been actively involved in summer 1943 in the negotiations occurred in Switzerland between exponents of the Italian anti-fascism underground and SOE /OSS in order to devise a strategy to bring about the end of the regime¹¹⁷.

At that time, Rossi had unfolded his own plan to the Mac Caffery who apparently led these Swiss meetings with an attentive Allen Dulles in the background¹¹⁸. As for Spinelli, after moving in Switzerland at the end of 1943 he actively worked to develop extensive underground contacts among pro-Europeanist exiles there. His endeavours brought about the Geneva conference of May 1944 when exponents of 9 European countries ensued the “Federalist declaration of European Resistance fighters”¹¹⁹. In September 1946, Spinelli and Rossi, as already mentioned, participated in the creation of the European Union of Federalists (EUF) in Switzerland. Also in this case there was the involvement of the Allied intelligence community since remnants of the American OSS, as we will see, decided to back the creation of the European Union of Federalists¹²⁰.

The outcome of the “Free and United Europe” gospel in 1946 Italy

There is no doubt, in sum, of the leading role played by Italian Federalists within SOE and more in general with the Allied intelligence services during the Resistance. The post-war was different. It was not lack of determination but rather the constraining impact of external impediments. First and foremost the Federalist impetus of Italy was hampered by its condition of defeated country with no international say. Partly it was also hindered by the preoccupation of alleviating the harsh clauses imposed by the victorious powers which absorbed most of the energies of those working in the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs¹²¹. And finally it was also troubled by the need to solve the “Institutional question” that is the choice between Monarchy and Republic.

¹¹⁷ See TNA, *Special Operation Executive, Series 1, Special Operations in Western Europe*, document HS 7/262, *War Diary 1942*, vol. 1, pp. 245-246 and fill.

¹¹⁸ Ivi, p. 246.

¹¹⁹ Cfr. C. Delzell, “The European Federalist Movement...”, op. cit., p. 248.

¹²⁰ Cfr. Thierry Meyssan «Histoire secrète de l’Union européenne» Réseau Voltaire International, 28 juin 2004 <http://www.voltairenet.org/article14369.html>.

¹²¹ See on this Ilaria Poggiolini, *Italy* in D. Reynolds (ed. by), *The Origin of the Cold War in Europe*, op. cit., pp. 128-130. As for the year up to 1947 Italian government found mostly concerned

The Italian Federalists were solid in their republican feelings, yet the struggle within the country was not as straightforward as assumed during the war. The alliance of the Communists in this sense was essential for defeating the monarchists and therefore the Federalist forces in the government – albeit not of scarce significance - did not dare to displease them with their longing for the United States of Europe¹²². The latter option was clearly unwelcomed by the Italian Communists. Sergio Pistone has claimed that between 1945 and early 1947 the Italian Communist Party as part of the coalition government, and following indication in this sense from Moscow, participated in emasculating the Europeanist outlook of Italy¹²³.

Even the Italian *Movimento Federalista*, which was still active as a pressure group – but now under a new leadership - saw its activities in fact hampered by the momentary estrangement from the cause of Rossi and Spinelli. Both would restart their federalist action only in consequence of the launch of the Marshall plan which Spinelli and Rossi appreciated in so far as it provided the Western European countries with new room for manoeuvre towards their Federalist goals¹²⁴. Yet, at the end of 1945 Spinelli made manifest his pessimistic view of the general situation of the continent after the conflict. It frustrated the strategy envisaged in his *Ventotene Manifesto*, viz. that of a short, sharp struggle for federalism taking advantage of the power vacuum brought about in Europe by the collapse of Hitler's Reich¹²⁵. European countries had instead been occupied and stabilized in consequence of the decisions taken at the international conferences of Teheran, Yalta and Postdam by the "Three Big". Powerful foreign powers had once again deprived larger European masses of the freedom of deciding of their own foreign policies¹²⁶.

The only action feasible in those circumstances was, according to Spinelli, the intellectual task of "wakening European minds" on the magnitude of the

around the peace treaty terms which were negotiated in a growing atmosphere of East-West confrontation. Among the Italian government's concerns were pressing issues like the definition of the boundaries of the Free Territory of Trieste; the extent of the dismemberment of the Italian Navy and of the limitation on the Army and Air Forces; the fate of the Italian colonies, reparations to USSR, Greece, Yugoslavia, Greece, Albania and Ethiopia.

¹²² Sergio Pistone, "The Italian Political Parties and Pressure Groups in the Discussion on European Union", in Walter Lipgens, *The struggle for European Union...*, op. cit., p. 133 in particular.

¹²³ *Ibidem*.

¹²⁴ Daniela Preda, *Declino e rilancio del MFE tra fine della guerra e Piano Marshall*, in Michel Dumoulin (ed. by) *Plans des temps de guerre pour l'Europe d'après-guerre, 1940-1947: actes du colloque de Bruxelles 12-14 mai 1993*, Bruxelles-Milan, Bruylant-Giuffré, 1995, in particular pp. 516-517.

¹²⁵ Cfr. Pistone, *Italian Political Parties and Pressure Groups*, op. cit., pp. 135; 146.

¹²⁶ Daniela Preda, *Declino e rilancio del MFE...*, op. cit., in particular p. 493.

situation¹²⁷. The *Movimento* therefore should become a study-centre. Spinelli was also disillusioned by those who had participated in the Resistance at his side within the Action Party. Many of the former “azionisti”, progressive intellectuals or middle-class students and workers from the left, that Spinelli had seen as the prospective holders of the supranational banner had instead launched themselves in the political arena with the goal of changing exclusively the internal political structure of the country¹²⁸. Due to the intransigence of the Communists and the Socialists (who had joined the former with a pact of unity of action) the issue of the European federation had progressively disappeared from the Italian political agenda.

On the other hand, at the end of 1945 Spinelli believed that an agreement with the Communists in the parliament was indispensable for making those democratic reforms the country needed in the domestic field¹²⁹. Therefore this led to his decision of abandoning the Federalist crusade for fear that under present circumstances the Italian *Movimento Federalista* might end up for appealing exclusively to conservative forces¹³⁰. The situation which instead occurred was diametrically opposed. In January 1946, the new leaders of the Italian *Movimento Federalista* Umberto Campagnolo and Guglielmo Usellini, presided over a movement that Charles Delzell has defined as made in large part of “crypto-communists”, whose objectives were unsurprisingly “hazy”¹³¹.

For almost two years the *Movimento Federalista* participated in that large “third-forcist” political surge, which encompassed the majority of Europeanist groupings in the Continent, which advocated the Federation of Europe as a means of preventing the formation of rigidly hostile blocs¹³². As for the strategy Campagnolo claimed that, what was needed, was the direct mobilization of people¹³³. This would bring about the revolutionary (but non-violent) dissolution of states which would be merged through the agency of a European Constituent Assembly in a European Federal Republic¹³⁴. The latter would include Britain and also the USSR after the soviet people had dissolved their state¹³⁵.

On the other hand, such a far-reaching project was left in the vague concerning its more immediate political interlocutors. As already mentioned the

¹²⁷ Ivi, in particular p. 498.

¹²⁸ Ivi, in particular pp. 498-502.

¹²⁹ Ivi, p. 501.

¹³⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹³¹ Cfr. C. Delzell, “The European Federalist Movement...”, op. cit., p. 249.

¹³² Cfr. for instance S. Pistone, *Italian Political Parties and Pressure Groups...*, op. cit., p. 143.

¹³³ Daniela Preda, *Declino e rilancio del MFE...*, op. cit., in particular pp. 503-504.

¹³⁴ Cfr. Pistone, *Italian Political Parties and Pressure ...* op. cit., p. 160.

¹³⁵ *Ibidem*.

support of Italian left was unlikely. The hazy indication of the “masses” as the main protagonists evidently overestimated the interest of public opinion at large for European federation. Nor Soviet appreciation of such a plan would be more forthcoming. Finally, the *Movimento*'s detrimental approach to the Atlantic option particularly informed its relations with the Italian pro-western parties which were seen as outright inimical¹³⁶. In sum, before Spinelli returned to lead the *Movimento Federalista Italiano* Italian federalists had no influence on the Italian political establishment except that they played a considerable part in persuading the Constituent Assembly to adopt article 11 of the New Constitution¹³⁷. The latter, while not referring to European unity as such, spoke of “limitation of sovereignty necessary to a system for assuring peace and justice among countries”¹³⁸.

It can be claimed that the *Movimento Federalista*'s vision of unity of Europe which might comprehend both Labourite Britain and Soviet Russia reflects the same contradiction that traumatized those on the left of the Labour Party at the end of the war¹³⁹. Also in Britain the non-communist parliamentary left had tended for a while to align itself with the “fellow travellers” in condemning Britain and the United States for deterioration of relations with Soviet Union¹⁴⁰. Unlike the *Movimento Federalista*, however, the position of the left-wing of the Labour Party was quite different from that of the Communist Party and by mid 1946 this was made apparent. As Anglo-Soviet differences accumulated, the parliamentary Labour Left turned to the notion of establishing a “Third Force” which would assume independence from both the Superpower. This unit was considered capable to entertain positive relations with both the United States and USSR and even help them to bridge their divergences.

From this was also to come a new commitment to the goal of a United Europe expressed clearly at the end of 1946 in the Keep Left Manifesto. The Third Force was firmly grounded on Britain leading a group of countries which wished to maintain their independence from the Soviet Union. This was evident even for the most radical personalities within the Labour Party. As early as at the beginning of 1946 Michael Foot had expressed his conviction that Great Britain now stood “at the summit of her power and glory because the country, as a capitalist society run by a socialist government, could offer a middle way

¹³⁶ Daniela Preda, *Declino e rilancio del MFE...*, op. cit., in particular p. 515.

¹³⁷ Cfr. Pistone, *Italian Political Parties and Pressure Groups...*, op. cit., p.134-135.

¹³⁸ Ivi, p. 135.

¹³⁹ See Michael Newman, *Socialism and European Unity. The Dilemma of the Left in Britain and France*, London, Junction Books, 1983, p. 139.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

between Communism and Capitalism to the world”¹⁴¹. As 1946 unfolded, a neutralist option of this kind took ground among a progressively larger number of Labourite personalities and this, as will be said, also influenced the British policy towards Western European integration¹⁴². In other words, the Third Force that the *Movimento Federalista* had in mind was not endorsed even by those countries that should be its main protagonists namely the Soviet Union and Britain.

What associated Italy with Britain in 1946 was the endless discussion entertained by the democratic left in both countries regarding the alternative of opting for the Atlantic choice. The future members of “Keep Left” engaged during that year in a tight debate with the Labour Government on the apparent disadvantages of that alternative. By relying on the United States to counter the anti-British policy of the Soviet Government, Britain was endangering its relation with democratic forces in the rest of Europe, permitting them to be squeezed out by the division of every country into communist and anti-communist¹⁴³. First and foremost this fate befell the Italian Action Party during 1946. Since the end of the war as part of the coalition government, the Action Party made various attempts of gaining the confidence of the Christian Democratic majority for a policy of more independence from the United States, particularly in the economic sphere¹⁴⁴.

This was for instance the goal of Spinelli during 1945 as member of the Action Party and later in 1946 as an adherent to the newly created *Movimento per la Democrazia Repubblicana*. The latter was created in February 1946 as a consequence of the defection of Ferruccio Parri and Ugo La Malfa from the Action Party¹⁴⁵. Yet, eventually, the Action Party disbanded under the difficult task of reconciling the longing of the majority of the party for social justice with the laissez faire approach favoured by the Christian Democrats¹⁴⁶.

Earlier in the post-war, between June and November 1945 thanks to his outstanding Resistance records the Action Party had secured the post of Prime

¹⁴¹ Klaus Larres, “A Search for Order: Britain and the Origins of a Western European Union, 1944-55”, in B. Brivati and H. Jones, *From Reconstruction to Integration...*, op. cit., p. 73.

¹⁴² Ivi, p. 77 and fl.

¹⁴³ Cfr. Newman, *Socialism and European Unity*, op cit., p. 139.

¹⁴⁴ On the importance for the Action Party of a convergence with the more progressive forces of the Italian Christian Democrats in governing Italy see G. De Luna, *Storia del Partito d’Azione*, in particular p. 321 and fl.

¹⁴⁵ Cfr. G. De Luna, *Storia del Partito d’Azione*, op. cit., p. 329. On Spinelli’s disposition to work with enlightened Christian Democrats see Piero Graglia (ed. by.) *Europa Terza Forza: politica estera e difesa comune negli anni della Guerra Fredda, 1947-1954*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2000, in particular p. XXXVIII.

¹⁴⁶ Cfr. G. De Luna, *Storia del Partito d’Azione*, in particular p. 327 and fl.

Minister for its leader Ferruccio Parri. However, during 1946 major differences had progressively emerged between the democratic-reformist line of Ugo La Malfa and the more pro-socialist line of Emilio Lussu. These divergences combined with the electoral defeat of 1946 caused the party's decline. It can be maintained that the party was progressively weakened by the growing unwillingness of the "actionists" to work with revived Christian Democratic, Liberal and Communist parties which appeared as exclusively "interested in promoting partisan interests" of capitalist, socialist or clerical nature¹⁴⁷.

The Action Party had aimed to be an inter-class party and to promote (and appeal to) the need of the large masses of Italians who were still extraneous to the political system of the big mass-parties¹⁴⁸. The Action Party had evidently underestimated the importance of ideology in the strongly ideological context of post-war Europe. No wonder that the main group of former members of the *Partito d'Azione* led by Riccardo Lombardi joined the Italian Socialist Party of Nenni in October 1947. The rest under the leadership of La Malfa formed the above mentioned *Movimento per la Democrazia Repubblicana* which lasted for a very short season before his members flowed in the rest of the Italian "lay" parties.

In sum, in 1946 many of the former Italian Resistance leaders decided to distance themselves from Federalist activity, devoting to the deepening of intellectual aspects, like Rossi and Spinelli did for a while. Others, like Lussu, with their adherence to Italian Socialist Party renounced for the time being to the construction of Europe. Finally, personalities like Valiani or Mario Alberto Rollier, members of the new leadership of the *Movimento Federalista Europeo*, continued to nurture their links with the Anglo-American intelligence apparatus, especially with the British, in the hope of receiving much needed support to their Europeanist initiatives. Given the fact that the "Three Big" victorious powers now dominated the planet, British leadership of Europe seemed natural.

Bevin between the Superpowers: the struggle for a 'Third Force' in Europe

By 1945, it was manifest that the inter-war arrangements between the "Big three" had fostered a division of the world in spheres of interest. If the Americans were perceived as dominating the Western hemisphere and the Russians Eastern Europe, Britain's position in the new balance of world power remained uncertain. Surely, similarly to the Coalition government, what engaged most the new Labour leadership was the power political need of

¹⁴⁷ Ivi, p. 324 and fl.

¹⁴⁸ Ivi, p. 324.

boosting the crippled influence of Britain in the context of the new world order¹⁴⁹. This desire, on the other hand, matched with the widespread belief that Britain abandoning her traditional “splendid isolation” would answer to the demands of countries like Scandinavia and Benelux, which, as it was perceived, then looked at London as to a prospective leader in a more integrated Europe¹⁵⁰. A belief also spurred by the asylum received in London during the war by the Dutch, Belgian and Netherland government-in-exile¹⁵¹.

As for Italy, the exchanges entertained with many Federalist exiles pushed the Italians to have similar expectations¹⁵². Certainly these Europeanist sentiments were not completely disregarded by the new Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin as previously assumed by historiography. These feelings were in line with a new awareness in the Foreign Office, that the foreign secretary was eager to embrace, that Britain’s interests in the post-war were not separate from those of the rest of the Western European countries¹⁵³.

As already noted a completely new line of research asserting Bevin’s interest in European cooperation has emerged since the Eighties mainly via the contribution of historians like John Young and John Kant¹⁵⁴. This was the not particularly long but intense phase of the Labour’s government search of a new independent global leadership. Many historians saw this phase epitomized in Ernest Bevin’s official enunciation of his “Grand Design” or his “Three Monroe” doctrine of late 1945¹⁵⁵. According to the latter, Bevin claimed the right to protect the security of British Commonwealth and to develop good relations with British neighbours in the same way as the United States had done over a century in the continent of America. Similarly he condemned the fact that a Soviet Monroe had been recently adopted by Moscow from the Baltic to the

¹⁴⁹ There is a vast consensus on the power political complexion of the post-war Labour Government, see for all, J. Kent, “Bevin Imperialism...”, op. cit., p. 48 in particular.

¹⁵⁰ John W. Young, *Britain and European Unity...*, op. cit., p. 6.

¹⁵¹ See on this John T. Grantham, *The Labour Party...*, op. cit., in particular p. 126.

¹⁵² This is the belief of Giovanni De Luna the official scholar of Italian *Partito d’Azione* (Action Party) to whom the greatest part of Italian Federalists adhered in 1945. Giovanni De Luna, *Storia del Partito d’Azione*, (History of the Action Party), op. cit., p. 311.

¹⁵³ See for all J. Grantham, *The Labour Party...*, op. cit., in particular p. 126. More critic regarding the true nature of Bevin’s Europeanism but in agreement with Grantham is Hugo Young, “Ernest Bevin. Great Brit” in H. Young (ed. by), *This Blessed Plot. Britain and Europe from Churchill to Blair*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1998, p. 32 and fl. See also S. Greenwood, “The Third Force in the late 1940s”, in B. Brivati and H. Jones, *From Reconstruction to Integration. Britain and Europe since 1945*, Leicester, LeicesterUP, 1984, in particular p. 61.

¹⁵⁴ A concise account of this scholarship is in Oliver Daddow, *Britain and Europe since 1945...*, op. cit., in particular p. 114 and fl.

¹⁵⁵ See, for instance Klaus Larres, “A Search for Order...”, op. cit., p. 78.

Pacific¹⁵⁶. This interpretation gives emphasis to the idea of the new Foreign Secretary Bevin as aiming to assert the role that Britain would undertake between the Superpowers. It rejects the previously assumed belief that in 1946 Bevin had already resolved in his mind in forcing Britain into the slipstream of the United States in the by-polar world that was emerging.

For revisionist readings in order to reach his goal Bevin, on one hand, tried in fact to pursue a degree of economic independence from the United States and, on the other hand, he attempted to reassure the Soviets that Britain was not necessarily antagonist towards them¹⁵⁷. What most alarmed London, also according to major revisionist readings, was not so much the existence of a Soviet sphere of influence *per se* but rather the awareness of a vacuum of power in Western Europe which would permit Communism to spread further¹⁵⁸. Therefore the necessity of forming some power structure in Western Europe to balance the situation¹⁵⁹. Furthermore such a Western system by placing more control on a defeated Germany would enhance the prospect of continued Anglo-Russian cooperation¹⁶⁰.

This was what became soon known as Bevin's World "Third Force". In sum, a phase characterized mainly by the persisting fear of German renaissance along with the emerging awareness of existing Soviet danger as possible threats to peace in Europe. Therefore a foreign policy chiefly occupied by three goals up to the end of 1946. In the first place, there was the priority of boosting Britain's influence in the world. Secondly, there was the customary need to contain Germany, and, finally, it had emerged the relatively new objective of checking (possibly undetected) Soviet expansionism while keeping the appearances of continuing inter-Allied cooperation¹⁶¹. For the achievement of all these objectives, the potential leadership of a more integrated European unit represented an important addendum.

In this regard, revisionist readings highlight two main assumptions that Bevin shared with senior figures in the Foreign Office¹⁶². In the first place, the reality of Britain as the weakest of the "Big Three" required her to undertake

¹⁵⁶ Cfr. also J.T. Grantham, *The Labour Party*, op. cit., p. 127.

¹⁵⁷ Ivi, p. 131.

¹⁵⁸ See Sean Greenwood, *The Third Force...*, op. cit., p. 59.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶¹ There is a large consensus on this aspects of British foreign policy in the immediate post-war, see for instance David Reynolds, "Great Britain", in D. Reynolds (ed. by) *The Origin of Cold War in Europe. International Perspectives*, New Haven and London, Yale UP, 1994, pp. 77-95.

¹⁶² On the early convergence of Bevin's views with those of his senior officials see for instance J. Kent, "Bevin's Imperialism...", op. cit., p. 48-50; Kent and Young, "British Policy overseas", op. cit., pp. 43; 45; Sean Greenwood, "The Third Force in the late 1940s", op. cit., p. 61 in particular.

the leadership of Western Europe and to combine it with that of the Dominions in order to match United States and Soviet Russia's power¹⁶³. In this endeavour Britain had to be able to count on the alliance with France as an indispensable cornerstone, but also on the enrolment of the rest of the countries of Europe as valuable "collaborators"¹⁶⁴. Similarly important is the revisionists' claim that while pursuing his goals Bevin was cautious and avoided as much as possible of talking in term of a prospective Western bloc which might have upset, although for different reasons, both the Superpowers¹⁶⁵.

Yet, since summer 1945 the Foreign Secretary had voiced to his officials his desire of establishing closer relations either in financial and economic matters or in political questions with the countries on the Mediterranean and Atlantic fringe of Europe and more specifically with Greece, Belgium, the Netherlands and Scandinavia¹⁶⁶. Italy and France were put on a special footing in this scheme. There was in fact the wish of making both countries partners in a strategy to rebalance the disparity between British industrial and agricultural outputs¹⁶⁷. It also reflected the goal of becoming independent from the United States both in food stuff and raw materials and in general of looking at Western Europe as an easier source of supplies¹⁶⁸.

In sum, throughout all 1946 Bevin's nurtured quite high expectations regarding British economic policy towards the rest of Europe. On one hand, he believed that increased European trading would alleviate Britain's scarce dollar reserve. On the other, by giving some sort of economic assistance to the rest of Western Europe – either in providing financial aid or purchasing export goods – he thought he would establish Britain as an important contributor to European Recovery and enhance its prospect of becoming *The great European Power*¹⁶⁹.

More generally, in both France and Italy, although in different ways, matched another element of Bevin's strategy which envisaged using the resources of the European colonial powers and their bases as central economic and logistic assets of the prospective Western European system¹⁷⁰. As agreed with his senior officials, Bevin made a first step by approaching the French

¹⁶³ See on this, among many others, Hugo Young, "Ernest Bevin, Great Brit", op. cit., pp. 34-35.

¹⁶⁴ Cfr. John W. Young, *Britain and European Unity...*, op. cit., p. 1. See also for the reference to Italy as collaborator in particular Kent, "Bevin's Imperialism...", op. cit., p. 60 and following; and Grantham, *The Labour Party*, op. cit., p. 128.

¹⁶⁵ See in particular, S. Greenwood, "The Third Force...", op. cit., p. 61.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶⁷ *Ivi*, p. 62.

¹⁶⁸ Cfr. Kent, "Bevin's Imperialism...", op. cit., p. 51 in particular.

¹⁶⁹ *Ivi*, pp. 50-51.

¹⁷⁰ See for instance Kent and Young, "British Policy Overseas...", op. cit., p. 42 and fil; p. 51.

government in view of achieving a firm alliance with France¹⁷¹. However, as it has been contended, since the very beginning it was clear that "Enthusiasm alone could not diminish the real impediments strewn across the route"¹⁷². In the first place, in searching agreement with France, Bevin faced unreasonable demands from the French regarding the future of the Levant states and of the Rhineland and Ruhr; not to mention the strength of the French Communist Party which made fear that France was succumbing to Soviet influence¹⁷³. Secondly, he encountered staunch opposition to his economic policy within his own Cabinet notoriously in the Economic Departments and soon also in the Colonial Office¹⁷⁴.

However, Bevin was not deterred and instead with increasing emphasis brought to French attention the importance of the gain which could be made by cooperating in the colonial sphere. The latter consideration was in Bevin's mind when in early 1946 he approached the French Prime and Foreign Minister Georges Bidault affirming that France and Britain had in their colonial possessions a valuable amount of natural resources, manpower and strategic bases¹⁷⁵. If the two powers would work in partnership in developing the productive capacities of their Empires as one single economic unit they would soon match the United States and Soviet's power¹⁷⁶.

One note of caution must be made here. Possibly part of the reasons for an earlier underrating of Bevin's Europeanism can be traced in the Foreign Secretary's caution in discussing his strategy with anyone other than his closest officials in the Foreign Office. As Raymond Smith has contended, at this early post-war stage sensitive issues of Britain's foreign policy were discussed outside Cabinet, at *ad hoc* meetings of selected committees¹⁷⁷. Furthermore, Bevin disliked to commit his thoughts to paper¹⁷⁸. Notably personalities like Gladwyn Jebb of the Reconstruction Department and the Permanent Under Secretary Orme Sargent were acquainted and even inspirers of Bevin's scheme¹⁷⁹. The same can be said for Duff Cooper, the then influential British Ambassador in Paris whose opinions were held in high regard within the inner

¹⁷¹ See Grantham, *The Labour Party*, op. cit., p. 128-131.

¹⁷² Cfr. Kent, "Bevin's Imperialism...", op. cit., p. 63 in particular.

¹⁷³ Cfr. Klaus Larres, "A Search for Order...", op. cit., p. 79.

¹⁷⁴ On the disparities of views between the Foreign Office and the Economic Departments see for instance John Kent, "Bevin's Imperialism..., 1945-1949", op. cit., pp. 48-51.

¹⁷⁵ Cfr. S. Greenwood, "The Third Force in the late 1940s", op. cit., p. 64.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibidem*. See also, J. Kent and J. Young, "British Policy Overseas...", op. cit., p. 42.

¹⁷⁷ Raymond Smith, *A Climate of Opinion: British Officials and the Development of British Soviet Policy, 1945-1947*, «International Affairs», vol. 64, n° 4, Autumn 1988, p. 632.

¹⁷⁸ Ivi, p. 336.

¹⁷⁹ Cfr. John Kent, "Bevin's Imperialism...", op. cit., pp. 48-51.

entourage of Bevin¹⁸⁰. A few other Foreign Office's representatives were aware and shared – not without some reservations - Bevin's aims¹⁸¹.

As for the rest, the Foreign Secretary was aware of the hostile environment surrendering his vision particularly within the Economic Departments. According to the current Chancellor of the Exchequer and the President of the Board of Trade, respectively Hugh Dalton and Stafford Cripps, the idea of fostering economic cooperation with the rest of the European countries was a dangerous mistake¹⁸². It would distance the Americans, staunch opponents of regional economic blocs, as opposed to a multilateral world trade system. It would disappoint the Dominions which might suffer discrimination and not help Britain's deficit balance since dislocated European economies were even scarcer in dollar than Britain. Both Dalton and Cripps as former members of the Coalition government had been hardened by the experience of power against old-style internationalism of Labour Party's ideology¹⁸³.

Together they were convinced, both of British economic dependence from American help and by the danger represented by alienating the Soviets. Therefore the need of continuing wartime inter-allied cooperation. Unlike his colleagues from the economic departments, Bevin was much less persuaded of the feasibility of carrying on in amity with both the Superpowers.¹⁸⁴ Therefore, the existing opposition did not prevent Bevin from tapping a reservoir of thoughts which went back to his own extensive engagement with economic issues¹⁸⁵.

At the same time, as we shall see, also the vast number of clandestine contacts established during the conflict with outstanding foreign personalities now members of many post-war European governments were not completely discarded as possible reservoir of support. Was it completely uninfluential the fact that former SOE's agent Emilio Lussu had received the portfolio of Post-War Relief in the Ferruccio Parri's Italian Government in June 1945? Was really unimportant that former Mazzini Society's founder Alberto Tarchiani was now

¹⁸⁰ Ivi, p. 52.

¹⁸¹ On Bevin's supporters within the Foreign Office's various departments see for instance John Kent and J.W. Young, "British Policy Overseas...", op. cit., pp. 49-50.

¹⁸² See also on the opposition to Bevin's strategy in the Economic Departments, Clemens Wurm, "Great Britain: Political Parties and Pressure Groups in the Discussion on the European Union", in Walter Lipgens and Wilfried Loth (eds. by), *Documents...*, cit., vol. 3, *The struggle for European Union by Political Parties and Pressure Groups in Western European Countries, 1945-1950*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1988, in particular pp. 631-633.

¹⁸³ See Grantham, *The Labour Party*, op. cit., pp. 1-2.

¹⁸⁴ Cfr. Klaus Larres, "A Search for Order...", op. cit., p. 77.

¹⁸⁵ On Bevin's early political career as Union's leader see H. Young, "Ernest Bevin. Great Brit", op. cit., pp. 26-29.

Italian Ambassador in Washington? Or that staunch Federalist and old SOE's Resistance contact in Switzerland Ernest Rossi in July 1945 had become Under-Secretary in the newly founded Italian Ministry of Reconstruction? And was it not similarly important that another old acquaintance of SOE, Ugo La Malfa, was made first Minister for Reconstruction and later Minister for Foreign Trade in the first De Gasperi's Government from December 1945 onwards?

On the other hand, the involvement of the Italian engineering and building firms, artisans and other semiskilled workers in Britain's strategy of development of Africa in cooperation with European countries was also in Bevin's mind in the immediate post-war¹⁸⁶. There was also the intention of extending a welcome to Italian immigrants in settling in British African colonies to help the peninsula with the burden of unemployment¹⁸⁷. Both manoeuvres were intended, other than fostering intra-European cooperation, to placate Italian appetites on their former colony of Cyrenaica of which Bevin wanted a trusteeship¹⁸⁸. An insight in the opinion of the Italian economic departments on the matter was not evidently disregarded by the Foreign Secretary.

Here a potential further element of historiographical confusion must be also pointed out along with the mentioned verbal caution of Bevin. Even revisionist historians while investigating Bevin's vision have often concluded that the Foreign Secretary's European strategy was, notwithstanding all his laudable trying, in the last instance too "vague", "ill devised" and therefore ultimately "ineffectual"¹⁸⁹. Others have pointed out to the "ambiguity" of the Foreign Secretary¹⁹⁰. For instance, if Bevin claimed the right to apply his own Monroe doctrine in the Old Continent according to Greenwood, "the lack of precision which characterized his approach to European cooperation was never satisfactory tackled and seriously impaired his implementation"¹⁹¹. Similarly, many scholars put the stress, as already noted, on the Foreign Secretary's attention for countries on the Mediterranean and Atlantic fringe of Europe during 1946¹⁹².

¹⁸⁶ Cfr. Kent, "Bevin's Imperialism...", op. cit., p. 60 in particular and following.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸⁹ See for instance, S. Greenwood, "The Third Force", op. cit., pp. 63 and 68 and 69.

¹⁹⁰ See among others H. Young, "Ernest Bevin. Great Brit", op. cit., pp. 31-32.

¹⁹¹ S. Greenwood, "The Third Force...", op. cit., p. 63.

¹⁹² This opinion is also shared by Alan Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe*, London, Methuen, 1984, chapter VIII. The leading British historian claims that up to 1948 Bevin considered the possibility of creating a common market in Western Europe to maintain independence from the United States. Geoffrey Warner is also a well-known advocate of this view, see G. Warner, "The Labour Governments and the Unity of Western Europe" in Ritchie Owendale (ed. by) *The Foreign Policy of the British Labour Government, 1945-1951*, op. cit.

Many authors also agree on the fact that France and Italy were put in a special footing since the start¹⁹³. If overall, between 1945 and early 1947, this phase saw Bevin testing the feasibility of a new unity among those countries that he later named the “Middle of the planet” (the Western European countries, their overseas territories and British Middle East¹⁹⁴) regarding these countries and more specifically one of his supposedly favourite partners, namely Italy, has the subject been really tackled in depth? How much do we know about this Italian policy beyond the discussions – admittedly not many-occurred at that time between Foreign Office’s mandarins?

Better put, in light of the open opposition faced by Bevin within the British Cabinet, what do we know about the Foreign Secretary’s possible attempt to discreetly enrol as distinctly principal “collaborators” the already ongoing pro-Europeanist secret contacts existing both inside and outside the country? In other words, how useful is it to move away from traditional British governmental actors to try to grasp in full Bevin and Foreign Office’s actual Europeanist strategy? Can the idea of an attempt made by British foreign policy-makers to enrol as real collaborators both wider British pro-Europeanist societal forces and their vast network of contacts abroad – many of whom had been former British agents during the conflict – be completely ruled out? If it is true that there were many impediments strewn across the road: mainly American and Soviet’s unforeseeable reaction and the staunch opposition of the economic departments, how much must have appeared advisable to undertake very discreet steps towards the promotion of Britain’s Europeanist goals? As already noted, the broad involvement of the intelligence community, especially the American one, in the promotion of European unity is a well acknowledged phenomenon for the years after 1948, why the same cannot also be true for the previous biennium¹⁹⁵?

This adds strength to the idea that there was a wide spread belief that, like during the conflict, something underground but not less incisive could have been done. On the other hand, early 1946 saw also the creation of the Russia Committee sparked, among other things, from an alarming report by the Joint

¹⁹³ S. Greenwood, “The Third Force...”, op. cit., p.62.

¹⁹⁴ Ivi, p. 64.

¹⁹⁵ For the years after 1948 the work of historian Richard Aldrich must be here pointed out. Aldrich has described in details the American involvement with the American Committee for United Europe which formed around personalities like Allen Dulles and which apparently between 1948 and the early Fifties poured millions of dollars to support pro-Europeanist initiatives and pressure groups in Western Europe. See R. Aldrich, *OSS, CIA and the European Unity: the American Committee on United Europe, 1948-1960*, in «Diplomacy and Statecraft», vol. 8, (March 1997) pp. 184-227.

Intelligence Committee concerning Russia's strategic interest and intention¹⁹⁶. Among the measures devised to counter Russia's negative propaganda against Britain there was the decision to carry on a defensive line of publicity which exactly like during the conflict was centred on the enrolment of foreigner collaborators. Foreign politicians, publicists and trade union leaders would be enrolled to disseminate pro-British propaganda in their home countries¹⁹⁷. Moreover, is it not possible that also in this case, as we have seen it had happened in similar circumstances – one for all: relations with the Mazzini Society during WWII - the Americans after 1948 were mainly following the footsteps of their senior intelligence partners? Again, this is a field of research at a very embryonic stage, yet it seems advisable to point to a few revealing episodes that occurred between 1945 and 1947 which give emphasis to the existence of a clandestine side of Bevin's foreign policy. This is what is commonly known as the "intelligence dimension" and still remains an under-investigated historical feature.

Before going into further details concerning these episodes, it seems worthwhile to add a few more considerations about the general framework in which these supposed clandestine activities took place. These considerations concern, on the one hand, the fact that in 1946, there was a wide bipartisan political consensus inside Britain on the advisability of European economic cooperation. Secondly, it must be remembered here that unlike previously assumed by historiography, the European countries and particularly Britain could count in 1946 on a larger room for manoeuvre in regard with fostering European cooperation. Although even today nobody would question the goodwill of the United States towards Western European integration due to paramount economic, political and strategic reasons, what has been more recently contended is the extent of American leverage on the European countries in this respect¹⁹⁸. If we take into account these two elements – the existing widespread bipartisan consensus and a larger room for manoeuvre for Britain than previously assumed – the idea of carrying on with clandestine activities geared to promote Europeanism in the continent must have appeared not totally obnoxious to the Foreign Secretary.

¹⁹⁶ Cfr. R. Smith, "A Climate of Opinion: British Officials...", op. cit., p. 632.

¹⁹⁷ Ivi, pp. 635-640.

¹⁹⁸ Among the many dissonant voices in respect to previous readings see for all the chapters by Antonio Varsori, Daniele Pasquinucci, Mark Gilberg, Morten Rasmussen and Lorenzo Mechi in A. Varsori and Kaiser, *European Union History*, op. cit.

In and out of Whitehall: the phase of bipartisan consensus

As just noted, there is evidence that concerning cooperation in Europe, at least for one year after the end of the conflict there was full consensus between the Labour establishment and the Conservative opposition¹⁹⁹. This is because exponents of both line-ups believed in the importance of creating regional economic blocs in the continent to foster economy and preserve peace. During the war, apparently under the spell of Kalergi, Churchill in several occasions had advocated his idea of creating three South-Eastern European confederations to combine with the five major European powers in a new system that he had named "Council of Europe"²⁰⁰.

He had also welcomed the formation of distinctive "United States of Europe" in different circumstances. He reiterated his thoughts in the post-war and between 1945 and 1946 at least in three important occasions. In November 1945 Churchill made a statement in this sense during a speech at the Belgian parliament. He restated his view in occasion of his celebrated "Iron curtain" speech at Fulton, Missouri, on 3 March 1946 and again at the University of Zurich in September 1946²⁰¹.

As for Bevin, he had also made apparent in several occasion his firm belief concerning the economic causes underlying war and the need of establishing effective international economic organizations while occasionally advocating the "United States of Europe"²⁰². On the other hand, traditionally the Labour Party's orthodoxy in foreign policy consisted in a commitment to internationalism²⁰³. Among the principles professed there was explicitly the idea of a transfer of a degree of national sovereignty to some supranational organization²⁰⁴. The creation of a Judicial body for the settlement of international disputes was also endorsed as a desirable machinery²⁰⁵.

Furthermore, in Bevin's case his experience during 1929 as member of the Colonial Development Advisory Committee, established by the then Labour Government, had brought him to appreciate the importance of reforming in new directions the existing relations between the British mother country and its subjected population²⁰⁶. He believed that this goal should be shared by the rest

¹⁹⁹ See on this the opinion of Grantham, *The Labour Party*, op. cit., p. 126.

²⁰⁰ Ivi, p. 38 and ffl.

²⁰¹ Ivi, pp. 164-165.

²⁰² Again on Bevin's days as a Union leader see H. Young, "Ernest Bevin. Great Brit", op. cit., p. 28.

²⁰³ Cfr. Grantham, *The Labour Party...*, op. cit., p. 6 and ffl.

²⁰⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁰⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁰⁶ Cfr. J. Kent, "Bevin's Imperialism...", op. cit., p. 54 in particular.

of the European colonial powers and that there was room for manoeuvre for working in partnership in this area. It represented a broad overture, beside France, to countries like Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal and again Italy.

In sum, during 1946 personalities from both the Labour establishment and the Conservative opposition initially showed a strong bipartisan approach to the Europeanist issue. A tangible proof of this is the fact that many of them shared membership in the same national and transnational pro-European pressure groups. If we look at the principal networks emerged during 1946 it is evident that they comprised personalities of the most diverse political complexions. This is true for the European Union of Federalists (EUF) created by Dutch Professor Henri Brugmans in Geneva in September 1946 to become the true bystander of the supra-national solution. It also applies to the Independent League of European Cooperation (ILEC), which will be discussed shortly in more details, a liberal economic organization established in London in summer 1946. It is what Churchill maintained of his allegedly “non-political and not-partisan” group of the United Europe Movement (EUM) launched in London between 1946 and 1947. EUM was conceived in order to join – and possibly take charge of – the Europeanist crusade in Britain and in Europe. Finally a similar diversified complexion characterized the post-war version of Kalergi’s Pan-European movement known in 1946 as the European Parliamentary Union (EPU) which lobbied in favour of European unity within the different European Parliaments and pushed for the early convening of a European Constituent Assembly.

Among Kalergi’s acolytes in Britain there was the Australian born barrister and since 1945 Labour M.P., R.W.G. Mackay, one of the staunchest supporters of Federalism within the Labour government. In the beginning also Mackay’s efforts were directed to the creation of some sort of bipartisan lobby among the British parliamentarians. In effect a small All-party Parliamentarian Group was launched in early 1946 following Kalergi’s advice of keeping the European crusade free from party-political etiquettes²⁰⁷. The diverse political complexion of these networks confirms that across the continent a large assortment of personalities nurtured the hope of keeping the problem of European unity entirely out of the realm of party-politics²⁰⁸. It was considered advisable instead to act together and in any possible direction to influence

²⁰⁷ See Grantham, *The Labour Party...*, op. cit., p. 174.

²⁰⁸ *Ibidem*.

governmental action²⁰⁹. Unlike the latter, their activities were mainly carried on behind the official scene: a modality which guaranteed their anonymity not devoid however of a proved degree of impact²¹⁰. It is worth also to add that what probably made these pressure groups unequivocally both tolerable and influential, at least in Britain, was their broad interaction with the national intelligence apparatus in a reciprocal activity of alternatively either support or control.

In sum, if research moves away from traditional governmental action and turn to the investigation of the role of national and transnational pressure groups, British interest in European cooperation appears sharper. This picture becomes even more significant if we include the discreet activities in this respect of British intelligence services between war and the immediate post-war, namely SOE and later JIC (Joint Intelligence Committee). The latter was the body which inherited remnants of the former after its early disbandment in 1945²¹¹. The new edifice of JIC, on the other hand, brought the intelligence apparatus back within the realm of the Foreign Office.

ILEC pressure group and the fight for the economic integration of Europe

The continuance of British clandestine involvement at several levels with societal forces of strong Europeanist orientation it has been recently pointed out by some political commenters. For instance, as Thierry Meyssan has revealed for the Independent League for European Cooperation (I.L.E.C.) launched in London in September 1946, not only one of its main promoters, Joseph H. Retinger, was a former SOE agent but the whole structure of the pressure group received the backing of the British Joint Intelligence Committee²¹². Moreover, ILEC's second chairperson, the former Belgian Prime Minister Paul Van Zeeland, had spent his wartime days as a member of the Belgian government in exile in London lobbying for an European security system²¹³.

²⁰⁹ This is the opinion in particular of Laura Kottos, the scholar who has investigated the formation of ILEC and particularly the activity of its British section. Cfr. L. Kottos, *A 'European Commonwealth': Britain, the European League for Economic Cooperation and European Debates on Empire 1947-1957*, in «Journal of Contemporary European Studies», vol. 20, n° 4, 2012, p. 498 in particular.

²¹⁰ Ivi, p. 499.

²¹¹ See Richard Aldrich, "Secret Intelligence for a post-war world: reshaping the British intelligence community, 1944-1951" in Aldrich (ed. by), *British Intelligence, Strategy and the Cold War, 1945-1951*, London, Routledge, 1992, pp. 16-27 in particular.

²¹² Cfr. Thierry Meyssan, *Histoire secrète de l'Union européenne*, in «Réseau Voltaire International», 28 juin 2004 <http://www.voltairenet.org/article14369.html>

²¹³ See Grantham, *The Labour Party...*, op. cit.

As for the second reminder we had pointed out before, that is, the room for manoeuvre of European countries, again this must be born in mind when addressing the above mentioned British clandestine initiatives. The latter must be seen within an interpretative framework which, following revisionist writings, acknowledges Britain a much larger agency than previously assumed particularly in regard to the United States. This allows for an investigation of some previously belittled initiatives by the British apparatus like for instance in the specific sphere of intelligence. Following the foot-steps of Milward and others, as mentioned, different European scholars focusing on early integration have contributed to discount American power over European countries at that time.

For instance, it has been pointed out that, differently from mainstream United States' public opinion, the American State Department resolved to take into due account European - particularly British - sentiments towards the loss of national sovereignty. Therefore the important conclusion has followed that Americans willy-nilly accommodated British sensibility²¹⁴. This is not to deny that the Americans attempted their own secret manoeuvring with respect to the goal of unifying Europe. Nevertheless, the new readings allow us to claim that United States' action must have been concerted at a larger extent than previously assumed with their traditional intelligence counterpart in Europe namely the British.

According to Thierry Meyssan in late 1945 the British Joint Intelligence Committee, presumably responding to knowledge of American involvement in the setting up of the European Union of Federalists (EUF) in Geneva, sponsored the creation of the Independent League for European Cooperation (ILEC)²¹⁵. This was an international forum composed by national committees where domestic experiences were exchanged and transformed. Since late 1945 branches of ILEC were opened throughout all the major Western European countries including Italy and Britain. A division was also established in the United States to work in conjunction with the Council on Foreign Relations in order to study how to create in Europe a common area of free exchange and possibly the adoption of a common currency²¹⁶.

Apparently during the summer of 1945 the Council on Foreign Relations in conjunction with British Chatman House had already sponsored a conference in London where the common positions of London and Washington had been

²¹⁴ See for instance Klaus Schwabe, "The United States and European Integration, 1947-1957", in Clemens Wurm (ed. by), *Western Europe and Germany. The Beginning of European Integration, 1945-1960*, Oxford, Berg, pp. 115-36.

²¹⁵ Thierry Meyssan, *Histoire secrète de l'Union européenne...*, cit.

²¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

made manifest²¹⁷. The idea of creating in Europe some sort of common economic unity to foster market and help reconstruction was evidently and unsurprisingly endorsed by both sides. Nevertheless, as already mentioned, American effective leverage on European countries in this respect was not as straightforward as previously assumed, therefore the advisability of working in accordance with the British on the issue.

ILEC's secretary general, Joseph Retinger was, as already noted, the former advisor to the Polish Prime Minister in exile in London. Retinger during the war had served as a SOE agent and in this capacity had been parachuted into occupied Poland to make contact with the Polish underground Resistance. The President of ILEC was instead Paul Van Zeeland former Belgian Prime Minister in exile²¹⁸. Both characters would remain central in the main endeavours towards the construction of Europe. The two are part of a quite volatile network of former pro-Europeanist anti-fascist exiles, Resistance leaders and agents of various foreign nationalities who after the war acted behind the scene to influence the political scenario.

The Independent League for European Cooperation in 1949 became the European League for Economic Cooperation. Networks like ILEC deserve investigation because there is evidence that their advices, and specifically those of ILEC, were acknowledged at the highest level of their respective governments²¹⁹. Even better, it seems that Bevin's distinctive economic policy regarding Western European cooperation reflected in a specular way the guidelines suggested by ILEC²²⁰. On the other hand, the latter's members were not novice in economics and politics. The members of the ILEC were a transnational assortment of personalities of the highest standing and numbered among themselves Ministers and deputies from different European Parliaments, politicians and union leaders as well as national and multinational business firms' tycoons. Later on ILEC became an advisory body for the European Council while Van Zeeland entered the Bilderberg Group.

The popularity of the British section of ILEC was linked to its projection of itself as a bipartisan and professional pool of experts which could help Britain to build its domestic and foreign economic policy. According to scholar Laura Kottos, the British section of ILEC included personalities which spanned from Conservatives figures like Harold Macmillan, Duncan Sandys and Julien Amery to Labourite exponents like Roy Jenkins and Liberal champions like Juliet Rhys-

²¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

²¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

²¹⁹ Cfr. L. Kottos, "A 'European Commonwealth': Britain...", op. cit., pp. 498-499.

²²⁰ Ivi, p. 501-502.

Williams, future secretary of the section²²¹. Oxford economist Roy Harrod and influential Federalist journalist Lord Layton from «The Economist» also adhered to the section²²².

If the League had usually acted as a transnational intellectual forum for debating economic issues by late 1945 cooperation between Europe and its colonial possessions had come to the fore as a dominant feature of its agenda. There were several reasons behind it. First of all it offered to the European mother countries a solution to the burden of sustaining their colonies especially facing the post-war financial wreckage especially of France and Britain. Secondly, it reflected the need, for the same reason, to develop the colonies as a conduit to their own self-support and to improve their capacity of responding to the requirements of increasingly larger markets. As already mentioned there is evidence that Bevin's ideas on the subject voiced in his discussions with a few European foreign ministers reflected the guidelines of ILEC British section²²³.

Laura Kottos when investigating ILEC's activities has claimed that European policies concerning relations with Empires were managed by different ministries in the countries concerned and that there is little evidence that these policies were linked in governmental terms. Therefore her claim for the importance of moving away from governmental action and turning instead to the investigation of transnational pressure groups within civil societies which in her view moving behind the political scene where able to promote their ideas²²⁴.

Kottos highlights how by early 1946 not only British and French sections of ILEC were in agreement on the creation of a European Customs union but also the Belgian section had joined them²²⁵. This Customs union was intended to harmonize financial and economic policies both between metropolitan markets and between the latter and their colonial possessions. The three sections believed also firmly that a liberal European integration must have as a corollary the potential to ease the regime of imperial preferences. Colonial big business was aware that the latter prevented them from selling at competitive prices their products outside the metropolitan markets and namely to most of the European countries. If the goal of ILEC was to make colonies more competitive, the first step was to extend the preferential regime to the other non-colonial European partners²²⁶.

²²¹ Ivi, p. 499 and fl.

²²² *Ibidem*.

²²³ See L. Kottos, "A 'European Commonwealth...'", op. cit., p. 498.

²²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²²⁵ Ivi, p. 500 and fl.

²²⁶ Ivi, p. 501.

The attempt to increase the exchange of commodities in this way, on the other hand, reflected an already existing trend in the commercial exchanges between European Empires and their overseas possessions. The latter wanted consumer goods and capital equipment, the former food staff and raw materials²²⁷. In exchange for access to product at preferential tariffs, the non-colonial European powers would participate in the development of the colonies through some giant scheme for “joint European development of African resources” to be defined²²⁸. The overseas territories needed investments to improve their infrastructures and trading facilities and once the virtual cycle would be started it would attract further investments and the competitiveness of the colonies would boom²²⁹.

European overseas possessions were also known as possessing in great amount minerals of which the United States were completely barren. In sum the development of the productive capacities of the colonies could be used to earn dollars and redress the balance of payments not only of France and Britain but also of the rest of the European countries. This was to be the case in particular for Italy since Bevin’s had in mind to replace the Italians in their trusteeship of Cyrenaica and he thought that the easiest way of achieving it was to compensate the Italians – big firms and working force - by granting them a place in the British scheme of development of the African colonies²³⁰.

Although concerns have been expressed concerning the viability of Bevin’s “European Commonwealth” as sometimes the plan was called, there is evidence that throughout 1946 the Foreign Secretary spelled it several times. It mentioned it to three consecutively different French Prime Ministers, namely Charles De Gaulle, Georges Bidault and Leon Blum. He also constantly lobbied the 1946 French Foreign Minister Bidault on the importance of the matter with apparently a good degree of success²³¹. He furthermore kept Attlee informed²³². Bevin’s belief in the potential of colonial cooperation was still held firm at the time of the signing of the Treaty of Dunkirk in early 1947²³³. During the negotiations it was stated that a special commission for studying how to set up an Anglo-French Customs Union was to be created. The commission should consider also the adoption of a special regime for allowing the dependent colonies to join the machinery. As again Laura Kottos has maintained at that

²²⁷ Ivi, p. 501-502.

²²⁸ *Ibidem*. See also Kent, “Bevin’s Imperialism...”, op. cit., in particular p. 54; and also fl.

²²⁹ L. Kottos, “A ‘European Commonwealth...”, op.cit., pp. 502-503 in particular.

²³⁰ See J. Kent, “Bevin’s Imperialism...”, op. cit., in particular p. 60; and also fl.

²³¹ Cfr. Greenwood, “The Third Force...”, op. cit., p. 64.

²³² L. Kottos, “A ‘European Commonwealth ...”, op. cit., pp. 501-502.

²³³ *Ibidem*.

time the project of a possible joint venture of European powers in developing African resources had been repeatedly discarded by several intradepartmental study groups officially launched by the British government. Therefore Kottos claims that at the root of Bevin's stubborn endorsement of the Europe-African scheme there was the persisting lobbying in this sense of the British ILEC section.

British Foreign Office's plead for «L'Unità Europea»

One further revealing episode occurred at the beginning of 1946 which testifies once more as British pro-Europeanist societal forces were in fact privy to foreign office officials and could influence the latter's action in favour of Europeanist goals. Also in this case moreover there is evidence of a bipartisan consensus which informed both Labour and Conservative's action in this sphere. The episode regards a correspondence occurred between February and April 1946 between the General Secretary of the internationalist pressure group of "The New Commonwealth", N. B. Foot, and the British Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Philip Noel-Baker²³⁴. "The New Commonwealth" was another of the many international pressure groups which dominated the British scene in the second half of the Forties. In this case it championed the preservation of world peace and to this end it lobbied in favour of collective disarmament and the creation of an international police (air) force to regulate European disputes.

Like others of these post-war British networks the President of the British section of "The New Commonwealth" was Winston Churchill²³⁵. In mid-February 1946, Foot had addressed Noel-Baker in order to inform him of a most unfortunate episode which apparently had occurred to the Italian weekly Federalist journal «L'Unità Europea» of whom the British Foreign Office probably had already knowledge. This was in fact the major publication produced by Italian Federalists during the Nazi occupation as an underground organ of resistance. Personalities like Leo Valiani, Ernesto Rossi e Altiero Spinelli at that time had been among the principle authors of the journal. During the war SOE had monitored «L'Unità Europea» for the Foreign Office.

²³⁴ Cfr. TNA, FO371/60673. This is a folder named Western Department, Italy, 1946, file n. 503. It contains most of the correspondence occurred between February and April 1946 among British Foreign Office's officials and between the latter and the General Secretary of "The New Commonwealth" with the goal of resuming publication of «L'Unità Europea» Italian Federalist journal.

²³⁵ Cfr. TNA, FO371/60673. Letter n° ZM 583 dated 13 February 1946 from General Secretary of "The New Commonwealth" N.B. Foot to Philip Noel-Baker of the Foreign Office. The information regarding the presidency of Churchill is provided in the letter-head.

According to Foot, who had been informed on the matter by the Secretary of its affiliated pressure group of *Swiss Europa Union* of Lausanne, the previous summer the Allied authorities in Italy had stopped the publication of «L'Unità Europea» without explaining the reason for the ban. Foot mentioned to Noel-Baker that previous attempts made to contact the Allied Press Office for Lombardy in order to solve what Foot called “a minor mystery” had given no positive result²³⁶. Therefore Foot said that they (“The New Commonwealth”) “have been asked to bring the matter to the attention of the British government in the hope that the Director of the paper, Professor Mario Alberto Rollier of Milan University, could be accorded the privilege of an interview with Major Sinclair Nobel, who seemed to be the responsible Allied officer”²³⁷.

As Foot cared to add to Noel-Baker, although he did not know the full details of the matter: “he would be reluctant to believe that his Swiss correspondents would ask ‘The New Commonwealth’ to put forward these representations unless they were confident of the reliability of those responsible for the direction of the paper”²³⁸. Therefore, Foot expressly requested Noel-Baker to conduct an official investigation on the matter. Within a few days the Western Department approached the British Embassy in Rome asking to provide any information regarding the Allied ban on the publication of «L'Unità Europea»²³⁹. On the same 25th of February Noel-Baker wrote back to Foot to reassure him that the proper enquires were being made to the British Embassy in Rome and that he would keep the General Secretary duly informed as soon as he received the report from Rome.

On the other hand, the Minister of State took the time to remind Foot that since the 31 December of the previous year the Allied Military Government in Italy had come to an end with the consequence that the question of “the maintenance or withdrawal of the ban would therefore now be a matter entirely for the Italian Government”²⁴⁰. He also added the suggestion that the *Swiss Europa Union* should approach the Italian government in this respect²⁴¹. Nevertheless, a second sub-file-folder containing the internal correspondence of the Foreign Office reveals that in fact the Western Department spent some time

²³⁶ *Ibidem*. This information are contained in the same letter of 13 February 1946.

²³⁷ *Ibidem*. Again information in letter dated 13 February 1946.

²³⁸ *Ibidem*.

²³⁹ Cfr. TNA, FO371/60673. Letter n° ZM 583/-/22 dated 25 February 1946 and issued from the Western Department to the Rome British Embassy.

²⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

²⁴¹ TNA, FO371/60673. Letter n° ZM 583/-/22 dated 25 February 1946 and issued from Noel-Baker to N.B. Foot.

throughout March 1946 occupied in sorting out the question²⁴². A quite informative letter was addressed to the Western Department on 18 March 1946 by the British chancery of the Rome Embassy²⁴³.

The latter reported that enquires made by the British Press and Information Office in Milan had revealed that «L'Unità Europea» had in fact been closed down the previous July, but it had happened in consequence of the journal's lack of money and not because any permit had been refused²⁴⁴. He also added that the British Information Office had taken the time to approach in this respect the director M. Alberto Rollier and the latter had affirmed that in May 1945 he had received a verbal permit to publish «L'Unità Europea» by the British Psychological Warfare Branch. The chancery was not able to confirm Rollier's assertion because details concerning publication permits were in the domain of the Allied Publication Board whose files by then had been already headed back to the Italian authorities. Yet, he believed without shade of doubt that "it does not appear that Rollier has suffered any wrong at the hands of the Allies, nor indeed that he is under the impression of having suffered wrong"²⁴⁵.

Furthermore the good news was provided that according to the information in the hands of the Rome Embassy a fortnightly paper bearing the same name was at that time being published in Turin by the Italian Federalist Professor Augusto Monti and Francesco Lobue²⁴⁶. In concluding his letter the chancellor added a just apparently superfluous reminder for the Foreign Office. He reminded the Western Department that the granting of publication licenses within Italy was at that time "entirely a matter for the Italian government" and there was no way in which the British could intervene without being accused of "unwarranted interference in Italian internal affairs"²⁴⁷. In sum, in light of the interest showed by the Foreign Office in the fate of the «L'Unità Europea» and of the consequent pressure exerted on the Rome Embassy in this sense the latter felt compelled to remind London that there were certain boundaries to be kept in mind in diplomacy. Once Noel-Baker had provided Foot with all the details now in his possession, the General Secretary sent a last regretful and apologetic

²⁴² Cfr. TNA, FO371/60673. Sub-folder n° ZM 1041 containing correspondence between the Western Department and the Rome Embassy.

²⁴³ Cfr. TNA, FO371/60673 letter n° ZM 1041 dated 18 March 1946 from the Rome Embassy's chancery to the Western Department of the Foreign Office.

²⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

letter, dated mid-April 1946, where he expressed his deepest concern in fact for “having put the Minister of State to a lot of unnecessary troubles”²⁴⁸.

These episodes, both the first concerning ILEC and the latter about «L’Unità Europea», reveal how the Federalist crusade conducted by Lussu, Valiani and all the others had not completely vanished in the thoughts of British policy-makers with the end of the conflict. Rather the opposite was true. Many contacts with diverse pro-Europeanist pressure groups were still in place and acted in different directions behind the scene, in the Foreign Office. The advice provided by members of these networks were never disregarded when the issue of intra-European cooperation was on the table or when there was the need of finding new strategies to expand it in original directions. The British section of ILEC and «L’Unità Europea» were part of a larger puzzle which the Foreign Office was keen to continue to assemble even when, or rather also in consideration that, Churchill’s stamp was on the general plan. On the other hand, it had been there since the very beginning. It had been Churchill who pushed for putting Europe ablaze, for the creation of SOE. Also the decision of giving its leadership to Dalton had had Churchill’s stamp. When clandestine action had become a matter of life or death for Britain both Conservative and Labour exponent had been in agreement. In 1940 the Labour party had joined the struggle for Britain’s survival entering into the Coalition government next to Churchill. There was no reason in 1946 for not continuing in agreement as before. Not yet.

²⁴⁸ Cfr. TNA, FO371/60673 letter n° ZM 1041/583/22 dated April 10th 1946, from N.B. Foot to Noel-Baker.