

From the Five-Party Alliance to Forza Italia. The formation of the centre-right coalition in Italy from 1994 to 2001.

1994 culminated in the crisis of the political system and opened a new phase of democracy in Italy. The elections in March were won by the Pole of Freedoms (Polo della Libertà). By getting 21 percent and eight million votes, Forza Italia became the leading party in Italy. Its leader, Silvio Berlusconi, was appointed Prime Minister. After fifty years of substantial immobility in the political system, the executive was now to be led by a party born only a few months before.

The crisis of 1992-1993 led to the dissolution of the political forces that had governed Italy since the start of the post-fascist era. The five-party alliance that had held the reins of government over the last decade simply did not exist anymore. Enter Forza Italia, the movement around which Silvio Berlusconi had built the coalition that defeated the alliance of the Left.

During its life span of fourteen years, Forza Italia has been the most significant novelty in the political scene that emerged after the crisis that marked the end of the "First Republic". Berlusconi has twice been Prime Minister and his party has always performed brilliantly in any election, becoming rooted in the territory with the passing of time, counting thousands of militants and public administrators today.

As emerged from poll studies, Forza Italia has increasingly inherited the moderate vote and the territorial rootedness that once belonged to the five-party alliance, to which followed the moving of leading groups of the old governing majority. After a quiet, peripheral start in the local elections, Forza Italia eventually became an important phenomenon nationwide, especially after 2001.

At the same time, many national leaders involved in the "'94 revolution" went in the opposite direction, moving back to the province as mayors and governors. All of this naturally forced a cultural rethinking of Forza Italia. After the first phase, where the identity of the party was reduced to the identification with the leader and a model of corporate efficiency, a broader debate on the cultural roots of the party was brought forward.

Forza Italia was to be interpreted not only as a new political party representing a transparent and efficient alternative to the old party system, but also as a political force with the aim of gathering the best tradition of the old parties themselves. An attempt to re-dignify political traditions and parties that, starting from the eighties, had degenerated into business committees, resulting in frequent episodes of

misrule and corruption, but which had previously been the focus of Italian reformism.

Forza Italia is believed to have attempted to mend the tear that occurred between society and political power in the years 1992-1993. Also, it has tried to give representation to large numbers of people from North to South with enormous social and geographical differences who were seeking a moderate way out of the collapse of the parties of the so called "First Republic".

The Left underestimated the complexity of the challenge and read the Berlusconi phenomenon as the adventurism of an individual. Forza Italia was undoubtedly that too, and the enormous resources of its leader were obviously part of its success, but the key was to be found in the moderate response that Forza Italia was offering to get out of the Italian political crisis created by Tangentopoli. That is why Forza Italia was able to inherit, without difficulty, much of the electorate and a significant number of leaders of the Five-Party Alliance.

We believe that Forza Italia has represented, rather than a break with the previous political system, an acceleration in its persistence. The personalization of political action, the campaign centered on the leader and the creation of a party through one's own personal resources were certainly new to the Italian political system, but they were not a break.

These phenomena, as we have seen, were already in progress, and had had a forerunner, for example, in Bettino Craxi. But all across Europe, both now and in the past, the personal and / or charismatic party seemed to be the most effective way to preserve the contact between politics and society, a role that the parties were now having trouble playing. It is obvious that the concentration of economic and political power that has coincided with the Forza Italia experience produced a hardly imitable unique example. However, research also shows obvious elements of continuity, or rather of persistence, between Forza Italia and the Five-Party Alliance.

Thus, the function of Forza Italia seems to have been that of a meeting point between the government forces from the "First Republic" that would not, could not, or were no longer able to reform themselves, to which this new party offered the possibility of an outlet into the "Second Republic. "

In conclusion, it seems congenial to a quote from Andrea Graziosi, "Human history is one of persistences, rather than continuities, as well as breaks." The account of the birth of Forza Italia seems to be just that. In addition to being the First Republic's final break, it has been the story of a continuity, or better still, that of a persistence.