The Independence war
Francis the II and the Two Sicilies in 1860
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Abstract

The recent historiography has questioned the classic themes of the story of the "mezzogiorno" in Risorgimento time. The end of the great narratives has been an event of growing interest both in the scientific debate and in public discourse, opening large spaces to research about the conditions of pre-unification states.

The Southern Kingdom, respect to the other contextual realities of the peninsula, expresses peculiar elements that make difficult to read them under the light of the recently established nationalist narratives. The legendary contour of the Risorgimento period, which core-theme was the invading enemy and the usurper of a land, destined by history to come back together, may have a light grip to Central-North structure, but it is not *tout court* comparable to the two Sicilies realm. The term, in fact, deletes the specificity of an area where there was not a foreign government, and occult a path that transformed it from an autonomous political and institutional subject, to a part of the new national state. More than a revival of the denied homeland, the transition was - in the words of the protagonists themselves – "a proper revolution, a conflict, at some stage, a real civil war". The idea that "an historical-set national law should prevail on the fragmentation of small countries" has underestimated the possible permanence of existing regional arrangements. The construction of a new state-size nation has long been proposed as the inevitable and necessary conclusion of an ideological-political processes, but it is also a symbolic-cultural action, rooted in the medium-long term and that eventually met a natural convergence.

In parallel, these routes generated an historical problem: the Anti-Risorgimento. The specular and complementary narration carried on by the Italian nationalist narrative is not, and it was not only, an alternative mythology produced by the variegated universe of the defeated (reactionaries, monarchists intransigent Catholics, legitimists). It was a different point of view of the sequence of events enabling that result.

If the Risorgimento was a myth even in the very moment in which it took place, the Anti-Risorgimento was a reality until its defeat, powerful and virtually irreversible. It produced other narratives, moving it to a different level. Until that time, it constituted a credible and widely practicable way for Italian unification: from the internal perspective, the end of the kingdom of Naples, who had shown great resilience in overcoming all challenges and tensions intestine from 1820 on, was nothing but obvious.

The disappearance of kingdom and dynasty was the result of a series of unforeseen circumstances and conjunctures - or political mistakes, empty military actions, administrative shortcomings, territorial gaps, individual choices. "A few states such as the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies cook until the last between dissolution and survival. Although it has roots in the past. of course the collapse is the result of a play that has been on stage since 1860". The State's depletion was consumed throughout at least three different phases, and very quickly: the revolutionary situation of Sicily in the spring of 1859 became the April revolution in 1860. The bells of Gancia reactivated the terms of entrenched political conflict. Here, the legitimist and reactionary politics, via the successful management of the internal government, the wise use of strength in local governments and, above all, the identification of the kingdom with the dynasty, systematically won the challenges of the on-going liberal-constitutional. The civil strife that followed the suppression of the revolution prepared the ground for the landing of "the thousand"; after May the 11th, it turned into a national war for the unique coincidence that the regional political opposition approached the project towards the common and main enemy.

Deleted the Neapolitan home, plebiscites formalized the transition from an absolute state and regional character to another parliamentary and national type, highlighting so the key role played in the crown mend fractures in ensuring policy continuity.

The monarchy remained, both in the South and in Italy, the symbolic element and the fundamental identity around which the unification of the country was possible. Its strength, demonstrated by its continuity in the replacement of the Bourbon sovereignty with the Savoy, allowed the stabilization of the new state and the legitimacy of its institutions.

Despite its central role in the political process, the monarchy is the great absentee of the historical reconstruction of the Risorgimento.

The current state of art of the South' studies imposes therefore a deeper understanding of the Bourbon monarchy, its institutional appendages and its political proposal. In this perspective, the study of the Anti-risorgimento necessarily passes trough its main protagonist: Francis the II. Being the last member of the dynasty, he inherited not only an efficient government structure, able to face the opposition and control territories for more than a century and a half, but also the fractures that had punctuated the terms of the clash before Francis was even born. He was such unable to read events and respond to the impact of Italian nationalism, that on the contrary he intercepted political forces hostile to the regime, and the combination of patriotism and freedom in the new European geopolitical framework declared the end of the "legitimist" world.

Looking at those events through the lens of the relationship between the king and the apparatuses of the state, the scene enlarges and expands, making us understand the war, to reflect on the collapse of the monarchical institution, and on the responsibilities in determining military and political defeat. The widespread violence converted the secular dialectic between the king and the Neapolitan homeland in a complex dynamic between the last sovereign, the representatives of the Bourbon establishment and the Garibaldi's fellows impact.

The perspective of the protagonists used in this research helps to explain the deepest reasons of the crisis that unset from the sovereign the whole pyramid of power.

By collecting and analysing the documents produced by the government, letters, telegrams, memories, reconstructions, this research proposes a new interpretive key to understand how the Bourbons lived and perceived the war; how the monarchy, with its local appendages, organized and managed the strategies of defense; and how far the failure of the policy direction contributed to the substantial defeat of the dynastic claims to the South.