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Living Memory - 30th Anniversary of the Charter of Paris for the New Europe

Everything Was Magmatic

Interview with Ambassador Antonio Armellini

Ambassador Antonio Armellini was roving ambassador to the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) from 1990 to 1992.

In this interview, he recalls the negotiations leading to the signing of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe in 1990 and reflects on the Charter's legacy for the present day. He spoke with former OSCE researcher in residence Gian Lorenzo Zichi (PhD, University of Cagliari, Italy).

MEDALLION/TEASER

[ARMELLINI]: Thank you

Zichi: You recently published a book on the diplomatic negotiations leading to the Charter of Paris. What was the significance of the Charter at the time and what was its legacy for the Helsinki Process?

[ARMELLINI]: The Charter of Paris and the negotiations that brought it to fruition were intended to pick up the threads of the Helsinki Process, updating and revitalizing it in light of the new situation that was emerging in Europe, that of the overcoming of the Cold War and the announcement of a "whole and free" Europe based on shared values and common principles. It was the period when – as you will recall – the idea of the "end of history" had come into its own, and the Charter of Paris was supposed to be a depiction of what could and should be and obviously was not. The Helsinki Process had defined the ways and limits of co-operation between the two opposing blocs; it had, in other words, set the framework of an antagonistic but not conflictual relationship between them. It was now up to the Paris Charter to redefine its logic and modalities, accompanying a process of transition to a common perception of democracy and society and reaffirming the enduring validity of its founding principles in the new Europe, stretching from the Atlantic to the Urals, that was being announced.

The Charter of Paris was designed to accompany a transitional period of years, but this period actually lasted only a few months: the 1992 Follow-up Meeting, "Helsinki 2", which was supposed to fine-tune its operational framework, clearly showed how the Yugoslav crisis was seriously calling into question the political assumption behind the new Europe project mapped out in Paris. The value of the Charter of Paris remains that it represented an extraordinary opportunity to change the political and security arrangements of the European continent and East-West relations in general. Things eventually moved differently, much more quickly than expected. This matter of timing was not the only reason for what later happened, but it was certainly a concomitant of the fact that we ended up in such a profoundly different situation.

[ZICHI]: We are living in a period in which war has returned to Europe and in which the architecture of international security is deeply threatened. In your opinion, what should be the role of the OSCE and how do you see the future of the OSCE itself?

[ARMELLINI]: We are living through a dramatic phase fraught with many uncertainties. The role of the OSCE is necessarily more limited, but of course not as much as some think. The evolution of the crisis may bring it to a point where the OSCE's principles, but also its practices and conducting of negotiations gain new strength. We often hear in Italy that the way to resolve the conflict and get out of the crisis is: "enough of Yalta, let's go back to Helsinki". It has become almost a mantra, but we tend to forget that the Helsinki Process was possible because there had been Yalta, which codified the division of Europe into distinct and opposing blocs. When the confrontation lost the possibility of turning into conflict, and both sides realized that they could not gain any further from its continuation, then the window opened to move, with Helsinki, to a different phase. Today we are faced with a kind of logical reversal because we will have to return first to Yalta – that is, to a situation in which both sides realize that they will not be able to derive substantial additional benefits from the continuation of the war – and then set off in search of a way out. Only at this point could the mechanisms of the OSCE come into play: the Ten Principles, the "constructive ambiguity" of their application and the way they have been used over the year, where they have worked on several occasions – not perfectly, but worked nonetheless – could come in handy in the situation we now have in and around Ukraine. There are also downsides, of course, primarily involving the entropy of international organizations, which the OSCE has certainly not escaped. As it moved from a flexible negotiating forum to a structured international organization, the limitations of the Helsinki Process became more apparent.

MAIN INTERVIEW

[ZICHI]: Now we would like to take a step back with you. Can you tell us when your personal involvement with the CSCE and with the preparation of the negotiation of the Paris Charter began?

[ARMELLINI]: My involvement with the CSCE began in the second half of the last century, when in 1988 I assumed responsibility for the CSCE Department of the Political Affairs Directorate of the Farnesina [Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation]. It was the time when the Vienna Follow-up Meeting was drawing to a close, which led to some rather important achievements, particularly in the human dimension. The meeting was still held according to the procedures of the old CSCE, and I realized this with partly amused bewilderment when I went to Vienna for the first time a few days after starting my new work. The setting, in the solemn hall of the Hofburg, was quite unique. Plenary sessions were held two orthree times a week and, once the reading of the agenda was over, lasted on average less than half an hour, that is, until a delegation, on the basis of prior agreement, asked for "a coffee break," which was immediately granted. There had been no basis in the plenary for recording any progress, anda couple of days slipped by until the next session. Negotiations continued informally, however, among the protagonists of the three main groups: NATO and European Economic Community (EEC) countries, the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, and Neutral and Non-Aligned Countries (NNA). The negotiating framework was no longer one of confrontation, as previously stated, but neither were there shared values in the technical sense.

With the PrepComm [the negotiation of the Paris Summit and Charter] we moved to a completely different pace. As I wrote in my little book on the Paris Charter, the transformation of the negotiating timeframe was radical; what used to be done in a matter of years, the PrepComm did in a matter of months. It was able to do so because the idea of moving toward a shared goal had taken hold. Each of the parties came to the negotiations with their own priorities and goals, yet everyone worked at a pace of an intensity previously unknown at an international conference. There was a realization that everything was changing and you needed to reach a conclusion that would allow for the development to be governed jointly.

[ZICHI]: The Charter of Paris was negotiated and signed at a time of profound transformation in international relations, in a tight timeframe of about six months. What, in your opinion, were the crucial and most problematic phases of the negotiation?

[ARMELLINI]: I think the most complex part was the initial preparation, when it was necessary to recompose very different positions as an entirely new framework was emerging. The proposal for a summit grew out of a Soviet initiative, on which were grafted some Mitterrandian visions of the new world security order, in which France was to play a special role. Both aroused keen American misgivings, and one of the most complex knots was to overcome the difficulty for Washington to fully grasp the significance of an operation that, in my view, brought to fruition the great gamble of the Helsinki Process.

I digress briefly: why did Helsinki work? On the basis of a double intuition, or wager if you will. On the one hand, that of Henry Kissinger, who imagined that the little cankerworm of human rights could insert into the Soviet system factors of instability that would eventually undermine it. On the other, that of Leonid Brezhnev, to obtain the legitimization of a *de facto* suzerainty and the recognition of Soviet hegemony in Central and Eastern Europe. It was a win-win negotiating scenario (the one that in another context and different forms I was evoking in the case of Ukraine) that was instrumentally presented as mutually beneficial, but resulted in a winner and a loser.

The Paris Summit was initially envisioned by the Soviets as defensive, to safeguard as much as possible the existing order, but with Mikhail Gorbachev it became the instrument with which to govern a new order. The most complicated point was certainly that of finding an initial basis on which to start working. Then, in the negotiations, positions were crossed that were admittedly more tactically than strategically opposed. As it went on, there was no shortage of problems. Germany entered the negotiation as two states and came out as one, and this deeply affected German attitudes. The decline – almost an eclipse – of the NNA countries challenged their traditional role of kingmaker in the Helsinki Process and created great difficulties for them: it was no longer clear with respect to whom and to what they should be neutral and non-aligned in a world that was moving away from the logic of blocs. In the end, however, the fact that a shared arrangement was to be arrived at was recognized by all as the indispensable goal and the very essence of the summit.

[ZICHI]: Ambassador, could you tell us what was the atmosphere in the Austrian capital especially at the beginning?

[ARMELLINI]: The feeling was that we were facing a crucial deadline. The world around was moving with great speed in Vienna itself (and more were to come). We were meeting – this is also an interesting aspect – in the same hall of the Hofburg where the Congress of Vienna of 1815 had been held, and the weight of memory was strong. The priorities were partly similar, but the times were radically different. That the timeframe would be short was perhaps not obvious at first to everyone. But certainly it was to Mitterrand, who aimed to have the summit held in Paris, which was not unanimously accepted at first. Negotiating for an all-encompassing final outcome – which for the Helsinki Process was not trivial – led to an acceleration that was eventually shared by all, although at first the feeling had been that the goal was to define the rules and boundaries of a negotiating space within which to arrive at a final agreement later. Even from the first weeks and early discussions of the agenda it became clear that this was not going to be the case. The coming German unification and the advanced unravelling of the Soviet system made it clear that if one really wanted to be part of a process that would define the path to a new security arrangement in Europe, the Summit and Charter would have to be done as soon as possible. By the time of the New York meeting (Oct. 1 and2, 1990), which confirmed the American commitment, it was understood that not only could we go ahead, but Mitterrand could be given satisfaction that the Paris Summit would be convened within the year, although perhaps less focused on the new pan-European security arrangement than he would have wanted.

[ZICHI]: Could you tell us how Italy approached this important deadline and the composition of the Italian delegation that you led during the PrepComm?

[ARMELLINI]: Italy's participation was very active. Someone remarked – I don't know whether rightly or wrongly – that in our participation in the Helsinki Process there were two fundamental phases. That of 1973-75, of the drafting of the Final Act, and that of 1988-90, of the drafting of the Paris Charter, which we looked at as the Magna Carta of the new European arrangement, which we mentioned earlier. This also reflected the orientation of the government at that time, where there was a Prime Minister like Giulio Andreotti, who was an "old man" of the CSCE in its original vision, and a Foreign Minister like Gianni de Michelis, who was instead a strong innovator. De Michelis imparted a strong thrust to this second phase, because he realized perhaps more than others its importance for Italian foreign policy. I believe that De Michelis was one of the most intelligent foreign ministers of these years, capable of being able to see beyond the immediate, but not always careful to make sure that the intendancy followed. He was often ahead of political reality. It was very clear to him that this was an opportunity to assert Italy's role in a scenario in which the blocs would count less and individual countries would begin to count more, as would groups such as the EEC. This was the line followed by the Italian delegation throughout the negotiations. We were very active, with constant back-and-forth play with the French, who had a different vision, inspired by the Mitterrandian ambition of French political primacy. We also had the extra card of the rotating presidency of the European Community, which allowed us to increase our influence, which we exercised both in the PrepComm and during the summit. In Vienna the (almost) fledgling political co-operation among the EEC Twelve had its first concrete test runs, with some difficulties but also with several benefits for the substance of the negotiations. In short, the overall picture was one of an Italian position that was

well defined at the national level by Prime Minister Andreotti and Foreign Minister De Michelis, with different approaches but essentially shared aims, and a co-ordinating function exercised through the rotating presidency of the EEC, which allowed for a high-profile diplomatic role. In Vienna, it became clear that the EEC Twelve was an entity whose presence and participation was essential.

[ZICHI]: Remaining in the vein of Italian specificity, what were Italy's main objectives?

[ARMELLINI]: Italy intended to be an active and co-responsible player, aiming also by virtue of its traditional European commitment to make the influence of the EEC equal to that of the other major players. To speak of an equal role is perhaps too much, but assuring the vision of the Twelve a decisive weight in the construction of the new balances that were emerging was certainly a fundamental component of our participation. Foreign Minister De Michelis paid particular attention – I mention this in my book – to the processes of decomposition and re-composition in Eastern and Central Europe. This was an area close by and of historical interest to Italy in which everything had come into motion and where we wanted to be present more effectively, even if the Yugoslav crisis created much confusion and some mess. Italian attention was focused on how to safeguard our present and future interests in the presence of a rapidly growing Germany. This area was more at the centre of our attention than the Mediterranean, which also – I am well aware – was historically a mainstay of the Italian presence in the CSCE. That said, we determinedly pushed the Mediterranean dossier in Vienna, often failing to garner more than general interest from our partners. I remember that in Vienna it was difficult to engage the Mediterranean non-participating countries themselves. There was the usual impasse with regard to Israel and there was the problem of Libya's involvement, so that it was only Egypt that gave the impression of taking a concrete interest.

[ZICHI]: In your book you write that the commitment to the negotiations by the participating countries was “choral”. Which delegations did you work closely with? Did any points of difficulty emerge?

[ARMELLINI]: From the point of view of negotiation – or if you like of negotiating technique – the interlocutors were, first and foremost, the European Community and the Atlantic Alliance (in which the EEC was included, with the sole exception of Ireland), each of which expressed the Western position in an autonomous but closely related form. The group of Eastern countries, on the other hand, practically no longer existed. There was interlocution with the Soviet Union, which was indispensable, but absolutely passive. The other members of what had been this group acted autonomously, calling themselves “new democracies under construction” and playing a very incisive role, especially Poland and Hungary. The NNAj countries had difficulty playing their traditional role as liaisons and suffered partial marginalization. Especially within the Western group, the negotiations were choral in nature – a dialectical chorus -that had to confront the problem of politically linking the communitarian dimension with the broader context of Atlantic solidarity. This was one of the most complex tasks of the negotiations for the Westerners: there were no real clashes, but the new communitarian political reality did not always fit with the traditional procedures of the CSCE (nor with the vision of some of our Atlantic partners) and was received with suspicion, especially by the

United States. The latter had expressed a strong initial reservation about such a procedural innovation, which remained evident in some parts of American public opinion and government. The United States delegation, as the United States ambassador in Vienna explained to me, unlike those of most other countries, had no unified structure led by an ambassador whose job it was to express the national position. Rather, it was composed of a plurality of delegates who independently received their instructions from different authorities, with respect to which the ambassador played a somewhat mediating role. The official sent by Congress, for example, was answerable to it and not to the ambassador, complicating as we would later see, the progress of the negotiations. I think the PrepComm was a very interesting growth experience for the whole Western group, particularly at the European Community level. European political co-operation took its first steps in Vienna, following the lead of the various European Councils, which reiterated the prime importance of seeking common positions within the CSCE process. The Atlantic Council's London Declaration [July 6, 1990]1established the norms of mutual co-operation at the Atlantic level, but on a day-to-day basis it was a process of "adjust and progress" that had to find its own justification each day. All of this took place in the face of the substantial passivity of the Soviet Union, which looked with perplexity at the role of communitarian Europe. It was accustomed to a direct relationship with the United States, from which it drew its fundamental guarantee of security, a guarantee that for a long time rested on the illusion of the permanence of the two alliances. In the meantime, the latter was being destroyed at its roots by those of the Warsaw Pact who were supposed to remain members, but who, instead, did not even think remotely of maintaining the Eastern bloc, displaying a disruptive attitude that accelerated the end of the Soviet system.

Also very interesting, given the context of the time, was the role of two leading players in so-called Eastern Europe, Poland and Hungary. Both could count on top-notch diplomatic staff and brought in-house instances that were fundamental to the definition of the new security balances, even if they expressed at times priorities and aspirations that were problematic for the very success of the negotiations (as their future participation in the European Union would, many years later, be charged with highlighting). That said, in Vienna theirs was certainly an important role.

Germany was a major participant. Once it was verified that the "2+4" scheme was working and, with the signing of the Treaty on the Final Status of Germany on September 12, 1990, the certainty of German unification was attained, its interest became less keen because the underlying objective of its participation had been substantially achieved. As for the Americans, recalcitrant at first and then gradually more convinced, they were negotiators who were always very careful to prevent the Atlantic dimension and the fundamental role of the "two European partners from afar," i.e., the United States and Canada, from being challenged in the slightest. Within the European front there were also very opposing positions: there were those who pushed hard and those who pushed less hard for the success of the negotiations and for the affirmation of the EEC's unitary role.

Finally, it is worth mentioning a small event that is perhaps more relevant than it seems. Not many people remember that the Paris Summit [November 19-21, 1990] was blocked for about a day and a half by Liechtenstein, over an issue of territorial sovereignty that smacked of feudalism. The Liechtenstein family had owned much of Bohemia, which had been expropriated from it by socialist Czechoslovakia, and was demanding its restitution. It took some doing and good offices to get them to withdraw their opposition to consensus on the Final Document. I remember running into the

President of the United States, George H.W. Bush, who could not understand the situation and said, "but who are these gentlemen who [by blocking the summit] are preventing me from going home?" Liechtenstein felt that it still had the right – but perhaps it was mainly a statement of principle – to claim in the heart of Europe sovereignty and restitution that harkened back to a bygone order and threatened to open up far more thorny issues, which were not lacking and very complicated to resolve in the years that followed.

[ZICHI]: Earlier, you referred to Italy and the Mediterranean and how the latter was ancillary. Could you tell us more about the Mediterranean passages of the Paris Charter?

[ARMELLINI]: In Paris, as you know, there was no debate in the sense that it was primarily a protocol event, where the heads of state and government reiterated their positions; the negotiation was done in the PrepComm. It was known that the Mediterranean chapter was an integral part of the CSCE, but those who committed themselves to broadening its scope were relatively few. Italy had been doing it strongly since Helsinki, but the French and Spanish attitude was rather lukewarm and it was not possible to go much beyond reaffirming the priorities we cared about. The Mediterranean countries, for their part, did not seem to fully grasp the importance of this. For the Americans there was the taboo of Libya and for the Arabs that of Israel, which blocked any hypothesis of progress, particularly on the proposal for a CSCM [Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean] that was then, and has remained, an Italian priority. The CSCM resumed the CSCE model, but did not, in my opinion, take enough account of a fundamental difference: Helsinki worked because it indicated the ways of possible co-existence between adversaries whose confrontation had already been stabilized at Yalta. The CSCM was supposed to indicate ways of co-existence between adversaries whose confrontation was far from stabilized.

[ZICHI]: We would like to dwell briefly on the composition of the Italian delegation that you led in the Vienna negotiations. What memories do you have, also personal ones, of your team?

[ARMELLINI]: As we said before, the negotiations had a very fast pace, leaving little time for anything else. The Italian delegation was very cohesive and worked well from the beginning, with members from different backgrounds, but all of the highest calibre. It included diplomats – some experienced and some younger –, military experts, legal advisers and administrative officials, who alternated depending on the situation. There was always very effective co-ordination and transparency. I believe that in the "old CSCE" there had been room for personal disputes and differences, but here, I repeat, there was not the inclination and especially not the time for such things. Unlike the United States delegation, for example, the Italian officials of the Farnesina and other agencies always operated in a unified key.

[ZICHI]: How do you assess the evolution of the CSCE/OSCE in the aftermath of the signing of the Paris Charter?

[ARMELLINI]: At the "Helsinki 2" meeting in 1992, the CSCE saw an opportunity to give substance to the transformation announced in the Charter by operationally articulating the commitments contained in its various chapters. The Yugoslav crisis befell all of this: within a few months it seriously challenged the prefiguration of a "new world" capable of solving all problems within a framework of co-existence and respect for sovereignty. In Helsinki, from 34 participating States we had already become 52. The ceremony of the signing of the Final Act by the new member countries took place a couple of days before the July 1992 summit. We were in the midst of the Nagorno-Karabakh negotiations, but no one wanted to miss the opportunity to witness the surreal scene in which Armenia and Azerbaijan, which at that very moment were in a war with each other, solemnly signed the Ten Principles.

The signs of crisis were obvious. In 1992 in Helsinki it was decided that the CSCE would become the OSCE, but the difficulty of carrying forward a project that was the child of a vision of European security that had changed again was already being confirmed. It was no longer a matter of opposition between two blocs, East and West, with easily recognizable interlocutors, but rather one of the unravelling of a system that should have sought re-composition.

Helsinki 1992 was an attempt to keep a co-operative arrangement in place while a part of Europe was shattering, in substantial contrast to commitments made in a very different perspective, and this led to serious consequences. There is, in my opinion, an entropy of international bodies, which makes the CSCE, moving to the OSCE, the CSCE has remained but has taken on the nature of a technical crisis management tool, more reduced than the Paris vision. And yet, the CSCE, having become the OSCE, retains a less spectacular but still significant utility. Missions on the ground perform an important peace-building task, although they have been very little mentioned and often forgotten. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) grew over time, despite the fact that the Americans had opposed its creation in Vienna, more because of internal congressional dissension than scepticism about its basic idea. With the CSCE becoming the OSCE, organs such as the Conflict Prevention Centre, field operation and the OSCE PA, which had been conceived at the time as collateral to the structured collaboration to be carried out within the Ministerial Council and in the Permanent Council, have taken on greater weight. Collaboration in the Councils is mainly formal, while in the other organs concrete steps could be taken, although the Paris Charter had not reserved a priority role for them.

[ZICHI]: In 2022 you published the book entitled *Italy and the OSCE Charter of Paris for a New Europe (*in Italian). Can you tell us what prompted you to write this book?

[ARMELLINI]: There were at least two reasons for this. The first is that the negotiation for the Paris Charter represented, all in all, a significant moment in the diplomatic history, minor or otherwise, of our country, about which little has been said. Having at my disposal memories, documents and other material, it seemed to me not without importance to reconstruct this event, both for its general value and as a testimony of how Italy was able, at a dramatic juncture, to play a role whose importance was not known to all. Then there was the desire to bear witness to the very significant growth of political co-operation within the European Community. As chance would have it, it took place under the Italian

presidency, but that is only of relative importance. What matters is that it experienced in Vienna a realization beyond expectations, in a magmatic framework that opened up many spaces.

The second reason arose from a reflection on how the experience of the dynamic of the Vienna negotiations, and of the CSCE in general, may still have utility. While in the post-Paris era everything became more complicated – we were still far from the invasion of Ukraine, but critical issues were not lacking – I wondered whether the instrumentalization of a pact system conceived in the late 1980s to manage the transition from confrontation to co-operation might not, *mutatis mutandi*, also be applicable in the crises of the present, starting from a proper assessment of the room for manoeuvre within the opposing camps to try to identify an area of convergence and co-operation. The application of the Helsinki Principles succeeded through a clever use of "constructive ambiguity" in bringing together the principle of the inviolability of borders with that of their modifiability. This kind of dynamic, which succeeded in recomposing opposing positions, albeit with not a few grey areas, could be useful even today. It remained locked in a drawer for a long time because it did not seem to be needed anymore, but now that we are returning – not to the Cold War of the 1970s, but nevertheless to a situation of confrontation –, yes, it can be applied. Not so much to promote a negotiation, because that will be possible only when the analysis of the respective costs/benefits is consolidated, but to foster the conditions for it to happen. The book should have come out several months ago and in the meantime the crisis has accelerated, making it an old book, but, if you will, also current.

[ZICHI]: Very current, I would say. Not only does it allow us to rediscover an important historic moment, but it is also a useful instrument for reading the current reality. Moving now to current events: what is happening in Ukraine is there for all to see, a situation that is having an impact on the very functioning of the OSCE. How do you think the OSCE could or should act with respect to the Ukraine crisis, and could or should Italy also play a role?

[ARMELLINI]: I have already given answers to this question on several occasions in the course of this talk. The OSCE is a forum in which one can meet and look for margins of mutual compatibility. It is a platform that allows, without fixed commitments, to meet where there is a will to overcome a conflict. As it should be in this case. Interestingly, the OSCE is generally never talked about, but in times of crisis it is talked about by pulling it, like a jacket by its sleeves, in one's favour. This circumscribes its effectiveness in the immediate term, but shows how in a crisis both sides find an advantage in it. The Helsinki Process was born that way and that is its value. Right now, there is no Cold War, and I don't think there will be a nuclear war, but there is a horrendously polarized debate in which it is difficult to formulate any kind of reasoning. The OSCE can be a place where reasoning, nonetheless, can be done. The OSCE has the advantage of being the only forum where everyone is present. To say that it is the only forum where everybody is present does not give an automatic guarantee for effectiveness, and I cannot say how it could be useful in the present moment, but I think it could play a positive role if a different phase opens up in this crisis. One in which both sides come to the conclusion that they cannot gain any further advantage from continuing the conflict, and the respective public opinions and elites accept that this would be the maximum advantage realistically possible, and expendable politically internally. In such a case, the OSCE could become a place for

reasoning, where the parties concerned do not cast votes or decree who wins and who loses, but rather find a mutually acceptable way forward. Even in Helsinki, the negotiation worked because it started from a win-win assumption, although in the end there was a winner and a loser. Will it happen? Will it not happen? I think today we are far from that possibility, and it is difficult to get beyond the starting positions of the two sides. There is aggression, and it has to be stopped. One gets out of aggression either by *debellatio*, total defeat of the adversary, or by armistice or negotiation. In the absence of *debellatio*, the OSCE can make sense.

[ZICHI]: More than thirty years after its signature, what do you think is the legacy of the Charter of Paris today?

[ARMELLINI]: As we said earlier, from a historical point of view, the Paris Charter remains an interesting example of how to update a pact dynamic that was conceived for the management of the East-West relationship, and whose evolution it had followed, making it an instrument to accompany the transformation of the background scenario, preserving the ability to manage it and anticipating the possibilities for change. The Paris Charter was derived from the Helsinki Final Act and the Ten Principles; it updated and transformed them because the world had changed in the meantime. It is an example of the flexibility of international institutions – structured or not – and can certainly be a source of interest to those who study these issues.

In addition, for those who are involved in international relations, the book I wrote on the negotiation of the Paris Charter can be a small guide to negotiating technique, showing how a negotiation evolves day by day and positions change. For someone who is about to become a negotiator, it is perhaps worth taking a look at what those who have done the negotiation say, the results they have achieved, the mistakes they have made, and the difficulties they have encountered in general. The Paris Charter is a tool that can come in handy at the right time, as I have been saying. It is also a small piece of history from which to evince some more technical aspects.

The PrepComm came unstuck when the negotiators of the Twelve – alone and without collaborators – decided during a weekend in the countryside [the Helenental Seminar in September 1990] to present a winning common position, following the "Gymnich model" [informal meetings of the European foreign ministers]. Whatever the skill of the negotiators and whatever the complexity of the issues, every now and then it took a political juncture in order to move forward, and the New York Ministerial Meeting fulfilled that function. The negotiation of the Paris Charter was also a laboratory of diplomatic interaction. Some lessons can also be drawn from the analysis of the Vienna negotiations about what happened next. It struck me very much how Yugoslavia abandoned with a volte-face at the very last moment the position of the Twelve and sided with the American position, subjecting everyone to an unexpected extra negotiation at "Helsinki 2". I asked the Ambassador in Belgrade about this, who replied that we did not realize who was the master and who was not in charge of the negotiations and added, as the warnings of the Yugoslav crisis were becoming clear: "*You are playing with fire because now you have the problem of Slovenia, then you will have that of Croatia and on and on to the disintegration of Yugoslavia until the disaster of Bosnia. Note down these deadlines and you will see that it ends as I tell you*". The ambassador was a Montenegrin working for Belgrade

and was himself an expression of Yugoslav complexity: over the next two years his prediction proved to be accurate "*à la semaine près*".

[ZICHI]: Thank you very much, Ambassador, on behalf of the project and me for sharing these reflections with us and, more generally, also for the testimony represented by your book because on the one hand it confirms the validity of traditional historical research tools that can also be positively aided by oral history projects that preserve memories, experiences and the living voice of the protagonists.

[ARMELLINI]: Thank you.

This interview is part of the oral history project "Living Memory - 30th Anniversary of the Charter of Paris for the New Europe", an extra-budgetary project conducted by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)'s Documentation Centre in Prague headed by Ambassador Irena Krasnicka. The project envisages intergenerational dialogue aimed at preserving the memory of the Paris Summit through the living voices of the protagonists and negotiators. The interview was conducted by Dr. Gian Lorenzo Zichi (PhD) of the University of Cagliari, who was OSCE researcher in residence (three times between 2018 and 2020).

Read more by Antonio Armellini:L' Italia e la Carta di Parigi della CSCE per una nuova Europa. Storia di un negoziato (luglio-novembre 1990), Quaderni della Facoltà di Giurisprudenza 59, 2022.