



Guido Levi, Daniela Preda (ed.) (2018). *Euroscepticisms. Resistance and Opposition to the European Union/European Community*. Bologna: il Mulino, 622 pp.

Angelica Radicchi

“We are not just a part of Europe. We have a different history. We have ties and links which run across the whole world, and for me at least the Commonwealth [...] is something I want to cherish”. The author of this statement is not Nigel Farage struggling for the campaign in favour of Brexit, but Hugh Gaitskell, former leader of the British Labour Party, who in 1962 commented on the potential entry of the United Kingdom into the European Common Market. In short, Euroscepticism is not a recent phenomenon. It has its roots in an anti-Europeanism that, albeit in different forms, has accompanied all the stages of the process of European integration. However, the increase in the consensus towards the Eurosceptic forces recorded in the last few years in almost every member State of the European Union - it is enough to mention the triumph of Marine Le Pen in the 2014 European elections and the result of the Brexit referendum in 2016 - has directed studies on Euroscepticism and its causes towards an analysis detached from the past, as if it were a completely new phenomenon. The analysis provided by several scholars was consequently devoid of a holistic and comparative approach at the European level that, precisely because of a common history of resistance to European construction, would have allowed to catch common and divergent factors.

For this reason, amongst the scientific publications dedicated to the topic, the rich volume published by il Mulino, entitled *Euroscepticisms. Resistance and Opposition to the European Union/European Community*, deserves particular attention. It is the result of a study that involved a large group of scholars coordinated by two historians of the University of Genoa, Guido Levi and Daniela Preda, editors of the book. The choice of method that has led to the creation of this work can be seen from the title that declines Euroscepticism in its plural form highlighting the variety of the phenomenon and suggesting the will of the authors, although almost exclusively Italian, to provide a comparative overview on a European level.

Another element of originality is represented by the decision to analyse the modern phenomenon of Euroscepticism looking back at the history of European integration. This choice is highlighted by the use of the term “resistance” in the title that refers, not only to the forces today opposed to the *status quo*, but also

to all the manifestations of hostility that have emerged against the European project since the fifties. The historical perspective of this study, in spite of the multidisciplinary approach, intends to point out the elements of continuity and discontinuity between the anti-Europeanism of the past and today's Euroscepticisms, forcing the historian to give a new critical interpretation of the European construction path and of its contradictions.

Another element that characterizes the choice of method of this study consists in the common thread that binds the 39 contributions which composed the book, i.e. the non-preliminary approach with which the phenomenon of Euroscepticism is analysed in its deepest causes: starting from the lack of value adherence to the European project until the inadequacy of the European institutions in knowing how to tackle some key challenges of this beginning of the century such as the economic crisis, terrorism and migration. The objectivity of the approach, however, does not hide the concern regarding the consequences that the growing Euroscepticism, fuelled by a potentially "explosive" mix of nationalism and populism, could generate without a political alternative capable of providing adequate answers to these challenges and warding off the ghosts of the past.

Moreover, the volume has the merit of filling a gap in the Italian historical studies on Euroscepticism to which it devotes the entirety of the second part, *Anti-Europeanism and Euroscepticism in Italy*. This section of the book is of great interest, particularly in the light of recent developments in Italian politics that show the need - today more than ever - to understand the reasons that led to the formation of the more Eurosceptic government in Italian political history, composed by the 5-Star Movement and the League, parties that in the European Parliament are respectively in the group of Nigel Farage (EFDD) and in that of Marine Le Pen (ENF). The essays dedicated to the study of the Italian case concern, to name but a few, the historical anti-Europeanism that had characterized the political activity of the Communist Party and the Italian Social Movement, the federalist Euro-criticism towards the Treaties of Rome and the peculiar Euroscepticism of Silvio Berlusconi who was the first Italian President to define himself openly non-pro-European. It eventually ends with the two contributions dedicated to the Eurosceptic political formations currently on the crest of the wave constituted precisely by the 5-Star Movement and by the Northern League.

The third part, *Anti-Europeanism and Euroscepticism in Europe*, manages to provide an interesting overview of the phenomenon by analysing the peculiarities with which this was manifested in France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Spain, in Northern and Eastern Europe, as well as in Russia. The only big absentee is the Greek Golden Dawn which, despite representing one of the most significant cases of Eurosceptic formation with evident neo-Nazi connotations, unfortunately finds no space inside the volume. From the contributions it seems that the authors agree on the factors that have triggered the wave of Euroscepticism that has hit Europe, such as the mismanagement of the Greek crisis and

the austerity policies of Brussels, which have brought to light the structural deficiencies of the construction of the European Union often characterised by a transfer of sovereignty, from the national to the supranational level, without the necessary strengthening of democratic representativeness within the European institutions. This factor was accompanied by the economic suffering of large sections of the population which was not opposed by a common social policy i.e. the irreplaceable systemic balancer of a common economic and monetary policy. The consequent rupture of the social pact between governments and citizens followed the nostalgia of a reassuring past that generated a polarisation of the political discourse on pro-European or Euro-sceptical positions.

In conclusion, what seems to emerge from this study is the consolidation on a European scale of the dividing line between political parties - predicted by Altiero Spinelli in the Ventotene Manifesto - which would inevitably fall along "the line, very new and substantial" between "those who conceive the essential purpose and goal of struggle is the ancient one, that is, the conquest of national political power [...] thus allowing old absurdities to arise once again and those who see as the main purpose the creation of a solid international state". The polarisation of the European political landscape on these two axes could represent an opportunity for the pro-European and Eurocritical forces to form a common front on the occasion of the European elections of 2019, even more so that the Eurosceptic forces have so far shown that they are not able to give substance to their populist demands. This electoral event will in fact represent the test bench for all those forces that will set themselves the task of putting a stop to the advance of Euroscepticism and to propose an effective supranational alternative able to counter the nationalist propaganda.