

The historic compromise and his protagonists

The communist secretary Enrico Berlinguer with three essays on the newspaper “Rinascita” proposed the strategy of “historic compromise” in September 1973. This political proposal was not born suddenly: it was the consequence of many events occurred in Italy in the decade 1968-1978. In the students’ mobilization known as “the sixty-eight”, young people criticized the values, the ideas and the actions that were dominants from the end of Second World War. They asked a new university system. Then, even workers started to protest for their conditions of work. The mobilization of all civil society was in act. The governments were not able to give an answer to the requests of Italians: the socialist participation at the executives (from 1963) of center-left was unsuccessful in terms of reforms. The Christian democrat leader, Aldo Moro, sought a possible agreement with communists to face the civil protests and to save the center-left form of government; the Italian Communist Party, in fact, had a growth of consents from 1968, thanks to a process of internal renovation. The secretary Enrico Berlinguer continued with the “Italian way to socialism”, started by Palmiro Togliatti: it was the abandonment of violent conflict against capitalism to defeat it internally, by parliamentary reforms. The aim of communists was clear: they wanted to enter in the government to stop the crisis of Italian political system and to reach a socialist

society. The communists had to review their relationship with Soviet Union to make themselves trustable to the political forces, especially Christian democrats. The “snags” from Moscow were more evident after the “Prague’s spring” (1968) and the celebrations for the 60th anniversary of October’s Revolution (1977). Aldo Moro presented, in 1968, the “attention strategy”: it was necessary to open a dialogue with communists (in which there were a lot of confluence of people in mobilization), so the Christian Democrats could continue to be the principle axis of Italian politics. Aldo Moro intensified the negotiations with communists after the explosion of the bomb in Fontana Square in Milan in 1969 (the historians declared that this attempt was the starter of the “years of lead”) and the consequent birth of “red” and “black” terrorism. In this scenario was necessary a strong and an authoritarian executive, which should be able to bring back public order: the massacres of extreme right forces and the murders of Red Brigades upset Italy during 70s. For these reasons, the communist leader proposed the strategy of “historic compromise”: an alliance between all the democrat parties of the country, even Christian Democracy, to stop the crisis civil and economic. The proposal, as was formed by Berlinguer, could not be accepted by Christian democrats (because of the ruling anti-communism and the American ally) and by Moro that, in fact, rebated with the strategy of “third phase”: it was necessary a gradual opening to Communist Party in the majority to restore the order in Italy, but this would not mean their entry in the executive. The idea of Moro is clear: the Christian Democracy had to be in the center of Italian politic system, but there was the necessity of an enlargement of democratic base of the State and a major participation of the people. It was indispensable the legitimation of all democrat forces. The election of 1976 showed that the Christian Democracy and the Communist Party were the two winners. By the communist side, they wanted a participation in the government. The Christian democrats did not want a coalition with the ancient rivals. For the unwillingness of socialists and republicans to enter in every kind of executive, it was choose the way of “national solidarity”: a government of Christian Democracy with the abstention of all parties. This was considered by Berlinguer as an “executive of emergency” (because of the critical situation in Italy). In 1978, the Communist Party took in crisis the government, because it wanted to participate directly. The news of the Aldo Moro’s abduction by Red Brigades (16 March 1978) played a fundamental role: a new Christian democrat government were established and the Communist Party entered in. The political stability last only for fifty-five days: when the

corpse of Aldo Moro was found, the communists comprised that they were “used” for the approval of economic and security unpopular laws and they decided voluntary to come back in the opposition. In that way, the “national solidarity” was over.

In conclusion, we cannot talk about victory of “historic compromise”: the Communist Party did not win, because it did not enter entirely in the government; on the contrary, it did not show a concrete governmental capacity adequate to its aspirations, when it was nearer to the “buttons room”: it was unable to impress a strong sign in the system. The Christian Democracy won in all these years. It was able to go out from the strong crisis thanks to the ability of Aldo Moro, which stopped the communists’ requests. The Christian democrat leader compacted all the currents of the party averse to an opening at Communist Party; he get the creation of two emergency governments, which were necessary to stop economic and social crisis.