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Bertrand Vayssière

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**ALEXANDRE MARC.
PERSONALISM AT THE SERVICE OF EUROPE***

BERTRAND VAYSSIÈRE

As supporters of European projects go, Alexandre Marc cuts an unusual figure: there was, without doubt, a project that he held dear, a project known as “integral federalism”, but Marc’s intellectual voyage was so out of the ordinary that it is opportune to wonder whether the “non conformist” label that links him to this 1930s current of thought is not perhaps an obstacle to a better knowledge of his actual action. Individualist and stubborn, Marc generated antagonism in a number of quarters,^[1] even within his own federalist sphere, where he can be considered a leading figure. Also setting him apart from other great supporters of European projects is his exceptional longevity: Alexandre Marc died on 22 February 2000, at the age of 96, while writing a new book on integral federalism, a project that he always hoped one day to see triumphant in Europe.

But leaving aside this tenacity, a mark of the vitality of a man who devoted all his energies to the defence of an ideal, one must ask oneself how much influence an action conducted outside the traditional political institutional setting can have: Alexandre Marc dreamed of a Europe born of a mobilisation of society generally. Furthermore, his personal and intellectual background had rendered him mistrustful of the world of politics, which he always approached reticently. We also need to ask ourselves to what extent circumstances influenced Marc’s action, an action that, as his life unfolded, can be broken down into a series of stages that clarified his project and determined his way of defending the same.

We will thus consider this question in three distinct parts, which represent the three main moments in Alexandre Marc’s conception of his project. We will begin by looking at his formation, which, intrinsically bound up with the events of his life, made Marc the ultimate man “without a homeland” (like Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi).^[2] On a number of occasions in the early ‘30s he was threatened with expulsion from France because of his Russian roots, and he was not definitively naturalised until 1946. This series of upheavals, which took place in the period between the two world wars, demonstrates that a European background does not have to be a premise for elaborating a political and social project for Europe, which can instead be reached at the end of a long journey; indeed, it was not until he was 40 that Marc arrived at his conception of it. After thought comes action: in Marc’s view, and in that of many other federalists, the Second World War seemed to generate the conditions needed to make this project, until then ignored both by the elite and by public opinion, win through. This transition from thought to action was made within the Union of European Federalists (UEF), an organisation, created with Marc’s help in December 1946, that had first been envisaged during the war and to which, in an era of transition, he became totally committed, devoting himself to tactical questions, and to the great problems of political, economic and social reorganisation raised by the end of the war. But this positive period seemed to draw to a close with the start of the Cold War, when Marc himself

concluded that the project and the political situation no longer coincided. Resigned to the view that action was no longer an option, he became an educator, staking everything on the power of his ideas in the long term.

A non Conformist without a Homeland

A Cosmopolitan Background.

Alexandr Markovitch Lipiansky was born in Odessa on February 1st, 1904 (January 19th on the Julian calendar), into a not overly religious Jewish family: his father was a businessman while his mother, exceptionally for the country and the period, was a qualified and practising professional (stomatologist-dentist). From a young age Alexandr, surrounded by tutors, demonstrated a boundless and already eclectic intellectual curiosity: the young Russian boy was soon drawn towards the German school of philosophy, particularly through the work of Nietzsche — he reported reading *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* at the age of ten^[3] — and Immanuel Kant, both of whom reject any form of determinism and believe that the spiritual values of the individual prevail over all materialistic and utilitarian considerations. Nineteenth-century Russian socialist philosophers also contributed to the early formation of the young Marc, particularly through their ideal of *sobornos't* (a self-managed community of people, whose models are the *mir*, the *artel'*, and the *obshchina*), which quickly occupied a prominent position in Alexandre Marc's future project. But Alexandre Marc's development in this period was not only theoretical — he was also proving to be a committed and militant member of the revolutionary socialist party, particularly in the wake of the dissolution of the constituent assembly at the hands of the Bolsheviks on January 6, 1918 (January 19 on the Gregorian calendar).^[4]

It was against this turbulent background that, in 1919, Marc left Russia for France, via Germany. He enrolled in the Saint-Louis Lycée in Paris, where he proved to be a brilliant scholar and, prior to rejoining his parents in Berlin some time between 1922 and 1923, discovered the “intuitivism” of Bergson. Probably inspired by his early reading and wishing to meet masters such as Heidegger and Husserl, he completed his education at the German universities of Jena and Freiburg. But the young Marc was to be disappointed by the experience, refusing to accept contemporary philosophy's lack of political engagement in what was a period of widespread crisis. He thus returned to France and registered at the free School of Political Sciences (1923-1927), after which he started working for the publishers Hachette, and formed his first philosophical society, known as the *Club du Moulin Vert* (whose first meeting took place on October 27, 1930). In this period, he regularly met men such as Nicolas Berdiaeff, Jacques Maritain and Gabriel Marcel, and it is from these meetings that the personalist doctrine of the *Ordre Nouveau* group was born.

The Ordre Nouveau Doctrine.

The *Ordre Nouveau* group, which definitively adopted this name at the end of 1930, was initially formed with the aim of discussing the spiritual bases of mankind. However, it gradually shifted towards a more general examination of the problems generated by the prevailing climate of crisis. Deeply troubled by the “decadence of the French nation”,^[5] the men of the *Ordre Nouveau* proposed a regime not definable on a juridical basis, but characterised rather and above all and in this it differs from Anglo-Saxon federalism, which focuses on institutional problems by a general principle of social organisation based on respect for all kinds of diversity.

In his book, *Histoire de l'idée fédéraliste*, Bernard Voyenne, a militant federalist and very

close friend of Marc's, stresses that the federalists' rapid attainment of political maturity is to be attributed to the reflections of the *Ordre Nouveau*.^[6] Yet these apparently clear links between federalism and personalism were not in fact established automatically or from the outset by the *Ordre Nouveau* founders. Vuyenne writes that Alexandre Marc "and his friends seemed [...] to want [federalism] only as a necessary but in a certain sense complementary dimension to the personalist doctrine they were at the time elaborating".^[7] Resolutions passed by federalists during the Resistance and at the time of the Liberation certainly share features with pre-war personalism. The first of these is the "third way" between capitalism and communism: Denis de Rougemont, in *Politique de la Personne*, defines the personalists as "declared anti-capitalists, who nevertheless failed to embrace the abstract collectivisation foretold by the soviets; anti-nationalists, but despite this patriots; federalists on a European political level and personalists on a moral level".^[8] The second feature shared by personalism and post-war federalism emerges in the declared apolitical nature of the federalists who, like the personalists, believe the rules of the traditional game of politics to be distorted by the "fatalism" of the right and the "voluntarism" of the left, both of which, in an ageing republic that is out of touch with social realities, are compromised; this is the source of the political non conformism of the two movements, both of which accept in their rank and file men originating from all political persuasions, men who are united in their rejection of a system in which they no longer have faith. This non-conformism explains the emergence of a particular current, caught between the influence of the anarchical and syndicalistic left (characterised by its mistrust of parliamentary imposture and of *laissez-faire* economics) and that of Maurras' right (characterised by its opposition to Jacobinic centralisation and its respect for "living" communities — the family, religion, profession and nation). It is possible to detect a certain ambiguity in these men who want "neither right nor left"^[9] and who attribute all evils to parliamentarianism.

The *Ordre Nouveau* movement, created in December 1930, veered towards personalism,^[10] an engagement that is based on the idea of the person as well as on spiritual reflection (Marc converted to Catholicism on September 29, 1933 at the *Bon Pasteur* convent in Pau), in contrast to the holistic philosophies (Hegel, Marx), which created false gods (nationalisms).^[11] The rallying cry of personalism is "the spiritual first and foremost, then the economic, with politics at the service of both of them". The main axes of this philosophy, which developed throughout the '30s, advocate a form of non nationalised economic organisation that, being characterised by economic and social pluralism, liberates man (unlike state monism), although at this stage it was still conceived for a limited framework, i.e., for France alone. It was, first and foremost, a question of "federating French forces to build a new order". Marc defended this vision in pieces written for many French (*La vie intellectuelle*, *Sept*, *Temps Présent*, *Plans*), and more rarely foreign (*New Britain*) journals.

At the same time, Marc was defending the idea of a "*front unique de la jeunesse européenne*".^[12] At the age of 29, he and René Dupuis published the book, *Jeune Europe*.^[13] In which they stressed the "intercultural" value of the new generation, on which the disappointments of the Great War had left a mark. This generation, no longer wishing to yield to party pigeon-holing, had become "radicalised"; openly "revolutionary", it had severed its links with the liberal and parliamentary system and with "abstract" individualism.^[14] Marc had considerable contact with Germans sharing this philosophy, meeting them during his university pilgrimages, individuals such as Otto Strasser and, above all, Harro Schulze-Boysen of the *Gegner (Adversaries)* group, whom Marc already envisaged as the future leader of a revolutionary European federalist movement.^[15] Walter Dirks and Paul Ludwig Landsberg. These meetings, which were essential for Marc — he saw them as opportunities to establish dialogue between young people who no longer had cause to oppose one another in the name of inevitable rivalry between nation-states — were started very early on, but did not

produce any concrete results. In Frankfurt, in February 1932, an attempt was made to reconcile these various non conformist currents, which, despite all sharing a rejection of liberal society, tended to embrace different ideological orientations, but its outcome was disappointing. Marc, remarking that an atmosphere of oppression had descended on German intellectuals (the *Gegner* group was banned in 1933), appealed for the creation of a Young Europe that embraced only the Western part of the continent.

The outbreak of war took Marc, at the time in a sort of retreat in the South of France, by surprise (the last issue of *Ordre Nouveau* was published in September 1938). He enlisted in the 141st division of the Alpine infantry in Orange, perhaps motivated by a desire to demonstrate his attachment to this France that persisted in refusing him naturalisation; there, he experienced what he described as a “strange war”, during which he was transferred to the 5th office of the General Staff of the XV Region. Discharged in the summer of 1940, he spent some time in Aix-en-Provence without any clear idea of how to direct his action. After trying in vain to reach London, and later Spain, at the start of 1943, Marc, with his family, finally crossed over into Switzerland, and there he was forced to remain until the Liberation.^[16]

A Man of Action Wanting to Act (1941-1948)

The Definition of “Integral Federalism”.

As was true of other federalists, such as Altiero Spinelli, the Second World War played an important role in directing Marc’s thought towards European action. In Marc’s case, the discovery of European federalism was made initially on an intellectual level, through his reading of Proudhon, with whose work he was little and poorly acquainted. Alexandre Marc himself admitted that Proudhon was not highly regarded by the editors of *Ordre Nouveau*:^[17] Proudhon’s theories were, in fact, derided as abstract and archaic, and there were many non conformists who were not drawn to anarchic solutions. Marc, attracted by what he read, managed to get a selection of Proudhon’s texts published^[18] — a veritable feat in wartime.

Through Proudhon, Marc came to believe that federalism could constitute the political completion of personalism, and that this completion could be achieved through the contribution of a true doctrine and a militant structure, which a strictly intellectual movement would not have. He thus developed a project that, uniting federalism with the anarchic traditions of the workers’ movement, was markedly left-wing in character and set it out in *Avènement de la France ouvrière* (written in 1944 and published in 1945), whose final chapter was entitled “Le Fédéralisme intégral.”^[19] The final words of the book explain the choice of the word federalism: “There is one word, and only one, that seems to escape most of the drawbacks that beset its rivals: socialism, collectivism, anarchy, etc. There is one word, and only one, that can comfortably be used to express, as far as this is possible, the essential characteristics of the revolution of order, according to the aspirations of the French working class: federalism.”^[20] The *Ordre Nouveau* federalism was essentially a spiritual state:^[21] Europe was still little considered. Above all it was the work of a section of the Resistance that altered the political and social objectives of personalism.

In this way, Marc’s project was inserted into a European framework, the idea being to “federate the federalist forces” (November 1943) within the Resistance. However, his ideas, although affirmed with renewed vigour, seemed for the time being to be applicable only to France, a moribund France that needed to overcome a series of weaknesses that Marc outlined in a rather brutal fashion.^[22] The struggle that Alexandre Marc intended to engage in was meant, therefore, to preserve the integrity of France (especially against what Marc referred to as “Anglo-Saxon interference”) and to ensure its moral salvation. The struggle for Europe would come later, being realisable only at the hands of a regenerated France: “In the work that

is needed to build Europe, a particularly important role, that is to say, a decisive role, will be played by France. This affirmation has nothing to do with ‘chauvinism’ of any kind, or with ill-considered exaltations of national pride: examining the probable situation of tomorrow’s Europe, one cannot fail to see that France, with all its faults and weaknesses, emerges as the only country equipped to take on such a task.”^[23]

Like Spinelli in Italy, Marc saw federalism as a project likely to succeed only on the back of commitment and not of sentiment, a conviction that led him to reject the European ideal that had grown in strength in the inter-war years, and which at the time he had largely ignored. Marc and Spinelli, however, differed on a number of points, including the way in which a federal society might be attained; their approaches derived from histories and cultures that made each particular, linked to deeply differing cultural references and ideas; furthermore, each clearly bore the hallmark of his “creators”, absolutely convinced that, when the Liberation came, it would simply be a matter of meeting up with the other people who, necessarily, shared his conception of federalism. That said, their two visions did have points in common, the first of these being the approach to the phenomenon of militancy. Both commented on the setbacks suffered by the federalist ideas of the pre-war period and attributed them to the same factors: excessive optimism, amateurishness, and elitism of the idea.^[24] On this last point, their agreement was total: both men put across their views in heated manifestos and reports; both were aware that federalism, without the support of public opinion, would be a vain cause. And the conclusion to be drawn from this was self-evident: federalism (it was still referred to in the singular) needed a true platform for its struggle, one that would allow it to exploit and coordinate dispersed and ill-disciplined energies. At the time of the Liberation, the spirit of the Resistance seemed, in the eyes of all those wanting European unity, to make united action look like a real possibility.

Marc and the Union of European Federalists.

Upon the creation of the UEF, in December 1946, Marc’s project seemed to come true. He played a very active role in the birth of the organisation, and indeed became its first secretary-general, but he found himself at the head of an organisation that was spread across Europe, and whose conception of federalism itself was not homogeneous. In Alexandre Marc’s view, the UEF had to remain, for this very reason, a body for “connecting, coordinating, and linking up autonomous forces” (March 1947).^[25] The strategic position he occupied in this organisation is illustrated by the many contacts he re-established or established with federalist organisations of all tendencies, such as *La Fédération* (André Voisin), which was close to the world of employers, or *Cercles fédéralistes et socialistes* (Claude-Marcel Hytte), which was more inclined towards trade union action. Initially, Marc was concerned to protect the UEF from the influence of certain politicians, who seemed to want to “hijack” the European idea for profit, a very clear effort of this kind being seen on the occasion of the first large federalist meeting in Hertenstein (15-22 September, 1946), an event whose message was completely overshadowed by Churchill’s famous “United States of Europe” speech in Zurich. Marc, in this regard, experienced a sense of resentment that he found hard to swallow: “Contrary to what is usually written, this speech did not ‘trigger’ European action, since that existed already: but it did help greatly to alert public opinion and governments to the importance of this action”.^[26]

The first Congress, held in Montreux (27-31 August, 1947) was without doubt the most prominent federalist summit and the one that attracted the most media coverage: the aim of the meeting was to put together a doctrine suitable for the federalist struggle and to make as many people as possible aware of the action that had been carried out following the Liberation. To this end, the Congress, running the risk of annoying a number of the original

militants, favoured the presence of higher-profile speakers (Maurice Allais, Léon Jouhaux, Edouard Herriot): the UEF thus courted publicity, preferring to bring in a de Rougemont, invited by Marc^[27] himself, rather than let less “high media impact” federalists take the stage. The charge of idealism, too often levelled against federalist thought, prompted certain members of the UEF to seek intellectual cover and a measure of influence at government level. A few months after the Montreux meeting, Alexandre Marc defended this line in an issue of *L’Action Fédéraliste Européenne*.^[28] Alongside this quest to find prestigious supporters, a considerable effort was being made to make the general public aware of federalist action: thus, prior to the Congress, Alexandre Marc held a series of meetings that sometimes, as at Nancy and Rheims,^[29] gathered as many as 800 people, and increased his contacts with the press,^[30] at the same time speaking out against the “plot of silence” against federalists.^[31]

In the main speeches at Montreux, much space was given to the ideas of personalism and integral federalism that, sustained by Marc, concern relations between the individual, intermediate communities (municipalities, regional administrations, etc.) and the state, and the circulation and distribution of wealth, as well as worker “participation” in enterprises. The idea of a European constituent assembly, made up of representatives of the populations of different countries, received far less consensus. The anti-parliamentarianism of some federalists is expressed in their opposition to the centralised form that, in their view, a European state would automatically assume, the latter being considered a simple transposition of the nation-state onto a larger scale, or rather a sort of Jacobinic Europe. The debates at Montreux focussed above all on the action needed at root level, which is to say at the level of society’s living forces, rather than at the level of its institutions.

One of the priorities that the Congress set itself was to identify an economic model capable of managing each country’s different problems. The federalists did not like partial agreements, which at the time were just developing: equally, the cartelisation of the European economy and the formation of customs unions were condemned (as, for example, when France tried, on March 20, 1945, to draw the Benelux countries into a three-party council of economic cooperation, an arrangement that discriminated against Germany). This federalist dislike of partial agreements is summed up in the economic policy motion, drawn up by Marc and Allais and adopted by the Congress. According to this motion, “it would be entirely utopian to think that efforts to establish reciprocal economic agreements between sovereign states might, by themselves, lead to a true European federal union”.^[32] In the quest to find new solutions, more in harmony with the European spirit, the federalists proposed, to the good of all, the pooling of resources that was so much desired by Saar (which Marc hoped it might be possible to transform into a “European district”) and by Ruhr.

The ideas of integral federalism prevailed at Montreux, which is logical if one considers that these ideas had been established ever since the federalist movement first attempted to unite. Yet the speech delivered by Spinelli, who was present in Montreux, constituted a break with the supporters of integral federalism. The speech contained traces of an “opportunistic” federalism, which is less attracted by theory (Spinelli’s rejection of abstractions is well known) and instead pays more attention to the political setting. One might say that, through Spinelli, the Cold War became a significant part of a debate that, until that point, had ignored it:^[33] it had become necessary to use the recently proposed Marshall Plan as a means of launching European unity. The idea of Europe as a third force, which Marc held dear, was imperceptibly slipping away.

The Disappointments of the Cold War

A project overtaken by political events.

Strangely, it was just as Marc was managing to instil his philosophy into an increasingly substantial Movement (militants numbered around 100,000 in 1947) that his influence began, in fact, to decline. The reason for this was the Cold War, which was changing the political scenario he had envisaged and was forcing the Movement to adopt radical viewpoints and to favour order over revolution. In reality, Marc had been active long enough to establish an extremely heterogeneous militant structure. His many conferences had helped to popularise the foundations of integral federalism, and the circulars he had sent to various UEF member groups had helped to strengthen what was a considerably complex structure.^[34] Alexandre Marc called to order all those who, running the risk of forgetting that money is the backbone of war, were apparently willing to settle for a purely ideological struggle.^[35]

This last point brings to mind the competition for funding between the various pro-European movements and helps to explain the concerns over the presence on the stage of a movement (the *United Europe Movement*) led by Churchill, a great personage who wielded enormous influence both in the European debate and in the financial sphere. This competition is also recalled by Dutchman Henri Brugmans, first UEF president, who talked of the need to exclude Alexandre Marc from efforts to gather funds, as his arguments were too revolutionary and his character too impetuous for interlocutors who were nearly always businessmen more interested in the traditional questions of customs tariffs and resistance to communism. The federalists paid the price for their greenness in this sphere: Brugmans cites, for example, an important meeting (probably in February 1947) between Marc, Raymond Silva (vice-secretary-general) and himself and representatives of leading Swiss financial groups, a meeting whose aim was to obtain funds for the federalist organisation. It was a rude awakening for the three to have their arguments taken apart by one of those present, banker Edward Beddington Behrens, a relative of Churchill, who pointed out that the UEF had no “great name” to represent it, and that it was driven by dubious social ideas.^[36]

These early months of rapprochement between pro-Europeans provided opportunities to note that the ideological differences between the groups were very great and that the militant conception of federalism clashed with a system characterised by the prevalence of strong individuals, engaged in the debate in the hope of orienting it. Cooperation between these disparate European movements became, however, inevitable with the establishment, in Paris on November 11, 1947, of the *Comité international de coordination des Mouvements pour l'unité européenne*. The November 11 agreement was ratified by the Central Committee of the UEF on November 15, in spite of numerous reservations^[37] over the right being better represented at the heart of the pro-European movement. The influence of the “unionists”, who in fact were not even envisaging an integrated Europe, therefore made itself very clearly felt and laid bare the naivety, easily exploited by the political heavyweights, of certain federalists. Thus, Alexandre Marc, who had proposed and supported the historic meeting in The Hague, felt that he had been dispossessed of this idea by a man more cunning than himself, Duncan Sandys, who was soon to control the destiny of the European Movement: “Like a political new boy, and showing a naivety that still makes me blush, I had handed over, to a certain Duncan Sandys, whom I had met at the Montreux Congress, the task of supervising contact between ourselves and The Hague, in order to make preparations for the meeting there of the States General of Europe”.^[38] This gave rise to a “dispute over the paternity”^[39] of this meeting, which only underlined, in the eyes of militant federalists, the ambiguity of the same.

The Congress in The Hague and its Consequences.

Notwithstanding this, the UEF continued preparing for this event, which was presented as meeting of capital importance for the building of Europe. It appeared to be the goal federalists

had been dreaming of, federalists who, in a December 1947 brochure produced by Alexandre Marc, referred to “true States General of Europe”.^[40] Marc believed that it was necessary, above all, bring together the “living forces” of Europe, rather than a few prominent politicians, whose commitment to Europe he did not trust.^[41] In his view, this meeting had to have popular legitimisation, that is, it had to express the will of Europeans to unite and to confer political authority on the Congress in The Hague. This appeal bore the hallmark of the integral federalists, who until that point had, as at the Montreux Congress, constituted the majority and appealed to all those with a role in society, calling upon them to participate in the definition of their own political destiny.^[42] But not all within the UEF, the Italians in particular, shared this view of how the event should be defined. In a letter dated February 18, 1948, Alexandre Marc, fearful that Spinelli and Rossi (authors of the famous *Ventotene Manifesto* and founders of the *Movimento federalista europeo*) might attempt to take over the UEF, wrote of the need to create, in view of the Congress in The Hague, an “anti Spinorossi” front.^[43] In a letter to Bernard Voyenne, dated January 28, 1948, he indeed wrote: “It must be recognised, objectively, that until now the UEF’s political line has been determined predominantly by “my” views. If — as some wish — I were to distance myself from it, it would soon go off course. I would see this as a betrayal of the very enterprise that I, more than anyone else, have helped to start and develop.”^[44]

But this political line was increasingly disputed within the UEF: Altiero Spinelli, in a memorandum presented in Rome on January 22, 1948,^[45] criticised harshly the expression “States General”. He, on the contrary, believed that federalist action needed to have political objectives oriented towards the transfer of sovereignty, objectives such as the convening of a European constituent assembly, and examined the nature of the federal links between each member state and the powers that would be transferred to the “European authority”, the stance of federalists on major international issues, etc. As they began, increasingly, to be applied to current political realities, the arguments in favour of “constitutional” federalism gained strength within the UEF: on March 19, 1948, the French Assembly passed by majority (169 members) a motion “on the convening of a constituent European assembly” presented by a few members of the French *Federalist Parliamentary Group*, Edouard Bonnefous (UDSR), Paul Rivet (SFIO), François de Menthon and André Noel (MRP). Taking advantage of this favourable political moment even the British (March 18, 1948) and Dutch parliaments took the same initiative at this time — the UEF entrusted several of its members to examine in depth the concept of the transfer of sovereignty, with a view to raising it at the congress in The Hague.^[46]

This tactical change was imposed on all the members of the federalist movement, Alexandre Marc in particular, at a preparatory meeting, held on January 30, 1948. On this occasion, discipline was urged,^[47] which, for him, meant abandoning once and for all the term “States General”. No declaration referring to the meeting in The Hague was to be made without consulting the secretary-general (Raymond Silva), while all were required to use the term “Congress of Europe”. The federalists tried to attract certain “progressive” personages to The Hague, and one who stands out in particular was Léon Blum. Having sent him a memo expressing the interest of federalists in his work,^[48] Marc sought to awaken Blum to the ideas that he was intending to defend in The Hague. However, the much awaited meeting with this illustrious man left Marc with a bitter taste in his mouth. This is what Alexandre Marc wrote about Leon Blum, whom he finally met in December 1947: “I met Leon Blum. He looked extremely tired and I was struck by his total lack of revolutionary fire. He began by comparing the federalist movement to a ‘basket of crabs’ [...] I have to admit that a chill ran down my spine [...]. In short, Blum has agreed to provide me with the resource I need [his presence in The Hague], but I found him to be very tired and conditioned by ‘fashionable’ considerations (‘big names’).”^[49]

The resource Marc dreamed of obtaining was a guarantor of federalist ideas at the highest political level, to counter the unionists, who, gathered around their central figure, Churchill, were well represented. The presence of Churchill goes some way towards explaining the decision (in January 1948) of Britain's Labour Party not to attend the congress in The Hague. Federalists, Marc in particular, had long been striving to convince Labour to go back its decision,^[50] but their efforts were in vain, which only drew attention to the political isolation of the UEF within the Congress. All this says a great deal about the opposition between unionists, who were content to settle for a traditional solution of cooperation among states, and federalists, who came out of this Congress with the clear impression that "their" Europe had not been afforded the consideration they felt it deserved, since the debate had not viewed European unity as the "preliminary issue". (Marc had spoken on the defence of rights and the institution of a supreme court). At the end of the Congress, some of the members of the UEF, gathered around Marc, issued a press release highlighting the failings of the meeting: the UEF complained that "in political terms, the Congress has not defined the practical instruments that will make it possible to convene, rapidly, a European assembly, representing all the living forces of society".^[51] Alexandre Marc, swimming against the moderate political tide that prevailed in The Hague, lashed out against those he defined as "conservative pro-Europeans".^[52] To counter this conservatism, Marc proposed the establishment of a "progressive coalition",^[53] embracing men such as de Rougemont.^[54] This confrontational line worried more moderate federalists, like Brugmans, who felt criticised, without due explanation, for their "opportunism".^[55] In June 1948, Marc resigned from the *International Coordination Committee*, discouraged and disappointed by the "whispers in the corridors, [by] the 'diplomatic' practices and in general [by the] manoeuvres that, for me, have rendered suffocating this atmosphere in which we were called upon to cooperate".^[56]

The setback in The Hague stirred up Marc's first doubts. However, the overriding impression is that he failed to see the wider picture: his doctrine and the revolutionary-type action he proposed had, in fact, become impossible in a setting characterised by constant improvisation and apparent good will on the part of the states. Marc, too deeply conditioned by his rejection of any system, communist or capitalist, appeared to have been overtaken by events. It is important to stress that officially the UEF still supported the idea of Europe as a third force, different from and independent of both American capitalism and Soviet collectivism. But even Marc could not deny the importance of political declarations that heightened awareness of the need for European unity and for a political Europe: "The sensational offer made by the American Secretary of State, General Marshall; Bevin's significant speech; the meeting between Bevin and Bidault; the advances made by Clayton; these are just some indications of how the federalist question has been moved to the forefront of today's political stage".^[57] But the man who benefited from this "rise" in prominence was the one who favoured the "American way": Spinelli became the most influential actor within the UEF, which he turned into the kind of "pressure group" that Marc disapproved of on the grounds that it targeted only politicians. Following the second federalist congress (this time in Rome in November 1948), Marc remarked that "federalism as a whole is turning its back on spiritual, cultural and social questions and devoting itself to a form of action that can be defined political"^[58] and underlined the contradiction that is inherent in the "lobbying" of states on federalist issues.^[59]

This "opportunism", so despised by Marc, instead found justification in the fight for "supranationality" in which the federalists were, by this time, engaging openly with those states that were seemingly willing to cooperate. Thus Marc played little part in the debates on the Schuman Plan, which he saw as premature, and was indeed among those openly denouncing the naivety of federalists, whom he viewed as victims of an "acceleration of history", in which they had everything to lose.^[60] For the same reasons, Marc distanced

himself from the work of the *ad hoc* committee, unlike Spinelli, who was more at ease conducting politics from the inside. Moreover, the inclusion, in the EDC Treaty, of the famous Article 38 justified the “constitutional direction” taken by the UEF. Alexandre Marc, suspicious of this “decisive step”, which caused “the idea of European federalism to shift to government level”,^[61] decided to devote himself to education, promoting the creation of a department of federalist studies.^[62] From this point on, he poured all his energies into this “rearguard” campaign, taking part in camps for the young people of Lorelei (July-September 1951), and setting up European education centres, such as the Centre européen de documentation in Saarbruecken, the Centre international di formation européenne in Nice (1954) and the Collège universitaire d’études fédéralistes in Aosta (1961), all intended as instruments for the formation of militant European federalists. The setback over the EDC, in August 1954, led Marc to an unexpected rapprochement with Spinelli, both men rejecting the project to “relaunch” Europe and, through the *European People’s Congress* (1955-1961), adopting an extreme stance that led to a split in the UEF (November 1956).

The fate of Alexandre Marc’s project brings us back to the particular context of the post-war period when, in an inopportune simplification of the situation, only the action of Europe’s founding fathers was taken into consideration. Because while it is true that the building of Europe started to become a concrete reality with the Treaties of Rome in 1957, it is also true that it had been envisaged and prepared for throughout the chaotic early Cold War years. To study Marc is to observe the laborious and difficult conception of a project cultivated against a background of pain, doubt and the realisation that a profound gap can exist between political reality and the utopia dreamed of. This was a time of intense European debate, and Marc emerges as both an example and a victim of this: it was certainly a prolific era, but what it ultimately generated was a defensive and political formula for Europe, that took little account of the subtleties of personalism. There is certainly room for criticism of Marc’s vision, particularly of the corporatist aspects of integral federalism, which, in the wake of the Vichy period, gave cause for concern and prompted Alexandre Marc to accept alliances that, in the eyes of many observers (federalists included) discredited his project, even though he personally never felt any affinity with the ideas of the national revolution. Furthermore, Marc’s project was extremely mechanistic: his conception of federalism finds no basis in history and it is possible to note too many contradictions in this philosophy that mixes order with freedom, plurality of membership and corporativism, etc. The project of Alexandre Marc, which bore the hallmark of its author’s philosophical approach, too often favoured idea over action,^[63] the long term over the short term, and this made it difficult for it to attract a broad consensus, above all among politicians and at the level of public opinion.

Therefore, should Marc merely be considered merely as one of the “dreamers” with which the history of the European idea is strewn? The answer is no, as some of his ideas are still relevant to today’s context, i.e., his idea that our political, economic, social and cultural organisations are obsolete and no longer respond to the needs of the modern world, his view of a society dominated by large-scale organisations, in which men are reduced to little more than objects, and his concern over the increasing intrusion of technocracy into our daily lives. In general, we might say that Marc’s positions are little influenced by disillusionment with strategies founded on the idea of a welfare-type nation-state. There is room in the current debate on the building of Europe for discussion of certain solutions based on personalism: subsidiarity as opposed to the hypertrophy of any form of power seems generate wide consensus, while the principle of cooperation, the only one equipped to face up to the real needs of society, is championed by all the trade union forces.

Nevertheless, Marc’s project does not appear to advance the building of Europe, as the latter is now understood: according to his view, there should be a deepening before there is a widening and reflection is preferable to urgent action. Necessary and constructive reflection,

although frequently invoked in the present debate, seems instead to be making way for accelerations of history, which are moulding the European project to circumstances that no one seems able to control. Profound reflection and tranquil debate are thus out of the question, and this continues to distance us from the “spiritual question” that, for Marc, had to precede any European project and any better future, a future that we are still a long way from attaining.

* This heading includes contributions which the editorial board believes readers will find interesting, but which do not necessarily reflect the board’s views.

This article is based on my contribution to a meeting that was held at the University of Cergy-Pontoise from 8th-10th November, 2001. Organised by Professor Gérard Bossuat, this meeting considered *the settings, relationships and leading personalities that have carried forward projects for European unity*. The aim of the historians taking part was to present new research into the history of European unity, research that looks beyond the traditional, that is to say official, story of its great milestones, from Briand through to Schuman, men who were by no means the only heroes, or founders, of Europe. The meeting was born of the view that these various projects for European unity were not ideas that developed casually in the minds of brilliant thinkers, but were instead born of a number of factors: the education and culture of those who have really given thought to the project, their ideological orientation, the interests of groups and even particular circumstances. Thus, the spotlight was turned on the personalities who have presented, to those with the political power to decide, realistic projects for the building of European unity, and the settings in which they did this. The aim was also to evaluate the willingness of contemporary society to accept unity, a frustratingly slow and disappointing process in the eyes of its most enthusiastic supporters, but one that has nevertheless borne fruits, given that, today, we do indeed have a European Union. One important question, in particular, is difficult to answer clearly: did these important settings and actors in the process of the building of European unity, actors such as Alexandre Marc, but also Joseph Retinger, Altiero Spinelli and François Mitterrand, really influence decisively the course of history? Or were all these developments in some way destined to come about? Either way, the drive and passionate commitment of these men bears witness to their belief that it is possible to determine the direction of European history.

[1] One might even wonder whether Alexandre Marc did not suffer, to some degree, from a paranoia that exacerbated his sense of being misunderstood; this would explain why his project (in reality a project of many forms) was discarded by traditional pro-European circles: “In the European movement, there is certainly a prevalence of politicians who rail against the non conformist in me, free thinkers and intolerant protestants who do not like the Catholic in me, reactionaries who are afraid of my social ideas” (“Letter from Alexandre Marc to Father Antoine Verleye”, quoted in Isabelle Le Moulec-Deschamps, *Alexandre Marc, un combat pour l’Europe*, University of Nice-Sophia Antipolis, 1992, p. 400.

[2] Marc met Coudenhove-Kalergi very early on, and exchanged several letters with him in the thirties, rebuking him for his overly conservative and “fashionable” view of Europe. We will return to this topic later.

[3] Christian Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe (1904-1934)*, Nice, Presses d’Europe, 1998, p. 54.

[4] *Ibidem*, p. 58.

[5] From the work of Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu, published in May 1931 by Rieder.

[6] Bernard Voyenne, *Histoire de l’idée fédéraliste*, Paris-Nice, Presses d’Europe, t. III, 1981, p. 164.

[7] *Ibidem*, p. 202.

[8] Denis De Rougemont, *Politique de la Personne*, Paris, Je Sers, 1934, p. 240.

[9] Title of an article edited by Jean Jardin, Thierry Maulnier, Robert Loustau, Denis De Rougemont and Robert Aron in issue no. 4 of the review, *L’Ordre Nouveau*, October 1933, pp. 1-6, also used in a work by Zeev Sternhell (Brussels, Complexe, 2000), who sees this refusal to choose as the root of French fascism. The federalists’ response to this attack came in Pascal Sigoda’s “Qu’est-ce qui fait courir Z. Sternhell?”, followed by a “Note complémentaire” by Alexandre Marc in *L’Europe en formation*, Summer 1987, no. 268, pp. 39-46 e pp. 47-50.

[10] The underlying principles of this, dealt with in Germany in the second decade of the nineteenth century by William Stern and Max Scheler, were still not known in France.

[11] Alexandre Marc, Claude Chevalley, “Patrie, Nation, Révolution”, in *Avant-Poste*, January-February 1934.

[12] Alexandre Marc, René Dupuis, *Manifeste du Front unique de la jeunesse européenne*, 1933.

[13] Alexandre Marc, René Dupuis, *Jeune Europe*, Paris, Librairie Plon, 1933.

[14] *Ibidem*, p. XII.

- [15] Christian Ray, *op.cit.*, p. 288.
- [16] “We are living in a true desert: no news of my parents; no news of my wife’s family; no news of our friends in Lyons; no news of the *Temps Présent* group, no news of anyone”, in *Letter from Alexandre Marc to Bernard Voyenne*, Estavayer, 24 November 1944, p. 1, Nice, Centre International de Formation européenne (CIFE).
- [17] *Ordre Nouveau*, n. 41, p. 62.
- [18] Alexandre Marc, *Proudhon*, Librairie de l’Université de Fribourg, 1945.
- [19] He presents this doctrine in “Le Fédéralisme intégral”, in *L’Action fédéraliste européenne*, n. 2, 1946.
- [20] Alexandre Marc, *Avènement de la France ouvrière. Traditions et aspirations des travailleurs français*, Porrentruy, Partes de France, 1945, p. 226.
- [21] “Premiers principes: Du Fédéralisme”, in *Ordre Nouveau*, n. 2, May 1933.
- [22] *Note du 4 octobre 1943*, pp. 1-2, Personal writings of Alexandre Marc, Vence.
- [23] *Quelques réflexions sur l’avenir de l’Europe*, 20 March 1944, pp. 2-3, Personal writings of Alexandre Marc, Vence. In a slightly modified version of this text, drawn up by Marc on 16 May, 1944, he adds that “one would perhaps do well to observe that the idea [of the French initiative] does not damage England’s role in Europe: but the weight of the British empire is such that England will be able to fulfil its European functions only after the unity of our continent has been affirmed”, pp. 2-3, Personal writings of Alexandre Marc, Vence.
- [24] Alexandre Marc, “Histoire des idées et des mouvements fédéralistes depuis la Première Guerre Mondiale”, in Gaston Berger (editor), *Le Fédéralisme*, Paris, PUF, 1956, pp. 129-148.
- [25] Alexandre Marc, “Pour l’action fédéraliste”, in *Cahiers du Monde Nouveau*, March 1947, n. 3, pp. 104-10; Alexandre Marc, Henri Koch, *Lettre circulaire n. 8*, p. 3, 25 April 1947, WL-177, Florence, *Archivi storici delle Comunità europee* (ASCE).
- [26] Alexandre Marc, “Histoire des idées et des mouvements fédéralistes depuis la Première Guerre Mondiale”, in Gaston Berger, *op. cit.*, p. 143.
- [27] Denis De Rougemont, “The Campaign of the European Congresses”, in Ghita Ionescu (editor), *The New Politics of European Integration*, London, MacMillan, Saint Martin’s Press, 1972, p. 12.
- [28] Alexandre Marc, *Lettre circulaire n. 9*, 29 April 1947, WL-124, Florence, ASCE.
- [29] Isabelle Le Moulec-Deschamps, “Alexandre Marc et l’action européenne d’après-guerre”, in *L’Europe en Formation*, Summer 1998, n. 309, p. 56.
- [30] The federalists had help from several quarters in raising awareness of the Montreux Congress, for example from Bernard Voyenne, journalist for *Combat* and member of the UEF, to whom Marc regularly sent communiqués that were previewed in the journal (cfr. *Letter from Alexandre Marc to Bernard Voyenne*, Geneva, 14 August 1947, Nice, CIFE).
- [31] *Letter to Claude Bourdet*, Vaucresson, 18 September 1947, Personal writings of Alexandre Marc, Vence.
- [32] *Rapport du Congrès de Montreux*, 27-31 August 1947, Geneva, p. 130.
- [33] *Discours d’Altiero Spinelli au Congrès de Montreux*, 27 August 1947, AS-10, Florence, ASCE.
- [34] For example, Alexandre Marc, *Lettre circulaire n. 5*, 20 February 1947, WL-124, Florence, ASCE, in which he asks that 200 copies of any document printed by a UEF member be sent to the secretariat for distribution to the other members.
- [35] Alexandre Marc, *Lettre circulaire n. 15*, 10 June 1947, WL-177, Florence, ASCE.
- [36] Henri Brugmans, *A travers le siècle*, Brussels, Presses interuniversitaires européennes, 1993, p. 240.
- [37] *Lettre de Henri Brugmans, Alexandre Marc et Raymond Silva aux membres de l’UEF*, 21 November 1947, UEF-210, Florence, ASCE.
- [38] Quoted in Isabelle Le Moulec-Deschamps, *op.cit.*, p. 316.
- [39] Title of an article published in *L’Europe en Formation*, Spring 1944, n. 292, pp. 46-47.
- [40] Alexandre Marc, *Brochure de l’UEF*, 20 pages, December 1948, UEF-128, Florence, ASCE.
- [41] Alexandre Marc, “L’Europe assume son destin”, in *Cahiers du Monde nouveau*, n. 5, May 1948, p. 4.
- [42] Alexandre Marc, *Projet concernant la délégation française pour les Etats-Généraux de l’Europe de La Haye*, 17 November 1947, AS-10, Florence, ASCE.
- [43] *Letter to André Voisin*, Geneva, 18 February 1948, p. 1, Personal writings of Alexandre Marc, Vence.
- [44] *Letter from Alexandre Marc to Bernard Voyenne*, Geneva, 28 January 1948, p. 1, Nice, CIFE. This impression emerges even more clearly in a letter written to the same person a month later: “Political test: I am disturbed by the orientation of the UEF, I feel that I am losing control of this political ‘machine’ I have built and that I have been reduced to the playing the part of a sorcerer’s apprentice”, *Letter from Alexandre Marc to Bernard Voyenne*, 6 February 1948, p. 2, Nice, CIFE.
- [45] Altiero Spinelli, *Memorandum sulla preparazione del Congresso dell’Aia*, 22 January 1948, AS-11, Florence, ASCE.
- [46] Michel Mouskhely, Gaston Stefani, *Avant-projet de Constitution fédérale européenne*, 5 March 1948, ME-404, Florence, ASCE.
- [47] This call to order led to the first clash between Alexandre Marc and Brugmans, to whom he alludes in two *Letters to Bernard Voyenne*, Geneva, 23 January 1948, pp. 1 and 3, and 24 January 1948, p. 1, Nice, CIFE.

- [48] *Aide-mémoire pour le président Léon Blum*, 3 November 1947, WL-99, Florence, ASCE.
- [49] Alexandre Marc, *Lettre aux membres du Comité Central*, 21 December 1947. p. 1, WL-84, Florence, ASCE.
- [50] *Letter from Alexandre Marc to Harry Hynd*, Geneva, 26 January 1948, UEF-3, Florence, ASCE; *Letter from Alexandre Marc to M. Mitrinowitch, New Europe Group*, Geneva, 7 February 1948, UEF-3, Florence, ASCE. *Letter from Alexandre Marc to Richard Acland, Chambre des Communes*, 24 February 1948, UEF-2, Florence, ASCE.
- [51] *Communiqué de presse de l'UEF*, The Hague, 11 May 1948, UEF-210, Florence, ASCE.
- [52] Alexandre Marc, "De l'unionisme au Fédéralisme", in *Fédération*, n. 40, May 1948, pp. 9-11.
- [53] *Letter to Henri Frenay*, Geneva, 16 November 1948, Nice, CIFE; *Letter to Claude-Marcel Hytte*, Geneva, 17 November 1948; *Letter to Raymond Rifflet*, Geneva, 19 November 1948, Personal writing of Alexandre Marc, Vence.
- [54] *Letter to Alexandre Marc*, 1 Novembre 1948, Personal writings of Alexandre Marc, Vence.
- [55] *Letter from Alexandre Marc to J. Schroeder*, Geneva, 18 July 1948, Personal writings of Alexandre Marc, Vence.
- [56] *Letter from Alexandre Marc to Raymond Silva*, Geneva, 25 May 1944, UEF-4, Florence, ASCE; *Letter to Suzanne Marc*, 11 May 1948, *Letter to V.*, 11 May 1948, *Letter to Anne-Marie Trinquier*, 22 May 1948, Personal writings of Alexandre Marc, Vence.
- [57] Alexandre Marc, *Lettre circulaire n. 11*, 18 June 1947, WL-177, Florence, ASCE.
- [58] Quoted in Isabelle Le Moulec-Deschamps, *op. cit.*, p. 435.
- [59] *Ibidem*, p. 440.
- [60] *Letter from Alexandre Marc to Guglielmo Usellini*, Versailles, 27 July 1950, UEF12, Florence, ASCE.
- [61] Title of the editorial of *Bulletin de l'UEF*, n. 3 bis, 25 August 1948, UEF-245, Florence, ASCE.
- [62] Alexandre Marc, *Rapport sur la création d'un Département Institutionnel*, 19 December 1948, UEF-128, Florence, ASCE.
- [63] Cfr. the text by Lucio Levi, in Lucio Levi, Guido Montani, Francesco Rossolillo, *Three Introductions to Federalism*, The Ventotene Papers, Ventotene (Italy), The Altiero Spinelli Institute for Federalist Studies, 1989, p. 59.