
75 years ago the Italian people chose the Republic: an anniversary to celebrate the foundations of the Country

June 2nd is a cultural holiday, which may be why it is not very popular, to the extent that it had been abolished. Yet it carries great meaning, for it marks a new path: it marks the inception of a recovery and development process. All the more significant today. *Seventy-five years have passed since the Italian people chose the Republic: an important anniversary.* We may not have realised that in less than two years the virus killed as many people in Italy as in the first three years of the Second World War. And it was on the symbolic date of the institutional referendum of June 2, 1946, that we made a fresh start. *A key date in the heart of the history of united Italy, from 1870, when unity was accomplished with Rome as its capital, to the present day.* It is also a European anniversary because on that day, also in France, citizens, both men and women, with equal political rights, were called to elect a Constituent Assembly, after an excessively long process, both in Italy and in France. *Indeed, the Republic means common good, and hence common home, so laws must belong and apply to all, as befits a democracy, with no special privileges.* This, both then and today, is by no means to be taken for granted. For this reason, the Republic has been appropriately termed, i.e. defined, in the Constitution. Whereas Soviet satellite states were self-defined People's Republics, i. e. only citizens who adhered to the Communist system were considered "the people", the Italian Republic is a "Democratic Republic" - a personalist and pluralist democracy - "founded on labour." *Far from being a rhetorical or a formal expression, it outlines a project, a path, a goal.* "Thus - as synthesised by Italian statesman Amintore Fanfani - the utmost growth of this popular community will only be achieved when every man (today we would add "every woman") will have made the greatest contribution to our common prosperity to their fullest capacity." In this respect, wrote the drafter of the statement drawn up by a group of Christian Democrat 'professors', *"the expression 'founded on labour' underpins the commitment, the underlying theme, of our entire Constitution."* Celebrating the Republic means reaffirming that motivating force. We must remove the impediments, and interpret it in the light of today's European and global perspective. Alcide De Gasperi, the steadfast guide of those pivotal years, said after the Constituent Assembly had finished its work: "may Europe and the world recognise in the new Italy, in the new Republic, based on freedom and democracy, the worthy heir and continuer of its age-old, universally recognised civilisation". The words of the key players in that historic event, which is also ours, echo from afar. We need to reconnect with them. We may rightly criticise the numerous wrongdoings or the small stature of many protagonists. Yet the virus - and its manifold impacts - has shown us that we must have a lofty purpose. Knowing that our foundations are strong and possessing the clarity of vision and the cultural background needed to identify them and use them as a driving force makes this commitment feasible and attainable.

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