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1. Some ideas to reflect on the recent “abolition” of Southern Italy

The “Southern Question” (and therefore, the history of Southern Italy) has been, in the latter part of the XX Century, recanted and denied, up to predicting its disappearance for good, provocatively taking the stance that “Southern Italy should be abolished”¹. According to Gianfranco Viesti, an actual cleavage had open between Southern Italy and Italians; abolishing the South was in fact the only way out of it. “That is, eliminating the stereotype allowing us to never see what is really happening in the Southern regions and in the several territories composing them for good or ill, using the stale reason that Southern Italy is “South”, i.e. something other than Italy. Clearly, abolishing the Southern part thereof does not mean to abolish Italy’s problems, from poverty to crime, from the bad shape the infrastructure is kept in to unemployment and surely it does not mean avoiding to notice that the aforementioned problems are worse in the southern part of Italy.

What “abolishing Southern Italy” means is going back to use the word “South” to indicate and define a territori, a point of the compass, a culture, a part of the country possessing its vices and virtues, not to be seen as a problem in itself. (...) Abolishing Southern Italy means that one should not discuss special policies for the South, but rather ordinary policies for Italy »². This concept has been further clarified by the following summarization statement: «Abolishing Southern Italy means, at the end of the day, to bereft Italian national politics and local communities of a great alibi: that of the eternity of the Southern Question and therefore (...) of the wisdom of the usual tools to tackle it, by means of a tit of incentives and a tat of assistance (...) Thinking that Southern Italy, and therefore the whole of the country, may really grow by means of special policies “for the South” is pure illusion. The only viable path, and it’s a winding, complex and dangerous one, is to deeply revise the economical policies Italy undertakes in the Euro era and their opportunities for reorganisation between centre and outskirts. It has nothing to do with “Southern Italy”»³.

¹ See. G. Viesti, *Abolire il Mezzogiorno*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2003.

² *Ibidem*, pp. X-XII. Viesti, keeping up with his exhortation, further clarifies that: «Abolishing Southern Italy as a problem in itself means the factual abolition of the special policies for Southern Italy, as they are substantially different from those enacted in other regions of the country. Luckily, much has been accomplished in recent years, starting with the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno; the recurring temptation to rebuild special purpose institutions, following special procedures must be rebuked. Abolishing Southern Italy means rather that we must discuss about national institutions, procedures and policies and of their impact on territories and communities. Modern policies on infrastructure building and, better still, upkeep and management, are needed, not simply “public works”; modern and adequate policies are also needed for market regulation and to promote and safeguard healthy competition and not, like it was done in the past, State-financed enterprise, investing (especially in Southern Italy) without considering local situations and whether the investments they undertake are convenient or not. Policies for economic growth are also needed, actions for education, training and research, efficient transport networks for every region, initiatives to help create an industry-favourable environment, allowing firms and companies to increase their investment efforts everywhere, especially wherever (as it is the case with southern Italy) untapped opportunities are present; it must no longer happen, like it was in the past, that massive State incentives succeeded only in shifting from the North to the South the money from those investments that had to be undertaken anyway. Transparent and universally-applied welfare policies are also needed, as they must help fight social exclusion in the whole of Italy, unlike the cronyism-plagued measures carried out in responding to emergencies, especially in the South. An ordinary and efficient public administration is also required, based on simple and crystal-clear rules, able to stand on the citizen’s behalf and not against them; and surely we do not need task forces or “small laws” deceiving ourselves we can sideline the issue in its modernisation ».

³ G. Viesti, *Abolire il Mezzogiorno*, cit., p. XVI. It should be noted, however, that Viesti recently got back to write about a forgotten and tormented South, betrayed by unworthy ruling classes and seen as an “otherness” by the rest of the country; therefore he put into question its own idea to eliminate Southern Italy as a problem (please see. G.

However, such a stance, based on the revisionistic currents rooted in the experience of the “Meridiana”⁴ review and dominating the debate on Southern Italy up to a few years ago, has been unable to produce viable solutions, starting with national “ordinary policies”; in fact, with the onset of the new millennium the issue of the “canceled takeoff” of Southern regions, and the overall situation of Southern Italy getting behind the rest of the country, came slowly but surely back to the limelight. Furthermore, the historical reassessment carried out by the majority of the scholars involved, without an effective debate, developed itself beyond measure, taking on, in some extreme cases, a sort of “leghismo del Sud”, a sociopolitical stance mirroring that of the Northern League, an Italian governing political party committed to the superiority of the Northern regions, and applying it to the ones in the South. Such a “leghismo del Sud” denies the existence of any “Southern Question”, exhorts the “anthropological” diversity of South Italian peoples, the utter goodness of their original traditions, hallowed Southern identity⁵, tracing back its magnificent and progressive fates to the Middle Ages, supporting the possibility of an “endogenous” development, based on local resources, tourism, environment and agriculture⁶. Such a vision can be found also, in

Viesti, *Mezzogiorno a tradimento. Il Nord, il Sud e la politica che non c'è*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2009).

⁴ Please see. “Meridiana”, Rome, Donzelli Editore, from n. 1 to n. 45, 1995-2002, and Rome, Viella Libreria Editrice, from n. 46 to n. 65-66, 2003-2009; <<http://www.viella.it/riviste/testata/8>>. IMES, who established the review, introduce themselves like that : « The Istituto meridionale di storia e scienze sociali (in Italian, IMES) was born on January, 1986 from the initiative of a group of scholars linked by a common research about Calabria’s issues. From Calabria onwards, the horizon of these studies has been widened to include the whole of Southern Italy first and foremost, knowing full well that, to effectively study the dynamics of Southern development, the survey must be extended to all the other “Souths”, to the Mediterranean and European realities. Putting Southern Italy back in the circuit of the present history of contemporary societies is, to summarize, our driving idea, which guided the Istituto’s activity since its inception, in a collective effort of understanding able to approach different scientific practices. Truth be told, the Istituto’s activity has been anything but “neutral”; it tackled Southern realities in very little “ortodox” ways, by means of a precise standing.

⁵ Please see. M. Alcaro, *Sull’identità meridionale: forme di una cultura mediterranea*, Turin, Bollati Boringhieri, 1999.

⁶ On this subject, the words written by Augusto Placanica in his article for the “Rassegna Storica Salernitana”, quoted by Aurelio Musi as a spiritual testament of sorts during the former’s commemoration, are worth reporting: «Now, even a series of fibs is spreading in the zones of Cosenza and its environs, vague and anti-historical foolishness, more than ever before (by Cassano, Alcaro, Meldolesi, Piperno and similar knaves), whom not only speak and muse about an alleged Southern identity, still to be proved and to be understood in its thousand different features, but also see in Southern Italy (the current one, mind you) like a sort of Promised Land in the desert of illusion that is our age; a world that’s happy in its being *naïf*, homeland of the good life in its being the last haven of premodernity, where some august traditions, dead elsewhere, are still alive, such as the socioeconomic institution of “neighbourhood”, with its idyllic relationships, the absence of the quick doldrums of our times and other similar wonders that us, mere mortals cannot see, not even by paying for them, not even in the fullest of some lucky *otium* in this miserabile everyday life of us Southerners. Ah, the bad luck not to live in the deep South! And it is strange that the may who went away (high officers, University professors, etc., not to mention the million of migrants of the 1950s and 1960s, the best minds and energies of the time, do not long to go back. Misteries of nature!» (A. Placanica, *Qualche parola sull’identità*, in “Rassegna Storica Salernitana”, handbook 36, year XVIII, n. 2, 2001, pp. 9-10; now in A. Musi, paper for the commemoration of Augusto Placanica, edited by the Department of Theory and History of Juridical and Political Institutions in Modern and Contemporary Society at the University of Salerno, February 24, 2003). Its criticism was all the more bitter when he observed that: «Of course, it would be enough to show these apostles of this *New Arcadian Academy* a bit of *facts*, a few serious and updated statistics (concerning socioeconomic topics, employment, judicial matters, unvented anger, the cost of life and houses and other similar issues; all things whence approximators flee- as Shakespeare would say- like boys from books) to show the effective distance between the beautiful reality one has in his head, usually beautiful and gratifying (I’m talking about reality, here) and the true everyday life » (A. Placanica, *Qualche parola sull’identità*, cit., p. 10). It must be noted that Placanica was the President of IMES and amongst the protagonists of “Meridiana”; for this review he wrote also the essay *L’identità del meridionale*, in “Meridiana”, n. 32, Rome, Donzelli Editore, 1998, pp. 153-181.

its general terms, within the concept of “meridian thinking” by Franco Cassano⁷, entailing an overhaul of the image Southern Italy had of itself; no longer a backwards periphery, but a new engine, taking its power from a rich, primeval, manifold identity, truly Mediterranean. As Cassano himself clarified: «meridian thinking entails the idea that South should not only learn from the North, from the so-called “developed countries”, but that it has also something to teach, and therefore its fate would not be that of disappearing and become North like the rest of the world. South has an important voice, and it should be safeguarded; it is a voice that may criticize some of the limits of our way of life, so conditioned by North-Western centrality in the world. I think that South should be capable of imitating, but also to question, a world which based its cornerstones on speed and obsession with profit »⁸.

Earlier still, in the beginning of the 1970s, to be exact, the work of two influential authors (their works actually “set a trend”) must be noted: they are Edmondo M. Capececatro and Antonio Carlo⁹, and they have been somewhat forerunners to the following revisionist trends in historiography. The two aforementioned authors criticized the traditional interpretations of Southern history, questioning the thesis of an “underdeveloped” South, atavically backwards, semi-feudal, and still pre-capitalistic. By means of a socio-economical analysis of pre-Italian Unity Southern Italy, Capececatro and Carlo maintained that the North-South gap was nonexistent (or unimportant anyway); the development-vs-underdevelopment dialectic was born in a unitary economic space and therefore, after the Unification of Italy¹⁰. To this frame, apparently aimed at a reassessment of the condition of Southern Italy under the Two Sicilies, later studies have linked, such as the one by Marta Petrusiewicz¹¹.

The publishing of the collection of writings by Giuseppe Galasso in 2005 is maybe the more significant *turning point* moment of the whole affair, as a true dialogue between stances- something that was absent for almost 15 years from the historiographical, political and economical debate- and Southern Italy began to be seen as a nationwide “open problem”¹². Galasso himself reminded how, still in 2000, when describing an issue-ridden Southern Italy, puzzlement and misunderstanding were a common reaction: «The surprise I evoked was born from my representation of Southern Italy as a place still plagued, in all its features, by a grave lack in modern development and which still represented the Italian dualism affecting the country’s economical and social structure in all its might. The common (mis)conception was that South Italy had undertaken recent developments so to be considered on par with the rest of Italy instead. For the supporters of this conception, the “Southern Question” appeared outdated, both as a factual reality and as a judgment and analysis criterion »¹³. According to Galasso, in the “common conception” two “Souths” pursued each other: «On one side, we have a South animated by growth trends substantially higher than those in the rest

⁷ Please see. F. Cassano, *Il pensiero meridiano*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1996.

⁸ F. Cassano, *Ragione occidentale, ragione mediterranea*, excerpt from the “Il Grillo” TV programme of 16/4/2002, <<http://www.emsf.rai.it/grillo/trasmissioni.asp?d=904>>.

⁹ Please see. E. M. Capececatro, A. Carlo, *Contro la “questione meridionale”. Studio sulle origini dello sviluppo capitalistico in Italia*, Rome, Saponà e Savelli, 1972; E. M. Capececatro, A. Carlo (edit.), *Per la critica del sottosviluppo meridionale*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1973.

¹⁰ Hence the provocative title of another work of the time, moving in the same critical dimension Please see N. Zitarra, *L’Unità d’Italia: nascita di una colonia*, Milano, Jaca Book, 1971).

¹¹ Please see M. Petrusiewicz, *Come il Meridione divenne una Questione. Rappresentazioni del Sud prima e dopo il Quarantotto*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 1998.

¹² Please see G. Galasso, *Il Mezzogiorno da “questione” a “problema aperto”*, Manduria-Bari-Rome, Piero Lacaita Editore, 2005.

¹³ G. Galasso, *Il Mezzogiorno da “questione” a “problema aperto”*, cit., p. 8.

of Italy; on the other, a South out of the “Question”. A whole current of studies lent strength to these assessments given by the political and economical milieu. From the 80s on, the need to consider Southern Italy without meridionalismo had risen and it meant to consider the (in)famous “Question” as inappropriate to Southern reality, both now and in the past. What Italian dualism? The importance of the gap between High and Low Italy, fully revealed by all the main statistics indicators, was utterly denied. What Southern Italy? The South was to be broken down into parts and sections which, being its true essence, emptied the meaning of the “Southern category” (the notion of Southern Italy was defined like that, with poor elegance and semantic property)¹⁴.

In such a climate, «talking about the South, the Southern Question, meridionalismo, Italian dualism and gap as actual and meaningful elements in the reality of the country and as a massive and enduring problems was a sure way to get condescending smiles of those already seeing a new era of knowledge and development for Italy and the South, so that the discussed and denied “Southern category” the perceived cornerstone of “old meridionalismo”, “old politics”, “old historiography” and so on»¹⁵. Then, Galasso observes that: «Assessing the damage these convictions inflicted on the cultural and on the political humus is hard. My *habitus* as an historian always brings me to wonder about the reasons for such unappropriateness of analysis, judgments and perspective (...) I am led to believe that, in this case, reasons surely don’t lack and, if one was to indicate them very summarily, they can be easily found, both in the progressive decay of the meridionalistic push carried out in Italy for the better part of twenty years after WWII from 1945 on and in the deep crisis of the whole Italian political system between the 1980s and the 1990s; a well-known link is present between national and Southern events»¹⁶.

Another meaningful stance of “educated resistance” to the ubiquitous revisionism of the last decade of the Twentieth Century is that of Luciano Cafagna who, after publishing a volume that became a cornerstone of “dualistic” theories¹⁷, wrote on the topic again by means of a *pamphlet* based on the antinomy between North and South¹⁸. Cafagna diverges from the traditional stance on an essential point, thinking that the tradition portraying South Italy as «a sort of subjugated and exploited colony, on which Northern Italy had built its good fortune»¹⁹ is in reality a common misconception. Nevertheless, its refusal of a South that had finally solved its problems is firm, and its reflections on the matter are merciless: «One might think (...) that Northern Italy’s dynamic richness could have been quickly and effectively directed to the South, helping the latter complete the path to development it had known, albeit later. This passage could have happened by direct State intervention or (also) by direct action of capital formed in Northern Italy, more or less encouraged by the State. Now we know full well that capital (or, better, money) has been transferred, both directly and indirectly, but South has not been able to get on the path to similar, autonomous growth. Southern Italy experienced its own development, but in forms unable to economically self-replicate and, worse still, by and large linked to crime. (...) That’s still not all. The State, who had to direct and oversee an harmonious process of integration between North and South has not only been unable to do this but ended up involved in this armed robbery, often helping it out. In the best of cases, it has been cowed in a corner, paralyzed with impotence»²⁰.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*. For a punctual reference to the bases of the questioning of this elaboration by Galasso, Please see G. Giarrizzo, *Mezzogiorno senza meridionalismo: la Sicilia, lo sviluppo, il potere*, Venezia, Marsilio, 1992.

¹⁵ G. Galasso, *Il Mezzogiorno da “questione” a “problema aperto”*, cit., p. 9.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ Please see L. Cafagna, *Dualismo e sviluppo nella storia d’Italia*, Venezia, Marsilio, 1989.

¹⁸ Please see L. Cafagna, *Nord e Sud. Non fare a pezzi l’unità d’Italia*, Venezia, Marsilio, 1994.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 7.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 8-10.

These words are from 1994, and not intended to engender resignation and closure: «It's a long way from there to rip Italian unity to pieces »²¹. On the contrary, the prevailing idea was that « Southern Italy cannot be abandoned, but must learn self-reliance»; in fact: «this, only apparently a paradox, is the only way to gain fruitful external aid, not necessarily only from Italy...»²².

This scholar assessed also the revisionism overall, defining it “natio-Southern”, by means of a very interesting train of thought, both for its equilibrium and the open irony it is laced with. Beginning with the fact that this historiographical stance showed a progressive “linguistical insufferance” with the usual terms of “dualism and “meridionalism”, up to denying the concept of “Southern Italy” itself, Cafagna supposed that «we will not be able to find words about that in the vocabulary anymore and we will have to express ourselves only with gestures, like Harpo Marx »; most of all, he reported the “anecdote” about a journalist who « happened to be in a town in Sicily, amidst a crowded funeral; he asked a weeping woman who the dead was, and she answered “why, is there any *dead*?”»²³. The link with Southern revisionism is in fact immediate: «In reading some papers, because of misdirected pride, it seems that no “dead” whatsoever plagues the present and the past of Southern Italy social and economic history »²⁴.

Nevertheless, Cafagna himself mantainst that it is always worth the effort to «try and detect the really meaningful theories and research evidence amongst this “nouvelle vague” and get rido f what may appear only a *curious* and *self-defeating* rhetoric operation»²⁵. In the three main components of historiographical revisionism- the negation of any *Infatti, nelle tre componenti fondamentali della revisione storiografica – la negazione di ogni «stasis of the history of Southern Italy», affirming, on the contrary, «a specific dynamism of Southern Italian history»; the questioning of the «meaning of an aggregate vision of “Southern Italy”», as opposed to the importance of regional and local territories; proclaiming the «full-fledged modernisation of Southern regions» against the strict logic of economical growth indicators - there are elements useful to help a better and deeper understanding of Southern reality, which «risk to get flattered in the dark by the mere backwardness stereotype»²⁶. However, Cafagna concludes by clearly affirming that «in their more estreme enunciations, these revisionist stances are open to suspicions that they are plagued, on one side by rhetoric bias due to a sort of semi-nationalistic pride and on the other by the influence of an ambiguous “cultural relativism” who set up camp in later years between the ruins of ideological crises»²⁷. Based on these assessments, both the one of fifteen years ago (Cafagna) and the more recent ones (Galasso), a review of the history of the debate on Southern Italy may be started, examining the state of the art of a subject that is resistant to simplifications and mockeries, requiring instead an educated and long-ranged effort, going well beyond the tools for reflection this paper gives.*

However, for argument's sake, we may get back to the beginning moment of “nuovo meridionalismo”, when the birth of the SVIMEZ and the effort towards defining the industrialization strategies of the less-developed part of the country started a series of greatly

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 13.

²³ L. Cafagna, «*Perché, morti ci furono?*». *Un revisionismo nazio-meridionale*, in *Nord e Sud. Non fare a pezzi l'unità d'Italia*, cit., p. 81.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 81-82.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 82.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 82-83.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 84.

worthy reforms, whose meaning should be taken into account even today. In fact, the birth of a new season of meridionalist policies was made possible by several conditions enabling to tackle Southern contradictions with adequate tools and to give a credible model for the developing needs of the whole country: the experience accrued by the “management” of IRI during the phase following a deep economical crisis shaping the original features of Italian industrialization; the convergence of several stances towards a sort of “supply Keynesism”, singling out capital accumulation as the basic tool for the industrial takeoff of Southern Italy; the link between analysis and elaboration in the activities of SVIMEZ, and also the effective State-led action, implemented throughout a reform programme and, in particular, an extraordinary intervention towards overcoming Italian dualism.

As it has been already stressed in a summarized description of the Association’s beginnings: «The problem of the industrialization of Southern Italy is put in the limelight of Italian economical policies by SVIMEZ, committed to the stance that this is the core issue to tackle in order to reduce, and then bridge, the gap the South has, compared with the rest of the country. This frame of mind was present since SVIMEZ’s beginnings- it was founded on December 2, 1946- ; to effectively support industrialization policies, people from the world of enterprise, science and finance were called to join in the projects SVIMEZ implemented, in order for it to be a real expression of ideas and associations, while conducting researches and elaborate proposals in cooperation with the Government, but in the fullest autonomy. These were the ideas that, even before the end of WWII, were reflected upon, mainly between IRI men– Beneduce, Menichella, Giordani, Cenzato, Saraceno (...) –these ideas came to them following the experience that IRI carried out from 1936 on on behalf of those industries operating in the mechanical, metalworking and shipbuilding sections in the Naples area; this experience actually introduced the principle of direct industrial activity by the State in order to develop, and not only restore industries. After the war, Mr. Saraceno, attachee of the IRI to a special department of the Italian Ministry of Industry, and charged with planning special initiatives to restart industrial activity, introduced . Menichella to Rodolfo Morandi, then the Italian Minister of Industry; therefore, SVIMEZ, whose first President was Morandi; Paratore was president of the IRI, with Cenzato vice President and Saraceno as General Secretary: such an act was an effective reaction to the lack of awareness and action concerning the Southern Question in the postwar reconstruction programmes.

The main promoters of SVIMEZ thought in fact that bridging the North-South gap had to be the main goal of a series of coordinated public actions. Hence the proposal of an extraordinary intervention- conceived as a tool for development policies able to create an industrial investment-favourable environment, still missing in Southern Italy– introducing the innovative principle of a decision system and a coordination of public interventions altogether different from the ones used in the rest of the country. The “extraordinariness” of the action was in fact suggested not only by the scope of the public works necessary for Southern Italy, but also by the operational limits of “ordinary” administrations and the slowness and complexity of their proceedings»²⁸. It was indeed a vision with considerable innovative force for the times it was planned in and useful to understand also today the important duties the whole of Italy must undertake to overcome the tough crisis plaguing it and condemning the South to new forms of backwardness.

2. The time when Southern Italy and “Southern Question” were not empty words

Margaret Carlyle, concluding a long trip in the Southern regions which allowed her to enter into contact with both the local populations and some of the best Italian personalities and skills, observed- in the 1960s- that in the South : «after centuries of oppression and stagnation, great changes in the social and economical life of the population are finally running. Signals of a true awakening are already present, springing from an almost forgotten impulse of hope and faith, even

²⁸ SVIMEZ, *La storia della SVIMEZ*, <<http://web.mclink.it/MN8456/storia.html>>.

if an untiring effort in order to carry its momentum on and give new reasons and answers to the population's needs»²⁹. The “awakening” of Southern Italy was due to a strategy planned in the immediate postwar era and «carried out by those Italians interested not only in improving Southern peasants' quality of life, but the economic level of the whole of Italy, making its Southern part a reasonably prosperous partner within the Italian economy, able to contribute to a steadily growing Italian wealth instead of being a deadweight that can only be considered with scorn in a Western country »³⁰.

It is clearly true that –also in the analysis of those experiencing Southern Italy by a *un first-hand study* – that the main spur towards this turning point came from historical figures like Pasquale Saraceno³¹, who, following and updating the work of Francesco Saverio Nitti³², put the industrialization process at the center of the policies to develop Southern Italy..

The start of a serious and deep review of the Southern Question, having as its most important result a school of thought completely different from “classic meridionalism”, came to pass during the phase immediately following the postwar liberation of Rome. As reminded by Pasquale Saraceno: «The nuovo meridionalismo was born in 1944 as the outcome of a research for a model of development that could be different to the one who had guided Italian economy from the unity onwards, a model that, in our opinion, would have guided not only postwar reconstruction but also the expansion of our economy beyond reconstruction(...) Thus, already in december, 1946, the SVIMEZ will be born; there the idea of extraordinary interventions will be made a reality, as will be made a reality several stances, agreeable or not that they may be. All this belongs to the theme of *development* and not to that of *assistance* »³³.

During the first postwar years, when the conditions to reactivate Italian industries were to be set and the bases for the following Italian development were built, all the acuteness of the Southern problem was felt. Southern Italy had not only taken the brunt of war devastation but had also been weakened by the inflation brought by the *am-lire*. In that situation, heavy with the dualism of the Italian economy, finding solutions not leading to the usual sequence of the old industrial policy, focused on the productive aspect where present and leaving the fate of Southern economy to a future driving effect. However, precisely to respond to a deep need of change in that “model of development” that saw the investments to bring development and employment in Southern Italy as un sound, the experience of “nuovo meridionalismo”³⁴ began. As the increase of the gap between North and South would have entailed giving a part of public spending in welfare support and not in

²⁹ M. Carlyle, *The Awakening of Southern Italy*, London, Oxford University Press, 1962, p. 1.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 44.

³¹ Please see *Ibidem*, pp. 54-55.

³² In fact, according to Saraceno: «Amongst the best supporters of classic meridionalism , maybe only in Nitti we may find, *in nuce*, those cues for reflection which, in a renewed context, will be the base of nuovo meridionalismo» (P. Saraceno, *Il nuovo meridionalismo*, Naples, Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici, 1986, p. 7).

³³ *Ibidem*, cit., p. 6.

³⁴ As Giuseppe Galasso noted: «At that time the historic and structural issues of the Italian State, who still had less than a hunderd years, moine with those specific and immediate problems of the postwar era. So- in order to give an idea, and a very scrawny one of this devastating union between structures and contingencies- there was the problem of a ruinous inflation and the lasting issue of a still incomplete industrialisation of the country, there wsa the difficulty to provide food and the lasting problem made up by the “Southern Question”, who got back to its more urgent actuality after the forced silence of the crumbled Fascist regime. In its own way and with its inborn limits, the establishment of Svimez was a meaningful event. It bore witness, first and foremost, of an actual will to rise, after the damages the war brought and amongst the many problems and the few certainties the latter left, with new initiatives and ideas » (G. Galasso, *SVIMEZ, Mezzogiorno, un sessantennio di storia italiana*, in *Per il Mezzogiorno e per l'Italia. Un sogno ed un impegno che dura da 60 anni*, edited by N. Novacco, Bologna, il Mulino, 2007, pp. 17-18).

supporting production, experts and scholars wondered about «focusing this spending in creating those investment-favourable conditions Southern Italy lacked»³⁵. From there the most fruitful current of meridionalism began, operating within the Associazione per lo Sviluppo dell'Industria nel Mezzogiorno, the most important association for the development of Southern Italy, beginning on November 8, 1946, when the then-Italian Minister for Industry and Commerce, Rodolfo Morandi, invited «the men of the first IRI»³⁶ together with other relevant personalities of the Italian economic and finance *management*, namely: Giuseppe Paratore, Donato Menichella, Stefano Siglienti, Cesare Ricciardi, Giuseppe Cenzato, Oscar Sinigaglia, Paolo Albertario, Luigi Morandi, Stefano Brun, Vincenzo Caglioti, Francesco Giordani and Pasquale Saraceno³⁷. That meeting, prepared by the previous talks between Menichella, Giordani, Cenzato and Saraceno, was not the first act of “nuovo meridionalismo”.

At least two other events had a significant importance for the birth of the SVIMEZ which happened in Rome on December 2, 1946³⁸. First, the experience of managing the IRI, called to tackle the crisis of Southern industry, beginning the reconstruction and restoring of mechanical and metalworking companies in the area of Naples, already from the years before WWII, starting in 1938³⁹. This event had set in stone the conviction of the unavoidable necessity and, at the same time, of the actual feasibility of a widespread industrialisation in Southern Italy, within the frame work of an overall growth of the country⁴⁰, allowing the beginning of the reflection on such an

³⁵ P. Saraceno, *Il nuovo meridionalismo*, cit., p. 5.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 7; Please see P. Barucci, *Introduzione*, in P. Saraceno, *Gli anni dello Schema Vanoni, 1953-1959*, Milano, Giuffrè, 1982, pp. 3-6.

³⁷ In the autonomous logbook of November 8, 1946, attached to the volume of the *Verballi delle Assemblee della SVIMEZ*, it was pointed out that Morandi's idea could be summarized in the proposal to give birth to an organism with the following duties: «a) assess the current situation of South Italian industry and study the best conditions to favour both existing and new activities to develop the industry of Southern Italy; b) promoting industrial initiatives amongst the chief people of industrial and finance companies; c) working with the competent authorities towards the removal of the obstacles blocking said initiatives» (SVIMEZ (edit.), *Il Mezzogiorno nelle ricerche della Svimez, 1947-1967*, Rome, Giuffrè, 1968, p. 759). According to Morandi, such a task could be fulfilled by an entity able to gather all the more meaningful expressions of the Italian industry, science and economics, endowed with large financial means and a flexible structure. The finalities of the Associazione were set during a long meeting, attended by Morandi, secretary of the IRI, Chialvo and Saraceno. The text of the Statute, approved later on, had on its Article 2 the following provisions: «The Associazione aims to promote, in the spirit of effective national solidarity and with a vision of unity, the deep study of the economic conditions of Southern Italy, to propose effective action programmes to propose effective courses of action apt to develop in the South and on Italy's major Islands those activities better answering to the ascertained needs » (SVIMEZ (edited by), *Il Mezzogiorno nelle ricerche della Svimez, 1947-1967*, cit., p. 764).

³⁸ As Saraceno reminded: «The Associazione was established on December 2, 1946, and on January 8, 1947, the first assembly receding the first Board of Directors; to them, Morandi, elected President, submitted the text(...) held as a presentation of this body's aims and program. Concerning the actual activities of the Associazione, in a first phase it was surmised that it could cover the three fields Morandi detailed in the preparatory meeting of November 8, 1946, even amongst uncertainties by its promoters on point b), i.e. the possibility to take the initiative in the field of production and not only on industrial research. The first action in that direction showed that the doubts were well-placed; the staff got soon aware of the fact that, lacking some conditions which only public action could bring to bear, the feasible initiatives in the Southern Italy at the time were few. Therefore, it seemed wise to focus all the resources of the Associazione in researching development models for our economy, such as the industrialisation of Southern Italy, perceived as more apt and consistent with the Associazione's goals. Morandi will be President of the Associazione for just three years (1947-1949), asking to be exempted after the political tensions following the events of April 18, 1949; however, he was persuaded to become Vice-President, a job he will keep until his death in 1955» (P. Saraceno, *Morandi e il nuovo meridionalismo*, in “Apulia”, n. IV, 1981, <<http://www.bpp.it/apulia/html/archivio/1981/IV/art/R81IV019.html>>).

³⁹ Please see P. Saraceno, *Gli interventi del primo IRI*, in “Banca, borsa e titoli di credito”, 1981, p. 304; P. Saraceno, *Intervista sulla Ricostruzione, 1943-1953*, edited by L. Villari, Bari, Laterza, 1977, p. VII.

⁴⁰ Please see A. Del Monte, A. Giannola, *Il Mezzogiorno nell'economia italiana*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1978, pp.

initiative and on the public bodies that would be charged with its implementation, already since the end of the Fascist regime. The meeting between Rodolfo Morandi and Pasquale Saraceno – whom had left IRI in the meantime- held at the Italian Ministry of Industry, in the preparatory phase of the “First aid plan”⁴¹, was the spark which kindled the fire of the reformation impulse. The « pragmatist features of nuovo meridionalismo» had its origin within the intervention to save the big banks in 1933, implemented because of the IRI, whom, operating with «entrepreneurial tools and functions», acquired «all the commanding shares in those enterprises the bank owned, also in the case of profiting ones»⁴². In other words, the choice IRI made allowed the shift from a ruinous action in supporting the banks, held after the First World War, to a focused strategy, that had amongst its results a positive overhaul and growth of the industrial issues in the Naples area. aveva consentito il passaggio da un’azione rovinosa nel soccorso alle banche, dopo la prima guerra mondiale, ad una strategia mirata, che comportò anche la riorganizzazione e la crescita del tessuto industriale nell’area napoletana: «In the culture of prewar IRI the urgent necessity to industrialize Southern Italy was well present; this was done not to improve the living conditions for the people of Southern Italy, a job more apt to political bodies and not management ones, as to make the Italian industrial progress more deep and/or organized»⁴³. On this issue, a document issued by IRI on September 3, 1948 «on our activity and on the program for Southern Italy »⁴⁴ is especially significant. From that paper, in fact, emerge that, mainly, IRI shares in the industries of Southern Italy were «initiatives, in some cases relatively recent, and encompassing several important industry sections, from metalworking to agriculture and requiring an estimate expenditure of about 100 billions lire, given the currency’s value, with about 28.000 employees»⁴⁵. The biggest industrial conglomerate, the one based in or around Naples and including mechanical (Navalmecanica, Stabilimenti Meccanici di Pozzuoli, Industria Meccanica Napoletana, Metalmeccanica Meridionale e Fabbrica Macchine), metalworking (Ilva di Bagnoli e di Torre Annunziata) and transport (Tirrenia e Circumvesuviana)⁴⁶ companies.

The other relevant fact, even if all too often overlooked was the establishment of an unique Centro di studi e di attività, a study center whose activities lasted a year and a half. The CEIM (Centro Economico Italiano per il Mezzogiorno) was born in Naples in July 1946 to “study and carry out” initiatives to solve the problems of South Italian regions: besides Giuseppe Paratore (Then President of IRI), Emilio Sereni, Giovanni Porzio, Giorgio Amendola and Giuseppe Cenzato (CEO of SME), the other protagonists of that unique experience were Giuseppe Russo, Nicola Rivelli, Manlio Rossi Doria, Ferdinando Isabella, Pasquale Mazzella, Ivo Vanzi, Cesare Foà, that is,

120-124.

⁴¹ Please see P. Saraceno, *Il nuovo meridionalismo*, cit., p. 8. However, as noted by Nino Novacco, Morandi already had the opportunity «to appreciate Saraceno’s ideas» within the CLNAI’s economic commission (N. Novacco, *Per una riflessione sul meridionalismo di Cenzato*, in “Rivista Economica del Mezzogiorno”, year XIV, n. 3, 2000, p. 899).

⁴² P. Saraceno, *Il nuovo meridionalismo*, cit., p. 7. Saraceno went on, noting that: «the nuovo meridionalismo intended to, by means of extraordinary interventions, make development policies possible and signal the ceasing of the assistential policies implemented for Southern Italy after the Unification of Italy».

⁴³ P. Saraceno, *Il nuovo meridionalismo*, cit., p. 8.

⁴⁴ Please see Archivio Storico IRI, Numerazione Nera – Pratiche generali, Relazioni e notizie IRI, Fascicolo II° (1944-1954), “Attività, situazione attuale e fabbisogno finanziario dell’IRI”, busta 025 – “Appendice: Appunti sull’opera svolta e sul programma dell’IRI per il Mezzogiorno d’Italia”.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 31.

⁴⁶ Please see *Ibidem*, pp. 32-34. This framework does not consider minority participations in the SME, Società Esercizi Telefonici and Terme di Agnano.

important figures of Neapolitan and Southern intelligentsia and enterprise⁴⁷. The presidency of the Centro was offered to Paratore, with Amendola and Porzio vice-Presidents, a young Giorgio Napolitano, now the President of the Italian Republic, and Giuseppe Russo were charged of the secretariat. The main inspiration of CEIM was surely born of the need the Neapolitan economic world felt (...) to have a seat to make themselves heard in a surely hard moment for Southern Italy and Italian economy at large »⁴⁸. The activity of the Centro featured a remarkable interest and a deep commitment- poured through a series of technical departments (industry, agriculture, credit and insurance, building and city studies, sea, commerce, communications, handcrafts, health and society, professional education)⁴⁹ –, whose peak was reached in setting up three important meetings and implementing and managing very meaningful projects, indicating a good perspective for the productive development of the South⁵⁰, predating the full resumption of meridionalistic initiatives upon the establishment of the SVIMEZ⁵¹. Therefore, from the brief but intense action of CEIM came a strong impulse to effectively tackle the main issues of Southern Italy, within some policies aiming to promote Italy's renewal and economic advancement. According to Giorgio Amendola: «One of the reasons moving men like Paratore and Cenzato towards promoting (...) the establishment of CEIM was, declaredly, that to support and uphold, when designing and implementing nationwide economic projects, the particular needs sported by the economy of the South, which risked yet again to just foot the bill of the new economic growth(...). On this field, a meaningful encounter between the working class and important capitalistic groups. Within the Italian capitalism itself, there was a struggle between those forces aiming at rebuilding the old, autarkic and protectionist system and those pointing towards a productivity increase and an Italy

⁴⁷ Please see C. Franco, M. Baldari, E. Guardascione, *Dentro Naples. Per una Storia dell'Unione degli Industriali della Provincia di Naples*, Naples, Guida Editori, 1987, pp. 63-64; G. Amendola, *Fascismo e Mezzogiorno*, Rome, Editori Riuniti, 1973, pp. 53-54. As Giorgio Amendola reminded: «It was a particular experience, taking part in the activities of the Centro economico italiano per il Mezzogiorno (CEIM) with Sereni. It was an alliance with the representatives of the SME's monopolistic capital, such as Cenzato, implemented by us Communists, ahead of the Socialist and even the Christian Democrats. Suffice it to say that Paratore, the old supporter of Nitti and founder of the IRI, was President and Sereni was the managing director, with Porzio and me as Vice-Presidents. It was an alliance with the opponents, an experience that had to be placed in that moment and studied » (G. Amendola, *Gli anni della Repubblica*, Rome, Editori Riuniti, 1976, p. 336).

⁴⁸ N. Novacco, *Per una riflessione sul meridionalismo di Cenzato*, cit., p. 898. As Novacco himself noted, following in his memory: «this need sat well with the Italian Communist Party's aspiration to open an active relationship with those men and interests bisogno si incontrò positivamente con l'aspirazione del PCI di aprire un attivo rapporto con gli interessi e con gli uomini dell'economia, di cui comprendeva il peso e cui non voleva solo contrapporsi politicamente e polemicamente, ma con cui sperava anzi di poter avviare (...) un dialogo costruttivo».

⁴⁹ Please see N. Novacco, *Per una riflessione sul meridionalismo di Cenzato*, cit., p. 898.

⁵⁰ As it was noted: «In a few months a series of meetings on the transformation of landed property, on transports, on engineering industry, allowed to begin a reconnaissance on single Southern problems and a serious confrontation on programmes. The start of CEIM's activities was a «headstone for those alliances present at the moment between the Italian Communist Party and important groups within Italian capitalism»; indeed «these alliances became actual initiatives for work and debate as they found a specific and fertile ground, that of Southern Italy and its urgent issues» (G. Amendola, *Fascismo e Mezzogiorno*, cit., p. 54). The weight concerning the intentions of productive forces was a meaningful part of the CEIM's experience: at that time, the Neapolitan entrepreneurs submitted requests very compatible with the Centro's main goals «in order to ensure job opportunities to the industries of Southern Italy; reactivate the private building industry; activating further earmarking of funds and fiscal and economic credit facilities; support the revival of traditional and small enterprise; award further funds to public works» (C. Franco, M. Baldari, E. Guardascione, *Dentro Naples. Per una Storia dell'Unione degli Industriali della Provincia di Naples*, cit., p. 65).

⁵¹ On this, Novacco notes that: «The experience of CEIM, albeit brief- spanning from July, 1946 to spring 1948- deserves to be remembered both for its somewhat anticipatory nature concerning an official and formalized revival of the commitment to Southern Italy economic growth and development, and for its political inspiration and place » (N. Novacco, *Per una riflessione sul meridionalismo di Cenzato*, cit., p. 898).

taking part in the international economic competition»⁵². The initiative of the Centro Economico Italiano per il Mezzogiorno, that could have been generalised⁵³, did last, on the contrary, just eighteen months and CEIM «disappeared without any regular public death act »⁵⁴. Nevertheless: «From those primal initiatives, SVIMEZ remained alive »⁵⁵.

According to Saraceno, the “nuovo meridionalismo” could be summarized as follows in its main features: «a) no relevant problem of Italian society can find a viable solution if the Southern Question remains open; b) Industrialisation of Southern Italy is a necessary, albeit non sufficient, condition, for the Southern Question to be resolved; c) Industrializing Southern Italy is therefore an aim whose pursuing must influence and shape the resolution of every problem Italy has»⁵⁶. These distinguishing elements were the consequence of the stance that the gap had to be bridged not as a regional issue but rather as a problem shaping the structure of the whole Italian economy⁵⁷.

Furthermore, another original feature- reminded only rarely- accompanying this new and sturdy meridionalist stance since its inception was the Europeist choice, i.e. the capacity for Southern Italy to attract those opportunities offered by the progressive market integration. Such a

⁵² G. Amendola, *Fascismo e Mezzogiorno*, cit., pp. 58-59. We should also reconsider the other part of the assessment by Amendola, the one in which he reminded, between those same pages, that: «The activity undertaken at the CEIM deserves critical attention (...). The reason (...) for the participation of the best representatives of the most important groups of Italian capitalism was transparent enough. They also intended to look for some forms of cooperation with the organized forces of the working class in order to simmer down the danger of class war (...). Those capitalistic groups also intended to request a particular focus in government activity in order to start the reconstruction of Southern economy, grievously wounded by the war (...). But this meeting (...) appeared important also because of the fact that the working class had its own interest that a quick and effective reconstruction might begin, thus stopping the destruction of the socioeconomical framework plaguing Southern Italy.

⁵³ Such a stance is strengthened also by what happened, in several ways, not only in Naples, but also in Rome and Turin: «Facing the offensive by the monopolistic groups, then focusing on inflation, the working class attempted to (...) strike a cooperation, albeit precarious and unsteady, with groups of “productive” bourgeoisie. That is the moment of Pesenti’s presidency of IRI and of the cooperation with Menichella in Rome, Valletta in Turin and Cenzato in Naples» (G. Amendola, *Classe operaia e programmazione democratica*, Rome, Editori Riuniti, 1966, p. 224).

⁵⁴ G. Amendola, *Fascismo e Mezzogiorno*, cit., p. 55. In fact, according to Amendola, «The breakup of national unity (...) led first to paralysis and then to death for C.E.I.M.» (G. Amendola, *Il Mezzogiorno si muove*, in “Rinascita”, n. 4, aprile 1951, p. 170); This judgment is then confirmed by the following observation: «The development of Ceim was emblematical. When the balance of power changed at the national level, by means of the famous “turn of ’47 (the Communists were put out of the fourth De Gasperi government, after the setting up of a function attracting entrepreneurial and social interests by the Christian Democrats (...), after the rising up of similar bodies active in the same fields than Ceim, the latter died out by slow consumption » (C. Franco, M. Baldari, E. Guardascione, *Dentro Naples. Per una Storia dell’Unione degli Industriali della Provincia di Naples*, cit., p. 64). The end of this experience cannot be limited to the changing of a single phase, as it ended also because of its limits, both in its framework and in the subjective forces promoting it.

⁵⁵ G. Amendola, *Fascismo e Mezzogiorno*, cit., p. 59. In fact, as already explained it was from the joining of several entrepreneurs promoting CEIM and Saraceno, Morandi, Menichella, Giordani, that SVIMEZ was born in December 1946 (Please see C. Franco, M. Baldari, E. Guardascione, *Dentro Naples. Per una Storia dell’Unione degli Industriali della Provincia di Naples*, cit., p. 67).

⁵⁶ P. Saraceno, *Morandi e il nuovo meridionalismo*, cit., <<http://www.bpp.it/apulia/html/archivio/1981/IV/art/R81IV019.html>>. In this same article Saraceno underlines that «this conception is due to Rodolfo Morandi» and that his reference was «the final paragraph of the “Storia della grande industria in Italia”, as it is widely known, is from 1931».

⁵⁷ In fact: «it was the whole of the developing mechanism of our country that had to be modified. It was required not only to act on a wide level in Southern Italy; there was also the issue that the general policies (especially the fiscal ones, or those regarding credit) and that the measures taken for particular areas of the Nord and Center of Italy (such as incentive-based policies) had to be consistent (or at least, not clashing) with the meridionalist ones» (P. Saraceno, *È ancora valida la concezione del meridionalismo apparso nell’ultimo dopoguerra?*, in “Apulia”, n. III, 1975, <<http://www.bpp.it/apulia/html/archivio/1975/III/art/R75III004.html>>).

choice was not only not rejected because of an abstract “protectionism” but was rather held as an important development factor; unfortunately it was employed very few times in the following phase⁵⁸.

The themes of industry and market- the latter frequently underestimated during historical surveys, whose focus is usually the link between the setup of “nuovo meridionalismo” and public intervention- were already present in a paper by Rodolfo Morandi of January 1, 1947, written to detail and illustrate SVIMEZ’s activity, worthy to be related in its entirety: « The reconstruction of our economy, giving birth to complex problems such as the best possible distribution and application of our forces, the most rational use of our resources, the update and improvement of our production facilities, gave the “Southern Question” a new actuality. Everybody recognizes that reconstruction could never go in the sense that the prewar situation entailed, as it was based also on the great backwardness of Southern Italy. Everybody concurs on the necessity to eliminate so deep a gap, as it would effectively prevent to embrace the necessary wider horizons that every mind having a modern vision of economical issues must accept. The need to ensure the wider possible range and scope to the deployment of productive forces, making the most of the whole unitary Italian area; the good tools to use in widening the markets’ absorption capacity; the forthcoming cost reduction opportunity in exploiting full-cycle some local resources; furthermore, the favourable geographic placement of production centres will naturally help removing those invisible barriers who slowed down, during Italy’s contemporary history, the economic development of its Southern part. These natural movers, which could have been, in a normal context, really slow to mature and present themselves as changing factors of our economic structure, must in any case become the main directories of reconstruction, in a moment when we ask our country not a progressive increase of the existing system, but its fundamental overhaul and reorganisation. So, the economic activation of Southern Italy, itself the fundamental requirement to resolve the “Southern Question” becomes the first and bigger problem of our reconstruction. And this problem should be tackled, by the joined forces of the whole Italy, as a pre-eminent national issue. Furthermore, the economical issues linked with Southern Italy are too vast and complex a subject to be tackled as a direct action goal. Rather, it should be tackled as a process that can find within itself the strength to effectively deploy only once it is already active, overcoming those limiting conditions that appear in its quiescence. In order to give life to such a process we must endow Southern Italy with a propulsive force, able to act quickly and efficiently. This force can be none other than industry. And when we say “industry” we do not mean transplanting isolated productive units or a forced repopulation of initiatives but rather a network of transformation activities having natural vitality and creative vigour. In order to overcome some starting disadvantages, it may be necessary that the State grant some compensations and subsidies, but these cannot be the cornerstones of a building lacking its foundations. Those industries having good economic reasons to establish themselves or good opportunities to develop shall be supported. To reach this goal neither the law nor the State are completely fit, if this selection is not made by other policy bodies, themselves an emanation of productive factors. With these goals and features in mind, the “Associazione per lo sviluppo dell’industria nel Mezzogiorno”» is born⁵⁹.

⁵⁸ As seen by Saraceno: «Meridionalism was, in its beginning, an Europeist movement, as the lessened customs duties imposed on Southern industry because of European integration would have been more than compromised by the additional impulse coming from such integration and from the opportunity to locate a significant part thereof in Southern Italy. As it is known, such impulse came to pass; however Southern Italy missed, except for metalworking and petrochemical companies, a spread of newly-localized industries. It must also be noted that the missed perception of our development in a meridionalist way made our position in Brussels weak in the regionalist sense; the then-European Community’s regional policy began only sixteen years after the sign-up of the Treaty of Rome, when the United Kingdom entered it » (P. Saraceno, *È ancora valida la concezione del meridionalismo apparso nell’ultimo dopoguerra?*, cit., <<http://www.bpp.it/apulia/html/archivio/1975/III/art/R75III004.html>>).

⁵⁹ R. Morandi, *La ricostruzione italiana e lo sviluppo della economia industriale del Mezzogiorno*, in SVIMEZ (a cura di), *Il Mezzogiorno nelle ricerche della Svimez, 1947-1967*, cit., pp. 3-4.

However, the birth of the SVIMEZ had also an international landmark, as did its activity. In fact, the background idea of industrial development for Southern Italy was not only a brainchild of Nitti and the supporters of Italian modernisation; it had wider and deeper roots. This new meridionalist idea was linked, in particular, to the general -not only Italian- issue of economically depressed (or underdeveloped) areas and to its main theories: «The enlargement of the thematical horizon thus realized was worth in itself (...) to provide this issue with another historical and structural dimension but, most of all, it opened new grounds to the technique of economical and social intervention»⁶⁰. The reflection on economic underdevelopment began during WWII⁶¹, when it appeared in all its clarity that the countries belonging to the more backward parts of the world would not have tolerated for longer still an economic mechanism that only widened their distance from the most advanced countries⁶². This dualism would have worsened in a system where

⁶⁰ G. Galasso, *SVIMEZ, Mezzogiorno, un sessantennio di storia italiana*, cit., p. 20. It must also be noted that the concept of “depressed area” originated in the British world and was elaborated in the 1930s, «after the depressing effects on economy brought by the crisis of 1929», and referred to a «short-term situation, unapplicable to Southern Italy without adaptation » (V. Negri Zamagni, M. Sanfilippo (edited by), *Nuovo meridionalismo e intervento straordinario. La SVIMEZ dal 1946 al 1950*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1988, p. 33).

⁶¹ Nicola Boccella reminded that «The theoris dealing with *tout court* economic growth can be traced back to the studies carried out in the 1940s and 1950s by Roy F. Harrod, Ragnar Nurkse and Robert M. Solow, rooted in the analyses by the classical economists of the Industrial Revolution»; Charles P. Oman and Ganeshan Wignaraja, signaled in turn that «only after WWII, researchers and policymakers dealt explicitly with the causes of, and the barriers to, development in the “backwards” areas, later called “underdeveloped” countries, then defined as the “Third World” and now called “developing countries”. It is however important to remember that several events happened in the first half of 1900, especially in the postwar era, contributed to spark interest in the Third World. One of them was the upsetting of global commerce between the Depression years and those of the two world wars, between 1915 and 1945, that shifted the trends towards what was called internal-oriented growth and industrialization with import substitution, particularly in Latin America (...). Another factor was the restoring of the alliance between industrialized countries and the creation of international organizations in the years following the war (...) An important result from back then was the creation of the United Nations during the San Francisco Conference of 1945. The UN’s aim was to create a world order aiming to economic and social development. It is interesting to note that of the 51 countries taking part in the meeting, only 12 came from industrialized countries, while the majority of the others came from Latin American countries(...) Another noteworthy factor was the process of decolonization and the proclamation of independence of the greater part of Africa and Asia. (...) Furthermore, another factor that doubtlessly contributed to the growth of word interest concerning poverty problems and human suffering in Third World countries was the availability of information on global poverty. Responsible for this were, on one side the revolution on communication technology and on the other the effort of many international and multilateral organisations who began gathering for the first time systematical data on the economical conditions in the Third World in the wake of the war» (N. Boccella, *Introduzione alla traduzione italiana*, e C. P. Oman, G. Wignaraja, *Introduzione*, in C. P. Oman, G. Wignaraja, *Le teorie dello sviluppo economico dal dopoguerra ad oggi*, Milano, LED Edizioni Universitarie, 2005, p. 10 e pp. 50-52., orig.: *The postwar evolution of development thinking*, Macmillan/OECD Development Centre, Paris, 1991). Per un ulteriore approfondimento delle teorie dello sviluppo equilibrato e del sottosviluppo, maturate negli anni del secondo dopoguerra: Please see A. O. Hirschman, *La strategia dello sviluppo economico*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1968, orig.: *The strategy of economic development*, New Haven/London, Yale University Press, 1958; H. Myint, *L’economia dei paesi in via di sviluppo*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1973, . orig.: *The economics of the developing countries*, London, Hutchinson University Library, 1965; A. N. Agarwala, P. S. Singh (a cura di), *L’economia dei paesi sottosviluppati*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1966, ed. orig.: *The economic of underdevelopment*, London, Oxford University Press, 1960; B. Jossa (a cura di), *Economia del sottosviluppo*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1973; S. Holland, *Capitalismo e squilibri regionali*, Bari, Laterza, 1976, ed. orig.: *Capital versus the regions*. London, Macmillan, 1976; B. Hettne, *Le teorie dello sviluppo e il Terzo Mondo*, Rome, ASAL, 1986, ed. orig.: *Development theory and the Third World*, Stockholm, Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries, 1982.

⁶² The “Supplemento alle ‘Informazioni SVIMEZ’ sui problemi dei paesi economicamente sottosviluppati”, published in Rome by the SVIMEZ, published the translation of several articles on those themes as part of a debate which strongly developed during the 1950s. In particular Please see P. N. Rosenstein-Rodan, *Problemi dell’industrializzazione nell’Europa orientale e sud-orientale*, n. 17, aprile 1954; R. Nurske, *Problemi della formazione di capitale nei paesi sottosviluppati*, n. 4, marzo 1953, n. 5, aprile 1953, n. 25, dicembre 1954; M. Dobb, *Alcuni aspetti dello sviluppo economico*, n. 10, settembre 1953, n. 11, ottobre 1953.

compared costs would not bring an equalisation of world economies, but on the contrary, an increase in the elements of dependance and delay for weaker economies; the overall unbalance at the international level, coupled with the policies enacted by the more advanced countries, would have become a factor for real underdevelopment⁶³. Therefore, poverty was caused by marketing imbalances whom in turn produced new economic gaps and misery, in a vicious, continual cycle that could be broken only by external actions-led policies, able to redirect the closure and stiffness of the economic system⁶⁴. In such a context the activities of public bodies were encouraged to remove the original obstacles preventing the spread of industrial investments and to usher in balanced development⁶⁵.

Generally speaking, underdevelopment theories detected a cornerstone criterion to measure the backwardness of an economy in per capita income; through this tool, the gaps in growth or, better still, the different development levels in the world could be assessed quantitatively. As Claudio Napoleoni observed: «The problem of defining an underdeveloped economy is by no means an easy one(...). Furthermore, bearing in mind most of all that this definition must allow a quantitative survey of underdevelopment, one may assume that, generally speaking, the development degree of a given economy may be identifiable by the average level of per capita income»⁶⁶. Anyway, from WWII onwards, «literature on underdeveloped economies has sizably grown», tackling essentially three issues: the «definiton of underdevelopment»; an analysis of the «main features of underdeveloped economies», and an examination of «the ways to overcome underdevelopment»⁶⁷. Since its beginning, the “nuovo meridionalismo”, inspired its activities to these thematics and to such a quantitative view of economic development, applying it to the internal dualism of a single country.

In the decades following the affirmation of these tendencies, the range of survey and analysis has been considerably widened, up to the insertion of qualità criteria in assessment. To the classical framework, based on the use of per capita GDP, a new, quality-based classification method have been joined.

The most widespread indicator is, in the latter case, the *Human Development Index*, worked out by the UN from 1990 on- mainly with imput by Mahbub ul Haq e di Amartya Sen – and published yearly by UNDP (United Nations Development Programme)⁶⁸. However, this tool also has been

⁶³ Please see G. Myrdal, *An american dilemma: the Negro problem and modern democracy*, New York/London, Harper & Brothers, 1944; G. Myrdal, *Teoria economica e paesi sottosviluppati*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1959, ed. orig.: *Economic theory and underdeveloped regions*, London, G. Duckworth, 1957.

⁶⁴ Please see R. Nurske, *Problems of capital formation in underdeveloped countries*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1953; R. Nurske, *Equilibrium and growth in the world economy: economic essays*, a cura di G. Haberler e R. M. Stern, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1961.

⁶⁵ Please see P. N. Rosenstein-Rodan, *The international development of economically backward areas*, in “International Affairs”, aprile 1944, pp. 157-165; P. N. Rosenstein-Rodan, *Notes on the theory of the big push*, in H. Ellis e H. C. Wallich (a cura di), *Economic development for Latin America*, New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1961; P. N. Rosenstein-Rodan (a cura di), *Capital formation and economic development*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1964.

⁶⁶ C. Napoleoni, *Il pensiero economico del 900*, Turin, Einaudi, 1963, p. 167.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 166-167.

⁶⁸ Please see *Human Development Reports*, <<http://hdr.undp.org/en/>>. According to Mahbub ul Haq: «The basic purpose of development is to enlarge people’s choices. In principle, these choices can be infinite and can change over time. People often value achievements that do not show up at all, or not immediately, in income or growth figures: greater access to knowledge, better nutrition and health services, more secure livelihoods, security against crime and physical violence, satisfying leisure hours, political and cultural freedoms and sense of participation in community activities. The objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives» (M. ul Haq, *The Human Development concept*, <<http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev/>>).

questioned because of the variability and indeterminateness of its proposed indicators and, in recent times, for the urgent necessity to quantitatively assess the effects of the economical crisis in order to foresee and implement economical tools for recovery and development, particularly for backward areas.

In conclusion, we may agree with an observation by Giuseppe Galasso, according to whom: « Svimez thought since its beginning that only a sizable expansion of real economy, beginning from its most powerful production base, i.e. industry in its whole range of technical and productive expressions, most of all those located at the best and more advanced levels, could have brought Southern Italy out of underdevelopment and make it sufficiently, albeit not totally, self-reliant and self-propulsing in the modernisation of its social and economic system, within the Italian framework»⁶⁹.

3. The “nuovo meridionalismo” after more than sixty years

After more than six decades since the birth of SVIMEZ, we must consider the meaning of an experience and commitment on Southern Italy’s behalf in the whole of its founding values, distinguishing the “nuovo meridionalismo” from the “classic” one: «the old meridionalismo was nurtured by economy and statistics, whereas the nuovo meridionalismo rew on history and had a political *animus* no less than its predecessor. The difference between the two was in (...) the reference to a general framework that was substantially wider than the national one, as well as to the most recent social and economical experiences and doctrines, after what happened in the 1920s and 1930s»⁷⁰. However, one cannot underestimate the scope of an approach which endorsed innovation also in methodologies, bringing to the fore a statistical and economical framework used to “put numbers and issues together” in order to analyse and understand the reality of Southern Italy in its every aspect, portraying it with rigour and objectivity- even by constructing the so-called “depression indexes”⁷¹ – to the interested parties, first and foremost government authorities and international bodies⁷². The first, numerous adherents to the Society (Banca d’Italia, IRI, Banca Nazionale del Lavoro, CONIEL, Banco di Roma, Banco di Napoli, Cisa-Viscosa, Innocenti, FIAT, SME, Società Anonima Arenella, Snia-Viscosa, Banca Commerciale Italiana, Credito Italiano, Finsider, Federconsorzi, Montecatini, Confindustria, IMI, Pirelli)⁷³ all pushed in this direction, as

⁶⁹ G. Galasso, *SVIMEZ, Mezzogiorno, un sessantennio di storia italiana*, cit., pp. 20-21. Galasso goes on, noting that «The problem of developing Southern Italy joined with the issue of the opportunity for Italy to pass the threshold of a full and definitive modernisation; such a point, supposed in the time when nothing pointed towards the “Italian economic miracle”, shows a particular value».

⁷⁰ G. Galasso, *SVIMEZ, Mezzogiorno, un sessantennio di storia italiana*, cit., p. 27.

⁷¹ As it has been noted: « To measure the depressed state of a given area, indexes are currently built. These indexes are based on income, considered the most significant result of economic status of any given area, on a case-by-case basis, other indexes tied to other aspects of economic life (production, consumption, taxes) in order to better qualify any given index (...) Then the main, specific goal of the index must be defined. We aim to possess viable criteria in the wake of public, counter-depressionary intervention so to assess the distribution of available sums, based on technical assessment of the economic status » (N. Novacco, *La popolazione come «capitale tecnico» e gli interventi anti-depressione*, in “Rivista Italiana di Economia, Demografia e Statistica”, nn. 3-4, 1950, p. 95).

⁷² Please see V. Negri Zamagni, M. Sanfilippo (edit.), *Nuovo meridionalismo e intervento straordinario. La SVIMEZ dal 1946 al 1950*, cit., pp. 30-31. As underlined in these same pages: «Everything possible was periodically studied and systematically analyzed by SVIMEZ: from industrial added value to demography, from aqueducts to wheat industry, from climatology to savings; from limited companies to education, to emigration, to consumption, from electricity to banks, from sewers to shows, from unemployment to hotel material, from credit to fishermen to khaki farming, from public works to dry figs, from graveyards to slaughterhouses, to goat fur production, as it may be easily inferred by perusing the weekly contents of the “Informazioni SVIMEZ” bulletin».

⁷³ Please see Verbale del 2 dicembre 1946, in *Verballi delle Assemblee della SVIMEZ*, vol. I, in SVIMEZ (edited

did a managing group involving knowledgeable and revered personalities, many of whom were trained under Alberto Beneduce, keeping continuity with Nitti's ideals and with the reforms of the beginning of the XX Century⁷⁴.

In this milieu, also the SVIMEZ's mission was clarified. In the beginning it was torn between "two souls", one pursuing «knowledge and research» and the other focused on «actual promotion activities»⁷⁵. In fact, during the second half of 1947, with the creation of the Società per l'Industrializzazione delle Regioni Meridionali (Sudindustria), the Society for the Industrialization of Southern Italy⁷⁶, this society was tasked with the duties in the commercial and industrial fields, while the activities concerning studies, surveys and further research. Even if Sudindustria's action appeared very localized, so that, at the end of the first budget exercise, the following was noted: «this action mostly dealt with taking over from Svimez those initiatives already in their realization phase and, being complete in research or study, appeared ripe for implementation»⁷⁷, and even if a limited timeline was set for Sudindustria, having to expire in 1954, we must say that its establishment allowed to distinguish between all the skills involved, thus developing SVIMEZ's soul in a manner more coherent with its goal to promote production advancement in Southern Italy. Donato Menichella, in the last part of 1949, clearly stated what were the privileged fields of action the Society had, capturing its truest calling: «a systemic action for study, surely framed in a passionate vision on the subject and its issues, but firmly committed to conduct serious and deep technical surveys (...) joining several qualified and competent people to its employees, which are very limited, albeit elected, in order to study and comprehend those problems whose solution is essential to let Southern Italy rise up from its status of depressed area»⁷⁸.

by), *Il Mezzogiorno nelle ricerche della Svimez, 1947-1967*, cit., p. 760.

⁷⁴ Please see S. Cafiero, *Questione meridionale e politica meridionalistica attraverso un quarantennio di attività della SVIMEZ*, in "Studi SVIMEZ", nn. 3-4, 1986, p. 396; M. Finioia, *Il ruolo di Donato Menichella nella creazione della SVIMEZ e della Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*, in AA. VV., *Donato Menichella. Testimonianze e studi raccolti dalla Banca d'Italia*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1986, pp. 323-329. SVIMEZ's first board meeting was chaired by Rodolfo Morandi, with Giuseppe Paratore and Giuseppe Cenzone as Vice-Presidents, and Pasquale Saraceno as general secretary, and saw also the participation of Vincenzo Caglioti, Pietro Frasca Polara, Giuseppe Lauro, Gerlando Marullo, Filippo Masci, Donato Menichella, OtTurin Pomilio, Paolo Ricca Salerno, Cesare Ricciardi and Stefano Siglienti. At a later date, these councilors were joined by Stefano Brun, Vincenzo Bruno, Francesco Giordani, Ivo Vanzi e Mauro Visentini. Auditors were nominated Gianfranco Calabresi, Luigi Chialvo and Isidoro Pirelli. Alessandro Molinari was made Director (Please see the Verbale of January 8, 1947, in *Verbali delle Assemblee della SVIMEZ*, vol. I, in SVIMEZ (a cura di), *Il Mezzogiorno nelle ricerche della Svimez, 1947-1967*, cit., p. 760).

⁷⁵ V. Negri Zamagni, M. Sanfilippo (a cura di), *Nuovo meridionalismo e intervento straordinario. La SVIMEZ dal 1946 al 1950*, cit., p. 21.

⁷⁶ In the issue of July 22, 1947 of *Verbali delle Assemblee della SVIMEZ*, vol. I, was written the following: «Promoted by the SVIMEZ and featuring the active participation of its Associates, the e con la partecipazione dei suoi the Società per l'industrializzazione delle regioni meridionali – SUDINDUSTRIA S.p.A, is established (as a public company deling with the industrialisation of Southern Italy). To this company – active until 1954 – is given the task to undertake experimental, technical and industrial initiatives to detect actual opportunities of industrialisation for Southern Italy» (SVIMEZ (edit.), *Il Mezzogiorno nelle ricerche della Svimez, 1947-1967*, cit., p. 760). Further, please see Archivio Storico IRI, Numerazione Rossa – Pratiche societarie, Società per l'Industrializzazione delle Regioni Meridionali Sudindustria, Faldone 125,3 – "Assemblee: bilanci e relazioni"; F. Dandolo, *Southern and Northern Italy in the second post-war period: the Sudindustria role*, speech and paper given at the "XV International AISSEC Conference", "Session 9 – Comparative Development Strategies in Mediterranean Countries", Castellammare di Stabia (Naples, Italy), November, 24-25 2006; F. Dandolo, A. Baldoni, *Sudindustria. Prospettive imprenditoriali e scenari per lo sviluppo economico del Mezzogiorno (1947 – 1956)*, Naples, Guida, 2007.

⁷⁷ Archivio Storico IRI, Numerazione Rossa – Pratiche societarie, Società per l'Industrializzazione delle Regioni Meridionali Sudindustria, Faldone 125,3 – "Assemblee: bilanci e relazioni", 622 Fascicolo I inserto b, "Verbale dell'Assemblea ordinaria e straordinaria di Sudindustria", Rome, March 2, 1948, p. 2.

⁷⁸ Verbale (log)of November 23, 1949, in *Verbali delle Assemblee della SVIMEZ*, vol. I, pp. 73-74, quoted in V.

Therefore, the Associazione per lo Sviluppo dell'Industria nel Mezzogiorno showed since its inception a great aptness to be the central engine of “nuovo meridionalismo”, manifesting an innovative and original paradigm, aiming to point out a new way to think and act, with awareness and determination on those issues plaguing the fate of South and Italy, in their mutual interest. Since its beginnings, SVIMEZ's aim appeared the industrialization of Southern territories.

In 1948, Corrado Barbagallo observed that «we are still a long way to say that Southern Italy is really an industrial area and a long walk is not needed to make it »⁷⁹. He acknowledged that one of the most harming conditions to the industrialisation of Southern regions was the lack of capital and in particular on «the capitalists' reluctance to invest their money in industrial enterprises to be based in Southern Italy», actually: «Southern capitalists are repulsed, as are, albeit somewhat less, Italian and foreign ones. This repulsion comes from the conviction that down there any industrial enterprise is going to be a costly, tiresome, and probably unsuccessful affair due to the lack of these elements the economist are used to obscurely call *agglomerative factors* »⁸⁰.

With a surprisingly actual tool, Barbagallo anyway wondered if the , tuttavia, se « the economic, and especially industrial, rise of Southern Italy» was not a danger for «the North's fortunes»⁸¹. The answer to this «dubious question», had, in his opinion, already been given, «since almost a century, all those experiences Europeans carried out in their colonies and, later on, into Europe itself»; and this was because: «In the past, the leading political ideal of the various States in their respective colonies was to prevent their development, in the illusion that such a decision would eliminate future competition, or even revolts. The facts then showed that this method brought only a progressive depauperation of the colony, and therefore of its purchasing power(...). Later on (...) such an experience spontaneously repeated itself in Europe. Against what popular opinion thought, other industrialized countries have been the best customers of industrialized countries, and that is because every country can industrialize only up to a point and since as its industrialisation grows, so does its quality of life, such a country is wont to buy on foreign market, and in greater quantities, those industrial products it did not use beforehand(...). The decay and the economic level of our Southern Italy brought instead reverse consequences, unfavourable to the North, bringing up those same negatives relations that existed between European colonies and metropolises fearsomely exposed in the XVIIIth Century. Likewise, in our country's best interest, it will be necessary to forsake prejudice and renew opinions(...). Nowadays, the more frequent exchange between the two

Negri Zamagni, M. Sanfilippo (a cura di), *Nuovo meridionalismo e intervento straordinario. La SVIMEZ dal 1946 al 1950*, cit., pp. 23-24. Menichella went on in his speech affirming the following: «I have both read and seen firsthand, during my recent journeys to America that many attempts at international cooperation in favour of underdeveloped areas have petered out having no data and knowledge whatsoever on the issues they had to face (...). Should foreign capital come to us without finding this harmony of studies and data, we could only state yet again that good ideas others have could not be realized. The Southern Question is eighty years old, but we must acknowledge that to the will of the men attempting to solve it in the past never followed a truly deep study of the conditions of Southern Italy and therefore the possibility that these conditions could be changed by means of appropriate capital investments. So, by means of the SVIMEZ, we shall doubtlessly see through these issues, both generally and in its more specific aspects ».

⁷⁹ C. Barbagallo, *La questione meridionale*, Milano, Garzanti, 1948, p. 188.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 184. Corrado Barbagallo (pp. 184-185) clarified that: « This term designates several elements, hard to catalogue but whose lacking can significantly aggravate production costs. It's about the easyness (or hardness) to come by of tools and spare parts, or other facilities or goods ancillary to the industries to be established. It's about the opportunity to find specialized workers vis-a-vis the need to call them from afar and pay pricely sums for technicians. It's about drawbacks in the commercial management, in the various public services blocking industry, aggravating costs or even making workers' life miserable as well as to technicians and managers. It's about the easiness or hardness to come by those semifinished or finished products one needs; to sum it up, the climate and atmosphere each and every industry needs to breath and live. It may seem that all of the above has little influence on industrialisation; conversely, these “aggregative factors” have a huge importance ».

⁸¹ C. Barbagallo, *La questione meridionale*, cit., p. 291.

parts of our Peninsula is -how horrible!- that of mockeries, grudges and even hatred. Italy must succeed in turning this encroaching tide, lest what the best spirits of our Risorgimento had dreamed will disappear into nothingness»⁸². It is not a handed down message that is able to reach us in a new context?

Looking deeper, we can observe that the progress of GDP in the last decade shows that Southern Italy is still late compared to the rest of the country⁸³, whose situation is also not so good. Even considering the less critical performances in the Southern area does not change the issue of a widening gap, which feeds a dualism moving “like a shrimp”, i.e. not aiming at profound interventions, but settling for minor adjustments in the best parts of the system, while others move back significantly. Such a perspective is completely ephemeral, even for the Northern regions whom, despite the progress of their GDP “on par with Europe” remain on the sidelines also in the Old Continent, as indicated by the *World Knowledge Competitiveness Index* (WKCI), built by the University of Wales⁸⁴. The still-lacking solution of some cornerstone critical issues in the Southern economic structure and the conviction that a “grassroots” government approach was enough to solve problems proved to be both devastatine and guilty. This attitude, held by the majority of the Southern ruling class linked itself to, and nurtured, a theoretical stance, widespread amongst Southern scholars, leading even to, as explained in these pages, deny the existence of any Southern “problem” whatsoever, branding as *d’antan* those stances daring to show the existence of a gap, in the most diverse forms, including the viewpoints bereft of a “meridionalistic” bias, such as those by Michele Salvati or Luciano Cafagna⁸⁵.

At the end of the day, this form of denial of a “common material civilisation” for the whole of Southern Italy and of the need for unitary, macroeconomical strategies, brought on a monumental waste of public resources during recent Italian history. From such an attitude came some of the most scathing judgments on Southern politics and ruling classes, and not without reason. Such a situation can change only if the people of Southern Italy become aware of their duties as citizens of this part of the country, but also of Italy and Europe. This duty can be summarized in the fact that, together with the inadequate, “top-down” stimulus and corrective interventions, can come to the fore, in such a critical phase of global economy, some “bottom-up” innovative market initiatives, by means of a diffused, even individual, participation by many Southerners and many Southern “excellences”, by those pursuing everyday innovative and lasting results in their activity. This way, an ancient antinomy of Southern Italy could be overcome; the one between “programmists” and “abolitionists”, between the absolute supporters of national policies and the ones pursuing local growth. In a moment such as the one we live in, computer networks can help build the most necessary structure for Southern Italy: the immaterial one; Internet can put Southerners in contact with the world, breaking the cage of their proud municipalism and putting them in the stream of global society and economy. With all its strong and weak points, but open! This infrastructure is even independent from the European corridors and it is something all Southern Italy needs the same way, given its total absence of speed and coverage..

The “nuovo meridionalismo”, by means of the good works carried out by the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno –at least until the birth of the Italian Regions as administrative entities- has been, until now, the only positive effect for Southern Italy: it reduced the gap and gave birth to a ruling class able to guide the country. We are not in those times anymore, and yet we need again a new idea,

⁸² *Ibidem*, pp. 291-292.

⁸³ Please see SVIMEZ, *Rapporto sull’economia del Mezzogiorno*, <<http://web.mclink.it/MN8456/rapporto.html>>.

⁸⁴ Please see *The World Knowledge Competitiveness Index*, <<http://www.cforic.org/pages/wkci.php>>.

⁸⁵ Please see L. Cafagna, *Dualismo e sviluppo nella storia d’Italia*, cit.; L. Cafagna, *Nord e Sud. Non fare a pezzi l’unità d’Italia*, cit.; M. Salvati, *Il sistema economico italiano: analisi di una crisi*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1975; M. Salvati, *Occasioni mancate. Economia e politica in Italia dagli anni ‘60 a oggi*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2003.

able to reach critical mass, in conditions that are deeply different from those in the past. Otherwise, the South, and the whole of Italy alongside it will become a frontier of backwards emerging areas, more and more encroaching on our country. Therefore, the common idea of “many Souths” should be put away and look at Southern Italy with a little more faith in its capabilities not only to take new perspectives but also to actually build them, with another kind of commitment, maybe a little less Illuministic and more respectful of its history, surely less dishonouring than the backward situation. Southern Italy has always existed as an entity, besides the “Southern Question”: this entity was born of a long history, made of subjugation and redemption and surely featuring all to often the rule of destructive individualism. Furthermore, because of the so-called “federalismo fiscale”, a realignment of the Italian administrative and economical framework, coupled with the chronic inability to solve its problems, Southern Italy risks to exist as “a world apart”, that is, as a declining area of a country, even unable to regain its previous levels of civilisation and economy. Therefore, it is needed to keep thinking in unitary terms, of a single South, because the need of a surge from its territories is heartfelt, of a solution based on goals and true contents, of a macro-regional governance, representing the only viable turning point for this part of Italy, as Giorgio Ruffolo thinks⁸⁶.

Upon the 150th anniversary of Italian unity, invoking abstract reasons of social cohesion is not enough, an actual path must be detected, based on mutual usefulness and interests between macro-areas, such as Northern Italy, who, albeit having begun a productive renewal, lacks in free spaces, young human resources and innovative skills and another one, such as the South that, despite its strong crisis, can count on wide unused surfaces, creativity, talents and single innovative experiences. In such a new situation, the solution to the “Southern Question”, if accompanied by new forms of responsibility and protagonism, as well as by a profound conviction and commitment towards the need to stand up to global competition and market choices, as well as to the criteria of efficiency, skill and meritocracy, can get back to be a national subject, helped by the rest of the country as well, in order for it not to become the South of another Europe, the most advanced one.

For all these reasons, the idea to rediscover the basic principles of the season of the “nuovo meridionalismo” cannot deploy itself in mechanically retaking a path abandoned upon the end of the extraordinary intervention and definitely canceled at the end of the 90s. Neither can “further” intervention of the State be viable, reproposing, *sic et simpliciter*, the elaboration of Saraceno and SVIMEZ. As it has been very well put: «Surely neither dualism nor these overall features present themselves, after sixty years of Italian republican history, in the same terms of the beginning. But who did seriously ever think that Southern Italy was unmoving and unchanging? Who ever thought that Southern Italy-itself the sum of the realities of other regions of Italy- may be considered an undifferentiated reality, having the same speed and tendencies? Who ever denied that, speaking of an overall Southern Italy problem the specific situation of the Southern problems is not denied, but rather framed in the best and most proper way, given the manifold Southern realities? The whole of Italy changed, and deeply so, on an international stage very different from that of sixty years ago and South changed along with the rest of Italy; despite this, the country’s internal balance, concerning Southern Italy, has been very little shaken or altered»⁸⁷. Therefore, the return to a primeval phase entails, very simply, to verify some of the themes of that very fruitful experience in order to promote, for example, a new reflection on the relationship between State and market or to look at the modern part of a thought system giving Southerners a fundamental role in the rise and renewal of the South, in an unitary framework of development for the whole of Italy or to put the “Southern issue”-never abolished and always “open”- in a context of Euro-Mediterranean relationships, if not within the whole of globalisation and its competitive challenges. After all, the

⁸⁶ Please see G. Ruffolo, *Un paese troppo lungo. L’unità nazionale in pericolo*, Turin, Einaudi, 2009.

⁸⁷ G. Galasso, *SVIMEZ, Mezzogiorno, un sessantennio di storia italiana*, cit., p. 34.

“nuovo meridionalismo” has been a powerful and untiring engine for a reform strategy, a method before than a program, besides representing a greatly innovative content for Italy’s economic and political scenery. Who knows wheter, to develop Southern Italy, we can restart precisely from there.

Amedeo Lepore

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