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THE POLITICAL TRANSITION AND MEMORY WARS IN ITALY AFTER THE CRISIS OF THE FIRST REPUBLIC

ABSTRACT:

The post'89 period represents an important watershed for Italy in terms of national public memory. The collapse of the parties that had animated the anti-fascist resistance and gave birth to the Italian Republic, together with the coming to power of Silvio Berlusconi with a center-right majority, triggered a harsh political and cultural clash in the mid-nineties for the redefinition of the Italian master narrative. Under the guise of a renewed anti-communism and pacification between the old opposing parties (Fascists and Antifascists), the governing right wing harshly criticized the memory of the Resistance as an axis of political legitimacy. In its place it has promoted a neo-patriotism as a reference value and an anti-totalitarian paradigm that equates the crimes of communism with the crimes of fascism. The attempt to dismantle the memory of the Resistance failed however, especially due to the opposition of the Presidents of the Republic (Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, Giorgio Napolitano, Sergio Mattarella). In the same way, the equivalence between the so-called "boys of Salò", that is, young people who sided with Mussolini after the armistice of 1943, and the anti-fascist partisans has not succeeded. More successful was the attempt to include in the national public memory the commemoration of the Italian victims of communist crimes, with reference to the Italians of Venezia Giulia who were subject to the violence of Tito's Yugoslav communists. For this purpose, a specific commemorative date has been introduced on the 10th of February known as the Day of Remembrance. It has become a competitor to Holocaust Remembrance Day (27 January). Also in Italy, as in the rest of Europe, a competition has been created between a cosmopolitan memory, based on the Resistance and the Shoah and which focuses on universal human rights, and a nationalistic memory that instead exalts the secular glories of the nation and recalls its sufferings.