

## United World College of the Adriatic

### Opening Ceremony Pula 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2009

Railway carriages - this might be a topic for an extended essay – seem to have played an unpleasant role in history, as the Germans discovered when they were humiliated by the French in that carriage in the forest clearing in Compiègne north of Paris in 1918 and the French likewise in turn by the Germans in the very same carriage in 1940. But the meeting that took place between the Founder Headmaster of Atlantic College, Desmond Hoare, and a young Italian diplomat Gianfranco Facco Bonetti, in the train between South Wales and London in 1971 led directly, albeit only after eleven intervening years, to the creation of the United World College of the Adriatic. Victories, as we know, have many fathers, successful schools many founders; but there is no doubt whatever that your President was the original and first founder of this college that is meeting here today.

Duino students are, as we also know, special, gaining their international credentials among other accomplishments through their ability to sit through long and numerous speeches, with extra bonus points when these speeches are in an incomprehensible foreign language. The three most difficult things in life are to climb a fence that is leaning towards you, kiss a girl who is leaning away from you, and remain awake until the very end of an Adriatic College Opening Ceremony. I shall do my best for you, encouraged by experiencing the College in good shape after a difficult period.

Mia moglie ed io siamo particolarmente contenti di vedere – rivedere – una piccola squadra di Duinesi. Che veniate una prossima volta in due o tre corriere come si faceva una volta! Un saluto affettuoso da due Duinati sentimentali e pieni di nostalgia.

A few weeks after my wife and I arrived in Duino we fell into conversation with an old man fishing on the banks of the River Isonzo north of Kanal. His father had fought in the Austrian, he in the Italian, his son in the Yugoslav armies. If he had a grandson, he would have been in the Slovene army. All generations of this family had lived in the

same house. Humphrey Davy, the inventor of the British miners' safety lamp, was tubercular and spent his holidays in the small Slovene village of Podkoren. A plaque on the house records his stays there in Slovene. If you unscrew the plaque you will find the same text in German on the other side – an economical way to behave in changing political circumstances.

There is more history within a day's walk of the Adriatic College than in the neighbourhoods of all the other United World Colleges rolled into one, perhaps even more, as Winston Churchill once suggested of the Balkans, than can be digested. Languages, culture, art! Did Jason and his Argonauts really reach the River Timavo in their mythical search for the Golden Fleece? If you examine carefully the rock floor above the river mouth you will find the ruts of wagon wheels from the time when this was a main trade route between Aquileia and Illyria to the south. Wealthy Romans spent their summer holidays on its banks. Trespass into the grounds of the waterworks that control the undersea supply of fresh water to Trieste above the road at this point and examine the fine Roman mosaic floor, a survivor from one of those fine villas that made this a magical place for those Roman holiday-makers. Visit the Aurisina marble quarry that has been mined continuously since the days of Christ. It is an extraordinary privilege and an extraordinary opportunity to attend this of all colleges, but it is also a profound responsibility, for there is blood too. On closer examination one has the feeling that every old building, every stone, is stained. The responsibility is to understand the bitterness and the suffering and to learn. *"Days of mad illusions, faith in a better humanity, which made us exult and demand the deaths of millions of men."* This was the First World War here. 162,563 Italian soldiers were court-martialled for desertion. One Italian general revived the old Roman practice of decimation, the execution of soldiers chosen at random from units that had failed to "perform". Hundreds were shot officially. One must wonder: how many unofficially? One ambitious journalist noted that *"the soul of the country was in the hands of the newspapers."* Was this, another writer asked himself, *"a tragedy or an opera?"* I am sure that if the wretched behaviour displayed by Gabriele d'Annunzio on 28<sup>th</sup> May 1916 on the Timavo river, just two kilometres from the College, which included giving orders to turn the guns on his own men who without him

had crossed the river under enemy fire, had been more widely known, he could never have become the Fascist hero who led his legionnaires from Ronchi dei Legionari to take Fiume in defiance of the decisions of the Versailles Treaty. All these and many other details are given in a book published recently by a young English historian, Mark Thompson, *The White War*. I feel sure that a copy has already reached the College library. If not, I will donate one.

Looking back, I am convinced I should have ensured that every student visited first the mouth of the River Timavo, then the magnificent Škocjan Caves some 40 kilometres from Duino where it goes underground, perhaps also those other immense caves beyond Postumija that are blackened by the explosions of ammunition stored by the Yugoslav partisans during the Second World War. The Timavo was so stunned by the College's arrival in September 1982 that, two months later, it stopped flowing for several days for the first time in recorded history.

None of this, of course, is of any value or interest unless the College makes itself a part of the local history. Hence the village campus! In the early days many students lived in small local residences belonging to Duino inhabitants. Then came the move towards fewer, larger College residences, a change that was well under way years before I left. I regretted it then and I regret it now. Good news for the College accountants! Good news perhaps for student control! Bad news for the College's purpose!

In 1982 when the College was founded, the natural challenge was East-West relationships, and it was a strange time. Before the College opened we had sought permission through the Yugoslav Embassy in London to set up a marine activities base on the Istrian coast. Years later, thanks to a former student of Atlantic College who had influential contacts in Belgrade, we discovered in confidential files a report that this proposal, given that Lord Mountbatten had earlier been the International President of the United World Colleges, was clearly a NATO effort to spy on Yugoslav naval defences. Nor was Yugoslavia alone in such matters. The Italian politician Cossiga, later President of the Republic and at the time President of the Senate, was our main speaker at the

second annual opening ceremony. His head was always full of conspiracy theories – probably still is. Whilst struggling through my first major speech in Italian I heard much muttering on stage. This was not our own President, Corrado Belci, translating my Britannic Italian into Italian for a Sardinian, but Cossiga explaining to Belci that he must keep a very careful eye indeed on David Sutcliffe who had self-evidently been sent across to Italy by the British Secret Service. In those days Mark Sylvester had a South African passport and was not allowed into Yugoslavia. He overcame this difficulty by taking up caving and crossing the border underground. When we mentioned this to the visiting Yugoslav consul he was quite definitely not amused. (We used to have an Italian teacher who had also been a student at Atlantic College – Marco Dalbosco. When Mark Sylvester finally secured his Italian citizenship we invited him to change his name to Marco Dalbosco II. If you do not get the Sylvester-Dalbosco allusion, have a quiet word with a Latin-speaking colleague, but do not worry – I had to explain it all a few weeks ago to Cristina Leban). But there were amusing moments as well. We had been provided with six vans by Fiat at a friendly price. When they all needed their first service I found myself as the apparently least busy member of the staff entrusted with taking them down to Trieste to the large Fiat establishment on the sea front. The moment the workmen discovered I was English, I was subjected to detailed, riveting descriptions of the differences in military demeanour and etiquette between the British and the American occupation forces, descriptions that led rapidly to operatic demonstrations of British and American marching, counter-marching, saluting, presenting arms and all the rest of military parade ground drill. Within minutes work stopped, all the Fiat employees joined in, and the entire performance was repeated the moment I reappeared for another service. A happy memory, as was too the occasion on the Yugoslav border when we had our first two Chinese students in the van – the entire border was closed in both directions for at least fifteen minutes whilst the enthusiastic border staff poured out of offices to examine the first Chinese passports they had ever seen.

Between 1982 and 2008, 1647 students from Central and Eastern Europe were given scholarships by the United World Colleges. If you take the value of a scholarship as 20.000 € and entrust the mathematics to first year students in Maths Studies, you will

arrive at a total figure of 65,880.000 €. If, however, you pass the calculation to a second year class in Further Maths, perhaps under the remote control of Elham Sheiry, taking account of inflation, the additional costs that arise from travel and pocket money and above all the subsidies that most colleges contribute towards the quoted costs of scholarships, you are likely to approach 90,000.000 €. This is an extraordinary record, comparable with governmental grant programmes. It was the Adriatic College's privilege to take the lead on behalf of the United World Colleges, and by 1990 one third of College students were from Central and Eastern Europe.

Was the College therefore responsible for the fall of the Berlin Wall? We must be reasonable about such matters and share the credit with others! But the key to the matter lies in the well-known Bismarck quote: The statesman does not make history, *"but when he hears the rustle of God's cloak, he springs up and seizes its hem"* (to which our Kurt Hahn added: *"There are those who can hear but not jump; others only too ready to jump but deaf."*)<sup>1</sup>

What then, in these days of rucksacks and Ryanair, is the mission of the United World Colleges?

The early days of the Atlantic College were focussed on the unity of the Atlantic nations, Western Europe and North America. Kurt Hahn's motivation, recorded with spectacular inaccuracy on the UWC web site, was unequivocal: *"There is spiritual unrest among the youth of Russia ever since Khrushchev admitted in 1956 that massacre and torture were part of the system he served ... many young people look westward with hope and with distrust and ask a question that will make us blush: are you in earnest about the ideals you profess? Who shall give the answer? ... I believe the Atlantic College can contribute to the most important task of our generation – the transformation of the Cold War into a hotly contested peaceful contest of the spirit .... "*

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<sup>1</sup>*Der Staatsmann macht keine Geschichte, "aber wenn er in den Ereignissen um ihn herum den Mantel Gottes rauschen hort, dann kann er hinzuspringen und einen Zipfel erfassen." Die einen horen und können nicht springen, die anderen sind nur zu sprungbereit, aber leider taub.*

The United World Colleges are above all else a political endeavour. One of Hahn's otherwise foremost critics in Germany, Hartmut von Hentig, has this to say: *"Politics and Education: with Hahn, the former not only leads to and contributes to the latter, it not only has "political rank"; it is itself the beginning of politics. It is from this reflection that Hahn develops his schools, his secular "Order" for our time, his experience-based educational principles, his themes of response to challenge and responsibility, his international Atlantic College. This reflection enabled him as a matter of course to raise educational matters with the most senior statesmen, to stimulate them to the foundation of schools .... We understand once again what education is and how integral it is to politics."*<sup>2</sup>

The 1980's became the time of bridge-building, of reconciliation between East and West. It is true, thanks above all to the founder Headmaster of the Atlantic College Desmond Hoare (this is rarely acknowledged in UWC circles) that initiatives were taken in Third World matters leading to the setting up of the Simon Bolivar College in Venezuela, but this has remained a footnote, albeit an important footnote, to the main UWC story.

The concept of UWC students educated to be leaders has always been and always will remain controversial, but the UWC movement must itself be in the lead. And so there arises the absolute need to hearken carefully to the rustle of the hem of history, a difficult task. Is the current pre-occupation with rebranding, I ask myself, a matter of shine or substance; and should the UWC image become more distinctive and separate, or more embracing and cooperative?

It remained again the privilege of the Adriatic College, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, to engage in reconciliation in the 1990's throughout the bloody break-up of Yugoslavia. I

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<sup>2</sup> *Politik und Paedagogik: Bei Hahn traegt die letzere nicht nur zur ersten hin und bei, sie hat nicht nur "politischen Rang", sie ist selbst der Anfang der Politik. Aus diesem Gedanken entwickelt Hahn seine Erziehungsschule, seinen weltlichen Orden auf Zeit, seine Erlebnispaedagogik, seine Bewahrungs- und Verantwortungsschule, sein internationales Atlantic College. Dieser Gedanke laesst ihn auch mit den hoechsten Staatsmaennern ganz selbstverstaendlich ueber Paedagogik reden .... wir nehmen wieder wahr, was Paedagogik ist und wie sie mit der Politik zusammenhaengt.* Kurt Hahn – Reform mit Augenmass: Ausgewaehlte Schriften, ed. Michael Knoll

recall the students who came to Duino from all the different parts of that tormented country; the sound of the guns, clearly audible from Trieste, during the brief war in Slovenia; the girl from Banja Luka and the boy from Srebrenica in the same tutorial group, both of whom had lost close family members, hostile in their first year, united by their common fate in friendship in their second; the refugees for whom we were able to find scholarships to transfer them from camps to the College to give them a future; my meeting in Zagreb with 40 school pupils recently evacuated from Vukovar; the NATO bombing of Serbia during the Kosovo crisis - Duino lay on the flight path from the NATO base Aviano, the war planes could be heard passing overhead, and the Serb students would run to the telephone or computer to alert their families; the Sunday evening when I was driving Orthodox students to attend Easter mid-night mass in Trieste and the planes flew overhead as we were entering the van, many students making the journey in tears, to be comforted individually after the service by the fine Orthodox priest of that time.

It is also hard to envisage a more challenging and, one must acknowledge, more rewarding time for the College social service. For some two years students visited the refugee camp in the forest near Kozina, just over the border in Slovenia, almost every weekend during term time. The refugees were mainly women and children, along with a few older men and a small number of families. The students' main job was to organize games and activities for the children, which quickly expanded into the teaching of English. The basement of the academic building was full for weeks of huge parcels of medicines, clothing and food contributed by student families, local inhabitants, donors from Germany and Britain and other IB schools, of hundreds of packets of milk from the Bar Bianco, as many as ten volunteers working every afternoon to sort all these materials into boxes for distribution to the camps. A former student of the Atlantic College, Stephan Barker, working in the European Patent office in Munich, raised and donated money to supply one camp with a new and critically needed boiler and heating system.

As more refugees arrived in the region the College expanded its activities, particularly to a large holiday camp at Umag which had been turned into a refugee camp of huts and

tents. There the College arranged for the setting up of a loudspeaker system playing music and generally enabling communication over the camp with equipment donated by an IB school in Frankfurt. There was never any shortage of volunteers, even when we had groups in two different camps on the same weekend, and many students got to know individual children and families well and became skilled at organizing activities. And the College arranged the visit to Italy of a choir of young refugees in Ljubljana, led by a wonderful musician from Sarajevo, whom we got to know well.<sup>3</sup>

Preceding and behind these more dramatic events lay the steady stimulus of interest in the spread of the International Baccalaureate. Our first really active partnership was established with two outstanding gymnasia in Ljubljana and Maribor. Both, with the full backing and funding of the now independent Slovene government and the untiring assistance of Adriatic College staff, introduced IB streams of 15 carefully selected pupils in each year. Their first diploma examination results placed them at the head of all IB schools worldwide. On the basis of this experience the Maribor Head, Ivan Lorencic, was seconded from his schools for several years to direct radical changes in Slovene secondary education, a major IB contribution to national educational reform. Croatia, at the College's suggestion, opened an IB stream in a Gymnazium in Zagreb; the then Czechoslovakia followed in the same footsteps; the Director of the Bilingual Schools programme in Hungary joined the College Council of Administration and thereby strengthened his position over the introduction of the IB into a leading school in Budapest; and the impressive growth of IB schools in Poland also occurred in regular and close cooperation with the College.

Must one now say that the East-West challenge has been fully met?

This is the moment for me to say a word about the UWC-IB Initiative in Bosnia, which is an extension of the work of the Adriatic College and could not have been born without the support of the College.

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<sup>3</sup> There can have hardly been anyone in the College who did not contribute in one way or another, but all present at the time will associate these efforts in particular with Andrew Maclehorse and Manuel Fernandez.

First, the story of how the link between the College and Bosnia and Herzegovina was created!

The magnificent library building in Sarajevo was on fire, shelled by the Serb gunners in the surrounding hills. A Serb lady from Banja Luka, Azra Karabdic, for years a loyal citizen of Sarajevo, was with many others hurriedly rescuing books and documents and found that she had saved a prospectus of the Adriatic College (how it had got there remains a mystery). Discovering that there were no Bosnian students in Duino, she insisted on access to one of the only two working satellite telephones in the city and rang the Trieste Chamber of Commerce (she was herself an employee of the Sarajevo Chamber). The Trieste Chamber responded with the immediate offer of two scholarships.

The library is no longer burning, but it has not been rebuilt either. Extracts from the most recent issue of the American journal *Foreign Affairs* give us no comfort: “*Bosnia ... on the brink of collapse ... Bosnians are once again talking about the potential for war ... an institutional structure based on ethnicity that rewards those who appeal to fear and ethnic chauvinism ... conflicts that begin in Bosnia rarely remain within its borders ... if the international community fails in Bosnia, the prospects for international state building elsewhere are extremely grim.*”

It has been natural that international education since the Second World War has prospered in countries that are politically, socially and economically stable. But what of the countries that lack these advantages and, as a direct consequence, have the most urgent need of all for international education and international understanding? It is here that the challenges and the opportunities for international educators lie in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

This is an extract from papers presented to the UWC International Board and Office when the Bosnian Initiative was first envisaged:

*Is there a real role for international education in societies struggling to regain their balance after conflict, the roots of which are still present? Can the United World Colleges contribute, after the cessation of conflict, to the rebuilding of civic society on the ground? Are we right within the UWC to sense a renewed need for an idealistic target that might initially seem to be beyond our grasp?*

*What we propose must be convincing and rewarding, with recognizable practical consequences, for the local people. It must be tailored to the local situation, taking advantage of national traditions and accomplishments. If it is elitist, it must nevertheless be reasonably accessible to those who want it. It must be capable of further local development to ensure relevance. It must be value for money by standards and figures that we are not accustomed to. To ensure sustainability, it must be dovetailed into existing structures and have strong local participation. To secure funding it must be convincing to international agencies and therefore politically alive. It will indicate clearly a path towards local takeover. To gain credibility and create confidence, it will almost certainly be programmed in incremental stages. Idealism and practical necessity will move hand in hand.*

What is the record?

We have set up a United World College within a national school, the students living in local rented accommodation.

In the first three years we have had 283 scholarship students, 171 from all national (or “ethnic”) groups in Bosnia, and 112 from 37 other countries round the world including Afghanistan, Iraq and Rwanda.

Our Centre for the Professional Development of Teachers has so far implemented 12 workshops and 4 study visits to Slovenia for a total of 459 participants from all Cantons

and Entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The participants have included 9 ministers of education, 21 representatives of 7 pedagogical institutes, 64 head teachers representing 33 towns and 357 teachers from schools across the country. With funds from Slovenia we have begun the institution of courses in management for future head teachers with subsequent certification.

In answer to the question on the UWC role in these matters I give you the following story from two years ago. A girl from Germany had just arrived and found herself sharing a room with a Croat girl from Mostar. The German girl asked her room mate to show her around the town. Here you must understand that Mostar is divided down the middle by the Neretva River, the Croats living on the western, the Bosniaks on the eastern bank. It transpired that the Croat girl, 16 or 17 years old, had never crossed to the other side. “Then”, said the German girl, “I will take you there”. And she did. Which is why we are there.

And what of the future?

We are struggling with a development plan for the next 5-7 years. Our aims? A strong college of 200 UWC students, 4000 participants in our teacher training programmes, the consolidation of leadership, management and certification courses for head teachers, the creation and recognition of a national interpretation of the International Baccalaureate that will be offered in the local languages to make it accessible to local schools, with the main features carefully respected (“Learn how to Learn”, Extended Essays, the Theory of Knowledge, obligatory activities and community service programmes), and an IB Moderating Committee that will influence the syllabus content and assist the final evaluation process, the examinations. This proposal will receive its first review by the IB Advancement and Access Committee on 20th November. Ambitious ideas, you will say, noble even, their nobility lying perhaps in part in their unrealism – we do not have the money for next year’s entry of students. Timothy Garton Ash of St. Antony’s College, Oxford – St. Antony’s College! I have at home a letter in which the donor of that college, Antoine Besse, asserted that, had he known Kurt Hahn earlier, he would have

given his money to him rather than to Oxford. His son Antonin, with us today, made possible the launch of Atlantic College and therefore of the United World Colleges through his donation of St. Donat's Castle and played a critical role in the founding of both the Adriatic and the Mostar Colleges – Timothy Garton Ash wrote: “*But to say that an ideal has never been fully achieved is merely to say that it is an ideal.*” We have no alternative but to proceed in that spirit.

I want to speak briefly about three remarkable personalities in the relationship between Central and Eastern Europe and the United World Colleges.

Professor Pawel Czaratoryski of Poland was a member of the Polish Catholic nobility. I remember him guiding my wife and me through the Castle in Krakow. He knew all the portraits on the walls intimately – they were his ancestors. He attended school underground under the Nazis, the university underground under the Soviet communists. Let us remember that Poland lost six million lives in the Second World War, of whom just 200,000 were soldiers. ***God's Playground*** was the title chosen for his major work on Polish history by a well-known contemporary historian. Some playground! Despite achieving an international reputation as an academic Pawel Czaratoryski refused offers of teaching posts from American and other universities. His duty was at home and, living in humbling domestic circumstances, he became advisor and counselor to scores of university students in their personal and political activities, to the miners in the *Solidarność* movement, and on Polish internal affairs to Pope John Paul II. To visit his students or to attend meetings in Duino he climbed aboard the overnight bus from Warsaw to Venice. He was the inspirational figure in setting up UWC National Committees in Poland, Belorussia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Kaliningrad. After recognition of the IB had been repeatedly delayed by an unwilling government, he persuaded the Minister of Education to attend a UWC regional meeting in Kazimierz. After stating that he was not going to let him out until he had given way, he cornered the Minister in a small room in the presence only of the Atlantic College Headmaster Andrew Stuart and me. It was an impressive performance. Two weeks later the Ministry

published the document granting the IB Diploma full recognition for entry to all Polish universities.

Irena Veisaite was a Lithuanian Jew whose mother was killed in a Nazi prison in 1941 when Irena was 13 years old. She was taken by her grandparents into the ghetto in Kaunas from which she escaped alone one dark evening in 1943, walking the streets for three hours before she was eventually given shelter. *“The most terrible thing was to force oneself to walk slowly on the pavement. This was a shooting offence for a Jew...”* She was eventually “adopted” by the wife of a Lithuanian general who had been taken off to a Soviet Gulag and, unknown to his wife at the time, executed there. After war’s end the wife was herself imprisoned, then sentenced to 10 years in a Gulag as well. In 1990 Irena met George Soros at a conference in Dubrovnik. He had been looking for leaders in Lithuanian society to set up Open Society programmes. She told him: *“You can overthrow a government in one night, but if you do not change mentalities, you will not succeed. It must be an educational foundation” – “and you should have set it up the day before yesterday”.*

Irena was the Vice-Chair of the Open Society Board from 1990 until 1993 and the Chair from 1993 until 2000. By 1998 over 50 programmes were being run by a staff of 70. More than 500 books had been published; over 1000 participants were being sponsored for conferences, seminars and study trips abroad; access to the internet had been set up for almost 700 organizations; a performing arts programme was developing modern theatre, dance, cinema and music; the education programme was sponsoring the Step by Step movement for teachers, the Egmont Kindergarten and many High School teaching programmes, field trips, the integration of children from ethnic communities with a particular emphasis on Romany children, child-centered classrooms, and the democratization of pre-school education; and curriculum development was being carried out through the Transformation for Education programme. In addition there were the Health Education, the Library, and the Social Care Programmes for street children and for the mentally and physically handicapped; the Lithuanian Journalism Centre was established; new law clinics promoted the legal education of citizens; amendments were

drafted and put forward with the support of the United Nations Development Programme to the laws on charity and relief; **and** there was the part-sponsorship of students to the United World Colleges and the funding and running of ten UWC Short Courses in Lithuania. When George Soros was asked what he remembers when thinking about Lithuania, he answered: *“I see in front of me Irena’s face”*. When I questioned her, looking back, for her comments on the United World Colleges, she replied: *“There is an urgent need to work faster, lest other pressures take over”*. When the celebrations took place at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2004 to mark the acceptance of the Baltic States into the European Union, it was Irena Veisaite who spoke on behalf of her country. *“I felt proud and good to be speaking as a Lithuanian of Jewish origin in the capital of the people who had desired my death.”* George Soros has established a permanent Fellowship at the University of Vilnius in her name.

My third personality is the Founding President of the Adriatic College, Corrado Belci.

Corrado Belci was born in Dignano, only a few kilometres from Pula, and spent his early years here in Pula. Nothing could have been more appropriate than to have had him today as your main speaker. Alas, he is very unwell. *“Old age is always a shipwreck.”*<sup>4</sup> He has spent his life giving hope, optimism and confidence to others. Let us trust that today’s ceremony in the place of his youth will express some of our debt to him.

Corrado has recorded and often recited his first direct experience of war. He had been playing football – he was always a passionate sportsman and later became both a sports journalist and President of the Trieste Club *La Triestina* - and had been bruised on the shin by a famous Pula player, Aldo Fabbro. Three days later, his bruise still sore and visible, American Flying Fortresses raided Pula and caused extensive damage. Racing down with friends to the home of his soccer hero Aldo, he found him lying dead in the ruins, the foot that had wounded him severed in the rubble. Not long afterwards, again sheltering from a raid, this time in the spire of the church Sant’ Antonio, he resolved with

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<sup>4</sup> *“La vieillesse est toujours un naufrage”*: de Gaulle

a close friend to form the future DC, the Christian Democratic Party, in Pula. He was 19 years old.

In 1947, along with thousands of fellow Italians, Corrado Belci and his family left Pula as exiles for Trieste, the almost inevitable consequence of the abandonment of the major part of Istria to Tito and Yugoslavia by the Allies. As is curiously characteristic of that bewildering city Trieste, it was once again an immigrant who was to make one of the greatest contributions to her prosperity and well-being. There is scarcely a major development or achievement of the post-war years that is not associated with Corrado Belci's political skills, personal devotion and utter integrity of purpose: the immense expansion and modernization of the port facilities, the autostrada system, the environmental law for the protection of the Carso, the setting up of the special Fondo Trieste that financed so many major capital projects in the city, indeed the very creation of the Autonomous Region itself of Friuli-Venezia Giulia.

Italian politics is a mystery to foreigners, perhaps even more of a mystery to Italians. One is tempted to say that their politics are the greatest compliment one can pay them – only the Italians could survive them. But Corrado Belci was quite clear that, in this “*country of continual passion and fragile structures*”<sup>5</sup>, politics was not about power for politicians but service to the people. And he was equally clear about the demagogic alternative always lurking in the background: “*Il capo – il popolo – l’ovazione!*” A few weeks ago my wife and I were walking in the Carnian mountains north of Udine when we encountered one of those lorries with a crane that was moving heavy equipment. In the driver's window was posted a large manifesto. “*Last night I had a wonderful dream. I dreamt that I had written a letter to Mussolini. Here is what I wrote: Caro Duce ....*”

It was often a hard and bitter road with harsh challenges for him and his family, never more so than when confronting terrorism and the Red Brigades in the “*years of lead*” in the 1970's. The bloodshed of those years is all too easily forgotten: in 1974, 428

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<sup>5</sup> “*Questo paese dalla passionalità continua e dalle strutture fragili.*” Aldo Moro

assassinations; in 1977, 2128; in the first 9 months of 1978, 1668; in the single incident at the Bologna railway station in 1980, 85 dead and 200 wounded. Corrado Belci was one of a group of four or five Christian Democrats who were leading the country through these dark times, darkest of all when their leader Aldo Moro was kidnapped in 1978, held captive for 55 days, then left in a car boot with ten bullets in his chest. I have an all-too-vivid picture of Corrado Belci's life at that time – the permanent armed escort and the bullet-proof clothing, the move every night to a different place to sleep, the frequent telephone calls from Rome to Trieste to assure his family that he was still alive, the pain of the repeated loss of colleagues and friends, the agonies of the choice between saving Moro through negotiation and respecting the principles of democracy and the state. And he often spoke too of his friend Pietro Mattarella, President of the Region of Sicily, with whom he had a long telephone conversation on the morning of 6<sup>th</sup> January 1978; when he returned from Mass two hours later Mattarella was dead, shot down in this instance not by the Red Brigade but by the Mafia. We are sometimes scornful of Italian courage, and we do well to note that, in the crowded cathedral of the funeral service, his younger brother Sergio rose and announced to the congregation that he was henceforth assuming his brother's political role – he was later as Minister of Education to take the recognition of the International Baccalaureate through the Italian Parliament.

The Italian Cardinal Tonini was moved to make this comment on the terrorism of those years, but he must have had in mind too the years 1939 - 45, those years of the utter desolation of the human spirit, victims of the partisan war in Yugoslavia stripped naked, bound together with barbed wire and cast over the cliffs into sea, the Istrian catholic priest who had his throat cut after celebrating Sunday Mass, the thousands of Cossacks (no innocent victims themselves, it must be admitted) with their families, who, in response to the demands of the Yalta agreements, were handed over to the partisans after the war by the British, Britain's greatest war crime, to be machine-gunned to death in the fields of northern Slovenia: *“The truth is that terrorism has reached that immeasurable infinity that only the human spirit can impart to evil, it is that pitiless inferno that in the*

*natural world is to be found only in the human heart, man the only being capable of endowing evil with the freedom and intensity of the spirit.”*<sup>6</sup>

Belci’s great friend and political mentor, Benigno Zaccagnini, Secretary General of the Christian Democratic Party during the “years of lead”, was to write: *“as a Christian I have the duty to believe in hell, but I am also able to think that it may be empty.”*<sup>7</sup> It is, I suggest, not fanciful to see the entire human dilemma summarised in these two statements of the Cardinal and Zaccagnini. Indeed, it is my conviction that the post-war years of the 1950’s, the 1960’s and the 1970’s in Italian politics, the patient struggle to bring the large communist party into responsible parliamentary activity on condition that it abandoned Stalinism, the courageous fight to establish the roots of effective democracy (*“la democrazia compiuta”*, to echo the phrase so often used by Belci), in a society that had previously seen much of even its Catholic faith absorbed by Fascist ambition, may rightly be called years of moral, even spiritual struggle. Democratic survival in the “years of lead” would not have been possible without the steady preparation of the earlier period. Nor is it inappropriate to recall the grave doubts during that time of the UWC International Board over the setting up of a College in Italy – without the steadfastness of Tony Besse, I doubt if any of us would be here today.

But it is Corrado Belci the peacemaker that I would above all like to bring to mind today.

In his history of Christian Democratic personalities in the political life of Trieste, Corrado remembers the animosity that had arisen between him and a certain colleague. Feeling himself the guilty party, he sought him out and apologised. A moment of surprised silence, and then *“a tear, an embrace and the immediate move from the formal Lei to the informal Tu blessed our peace.”*<sup>8</sup> In 1965, at a time of enormous stress between the Italian and the Slovene communities in Trieste, a communist Slovene, Dusan Hreschak,

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<sup>6</sup> *La verità è che il terrorismo ha raggiunto la smisurata infinitezza che solo lo spirito dell’uomo sa dare al male, e quella spietata abissalità che, in natura, si trova soltanto nel cuore umano, che è l’unico essere capace di dare al male la libertà e l’intensità dello spirito*

<sup>7</sup> *“Come cristiano devo credere all’inferno, ma posso anche pensare che sia vuoto.”*

<sup>8</sup> *“Qualche lacrima, un abbraccio e il passaggio immediato dal Lei al Tu, sanzionarono la pace”*

was nominated for membership of the City Council. Opponents assembled 52,000 signatures in protest. Even the Bishop of Trieste, the famed Bishop Santin, whose memorial church towers over the cliffs and Bay of Trieste, deliberately and evocatively facing his lost homeland of Istria, contributed ill-concealed, easily identifiable but anonymous articles to the local press. Belci's response: he went secretly to the home of Dusan Hreschak and achieved an immediate human relationship. He was always able to distinguish between religious loyalties and the public duties of a Christian statesman.

In 1976-77 the Osimo Treaty that finally and conclusively ceded the Istrian Peninsula to Yugoslavia was signed and ratified. It is the Italian equivalent of the recognition by the government of Willy Brandt of the Oder-Neisse Line between Germany and Poland. Corrado Belci was entirely clear that it was his responsibility as the Deputy for Trieste to see the process of ratification through the Italian Parliament. He was also clear that this meant the end of his political career, for he could never again achieve re-election. He did not hesitate, dismissing tributes to his courage and integrity with light-hearted comments that he had already exceeded the time he had promised his wife he would spend in politics. For him the Treaty was *"a necessary humiliation to turn the page of history ... to begin again to exist, to live as a nation"*.<sup>9</sup> His political will was a direct reflection of his personal attitudes. Writing about the College after several years as President, he defined the qualities necessary for peace-making: *"peace is not a comfortable process ... it is that little fragment that the young students of the United World College put together ...it is the courageous creating of peace between former enemies without waiting for the other to begin, it is that continuous process of giving without receiving in return, above all without knowing whether and when the process will ever achieve completion."*<sup>10</sup>

The College's Peace Walk of 2000, appropriately organised by Viviana Pace, was a small symbol of this sentiment. It took the students from the little-known monument in Basovizza to the Slovenes executed in 1930 by Italian Fascists to the far better known

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<sup>9</sup> *"... un'umiliazione necessaria per voltare la pagina della storia ... per ricominciare a esistere, a vivere come nazione ..."*

<sup>10</sup> *"La pace non è comoda ... è quel pezzetto che i giovani del mondo unito mettono insieme ... è la coraggiosa pacificazione tra ex-nemici senza aspettare che cominci l'altro, è questa continua donazione senza contropartita, soprattutto senza sapere se e quando mai l'opera sarà compiuta."*

Foibe, also in Basovizza, and thence to the Risiera in Trieste, the only Nazi concentration camp on Italian soil. It was, as is recorded in the book of the Times journalist John Earle, *The Price of Patriotism*, the first time ever that these three monuments had been linked together in a single manifestation. The College march was emulated shortly afterwards by the Italian Minister for Equal Opportunities but in a personal, not an official capacity.

Corrado Belci has written a dozen books, among them an admirably calibrated, sensitive account of the history of the border between Italy and her eastern neighbours from the time of President Wilson's proposals in 1919 up to 1945. He has written too about Osimo and the Schengen Agreements, although his ill-health has prevented him from bringing this work to the point of publication. And it is true: without Osimo, there can have been no Schengen. The German formerly communist writer Manes Sperber has this chilling reflection in his memoirs: *"in the cemetery of things past the dead do not lie under the gravestones; they crouch and cower on top of them, the oppressors alongside their victims."*<sup>11</sup> It has been Corrado Belci's rare accomplishment to have enabled so many of these unhappy creatures to withdraw more peacefully into their final resting place.

Corrado Belci never met Kurt Hahn. What conversations they would have had, had they shared a common language!

I do not believe that there is a single school, neither Salem nor Gordonstoun nor the schools of the so-called Round Square Conference, about whose creation he was so unhappy, and certainly not the United World Colleges, that can call themselves true Hahn schools. The man is missing. But we can and should remember three things.

His schools were intended to be centres of healing within their neighbourhoods.

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<sup>11</sup> *"Im Friedhof des Vergangenen liegen die Toten nicht unter den Grabsteinen, sie kauern auf ihnen; die Verfolger neben ihren Opfern."* Manes Sperber: Bis man mir Scherben auf die Augen legt.

He wanted the rebel, not the conformist. All his efforts were aimed at nurturing the moral conscience and the spirit of body and mind to follow its commands. Moral health and martial vigour! “ ... *In my Oxford days, I would have said if you scratch an English undergraduate or Public Schoolboy, you will find a rebel. Today I say that if you scratch them you will find a civil servant ....*” The citizen has the duty to speak out. He praised and quoted often Churchill’s phrase “*the angry growl of democracy*”. He himself was ever unable to remain silent. Some examples:

When the corpses of thousands of Polish officers were uncovered in mass graves in the woods of Katyn in 1943, he protested against the refusal of the British Government to recognise the truth – that they had been murdered by the Soviet, not the German army. “*The Germans have committed much more horrible crimes; but there is one thing they are not capable of doing: they cannot murder men in 1941 who were already dead in 1940.*” This was the key moment when it became clear that Poland, the country for which Britain and France had entered the war in 1939, was being abandoned. Remember that, under pressure from Stalin, Polish soldiers and airmen who had fought for the Allies were prevented by the British government from taking part in the 1945 Victory Parade in London.

After his second war-time sermon in Liverpool Cathedral (here was a remarkable thing – a Jew preaching in an Anglican Cathedral), the Cathedral authorities would not allow the publication of his text because he had so strongly criticized the partisans’ oath of the Soviet allies: “*I promise to avenge always mercilessly and without pity. Blood shall be avenged by blood and death by death.*”

He protested immediately over the use of the atomic bomb against civilians: “*...war necessity or war convenience?*”, quoting the Franck Report written by the German Jewish physicist who had himself been involved in the development of this weapon, whom he knew, and on whose behalf he had drafted a published protest against Hitler in the 1930’s.

A supporter of the policy of unconditional surrender, he nonetheless protested against incompatibilities between it and the terms of the Atlantic Charter agreed previously between Churchill and Roosevelt.

After the war, a specially courageous move for a German Jew who had fled Germany in 1933 and spent the war in Britain, he questioned publicly the justice and legality of procedures under which certain German generals were being tried and condemned.

He declined an invitation to speak at a meeting intended to seek bridges between the Jewish and the Christian faiths: *“I am since 1945 a Communicant of the Anglican Church and while I am proud of my pure Jewish race, I find myself in bitter opposition against the Zionist revival of a fierce Old Testament tradition and against all those European Jews who have condoned Bernadotte’s murder.”*<sup>12</sup>

Kurt Hahn once described remembering a boy who told him that, when he was small, he would lie awake dreaming of how one day his grateful parents would come and bring him flowers for having saved the world.

I am sure that you have not come to the College for the sake of a wealthy career in merchant banking, or to win a Shelby Davis scholarship, or for future free bed and brunches around the world with former College friends, or even for a cappuccino down at the Porto, but for the sake of dreams such as these.

*„Wer keinen Mut zum Traumen hat, der hat keine Kraft zum kaempfen.“*<sup>13</sup>

The question, Albert Schweitzer has told us, is whether we ought to make history or to endure it.

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<sup>12</sup> Bernadotte was assassinated in Jerusalem in 1948 by the militant Zionist group Lehi, while pursuing his official duties as the UN Representative charged with negotiating an Arab-Israeli understanding

<sup>13</sup> *“He who does not have the courage to dream does not have the strength to fight.”* Otto Herz

Remember those dreams of roses and the prospect of a grateful world. Hold fast to them. Cherish them in the midnight hours and live them in the morning. They are the best, the only hope for mankind.

I have finished. I wish you well.

**David Sutcliffe**