

Emília Hrabovec¹

Comenius University in Bratislava

Pius XII and the Idea of European Unity

Summary

Pope Pius XII supported the idea of unifying Europe, but reminded Europeans of the principles on which a just and durable European convivence had to be based: on the “moral law that the Creator revealed by means of natural law”, in respect of the dignity of human persons and of all natural communities. He was convinced that Europe should not be a super state disrespecting national cultures, but a synthesis of national identities and transnational solidarity based not on a coincidence of economic or political interests, but on the unity of Christian spirit.

Keywords: Holy See, Europe, Pius XII, Christian civilisation, European unity

Streszczenie

Pius XII i idea europejskiej jedności

Papież Pius XII popierał ideę jedności europejskiej, ale przypomniał Europejczykom o zasadach, na których należy budować sprawiedliwe i trwałe współistnienie Europy: „prawo moralne, które Stwórca objawił przez prawo naturalne” w odniesieniu do godności osoby ludzkiej i wszystkich społeczności naturalnych. Był przekonany, że Europa nie powinna być superpaństwem, nieszanującym kultur narodowych, ale syntezą narodów zachowujących swoją tożsamość i ponadnarodową solidarność, opartą nie na zbiegu interesów gospodarczych i politycznych, ale na jedności ducha chrześcijańskiego.

Słowa kluczowe: Stolica Apostolska, Europa, Pius XII, cywilizacja chrześcijańska, jedność europejska

¹ Emília Hrabovec (ORCID: 0000-0002-9601-0486) – full professor, Head of the Department of Christian Philosophy and Historical Sciences. Studied in Freiburg im Breisgau, Munich and Vienna, PhD., habilitation and extraordinary professor at the University of Vienna, visiting professor in Leuven (2008) and at “La Sapienza” in Rome (2017), senior research fellowship in Trento (2008) and Regensburg (2013), member of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences, author of numerous publications in six languages on ecclesiastical and political history of Central Eastern Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries and on the diplomacy of the Holy See. E-mail: emilia.hrabovec@frcth.uniba.sk.

Although “Europe” historically represents an eminently Christian concept, in the current scientific and public discourse her birth and identity tend to be seen only in secular political or economical terms, ignoring the religious aspects as well as the role played by Pope Pius XII and his successors in the genesis of the idea of European unity. Against the background of the eventful postwar years, marked by the heavy consequences of the war, disruptive ideological and political forces and the Cold War, and in an interdisciplinary approach, the article examines the efforts of the Pontiff to fill the nascent idea of European unity with Christian contents and to place it on the “the irrefutable and unchangeable fundament of moral law that the Creator revealed by means of natural law”,² as the only basis for its survival.

1. Pius XII and post-war Europe

From the outset of his first encyclical *Summi pontificatus*,³ Pius XII did not cease to emphasize that the deepest root of evil in modern society lay in the apostasy of mankind from God and in the refusal of a universal moral norm, thus creating a breeding ground for three principal subversive forces: national and state conceit; liberalism, which wanted to create unity, without and against the Church by means of a lay culture and a secularised humanism; and totalitarianism, both child and foe of liberalism, that “reduces man to a pawn in a political game, to a number in an economic calculation”.⁴

Pius XII was convinced that the way out of this impasse of unprecedented violence, disunity and insecurity could only be addressed through a return to Christianity that had shaped European civilisation, as well as a fundamental transformation of European order on a Christian basis. The concept of Christian civilisation became the cornerstone of papal

² Cf. the Christmas speech of Pius XII from 1941, in: *Actes et documents du Saint Siège relatifs à la seconde guerre mondiale* (= ADSS), vol. 5, eds. P. Blet, R.A. Graham, A. Martini, B. Schneider, Città del Vaticano 1965–1981, p. 344–347.

³ Pius XII, *Summi pontificatus*, “Acta Apostolicae Sedis” (= AAS) 31 (1939), p. 413–153.

⁴ Pio XII, *Discorso Negli ultimi sei anni*, 24.12.1945, https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/speeches/1945/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19451224_negli-ultimi.html (12.06.2020).

thought on a “new and better Europe”. The distinguishing features of this “new Europe”, defined in the papal wartime allocutions, were defined as respect for the divine and natural law; for the inviolable dignity of human person; for the universal equality of rights, including the right to an independent life and one’s own identity as well as traditions for all nations; freedom in its ethical and social dimension; solidarity and liberation of legal systems from the rigidity of legal positivism and their anchoring in natural law.⁵ An order based on the fulfilment of these requirements should create preconditions for a secure and durable peace in justice and for a European unity as a harmonic community of nations embedded in the common Christian identity and able to reconcile adversaries and create a synthesis of national-patriotic thinking and mutual solidarity. The final goal of this vision was the practical implementation of the Catholic social doctrine as a realistic alternative to political orders conceived without or against God.

The postwar development caused the Pope a profound disappointment. Instead of the realisation of his ideal of a “new Europe”, he found new divisions, disrespect for natural rights of men and nations, predominance of materialistic spirit and of national and social conceit, which imposed drastic measures on the defeated nations,⁶ “abused the postwar political predominance to eliminate economic competition”⁷ and perpetuated the legal and political insecurity, thus paralysing the eagerly desiderated consolidation.⁸ The Pope perceived with particular

⁵ Cf. the encyclical *Summi Pontificatus* and the Christmas speeches of Pius XII from 1939, in: ADSS, vol. 1, p. 353–361; from 1941, in: ADSS, vol. 5, p. 344–347; from 1942, AAS 35 (1942), p. 9–24. On the basis of the Pope’s public pronouncements G. Gonella published the work *Presupposti di un nuovo ordine internazionale*, Città del Vaticano 1943.

⁶ Pio XII, *Discorso al Sacro Collegio nella festività di S. Eugenio*, 2.6.1947, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/speeches/1947/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19470602_una-volta.html (12.06.2020).

⁷ Pio XII, *Discorso in occasione del II Congresso internazionale per dar vita all’unione federale europea*, 11.11.1948, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/speeches/1948/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19481111_nous-sommes.html (12.06.2020).

⁸ Pio XII, *Allocuzione Negli ultimi sei anni*, 24.12.1945, op. cit.; Pio XII, *Discorso ai nuovi cardinali*, 20.2.1946, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/speeches/1946/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19460220_la-elevatezza.html (12.06.2020); Pio XII, *Discorso al Sacro Collegio nella festività di S. Eugenio*, 1.6.1946, <http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/>

concern the birth of the Iron Curtain that split the continent into two political-ideological blocks under the influence of two victorious great powers: the United States, a distant non-European power dominated by a liberal protestant lay culture which had a difficult relationship with Catholicism; and the Communist Soviet Union that erected in her European glacis a block of satellite states in which the Communist system was established and the severe persecution of a broad spectrum of people, and particularly of the Catholic Church, was unleashed.⁹

In the spirit of his “eschatological” interpretation of history, Pius XII considered the expansion of Communism a lethal danger for Christian civilisation and the struggle against it an apocalyptic confrontation with an evil that was “intrinsically wrong” and with which no compromise was possible.¹⁰ During the war the Pope and his diplomats repeatedly warned the Western Allies that their alliance with the Soviet Union would result in sacrificing a greater part of Europe to the spread of Communism.¹¹ These warnings also mirrored the diplomatic-political activities of politicians from Central-Eastern Europe, from Lithuania and Poland to Slovakia, Hungary and Croatia, who in a desperate effort to avoid the perpetration of Communism in their countries and to preserve their independence, reflected on a possible “Catholic bloc” or a confederation in the “Catholic belt” in Central-Eastern Europe and

speeches/1946/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19460601_una-volta.html (12.06.2020); Pio XII, *Discorso al Sacro Collegio in occasione del Natale*, 24.12.1946, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/speeches/1946/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19461224_fu-mai.html (12.06.2020); Pio XII, *Discorso al Sacro Collegio nella festività di S. Eugenio*, 2.6.1947, op. cit.; Pio XII, *Radiomessaggio ai popoli di tutto il mondo in occasione del Natale*, 24.12. 1947, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/speeches/1947/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19471224_natale.html (12.06.2020).

⁹ For the Pope’s perception of Yalta and the Iron Curtain cf. J. Pollard, *The Papacy in the Age of Totalitarianism 1914–1958*, Oxford 2014, p. 362–366, 398–400; A. Riccardi, *Il Vaticano e Mosca 1940–1990*, Bari 1992, p. 88–131.

¹⁰ Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris*, AAS 29 (1937), p. 87–96.

¹¹ ADSS, vol. V, p. 202–206, 208–209; ADSS, vol. VII, p. 378–379; ADSS, vol. XI, p. 417, 456–458, 692–696. Cf. E. Di Nolfo, *Vaticano e Stati Uniti 1939–1952: (dalle carte di Myron C. Taylor)*, Milano 1978, p. 317–319, 331–332; P. Pastorelli, *Pio XII e la politica internazionale*, in: *Pio XII*, ed. A. Riccardi, Bari 1985, p. 134–144.

pleaded with the Pope to intervene on their behalf with the Western Allies.¹² Efforts to form a “Catholic barrier” in the delicately placed historical space between Germany and the East in the proper sense, which was one of the crucial Catholic regions in Europe, not unlike reflections on the idea of a “Catholic Latin bloc” around Germany, France, Italy and Spain, which had been discussed in the Vatican in the interwar period and linked with the idea of the *Abendland* and the English Renaissance movement,¹³ could count on the Pope’s support. Such a realisation, however, failed because of the policy of “unconditional surrender” and the Yalta agreements on the division of the spheres of influence, which made any alternative plans for a postwar order impossible. The divided and exhausted Old World was losing its identity and voice on the international stage and the sad prediction of Pope Benedict XV pronounced during the first world war about the “suicide of Europe”¹⁴ seemed to come true.

Although Pius XII tried to maintain contacts with the countries on the far side of the Iron Curtain for as long as possible¹⁵ and even after the expulsion of his diplomats, the hermetical closure of the frontiers and the beginning of the worst persecutions did not stop to show them attention and solidarity, to keep alive the idea of the unitedness of a European

¹² E. Hrabovec, *Die Slowakei, der Heilige Stuhl und die Großmächte 1939–1945*, in: *Nation, Nationalitäten und Nationalismus im östlichen Europa. Festschrift für Arnold Suppan zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. M. Wakounig, W. Müller, M. Portmann, Wien, Berlin 2010, p. 557–562.

¹³ B. Chelini-Pont, *Papal Thought on Europe and the European Union in the Twentieth Century, “Religion State and Society”* 37 (2009), 1–2, p. 135–136; Ch. Dawson, *The Making of Europe: an Introduction to the History of European Unity. Vol. III*, Washington 1932, p. 247–304. Charles De Gaulle, received in audience on 30 June 1944, wrote in his memoirs that the Pope was convinced that the Christianity would suffer cruel trials and only a close union of European states inspired by Catholicism could contain the danger. De Gaulle perceived this idea as the “great proposal” of Pius XII. Cf. Ch. de Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre. II. L’Unité (1942–1944)*, Paris 2000, p. 498.

¹⁴ Benedetto XV, *Lettera ai capi dei popoli belligeranti*, 1.8.1917, AAS 9 (1917), p. 421–423.

¹⁵ E. Hrabovec, *Santa Sede e Cecoslovacchia 1945–1965*, in: *Chiesa del silenzio e diplomazia pontificia 1945–1965. Umlčaná cirkev a pápežská diplomacia 1945–1965*, eds. E. Hrabovec, G. Brugnotto, P. Jurčaga, Città del Vaticano 2018, p. 53–92; J. Ickx, *L’Ostpolitik di Pio XII. Il “modus vivendi” proposto a Mosca 1946–1947. Il caso di padre Alessandro Töhötöm Nagy S.J.*, in: *Chiesa del silenzio e diplomazia pontificia 1945–1965*, op. cit., p. 156–179; M. Balogh, *Diplomatic Missions of the Holy See in Hungary and East-Central Europe after the Second World War*, “Central European Papers” 2 (2014) no. 1, p. 88–114.

civilisation and to remind the West of “the great absent” from “the other Europe”¹⁶ as well as the final goal of reunification of the continent,¹⁷ as soon as the international situation began to ease, he tried even a cautious rapprochement with the East;¹⁸ nevertheless, the reality of the Cold War dragged him closer to the West. Consequently, the Pope welcomed the Truman doctrine of “containment” and the Marshall plan of economic aid to Western Europe, bound by the condition of institutionalisation of a European cooperation, hoping that this would help Western Europe to recover from the postwar economic and spiritual misery and hinder a further expansion of Communism.¹⁹

In spite of his anti-Communist stance and a certain convergence of interests with the USA that resulted from the logic of the Cold War, the Pontiff never considered himself a soldier of a Western anti-Soviet “crusade”, for which cause president Truman tried to win him over,²⁰ he suffered due to Communist accusations of being “liased” with the Anglo-Saxons and of propagating an alliance “between Christ and

¹⁶ Pio XII, *Radiomessaggio per celebrare il Natale dell'Anno Santo*, 23.12.1950, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/speeches/1950/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19501223_un-anno.html.

¹⁷ “L' Osservatore Romano” (13.05.1948).

¹⁸ Cf. his apostolic letters to the nations behind the Iron Curtain *Impensiore caritate* to the Catholics in Czechoslovakia, AAS 43 (1951), p. 768–772; *Ad universos Russiae populos* to the peoples of Russia, in: Pio XII, *Discorsi per la Comunità Internazionale (1939–1956)*, Roma 1957, p. 551–552; *Veritatem facientes* to the faithful in Romania, AAS 4 (1952), p. 249–253; *Poloniae annalibus* on the occasion of the 7th centenary of the canonisation of S. Stanislaus, AAS 45 (1953), p. 498. In 1956, there were even some reflections in the Secretariat of State on the possibilities of a renewal of diplomatic contacts or negotiations with Czechoslovakia. S.RR.SS., Fondo Spogli, Card. Agostino Casaroli, pos. 65, f. 102, riservato, appunto di Antonio Samoré; S.RR.SS., Fondo Spogli, Card. Agostino Casaroli, pos. 65, ff. 105–106, Cecoslovacchia, Relazioni fra Stato e Chiesa (Corrado Bafile), 26.5.1956. For the resultless tentatives of a diplomatic rapprochement with the USSR cf. A. Rocucci, *Santa Sede, Chiesa italiana e Unione Sovietica negli ultimi anni del pontificato di Pio XII*, in: *La moralità dello storico. Indagine storica e libertà di ricerca, Saggi in onore di Fausto Fonzi*, eds. A. Ciampani, C.M. Fiorentino, V.G. Pacifici, Soveria Mannelli 2004, p. 335–359.

¹⁹ Myron Taylor to president Truman, 27.08.1947, in: Di Nolfo, *Vaticano e Stati Uniti, 1939–1952: dalle carte di Myron C. Taylor*, op. cit., p. 533.

²⁰ D. Kirby, *Truman's holy alliance: the president, the pope and the origins of the Cold War*, “Borderlines: studies in American culture” 4 (1997), p. 1–17.

dollar” and calling for a war,²¹ and even in the most radical period of the Cold War did not hesitate to distance himself from both blocs, being convinced that neither had realized the Christian order as the necessary condition for a just and lasting peace. On Christmas Eve of 1947 the Pope put it clearly:

Our position between the two opposing factions is not due to any prejudice, or any preference for one nation or another, or for one group of nations or another, and nor is it influenced by the turn of events. Be with Christ or against Christ, this is the sole question.²²

2. Pius XII and the vision of a united Europe

It was in this historical context that the Pope’s vision of a united Europe was shaped. Under the given circumstances it was the “small Carolingian Europe” with its core in Germany, Italy and France; intensive efforts of the Pacellian diplomacy in trying to extend it to Spain failed. This community of (Western) European states, after bloody conflicts reunited on the basis of Christian values, should then become a space in which Europe would be able to consolidate politically and economically, reconcile former enemies and strengthen her spiritual and moral fundamentals in order to guarantee peace, stability and prosperity, to rediscover her historical vocation as a guardian and a propagator of Christian civilisation in the world, thus resisting two major dangers: expanding Communism and inner secularisation.

In concreto, a united Europe would enable Italy and Germany to emancipate themselves from the condition of defeated states and to reacquire the dignity of members of an international community they culturally and historically belonged to. The Pope followed especially the German question with particular attention, being convinced of its crucial

²¹ ÖStA, AdR, AA, II–Pol. 1947, Karton 48, Austrian embassy to the Holy See to the minister of Foreign Affairs Karl Gruber, 18 October 1947; P. Chenu, *Pio XII. Diplomatico e pastore*, Cinisello Balsamo 2004, p. 323.

²² Pio XII, *Radiomessaggio al mondo intero in occasione del Natale*, 24.12.1948, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/speeches/1948/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19481224_un-tempo.html (20.06.2020).

importance for peace and stability in Europe. However, he was well aware of the fact that in the absence of a peace treaty and a consensus of the victorious powers, and in persistence of fears of a reinforcement of Germany, this central question of post-war reconstruction could only be resolved by integrating it into transnational European structures.²³

Finally, the unification ought to give the exhausted Old World a chance to regain its voice in the concert of world powers dominated by the two great non-European protagonists and up to a certain point to escape the logics of the Cold War and of the counter positioning of the social doctrines of Marxism and capitalism, both erroneous, and to preserve some space for alternative attitudes.²⁴

Though the papal pronouncements repeatedly referred to the concept of European *christianitas* and evoked images of times “when Europe formed a compact whole”,²⁵ her soul was Christianity and the Pope “a generally recognized mediator and peacemaker”,²⁶ the Pope’s aim was not to nostalgically re-establish the anachronistic medieval model

²³ On 5 July 1956, while receiving the president of Western Germany Theodor Heuss, the Pope expressed his satisfaction with the recovery of Germany and praised it as a result not only of the hard work and excellent character traits of the German people, but also of the German politics in which “the loyalty to Germany and the loyalty to the European Community” built “an indivisible whole”, “*L’Osservatore Romano*” (6.7.1956), p. 1. See also M. Feldkamp, *Pius XII. und Deutschland*, Göttingen 2000, p. 162–168; L. Volk, *Der Heilige Stuhl und Deutschland, 1945–1949*, in: *Kirche und Katholizismus, 1945–1949*, ed. A. Rauscher, Paderborn 1977, p. 53–87. On Italy cf. F. Malgeri, *Alcide De Gasperi, “Il sogno europeo”*, in: *I Padri dell’Europa. Alle radici dell’Unione Europea*, ed. C. Semeraro, Città del Vaticano 2010, p. 44–48.

²⁴ ÖStA, AdR, AA, Vatikan 2, II–Pol/1947, Karton 48, Austrian Ambassador to the Holy See Rudolf Kolhruss to the minister of Foreign Affairs Karl Gruber, 9.7.1947 and 28.7.1947. Cf. also the articles published by the director of the Vatican daily “*L’Osservatore Romano*” Conte Dalla Torre in 1947 and 1948, which stressed the neutrality of the Holy See and her role as a mediator between the blocs. The articles were written in the first person, i.e. they did not mirror the opinion of the Secretariat of State, but the Secretariat of State never disavowed them. Cf. “*L’Osservatore Romano*” (18.6.1947), (16.5.1948), (16.10.1948), (17.10.1948); ASMAECI, Affari politici 1946–1950, Santa Sede, busta 11, telegramme of the Italian embassy to the Holy See, 22.10.1948. Cf. A. Riccardi, *Il “partito romano”*. *Politica italiana, Chiesa cattolica e Curia romana da Pio XII a Paolo VI*, Brescia 1983, p. 130–131.

²⁵ Pio XII, *Discorso in occasione del II Congresso internazionale per dar vita all’unione federale europea*, 11.11.1948, op. cit.

²⁶ Pio XII, *Discours aux participants au congrès international de «Pax Christi»*, 13.9.1952, AAS 44 (1952), 16, p. 818–823.

of *societas christiana*, but to apply the core of its values to the current historical context, i.e. to reverse long term secularisation and to renew the unity of life and faith.²⁷

This Catholic model of the European idea received a strong religious symbolics, when Pius XII in 1947, on the occasion of the 1400th anniversary of the death of St. Benedict, in his first specifically “European” encyclical *Fulgens radiatur* proclaimed him as a “father of Europe” who connected romanity and the Gospel, and united the young and wild European peoples by “cross, book and plough” under Christ’s banner, giving the European community its specific features.²⁸ This was not a romantically historical reminiscence, but a realistically prescriptive vision for the future with a clear message: as it was fourteen centuries before, Europe once more stood at a turning point in her history and would only survive if she was able to re-establish “the bond between religion and European civilisation.”²⁹

The Pope’s conviction that Europe stood on the threshold of the decisive struggle “between truth and error, faith in or denial of God, supremacy of the spirit or predominance of matter”,³⁰ was very strong and he never missed the occasion to remind his listeners of the “terrible gravity of the present time.”³¹ His repeated references to historical personalities who had happened to live during the turning points of history and by their example had shown the way out of deep civilisation crises, such as St. Augustine “who saw the world he loved so much beginning to perish”, but found in the Church and her universal message the force to believe in the arrival of new times,³² or the already mentioned

²⁷ Pio XII, *Discorso ai pellegrini elvetici convenuti a Roma per la canonizzazione di San Nicolao della Flüe*, 16.5.1947, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/speeches/1947/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19470516_pellegrini-elvetici.html (20.06.2020).

²⁸ Pius XII, *Fulgens radiatur*, AAS 39 (1947), p. 137–155. Cf. also Pius XII, *Homily in the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls*, 18.9.1947, AAS 39 (1947), p. 452–456.

²⁹ Pio XII, *Discorso in occasione del II Congresso internazionale per dar vita all’unione federale europea*, 11.11.1948, op. cit.

³⁰ Pio XII, *Discorso al Sacro Collegio nella festività di S. Eugenio*, 2.6.1948, op. cit.

³¹ Pio XII, *Discorso ai pellegrini elvetici convenuti a Roma per la canonizzazione di San Nicolao della Flüe*, 16.5.1947, op. cit.

³² Pio XII, *Discorso Negli ultimi sei anni*, 24.12.1945, op. cit.

St. Benedict, or to historical moments of the “defence of Christian civilisation” such as the battle against the Osmanic fleet near Lepanto,³³ demonstrated how deeply the Pope perceived the crossroads Europe was standing at and how radical his diagnose was: Europe will either be naturally Christian, or will not be at all, falling prey to the fire provoked by a materialistic culture for which only masses and physical force counted.³⁴

Pius XII was well aware of the fact that many European initiatives that arose after the war under the sign of the European movement, were programmatically heterogeneous, split between the unionists, who were in favour of European rapprochement administered by governments and parliaments and respecting the sovereignty of national states, and the federalists, who were in favour of a European super state. Moreover, many of the supporters of the movement did not take a stance on a Christian basis. Among the participants of the first Congress of the European Federalist Movement that gathered in May 1948 in Den Haag, were not only politicians with Christian profile like Alcide De Gasperi, Konrad Adenauer or Robert Schuman, but British conservatives like Winston Churchill or his son-in-law Duncan Sandys, federalists with Marxist conviction like Altiero Spinelli or the former leader of the French *Front Populaire*, an alliance of left-wing movements including the Communists in 1936, Léon Blum, or politicians who took up older European ideas rooted in lay humanism or masonic perceptions contrary to Catholic thinking. Nevertheless, the Pope did not want to let himself be excluded from this choir and sent his representative to the congress, the apostolic internuncio in the Netherlands Paolo Giobbe.³⁵ In November 1948, in an

³³ Pio XII, *Discours à un groupe de sénateurs et de représentants du Congrès des États-Unis, appartenant au «Committee Investigating Information Program»*, 7.10.1947, http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/fr/speeches/1947/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19471007_congresso-usa.html (20.06.2020).

³⁴ Pius XII, Brief an die Vorsitzende des Deutschen katholischen Frauenbundes Frau Greta Krabbel, 17.7.1952, in: *Katholische Kirche und Europa. Dokumente 1945-1979*, ed. J. Schwarz, München 1980, p. 14. Cf. G. Barberini, *La politica europea della Chiesa cattolica da Pio XII ad oggi*, in: *La Chiesa e l'Europa*, ed. G. Leziroli, Cosenza 2007, p. 92.

³⁵ P. Chenaux, *L'ultima eresia. La Chiesa cattolica e il comunismo in Europa da Lenin a Giovanni Paolo II*, Roma 2011, p. 126.

atmosphere shaped by the Berlin crisis, but also by the tercentenary of the Peace of Westphalia (1648), which offered the Holy See an occasion to launch a public appeal for a European collaboration,³⁶ Pius XII received the participants of the 2nd Congress of the European Union of Federalists. In a long speech he invited “the great nations of the continent with a long history rich in glory and power” – this diplomatic formulation might have tried to include also Franco’s Spain, otherwise excluded from the unification efforts – to forget their past *grandeur* and engage in a political and economic unity”. The Pope praised the efforts of the movement for a European unity and the resolution of the Cultural Commission of the Den Haag Congress, which mentioned “the common heritage of Christian civilisation”, but reminded his guests that general words were not enough and that expressions should reflect the explicit recognition of the Divine, or at least of the natural law of which human rights were an integral part and without which there was no moral authority to guarantee them. A united Europe, the Pope instilled in his listeners, needed a concrete bearer. The old, declining European elites could not fulfil this role any more, even less the amorphous, uprooted and manipulable mass being the most dangerous enemy of real democracy and freedom. Only members of conscious nations: men and women who respected order and peace, lived in happy families and who did fruitful work could be considered the durable pillar of European reconstruction, as long as it offered them respect and protection.³⁷

As Pacelli correctly presumed, it was not the abstract ideologies of the international associations of European federalists that became the starting point for the first specific unifying efforts, but rather the concrete steps of legitimate political representatives of the European states who in the grip of Cold War and the unresolved German question sought for a way how to secure mutual collaboration in partial, but crucial political

³⁶ In a letter addressed to the bishop of Münster, the substitute at the Secretariat of State Giovanni Battista Montini, writing on behalf of the Pope, invited the European states to a mutual collaboration, in: *Documents pontificaux de sa Sainteté Pie XII, 1948*, Paris 1950, p. 378–379.

³⁷ Pio XII, *Discorso in occasione del II Congresso internazionale per dar vita all’unione federale europea*, 11.1.1948, op. cit.

and economic spheres on the fundament of balance and justice, thus escaping the logics of counter positioning between the victors and the defeated and the renewal of the fatal “spirit of Versailles”. Pius XII welcomed the results of these efforts – the birth of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951 – with unconcealed enthusiasm and referred to the Treaty of Rome from 1957 establishing the European Economic Community as the most important political event in the modern history of Rome.³⁸

Though Pius XII used different and sometimes even contradictory notions to designate the nascent European community – he spoke about Union,³⁹ Federation or Community of States⁴⁰ –, and never specified the political and institutional profile of his ideas, he did however define the basic principles which they were supposed to be based on:

1. The Pope did not doubt that the European co-existence would require that the states give up some part of their sovereign rights in favour of the common good.⁴¹ Nevertheless, he never demanded the abolition of individual states in favour of a transnational entity, but on the contrary called for the necessity of a real and effective state authority, limited only by the Divine commandments and mutual solidarity.⁴² Similarly, he refused any disrespect for the natural community of a nation with its particular identity and historical heritage.⁴³ The Pope’s ideal was therefore a harmonic synthesis between the rights and the identity of the

³⁸ “L’Osservatore Romano” (27.03.1957). Cf. P. Chenaux, *Un’Europa vaticana? Dal Piano Marshall ai Trattati di Roma*, Roma 2017, p. 264–273.

³⁹ Pio XII, *Discorso in occasione del II Congresso internazionale per dar vita all’unione federale europea*, 11.11.1948, op. cit.

⁴⁰ Pio XII, *Discorso ai partecipanti al Congresso d’Europa*, 13.06.1957, https://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/speeches/1957/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19570613_congresso-europa.html (20.06.2020).

⁴¹ Cf. H. Schambeck, *Pius XII. und der Weg der Kirche*, Würzburg 1979, p. 15.

⁴² Pio XII, *Radiomessaggio ai popoli di tutto il mondo*, 23.12.1953, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/speeches/1953/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19531224_che-abitava.html (20.06.2020).

⁴³ Pio XII, *Radiomessaggio a tutto il mondo in occasione del Natale*, 24.12.1954, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/speeches/1954/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19541224_ego-declinabo.html (20.06.2020).

nations and a supranational solidarity that integrated the diversity of individual voices into a “magnificent classic polyphony”.⁴⁴

2. The European community could not be reduced to pure economic or military interests, but had to have a common spiritual fundament, rooted in Christendom that only could give rise to a “European spirit”, i.e. the conscience of common spiritual values and the will to a common life and to sacrifices that solidarity requires.⁴⁵

3. A great idea, able to unite the European nations, could not draw force from a negative motivation, i.e. from the fear of conflict⁴⁶ or the refusal “of the life forms of that other group” (i.e. the Soviet bloc).⁴⁷ The Pope refused a reductive comprehension of the Western community exclusively in light of counter positioning towards Communism and the Soviet bloc and always differentiated between the Communist system as such and Russia and the other nations behind the Iron Curtain, who were not enemies of Christian Europe, but victims of the Communist system. Commenting on the Den Haag congress, the Vatican daily “L'Osservatore Romano” pleaded for a Western European union, but not intended as an adversary of the East, but as a starting point for a future fusion with the Eastern union.⁴⁸ In a letter to the American president Harry Truman from July 1948, the Pope underlined that “the stability and peaceful prosperity of non-Russian Europe was a goal of its own, not an instrument to limit the power of modern Russia”, and that “whatever might happen to Russia, the well-being of mankind requires that Europe be based on strong and healthy grounds.”⁴⁹

Instead of a European thought based on a negative motivation, the Pope called for a positive unifying force, which he saw in the “spiritual and moral ideas that for centuries had belonged to the heritage

⁴⁴ Pius XII, *Discorso ai membri del Corpo Diplomatico presso la Santa Sede*, 25.02.1946, https://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/speeches/1946/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19460225_corpo-diplomatico.html (20.06.2020).

⁴⁵ Pius XII, *Address to a Group of Professors and Students of the College of Europe in Bruges*, 15.03.1953, AAS 45 (1953), p. 181–184.

⁴⁶ Pius XII, *Radiomessaggio ai popoli di tutto il mondo*, 23.12.1953, op. cit.

⁴⁷ Pius XII, *Radiomessaggio a tutto il mondo in occasione del Natale*, 24.12.1954, op. cit.

⁴⁸ “L'Osservatore Romano” (13.05.1948).

⁴⁹ Di Nolfo, *Vaticano e Stati Uniti, 1939–1952: dalle carte di Myron C. Taylor*, op. cit., p. 583.

of Christian Europe”: in liberty that respects the common good, and in the natural law as a fundament of every state construction. Only a Europe built upon such grounds can survive “in confrontation with the unjust, but strong” Communist vision that imposes its ideal of “paradise on Earth”.⁵⁰ Hence, there was a strong counter position to Communism in his thought and a strong persuasion of the necessity to face the common danger, but not in the political form of a struggle against the nations from the other side of the barbed wire, as was sometimes proposed in the continuation of Cold War thinking, but as a refusal of Marxist ideas, whether they were coming from outside, i.e. from the Soviet bloc, or from inside, from the Marxist circles in the West, and an invitation to replace them with Christian heritage as the true European identity.

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⁵⁰ Pio XII, *Radiomessaggio a tutto il mondo in occasione del Natale*, 24.12.1954, op. cit. Cf. G. Rumi, *Il Papato contemporaneo e l’Europa. L’insegnamento pontificio per l’unità politico-sociale del continente*, in: *Quale federalismo per quale Europa. Il contributo della tradizione cristiana*, eds. F. Citterio, L. Vaccaro, Brescia 1996, p. 285–286.

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