

A Review: C. Malandrino, S. Quirico (eds.), "Centralizzazione, decentramento e federalismo: un dibattito tra Italia ed Europa (1939-1948)" [Centralization, Decentralization and Federalism: A Discussion Between Italy and Europe (1939-1948)] (Milano: Giuffrè, 2017)

by Andrea Spallino

With the hope of "enriching local, national and European historiography" (Malandrino, Quirico 2017: X), this volume gathers the scientific results of the research project entitled *Centralizzazione, decentramento e federalismo tra guerra civile europea, Resistenza e ricostruzione democratica (1939-1948)* [Centralization, Decentralization and Federalism Between European Civil War, Resistance and Democratic Reconstruction (1939-1948)], which, between 2015 and 2017, under the scientific direction of Professor Corrado Malandrino, involved a group of researchers assembled at the Laboratorio di Storia, Politica, Istituzioni (La.S.P.I.) [Laboratory of History, Politics, Institutions] and active within the Dipartimento di Giurisprudenza e Scienze Politiche Economiche sociali (DiGSPES) [Department of Law and Political, Social and Economic Sciences] of the Università del Piemonte Orientale [University of Eastern Piedmont]. The subject of the research: the "rough and expansive" (*ibidem*: IX) comparison between decentralizers and centralizers that took place "coinciding with the epic resistance and the post-WWII period, intertwining with political, judicial, economic, social and philosophical-cultural problems" (*ibidem*).

In the complex and difficult decade between 1939 and 1948 – marked by the succession of war, resistance and democratic reconstruction – criticism towards the centralistic structure typical of the modern state began to emerge from many directions. New federative and autonomist sensibilities began to indicate "the exclusive and extreme sovereign state centralism among the causes that led, in the first post-war period, to the birth of totalitarianism" (*ibidem*: X), as well as to consider decentralization of the



state and the prospect of creating a new form of European political centrality as being the strongest antibody against a new European civil war. The modern nation state, considered the expression of a monolithic and centralist conception of power, was therefore a model to be disempowered in both doctrinal and institutional terms, in order to promote the birth of free supranational federation aggregations as well as the implementation of principles and elements of self-government and self-management at the regional and local levels.

The essays collected in this volume re-establish contributions, proposals and suggestions put in the field by important personalities in Italy of that time – the majority of them of Piedmontese origin – and by some other European academics and intellectuals.

The volume is subdivided into three parts. In Part I, entitled *Tra Italia ed Europa* [*Between Italy and Europe*], the Italian context is investigated. In particular, “figures united not only by a generic anti-fascism, but by its declination in genuinely federalist and autonomist terms, also as a result of a common militancy in ‘Giustizia e Libertà’ [Justice and Freedom] and then in the ‘Partito d’Azione’ [Action Party]” are examined (*ibidem*: XII). It is here that the figure of Silvio Trentin and his “fully federalist politico-theoretical reflection” (*ibidem*) are presented in the essay by Corrado Malandrino. This is followed by: jurists Tancredi “Duccio” Galimberti and Antonino Rèpaci with their own *Progetto di Costituzione confederale europea ed interna* [European and Internal Confederal Constitution Project] carefully described by Chiara Tripodina: a project that for the two jurists “wanted to be a bit like our *Città del Sole*” (*ibidem*: 41); Livio Pivano, the Alexandrian leader of Giustizia e Libertà [Justice and Freedom] and of the Partito d’Azione [Action Party], whose interest in matters relating to federalism and Europe is reconstructed by Alberto Ballerino; Umberto Calosso, “the scholar, journalist, patriot, politician and the teacher” (*ibidem*: 60) whose “conversazioni radiofoniche” [“radio conversations”] made between 1944 and 1951 are investigated by Stefano Parodi for their ability to contain “the essential features of the debate, which took place over the

years from the Second World War to the beginning of the process of European integration, concerning the issues of decentralization and federalism" (*ibidem*: 77) in an excellent synthesis. To conclude the Italian survey is Norberto Bobbio, whose articles are examined by Tiziana C. Carena. These articles were written by the Turin scholar between 1945 and 1947 and dedicated to the theme of federalism: *Le due facce del federalismo*, 1945; *Federalismo vecchio e nuovo*, 1945; *Il federalismo e l'Europa*, 1946; *Federalismo e socialismo*, 1946; *Federalismo e funzionalismo*, 1947; *Federalismo e pacifismo*, 1947 [*The Two Faces of Federalism*, 1945; *Old and New Federalism*, 1945; *Federalism and Europe*, 1946; *Federalism and Socialism*, 1946; *Federalism and Functionalism*, 1947; *Federalism and Pacifism*, 1947].

Part II of the volume is dedicated to *Prospettive internazionali* [International Perspectives]. In the essay by Stefano Quirico, the "perspectives" to be investigated are of the intellectual and economist Wilhelm Röpke who writes of a denazified and federal Germany within a new European and international order. Alexandre Kojève's idea of a "re-aggregation of European countries and peoples according to a tripolar logic (an Anglo-Saxon, Soviet and Latin 'empire')" is then recalled by Giorgio Barberis (*ibidem*: 138). Simone Attilio Bellezza examines the case of the Republic of Moldova whose story "strongly reminds us of Eastern Europe's convulsions in the last century" (*ibidem*: XIII): a geo-political context within which "the political formula of federalism has often been used not as an instrument of devolution of powers but as a stratagem for influencing international politics, to undermine the centralized power of another state, or to strengthen that of an opposing centralized state" (*ibidem*: 157).

Part III, *Istituzioni e territorio: due casi locali* [Institutions and Territory: Two Local Cases], however, crosses the boundaries of the history of political thought, recalling two Italian cases in which institutions and movements have been involved in the dialectic concerning centralization and decentralization. The first case, examined by Francesco Ingravalle, focuses on the conflict between the center and the periphery that governed the purging mechanisms in Italian administration after the fall of fascism. The second case,

whose theme is at the center of Luciana Ziruolo's essay, concerns the "organizational dynamics that regulate the female contribution to the so-called 'civil resistance'" (*ibidem*: XIII).

As one can see, the set of essays collected in this volume presents a panorama which is both plural and multifaceted. The disciplinary approaches are also different, since they range from political science to legal sciences. All the interventions demonstrate an acute historical sensitivity, also evidenced by systematic archival recognition.

Among the pages of the volume, the category of federalism is presented in numerous facets. In fact, "once the awareness of the decisive distinction between federal and confederal solutions has matured" (*ibidem*), the federalist option is expressed in many forms. These differ, for example, according to the equilibrium between the institutional levels of which they are composed. If in the constitutional project of Galimberti and Rèpaci, federalism shows itself strongly unbalanced in favor of the European-supranational versant, in the architecture imagined by Röpke, it is certainly more attentive to the reasons of federated subjects. Moreover, if all the theories examined find their convergence around the "value of peace", "the discourse became more complicated the moment when we moved into the economic sphere" (*ibidem*: XV). If thinkers like Trentin, Calosso, Galimberti and Rèpaci, "openly claimed the intention to give some tasks of economic planning to the supranational or infranational public powers established after the war" (*ibidem*), then in a different way, "neo-liberal economists like Röpke [...] perceived in the existence of an international federation one of the most reliable antidotes to neutralizing the ambitions of planning that were being pushed into view in light of the reorganization of the economies of democratic states after 1945" (*ibidem*: XVI).

This easily readable volume, reconstructs only in part the wealth of the political-institutional formulations that have been articulated on the centralization-decentralization-federalism axis during the delicate decade of 1939-1948 and which "contributed to asking, with different degrees of success, the question of the prerequisites for the revival of national democracies and the beginning of the European in-

tegration process” (*ibidem*). The recovery of those theoretical ideas can nevertheless not only offer useful incentives for further research, but above all “can be a useful resource to better understand, thanks to a long-term historical perspective, the dynamics in place and try to provide new coordinates for contemporary politics” (*ibidem*).

