



Estudos Ibero-Americanos

ISSN: 0101-4064

eia@pucrs.br

Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio
Grande do Sul
Brasil

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Democratic Corporatism – The Italian debate during the “First Republic” (1948-1992)
Estudos Ibero-Americanos, vol. 42, núm. 2, mayo-agosto, 2016, pp. 430-453
Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul
Porto Alegre, Brasil

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Democratic Corporatism – The Italian debate during the “First Republic” (1948-1992)*

Corporativismo Democrático – O debate italiano durante a “Primeira República” (1948-1992)

Corporativismo demócrata – El debate italiano durante la “Primera República” (1948-1992)

Marco Zaganella**

Abstract: The paper intends to explore the Italian debate on corporatism after the fall of fascism, in the years of the so-called “First Republic” (1948-1992). Over this long time period, which spanned more than four decades, the debate on corporatism continued to interest the nostalgic political right represented by the Italian Social Movement (MSI), but rekindled also the minds of Catholics. In both cases, the aim was to harmonize the corporatist theory with democratic principles. During Sixties the debate on the launch of a planning policy in Italy was seized by some members of the MSI as an opportunity to revive the corporatism and find a concrete solution to “govern” the Italian economy. The crisis of the institutions that emerged in the early 1970s and the consequent need for reform of the State finally give new vigour to corporate theories. The crisis of the institutions was perceived as a crisis of the political parties, which was ultimately the crisis of representative parliamentary democracy resulting from the French Revolution. In the 1980s the theme once again became of particular interest to the Catholic world and more specifically to the Milan Group, which revolved around the figure of Gianfranco Miglio. Until the beginning of the 1990s, the Milan Group produced a number of volumes on the reform of the Italian Constitution and on the issue of representation of organized interests.

Keywords: corporatism; Italy; political representation

*The research is a part of the project launched in 2006 by Fondazione Ugo Spirito e Renzo De Felice and aimed to gather and study the archives of the Italian right political parties.

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Resumo: O artigo se propõe a estudar o debate sobre o corporativismo italiano após a queda do fascismo nos anos da chamada “Primeira República” (1948-1992). Durante este longo período de tempo que durou mais de quatro décadas, o debate sobre o corporativismo continuou a interessar a direita política nostálgica representada pelo Movimento Social Italiano (MSI), mas também reacendeu a mente dos católicos. Em ambos os casos, o objetivo era harmonizar a teoria corporativista com os princípios democráticos. Durante os anos sessenta, o debate sobre o lançamento de um planejamento de políticas na Itália foi tomada por alguns membros do MSI como uma oportunidade para reavivar o corporativismo e encontrar uma solução concreta para “governar” da economia italiana. A crise das instituições que surgiu na década de 1970 e a consequente necessidade de uma reforma do Estado revigorou as teorias corporativistas. Essa crise das instituições foram percebidas como uma crise dos partidos políticos, que, em última instância, acabou por ser a crise da democracia representativa parlamentarista resultante da Revolução Francesa. Na década de 1980, a questão voltou a ser de interesse da Igreja Católica e, mais especificamente, do Grupo de Milão, em torno da figura de Gianfranco Miglio. Até o começo da década de 1990, o Grupo de Milão produziu uma série de volumes sobre a reforma da Constituição italiana e sobre a questão da representação de interesses organizados.

Palavras-chave: corporativismo; Itália; representação política

Resumen: El artículo propone estudiar el debate sobre el corporativismo italiano después de la caída del fascismo, en los años de la llamada “Primera República” (1948-1992). Durante este período de tiempo largo, que se extendió por más de cuatro décadas, el debate sobre el corporativismo continuó interesar a la derecha política nostálgica representada por el Movimiento Social Italiano (MSI), pero también volvió a encender las mentes de los católicos. En ambos casos, el objetivo era armonizar la teoría corporativista con los principios democráticos. Durante los años sesenta el debate sobre el lanzamiento una política de planificación en Italia fue tomado por algunos miembros del MSI como una oportunidad para revivir el corporativismo y encontrar una solución concreta a “governar” la economía italiana. La crisis de las instituciones que surgieron en la década de 1970 y la consiguiente necesidad de una reforma del Estado dio nuevo vigor a las teorías corporativas. La crisis de las instituciones se percibió como una crisis de los partidos políticos, que era en última instancia, la crisis de la democracia representativa parlamentaria resultante de la la Revolución Francesa. En la década de 1980 el tema volvió a ser de especial interés para el mundo católico y más específicamente al Grupo de Milán, que gira en torno a la figura de Gianfranco Miglio. Hasta principios de la década de 1990, el Grupo de Milán produjo una serie de volúmenes sobre la reforma de la Constitución italiana y sobre la cuestión de la representación de los intereses organizados.

Palabras clave: corporativismo; Italia; representación política

In recent years in Italy there has been a renewed interest in the economy of the 1930s and corporatism (SALVATI, 2006; SANTOMASSIMO, 2006; DOMENICANTONIO, 2008; CASSESE, 2010; GAGLIARDI, 2010; AMORE BIANCO, 2012; BARUCCI, MISIANI e MOSCA, 2015). Analysis carried out by scholars, while showing highly innovative aspects in terms of historiography, is,

however, focused on the theoretical development and the factual evolution of the corporatist system during the fascist years. This paper intends to go beyond the analysis of the fascist years and focus instead on the debate on corporatism developed after its use during fascism, namely throughout the years of the so-called “First Republic”.

Over this long time period, which spanned more than four decades (1948-1992), the debate on corporatism continued to interest the nostalgic political right but rekindled also the minds of Catholics. It then merged into the broader debate on the role of intermediary bodies in society and on the request for a reform of the state based on the principles of subsidiarity.

The paper is intended to examine precisely the debate on the “modern” aspect of corporatism after fascism. Unlike the years of the regime, it is clear that the aim of harmonising the corporatist theory with democratic principles is born both from the Italian Social Movement (MSI), the party that has picked up the historical legacy of fascism, and from the Catholic context (see the collection of writings by Alberto Canaletti Gaudenti and Saverio De Simone, *Verso il corporativismo democratico*, published in 1951).

A few years later, the debate on the launch of a planning policy in Italy was seized by some members of the Italian Social Movement (MSI) as an opportunity to revive the corporatism and find a concrete solution to ‘govern’ the Italian economy, following the helpless efforts of the centre-left governments. (See the volume by Raffaele Delfino entitled *Programmazione corporativa* published in 1967, the same year in which the MSI republished *La Carta del Lavoro* (The Charter of Labour), forty years after its first edition).

The crisis of the institutions that emerged in the early 1970s and the consequent need for reform of the State finally give new vigour to corporatist theories. The crisis of the institutions is perceived as a crisis of the “Republic of political parties”, as described by Pietro Scoppola, which is ultimately the crisis of representative parliamentary democracy resulting from the French Revolution¹.

In the face of this crisis, the debate returned in the 1970s and has raged ever since then, focussing on a different model of democracy, based on the representation of organised interests. The debate was

¹ The crisis of institutions gave strength to the antiparliamentary culture. See LUPO, 2004; CAPUOZZI, 2009. On the history of the Italian “first Republic” see: GINSBORG, 1989; LANARO, 1992; MAMMARELLA, 1993; LEPRE, 1994; SANTARELLI, 1996; SCOPPOLA, 1997; BARBAGALLO, 1994-1997; COLARIZI, 2007.

driven forward by the magazine *Nuovi Studi Politici* founded in 1971 by Salvatore Valitutti, a member of the Italian Liberal Party, and, within the Italian Social Movement (MSI), by the Institute of Corporative Studies, established in 1972.

In the 1980s the theme once again became of particular interest to the Catholic world and more specifically to the Milan Group, which revolved around the figure of Gianfranco Miglio. The Milan Group then created a collection printed by the publishing house Giuffr , entitled *Arcana Imperi*. Until the beginning of the 1990s, they produced a number of volumes on the reform of the Italian Constitution and on the issue of representation of organised interests.

Democratic corporatism

In Italy the debate on corporatism slackened after the fall of fascism, but it did not end. This is because catholic and nationalistic corporatist schools of thoughts existed prior to the fascism and survived after the end of the Regime.

Even the Left Unionists had found a way to express their sympathy for the corporative system. Bruno Buozzi, a former trade unionist and socialist member from 1920 to 1926, during the Civil War (1943-45) ruled in favour of maintaining corporatist order established by fascism, so long as it was inspired by democratic principles including elected offices, rather than in the appointment from powers above.

More generally, as Mariuccia Salvati underlined, a corporatist culture steered the Italian economy in the first decades of the Republic, surviving in the bureaucratic apparatus that led the public intervention in economy².

On the contrary, the debate on corporatism continued to involve only a minority of intellectuals and politicians, because this doctrine was perceived as an expression of fascism.

For this reason overt support for the corporatist doctrine failed to gain momentum at the Constituent Assembly, even though the Christian Democrats Attilio Piccioni and Aldo Moro presented a proposal in support of it (CAMERA DEI DEPUTATI, 1976, p. 2977)³. Anyway,

² She wrote that “a solid and widespread corporatist culture enabled the enti [public or government agencies] to survive the fall of Fascism” (SALVATI, 2006, p. 223).

³ In 1947 during the debate on the constitutional projects ongoing within the Constituent Assembly, an agenda signed by the honourable Christian Democrats Attilio Piccioni and Aldo Moro was presented. It called for the establishment of a second chamber representing the various categories of interests. The agenda, however, was not approved.

in the Catholic milieu, some intellectuals and politicians claimed a “birthright” in creating the corporatist doctrine, which was rooted in the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* declared in 1891 by Pope Leo XII, and which was later drawn on by Giuseppe Toniolo and Romolo Murri (PARLATO, 2015). In their works, Corporatists belonging to the Catholic wing tried to regain possession of the concept, trying to emphasise the harmony with democratic institutions. In 1951 Alberto Canaletti Gaudenti and Saverio De Simone produced a collection of writings entitled *Verso il corporativismo democratico* (Towards a Democratic Corporativism).

Alberto Canaletti Gaudenti, member of the Christian Democrats, was among the first members of the Christian Social Movement, selected in 1939 by Gerardo Bruni, to help put together a programme of economic and social reforms based on cooperatives and worker participation in the management of companies. On the eve of the secret meeting in March 1943, that approved the programme of reform, Canaletti Gaudenti broke away to take De Gasperi up on his invitation to collaborate in the birth of the Christian Democrats. After the fall of Fascism on 25 July 1943 he also took part in the recovery of the democratic trade unions and was appointed, together with the communist Mario Alicata and the socialist Olindo Vernocchi, to edit the periodical entitled *Il Lavoro Italiano*.

Immediately after the liberation of the capital Canaletti Gaudenti continued to direct his party in Rome and took part in its internal struggle working actively on the left of the Christian Democrats. Through the monthly publication entitled *Politica d'oggi* and the weekly publication entitled *Tendenza*, he conducted an intense battle against De Gasperi's moderate line. Gaudenti favoured a specific choice of party for the republic and the local authorities and called for a major commitment for the implementation of economic and social reforms through more independence from the Allies and the Vatican and closer collaboration with the parties on the Left. To this political school of thought, whose leader was Domenico Ravaioli and Costantino Mortati, Quinto Tosatti and Danilo De Cocci were its most notable representatives, Canaletti gave his specific contribution by working into his programme the guidelines that had already characterised the Christian Social Movement. In 1948 he was elected senator.

Verso il Corporativismo democratico was edited by Canaletti Gaudenti in cooperation with Saverio De Simone, who taught Public Law at the University of Bari and at the Catholic International University ‘Pro Deo’.

The book is an interesting synthesis between the positions of Catholic leaders and people close to the former regime, with contributions from Federico Alessandrini, Antonio Boggiano Pico, Angelo Brucculeri, Francesco Carnelutti, Raffaele Ciasca, Luigi Fontanelli, Giulio Gamberale, Luigi Gedda, Camillo Giordani, Igino Giordani, Achille Grandi, Ugo Indrio, Giuseppe Mozzi, Alfredo Naccarato, Raffaele Passaretti Pasquale Pennisi, Italo Mario Sacco, Don Luigi Sturzo, Santi Savarino, Quinto Tosatti and Vito Panunzio⁴.

The volume also featured an extract of the Malines Social Code, a synthesis of Catholic social thought developed between 1924 and 1926 and published in 1927 by the International Union of Social Studies. The volume in question referred to Chapter III of the Malines Code, entitled “The professional society”, which alluded to the corporatist organisation of different professions.

In the forward to the volume the writers’ aim is made explicitly clear, which is to think about the organisation and operation of the modern state, taking into account the nature of the groups within the state, at a time when Italy had recently ventured down the path of republican democracy. The modern state, in their view, cannot fail to take into account, in its organisation and in its operation, intermediate bodies, which live and work between the individual and the State, which therefore lie between the individual and the community. But at the same time, the modern State must also take into account the distribution of wealth, the situation with regard to public consumption and the welfare of the consumer. For these reasons the authors relaunched the corporatist doctrine, and since it was a corporatism based on freedom and respect for fellow man, they named it the ‘democratic corporatism’.

⁴ Luigi Fontanelli, Vito Panunzio, Raffaele Passaretti, Ugo Indrio, Pasquale Pennisi and Italo Maria Sacco had already collaborated with fascism. Fontanelli was director of *Il Lavoro fascista* from 1936 to 1943, which was part of the trade union movement (Mo.Si.), a trade unionist-revolutionary tendency consisting of the greatest exponents of the fascist unions welcomed by Giuseppe Di Vittorio in the Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL). Fontanelli was later the secret founder of the Italian Labour Union (UIL) in 1949 [NEGLIE, 2006]. Vito Panunzio had been a representative of the young trade unionists fascists and author of *Il secondo fascismo (1936-1943). La reazione della nuova generazione alla crisi del movimento e del regime* (MURSIA, 1988). Raffaele Passaretti was fascist union leader and author of several publications on social security. Ugo Indrio had instead been director of *Roma Fascista* from 1938 to 1943 and was an expert in trade union issues. Pasquale Pennisi, a Catholic-fascist journalist, wrote for *Secolo fascista*. Italo Mario Sacco was an author for the Institute of fascist culture, and wrote a two volume book on the history of trade unionism, before becoming a member of the Christian Democrats in the Italian Republic as well as representative of the Italian Parliament at the Assembly for the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952-53. Thanks go to Prof. Giuseppe Parlato for the above information.

Saverio De Simone in the preface, which is entitled “Our corporatism”, to distinguish it from the concept developed in the previous period during fascism, outlined the characteristics of democratic corporatism. It consisted of:

1. organic representation of the producers, from the most elementary associations of the civil society to the highest level which is represented by the Society and becomes the State;
2. legal regulation of production relationships – and of those relating to consumption – within the life of the State; and, therefore, through and by virtue of direct and sustained contact with associate groups, producers and, where appropriate, with particular categories of consumers;
3. self-regulation of the economy and everything relating to it, in all its aspects, even the highest authorities which make up the state; in this sense, even and especially in economic terms;
4. development of the state, from a form of insufficient political democracy to a form of actual, substantial and necessary social democracy (CANALETTI GAUDENTI, DE SIMONE, 1951, p. 17-18).

With the publication of *Verso il Corporativismo democratico*, the Central Committee of Corporative Studies was also established in Rome and was composed of members of the Christian Democrats including Guido Bisori, Antonio Boggiano Pico, Alberto Canaletti Gaudenti, Raffaele Ciasca, Camillo Giardina, Italo Mario Sacco and Quinto Tosatti.

In that period, the corporatist debate involved not only Catholics, but an audience which, from the Christian Democrat centre, stretched across and affected various segments of the Italian political right, belonging to liberals and to the Italian Social Movement (MSI). Sustaining it was the *Rivista Internazionale di Scienze Sociali* until it was directed by Francesco Maria Vito (1945-1968), the magazines *Pagine Libere* by Vito Panunzio, *Vita del Lavoro* by Luigi Fontanelli, *Nuovi Studi Politici* by Salvatore Valitutti, *La Corporazione* by Corrado Petrone, *L'Italiano* by Pino Romualdi, *Cantiere* by Primo di Siena, *Carattere* by Gaetano Rasi, *L'Orologio* by Lucci Charissi, *Presenza* by Pino Rauti, the periodicals directed by Ernesto Massi such as *Economia Sociale*, *Nazione Sociale* and *Continuità* as well as the *Rivista di Studi Corporativi*, published by the Institute of Corporatist Studies affiliated to the Italian Social Movement (MSI), and directed from 1971 to 1974 by Diano Brocchi and then from 1974 until the end of the publication, in 1992, by Gaetano Rasi.

Crisis of the institutions and corporatist planning

According to the members of the political right, the Republic gave the opportunity to relaunch the corporatism after the “failure” of the fascist experiment. Giuseppe Bottai and Camillo Pellizzi, two of the most prominent representatives of the past Regime, highlighted such a point of view. Bottai was the “father” of the *Carta del Lavoro* and one of the leading spirit of the debate on corporatism during Thirties. He defined the fascist experience a “failure” caused by the contrast between “the authoritarian orientation of the National Fascist Party and the most basic requirements of freedom of a corporatist order” (BOTTAI, 1949, p. 46).

Camillo Pellizzi gave a similar opinion. Pellizzi was founder of the London *fascio* and representative of the *Fasci* in Britain and Ireland from 1925 to 1938. From 1940 until the fall of the Regime in 1943 he was the President of the National Institute of Fascist Culture. After World War II Pellizzi dedicated to fascism his book *Una rivoluzione mancata* (A missed revolution). He stated that at a theoretical level fascism aimed to realize the collective interest through the corporative system, but in practice the achievement of this goal was obtained not by dialectical cooperation between the organized interests of the country, but by the decisions and the will of a single person: Benito Mussolini (PELLIZZI, 1949, p. 59-64). The analysis of Bottai and Pellizzi prove that the political right explained the practical failure of fascist corporatism by the authoritarian system. Then, the Republic offered the right conditions for a new attempt. The Italian Social Movement (MSI) revived the corporative doctrine from the first party conference, held in Naples from 27 to 29 June in 1948⁵.

The debate was inspired by three reports relating to “social and economic policy”, “domestic and constitutional policy” and “foreign policy”. The social and economic policy report was the most significant and its main objective was to fulfil the “evolutionary process that was interrupted by the war”, consisting of the synthesis of the corporatism of the fascist regime and the nationalisation of enterprises promoted by fascism in the Italian Social Republic. The document called for the legal recognition of the categories, the mandatory nature of collective controls, the introduction of the Labour legal system and the defence

⁵ On the history of the Italian political right after World War II see: ROBERTI, 1988; SETTA, 1995; BALDONI, 1999; PARLATO, 2006; AMBROSI, 2015.

of trade unionist unity. Finally, in contrast to free competition, the document had called for the implementation of a “national economic planning”. This aspect is significant. The Msi corporatist doctrine was connected to theoretical developments that during the 1930s had supported the assertion of the planned economy. Unlike the Catholic concept of corporatism, which emerged well before the “new economy” of the 1930s, corporatism and economic planning for the right-leaning Italian Social Movement (MSI) are two sides of the same coin.

This is also one of the reasons that explains the strong revival of the corporatist conception by the Italian Social Movement (MSI) in the years when Italy had initiated economic planning: it was seen as the moment of corporatism. The key moment was the year 1967. It is the year when the first five-year programme for the development of the Italian economy (1967-1971) took place, which was preceded by a heated parliamentary debate attended by the MSI members. It was also the fortieth anniversary of the declaration of the Charter of Labour, to which the MSI dedicated the publication *La Carta del lavoro. 21 Aprile 1927-21 Aprile 1967*.

Arturo Michelini, National Secretary of the Italian Social Movement (MSI), wrote in the introduction highlighting that: “today's call to the *Charter of Labour* would be little more than a fitting tribute to a historical fact, if we were not convinced that it contains within itself indications of admirable vitality and concrete validity, capable of resolving the problems caused by the severe crisis in modern society”. He went on to say that “to a democracy dominated by political parties we oppose the representation of the actual willingness of the living forces of the nation, that is, producers (entrepreneurs and providers of work) and of moral categories”. Finally, he referred to the debate on economic planning, in which the revival of corporatist theory was inserted by the MSI, and explained that:

in the face of development plans and programmes with a political rather than party base, which are a result of a legislative coaction, the result of legislative compulsion, we oppose the productive unity which can be formed freely as part of the supreme interests of the nation, for the will of the corporations that are self-governing, thereby achieving the highest model of modern democracy (MSI, 1967, p. 7-8).

Subject to fundamental criticism by the Italian Social Movement (MSI) was the democracy model created from the Constitution of 1948.

Augusto De Marsanich identified a deep conceptual contradiction between the 39 articles of the Constitution and 18 transitional rules. The articles were inspired by a series of general principles of the natural law doctrine. These articles were “noted and accepted” even if they were not particularly innovative. The only exception was the establishment of the administrative regions, because they were considered a minefield against the unity of the state. In the eyes of De Marsanich and the MSI, the transitional rules were instead intended to deny all the rights and powers of the citizens, for the benefit of a party system. This system was inspired by a concept opposed to corporatism: if the individual was participating in the political life of the State, as part of an economic category, in a partitocratic system the individual could participate in the political life of the state only insofar as they belong to a political party, as stated in Article 49 formulated by the socialist Lelio Basso (“All citizens have the right to freely associate in the party to compete with the democratic method to determine the national politics”). De Marsanich concluded that the Italian state system would not have survived the political parties crisis.

Meanwhile the debate on the implementation of the first five-year programme for the development of the Italian economy (1967-1971) raged on. The MSI introduced an alternative based on ‘corporatist planning’.

During the parliamentary debate, the rapporteur for the MSI, Raffaele Delfino, introduced the proposal not only into the debate on economic planning, but in the more general discussion relating to the ‘crisis of the State’. This discussion was already beginning to manifest itself in the mid-1960s, due to the impossibility of finding a synthesis between the positions of the Christian Democrats and the Socialist Party, part of the centre-left governments launched in 1963. The crisis of the State was due to the inadequacy of the institutional structure conceived in the aftermath of the Second World War, for a country which was agricultural, in the face of raging social and economic changes produced by the years of the “economic miracle”, which had turned Italy into an industrial power.

The problem of economic planning, according to members from the MSI, was first solved by revising the moulding of political will from which the programme was to be born, investing in particular into the role of parties and the representation of citizens (DELFINO, 1967, p.22-23). The MSI was not connected to the experience of fascism as a dictatorship – with the fascist dictatorship being considered a

unique exception in the history of Italy – but rather as the corporatist state, which had to represent the Italian solution to the problems of society and state that had emerged beforehand and that had led to fascism.

It is interesting to note how the Italian Social Movement's corporatist concept is different to the historical experience of fascism and should not be confused with it. In this regard, the book *La Carta del Lavoro*, published in 1967, makes for an interesting read, in which De Marsanich explains that the corporatist model was not confused with the closed economy, nor with autocracy, which represented a necessary parenthesis at that time in the history of Italy. It was a parenthesis which was, however, overcome in the 1960s. Italy was now a major industrialised country which needed to find its place in international trade to export its products, and corporatism had to comply with this new position (MSI, 1967, p. 77).

The problems that the Italian Social Movement (MSI) intended to solve through the revival of the corporatist system were primarily related to the representation of the general will, which, as claimed in liberal ideology, was not that expressed by ordinary citizens but rather producers, that is to say workers. Corporatism was to encourage the emergence of a real “work state”, overcoming the state of citizens. The economic programme, drafted by an assembly in which the professional categories were all represented, was to signify the synthesis of special interests in the greater national interest.

The definition of a work state allows one to also understand the reason why in the MSI the issue of corporatist planning is linked to another major issue, namely that of the participation of workers with regard to business management. The “co-management”, or “socialization”, represented a form of “corporatism” established within the individual company. The theme of socialisation formed part of the conclusion to the position expressed by Raffaele Delfino in *Programmazione corporativa* and was the subject of repeated legislative proposals from the MSI. Meanwhile, with the arrival of the 1970s, a crisis of the institutions began to emerge. On the one hand it became clear that it was a crisis of political parties, which were increasingly less able to make decisions of government and increasingly engaged in the preservation of power.

On the other hand, faced with such political impotence, the vindictive power of professional organisations and civil society grew. Worst of all, as Ugo Spirito recalled, were the trade unions, which,

from the hot autumn of 1969 onwards, tended to strip the Parliament of its functions (SPIRITO, 1971, p. 6). The result was a fragmented society, whose weaknesses threatened its very existence. Faced with this reality, the right felt the need to propose a vision to bring together representatives of interests and the protection of the public interest by strengthening the institutions.

It was the new general secretary of the MSI, Giorgio Almirante, who took over in 1969 following the death of Arturo Michelini, who would help carry out this project. In 1972 the Institute of Corporative Studies (ISC) was established in Rome, chaired by Ernesto Massi and directed by Gaetano Rasi. The ISC ceased its activities in 1992, when, coinciding with the end of the First Republic and the decline of the parties and therefore of the political culture that had characterised the debate in Italy in the twentieth century, the right-leaning Italian Social Movement (MSI) went a way forward to endorse the liberal ideology.

Between 1972 and 1992 the ISC represented the point of reference for the MSI economic policy strategy, focussing its reflection on corporatism and the participation of workers in company management, drawing on the pages of *Rivista di Studi Corporativi*, (which then changed its name to *Partecipare*) to form its proposals. In the opening address for the Institute of Corporative Studies, Ernesto Massi expressed the need to focus on the renewal of political representation in relation to the crisis of parliamentary democracy. To explain the crisis of the Italian parliamentary system, Massi quoted a Catholic political scientist Gianfranco Miglio and the lecture he delivered at the opening of the academic year 1964-65, as dean of the Faculty of Political Sciences at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan. Following Miglio's considerations, Massi offered as an approach the transformation of the Italian parliamentary democracy into an organic democracy, whose structure the Institute of Corporative Studies would have to help outline (ISTITUTO DI STUDI CORPORATIVI, 1973, p. 21-24). But the Institute of Corporative Studies's task was also to investigate the possibility of promoting the establishment of the participatory business management system. From 1955, each time a new legislature was opened, the MSI used to introduce a law to that effect.

The Institute of Corporative Studies had a central role in the latest proposals of the MSI on "co-management", constituting a working group in 1977, which led to the creation of the laws introduced in 1979

and 1991⁶. These laws explicitly recalled the experience of the *Chart of Labour*, but were also the result of discussions on some models examined by the EEC and the solutions adopted in the Federal Republic of Germany to soften the contrast between capital and labour⁷. Some elements of the Italian Social Movement's proposal were different from those of the aforementioned European experiences. The first one was the overcoming of equal representation between representatives of shareholders and employees in the management committee, in the name of a principle of proportionality calculated according to the contribution of each of them to the business. A second element of distinction was instead represented by the exclusion of trade union representatives from the management committee, believing it impossible to answer at the same time to the duties of the committee and the trade union. Finally, the proposal also called for the Italian Social Movement workers' participation in matters relating to the company expenditure, in particularly its profits (but not losses). This then echoed the theory of owners corporation put forward by Ugo Spirito in 1932 at the conference of trade union and corporatist studies held in Ferrara. Unsurprisingly, the same Spirito was speaking at the Institute of Corporative

⁶ ARCHIVE OF FONDAZIONE UGO SPIRITO E RENZO DE FELICE (AFUS), ISC, dossier entitled *Testo Base*. The last proposal for a new law on the establishment of a participatory business management system body submitted on 30 January, 1991 was signed by members including Servello, Rauti, Valensise, Abbatangelo, Alpini, Baghino, Berselli, Caradonna, Gaetano Colucci, Del Donno, Fini, Franchi, Lo Porto, Macaluso, Maceratini, Manna, Martinat, Massano, Matteoli, Mennitti, Mitolo, Nania, Parigi, Parlato, Pazzaglia, Pellegatta, Poli Bortone, Rallo, Rubinacci, Sospiri, Staiti di Cuddia delle Chiuse, Tassi, Tatarella, Trantino and Tremaglia.

⁷ AFUS, ISC, dossier entitled *Testo Base*. In reference to EEC, the first reference was that of the project of the fifth directive submitted by the European Commission to the council of ministers in 1972, which, representing companies with more than 500 employees, called for a third of the members of the supervisory committee to be appointed by the workers themselves or their representatives. The second reference was instead represented by the draft statute of the European Joint Stock Company, the version presented to the European Commission's council of ministers in 1975. The text stipulated that the supervisory committee be composed of three joint groups: one made up of the shareholder representatives, one comprising employee representatives and one comprising persons jointly co-opted by the first two groups. As for the Federal Republic of Germany, the text recalled the four laws governing the participation of workers: 1) the law of 1951 on co-decision, which called for a fair distribution of representatives of shareholders and employees in the supervisory board of companies in the coal and steel industries; 2) the financial statements of the previous law, which established the principle of worker representation also on the supervisory committees of the dominant companies which make up a "Konzern" (group of companies); 3) the law of 1952 on the structure of companies, which stated that even in companies not related to the two previous laws, but with more than 500 employees, 1/3 of the members of the supervisory committee should be appointed by employees or their representatives; 4) the law of 4 March 1976, which relates to a limited company, partnership limited by shares, companies with limited liability, mining associations with legal status and production and consumption cooperatives, with more than 2000 employees, in which the law called for an equal number of members on the supervisory committee.

Studies's inaugural conference emphasising "the current nature of corporatism".

With reference to the right wing, another place of debate that ensued in the early 1970s on corporatism was represented by the magazine *Nuovi Studi Politici*, founded in 1971 by the liberal Salvatore Valitutti. Since the first issue it was clear how this was the main subject, with contributions from Ugo Spirito (*Parlamento e Demagogia*, n. 1/1971, *Parlamento e sindacati*, n. 2/1972, *L'equivoco della Costituzione* n. 1/1972); Salvatore Valitutti (*Principio parlamentare e principio corporativo*, n. 2/1971, *Nota conclusiva sul principio parlamentare e sul principio corporativo*, n. 5-6/1971); Antimo Negri (*Corporativismo e parlamentarismo*, n. 4/1971); Claudio Orlando, (*La società contro lo Stato*, n. 2/1971) and Gian Franco Ciaurro (*La democrazia parlamentare nella fase dell'assemblearismo* n. 2/1971; *La democrazia parlamentare nella fase consociativa*, n. 4/1976; *La democrazia parlamentare nella fase neo-corporativa*, n. 1/1986).

It is significant to note that, apart from the writings from Ciaurro in 1976 and 1986, all the contributions emerged in 1971-72, which was a sign of a lively right-wing interest in issues of neo-corporatism at the beginning of the decade, one which over time would gradually diminish. The issue that gave rise to these writings was the relationship between political representation, understood as an activity directed toward the general aims of the associated community, and the representation of interests, focused on the pursuit of the greatest possible satisfaction of aims relating to professional groupings which make up civil society.

One common trait shared by the contributions was the focus on the stress of the parliamentary model produced by the French Revolution. The parliamentary model was based on the equality among citizens as opposed to the many differences that linked social states and the social and professional qualifications. This model that emerged from the French Revolution was rejected by Ugo Spirito, who remembered how the voter is a worker and therefore does not choose its representatives on the basis of an abstract ideology, but by reference to their particular area of work (SPIRITO, 1971, p. 6).

The weakness inherent in the French parliamentary model should not have led to its cancellation, but rather be used to complete the model with the support of an Assembly representing the interests of society. This was the idea put forward by Liberal Gianfranco Ciaurro, who in 1989 would become Secretary General of the Chamber of Deputies in 1993 and Minister for Coordination of Community Policies and Regional

Affairs in the first government led by Giuliano Amato. Featuring also in *Nuovi Studi Politici*, he wrote in 1986 that it was necessary to reconcile “what is best in the parliamentary principle with what is best in the corporatist principle”, in order to allow the transmission of impulses from civil society to political institutions ‘without these being forced to make or have their choices influenced by such impulses’.

He suggested instead that such impulses be mediated according to specific general interest objectives. In order to accomplish this, Ciaurro proposed to distinguish the mode of representation of both Houses; one dedicated to the undifferentiated and common representation of voters, the other to institutionalise the participation of intermediary groups in shaping the state (CIAURRO, 1986, p. 25-26). This was a proposal which, in the 1980s, was increasingly popular with the Catholics who gathered in the so-called Milan Group.

Arcana Imperi and the revival of Catholic neo-corporatism

The crisis of the centre-left structure finally collapsed in 1976, highlighting the inability of institutions to meet the needs of a society in profound transformation. The debate on the reform of the State gave new impetus to the corporatist tendency demonstrated by Catholicism. The main protagonist in the debate was the Milan Group, a study commission coordinated by Gianfranco Miglio, a political scientist, head of the Faculty of Political Sciences at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart from 1959 to 1988.

Miglio portrayed himself as heir to a “corporatist” tradition which was established at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in particular thanks to the contribution of Francesco Maria Vito, who had taught at the university since 1935 and who had been Dean from 1959 to 1965. But in general, he was connected to the line of Catholic thought espoused by such figures as Giorgio La Pira which attributed the crisis of the modern state to the constitutions stemming from the French Revolution (LA PIRA, 1945).

The work of the Milan Group began between 1980 and 1983, when it devised a series of proposals to reform the Italian Constitution. These proposals, and more generally the political-cultural project proposed by the Milan group, were disseminated through the *Arcana Imperi*’s political science series directed by Gianfranco Millie and edited by Giuffré. The Milan Group was particularly effective in its ability to catch the attention of politicians and inform them of the need for a reform of

the Italian political-institutional system, and encouraging the founding of a bicameral committee in 1983, chaired by the honourable Aldo Bozzi, which was, in all honesty, the first of a series of sterile attempts.

The book which explains the group's objectives is the second volume in the Arcana Imperi series. It is signed directly by Gianfranco Miglio and is entitled *Una Repubblica migliore per gli Italiani. Verso una nuova Costituzione (A better Republic for Italians. Towards a new Constitution)*. In Miglio's volume, referring to Edmund Burke and his speech *Discorso agli elettori di Bristol* on 3 November, 1774, he highlighted the "original contradiction which characterised all the 'representative regimes', that of the close relationship between voters and those elected that obliges the latter to carry out government actions aimed at promoting the 'fractional' interests of those who elected them. It is a behaviour that, however, leads to the resistance of all the other components of the society, resulting in the impasse in government decisions. According to Miglio, it was therefore necessary to distinguish between those who have the task of choosing and deciding, that is to say the members of the executive assembly, and those who carry the interests of different groups of citizens, namely the members of the representative. Miglio expressed the need for a "true separation of powers", which passed through several criteria of legitimacy, not standardised by the exclusive use of the elective-representative procedure (MIGLIO, 1983, p. 20-22)⁸. This was a functional procedure to legitimise the power of political parties and urged those who took on the responsibility of government to expand the system of public economy in order to consolidate and satisfy their constituencies.

In an elective-representative system the *raison d'être* was made up of an incessant electoral competition (national, regional, provincial and municipal elections) with the aim of winning to preserve the power, not to decide it. Miglio advocated instead a "reform of the 'power to decide', through a distinction between those who were entitled to govern and those who represent the interests of the society, explaining that 'the result of such a distinction is the return of the Parliament's role as original controller of the government (and not the creator and destroyer

⁸ Miglio added: "Burke had already made it clear that the 'representativeness' of the political class is different from 'collective representation', and Sieyès remarked that the electoral process cannot be the only creative source of authority. I am personally convinced that the adoption of various forms of legitimacy will be a main feature of the institutional system in which, on the basis that political systems are constantly changing, will transform the current democratic-consociational regime (or rather: the late-democratic regime). Whoever proposes to make the Italian Constitution of 1946-1948 less obsolete will have to move in such a direction".

of ministerial procedures); and the establishment of a ‘representative’ system of economic and professional categories” (MIGLIO, 1983, p. 36). Miglio and the Milan Group tried thus to overcome the opposition born from the French Revolution between parliamentary representative democracy, which is characterised as a democracy formed from atomistic-individualism, and “organic” representation, made up of the corporatist representation of interests.

Verso una nuova costituzione, which was the first volume in the Arcana Imperi, contains the Milan group’s proposals for reforming the Italian institutional system. Under Miglio’s leadership, four subgroups were created and were coordinated by Giovanni Bognetti (University of Milan), Serio Galeotti (University of Milan), Giorgio Petroni (University of Udine) and Franco Pizzetti (University of Turin). The working group devised a series of proposals to reform a constitution, which due to its parliamentary system, seemed outdated, as it was conceived to manage a nation which was still largely agricultural and not one which was increasingly industrialised. For this reason, the reform proposals relaunched the theme of corporatism, advocating the establishment of a “Council for the Productive Economy”, while a whole section of the book, the fifth by Franco Pizzetti, was devoted to “the relationship between political democracy and corporatist democracy. The Italian experience and the issue of the productive economy and the institutionalisation of the forces behind it” (MILAN GROUP, 1983, p. 49-51).

According to the Milan Group’s vision, the perfect bicameralism enshrined in the Constitution of 1948 had to be overcome by transforming the Senate into a chamber representing regions, on the model of the German *Bundesrat*, and then by having a productive Economic Council. The National Council for Economy and Labour (CNEL), which the Constitution intended to only be an auxiliary body for consultation with Parliament and the Government, appeared inadequate to Miglio and the Milan group.

According to the vision of the working group coordinated by Franco Pizzetti, the National Council for Economy and Labour was to be replaced by a third chamber, which would be added to the Chamber of Deputies and the chamber of regions. In accordance with the existence of a mixed economy, the Milan Group believed it necessary to establish an assembly where the economic and social forces, both public and private, operating in the market would be represented (with the exception of companies dealing with public services, because they were not acting

under market conditions). Members of this Council were to be elected by members of the respective categories and last for five years.

The Council would have to work with the Government to regulate the areas of production and exchange of goods and services and would have to provide for the allocation among the various sectors of economic resources allocated by the government through the finance laws. With regard to the interests represented in the Council, the Government would have to assume the role of a *super partes* body acting as referee, to safeguard the general interests of the country. With regard to the management of enterprises, the corporatist principles were considered softer than the positions expressed by the right. In fact, the Milan Group's project dedicated one page to the idea of employee participation in company management, proposing a reform of the Workers' Statute of Rights.

The Milan Group continued to explore the theme of the representation of organised interests even in subsequent Arcana Imperii publications. In 1984 Lorenzo Ornaghi published *Stato e corporazione. Storia di una dottrina nella crisi del sistema politico contemporaneo* (Giuffrè, Milan 1984) and the *Concetto di "interesse"*. In *Stato e corporazione*, Ornaghi placed the issue of corporatism "in the crisis of the contemporary political system", and explained that:

[...] It is significant, in fact, that the 'major' and 'old' themes of political thought return to form the core of modern political theory; these include the issue of foundations and forms of exercise (and control) of power, the issue of efficiency relating to the rules of the institutional game and even the issue of the 'nature' of the conduct of political aggregation. It is significant above all that these issues converge on an ancient theme, albeit one long since forgotten: the difficult and ambiguous issue between 'State' and 'Corporation'. It is then unsurprising that within the theory of politics the 'history' of the corporatist doctrine has begun to be retraced [...] (ORNAGHI, 1984, I, p. X).

It is interesting to note how, later in his speech, Ornaghi revealed a connection between the debate on corporatism that resumed in the 1980s, under the heading of "neo-corporatism", and the debate that began in Fascist Italy during the 1920s and 1930s. Both debates were dictated by the crisis of the modern state and the inadequacy of the tools available to understand the intricate relationship between politics (such as parties) and the state, and between politics and economics. The

interest in corporatism, Ornaghi added, was dictated by the need to want to “compose” and “regulate” the conflicting interests which in 1970s and 1980s’ society appeared increasingly divided.

In the foreword to the book, Ornaghi concluded by referring to the construction of a new corporatist theory that could resolve the crisis of legitimacy relating to the State:

In this sense, it is not at all erroneous to consider the assumption that it is the construction of a scientifically based corporatist model that can allow the policy theory to resolve the conflict that – in close connection with the changes taking place in the existing power systems (and confirmation of the rule that such transformations are always supported by – but not often preceded by – substantial changes in policy formulation) – each day faces efforts to set the wheels of the legitimacy of the state in motion and attempt to reduce the State to a collection of limited “functions” (ORNAGHI, 1984, 1, p. X).

The neo-corporatism was ultimately portrayed by Ornaghi as the form of regulation of relations between the state and interest groups more suitable as a result of “deideologisation” already in place within the State.

Arcana Imperi in 1988 published a book that contained the proceedings from a conference held to mark the 70th birthday of Gianfranco Miglio, entitled *Multiformità ed unità della politica*. At the final round table Miglio invited speakers to bring to light the process of reflection on the political representation that was developing in the age of reform and ideologies of the Enlightenment. It was a “lost” model, in which the central government, the financial management and the cooperation between social classes and State were being reformed (ORNAGHI, VITALE, 1988, p. 405-406). This line of institutional thinking was supplanted at the European level by the parliamentary order which had emerged from the French Revolution (COLOMBO, 1993). However, the institutional tradition continued to typify the German thought and in the mid-nineteenth century works by Gottlob Friedrich August von Liebe, Heinrich Ahrens, August Winter, Gustav Adolph Constantin Frantz and Von Mohl. The latter in particular, quoted by Leibholz in one of the volumes published in the Arcana Imperi series, foresaw the elimination of popular representation and the restructuring of the foundations of the state on a corporatist level, entrusting the representation of the general interests to a higher level of government (LEIBHOLZ, 1989, p. 269-270). This line of German thought went well with the Catholic corporatist tendency and therefore counted as a reference for the Milan Group.

As part of the Arcana Imperi series, in 1993, Stelio Mangiameli translated the book by Joseph H. Kaiser entitled *Die Repräsentation organisierter Interessen*, first published in Berlin in 1956. Kaiser stressed the indispensable presence of the organised interests within the public sphere of a mass industrial society. He drew attention to the need to regulate the relationship between the State and these interests, which, as Mangiameli emphasised in the introduction of his book, operate “in the intermediate space between the individual and state power” (KAISER, 1993, p. 6). It is a space that they themselves had won as a result of the transformation of Parliament as representative of civil society faced with the sovereign to a body representing the general will. This “shift – as Mangiameli describes – has left a void of representation of society, which the interest groups, organised into intermediary forces, have permanently filled” (KAISER, 1993, p. 12). In contrast to what was espoused by the Milan Group, Mangiameli did not make reference to the institutionalisation of the representation of organised interests. His concern was to recognise its importance in the context of society, understood as a privileged mediation between special interest and public interest. In this sense, Mangiameli’s presentation represented a fundamental shift from corporatism to the principle of subsidiarity of the civil society organisation and would be further developed in subsequent years (MANGIAMELI, 2002).

Conclusion: the crisis of the modern state continues and so does the debate on corporatism

The debate on corporatism represents a persistent topic in the Italian intellectual and political milieu since the end of XIX century. In some periods it gained force, in other lost its position, but it never disappeared. Today’s economic crisis and the need to boost development policies gives new vigour to the theories that advocate a greater role for the intermediate bodies and organised interests. All this comes just at a time when the Italian government takes the decision to abolish the National Council for Economy and Labour, highlighting the permanent separation between policy decisions and the demands of society.

Today the debate is now monopolised by Catholic intellectuals. With the end of the Italian Social Movement, the political right has indeed embarked on the removal of any reference to fascism that led it to renounce to corporatist doctrines, in the name of a more traditionally liberal leaning.

In the Catholic context, a need for a new illustration of the relationship between the State, society and the individual, which recognises the central role of intermediary bodies has become evident. References to the principle of subsidiarity and the role of the third sector made by representatives of associationism such as Giorgio Vittadini, Leonardo Becchetti, Giovanni Dotti, Andrea Olivero, will continue to rage on as long as the crisis of the parliamentary representative system which originated from the French Revolution continues to persist (BECCHETTI, 2010).

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Received: November 22, 2015

Accepted: January 12, 2016

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