Ventotene International Seminar: 36th edition
by Eric Rosenzweig

This September, I had the pleasure of being one of WFM’s five scholars chosen to attend this year’s Ventotene International Seminar, a conference on European Federalism and World Federalism run by the Istituto di Studi Federalisti Altiero Spinelli and the Young European Federalists (JEF). As most of the other 25 or so participants were from JEF, WFM’s participants provided a global perspective on federalism to the debates and discussions.

The conference is held every year on the Italian island of Ventotene. This was the site of Alterio Spinelli’s political exile during WWII. Marooned on the island with other democratic activists and intellectuals, Spinelli drafted his “Per un’Europa libera e unita. Progetto d’un manifesto,” which after his return to the mainland would become a foundational philosophical document in the creation of the European Union. His grave, the trodden paths of his daily walks around the island, and the warm Italian sea and sun served as a backdrop for our discussions on the nature of federalism and political strategies for a more cooperative world.

Each of the five days were divided into morning and evening sessions, about three hours each. The structure varied, but usually there would be two speakers, splitting the first two-thirds of session, followed by a question time with the audience as a whole or smaller, more concentrated discussions.

Speakers ranged from academics to politicos, and even a few members of European Parliament (Sylvie Goulard and Mario Monti), who incidentally were almost always my favorites. Topics covered in lectures were very comprehensive, including the theories on federalism, the economy and finances of a federal Europe, peace and security, and more. WFM’s own Executive Director, Dr. Tawanda Hondora, came to the island to lead the
group in a very enlightening discussion on the political and economic potentials between an African Union and European Union partnership.

I made many friends on the island, some of whom I hope to collaborate with in the near future. It was inspiring to be around other people who enjoy discussing the Eurozone as others do football and for whom potent potables and philosophy is considered a good night out. The experience was informative and invigorating for my own work and goals in the federalist movement, but the narratives brought by the WFM scholars and Dr. Hondora's lecture brought to light an important point: that above all else, in federalism, pluralism matters.

Even in a multinational-European conference, with young participants from all different educational and professional backgrounds, discussions will always be limited echo chambers without the voices of the wider cosmopolis. In pluralism we learn the needs of others, their lessons learned from failures and successes, and the effects that our own limited paradigms and actions have on citizens around the world. Perhaps this is a very progressive, millennial-American notion for me to take away from the experience; but I think my fellow participants from Argentina, Australia, South Africa, and Nepal would back me up on this.

And in this way the Ventotene Seminar's goals and outcomes most definitely align with those of the World Federalist Movement: connecting idealists around the globe for the creation of a cooperative society and the betterment of humankind. And pasta.

It was an honor to be chosen by WFM to attend the seminar. I learned loads about federalism, European politics, and I hope that I was able to contribute something on behalf of the World Federalists to advance the discussions on what it will take to create a federalist world, and what it should look like. Viva Euro, viva Federalismo!