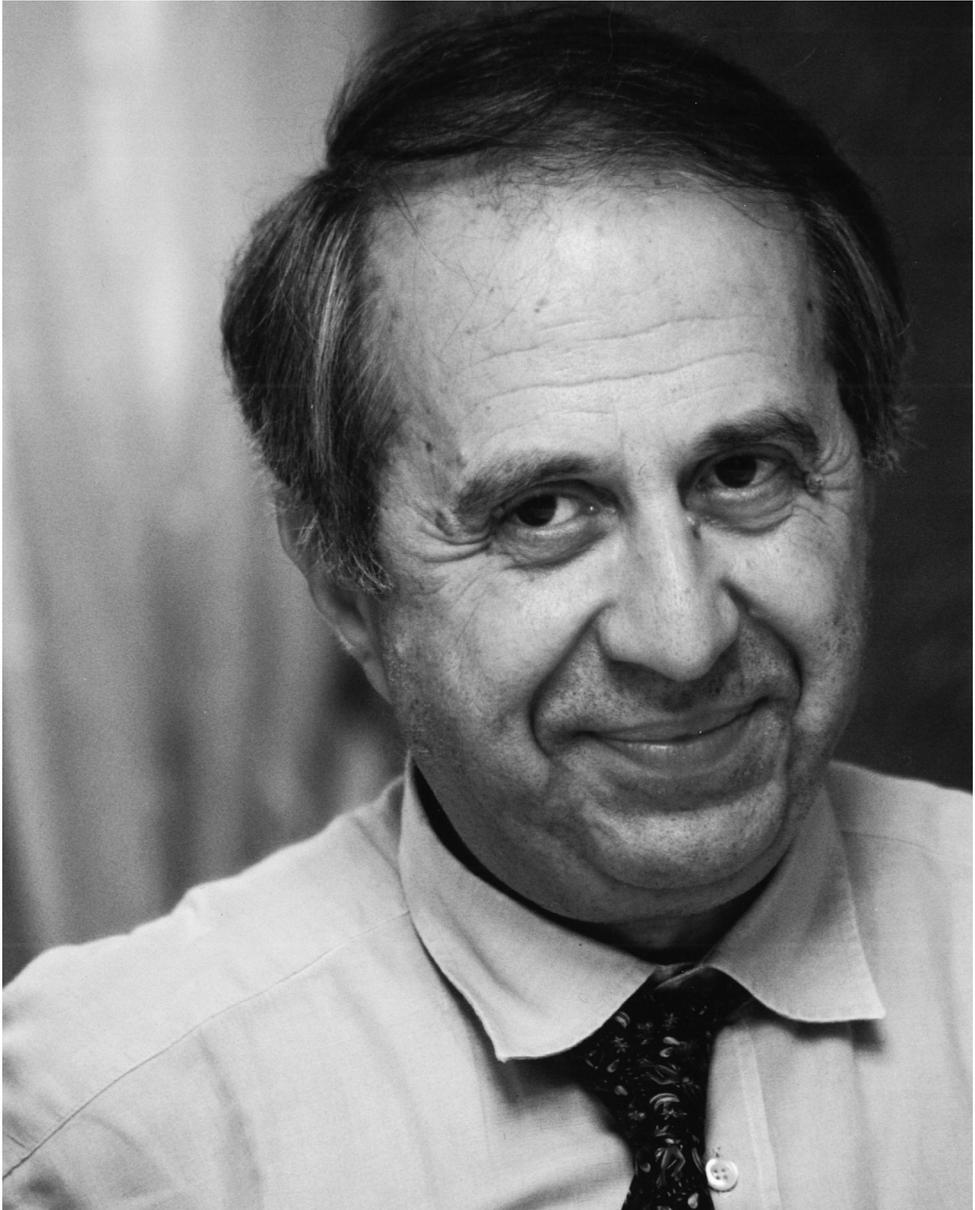


Tribute to

Emilio Gabaglio

(1937-2024)

A life in the service of
the trade union movement



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Foreword by Esther Lynch, ETUC General Secretary

The trade union movement is uniting to pay tribute to Emilio Gabaglio, an exceptional General Secretary and an extraordinary person who will forever be remembered by our community – a movement that transcends borders, embodying a truly international identity.

Emilio was often described as an innovator. His tireless energy, bold ideas and unwavering commitment to action opened new paths to support workers and dignify labour. He possessed a remarkable ability to lead workers with determination during times of struggle and to provide reassurance when compromises were necessary. In this document, which is based on an extensive interview with the ETUI, Emilio recounts the most significant events of his distinguished professional life.

It is worth recalling the historical context when he was General Secretary of the ETUC from 1991 to 2003. The year before his first election, the European Council celebrated the first free elections in the Democratic Republic of Germany since 1932, heralding German reunification, and encouraged other countries from the former Soviet bloc to follow suit. The European Community faced evident limits, prompting the need for the Treaty on European Union. Meanwhile, the world witnessed Iraq's brutal invasion of Kuwait, and escalating violence in Lebanon made resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict a focal point of the EU's international agenda. Rising xenophobia prompted European leaders to devote two full pages in the 1992 Council conclusions to combating racism. Although the EU Treaty was a major achievement that paved the way for new rights for European workers, the 1997 Stability and Growth Pact marked the beginning of austerity times, undermining the spirit of Maastricht.

Amidst these turbulent times, Emilio guided us through some of our movement's most defining moments, including the historic 1993 demonstration in Brussels – a powerful display of unity and strength. 'ETUC in Action' became the slogan of the early 1990s. Emilio understood that the trade union movement needed to display its strength to achieve substantial results. The demonstrations of 1993, 1997, 2000, 2001 and 2002 showcased this power.

In this paper, we see him leading a demonstration, holding a vacuum cleaner he later gifted to the leader of UNICE (now BusinessEurope), Zygmunt Tyszkiewicz. 'It still stands in the corner of my office. It is one of my favourite trophies,' he remarked years later (as reported by Politico in 1998). This gesture reflected the pragmatism of a man who believed in the dignity of work as the foundation of a new economic model. Together with the then European Commission President Jacques Delors, Emilio championed

landmark pro-worker legislation, such as the Working Time Directive, and established a framework for European social dialogue.

The interview highlights the signing by the ETUC and social partners of the Agreement on Social Policy, a key component of the Maastricht Treaty. In 1991, the Council recognised the need for the future EU to define its ‘social dimension, including social dialogue’. Jacques Delors addressed the ETUC Congress by saying “Hurry up!” and stressing the need to finalise the negotiations with the employers. ‘ The agreement was signed on 31 October 1991.

It was Gabaglio’s conviction that, ‘Without a contract, there is no union’ (s’il n’y a pas de contrat, il n’y a pas de syndicat). Legislation on parental leave, fixed-term contracts and part-time work, which remain part of European workers’ rights today, show that, while agreements may require compromises, such compromises lay the groundwork for lasting progress.

During the final years of Gabaglio’s mandate, the enlargement of the EU proved to be more challenging than anticipated. The accelerating pace of global competition, industrial relocation and financial speculation threatened the fledgling monetary system. The ETUC recognised, in the 1997 Stability and Growth Pact, a prelude to austerity, and proposed a pact for employment and investment, which unfortunately never materialised. This is the same struggle we continue to fight today in striving for an economic model that is fair for workers and sustainable for future generations.

Under Emilio’s leadership, a generation of European trade unionists found a platform for action. Sectoral social dialogue committees were established, and hundreds of European works councils (EWCs) were set up. Emilio considered the EWC Directive a significant achievement, allowing thousands of trade unionists to stand together against the excessive power of multinational corporations. This was not only a political success but also a step towards giving the trade union movement a unified European identity.

The ETUI played a crucial role in this success, which Emilio revitalized as an independent research centre. His foresight in establishing a training programme helped shape the European culture of a new generation of trade union leaders. Today, the experience of the European Trade Union Academy lives on within the ETUI and continues to shape the cultural identity of thousands of European trade unionists.

Emilio’s ability to keep the movement united and strong was more than an exercise in pragmatism: it was the vision of a man who dedicated his intellectual acuity to reconciling the divides that once separated socialist and Christian unions. His efforts, often made at great personal cost, as seen during his time at the Christian Association of Italian Workers (ACLI), were ultimately rewarded by the reunification of the global trade union movement in the International Trade Union Congress (ITUC). As Guy Ryder remarked, ‘All of his strengths as a negotiator, his profound understanding of the global trade union movement, and the esteem he commanded across its different currents contributed to the successful unification [of the International Confederation

of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the World Confederation of Labour (WCL) into the ITUC] three years later. It would not have happened without him.’

Under his leadership, the organization expanded rapidly, welcoming new members from all traditions of trade unionism across Europe. In May 1994, he led a delegation to celebrate International Workers’ Day in Sarajevo during its siege. ‘I don’t remember a single word of the speech I made,’ he later recalled, ‘but I will never forget the faces before me, filled with determination and hope.’ His determination to fight any form of dictatorship or oppression was tireless, the ours will not be less.

The European trade union movement is built on the simple idea of uniting working people to stand stronger together, both at home and abroad. We believe that all working people – no matter who they are, no matter what their job, no matter where they are from or who they love – deserve respect for the job they do, along with a fair wage and good terms and conditions set out in collective agreement. All jobs can and should be quality jobs.

As a movement, we continue to fight for bold solutions to the challenges faced by working people throughout Europe, building a Europe rooted in unity, respect, hope and social justice. As a movement, we continue to hold those in power responsible for delivering what we need to succeed during this period of upheaval and change. We are unapologetic in calling for a change to policy decisions so that our economies deliver for working people, not the wealthy few.

At the same time, a small number of far-right actors are stoking hate, fear and violence, targeting people at work, our trade unions and our trade union values. They benefit by making us afraid of each other, and they distract us from our goals by scapegoating and turning us against each other.

European trade unionism is the antidote.

Emilio was deeply committed to the vision of a united Europe. His legacy endures in all that we do.

Today, our thoughts are with his family and all those who were close to him. His loss is irreplaceable. I would like to offer, on behalf of the ETUC and European workers, our heartfelt gratitude and a symbolic embrace.

Foreword by Luigi Sbarra, CISL General Secretary

Emilio Gabaglio was a great CISL trade unionist. He began his voluntary commitment in his early 20s when he came into contact with the union while working as a supply teacher in his hometown of Como on the Swiss border.

After his experience in the ACLI, in 1972, he found our organisation to be the ideal place to continue his international commitment. In 1974, he began focusing his attention on an area agreed with the then CISL General Secretary, Bruno Storti: trade union action in multinational companies, work that was to become crucial in the following years. Emilio then dedicated himself unstintingly to Latin America in particular – a region plagued at that time by military dictatorships – and to constant, unwavering support for Solidarnosc’s struggle to build a free trade union in Poland and in the communist bloc.

In 1978, when the Head of the International Office of the CISL, Fabrizia Baduel Glorioso, became the first President of the European Economic and Social Committee and later a Member of the European Parliament, Gabaglio took over her role at the head of the International Department, thus beginning his wonderful adventure at our headquarters in Via Po.

It is interesting to recall his first mission on direct assignment from the then CISL General Secretary, Luigi Macario – repairing relations with the American union after some misunderstandings in the mid-70s.

In 1983, he joined the confederal secretariat, his subsequent undertakings focusing on labour market policies – in particular for southern part of Italy – the organisational secretariat and the actions needed to reshape the relationship between work and the environment.

It was Emilio Gabaglio, in the spring of 1984, who reported to the CISL Executive Committee on the decision, not made jointly, to summon up the courage to break the spiral of double-digit inflation and high unemployment through the agreement on the sliding scale, inspired by the ideas of Ezio Tarantelli.

The 1990s arrived with the challenge of transforming the European trade union from a representative lobby to an authentic social dialogue participant. Emilio Gabaglio’s time at the helm of the European Trade Union Confederation coincided, not by chance, with the emergence of the European trade union as a well-respected, leading organisation with a structure based on the continental model and an important role to play in social dialogue.

Like Jacques Delors, and in cooperation with him, he established a path towards and became the main social organiser of a project for a 'Europe of the peoples and of work'. These were the years during which Emilio was General Secretary of the ETUC; years in which, despite the general failure to intervene in the Balkan conflict, political Europe and social Europe seemed to take significant, albeit never decisive, steps forward.

Then came the highly demanding achievement of the Nice Charter of Social Rights and the moves towards the Convention for the Future of Europe, in which Gabaglio participated as leader of the European trade unions. These were years in which European social partners reached important binding agreements that accompany the Directives: parental leave, part-time work, fixed-term contracts.

As General Secretary, Emilio promoted workplace participation and economic democracy, becoming the key player in the establishment of European works councils in the major multinationals; in the same vein, we cannot forget his role in preparing for an advance agreement on issues of extreme importance today, such as remote working, which was signed shortly after the end of his long tenure as General Secretary.

We also must not forget his fundamental role in the creation of the International Trade Union Confederation, founded in Vienna in 2006 by decision of the largest assembly of trade union organisations in memory, more than 300 confederations from 170 countries on all continents, essentially bringing an end to the ideological and organisational divisions that marked the world trade union movement throughout the 20th century, notwithstanding the brief and controversial unity, between 1945 and 1949, within the context of the Communist World Trade Union Federation.

This was a unity in the International Trade Union Confederation, Gabaglio explained in a CISL publication, 'that had specific reasons, all intrinsic to the union, based on the awareness that the reunification of the world of work is the necessary, but obviously not sufficient condition, for effective counteraction against a globalisation without rules that has caused the devaluation of work, the reduction of workers' rights, the undermining of the role and bargaining power of unions'. This is the awareness that led to a real re-foundation of the international trade union movement in Vienna thanks, in particular, to Emilio's tireless work.

Gabaglio was, therefore, a proponent, teacher and guide, both inside and outside the union, of a reformist approach based on the idea that the world of work must intelligently approach the processes of change, at local, national, European and global levels. Not a utopia, but a great project that, over the years at SindNova, has been able to transform into concrete action an association promoted by various trade federations of the CISL that deals with work transformations and support to European works councils and in the training activity that it has addressed to CISL trade unionists.

Emilio never spared himself. Lucid, focused, active and generous to the very end; he was stubborn and obstinate in his ability to hold the table, to compose the diversity of European and international trade unionism, and to deal with employer organisations and community institutions.

We all remember his dedication, his style, his competence, his infinite generosity. Gabaglio taught these values and passed these skills on to generations of trade unionists.

He has provided us with valuable witness testimony that we can carry forward into the present, just when the European Commission has taken the deplorable decision to cancel the Commissioner for Work and Social Affairs – diluting the role into a figure with insufficient powers in our opinion.

Instead, we wish to launch a new age of dialogue and community building, as, like Emilio, we firmly believe in the final goal of the United States of Europe.

Having lost a great friend and close member of our family, we once again thank Emilio, a trade unionist without borders, an unforgettable builder of bridges of dialogue, peace and social justice. He left us at a difficult time. We will preserve his memory in order to try and face this difficult moment together by building, through participation and accountability, a better future to be delivered to future generations.

Part 1 Emilio on Emilio

Extracts from interviews conducted on 15 and 16 March 2022 at the ETUI offices in Brussels by Christophe Degryse, Philippe Pochet and Sigfrido Ramirez-Perez
Transcription, selection of texts and comments: Christophe Degryse¹

Youth: from the ACLI to the CISL via Christian Democracy

I was born in 1937 in Como, a town in northern Lombardy very close to the Swiss border. My family was middle class, but my parents came from more modest, farming backgrounds. My mother always told me that she started working before she had even finished school. She worked as a waitress in a shop in Milan.

When the war was over, I finished school and enrolled at the Catholic University of Milan, studying economics. I hadn't even finished my thesis yet, and the director of the institute where I had been a student called me up and said: 'Would you like to be a contract teacher to teach banking and business economics?' So I started straight away. It was the early 1960s. I taught and I took my first trade union card at that time, with the Federation of Teachers in Higher Education.

I was also a member of the Scout Movement. There was a spiritual assistant there who was also involved in the Christian Association of Italian Workers, ACLI. One day, he said to me: 'You academics should go and help the workers' social movement. But be careful not to lead it! It's the workers who are in charge.' That's how I came to be detached to the ACLI youth movement – it was a large organisation: there were hundreds of thousands of members at the time – and the leader was a worker, I still remember him. I was supposed to help him with writing texts and information activities. That's how I started in the workers' social movement. The ACLI president in Como was also the deputy secretary of the provincial CISL in Como. Then, as the years went by, I took up positions at national level in the ACLI youth movement. In particular, I was in charge of relations with the World Youth Assembly, with a first meeting in Casablanca in 1962, and then in Denmark in 1963 during the World Congress. This sparked my initial interest in the international dimension.

I've also always been close to the trade union movement. The organisation to which I've been affiliated for decades – the CISL – stemmed from the Christian movement, even though it was a non-denominational organisation. And I was also a member of Christian Democracy, which was logical at the time: I was even elected to the Como town council at the age of 22 or something like that. In the end, we who came from the Catholic world were in the ACLI, the CISL and Christian Democracy at the same

1. The extracts of text presented in this homage have been edited, as the interviews were conducted in French, which is not the interviewee's mother tongue.

time. Those were the three cards we carried in our pockets. But my whole life has tilted towards trade unionism, not politics.

Key figures

I had the privilege of meeting a number of people who made a major contribution to my education. At university, Professor Mario Romani² taught economic history; I met him later in Rome during my early years at the National Centre of the ACLI, because he was something of a reference intellectual for the CISL. Giulio Pastore, the first General Secretary of the CISL, had been Secretary of the ACLI. The first president of the ACLI was Achille Grandi, who was also General Secretary of the CGIL with [Giuseppe Di] Vittorio at the time. But, when Achille Grandi stepped down, it was Pastore who took over this role and led the union split that gave life to the CISL.³

At the Catholic University of Milan, there was a whole current of Christian social thought. There were other professors who had an impact on me, such as Giancarlo Mazzocchi and Luigi Frey, whom I met at university and later in Rome. These are people who have contributed to my development. And then there was Livio Labor, Vice-President of the ACLI at the start of my involvement. When Labor became President of the ACLI in 1961, he called me two years later to Rome, to the research department of the ACLI National Centre, asking me to deal with social issues. My first work in Rome was on the role of women in workers' organisations. I researched and published an article on this subject, which at the time was relatively new in the workers' movement.

An 'international bent' and a European dimension

But I have to say that I've always had a certain penchant for international affairs. So I soon left the research department to take charge of ACLI's international relations. This gave me the opportunity to meet quite a few people, including Émile Pin [1921-2006], a French Jesuit who, in 1963, asked me to go with him to Latin America. He was working on the question of new Christian movements in Latin America, with François Houtart from the Catholic University of Louvain (Belgium). That's how I spent three months in Latin America with Émile Pin, from Mexico to Chile, where we met grassroots Christian groups. I remember Gustavo Gutiérrez⁴ in Peru, and Bishop Bogarín⁵ in Paraguay, and others in Colombia, in Medellín... It was on that occasion that I had my first contacts

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2. A professor of economic history at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan, Mario Romani was also a Christian Democrat national councillor from 1949 to 1959. In 1950, he became a close associate of Giulio Pastore in the creation of the CISL. He headed the CISL Research Office until 1967 (Wikipedia).
 3. The unitary Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL) was formed at the end of the Second World War. In 1948, political tensions led to the first split, with the creation of the Christian-democratic (non-denominational) CISL. A second split followed later with the creation of the Italian Labour Union (UIL).
 4. Gustavo Gutiérrez Merino (1928-2024) is a Peruvian priest, philosopher and theologian considered to be the father of liberation theology.
 5. Mgr Juan Sinforiano Bogarín (1863-1949), the first archbishop of Paraguay, preached social peace and denounced torture. He set up initiatives to combat poverty, thus applying the Church's social doctrine (Wikipedia).

with the Latin American Confederation of Christian Trade Unionists, CLASC at the time, which later became CLAT.⁶

But we shouldn't give the impression that the ACLI was looking mainly at realities outside Europe, Latin America and so on. We were also very committed to the construction of the 'European Community' – we were in favour of the integration process. Labor himself was a member of the International Bureau of the European Movement. And, from the outset, the ACLI has been a member of the Italian Council of the European Movement, of which I am still an honorary member. So yes, the European dimension has always been present.

Livio Labor, President of the ACLI from 1961 to 1969, was a great influence in my life. I benefited from his teaching, but also from his legacy as a Christian committed to the cause of social justice. A convinced, practising Christian, but very secular in his attitudes to social and political life. And, at the time, this was a problem for the Catholic Church. It was a privilege for me to have had him as a role model.

A step too far...

At the Turin Congress of the ACLI in 1969, I was elected national president, taking over from Livio Labor who had decided to leave the organisation. I was still very young... perhaps too young, in hindsight. So, I found myself at the head of an organisation with a very strong social and trade union profile, with ideas firmly anchored on the left. And it was there, in the summer of 1970, that I took a step too far, as we would later say. At the Vallombrosa Study Week⁷ in 1970, in my closing speech, I brandished the idea that it was not impossible for Christians to commit themselves to a socialist perspective – democratic socialism, of course. But, for the Italian Catholic world at the time, the only political expression was Christian Democracy. Following this speech, there was a dialogue between the ACLI and the Italian Episcopal Conference, but no common ground was found. The bishops then decided to sever their ties with the ACLI. Even the Pope, in a speech to the bishops, said he deplored our choice. It was a crisis. To enable the ACLI to defend itself and save the organisation, we had to change course, and so the person responsible for this crisis had to leave. I resigned from the presidency at the end of 1972, and was out of work for a while.

After working for a publishing house of which I had become a director, and which was a voice of the Catholic left at the time, some former CISL comrades – Luigi Macario and Pierre Carniti – called me in 1974 to ask me to join the centre. I said yes straight away. It would be my first direct involvement in the trade union movement. But my arrival at the CISL was not easy. At the time, I was a rather controversial figure in public debates, and the General Secretary, Bruno Storti, still wanted to maintain good relations with the Church (even though the CISL was secular). In short, he wasn't convinced. He even

6. Central Latinoamericana de Trabajadores.

7. Every year, the ACLI organised a study conference during the summer, the 'Vallombrosa Study Weeks', named after a town near Florence.

consulted the Vatican – I learned this much later – to see what they would think if the CISL hired Emilio Gabaglio. The answer was: ‘It’s a good choice.’

Arrival at the Italian CISL

So I was hired by the CISL. But Bruno Storti didn’t want me to work on international issues. He suggested I work on multinationals. He had a long-term vision, because, at the time, multinationals were not yet at the heart of trade union debates as they are today. So I worked on it for two years, which enabled me to take part in seminars and travel: I went to the University of Michigan, for example, and took part in various international bodies, such as TUAC, which was beginning to tackle the issue of the OECD’s ‘guidelines for multinationals’.⁸

In 1977, Luigi Macario won the CISL Congress and became General Secretary, with Pierre Carniti as his deputy. And they appointed me Director of the International Department, with the first task of re-establishing relations with the AFL-CIO. A few years earlier, we had broken with our American comrades, who had criticised the Italian dynamic of a unitary trade union federation.⁹ So, my first mission was to Washington to renew relations with the Americans. This we managed to do together with Macario, Carniti and Marini.

As I progressed in my role as head of the International Department, I came to be confronted with international and global dimensions. I became a member of the executive of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, but I also encountered the European dimension, which was very important to us. My first ETUC congress was in Munich in 1979. I became a member of the Executive Committee. On this subject, I would like to remind you that the CISL and the UIL had fought right from the start of the ETUC for the CGIL to be admitted to the European Confederation. This was achieved in 1974, despite some opposition. This is important to emphasise, because, at that time, the Italian federation [*editor’s note*: CISL, CGIL and UIL] was increasingly expressing itself as such at ETUC level too.

The unitary federation experience came to an end in 1984 with the San Valentino agreements.¹⁰ Surprisingly, however, this split between the three organisations had no effect at international level: we continued to act together at both international and European level. Of course, there were difficult moments, criticism and controversy, but the end of the unitary federation did not seal the end of its international and European dimension.

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8. TUAC is the OECD’s Trade Union Advisory Committee. It is the interface between trade union organisations and the OECD.
 9. Between 1972 and 1984, a pact between the three confederations sealed a period of trade union unity: the unitary Italian federation.
 10. On 14 February 1984, under the Bettino Craxi government, an agreement was signed between the government, companies and trade unions (‘Social Pact’), known as the ‘Valentine’s Agreement’, after difficult negotiations. At the last minute, the CGIL refused to sign it.

It was in this context that we came together with the idea that the ETUC should be the recomposition of the European trade union movement at ideological and national levels. We became more and more involved in this European dimension, and, over the years, we began to adopt a slightly more critical attitude towards the ETUC's dynamic at that time.

Reforming the ETUC

We must, of course, pay tribute to Matthias Hinterscheid,¹¹ who worked hard to set up the organisation. But, as Italian trade unions, we felt that there was a certain lack of dynamism. I remember that we discussed this at the Hague Congress in 1982, and then at the Milan Congress in 1985 and the Stockholm Congress in 1988. And then, finally, we came to the decision to set up a working group for a 'more effective ETUC', led by Jos Stekelenburg. In the end, it was mostly the Italian Federation, but also other central organisations such as the CFDT in France and the German DGB, which were in favour of a change of gear in the dynamics of the ETUC. So we prepared a reform, and I took part in the Stekelenburg working group. It completed its work in 1990 with this report, which was discussed and approved at the Luxembourg Congress in 1991.

And now the Italians were among those who thought that the ETUC should assert itself more as a genuine trade union player at European level. At the time, we used to say, with a certain simplification, '*From representation to action*'. And the Italian slogan was '*We need to unionise the ETUC*'. It was a bit short, but that was the idea. This momentum culminated in the 1991 Congress, which approved the reform.

Bruno Trentin¹² was one of those communist trade unionists who were very committed to Europe. He had a clear vision: he believed that we had to wage a battle against the dominant neo-liberalism not only in the national arena, but also in the European arena. He was very critical of the lack of effectiveness of the European Community, and he was very committed to the development of the ETUC, which he saw as an essential tool for waging this battle.

Arrival at the ETUC

I am indebted to Bruno Trentin for the very important support he gave to my candidacy for General Secretary of the ETUC [at the Luxembourg Congress in 1991]. I later learned that, before the Congress, during a meal in Brussels between Italians, including Bruno Trentin, and the German DGB, he had convinced the DGB President to support Emilio for the post of General Secretary. I already had the support of the Italians, of course, but also of the CFDT, the Spanish, the Belgians and others, but the DGB carried a lot of weight. So that's how I was finally elected General Secretary in 1991.

¹¹. Luxembourg trade unionist (CGT-L), General Secretary of the ETUC from 1976 to 1991.

¹². Bruno Trentin (1926-2007), Italian trade unionist and communist politician, was national secretary of the CGIL from 1988 to 1994.

When I arrived at the ETUC, my mandate was clear: we had to apply the reform we had voted for at Congress. The ETUC must make this qualitative leap. I also had in mind the fact that we needed to achieve greater unity within the ETUC.¹³ The problem of the Spanish Workers' Commissions (CC.OO) had been resolved. But the problem remained with the French CGT and the Portuguese CGTP. So I kept that in mind, while applying myself first and foremost to achieving internal reform.

One of the major issues in this reform was that of the professional federations. Until then, there had been sectoral 'trade union committees' which were organisations with rather vague structures – except for the metalworkers, who were already a federation. They were like free electrons, acting on a more or less corporatist basis, without any real overall vision. We succeeded in transforming these structures into genuine European sectoral trade union federations. As we progressed, we turned the ETUC into a Confederation with two pillars: national confederations and sectoral federations. Somewhat in line with national realities. I think that's an important change, and it's something I was very committed to.

Towards contractual social dialogue

Even before I arrived, Jacques Delors had set up a working group of social partners to prepare for social advances in the negotiations for the Maastricht Treaty. But the discussions were at a standstill. When Delors came to the 1991 Congress in Luxembourg, he told us: 'Hurry up! Maastricht is coming up, and we absolutely must conclude the negotiations with the employers.'

After the Congress and throughout the summer, we tried to reach an agreement on a joint contribution to the Maastricht Treaty with UNICE [now BusinessEurope, representing private-sector employers] and CEEP [now SGI-Europe, representing public-sector employers]. It has to be said that the main interlocutor was UNICE, and its Secretary General at the time, Zygmunt Tyszkiewicz. He was a high-level figure, a convinced European, even if our positions often diverged. Nevertheless, we were unable to reach an agreement on Maastricht. And then something strange happened: Tyszkiewicz suddenly announced that he had to leave on a long journey and would therefore be unable to take part in the next negotiation meeting. At this meeting, however, a solution was found with his deputy. And Tyszkiewicz agreed to this solution! So, on 31 October 1991, we signed our agreement on a joint contribution to the future treaty, and sent it to Jacques Delors, who took it up at the Maastricht Summit on 9 and 10 December 1991. This agreement was included, virtually unchanged, in the 'Social Protocol' which was adopted by the Heads of State or Government in Maastricht.

With the 31 October agreement, we were structuring a social dialogue dynamic with a contractual dimension. I've always been convinced that, if there's no contract, there's no union. So I've always thought that it was absolutely essential to develop a logic of

¹³. At that time, some major communist-inspired trade union organisations had not yet been admitted to the ETUC.

industrial relations on a contractual basis. For me, this was a very important shift in the ETUC's profile and in its role. There is no doubt about that.

Years later, we signed the first framework agreement with employers on parental leave in 1995, then on part-time work in 1997, and then on fixed-term work in 1999. In accordance with the Maastricht Treaty, we asked for these agreements to be transformed into directives, which the EU Commission and Council did. So, in a way, we were becoming co-legislators.

Euro-demonstrations

The question of the balance of power has always been at the heart of my concerns: showing public opinion and the EU that the ETUC is not just a bunch of top brass speaking on behalf of employees and trade unions, but that workers are directly involved. Of course, there had already been ETUC demonstrations before: 5 April 1978 was my first participation in a decentralised demonstration. But, during my term of office, I made a strong commitment to ensuring that, at every key moment for the EU – summits of heads of state or government, or other important moments – there would be mass demonstrations by employees and trade unions. That's what we did in Brussels on 2 April 1993: a decentralised Euro-demonstration in every country [*editor's note*: more than 150 national demonstrations and more than a million participants]. These mobilisations moved the lines. In 1994, we obtained the Directive on European Works Councils, which I consider to be one of the most important achievements of the ETUC.

There have been many other demonstrations [in 1997, 2000, 2001, 2002, etc.]. Each time, we tried to take advantage of high points and the attention they generated in public opinion, in the media and in the EU to advance our demands.

The single currency... what about employment?

A few months before the arrival of the euro, on 1 January 1999, we asked to meet Wim Duisenberg, who was then President of the European Central Bank (ECB) in Frankfurt. The ETUC was in favour of the introduction of the euro, but we held a major demonstration under the slogan: 'The euro is coming... what about jobs?' We raised the question, which unfortunately is still relevant today, of monetary integration without economic integration in return: in our view, the EU absolutely had to have its own resources, a European budget and instruments of economic governance. This is what we asked Wim Duisenberg: the single currency, yes, but will the ECB also have in mind the issues of growth and full employment? He replied: 'Yes, as stability is restored.' We took that to mean that stability came before employment, and not *with* employment.

So we asked for a forum for consultation with the ECB. We managed to obtain that, twice a year, a 'macroeconomic dialogue' would be held between the ECB president and the social partners to discuss monetary policy. But one anecdote nevertheless illustrates Wim Duisenberg's neo-liberal attitude: during a hearing of the European Convention, a

colleague asked him about his vision of the Central Bank and read out the statutes of the American *Federal Reserve*.¹⁴ I asked: ‘Do you see in this, Mr. Duisenberg, the possibility of the ECB evolving towards a similar mission?’ The answer was: ‘No way!’ We didn’t get our way on that one. To be honest, we weren’t listened to and we didn’t have the strength to impose this.

The ETUC: a model for the International Trade Union Confederation?

At the Prague Congress in 2003, Guy Ryder, who was General Secretary of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), gave a speech in which he said that, in the end, the ETUC had proved that it was possible to have a single trade union centre representing several schools of thought, on an independent democratic basis. And Willy Thijs, who was, at the time, Secretary of the World Confederation of Labour (WCL), also took the floor and echoed this idea [of having a single global trade union confederation¹⁵], saying: ‘Well, we’ll have to think about it.’

At that time, I was finishing my term of office and leaving the ETUC. But, in 2004 or 2005, I can’t remember exactly, Ryder and Thijs called me to ask me: ‘Emilio, would you help us with this unitary drive?’ Why me? I had had two affiliations in my trade union life: the ACLI, where we had established links with the International Confederation of Christian Trade Unions, which had, in the meantime, become the WCL, but also, when I became international officer of the Italian CISL, I was a member of the governing bodies of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). So, in the end, I was seen as a liaison man, or a man of trust on both sides, socialist and Christian.

That’s how I came to be asked to manage the merger negotiations. We had several meetings in Brussels, which I chaired, and we travelled to other countries. I remember, for example, that Guy Ryder and I went to Kuwait to meet the Arab trade union. We also sought the support of other centres that had retained their autonomy at international level, such as the CTA in Argentina, the UNTA in Angola, including the French CGT. But we didn’t really manage to expand as much as we would have liked. I also remember that, in 2005, at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Guy, Willy and I organised a big meeting with hundreds of trade unionists to discuss the new unitary world centre.

Finally, the ETUC as such, and the success of unification at European level, paved the way for reflection on unification at international level. It was this dynamic that led to the merger of the ICFTU and the WCL in Vienna in 2006 to form the new International Trade Union Confederation, the ITUC. So I think Europe has been an example, a benchmark. Moreover, the European social model sometimes becomes a reference point in global debates. That’s why we really need to safeguard and develop this model further.

14. Which puts the objectives of monetary stability and job creation on the same footing.

15. At the time, there were three major international trade union confederations: the socialist ICFTU, the social Christian WCL and the communist WFTU.

Emilio, the ETUC and the 'high and mighty': a few anecdotes

I met French President François **Mitterrand** at the very beginning of my term of office at the ETUC. I have to admit that I wasn't really sure of myself yet, especially as Mitterrand had a rather cold, distant demeanour. But, in reality, he listened a lot and made very precise comments. He always supported us, including in 1991 during the Maastricht Social Protocol episode. We could always count on him. Incidentally, another anecdote: in 1994, at the height of the war in Yugoslavia, when we decided to go to Sarajevo to celebrate International Workers' Day and show our support for the Bosnian trade unions in the city besieged by the Serbs, it was Mitterrand who gave us a seat on a French military plane from Split to Sarajevo. It was the only way to get there. And it was the French Embassy in Sarajevo that managed our stay, guaranteeing absolute security.

With **Jacques Chirac**, it was something else. It was absolute cordiality, utmost empathy: 'My dear friend, would you like a beer?' Chirac was a man of the right, of course, but of the social right. He was very interested in the ETUC. From time to time, he would send an adviser to Brussels, whose name I have forgotten,¹⁶ to ask us: 'How are things going, Mr. Gabaglio? Do you have any special requests?' He was very attentive to us.

In the United Kingdom, during the 1997 election campaign, we naturally supported Tony Blair and the Labour Party. It was then that **John Major**'s Conservative Party publicly declared: 'If Tony Blair wins the election, it will be Mr. Gabaglio who will run the UK's social policy from Brussels.' Utter nonsense, of course! But at least it showed that we had entered the debate!

Every year, there was the TUC conference, which I always attended, and, in the evening, a dinner with the political representatives was held. I remember having a discussion with **Tony Blair**, the then Prime Minister, at one of these dinners. The discussion was about European works councils, which he didn't like at all. His wife Cherie was at the dinner, and she agreed with me, while he disagreed. This is just an anecdote, but later, in 2000, we learned through our contacts that Tony Blair was opposed to the inclusion of the right to strike in the rights recognised by the Charter of Fundamental Rights. This was absolutely unacceptable for us. We denounced him publicly: 'In that case, you'll never be able to count on the support of the ETUC.' And I have to say that it was France that came to the rescue. **Lionel Jospin** went to London, talked to Tony Blair and managed to convince him.

We have often found important political allies in the ETUC's battles. Especially in France, but also in Scandinavia and Belgium. We also had major support from **Felipe Gonzalez** in Spain, before the break with the trade union movement. Incidentally, Felipe Gonzalez had given courses in trade unionism at the CISL's Florence school when he was a lawyer in Seville, still during the Franco period. We were friends with him, right up to the moment we broke up.

¹⁶. This is probably adviser Dutheillet de Lamothe.

Germany also supported us. It was certainly a bit different, no doubt because I don't speak German well enough to enter into a direct relationship. At the time, it was **Helmut Kohl** and then **Gerhard Schröder**. But the DGB, which was in favour of the ETUC's positions, had very important links with governments, whatever their political colours.

As far as my own country, Italy, is concerned, I remember being in Luxembourg for a meeting of the EU Council of Ministers for Social Affairs. That was under **Silvio Berlusconi**'s government. In Luxembourg, I went to meet the Italian minister at the time, **Clemente Mastella**, a former Christian Democracy MP who had switched to Berlusconi. I explained the ETUC's demands to him, and he replied: 'But Emilio, we are a right-wing government!' That was his reply.

On the subject of the Third Way in vogue during the Blair years, I remember that, in January 1999, I was invited to the World Economic Forum in Davos. I was to take part in a round-table discussion with some important people, in particular a representative of US President **Bill Clinton**, but also **Ricardo Lagos**, who later became President of Chile, and **Anthony Giddens**, the theorist behind the 'Third Way' advocated by Tony Blair. I remember that he challenged the legitimacy of the unions, saying that we were out of date and that we had to accept that. I had a very hard clash with him that day during the round table.

In 2001, on the eve of the Laeken European Summit, we organised a huge Euro-demonstration in Brussels. At the end of the route, we agreed to meet **Guy Verhofstadt**, the Belgian Prime Minister at the time, to present our demands. When I arrived, he said to me: 'So, Mr. Gabaglio, did your demonstration go well?' I replied cautiously: 'Prime Minister, I think there were several tens of thousands of us.' And Verhofstadt corrected me: 'But no, Mr. Gabaglio, you're mistaken: the police tell us there were at least 100,000 of you!' For a Prime Minister to correct a trade union leader on the success of a demonstration was something quite rare!

Part 2 Emilio: a tribute by some of his friends

Contribution from John Monks

Emilio – an appreciation, by Lord John Monks

I first came into contact with Emilio in the mid-1990s when I became General Secretary of the TUC and a member of the Executive Committee of the European Trade Union Confederation. The TUC had not voted for him as General Secretary, and he was never to miss an opportunity to remind me of that fact.

But from the start I was intrigued by him. At ETUC meetings, he invariably gave a strong lead in debates and found, in a masterly way, united and imaginative ways forward to deal with particular problems. I remember he used to slip out for a smoke in some dark corner in the air-conditioned building in which we met. I liked his style. He was very knowledgeable about the culture of individual European trade unions and nation states; he was very well educated and wise and although he was particularly close to colleagues from Mediterranean countries, southern Europe generally and to Latin America, he worked closely with those from northern Europe – the ‘beer drinkers’ as I called them – and won their respect and affection.

Our relations were warm and friendly although sometimes he could be wary about the Anglo-American influence in international trade union affairs. I like to think that working with me and later Guy Ryder, eased his suspicions. I asked him where he learned English – he said he came to London in the early 1950s to study the language. He boarded a train one Saturday in Milan and travelled by train and ferry to London; this journey took 18 hours, and, when he arrived at his lodgings, tired and hungry, he was told by the landlady that she didn’t work on Sunday evenings, nor was there likely to be anywhere open which served food, so he went hungry on his first day of his first visit to London nor was he impressed by the plain white bread which was the staple of the people in Britain at that time. He quipped, ‘How did this lot win the war’

I digress. In 2002 Emilio came to London to see if I was interested in being his successor, his original choice having been Nicole Notat of the CFDT who had withdrawn. I was strongly pro-European, and, after consulting my wife who is Dutch, I accepted. There were some who wanted to enhance the role of the ETUC President and reduce the power

of the General Secretary. Emilio and I refused this, and I recall Emilio saying, 'Let's face the music and dance.' I was duly elected at the Prague Congress in 2003.

After his retirement, Emilio continued to work for the European and international trade union movement. He campaigned for the ill-fated EU Constitution which foundered when rejected by some Member States. He presided over an amalgamation of the ICFTU and the WCL and championed the accession to the ETUC of democratic trade unions from the old Warsaw Pact and Western Balkans.

He continued to take justifiable pride in the EU Social Dialogue which he and Jean Lapeyre, with Jacques Delors' encouragement, developed imaginatively. Unfortunately, when Jacques retired, the impetus behind Social Europe weakened and to this day the ETUC continues to try to restore it to the role it had in Emilio's early days as General Secretary.

He was a great man, a hero to many of us. His humour, charm, knowledge and wily approach made him an attractive leader, and all who knew him will remember him fondly.

Lord John Monks

Contribution from Bernadette Ségol

Emilio, flashes of memory

These few flashes to highlight Emilio as I remember him: an upright man, a fine diplomat, who loved life, people, justice and social progress.

Emilio, cigarillo in corner of mouth, in the European Economic and Social Committee room, is concentrating on his reply to the Executive Committee. Behind him, the sign 'No smoking in the room' seems to be addressed to someone else, certainly not to him. A bit of rebellion against the diktat of authority.

The year is 1991. Emilio was a candidate for the post of General Secretary of the ETUC. He was campaigning for the trade union federations to become full members of the ETUC. Resistance was strong, as the federations were tempted to retain their independence, just as they had with the ICFTU. Emilio is informed that Euro-Fiet will support his proposal. He turns to me, sitting at the back, smiles and thanks me.

It's the early 2000s, I think. It's the end of the morning. A call: it's the General Secretary of the ETUC, Emilio Gabaglio. A very unusual call, because I'm just a tiny cog in the European trade union machine. Emilio asks me to give up a meeting room reserved for Euro-Fiet, because he needs it for the ETUC. I refuse, explaining that this meeting is expected and prepared for, and that I can't cancel it. Emilio gets angry, berating me for lacking loyalty, or consideration, or respect, or support for the ETUC. He's very virulent. I resist, I don't give up. End of conversation. I go out to lunch, shaken by this altercation which leaves me dumbfounded. When I get back, I start working again turning my attention to the computer. My office door is open, as it almost always is. Hearing a noise, I turn round. Who's that in the doorway? Emilio! 'I've come to apologise,' he says, handing me a box of chocolates. I'm speechless, unused to receiving apologies. He sits down, I sit down. 'Emilio, we're going to find a solution.' The solution came from Jean-Pierre Bobichon, our contact at the Commission: he suggested a room in Luxembourg, with the necessary interpretation. So the ETUC would have its meeting in Brussels and Euro-Fiet in Luxembourg. End of story. My appreciation of Emilio soars to new heights.

Emilio has an almost British sense of humour. He is determined and takes his job very seriously. He has faith, he believes in the ETUC. At the same time, with a thin smile at the corner of his lips, he has that touch of distance and humour that puts failures, successes and peremptory statements into perspective.

Emilio knows how to listen to members and try to find consensual solutions. But he can also, when push comes to shove, twist the arm of those recalcitrant members who are obliged to follow, whether they like it or not. In this way, he is leading the ETUC towards

a more social, trade union friendly Europe. The recalcitrant sulk alone, but not for long, because Emilio knows how to pick up the pieces and keep the ETUC united.

Certainly a role model for any ETUC General Secretary!

So Emilio rests in my memory, wrapped in affectionate respect.

Bernadette Ségol

Contribution from Jean Lapeyre

Tribute to Emilio

I started working with the Italian unions in the early 1970s. The national secretariat of the CFDT metalworkers' federation met twice a year with the unitary secretariat of the FLM. I was lucky enough to have fascinating discussions with the three extraordinary General Secretaries of the FLM: Bruno Trentin for FIOM-CGIL, Pierre Carniti for FIM-CISL and Giorgio Benvenuto for UILM. All three went on to become General Secretaries of their confederations. I had a particular admiration for Pierre Carniti, but I had no idea that, much later, I would meet Emilio, who was a lifelong companion of Pierre, in human, trade union and political terms.

I really got to know Emilio at the CISL Congress in Rome in July 1989, where I was representing the ETUC. Emilio had become one of the two candidates for the post of General Secretary of the ETUC to replace Mathias Hinterscheid. I made it known that, if the Dutch candidate was elected, I would leave. Fortunately for the ETUC, Emilio was elected General Secretary in May 1991. As I had been elected Deputy General Secretary at the same Congress, our tandem was on track!

Emilio has always been close to the CFDT, and he reminded me that he was present at the 1964 Congress as President of the ACLI and that he had worked hard, in vain, to try to convince Nicole Notat, the then General Secretary of the CFDT, to succeed him at the head of the ETUC.

I trusted Emilio. We had the same union culture and the same values, but we were very different people. I trusted him because I knew where he wanted to go. I didn't always understand the paths he was taking, but I knew where he was going. I think he trusted me too. He didn't always know where I was or what I was doing, but he likewise knew where I was going, and we both had the same goals. We were very different but complementary: he was the brains, and I was the brawn.

It was also a time when, thanks to Jacques Delors, the European Union was relaunching ambitious plans for the internal market, its social dimension and, therefore, the construction of European social dialogue. Jacques, Emilio and I spent some memorable evenings, relaxed, discussing among friends the future of Europe but, first and foremost, that of its citizens and of the working world, the human dimension always being Emilio and Jacques' primary concern. Both were deeply religious.

He died on 7 October, the anniversary of the horrific terrorist attack by Hamas and then of Israel's terrible vengeance, which Hamas but primarily Palestinian civilians suffered. He died on 7 October, a man who was passionate about the Middle East, about

a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian situation, about a fair two-state solution, which now seems so far away. He must have suffered terribly from this situation.

Mariangela, Letizia, Chiara, the grandchildren and the youngest, Penelope, brightened his life. This terrible unfolding of life that always seems to demand a life for a life, a death for every birth.

Jean Lapeyre

Contribution from Maria Helena André

The Number 7

I took part in the 7th Statutory Congress of the ETUC, in May 1991, as the Chair of the ETUC Youth Committee, known as the Group of 7.

The ETUC world was not new to me, since I had an observer seat in the meetings of the Executive Committee, where there were hardly any women, and besides me no young people. The atmosphere in Luxembourg was different from that at the Brussels meetings, I must admit. I was there with the rest of the Youth Group, and we excelled in preparing my speech to the Congress, knowing that I had only a few minutes, but it was enough to call for a better recognition of the role of young people in the trade union movement and the need for the ETUC to allow for a stronger youth representation.

The need for change was present in every speech, resulting from the geopolitical, economic and social challenges of the period, following the fall of the Berlin Wall or the completion of the internal market, with the tension around the election mounting. Who would be the next General Secretary? Emilio Gabaglio or Johan van Rens? Who would implement the recommendations from the Stekelenburg report 'For a more efficient ETUC'?

Emilio Gabaglio was elected, and you could see there and then that a new ETUC would grow under his leadership. One of the statutory changes approved by the Congress was the enlargement of the ETUC Secretariat to a new Confederal Secretary from 6 to 7. Another amendment concerned the inclusion in the Secretariat of at least one woman, and he decided to have two women.

In the middle of the summer of 1991, Emilio Gabaglio visited Lisbon and invited me to dinner. I can still picture the restaurant where we went, and I know exactly what we had for dinner. But I do not want to talk about the menu but about the invitation I received from Emilio to join the Secretariat of the ETUC.

It did not take a lot of persuasion to accept, although we had to negotiate the date when I would start. I was very honoured by Emilio's invitation and very proud to be part of his team. I know Emilio was taking a risk with this invitation, I was young and with limited European trade union experience and yet he believed I could do a good job.

I will always cherish his trust and support, I will always praise his kindness and understanding. Emilio has always been my mentor and much of what I am today I owe it to him. Loyalty, firmness, vision of the future, strategic thinking, always one step ahead of the others, are some of the many qualities of Emilio Gabaglio that made him such a special person. Special for me and for the workers in Europe.

Thank you very much Emilio for deciding the young woman, from Portugal Chair of the Group of 7 would become the 7th member of your secretariat following the 7th Congress of the ETUC.

Maria Helena André

Contribution from Reiner Hoffmann

Memory of Emilio

The first meeting with Emilio took place at the IG BCE trade union school in spring 1994 in Bad Münder. I had been recommended to him as a possible future director of the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) and he wanted to get to know me. I had reserved a room for our meeting and was well prepared, equipped with numerous index cards filled with key words in English. Something had gone wrong with the reservation of the room; it was full. The trade union school was located in a large park and Emilio, pragmatic as he was, suggested that we combine our conversation with a walk. That completely threw me off track and I could forget my index cards written in English. The conversation was a bit of a stuttering exercise, as my English was anything but fluent. Peter Seideneck, his closest advisor, whom I knew from the time when he also worked at the Hans Böckler Foundation, was appalled at my poor English and advised Emilio: 'You can't hire him.'

Emilio had chosen me anyway and proposed my appointment as director to the ETUI's board of directors. I had barely started in Brussels when he told me that the Institute was under critical observation by the President of the EU Commission, Jacques Delors, who was not very convinced by the work of the ETUI. If the quality of the work did not improve, he would cut the EU subsidies for the institute. I had doubts that Jacques Delors would be interested. A few weeks later he called me and asked if I had time for lunch with the President of the Commission. Of course I had time. We met in one of Delors' favourite restaurants – Le Pou Qui Tousse – near the Sablon.

When I was alone with Delors for a few minutes - Emilio had probably gone to smoke a Toscanelli - he said to me: 'I am very happy, Reiner, that you have taken over the management of the Institute.' He had told Emilio that if the Institute's reputation did not improve even further, the funding would be significantly reduced.

It was then clear to me that Emilio had not exaggerated. He did not want an institute that simply duplicated the positions of the ETUC but was very interested in critical analysis and independent science. Not all unions wanted that, and so the Institute was always criticized. In such situations, he always supported and defended me and the Institute. The years of our collaboration were characterized by great familiarity, and I valued and enjoyed it very much. He was an impressive personality and I - like many others - learned a lot from him. Thank you Emilio!

Reiner Hoffmann

Contribution from Peter Seideneck

Dear Emilio, in the second half of September I received the last message from you. ‘Dear Peter, I feel very bad and I’m in hospital. Take care.’ I got two messages. First, you wanted an end to your sufferance and second, it was a goodbye and farewell. After that, your daughter Chiara kept contact by WhatsApp with me and I was very grateful. And finally, I received on October 7th a message from Chiara. ‘My dad has passed away.’ Then I was on the phone with Jean Lapeyre. And my memory came back.

I recalled that once we had been sitting together and you told me the story about your resignation as the president of the ACLI Association. At that time, you had been in favor of the historical compromise with the Communist Party in Italy and this of course was not in line with the official policy of the Catholic Church in Italy. You told me that then came a man from the Vatican to meet you, and finally I understood that it was under pressure that you had to resign. And I said to Emilio: ‘Brought he chocolate with him or the praline? Emilio, how did you know?’ So, chocolate was the compensation of the Vatican for Emilio's position concerning the historical compromise.

And in a way after that, in the ETUC, you continued to work on the historical compromise because when you had been the General Secretary, the door of the ETUC opened also for the communist trade union confederations in Western Europe. And I remember we had a good discussion with Bruno Trentin, who was a close friend of you, and a very reliable and anti-Stalinist communist in Durban at the edge, I think, of the congress of the ETUC. The other event that happened when you had been General Secretary was the full association of the trade union organizations that belonged at that time to the confederation of Christian trade unionists. So, the ETUC finally – and you managed that – was a united confederation that had in its ranks all tendencies of the European trade union movement. This was for sure one of the major results of your General Secretary position.

And after that, I would like to mention another issue. One of focus you had from the very beginning, was to enlarge the ETUC to the trade unions of the new democratic states, leaving the dictatorship of the Soviet regime. The other very important issue was that there was a war in Europe– in Yugoslavia – and you tried everything you could during the war to bring the trade unions from the different new republics together on a table. You organized together with the trade unions in Sarajevo a First of May meeting in 1994. Karadzic, who was the nationalist aggressive head of the Serb minority in Bosnia-Herzegovina, threatened the day before that snipers would shoot to the manifestation. It didn’t happen. More than 2,000 people took part in the centre of Sarajevo, and nobody was shot.

At the end, my dear Emilio, another for me very important issue was the way in which you managed the ETUC internally. You never played big boss. You always respected the other members of the secretariat and your collaborators. You had been open to

critics. You never blamed people to have a different opinion from yours. You had authority, but you had not been authoritarian. This, of course, was a very important factor in the functioning and the internal climate of the Secretariat. At the end, you managed to mobilize the ETUC and ETUC member organizations. There had been a lot of manifestations and rallies, not only in Brussels, but for example, I remember well in Ljubljana, in Slovenia, where more than 30,000 people participated. Mobilisation and motivation had been an element of the ETUC reality in your period. So, Emilio, it was for me really an honor to work with you.

And at the very end, Emilio: me also, I'm closer to the exit. The day will come when I could join you. The problem is that you will be probably in heaven, since you had all your life a believer and I never was. So probably I will end up in hell. But could be that you find a way to bring us together again. I thank you very much. You have been a great human, efficient, charismatic leader of the ETUC.

Bye bye, Emilio, farewell.

Peter Seideneck

Contribution from Guy Ryder

I would like to convey my sincere condolences and sympathy to Emilio's family, to his very many friends, and to all those who knew and worked with him.

No doubt, as the venue of the High-Level Conference and its venue reflect, Emilio will be remembered by many above all for his truly historic role in the construction of the European Union and of a Social Europe in particular. The significance of that contribution was evident to all at the time; in today's challenging circumstances it can be judged even more clearly for its true worth. His is not just a personal legacy but a challenge and an inspiration for each of us today.

My own contacts with Emilio were less in the European arena and more in the field of global trade unionism. He was as committed to worldwide worker solidarity as he was to the European project. That was evident from his work as CISL International Secretary and in his extraordinary knowledge of politics and social conditions on all continents. When the idea of creating the International Trade Union Confederation first came about – and not by accident it was at the ETUC Congress in Prague in 2003 when Emilio stood down as General Secretary that it got its first public airing – it was almost natural that Emilio should play the key role that he did as intermediary and facilitator. All of his strengths as a negotiator, his profound understanding of the global trade union movement, and above all the esteem in which he was held in all of its different currents combined to help bring about successful unification three years later. It would not have happened without him.

It was in this crucible that my own friendship with Emilio was forged and I got to know the man behind the public image. He was a brilliant political operator, but that talent was always directed by profound belief in the justice of what he was working for and strong adhesion to fundamental principles that did not change, whatever the circumstances. And that is why Emilio marked the people that he worked with just as much as he marked the social history of his time. He life will be celebrated and his loss mourned by people on all continents.

Guy Ryder

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