

## The Historical Origins of Italian Euroscepticism

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Can Euroscepticism be the subject of historical research? The question might seem naive, given that historians have been studying the topic for some time now, and with significant results.<sup>1</sup> Yet the dilemma exists, in so far as it alerts the historian to the need for certain preliminary conceptual clarifications.

The first regards the term used to describe the field of research: the all-encompassing nature of the term “Euroscepticism” requires that it should be used with caution, and adapted to the specificity and complexity of historical occurrences. Criticism of Europe has, in fact, been expressed over the years by a range of actors using a wide variety of arguments. Some opposition is motivated, for instance, by prejudices (ideological, political, cultural or other) which are substantially incompatible with projects for European integration. Then there is criticism which is neither ideological nor aprioristic but directed against the *practical form* of such projects and heralds the longing for “another Europe”. There might be some overlap between these two positions. This does not alter the fact that we need to separate “radical” anti-Europeanism from “other-Europeanism” at least before we begin to understand the various forms of “Euroscepticism”.

It is, however, not just a problem of classification.<sup>2</sup> It concerns also, and above all, substance. The substance of opposition to Europe has been forged by its temporal dimension. “Euroscepticism”, in fact, goes back a long way – prior even to the post-war process of integration – thus making it, as stated above, a *historical occurrence*, and not only attributable to current events.<sup>3</sup>

1. See, for example, B. WASSENBERG, F. CLAVERT, P. HAMMAN (eds), *Contre l'Europe? Anti-européisme, euroscepticisme et alter-européisme dans la construction européenne de 1945 à nos jours*, vol.1: *Les concepts*, Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart, 2010; M. GAINAR, M. LIBERA (eds), *Contre l'Europe? Anti-européisme, euroscepticisme et alter-européisme*, II: *Acteurs institutionnels, milieux politiques et société civile*, Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart, 2013; M. SPIERING, *The Essential Englishman: The Cultural Nature and Origins of British Euroscepticism*, in: K. TOURNIER-SOL, C. GIFFORD (eds), *The UK Challenge to Europeanization. The Persistence of British Euroscepticism*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2015.
2. Were this the case, “radical” or ideological anti-Europeanism and “other-Europeanism” could easily be respectively reabsorbed into “hard” and “soft” Euroscepticism, the two politological categories so aptly coined by P. TAGGART, A. SZCZERBIAK, *Contemporary Euroscepticism in the Party Systems of the European Union Candidate States of Central and Eastern Europe*, in: *European Journal of Political Research*, 1(2004), pp.3-4.
3. See M.-T. Bitsch, *Préface*, in: B. WASSENBERG, F. CLAVERT, P. HAMMAN (eds), *Contre l'Europe? ....*, op.cit., pp.19-21; B. WASSENBERG, P. MOREAU, *Introduction*, in: B. WASSENBERG, P. MOREAU (eds), *European Integration and new Anti-Europeanism*, vol.II, *The 2014 European Election and New Anti-European Forces in Southern, Northern and Eastern Europe*, Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart, 2016, p.16.

Italy provides an ideal observatory for studying the historical aspects of Euroscepticism. On the one hand, it is one of the “founding countries” of the European Community and for many years it was a pillar of Europeanism. On the other hand, in Italy there existed the most powerful Communist party in the West (the PCI), which was an early opponent of European integration.<sup>4</sup> The PCI defined its negative attitude towards the European community in the early 1950s, when the Italian government (led by the Christian Democrat Alcide De Gasperi) gave its enthusiastic support to projects for European integration, endeavouring to confer on them a federalist nature.<sup>5</sup> These two attitudes, different but both deeply rooted (at least until the late sixties, when the PCI began gradually to abandon its anti-Europe stance), introduce one of the theses developed in this essay, i.e. that the “quality” of Europeanism in Italy has helped to shape the contents of Italian Euroscepticism.

Furthermore, even the stereotypes at the basis of current Eurosceptical propaganda have a solid history. For example, the idea that European integration is an instrument through which Germany pursues its hegemonic ambition in Europe (an idea fed today by, among others, the Northern League, an ethnic-regional party which attempts to take on a national dimension by positioning itself as an aggregating force in opposition to the Euro and to “German Europe”) dates back in reality to the beginning of European integration.<sup>6</sup>

To sum up, there are solid bases for replying positively to the question posed at the beginning of this introduction. We can now set forth the results of our research.

### The rejection of “external constraint”

For many years Italy was considered to be a birthplace of Europeanism. There was, in actual fact, no shortage of sound reasons to support such a belief. The “European choice” was a salient feature of the foreign policy of Italian Republic governments, proclaimed with such conviction and triggering such consequences, also on the domestic front, as to merit the same level of recognition as the other major themes of Italy’s international affairs, such as the “Atlantic” and “Mediterranean” policies.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, Italian governments have always striven to deepen the European integration process, proposing and supporting solutions for closer integration, also in a federalist sense, of the member states of the European Community.

4. S. GALANTE, *Il Partito Comunista Italiano e l'integrazione europea: Il decennio del rifiuto, 1947-1957*, Liviana editrice, Padova, 1988; M. MAGGIORANI, *L'Europa degli altri. I comunisti italiani e l'integrazione europea 1957-1969*, Carocci, Roma, 1998.
5. D. PREDA, *Alcide De Gasperi federalista europeo*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2004.
6. L. RISSO, *Against Rearmament or Against Integration? The PCI and PCF's Opposition to the European Defence Community and the Western European Union, 1950-55*, in: *Journal of European Integration History*, 2(2007), pp.15-17.
7. P. CRAVERI, A. VARSORI (eds), *L'Italia nella costruzione europea. Un bilancio storico (1957-2007)*, FrancoAngeli, Milano, 2009, p.9.

Governmental Europeanism faithfully reflected an orientation which was largely prevalent among Italian citizens. Since the early years of the European Community Italians have always headed the “pro-Europe” group. An international survey published in 1962 on public opinion and “The Europe of The Six”, showed that more than 60% of Italy’s inhabitants shared “the European idea”, while only 4% declared themselves contrary.<sup>8</sup> At the end of that decade, another large-scale survey, promoted by the European Commission, confirmed approval of the Common Market, which 77% of the interviewees (the highest number together with Luxembourg) believed should be transformed into a proper political union, i.e., the “United States of Europe”<sup>9</sup>.

Fast forward from the initial stages of the European integration process to the eve of “Europeanization” sparked by the Maastricht Treaty of February 1992, and we see that approval remains stable. The *Eurobarometer* of December 1991 showed that Italians “are most likely to support Western European integration (89%) and the most likely to be sorry if the Community was scrapped (60%)”<sup>10</sup>.

In their capacity to reflect public sentiment, surveys should, as a general rule, be treated with caution. Nevertheless, the unambiguousness of the data seems to leave little doubt as to the orientation of the majority towards European integration. Furthermore, in an advisory referendum on the EEC held in Italy in 1989 to coincide with the European elections, 88% of the electorate voted in favour of the proposal to give a constitutional mandate to the European parliament.

In recent times, this once large consensus in favour of Europe has somewhat diminished – and not only in Italy as we well know. Turning once again to analysis on public opinion, Italian Europeanism recorded its first slight dip following the signing of the Maastricht Treaty. This decline then became more marked on the introduction of the Euro until it reached an unprecedented level immediately following the economic-financial crisis of 2008.<sup>11</sup>

Quantitative data would suggest, then, that the manifestation of Euroscepticism coincided with specific developments in European integration such as the birth of the EU and the introduction of the single currency, or with international events such as the crisis of 2008 (which had grave consequences for the European Union and highlighted its inability to protect the economies of its member states) and current mass migration in Europe (which drove Eurosceptic movements to demand the abolition of the Schengen Treaty). These developments provoked criticism of EU institutions

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8. CEAB 2 [Archives de la Commission européenne, Brussels], *L'opinion publique et l'Europe des Six. Une enquête internationale auprès du grand public en Allemagne, Belgique, France, Italie, Luxembourg, Pays-Bas*, Gallup International, 1962, pp.4-5.
9. HAEU [Historical Archives of the European Union, Florence], BAC 3/1974-27, Commission des Communautés européennes. *Les européens et l'unification de l'Europe*, Bruxelles, Juin 1972, p.61.
10. *Eurobarometer*, 36(December 1991), p.7.
11. P. BELLUCCI, F. SERRICCHIO, *Cosa pensano i cittadini dell'Europa?*, in: P. BELLUCCI, N. CONTI (eds), *Gli italiani e l'Europa. Opinione pubblica, élites politiche e media*, Roma, Carocci, 2012, pp.135-138.

and policies, perceived by citizens to be the main cause of their impoverishment and lack of security.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, the decline of Europeanism in Italy goes back a long way, and quantitative data and their evolutions in time only partially explain the reasons behind it. These reasons relate to the particular way that Italians have experienced and interpreted their participation in the Community and then the EU, and thus to the quality of their Europeanism.

Naturally, this does not diminish the importance of the above-mentioned European and international events but suggests they are a triggering factor rather than a cause. In short, the genetic code of Italian Euroscepticism was decided, to a great extent, by the nature of the country's Europeanism.

In order to develop this argument we need to proceed from the conceptualization of Italy's participation in the European Community/Union as an "external constraint". This conceptualization has enjoyed considerable and deserved consensus amongst scholars of European integration.<sup>13</sup> In reality, it is fairly well known that the idea of the external constraint came to early maturity in what can be defined as "technocratic" environments. The first to speak in such a way was the Governor of the Banca d'Italia Donato Menichella, in his *Considerazioni finali* of 1953. He claimed that the growth of the economy during the post-war years was certainly due to American intervention and to the "spirit of recovery", but of no less importance was "European organization which restrains us but which offers us guidance and undoubtedly contains our errors".<sup>14</sup>

In the early 1990s, Guido Carli (Menichella's successor as head of the Banca d'Italia) who, as Minister of the Treasury had signed the Maastricht treaty, offered an even clearer interpretation of external constraint. This he saw as having been, and continuing to be, decisive in "introducing, at the core of Italian society, a series of rules which it was incapable of drawing up by itself".<sup>15</sup> The intervening years between these two statements by Menichella and Carli should not deceive us into thinking that between the 1950s and the 1990s the external constraint was shelved, or that it was theorized exclusively in the technocratic *milieux*. On the contrary, it was constantly considered a resource because it helped to shape, in different ways according to the mutations of historical-political events, the reasons for Italy's participation in the multiple stages of European integration.<sup>16</sup> Thus it was used by the political class (also for internal reasons) as is demonstrated by the following examples: the anti-inflatio-

12. A. VARSORI, *La Cenerentola d'Europa? L'Italia e l'integrazione europea dal 1947 a oggi*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2010, p.420.
13. Cf. R. GUALTIERI, *L'Europa come vincolo esterno*, in: P. CRAVERI, A. VARSORI (eds), *L'Italia nella costruzione europea...*, op.cit., pp.313-331.
14. BANCA D'ITALIA (ed.), *Assemblea ordinaria generale dei partecipanti. Considerazioni finali*, anno 1953 (LX), Tip. Banca d'Italia, Roma, 1954, p.375.
15. G. CARLI, *Cinquant'anni di vita italiana*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 1993, p.5.
16. "If I had to pick out the one indispensable element for ensuring the strict coherence of our economic policy, I would not hesitate to stand by the European way which was chosen by the fathers of our democracy" (C.A. Ciampi): P. CASCELLA, *Ciampi torna e dà "lezione"*, in: *l'Unità*, 01.12.1994.

nary line adopted by the Italian government in 1964 with the support of Brussels (which damaged the reformist impact of centre-left governments),<sup>17</sup> the question of the Community loan negotiated by the Italian government in the early seventies and, finally, the country's entry into the European monetary system in 1978 (the latter two contributing to keeping the Communist Party out of government).<sup>18</sup>

It should be made clear that European constraint *per se* was by no means the only reason for Italy's support of the integration process. Yet the three examples mentioned above are a reminder that it entered into public debate every time participation in the Community imposed discipline on the country. It is no coincidence that in the early seventies, when the birth of the Monetary snake prompted the need for more scrupulous economic and monetary policies, in some quarters (entrepreneurial for example) the hypothesis of loosening ties with the EEC was advanced for the first time.<sup>19</sup>

It should come as no surprise then, that the fulfilment of commitments in Europe became a crucial theme following the Treaty on European Union, both because of the rigid criteria for entering the Eurozone, as well as the rules of the Stability and Growth Pact and its subsequent reforms. The debate centred immediately on Italy's ability to comply with the Maastricht criteria, and of the effective convenience of being part of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). The question 'Why die for Maastricht?', echoing Marcel Déat's slogan concerning the Danzig dilemma in 1939, became something of a refrain. It highlighted the awareness, widespread among Treaty supporters and detractors alike, that becoming part of the EMU would entail iron discipline and considerable sacrifice.

There was, however, yet another perspective from which to debate. This hinged on the widely shared idea that Maastricht had transformed Italy's relationship with "Europe". For some, the Treaty went a step further in that it offered new opportunities: it was, indeed, a juridical tool with which the European Union could assure Italy of protection. One of the most representative and effective supporters of this theory was Sabino Cassese, a jurist, former member of the Constitutional Court and expert on the history of the Italian state. In his opinion, Italy's adhesion to the EMU constituted the fulfilment of a proper mandate, knowingly conferred over time, "on other countries to keep [Italy] in line".<sup>20</sup> The politicians who had favoured this sort of receivership had not betrayed the nation at all.<sup>21</sup> On the contrary, they were the "best part of our political class", i.e. the part that,

17. R. MARJOLIN, *Le travail d'une vie. Mémoires 1911-1986*, Robert Laffont, Paris, 1986, p.342.
18. D. PASQUINUCCI, *Europeismo e democrazia. Altiero Spinelli e la sinistra europea 1950-1986*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2000, pp.287-290; V. CASTRONOVO, *L'avventura dell'unità europea. Una sfida con la storia e il futuro*, Einaudi, Torino, 2004, pp.50-51.
19. A. SPINELLI, *Per l'Italia staccarsi dalla Comunità sarebbe una vera catastrofe*, in: *Il Globo*, 24.03.1973.
20. S. CASSESE, *Classe dirigente ancora da cambiare*, in: *la Repubblica*, 11.01.1997.
21. "Europe actually serves as a commissioner for Italy. This is a necessary external constraint which obliges us to modernize, because without this foreign help our politicians would be unable to do it by themselves": F. RAMPINI, *Germanizzazione. Come cambierà l'Italia*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 1996, pp.73-74.

“long before De Gasperi, as far back as the Risorgimento (interrupted only by the Fascist autocracy) did not believe in itself and in Italians and believed that an external constraint was necessary”.<sup>22</sup>

This, then, is not just a key to understanding Italian’s participation in the EEC. It also explains the choices of the more prudent Italian politicians who, since the unification of Italy, had been largely pessimistic about themselves and their fellow citizens.

Whether or not we agree with them, Cassese’s words expressed the conviction (widespread in Italy) that the exercising of political leadership had a dual aim: orthopaedic and pedagogic. In other words, leadership should correct and educate Italians; wherever this was not possible, and it happened a lot, an “external constraint” was useful. It needs to be stressed that this idea presupposes a negative opinion of the “real” country which found itself under the care of the ruling class, whose more forward-looking exponents were progressive enough to be able to step aside and leave room, whenever necessary, to a supranational power.

However, in the early 1990s, or to be precise at the time of the signing of the Maastricht Treaty and with all the commitments that this entailed, this orthopaedic and pedagogic conception of political leadership came under fire. This development owes much to Silvio Berlusconi. As effectively expounded by the Italian historian Giovanni Orsina in a carefully researched piece on Berlusconian ideology,

“prior to [Berlusconi], from the Risorgimento until now, no political leader capable of winning the elections and heading the government had ever dared to say in such an open, explicit, blatant and blunt way, that Italians are fine just the way they are”.

We only need to compare this quote with the above statement by Cassese to appreciate the gap that separates two strikingly different ways of understanding the governing of the Italians.

Berlusconi, writes Orsina, ideologized the virtuous and self-sufficient character of the country, and turned on its head the principle of orthopaedic and pedagogic leadership. If things were going badly, responsibility lay not with civil society but with public institutions and the political élite.<sup>23</sup> This theory endorsed Italian society’s autonomous capacity for progress and the country’s aptitude for governing itself. Thus it was obviously incompatible with the reasons justifying the external constraint, and opened the way to criticism of the European Union, casting doubt on any ensuing benefits to Italy. It should also be stressed that objections to the external constraint flourished in a historic moment (the early 1990s) when it was used wittingly as a useful resource to strengthen political, social and entrepreneurial forces with a view to restoring the country’s economy. Thus, “Berlusconism” gave Italians the freedom

22. S. CASSESE, *Classe dirigente ancora da cambiare*, op.cit. Our italics. See also Ibid., *Governare gli italiani. Storia dello Stato*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2014, p.360.  
 23. G. ORSINA, *Il berlusconismo nella storia d’Italia*, Marsilio, Venezia, 2013, pp.25, 97 and 98.

to be late to modernize (which was a classical historical-political justification for Europeanism) by virtue of a populist reaction to the external constraint.<sup>24</sup>

Euroscepticism may well, as many claim, have been heralded by “Berlusconism”, but it also depended on the particular nature of Europeanism in Italy. The gap separating the leader of Forza Italia from the pro-European élite (and from their conception of the Community as an external constraint capable of amending Italian shortcomings) can be measured by comparing the two quotes in the table below. The second of these is from Mario Monti, i.e., the person who brought the Berlusconi government to an end in 2011 and who is one of the best known and qualified exponents of that “technocratic aristocracy” who have a complete lack of faith in the political class and yet are far removed from the citizens.<sup>25</sup>

Silvio Berlusconi, 26 January 1994:	Mario Monti, 11 January 2012:
“Italy is the country I love” Opening sentence of a video message in which Berlusconi announced his entry into Italian politics	“I have always worked to make Italy a country that resembles Germany as much as possible” Interview with Mario Monti in ‘Die Welt’, reproduced from ‘Corriere della Sera’

Thus in the European elections of June 1994, the electoral platform of the main party of the government, Forza Italia (which had won the national elections a few months prior), was anything but Euro-enthusiastic. Furthermore, Forza Italia requested that the EU limit its actions strictly to what was established by the Treaty and demanded greater defence of Italian interests in Europe, and of agriculture in particular.<sup>26</sup>

Obviously, the tone of the Forza Italia electoral campaign and the high percentage of votes won by them on that occasion (30.6%) did not mean that there was a sudden mass Euroscepticism in Italy. There were other implications. The first was that this reassessment of Italy’s relationship with Europe had decisively, and for the first time, become part of a national political debate. This might not have lead naturally to Euroscepticism (or to the various forms of criticism of European integration), were it not for the fact that resentment of the external constraint, as it had historically come about in Italy, created greater difficulties between Italy and Europe than any that might have been generated by a simple rejection of the rules laid down by, or negotiated with Brussels.

Meanwhile, whereas it is true to say that the Community/Union could and can place member states under obligation, it is also true that these same obligations can contribute to determining the role and legitimization of European institutions.<sup>27</sup> The fact that inclusion of the former fascists of the Alleanza Nazionale party in Berlus-

24. E. DIODATO, *Il vincolo esterno. Le ragioni della debolezza italiana*, Mimesis, Milano-Udine, 2014, pp.145-154.

25. I. DIAMANTI, *I principi del Montismo*, in: *la Repubblica*, 12.11.2012.

26. Berlusconi lancia la campagna delle elezioni europee: conquisterò i popolari, in: *Corriere della Sera*, 23.03.1994.

27. B. CURLI, *The “vincolo europeo”, Italian Privatization and the European Commission in the 1990s*, in: *Journal of European Integration History*, 2(2012), p.287.

coni's first government (1994) provoked alarm in Europe was greatly due to a defensive reflex of the Community institutions, prompting several EU leaders to call for

"a statement which unambiguously affirms that all its members [of the EU] subscribe to the fundamental values of democracy, individual liberty and respect for others".<sup>28</sup>

Still more revealing for the sake of our argument was the anxiety with which the European Commission noted, in 1994, the sluggishness of the privatization process in Italy.<sup>29</sup> This had been a fundamental step within the context of the Internal Market and of the Economic and Monetary Union.<sup>30</sup> The process had been regulated by the Andreatta-Van Miert agreement (respectively Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Commissioner for Competition) signed in July of 1993. Among other things, this agreement provided for Brussel's executive monitoring of progress – indeed another chapter in the history of the external or "European" constraint.<sup>31</sup>

## Europe in blind faith

In the early 1990s, an emergent and still uncertain Italian Euroscepticism began rapidly to dispute the Maastricht Treaty. The collision, at least in this period, was not "head on"; nor was it ideological or based on principle. Instead, it harked back to one of the historical weaknesses of Italian Europeanism. To resort once again to Berlusconi's perspective, it was founded on the idea that Italy had become part of the single currency "*a scatola chiusa*",<sup>32</sup> i.e. in blind faith. On the other side of the political arena, using similar arguments, the member of the *Partito Democratico della Sinistra* and vice premier Walter Veltroni and the leader of *Rifondazione Comunista* Fausto Bertinotti demanded to renegotiate the convergence criteria.<sup>33</sup> The same request was put forward by Unions and by several influential personalities from the entrepreneurial world.

Such a change of heart placed the blame, probably not always consciously, on one of the cognitive and operative structures of Italy's Community political strategy and of its entire foreign policy: the value of "being there", i.e., the primary need to be part of supranational (and international) bodies. It was believed that participation would

28. F. PAPITTO, *E nella CEE crescono i timori*, in: *la Repubblica*, 12.05.1994.

29. A. GOLDSTEIN, G. NICOLETTI, *Le privatizzazioni in Italia, 1992-1995: motivi, metodi e risultati*, in: A. MONORCHIO (ed.), *La finanza pubblica italiana dopo la svolta del 1992*, il Mulino, Bologna, 1996, pp.219-220; A. BONANNI, Perissich: "eliminate i monopoli", in: *Corriere della Sera*, 18.09.1994.

30. J. CLIFTON, F. COMIN, D. DIAZ FUENTES, *Privatization in the European Union. Public Enterprises and Integration*, Kluwer, Dordrecht, 2003.

31. B. CURLI, *The "vincolo europeo" ...*, op.cit.

32. S. BERLUSCONI, *L'Italia che ho in mente*, Mondadori, Milano, 2000, p.53.

33. M. GAGGI, *Veltroni: Sì, Maastricht va rivista*, in: *Corriere della sera*, 25.08.1996; G. BALLARDIN, Bertinotti: "Sì al rinvio, ma non basta", in: *Ibid.*, 28.11.1996.

in itself provide the resources – political and otherwise (for example those connected to “international ranking”) – that were considered indispensable if Italy was to bridge the gap with other member countries. The point is that this priority, in more than one circumstance, took precedence over a careful examination of the multiple consequences of adhering to the various stages of European integration.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, the achievement of participation frequently exhausted the commitment of the Italian public authorities, as is demonstrated by the scarce attention they then paid to adapting the internal systems to the rules imposed by “being there”.

It is useful, in this regard, to consider the remarks of the former President of the Republic Carlo Azeglio Ciampi regarding the transition of the national currency to the Euro because it illustrates well the sort of double standards that existed in the relationship between Italy and the EEC/EU. On the one hand was an anxiousness to belong to the Euro-zone (in the words of Ciampi, a staunch Europeanist and one of the architects of the single currency, the Euro was a “conquest”), and on the other, negligence in adopting a consistent framework of rules and political-administrative behaviours:

“In Italy the Euro was greeted as a conquest but the changeover could have been managed much better. I say this without controversy: the government that followed ours failed to dedicate attention and care to such a delicate situation”.<sup>35</sup>

Ciampi’s remarks are invaluable because they offer an opportunity to better understand the specific limitations, in the relationship between Italy and the EEC/EU, of a strategy which often centred on a yearning for membership. It is useful to remember, though, that this aspiration to belong at least provided the suitable ethical-political tension for determinedly promoting the reasons for Italy’s participation in the European Union.

It goes without saying that European integration is a dynamic process in a constant state of evolution. But there is more. European unification can be historically interpreted as originating from the inversion of an obligatory logical sequence that Joseph H.H. Weiler has ably defined by referring to an Old Testament passage:

“And Moses wrote all the words of the Eternal [...]. And he took the book of the Covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the eternal hath spoken we will do, and hearken”.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, first we will do. Next we will hearken, “that is try and understand what it is we are doing”. The inverse logic at the basis of a primeval constitutional moment becomes a powerful metaphor for supranational integration. In the immediate post-war period the “European pact” which the élite offered to (one might say imposed on)

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34. Cf. the chapter *Italy and the IGC: Negotiating External Discipline, Avoiding Exclusion, 1990-1991*, in: K. DYSON, K. FEATHERSTONE, *The Road to Maastricht. Negotiating Economic and Monetary Union*, UP, Oxford, 1999, pp.530-531.

35. Ciampi’s phrase is cited in U. GENTILONI SILVERI, *Contro scettici e disfattisti. Gli anni di Ciampi 1992-2006*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2013, p.88.

36. J.H.H. WEILER, *The Constitution of Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, p.5.

benevolently indifferent populations, constituted its very subject matter. In other words, the pact created the people of the European Community (and debatably, of an emerging European constitutionalism). The spirit summarized in the phrase *we will do, and hearken*, animated a generation of European statesmen for whom the alternative to the unprecedented unification project, to be pushed through urgently, was the return of the nightmare which had prompted civilized Europe to descend into barbarity.

“The new European construct offers a vision which enables a reinterpretation of a painful past, and holds forth a promised land of prosperity and peace”.<sup>37</sup>

If we recognize in the biblical passage a useful metaphor for interpreting the origins of European integration, we can perhaps extend it. According to this inverse logic, action, even more than praxis, comes before reflection and understanding. Access to the Community and adherence to its various policies and initiatives are certainly fundamental steps towards future benefits. But just as critical is the ability to participate effectively in the subsequent stage of reflection, i.e., the work of shaping all that was previously created and of which we wanted to be part, in order to maximize the advantages for all as much as for legitimate national interests. Never perhaps, as in the process of European integration, has aspiring to “be there” been so necessary. And yet it was not enough. Very often, it was only after signing up that the real match began.

Of this, Altiero Spinelli – a champion of supranational federalism – was well aware. In 1978 the Italian Parliament discussed the country’s participation in the European Monetary System (EMS).<sup>38</sup> Spinelli revealed with some annoyance that some of his fellow supporters of Italy’s immediate entry into the EMS were motivated by the miserable realization that “we are worth so little that we are *obliged* to be in it”.<sup>39</sup> Spinelli warned against this submissiveness, which seemed to him to be self-harming, because it thwarted the possibility of a pro-active and, where appropriate, assertive dimension to Italian participation in the Community:

“In my opinion, we have to be there, to contribute so things go in one way rather than the other. Not because we see the dangers but because we need to be present to fight for ourselves. We [...] mustn’t go with our tails between our legs, giving the depressing impression that we’re condemned to be the train-bearers, letting our partners think that yes, the Italians get upset from time to time, but in the end they agree to everything”.

Spinelli complained that

“after claiming to be in favour of European unity, we have not come up with a single group strategy in the European arena [...] I would say that, at government level, we have been

37. Ibid., pp.6-8. The quote is on p.8.

38. E. MOURLON-DRUOL, *A Europe Made of Money. The Emergence of the European Monetary System*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2012, pp.246-257.

39. Cited in V. GUIZZI (ed.), *L’Europa in Parlamento 1948-1979*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2006, p.556 – our italics. The debate in the Camera dei Deputati took place on 12 December 1978.

in Europe for a long time without knowing either where we're going or what we're doing".<sup>40</sup>

Here again are the flaws of a membership that had been anxiously sought, because it was thought to be a cure for the country's fragility and dysfunctionality, but that seemed to fade into an *a priori* testimony of Europeanism. This was, in short, "Europe in blind faith".

The situation described by Spinelli in 1978 was nothing new. Italy's decision to take part in the European monetary snake in the early seventies was more of a conditioned reflex than the result of an accurate assessment of the implications for the Italian economy.<sup>41</sup> If we go further back in time, it is not at all rare to find, in parliamentary debates on the ratification of various Community treaties, justifications referring to the need to avoid exclusion from budding European institutions,<sup>42</sup> right up to the meta-political justification, i.e., Europe as an "act of faith" or "unstoppable process", which was teleological and thus unavoidable.<sup>43</sup> Such motivations were not at all eccentric or marginal. It was the Prime minister Alcide De Gasperi who recognized within Europeanism, also for internal political reasons, the Sorelian ethical-political myth to offer to the masses and the new generations.<sup>44</sup> It can be observed that this finalistic (and redemptive) vision of the European integration process has not remained confined to the ruling political classes; on the contrary, it is acknowledged by that part of Italian historiography which has a federalist orientation, and which has helped to spread the conviction that Europe is a "community of destiny".<sup>45</sup>

It cannot be denied that the European choice has brought (and continues to bring) enormous advantages to Italy and that this is unquestionably due to the country's ruling class. Nevertheless, to invest this decision with a redemptive or even sacred meaning is to harbour expectations which in the end provoke rejection when the myth, or faith, fails to live up to its promises. But above all, the Europeanist discourse formulated by the *décideurs*, which gave priority to the political aspect, i.e., the need to be present, rather than the technical aspect, i.e. the consequences of that presence, is encapsulated in an ideological dimension from which choice and discretion, i.e. politics, have been removed.

40. V. GUILZZI, op.cit., pp.556 and 557.

41. Cf. A. VARSORI, *La cenerentola d'Europa?*..., op.cit., pp.258-259.

42. Speech of Christian Democrat Ruggero Lombardi in the afternoon session of the Camera dei Deputati, 23.07.1957, p.34312.

43. See, for example, the speeches in the Senate of the Republic of the Christian Democrats Teresio Guglielmone (morning session of 3 October 1957, p.23824), Natale Santero (session of 12 March 1952, p.31571) and Antonio Azara (morning session of 9 October 1957, p.24018).

44. P. CRAVERI, *De Gasperi*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2006, p.490.

45. In Italy, the main exponents of this historiographic trend include Sergio Pistone, Giulio Guderzo, Lucio Levi, Daniela Preda, Umberto Morelli, Luigi V. Majocchi. For a discussion on this school see D. PASQUINUCCI, *Between Political Commitment and Academic Research: Federalist Perspectives*, in: W. KAISER, A. VARSORI (eds), *European Union History. Themes and Debates*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2010, pp.72-78.

In that same parliamentary debate on the EMS mentioned above, the member of parliament Luigi Spaventa (future Minister of Budget and Treasury) observed that while he deemed the sacrifices imposed by the Treaty to be excessive, objecting was unpopular. This was because, he said, there was a risk of “being branded a nationalist, a retrograde, because there exists a kind of ideological Europeanist terrorism”.<sup>46</sup>

Over-dramatic they may be, but these words reveal another of the historical roots of Italian Euroscepticism. Here is orthodox Europeanism which limits the space for forming and developing “constitutional criticism” (if that’s what we want to call it) first of the Community and then of the European Union (and the manner of Italian *membership*). Until 1989 this orthodoxy was part of the “dual loyalty”<sup>47</sup> of the Italian ruling class, towards their country on the one hand but towards the international and supranational organizations of the Western bloc on the other. After the fall of the Berlin wall it became a resource for trying to radically alter the country by changing tack.<sup>48</sup> Thus criticism “of Europe” was summarily labelled firstly as ideological and antinational (because it was formulated above all by the Communist Party who were against the system and pro-Soviet) and later as irresponsible, populist and demagogical and thus “Eurosceptic”. Those who were loyal towards the Community/Union essentially gave up trying to understand and represent any expression of dissent towards the tangible form assumed by European integration, and, perhaps contrary to their intentions, ended up looking like the “party of the Crown”, or rather the defenders of the *status quo*. Consequently, when tradition came under fire, also under the pressure of changing public opinion, the Eurosceptics (in all their various shades) were able to monopolize heterodoxy and claim as their own even the manifestations of dissent that were completely compatible with Community polity and with the values of Italian Europeanism.

### Anti-German Euroscepticism as an inevitable shift

Recently in Italy, criticism of European constraint has shifted, perhaps inevitably, towards anti-German sentiment which helps to bolster present-day Euroscepticism. A convenient excuse is the rebellion against the “homework” dished out to Italy by the Germans through the European Union institutions.<sup>49</sup> It is worth considering whether this tension towards Germany might not be an updated version, albeit directed towards Brussels or, better still, Berlin, of what at the time of the Cold War was

46. The speech is reproduced in V. GUIZZI, *op.cit.*, p.544.

47. F. DE FELICE, *Doppia lealtà e doppio Stato*, in: *Studi Storici*, 3(1989).

48. W. VELTRONI, *Presentazione a Aa.Vv., Progetto per la sinistra del Duemila*, Donzelli, Roma, 2000, p.12: “[Europe] is an opportunity for Italy to initiate new growth processes and to strengthen the supports of the institutions, the economy and the society of a country which for too long has been trying to keep afloat without any thoughts to its future [...]”.

49. On this theme, A. VARSORI, M. POETTINGER (eds), *Economic Crisis and New Nationalisms. German Political Economy as Perceived by European Partners*, Peter Lang, Brussels, 2014.

widespread resentment regarding the infringement of national sovereignty resulting from the relocation of political-military leadership to the United States.<sup>50</sup> Perhaps such a hypothesis deserves some reflection in order to better understand the origins of Italian Euroscepticism. On the one hand it is true that anti-German sentiment has a precedent dating far beyond the boundaries of the (relatively brief) history of European integration.<sup>51</sup> At the same time, the first supranational institutions (from the ECSC to the EEC, including the failed European Defence Community), were all tainted by Italian anti-Europeanism in relation to the Germans' appetite for hegemony. For several years after the Second World war, fear of a revived "Prussian militarism" was an effective theme.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless it seemed of lesser importance in the light of propagandistic action whose main objective was the condemnation of American policy in Europe, for which European integration was a mere tool.<sup>53</sup> In other words, so central was the East-West clash that it absorbed any hostility towards the EC and towards the Bundesrepublik, making any merging of anti-German sentiment and anti-Europeanism irrelevant. On the contrary, it was on the terrain of European integration, as well as Atlanticism, that during the *Trente glorieuses* a relationship – if not idyllic, at least of "relaxed normality" – was re-established between Bonn and Rome.<sup>54</sup>

Anti-German sentiment and criticism of Europe began instead to merge in the early nineties. The end of the Cold War weakened the relationship of dependence between Europeanism and Atlanticism, while the Treaty of Maastricht made the new European Union a potentially more autonomous player endowed with coercive power. Evidence lies in the system of sanctions introduced for defaulting EU member states and the adaptation of national political systems to the rules and demands of a European political centre. This development coincided with, firstly, the defaulting on one of the axioms underpinning good relations between Italy and German (now unified, with the shifting of political weight that this involved) i.e., equivalence and political equipollence. Secondly, the Italian political-institutional system collapsed under *Tangentopoli* or "Operation Clean Hands", and there was a transition towards a "Second Republic" whose method of constitution and whose leaders caused unease and dismay among the German political class (and not only there). This, despite the

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50. F. ROMERO, *L'Italia nelle trasformazioni internazionali di fine Novecento*, in: S. PONS, A. ROC-CUCCI, F. ROMERO (eds), *L'Italia contemporanea dagli anni Ottanta a oggi, I: Fine della guerra fredda e globalizzazione*, Carocci, Roma, 2014, p.18.
51. F. NIGLIA, *L'antigermanesimo italiano. Da Sedan a Versailles*, Le Lettere, Firenze, 2012.
52. Cf. Emilio Lussu's speech delivered in the afternoon session of 14 March 1952 of the Senate of the Republic. Lussu maintained that "at the heart of the [Schuman] Plan today we see the threat of rearmed Germany as we have known twice during our generation, and we see war" (p.31743).
53. V. LOMELLINI, *The PCI and the European Integration from Eurocommunism to Berlinguer's Death*, in: L. BONFRESCHI, G. ORSINA, A. VARSORI (eds), *European Parties and the European Integration Process, 1945–1992*, Peter Lang, Brussels, 2015.
54. H. WOLLER, *Sul mito dell'estraniazione strisciante*, in: G.E. RUSCONI, T. SCHLEMMER, H. WOLLER (eds), *Estraniazione strisciante tra Italia e Germania?*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2008, p.27.

fact that the process launched at Maastricht presupposed political stability, economic symmetry, and reciprocal trust between Community partners.<sup>55</sup>

Starting from the early Nineties, according to some scholars, these and other dynamics triggered a *creeping estrangement* between Germany and Italy.<sup>56</sup> While this hypothesis was critically discussed and rejected by some, we might, in retrospect, wonder whether such reciprocal detachment did not lay the grounds for today's anti-German style of Euroscepticism.<sup>57</sup> To establish a connection we need to examine which of the factors determining the creeping estrangement in the early nineties have survived and are now at the basis of present-day anti-German Euroscepticism.

The first is the widespread revival of negative stereotypes, the main one being condemnation of Germany's innate will to colonize. Incidentally, from the conceptual point of view, mistrust or phobia towards another member state fully subscribes to Euroscepticism.<sup>58</sup> The second is the role that a part of the Italian intelligentsia plays in the spreading of these clichés.<sup>59</sup> Far from being particularly refined, some of the arguments put forward by some *maîtres à penser* are so crass as to be indistinguishable from the more reactionary expressions of Euroscepticism, and in fact can be used as such without any need for adaptation of simplification.<sup>60</sup>

At any rate, apart from its outer, more visible manifestations, the real origins of anti-German Euroscepticism are to be found elsewhere. They thrive in spiritual inertia, which causes facts to be interpreted by means of old, convenient stereotypes. The "anthropological trap"<sup>61</sup> is useful for neutralizing the occurrence of unexpected or unpredicted events, clothing them in reassuring but false certainties provided by familiar interpretive models.<sup>62</sup> What Eurosceptics polemically see as the confirmation of an eternal return *to the past* and *of the past* (the Chancellor Angela Merkel and the Minister of Finance Wolfgang Schäuble eager to reinstall "Teutonic dominion" over

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55. G. D'OTTAVIO, *L'Italia vista dalla Repubblica federale tedesca (1975-2010). Appunti per una ricerca*, in: S. PONS, A. ROCCUCCI, F. ROMERO (eds), *L'Italia contemporanea...*, op.cit., pp. 429-431.

56. G.E. RUSCONI, *Le radici politiche dell'estraniazione strisciante tra Italia e Germania* in: S. PONS, A. ROCCUCCI, F. ROMERO (eds), *L'Italia contemporanea...*, op.cit.

57. See contributions in: *L'Italia contemporanea...*, op.cit.

58. C. LECONTE, *Understanding Euroscepticism*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010, pp.64-67.

59. J. PETERSEN, *Italianizzazione della Germania? Germanizzazione dell'Italia? L'immagine dell'altro nella reciproca percezione di sé*, in: G.E. RUSCONI, H. WOLLER (eds), *Italia e Germania 1945-2000. La costruzione dell'Europa*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2005.

60. According to Luciano Canfora, historian of the ancient world, philologist and contributor to the *Corriere della Sera*, the European Union is a "huge German fiefdom and unexpected realization of the Führer's dream", in: *'È l'Europa che ce lo chiede!'. (Falso!)*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2012, p.39. On the other hand, *Quarto Reich* [Fourth Reich] is the headline on the front page of *Il Giornale* (a daily newspaper owned by the Berlusconi family) of 3 August 2012. For Matteo Salvini, leader of the Eurosceptic Northern League, Europe "resembles a Fourth Reich" (in: *Corriere della Sera*, 03.07.2015). The examples could go on.

61. G.E. RUSCONI, *Roma-Berlino, la trappola antropologica*, in: *La Stampa*, 05.07.2014.

62. A. BOLAFFI, *Cuore tedesco. Il modello Germania, l'Italia e la crisi europea*, Donzelli, Roma, 2013, pp.8-9.

the whole of Europe) is, above all, an excuse for failing to tackle and resolve real Italian (and European Union) problems.<sup>63</sup>

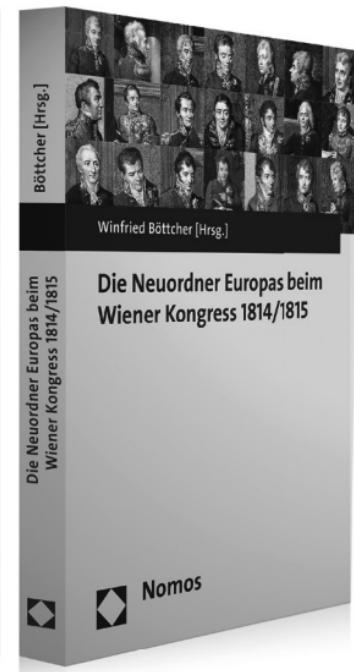
## Conclusion

Anti-German sentiment, a subspecies of Italian Euroscepticism, points above all to a ditching of responsibility. This appears to be a real paradox, since in Italy (as we have tried to argue), opposition to Europe is based to a considerable extent on rejection of an “external constraint” which can nudge the country into virtuous behaviour consistent with the Community commitments it has liberally taken on.

However, the paradoxes of Italian Euroscepticism highlight the historical limits of a certain way of understanding Europeanism. In Italy, at various levels (from political to academic and including technocracy) there exists a Europeanist orthodoxy based on a redemptive (implicit in the concept of “external constraint”) and teleological vision of European integration (understood as a Community which is written in the destiny of the peoples of the continent). The divide between this political-cultural representation, created in the past, and the current reality, characterized by the economic crisis, austerity politics, the collapse of Schengen and by uncertainty regarding the future of the Union (of which Brexit is only the most outward sign), must be borne in mind when analysing the origins and fortunes of Italian Euroscepticism.

63. L. REITANI, *Germania europea, Europa tedesca*, Salerno Editrice, Roma, 2014, pp.18-19.

# Neuordnung Europas



NEU 2017

## Die Neuordner Europas beim Wiener Kongress 1814/1815

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ofmaler Napoleons, Jean Baptiste Isabey (1855), porträtierte auf seinem viel gezeigten 23 Bevollmächtigte der Koalition gegen Napoleon.

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