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The Spinelli Draft Treaty (14 February 1984-14 February 2022)
“We Were on the Other Bank of the River”
The Spinelli Group
Strasbourg, 14 February 2022

Thank you, Virgilio, for bringing us together. Let me say that I am very honored to participate in this event.

It is good to see faces I have not seen for years.

Not all of us remember 1984 with clarity but we all see it as an important point of reference for the future. What we could hear from you confirms this.

To use a Hegelian concept here, „ The Owl of Minerva only takes flight at dusk”.

Which actually means that we have useful history behind us. It means that each generation does not have to start from scratch. And that the event like Conference on the Future of Europe is a part of the historical sequence of efforts for European unity, and not something that came out of nowhere.

I would like to say on behalf of the current Spinelli Group that in the first months of our fight for the Conference the friendly ghost of Crocodile Club was with us!

Even though the 1984 draft was not adopted by member states, its glow remained as a guiding light for future endeavours on the way to unity.

President Mitterand himself promised the Parliament that the member states would be obligated to reflect on the institutional changes.

And, in fact, The Single European Act, and then the Maastricht Treaty, as well as much later, the euro, were descendants, so to speak, of the ideas of the 1984 draft.

That reminds me my personal experience when after the Dutch and French voters rejected the Treaty establishing the Constitution for Europe, then in 2006 Giuliano Amato created a group called the Action Committee for European Democracy to rewrite the Constitution.

I had the pleasure to be a member of this group together with Paavo Lipponen, Chris Patten, Wim Kok, Jean Luc Dehaene, Costas Simitis, Otto Schilly, Michel Barnier, Antonio Vittorino.

We put forward a new treaty in June 2007. Hoping to save most of the Constitution. Today I can only express my hope that it contributed to the Lisbon treaty.

But going back to 1984, of course the date here is not without a certain special significance in our political imaginarium.

It is not only about Orwell. In 1969 a Russian dissident writer Andrei Amalric wrote a book „Whether the Soviet Union will Survive Until 1984”. Unfortunately, it seems that it survived in spirit, as we can see today.

I come from Poland. At that time in my country, we were on the other bank of the river, suffering the consequences of the marshall law and the US sanctions, and lived with bleak perspectives for the future.

At the same time, the European Union was well on the path of integration. It looked as these two parts of Europe will never meet.

But History intervened mightily in subsequent years. What was impossible became possible.

And now, 38 years later, we meet here, and I am coming from the other side of the formerly divided Europe, to talk about our future together.

And we still believe that the Spinelli Plan can be guiding light.

Of course the context is not the same.

In 1984, the Spinelli Plan arose out of the enthusiasm for the European Parliament that was elected directly, by the people of Europe.

Today, the scale of expectations has moved up considerably.

The current dream is to strengthen the representative democracy with a participatory one.

We are not there yet.

But the Conference on the Future of Europe is a massive step in that direction. There is still a chance that it will create a constitutional moment.

Interestingly enough some of the bold ideas from the Draft Treaty are making a comeback in the current discussions.

What we have to continue, without being modest in our ambitions, is to make the European Parliament a key driver for change. There is no other option.

In his speech of 1980 Spinelli saw clearly that European Parliament was in danger of becoming, as he put it, “an assembly vested with acute moral and political responsibilities but devoid of the competences necessary to exercise them”.

We have to remember his words every moment we work. Moral authority is not enough but it is important.

But we have to assert our power and ensure that our competences are commensurate with the challenges and responsibilities before us. And as Monica Frassoni said the Parliament should grab the initiative.