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Ph.D. thesis in Contemporary History

ABSTRACT

The War of Segrate

The first clash between Berlusconi and «la Repubblica»

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THE WAR OF SEGRATE
ABSTRACT

The fight between the biggest Italian entrepreneurs of the eighties, Silvio Berlusconi and Carlo De Benedetti, it's an exemplar vicissitude of the transition from the First to the Second Italian Republic. In fact into the War of Segrate, the financial and judiciary clash happened between the 1984 and the 1991 for the control of the publishing house Mondadori, we find a lot of phenomena typical of the First Republic, from the ambiguous connections between the institutions, the mass media and the political power to the difficult relationships between civil society and the leading class.

At the same time, the War of Segrate has been one of the founding episodes of the Second Republic, characterized by the sunset of the mass party that emerged during the thirties and forties and from the birth of two anomalous parties: the enterprise-party of Berlusconi and the newspaper-party of «la Repubblica». Analyzing the crisis of the mass party, ethical power with thousands of members and a structure similar to the State's one, we have recognized the necessity of spreading the spectrum of the Italian political history further the traditional history of the parties to deal with the study of the seventies, eighties and nineties of the twentieth century.

We have therefore placed at the center of the narrative the War of Segrate, recounting the years of transition from the point of view of the newspaper founded and led by liberal-socialist Eugenio Scalfari. The journalists' sources, memoirs, television programs, supplemented by parliamentary debate, have let us to paint a picture of the relationships between the powers of different nature in the Italy of the "long" eighties.

After some considerations of a political analysis on the crisis of the republic of parties, we have introduced Scalfari and his team, highlighting how their journalistic and literary production has shaped public opinion (and therefore the electorate) of the left wing, through a Manichean narrative, that opposed a healthy civil society to a corrupt and unshakable political class. The clash with the PSI led by Bettino Craxi, predestined competitor of Scalfari for the guidance of the "progressive" middle classes, occupies a large part of this section and introduces the

reader to the metaphor of a medieval gang war, with which he wanted to describe the Republic of parties.

Berlusconi, De Benedetti and their many connections with the political class and the economic and financial world of the eighties occupy the other two sections of our work, in which is shown how the creation and development of two of the largest industrial and financial concentrations of our country have occurred in a state of semi-lawlessness and constant political interference. So we had to describe the parliamentary battle, linked to the interests of Berlusconi's television networks, the companies of De Benedetti and their opponents, in which the political forces were divided in such an abnormal transverse way.

In the fourth chapter we have dealt with the crisis of the historical leader-team of Mondadori, swept away by a failed experiment in commercial television and family disagreements. There were therefore examined the roles of shareholders Berlusconi and De Benedetti and the decision of Scalfari to sell the group «L'Espresso» and with it «la Repubblica» to the Mondadori led by De Benedetti, giving up the decades-long battle for the freedom of the press from the extra-editorial interests. We have also concluded the chapter by analyzing the role played by «la Repubblica» newspaper and its allies in the fight to the agreement between the Craxi's Socialist Party and the right-wing Christian Democrats led by Andreotti and Forlani.

In the fifth chapter we have analyzed the long and troubled path of the law for the regulation of the broadcasting system, analyzing the relationships between the parties and between the institutions - Government, Parliament, Constitutional Court, ordinary courts - highlighting the lobbyist behavior that played the protagonists of the War of Segrate in the final draft of the law. In particular, we wanted to emphasize that this parliamentary battle would anticipate some features of the Second Republic, from the end of the unity of the Catholics to the division between post-communist and other left-wing and laic forces.

Finally, we have analyzed the War of Segrate from the point of view of the relationship between the shareholders in the company and in the courts, bearing in mind the views of Scalfari and his allies in the fight against Berlusconi, a publisher to them unwelcome because too close to the axis between the Socialists and the right-wing Christian Democrats. After having analyzed the different levels of courts of numerous lawsuits

triggered by the two factions, we have told the mediation imposed by the then Prime Minister Andreotti to reaffirm, deceptively, the primacy of policy towards the media and the economic trusts.