

Scylla and Charybdis: Italian moderates between absolute monarchy and the sovereignty of the people 1843 – 1861.

Introduction

Between 1843 and 1861, the role of the Italian moderates¹ was decisive in the process of the country's unification. The latest historiography has extensively analyzed such a role in all of its internal and international implications and has often emphasized a kind of cultural backwardness on the part of the Italian moderates with respect to the major European currents of thought². In this regard, Luca Mannori has analyzed the inconsistency of the image of the Italian liberals portrayed as a feeble and narrow minded culture, vis a vis the mobilization for the constitution 'involving all of the States of the peninsula in the first few months of 1848'. In other words, he enquires as to how such a situation could have occurred³.

This essay aims to contribute to eliminating such prejudice against the Italian moderates of this historical period by analyzing a fundamental aspect of their politics connected to beliefs and theoretical intuitions that would prove to be decisive in the transition from the old monarchic and aristocratic world to the new democratic one.

The motto used for the coronation of Victor Emanuel II as King of Italy, 'by the grace of God and by the will of the nation', was substantially a contradictory statement recalling two principles of legitimacy of power which could potentially be antithetic. Yet, that compromise was the final result

¹ The definition of 'moderatism' and its association with the term liberalism has always raised a lively debate in the context of Italian historiography. Aurelian Craiutu, who explored the issue concerning French political thought, has described 'moderation' as a kind of 'archipelago' which still needs to be re-examined and whose main preoccupation has concerned 'ending the revolution'. (A. Craiutu, *A Virtue for Courageous Minds. Moderation in French Political Thought, 1748-1830*, Princeton-Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2012, p. 1). Antonio Chiavistelli, in the entry 'moderate / democratic' of his recent *Atlante culturale del Risorgimento*, states: 'In those years, the liberal brand could apply, with no embarrassment, to both to those who had declared themselves democratic as well as to those who preferred to be defined moderate'. Chiavistelli also quotes Cesare Balbo to highlight the fact that among the liberals there were those who sought change through 'legitimate methods' and those who sought them through 'Jacobin methods' (A. Chiavistelli, *Moderati/Democratici*, in A.M. Banti, A. Chiavistelli, L. Mannori, M. Meriggi [eds], *Atlante culturale del Risorgimento. Lessico del linguaggio politico dal Settecento all'Unità*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2011, pp. 115-133).

² See for example Guido de Ruggero in *Il pensiero politico meridionale nei secoli XVIII e XIX*, Bari, Laterza, 1954, pp. 217-218, R. Romeo, *Il giudizio storico sul Risorgimento*, Catania, Bonanno Editore, 1966, pp. 111-113, S. La Salvia, *Il moderatismo in Italia*, in U. Corsini, R. Lill [eds], *Istituzioni e ideologie in Italia e in Germania tra le rivoluzioni*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1987, pp. 175-177, R. Romanelli, *Nazione e costituzione nell'opinione liberale avanti il '48*, in P. L. Ballini (ed.), *La rivoluzione liberale e le nazioni divise*, Venezia, Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2000, pp. 280-284. Maurizio Isabella e Roberto Romani have revised these points of view. In his study on Cesare Balbo, Isabella, in contrast with Romanelli, has tried 'to locate the political thought carried out by Balbo and his colleagues at the heart of contemporary European debates, the French one in particular, regarding liberty and aristocracy' (M. Isabella, *Aristocratic Liberalism and Risorgimento: Cesare Balbo and Piedmontese Political Thought after 1848*, 'History of European Ideas', 2013, n. 6, p. 835). Romani, on the other hand, has shown that even though it is true that moderatism, especially the kind carried out in Piedmont, changed in 1848, it nevertheless 'retained its conservative character. The task facing Piedmont in the 1850s was formidable. It consisted in consolidating constitutional government at home, and at the same time it subverted the European balance of power, and arguably the Pope's temporal power, without unleashing democracy or, worse still, socialism', (R. Romani, *Reluctant Revolutionaries: Moderate Liberalism in the Kingdom of Sardinia, 1849-1859*, 'The Historical Journal', 2012, n. 1, p. 49, see also Id., *Political Thought in Action: the Moderates in 1859*, 'Journal of Modern Italian Studies', 2012, n. 5, pp. 593-607, and *Liberal Theocracy in the Italian Risorgimento*, 'European History Quarterly', 2014, n. 4, pp. 620-650).

³ L. Mannori, *Il dibattito istituzionale in Italia al tornante degli anni Quaranta*, in M. L. Betri (ed.), *Rileggere l'Ottocento. Risorgimento e nazione*, Torino, Carocci, 2010, p. 64.

of both the moderates' influence on the Risorgimento and of Count Cavour's wise conduct after 1849⁴.

My aim in this essay is to show how the Italian moderates, from the most conservative to the most progressive, succeeded, from 1843, in controlling the patriotic movement, rejecting the republican option as unfeasible in a country that was still profoundly monarchical. They were also able to limit the democratic thrust, which came from the epic deeds of the revolutionary period, channeling it within the idea of a representative government led by public opinion and by the higher ranking monarchical power. They could benefit both from the English and French experience, the latter after the Restoration, and understood, only after the institution of a constitutional monarchy and only under its protective shield, that some of the achievements of the French Revolution, from the point of view of freedom, civil rights and political participation, could have been preserved.

In the first part, we will see how the moderates, between 1843 and 1846, sought first of all to create a common public opinion within the various states of the Italian peninsula urging their sovereigns to commit to the cause of national unity. This federalist plan would not be carried out through a Jacobin popular revolution, but through a number of gradual reforms conceded from above, enlightened by advisory and deliberative bodies and by public opinion itself, guided by the most educated men. During this stage, opposing opinions emerged concerning the concept of representative government, owing to issues of political convenience (the presence of censorship, the counteroffensive carried out by reactionary forces, etc.) as well as to real theoretical divergences.

The second part, instead, will deal with the crucial two-year period that followed which led to the first War of Independence of 1848-49, during which even the most conservative moderates openly sided with the representative government, following the constitutional turn occurred in Piedmont. In this setting, Vincenzo Gioberti converted to democracy with the intention of connecting the consensus of the masses to the actions of the monarchy in view of achieving the country's unity.

Finally, in the third section, I will show how, in spite of Gioberti's broadened perspective, many moderate conservatives, particularly from Piedmont, such as Cesare Balbo and the Count of Cavour, continued to be suspicious of popular sovereignty and favored and encouraged the monarchical principle, supported by a limited suffrage to avoid revolutionary upheavals. Nevertheless, Cavour and others were also ready to invoke a plebiscite against those legitimate sovereigns who opposed the Sabaudian state's annexation of their territories.

§ 1 On the path of reform towards national unity.

As highlighted by a well-established historiography, at the beginning of the 1840s, moderate writers began to create a kind of embryonic public opinion which would spread throughout the 'small states' of the peninsula⁵. These writers accepted the incitement received by Niccolò Tommaseo, one of the forerunners and promoters of the national debate on independence, freedom and the country's unity. His goal was to 'prepare a like-minded attitude' towards these ideas to convince the peninsula's sovereigns to change their opinion, also urging them to carry out 'good deeds'. As Tommaseo wrote, it certainly was not by means of violent revolutions aimed at subverting the authority that any tangible result would be reached. In fact, revolutions would prove to be 'if not fatal, filled with dangers, to say the least', while 'the most desirable reforms were those *conceded*

⁴ R. Romeo, *Il Risorgimento: realtà storica e tradizione morale*, in Id., *Dal Piemonte sabauda all'Italia liberale*, Torino, Einaudi, 1964, pp. 262-269. See also D. Settembrini, *Storia dell'idea antiborghese in Italia 1860-1989*, Bari, Laterza, 1991, pp. 26-27.

⁵ L. Cafagna, *Cavour*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1999, p. 138. L. Mannori, *La crisi dell'ordine plurale. Nazione e costituzione in Italia tra Sette e Ottocento*, in M. Fioravanti (ed.), *Ordo juris. Storia e forme dell'esperienza giuridica*, Milano, Giuffrè, 2005, p. 177, S. De Luca, *L'Italia immaginata dai moderati. "Nation building" e "State-building" in Gioberti, Balbo e d'Azeglio (1843-1847)*, "Storia del pensiero politico", 2012, n. 3, pp. 495-525.

from above, i.e. by the authority, and granted in the fashion and through the constraints of the times'⁶.

In his *Primato* of 1843, the text which initiated the debate, Vincenzo Gioberti highlighted that in order to reach the goals that many patriots had wished for, an agreement between the princes and the people would be vital, otherwise the very existence of civilization would be jeopardized. He also affirmed that 'the representative monarchy was the master in Europe' even if in many areas it was only in its 'initial stages'. Civilization in politics, as well as in religion, meant aiming for 'representative orders' which had to result from 'the accord between past and future memories and hopes, tradition and innovation, stability and progress of the hereditary monarchy and the elective Few'. The representative government was equally alien to 'opposite excesses, such as pure democracy and despotic monarchy'. Moreover, Gioberti was well aware that democracy 'in modern life' had taken over all 'regiments', but thought that the only reasonable democracy was the kind conforming to aristocratic virtue, genius and soul, which stood between 'feudal patriciate' and 'plebeian democracy'. 'Democratic orders' in fact, were 'not so justifiable in civil States that were not extremely small'. 'The dogma of popular sovereignty' was in contradiction with 'the original tenor of science' and with the progress of civilization. The people could acquire political rights 'only by escaping the plebeian condition, (...) through civilization' and through the action of the monarch who bestowed 'a ray of his majesty'⁷.

Cesare Balbo, like Gioberti, considered the agreement between the princes and the people indispensable, as he wrote in *Speranze d'Italia*: 'What we can achieve is a similar or higher degree of law, which may be obtained from our princes and which cannot be had without them'. It was only by following the 'rule of law, legality, legitimacy (all synonyms)' in this 'good undertaking' that the support of 'the public opinion, which is forceful' can be enjoyed. It is well known how in his book Balbo had underscored the importance of independence, postponing the issue of freedom and had suggested that the princes adopt 'advisory' instead of 'deliberative' governments for fear that parliamentary divisions would hinder the achievement of independence, as in 'the terrible examples offered by France and Spain'. In principle though, Balbo was not against the deliberative form of government if it were introduced by a prince; thus, he 'would employ the highest means of popularity and unity in Italy' and from that point on 'the foreigner's anguish on Italian land' would begin. What Balbo would not accept, then or even later, was the change produced by a constituent assembly or a convention, which he considered 'a truly backward invention'⁸.

The contributions by Massimo d'Azeglio and Giacomo Durando are certainly among the most important offered in this debate. D'Azeglio was well aware of the 'raging' fight concerning the principle of popular sovereignty, which 'provoked discord as soon as it was uttered'. In the past, divine right had been able to support power because everyone believed in it, but at this time all civilized nations were approaching the 'common law' and public opinion was becoming 'the true ruler of the world'. If, during this transition process, the highly contentious term 'popular sovereignty' could be replaced by expressions like 'universal consensus' and still remain disallowed, both should at least have been acknowledged as standing for 'the actual foundation of power'. Hence, the various Italian sovereigns would have had to unite in view of national interest and become 'moderate liberals' so that their subjects would not become 'fanatic liberals' embracing the principle of revolution. D'Azeglio, in fact, saw 'the rapid approach of an era in which nations' would be 'the safest grounds for thrones'⁹. Durando, instead, thought that the idea of taking an active part in managing one's own interests, which had originated during the French revolution, had by then become the general tendency of the people. The Congress of Vienna opposed this tendency

⁶ N. Tommaseo, *Un affetto. Memorie politiche* (1839), Roma, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1974, p. 32.

⁷ V. Gioberti, *Del primato morale e civile degli italiani* (1843), Brusselle, Meline-Cans, 1845, pp. 89, clxxxiv, cdli, 174, 315-317.

⁸ C. Balbo, *Delle speranze d'Italia* (1843), Capolago, Tipografia elvetica, 1844, pp. 228-235, 244.

⁹ M. d'Azeglio, *Degli ultimi casi di Romagna*, Lugano, Tipografia della Svizzera italiana, 1846, pp. 89-90, 99-100. Id., *Proposta d'un programma per l'opinione nazionale italiana*, Firenze, Le Monnier, 1847, pp. 14, 16, 26.

with its 'inextricable tangle of legitimacy' which, of course, applied to Italy, 'a nation that in a certain sense, had been saturated with French ideas for twenty years'. Durando wrote that amongst the 'strugglers', amid those who impatiently proposed violence and conspiracy (the subversive liberalism of the 18th century supporting demagogic democracy) and those who defended the Status quo, there were also 'the moderate friends of a balanced prosperity for all, those who want to preserve the monarchic principle because of the existence of the liberal principle'. Not supporting the latter group meant that 'if the day came when the waters were to break the dams, the monarchic principle would either be isolated or surrounded only by a faction of incorrigible spirits'. For this reason and in spite of Balbo, Durando suggested not to separate the issue of freedom from the issue of independence and urged the princes 'to change the existing forms of government by grafting a deliberative regime upon them, called constitutional or representative'¹⁰.

Balbo's position, on the contrary, was supported by Cavour in his first important public document, the famous essay written in 1846 concerning the Italian railway system. He stated that in the general context of the Congress of Vienna there had been a constant appeal only to the law of the strongest, thus constructing 'a political edifice devoid of any moral foundation', turning the possibility of a democratic revolution into an actual danger. At the same time though, Cavour was also convinced that a democratic revolution had no 'chance of being successful' because, except for a few cities, the democrats did not particularly enjoy the sympathy of the masses, who were 'generally very much attached to the country's old institutions'. For this reason, Balbo's appeal in *Speranze d'Italia* rightfully attracted those who 'elected the principle of legitimacy as the foundation of their political beliefs because they were loyal to their ancestors' traditions'¹¹. In October of 1847, Cavour wrote to Léon Costa de Beauregard affirming: 'I am convinced that order is necessary for the development of society; amongst all guarantees of order, the best is a legitimate power which is deeply rooted in the history of the country'¹².

Michelangelo Castelli, a friend of Cavour and a future collaborator of the paper 'Il Risorgimento', knew that to conquer public opinion it was necessary to face the absolutists legitimists. On the other hand, this was the only opinion which had been allowed to circulate freely in Italy and which succeeded in describing as an '*exaggeration*' 'what the French called *moderation*'. Castelli was wondering who, in his day, could 'still say that the principles, the doctrines and the theories supporting liberal opinion are anarchic, enemies of religion and thrones, and that even the simplest demonstration on their part must be repressed?'. The times were ripe for a constitution establishing 'the kinds of relationships between the nation and the prince', so that the citizens, with their right to 'contribute to making the laws' could work alongside the 'inviolable' king. Castelli maintained that on the other hand, 'national thrones were sacred to all Italians, and even though certain monarchic benefits were metaphysical, i.e. unperceived by many, the mere doubt as to the necessity of a hereditary monarchic order would mean not recognizing history and men'¹³.

On the opposite side and in agreement with Giuseppe Mazzini and the democrats, Giuseppe Napoleone Ricciardi engaged in the challenge of the moderates, who were struggling to conquer public opinion: 'If the axiom in politics is that revolutions are prepared by writers and that providing that certain beliefs are not rooted within the majority, no change can ever take place in the destiny of a people, I believe that the sacred obligation of every Italian writer is to purposely attempt to make the homeland able and ready for necessary and desired upheavals'. This criticism basically echoed what Santorre Santarosa had already expressed in 1821: 'When has a prince ever voluntarily surrendered to the wishes of the people?'. Considering that 'the obvious tendency of the

¹⁰ G. Durando, *Della nazionalità italiana. Saggio politico-militare*, Losanna, Bonamici e Compagni, 1846, pp. 22, 28, 30, 49, 50, 189, 195.

¹¹ C. Cavour, *De chemins de fer en Italie* (1846), in Id., *Tutti gli scritti*, Torino, Centro studi piemontesi, 1976, vol. II, pp. 951-954.

¹² C. Cavour, *Epistolario*, cit., vol. IV, p. 349.

¹³ M. Castelli, *Saggi sull'opinione politica moderata in Italia*, Italia, 1847, pp. 36-37, 82, 142, 144, 161, 181.

civil world was to be entirely democratic', entailed that 'the national will' represented the 'only legitimate source of all public authority', making it therefore immediately necessary to 'raise the flag of the people, the banner much dreaded by the Republicans'¹⁴.

§ 2 The representative government and the democratic turn.

As known, shortly after this debate the situation rapidly changed with the election of Pope Pius IX and with the beginning of a season of reform which involved the main Italian states, the prelude to the first war of Independence, which took place in 1848 - 1849. Silvio Spaventa, from March to July 1848 in articles written for the Neapolitan newspaper 'Il Nazionale', openly supported independence and the representative system, writing that 'the tangible history of the Italian Risorgimento' was starting with the new Pope and that 'the ideal emblem which expressed its nature and its course was the system of agreement between the monarchy and the people', which, nevertheless, would remain faulty if reform did not lead to a constitution. The monarchies' main task would be to 'serve the nation' and 'become the Peoples' unifiers'¹⁵. The disastrous outcome of the war, both in its 'federal' and subsequent 'democratic' phase, favored only one constitutional regime, that of Sabaudian Piedmont, which alone held high the Italian flag. Even though Charles Albert's former concession of a representative government had been carried out reluctantly¹⁶, it did obtain the approval of all the Italian liberals who had long demanded it. On 4 February 1848, in an article that appeared in the newspaper 'Il Risorgimento', Cavour stated that 'the people were prepared to exercise their political rights' and 'those who could fittingly represent them by carrying out the serious responsibilities of deliberative orders were not lacking within the nations'. In an article which appeared on 10 March, Cavour defended the statute from the attacks of its adversaries, as it included 'all of the great principles of a free constitution' and it consecrated 'all the rights enjoyed by the most civilized nations'. Furthermore, such a statute limited the executive power 'without overwhelmingly weakening the governing force' and guaranteed personal freedom and civil equality, all principles which, in 1789, represented 'the true basis of free life'. As in the English monarchy however, the 'constitutional power' lay jointly with the king and the House of Commons¹⁷. The concession of the Charter also drew the more skeptical and fearful legitimist conservatives closer to the national cause. Count Carlo Ilarione Petitti di Roreto, in fact, declared: 'The following cannot be denied: that the firm and steady tendency to proclaim and maintain each nationality marks our century; that nationality can only be based on reasonable public and private freedom; that building it by means of conspiracy and rebellion, as occurred in other times, has proven ineffective; that only the loyal agreement between the prince and the people of the same

¹⁴ G. N. Ricciardi, *Conforti all'Italia, ovvero preparamenti all'insurrezione*, Parigi, Dai torchi di François, 1846, pp. iv, 16, 128, 130, 152, 168.

¹⁵ S. Spaventa, *Dal 1848 al 1861. Lettere, scritti documenti* (1897), Bari, Laterza, 1923, pp. 19, 27, 31.

¹⁶ On 1 February 1848, Charles Albert had written to Count Giacinto Borrelli saying that he could not tolerate a popular demonstration like the one that was taking place in Genoa, as its goal was to demand a constitution; therefore he would oppose it strenuously. Two days later, during the *conseil de conference* chaired by the king, the situation changed and Borrelli said that if His Majesty deemed the constitution as inevitable, he was to grant it with the highest dignity. Even a pure conservative like Count Revel went so far as to suggest this choice to the king, even though it was in contrast with 'the principles on which he had been educated (...) all his life'. In fact, he understood very well that 'his country was not mature for a representative regime and that its adoption would produce 'sectarian results'. The Marq. Cesare Alfieri, during the session held on 7 February, was outraged by the press, which had spread the momentous opinion 'that democracy was a powerful component of our days' and for this very reason the government had to defend this opinion announcing the foundations for a statute and for a representative government, (*Lo Statuto Albertino e la sua preparazione*, edited by G. Falco, Roma, Capriotti, 1945, pp. 97, 180-181, 203-204).

¹⁷ C. Cavour, *Tutti gli scritti*, cit., vol. III, pp. 1083, 1113-1116. For P.G. Massimo Turina, 'The hereditary constitutional monarchy, with a deliberating popular representation, elected by all the citizens who have an interest in order and in the strict compliance to the law', seemed to unite 'all the advantages of the Republic without having any of its drawbacks', *Della missione del giornalismo*, Torino, Giuseppe Pomba e Compagnia, 1848, p. 19.

nation, can make such an enterprise successful'. Even Petitti had been forced to admit 'that the democratic tendency has become collective'. He also acknowledged that 'true equality of rights and duties and the abolition of all privileges pertaining to class, position or any other distinction among citizens is an inescapable necessity of the times. At the present state of civilization it is impossible to ignore such a necessity without seriously compromising the law of the State which is not incompatible with the representative monarchy'. It was not necessary to have a republican form of government to 'found democracy'; in the end, the republicans certainly 'made lots of noise' but were few and, according to Gioberti, 'truly backward'¹⁸.

Petitti echoed Ercole Ricotti, who had written: 'Yesterday Piedmont took its place next to the civilized nations, few of which have achieved such a status through similar high and virtuous venues. Piedmont did not succeed through rows and bloodshed nor by trampling on existent powers, which instead have led them hither, without a cry, without a tear, guided by its king, with the solemn attention of the people who are carrying out the greatest deed of their existence'¹⁹. In this climate, the future prime minister of the Kingdom of Italy, Bettino Ricasoli while in Florence stated that 'the concept of the Italian Risorgimento was inseparable from the idea of what is civil, and the Italian monarchy could not exist if not under the condition of being civil'²⁰. Also in Parma, a conservative such as Count Linati drew closer to the representative monarchy, which for him was 'the most perfect form of civil regime'. The representative monarchy was the last resort to curb that 'false and evil spirit leading to the twilight of our civilization', the American 'degradation' to which those European nations engaged in 'rebuilding a new social edifice upon ancient ruins' were attracted. In fact, social authority had to remain free from the will of its associates and could not be annulled, since in politics the 'dangerous consequences' of the direct examination of the Holy Scriptures had to be rejected. After all 'for the princes to reiterate that their authority came from God was not totally unreasonable, since tracing multiplicity back to its sole representative and harmonizing the differences for the common good, made such authority the minister and imitator of divine providence'²¹. Also according to Antonio Rosmini, in order to dispel the fatal error dating back to the French Revolution, which had sprouted popular despotism and revolutions against every government, it was necessary for 'the nation to be represented by the people's deputies joined to the sovereign, who was to ensure the balance between the Chambers'²².

After forming his ministry in December of 1848, Gioberti increasingly exposed the moderates' Risorgimento to democratic ideas. The speech that he addressed to the parliamentary chamber on the first day of his ministry, 18 December 1848, with the intention to resume the battle against Austria after the Salasco armistice, exemplified the new role that the term democracy had undertaken within the Italian context. For Gioberti, being democratic meant raising the mob to dignity, respecting equality before the law, caring for the interests of the cities as well as taking care of the provinces and building a national guard to defend freedom. For him, 'Democracy in these

¹⁸ C.I. Petitti di Roreto, *Sull'attuale condizione del Risorgimento italiano. Pensieri* (1848), in Id., *Opere scelte*, cit., vol. II, pp. 944-946. Petitti however, in his letters to Michele Erede and Alessandro Pinelli in February and in March of 1848 continued to express his concerns. In the raising democratic tide he smelled the 'stench of Mazzinian demands' which had 'thus far afflicted honest and moderate liberals'. A more democratic state though, contrasted with the country's prevailing custom, which would have reluctantly submitted to 'the revolutionary and communist club'. Petitti admitted his fears concerning the risks of anarchy or communism: 'God willing, we will not have a republic in Italy in a few months'. Even though he publically admitted it, he considered 'the Statute wrong in many ways' and disconsolately concluded: 'What does the Italian Risorgimento gain from this, and who knows how we will come out of it. (...) This is what true liberals think; this is also what Gioberti believes' (*Lo Statuto Albertino e la sua preparazione*, cit., pp. 89, 118-119, 141, 143-144).

¹⁹ E. Ricotti, *Della rappresentanza nazionale in Piemonte*. Pensieri, Torino, Dalla Stamperia reale, 1848, pp. 3-4.

²⁰ "La Patria", 4 febbraio 1848, n. 150, in A. Chiavistelli, *Dallo stato alla nazione. Costituzione e sfera pubblica in Toscana dal 1814 al 1848*, Roma, Carocci, 2006, p. 230.

²¹ F.F. Linati, *Nuova teoria del sistema rappresentativo*, Torino, Giuseppe Pomba e Compagnia, 1848, pp. 13, 17, 20, 25-26, 42.

²² A. Rosmini Serbati, *La costituzione secondo la giustizia sociale, con un'appendice sull'Unità d'Italia*, Milano, Giuseppe Redaelli, 1849, pp. 20, 30.

terms' could not 'make anyone jealous. It is the only form which answers to its name and which is worthy of the People, as it is virtuous, generous, and the ally of order, property, and the throne. It is strongly opposed to dissoluteness, violence and blood shedding; it is not repulsed by those classes which were once called privileged, (democracy) stretches out its friendly hand, inviting them to unite in the holy deed of facilitating and saving our homeland'²³.

But above all, it was with his *Del Rinnovamento Civile in Italia* of 1851 that Gioberti consecrated his democratic turn. Freedom was to shape the monarchy and the people were to participate in the government; in fact, 'the foundation of every legitimate political investiture was the free consensus of the masses'. All the institutions had to preserve a vital principle and once they became obsolete they could not be brought back to life through violence, like 'the French legitimists were trying to do to revive old fashioned forms of monarchy'. The vital principle, according to Gioberti, had to come from the people and not from 'sects', 'invasions' or 'conquests'. Instead, 'the arrangements and the botched up politics which took place in various parts of Europe' from 1815 onwards, were of that nature²⁴.

Even closer to the republicans, but keeping their main focus on the monarchy, were writers like Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi or Cavour's famous opponent, Angelo Brofferio. For them, the monarchy was certainly losing its glow of mystic legitimacy and the republic was recognized as 'the final form of government to which all people aspire'; in fact, divine right would finally be dispelled 'as an error in the night'²⁵. In 1848, Guerrazzi wrote: 'Derive the kings' origins from God; have the divine ampulla descend from heaven for their consecration; anoint them to make them religious; believe in their virtues, which heal scrofula or other similar illnesses by the mere touch of their toe; in excellence, salute them as if they were the image of God on earth. All of such impertinence is less the work of princes than of abject flatterers surrounding them and poisoning their spirit'²⁶. In 1850, Brofferio, in the same tone, wrote: 'Allied sovereigns invented divine right and theological legitimacy for themselves, which were to be ever more respected and far less understood'. For this reason, he had invited the monarchy to 'become democratic and republican'²⁷.

3 § The moderate conservative's response and the instrumental use of popular sovereignty.

The stance of the pro-democratic liberals could thus be viewed as a kind of capitulation to republican authors for whom, obviously, the monarchic era had come to an end with no space for fear or recrimination. Hence, Cavour undertook the task of retorting such affirmations when writing a review of Brofferio's works. He observed how 'in every passage' one could find 'a resonant word, a passionate exclamation in praise of democracy', a 'supple word that equally applied to very different systems, equivalent to rather different ideas when it was voiced by Gioberti or Mazzini, or by Louis Blanc or by an American who was a follower of Washington or Jefferson'. Which term was preferred by Brofferio, the 'pure' one or the one 'tempered by the monarchy'? Too tepid towards reforms and much inclined towards revolutionary means, Brofferio should not forget that Piedmont was the one to give 'a wonderful example of peaceful revolutions, of organized freedom, of harmony between the monarchy and civilization'²⁸.

Federigo Sclopis and Domenico Carutti replied to the writers who were more inclined towards democracy, with an obvious debt towards both Burke and the doctrinarians. Sclopis, whose stance harmonized with the most conservative writers, had previously pointed out how granting the

²³ (In G. Rumi, *Gioberti*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1999, pp. 22-23).

²⁴ V. Gioberti, *Del rinnovamento civile d'Italia*, Parigi-Torino, Bocca, 1851, vol. II, p. 274, vol. I, pp. 168-169, 234.

²⁵ F. D. Guerrazzi, *Condizioni italiane* (1848), in Id., *Scritti politici*, Torino-Milano, Guigoni, 1862, pp. 118, 133.

²⁶ *Ivi*, pp. 130-131.

²⁷ A. Brofferio, *Storia del Piemonte dal 1814 ai giorni nostri*, Torino, Pompeo Magnaghi, 1850-51, vol. I, parte prima, p. 9, vol. II, parte terza, p. 90.

²⁸ C. Cavour, *Tutti gli scritti*, cit., vol. III, pp. 1584, 1589-90.

Statute, even in the wake of the French events had been a wise gesture, since ‘resisting would have caused greater agitation’, in the same way that for many, ‘a weak beverage from the cup of freedom was like a potion offered by a makeshift nurse’. Nevertheless, he later specified that ‘the people’s constitutions were not established beforehand, but were the product of their physical and moral temperament and the result of their civilization’. Moreover, according to him, this longing for a constitution could be traced back to the times of Baldassarre Castiglione²⁹. For Domenico Carutti on the other hand, popular consensus was necessary both in hereditary monarchies and in republics, albeit only with the representative system. Furthermore, ‘raising the poor plebe to the dignity of a people’ would be possible through education and ‘economic improvements’. This was in fact ‘the true meaning of the democratic government, which had been so badly corrupted by those who would have liked to level everything to an absurd equality, disregarding any moral height’ enjoying ‘preeminence and a plebian kingdom’.

In reality, speaking of popular sovereignty in a representative government meant speaking of ‘the rule of the public opinion by way of the ablest men, elected to such office by the people’. Representation in fact, was nothing but ‘a natural procedure to extract from the womb of society the “raison public” which, single-handedly, had the right to govern’. The existence of a ‘patriciate’ not based on privilege but supported ‘by its own strength would not be against democracy but rather it would be its educator’. These were the reasons for which ‘election by the people or the Pope’s consent would not be enough to create a legitimate power’. Power had to be held and administered ‘in everyone’s interest’³⁰.

On the extreme right of the political spectrum, firm and unchanged reactionary criticism persisted. In 1853, Solaro della Margarita could not imagine a future for the monarchy without the nobility, which could be preserved only by birthright. The bourgeoisie was in fact constitutionally incapable of maintaining power and order. Solaro, as Louis De Bonald had already perceived in 1818, condemned the actions of the Italian moderates, beginning with the Congress of Vienna onwards, accusing them of preventing the restoration of ‘sound doctrines’; also, by ‘grafting ancient maxims (...) upon failing ones, they were producing a situation which, in a short time would put Europe in the same condition that France had been in before 1789, i.e. ready for new wars’³¹. Father Luigi Taparelli d’Azeglio also thought that there could not be any compromise with revolutionary ideas. Even a representative government within a legitimate monarchy would eventually capitulate to the republic. Obviously, the reactionaries’ critique continued even after the order established by Vienna. According to Taparelli, ‘legitimacy’ could not be replaced by ‘the rule of law’. Taparelli curtly stated that ‘opinion’ was the ‘tyrannical mother of illegitimate legality’³².

Balbo’s biography had embodied the very attempt of the moderates, so stigmatized by Solaro, to allow the new democratic legitimacy to grow in the shadow of divine legitimization. Certainly, in the course of more than thirty years, he had developed the most profound and original reflections on the issue. In his last work concerning the representative monarchy, left unfinished due to his death in 1853, Balbo, like Burke, had discovered that the original sin of democratic thought was precisely in the way in which the French Revolution had taken place, the cause of sixty years of instability in the history of France during which a number of ‘subversive usurpations’ had occurred in succession. The main fault had to be ascribed to Louis XVI for granting the assembly, ‘the royal power to change the State’, creating the constitution and starting a revolution. ‘This mistake brought about many others, such as errors, crimes and destruction, the wickedness that everyone knows about’. For this reason, Balbo feared the demands of the Italian democrats for any kind of

²⁹ *Un giudizio di Federigo Sclopis* (1849), in G. Falco (ed.), *Lo Statuto Albertino e la sua preparazione*, cit., pp. 151-152, F. Sclopis, *Degli stati generali e d’altre istituzioni politiche del Piemonte e della Savoia*, Torino, Stamperia reale, 1851, pp. 7, 416.

³⁰ D. Carutti, *Dei principi del governo libero* (1852), Napoli, Stabilimento tipografico, 1860, pp. 28, 50-51, 87, 89, 116-120.

³¹ C. Solaro della Margherita, *Avvedimenti politici*, Torino, Speirani e Tortone, 1853, pp. 86, 97.

³² L. Taparelli d’Azeglio, *Esame critico degli ordini rappresentativi nella società moderna*, Roma, Tipografia della *Civiltà Cattolica*, 1854, pp. xv, 48.

constitutional assembly, be it legitimate or not. Throughout Europe, monarchies had been established for fourteen centuries and ‘the feeling of loyalty’ towards them had not ‘diminished much’; it could not be stated that ‘the principle of legitimacy no longer had any strength’. As much as Balbo had praised the example of the American representative republic as free from some of the dangers existing in Europe, he thought that that system of government was still too young; in seventy-five years the American continent would probably be so crowded that it would be difficult to warrant equality and, consequently, the very existence of a republic. By praising the English representative monarchy, Balbo had successfully described the interaction between the two principles of legitimacy and the mistakes which the radicalization of one of the two would cause. He thought that the theory of popular sovereignty, the kind that was established during the revolution, had been the source of disaster as it had increased ‘occasions and pretexts to start revolutions’. In fact, once that theory had been expressed, ‘it naturally developed on its own in everything occurring at the end of that century, which the world knows, deplures and for which it is still paying’. If Balbo thought that the purpose of any authority had to be the welfare of the people, the latter could not be considered ‘the origin of supreme authority or sovereignty’, which, instead derived from God, as an evident truth. It was necessary to recognize that the principle of divine legitimacy was true ‘as far as its origin was concerned’ and this recognition ‘would lead to the true solution of the great problem of political change, which would not be good or legitimate unless originating from the consensus and cooperation of the existing authorities. Thus, changes would be easier and revolutions more difficult’³³.

Several years ago, Rosario Romeo, Cavour’s most influential expert, wrote that his idea of ‘using liberal forces along with dynastic initiative’ was drawn more from ‘Peel’s liberal method rather than from De Maistre’s old diplomatic designs’³⁴. In fact, when Peel died, Cavour wrote two articles in his memory. For him, this Englishman had simply represented ‘the ideal statesman of the moderate party’ since he had shown ‘most splendidly how the political and economic system of a people could be reconstructed without driving it into the abyss of revolution’³⁵. In another article, Cavour explained that, in Italy, the term ‘moderate’ was synonymous with ‘liberal’ and the party possessing

³³ C. Balbo, *Della monarchia rappresentativa in Italia* (1853), Firenze, Le Monnier, 1857, pp. 43, 60, 71, 88-89, 120-121, 129, 175-209. In Tuscany as well, Leopoldo Galeotti had tried to defend the charter of his country from the legitimists’ attacks. The French and German revolutions had struck a severe blow upon the constitutionalists, but the supporters of the ‘civil monarchy’ had not lost hope. For them, the latter was ‘suitable at all times and in all places’, it reconciled ‘the principle of authority with freedom’ and it would harmonize with ‘the inevitable and democratic trend of our age’. Anything beyond the agreement between the princes and the people ‘was nothing but despotism and revolution, usurpation and never true order’. The foundations of any order or power were based on the ‘respect for religious, moral and rational principles’. Civil monarchy, towards which the greater part of the inhabitants showed their ‘faith’, was well suited for Tuscany’s disposition, ‘the least troubled by the revolutionary fever’, (L. Galeotti, *Considerazioni politiche sulla Toscana*, Firenze, Felice le Monnier, 1850, pp. 28-29 33, 45, 47). The Marq. Gino Capponi and Raffaello Lambruschini had sided with Galeotti. In fact, the former wrote to the latter: ‘Universally nowadays, men want to know the things that matter to them and more or less participate in their management. There is no other choice than pursuing valid ways of reaching this goal. A way has been found and in my opinion it is the constitutional form. It is so congenial that the separation of the monarchy from this form would mean the monarchy’s destruction. (G. Capponi, R. Lambruschini, *Carteggio [1828-1873]*, Firenze, Fondazione Spadolini – Nuova Antologia – Le Monnier, 1996, p. 144).

³⁴ R. Romeo, *Il giudizio storico sul Risorgimento*, Catania, cit., p. 113. Cf. G. Talamo, *Cavour*, Roma, Gangemi, 2010, p. 39. Indeed, one of Peels contemporaries had summarized the kind of politics with which many liberal-conservative and moderate Italians had identified and who would support Cavour on the journey towards unity, to which Balbo was undoubtedly, acquainted with: ‘I have sometimes heard it asked, what is a conservative – what does the word mean? (...) A conservative is one who, having this loyalty of the constitution, believes it threatened with subversion by the encroachments of democracy, and is prepared to defend it against that danger. The conservative party therefore includes all those shades and degrees of political opinion, from the disciple of moderate Whigs principles to the most devoted champion of ancient usages, who agree on these two points – attachment to King, Lords, Commons, and State, and a belief that there is a pressing danger of these institutions being overborne by the weight of democracy’ (J.B. Walsh, *Chapters of Contemporary History*, London, John Murray, 1836, pp. 77-78).

³⁵ C. Cavour, *Tutti gli scritti*, cit., vol. III, p. 1557.

this title would resume its struggle against ‘*socialist* radicalism’ as well as against the ‘absolutism of the *divine right*’³⁶. In this political strategy, the agreement, called ‘*connubio*’ (the alliance), made by Cavour with the ‘center-left’ leader Urbano Rattazzi was rather important. The latter so described it: ‘The principles that were to inspire the new party were essentially two: the first was internal resistance to any arising reactionary trend’ as caused also ‘by the recent coup d’état that occurred in France; the second one, as much as the circumstances would allow it, was to foster the steady and progressive fulfillment of the liberties provided by our charter, which concerned the political, economic and administrative orders’³⁷. On the contrary, in view of the unitary program in the dynastic sense and to dispel any republican revolutionary temptation, the support that Cavour’s government had received from the ‘national society’ would be just as significant, in addition to and with the support of figures such as Daniel Manin, the advocate of the republic of Venice in 1848 – 1849 and Giorgio Pallavicino, not by chance both disappointed republicans. In September of 1855, Manin wrote in the ‘*Le Siècle*’: ‘If a regenerated Italy must have a king, it cannot be but one and none other than the king of Piedmont’. A few months earlier, from another newspaper, Pallavicino had retorted with realism against the attack waged by the republicans against the diplomatic initiatives of Piedmont, stating: ‘Italy is here in Turin; but, as you know, in Turin the Italian flag flies on the towers of a royal palace’. In view of the imminent War of Independence, the help of both the King of Sardinia and his army were essential. Pallavicino had been clear about his fears of an impending revolution: ‘Now, the democratic volcano is not blazing, but a fire, a terrible fire is smoldering in the bowels of the earth: eruption can take place at any moment now. It would be prudent to be prepared’³⁸. In 1860, Cavour therefore reaffirmed that ‘the king’s government is the only conservative power in Italy that is able to erect a barrier against the true revolutionary spirit and tame it. (...) We are the representatives of the monarchic principle which in Italy has disappeared from the hearts before being demolished by popular revenge. We have lifted it again and we have instilled new life into it and we have newly consecrated it. (...) And until the Kingdom of Italy is built on the indestructible foundations of the national and monarchic rule of law’, Europe must put aside the severe judgment which still weighs upon us³⁹. It therefore was not by chance that, once more, Cavour was looking for a wise blend between two principles of legitimacy, now that other Italian legitimate princes had already lost or were on the verge of losing their power and dominions. Obviously, the managers of the State of Savoy and moderate writers were not indifferent to the problem, as Roberto Romani has well clarified⁴⁰. Carlo Bon-Compagni, Savoy’s special Commissioner in Tuscany, did not deny that it would be ‘desirable to maintain the authority of the legitimate monarchy, (...) but the interests of one family were not to prevail over those hundreds of thousands or millions of men upon which it is not possible to impose a government to which they have not consented’. The dynasties which had been dispossessed, opposed the people’s rights and since they firmly hoped for the conservation of the existing order and feared the republic, they held ‘the hereditary monarchy in great esteem as it maintained the habits of universal and

³⁶ *Ivi*, p. 1570.

³⁷ In *Ricordi di Michelangelo Castelli*, edited by Luigi Chiala, Torino-Napoli, L. Roux e C. Editori, 1888, pp. 72-73. In Louis Napoleon’s France even Tocqueville aspired to re-establish constitutional and representative monarchy, perhaps with the aid of the Bourbon’s traditional monarchy which, for the French, embodied ‘normal freedom’ that had provided ‘sufficient guarantees to the spirit of liberty’. In fact, Tocqueville had forecasted long life for Napoleon’s government because he was meeting ‘new instincts’. Unfortunately though not freedom, since ‘the long and terrible revolution which we had been witnessing for more than sixty years’ seemed rather to ‘lead to despotism’. For this reason, he turned to Count of Chambord, the leader of the Bourbons, to make him understand how legitimacy for the liberals was a means and not an end and therefore he should invite his legitimist supporters not to be intolerant with them ‘as they would become Orleanists the day they were convinced that the cadet branch [could] or [would] not become liberal’. (Tocqueville, Note to Count di Chambord after the coup d’état in 1851, in S. Rials, *Révolution et contre-révolution au XIXeme siecle*, Paris, DUC/Albatros, 1987, pp. 162-165).

³⁸ *Lettere di Daniele Manin a Giorgio Pallavicino con note e documenti sulla questione italiana*, Torino, Unione tipografica editrice, 1859, pp. 122, 143, 157-158, 161, 168, 174.

³⁹ C. Cavour, Letter to Edoardo of Launay, 9 November 1860, *Epistolario*, Firenze, Olschki, 2005, vol. XVII, p. 2628.

⁴⁰ R. Romani, *Reluctant Revolutionaries: Moderate Liberalism in the Kingdom of Sardinia, 1849-1859*, cit., pp. 67-69.

spontaneous obedience among the people of modern Europe'. Hence, they had to accept the monarch from Piedmont, demanded by the people of central Italy 'as their king by unanimous vote'. Reinstating the previous princes, 'unanimously deprived of their power by their subjects' would not prevent other and more dangerous 'revolutionary upheavals'. Bon-Compagni knew very well that 'bitter end advocates of legitimacy rights would not give up', but the people were not 'to submit to their sovereign in the same way in which all men are destined to obey God'. In fact, the sovereign was to be obeyed inasmuch as he respected everyone's rights and 'the most valuable and sacred right of all nations was independence. Its loss, compared to other political ills, was like death compared to bodily disease'. Moreover, Bon-Compagni was eager to specify that the Italians had demanded 'the peoples' suffrage when it was necessary for them to have a government that would obtain spontaneous and universal obedience; they never used it to upset the states'⁴¹.

Conclusions

We have seen how the political strategy of Italian moderates of any persuasion was to reach the country's unification, avoiding any risk of revolutionary uprising. They attempted first to involve the sovereigns of the different States, through the concession of the representative government; they then supported Piedmont, which indeed had preserved a representative government, to continue the struggle for independence. Moreover, they understood that only monarchical legitimacy, which was deeply rooted in the country, could conclude such an operation successfully.

The issue of legitimacy of power would also be linked to the first phases of Italy's unification, affecting the soul of the most sensitive Italian writers, such as Alessandro Manzoni who, in 1873, approached the issue in a posthumous and incomplete work, in which he precisely recalled Balbo's theories. In a country which, on the one hand, witnessed the corrosion of legitimacy caused by a devastating civil war called 'brigandage' and, on the other, underwent the incessant action of the more radical democrats, Manzoni wrote some reflections comparing the 1789 French revolution to the Italian revolution of 1859. For Lucy Riall, this was a 'devastating blow to legitimacy in liberal Italy' if one bears in mind that Manzoni was Catholic and that the annexation of the Papal States in 1870 resulted in papal excommunication⁴². Nonetheless, Manzoni had tried to show that the Italian revolution, if compared with the French one, had been more legitimate, since it had sprung from 'the mutual trust and respect for king and country'. Instead, the French Revolution had broken out eighty years before and had aimed at replacing 'the kingdom of abuse with the kingdom of the rule of law' and was actually 'far from over'. Essentially, Manzoni identified the cause of the main difficulties which the French had experienced in forming a stable government. He thought they resided in the establishment of a new principle of legitimacy after abandoning the old order. He had in fact asked himself: 'What more conclusive proof can there be of the difficulty in establishing a government than having produced ten constitutions in little more than sixty years?'. In the Third

⁴¹ C. Bon-compagni, *Considerazioni sull'Italia centrale*, Torino, Tipografia eredi Botta, 1859, pp. 23-31. Terenzio Mamiani announced the birth of 'a new European rule of law' founded on the 'principle of nationality'. If, on the one hand, the order that had been established by the Congress of Vienna had lost the public opinion's consensus, on the other, the order based on the law of the nations was far from being achieved. In both cases, whether the power belonged to the prince or to the people, absolute sovereignty was to be avoided. Nonetheless, 'the government which received the consensus of those it governed and which completely satisfied social progress was legitimate'. The government which was wanting in both conditions would become illegitimate and the citizens would be responsible for the change. Legality and the choice of how to carry it out could be discussed at length, but not the necessity of it nor the goodness of its end', (T. Mamiani, *D'un nuovo diritto europeo*, Italia, 1860, pp. 225, 227).

⁴² L. Riall, *The Italian Risorgimento: State, Society and National Unification* (1994), London-New York, Routledge, 2002, p. 77. After the Capture of Rome, Gino Capponi wrote: 'I am angry and afraid for the consequences, in a way which has seldom ever occurred to me. It took place not as I figured it would, but the consequences are beginning now and will last a long time'. (G. Capponi, *Lettere di Gino Capponi e di altri a lui*, Firenze, Le Monnier, 1888-90, vol. IV, p. 259).

Estate, which had appointed itself as the 'Assembly', Manzoni had seen the key to all the subsequent developments, such as the establishment of popular sovereignty inherited from the Enlightenment, which had been the very engine of the revolution, and above all, the destruction of the existing government, which the Assembly had never been able to carry out and never thought of replacing⁴³.

Manzoni's position reflected Burke's interpretation of the French events, which would greatly influence the political thought of the Italian moderates during most part of the 19th century. Beyond the historiographical debate on Italian moderatism, these authors, though so diverse, regarded the issue of the legitimacy of power after the 40s as crucial, both in the perspective of the introduction of liberal reforms and in consideration of the journey towards independence. Despite the restoration of past governments, they were able to get a glimpse of how popular legitimacy, after the French revolution, seemed destined by history to also conquer the states of the Old Continent. They also understood, at different times and in different circumstances, that such a conquest would occur painlessly only if allowed to develop gradually within the monarchic structure and under its legitimacy. On the other hand, that was the framework in which the majority of the Italian population recognized itself.

⁴³ A. Manzoni, *La rivoluzione francese del 1789 e la rivoluzione italiana del 1859. Dell'indipendenza dell'Italia* (1873), Milano, Centro Nazionale Studi Manzoniani, 2000, pp. 26, 53, 95, 280, 289.