

The Future Of Italy's Catholic-Communist Alliance

In an interview with an Italian daily several days before the election of Pope John Paul I, the president of Italy's ruling Christian Democratic Party (DC) Flaminio Piccoli underscored the strengthening bonds between his own Catholic party and its mass-based counterpart, the Italian Communist Party (PCI), upon whose support in the parliamentary majority the Christian Democratic government currently rests.

Piccoli rightly hailed the alliance between the Italian Communists and Christian Democrats as one of far-reaching international significance. The Christian Democratic president, known as a "conservative Catholic," who comes from the same region of Italy as the newly elected Pope, stressed that the Italian Communists had contributed much to the democratic order, particularly in terms of a firm response to terrorism. He noted that the political pact between Italy's two major parties — of which former Prime Minister Aldo Moro had been the principal architect — had grown out of a global political and economic crisis reminiscent of the days of the Weimar Republic preceding Hitler.

No isolated incident, the kidnapping and subsequent murder of Moro constituted an attempt to overturn the political solution to that crisis for which the Italian leaders were providing a model. "This is not the beginning," Piccoli warned concerning terrorism, "but is the climate of a world conflict."

Piccoli's statements and the launching of a new pontificate which is expected, from all early indications, to continue the policies of East-West dialogue and peace under the banner of economic development which were the hallmark of the papacy of Paul VI, provide an appropriate context for reviewing the governing alliance in Italy. The future of the Italian parliamentary majority combination of DemoChristians and Communists can be assessed only when the high-profile public manifestations which have marked its history since early this year are also viewed from the standpoint of its little-known and scarcely understood deeper social roots.

Who Saved Italy?

Late last spring, a high-ranking Catholic Church official noted that had it not been for the Pope, Italy would be in a state of civil war. "The Pope saved the country, twice," he said, "first with his dramatic appeal that the Red Brigades unconditionally free Moro, then, in his historic address to the Italian

government and international diplomatic community on the occasion of Moro's funeral. He pulled the country, and the Christian Democracy, out of a mess."

Shortly thereafter the Communist Party secretary Enrico Berlinguer made the same claim for his own party, while addressing a national assembly of party regional secretaries. At some future time, Berlinguer cryptically hinted, when one of the protagonists writes his memoirs, the "true chronicle" of those critical days preceding Moro's assassination will reveal the crucial contribution made by the Communist Party.

So, the question arises, who save Italy — the Vatican or the PCI?

According to the scenario set in place by British secret intelligence and personally conducted by Henry Kissinger through U.S. Ambassador to Italy Richard Gardner, the Red Brigades terrorists were to split the Christian Democratic-Communist coalition and shatter each party's organizational structure. The Communist Party was to panic, the old Stalinist resistance veterans taking up arms in civil strife, the younger bureaucratic layers heeding calls for "law and order." The DemoChristians, on the other hand, were to capitulate to the Moro family's demands for leniency to the terrorists, and collapse the government. Bettino Craxi, Willy Brandt's handpicked secretary of the small Italian Socialist Party, was then to engineer the breakdown transition to urban guerrilla fighting and later civil war.

Instead, to the shock of the London *Times*, the DemoChristians and Communists did not take up opposite sides of the synthetic barrier erected by the British intelligence-run terrorists, but strengthened their commitment to save the Italian state from what they perceived as an outside destabilization attempt. The specific function of the Pope's unprecedented actions was to infuse this political alliance in defense of the state with the moral weight of universal purpose. Without depoliticizing the issue, the Pope raised the stakes by characterizing the Moro case as a struggle between civilization and barbarism — the theme which Moro's successor Piccoli has repeatedly struck since.

Ultimately, it is the implications of the Pope's impact and, more broadly, the role of mass Catholic organizations in Italy that uniquely explain "who" saved the country from war and coup d'etat. This will explain, conversely, why Britain's attempts to liquidate the country's two leading political forces have thus far flubbed — and the crucial limitations of both parties which must be overcome in order to permanently thwart the ongoing attempts at destabilization.

DC, PCI as "Churches"

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, Anglo-American intelligence under British secret intelligence direction spent undisclosed sums (millions from the Twentieth Century Foundation alone) working up "profiles" of the two large, and at that time generally clashing, Italian political parties. "Politologist" Giorgio Galli and "sociologist" Francesco Alberoni, the principal Italian academic stringers in this operation, embraced the notion that both the Christian Democracy and the PCI were merely "churches" with different dogmas. By pitting one against the other and assaulting both from the outside (and from within) as "dogmatic," Galli's and Alberoni's controllers believed they could crumble the two institutions.

Alberoni set to work in 1965 as a sociology professor at the Catholic University in Milan and, within two years, produced Mario Capanna, the first synthetic leader of the anti-DC, anti-PCI "movement." In 1967, Alberoni, expelled from Catholic University as a "radical," took his credentials to the recently founded Trento University of Sociology, where he created the hard-core leadership of the terrorist Red Brigades. Meanwhile Galli positioned himself at Milan's State University, ready to welcome Mario Capanna's triumphant entrance.

The two Milanese universities where Alberoni and Galli planted themselves were bastions of DC power. The PCI existed, but was not hegemonic among students. The mass student organization, then called "Gioventù Studentesca" (Student Youth), had been formed under the leadership of Don Giussani, an ally of Milan's Cardinal Colombo, in turn linked to Pope Paul VI who was the former Archbishop of Milan.

Gioventù Studentesca therefore became Galli's target for the actions of his cooked-up Maoist, Capanna. After a debut with an egg-throwing spree against the "bourgeoisie" attending opening night at La Scala opera house, Capanna earned himself designation of charismatic leader of the newly formed "Movimento Studentesco" (Student Movement).

Capanna's Movimento Studentesco set about splitting Gioventù Studentesca and, especially during 1968, succeeded in luring away nearly half its membership. The Pope responded, indirectly, as Don Giussani intervened to create a new organization "Communion and Liberation" which would absorb and reconstitute the shattered GS. Later, in the early 1970s, a group of Milanese politicians pushed the organization fight further and set up a political cadre force, recruiting from both early Catholic groups, called "Movimento Unitario Popolare" (Unified Popular Movement).

Now, a decade after Galli and Alberoni had unleashed the Capanna Maoists, the Popular Movement is a powerful mass organization, with its strongest centers in Rome and Milan. Communion and Liberation is actively reconquering hegemony in the schools and universities, in some happy cases wiping out the rock-drug counterculture. Movimento Studen-

tesco has evolved into a proterrorist umbrella group, Capanna is fighting to save his seat on the Lombardy regional council as an elected councillor (against a concerted Catholic campaign to oust him), and Alberoni — now, like Galli, an "intellectual" in the Socialist Party — is veering toward a drug addict's end.

The Catholic Counterattack

Although the Galli-Alberoni-Socialist Party "lay" ("antidogmatic") apparatus has not been destroyed, its terrorist network is being dismantled by the Communist-supported DC government. And, as last summer's administrative elections showed, the silent majority of Italy's voters is beginning to voice contempt for the entire operation. What Galli and Alberoni did not and cannot grasp — and what their "lay" predecessor, the anglophile philosopher Benedetto Croce, could not fathom — is the reality of the religious belief in the *soul*.

In Alberoni's formulation of the question, "faith" and political commitment are identical to the infant's dependent relationship to the mother (the "absolute"). It would suffice, in this case, to discredit and weaken the mother institution to provoke an identity crisis in the child, and to supply this "paranoid schizophrenic" child with a surrogate mother. Indeed, this is the theory on which Alberoni explicitly based his brainwashing activities at Trento University which resulted in his synthetic surrogate absolute, the Red Brigades. The same theory guided Capanna's assault on Gioventù Studentesca and the formation of proterrorist Movimento Studentesco.

If the theory appeared to work, it worked solely because a paranoid-schizophrenic state was induced in the selected victims; rock music, drugs and mind-destroying "group therapy" were used to weed out the psychologically most labile youngsters and transform them into zombies and terrorists. Such indeed is the psychology of Alberoni and Galli personally, but it is not the psychology of the sane adolescent or adult.

In a Catholic society, such as Italy, religious commitment is part of one's identity from earliest years. In healthy children, this means that one's identity is not confined to one's discrete material, historical existence. The healthy Catholic child believes he or she has a soul, an existence which is meaningful universally and eternally. It is that identity which makes him or her human, at one with humanity as a universal whole. Where the working-class, advanced-farmer or middle-class family is engaged in a common struggle to progress materially so as to afford their children greater opportunities for self-realization, the young Catholic more readily grasps the reality of the existence of the soul as that process of social progress mediating his or her own mental development.

It is in this light that the economic boom of the early 1960s, though short-lived, is remembered by so many

young and middle-aged Italians today. The boom was the materialization of a struggle for survival and progress after the war; and, not unlike Italians' attitudes towards relatives who emigrated to the United States, it represented the realization that development —*perfection*— was possible.

For many, the identification of material and cultural development with the Catholic Church was more explicit. First, this was because of the obviously primary role played by the Christian Democracy in post-war reconstruction; and, since Pope Paul's election in 1963, because the Vatican had explicitly defined its international role, in the famous encyclical *Popolorum Progressio*, in an ecumenical approach to peace through world development.

But this was not the whole story. For hundreds of thousands of Italians after the war, the only means of getting an education was through the Church. It was the Church, through its capillary parish structure, which afforded the primary and secondary education to youngsters whose economic situation would have otherwise condemned them to ignorance. Many such individuals form the core cadre force of Church structures today.

The Crisis of Catholic Youth

What happened to these Catholic youth as they approached high school and university in the 1960s was a complex phenomenon. When the economic crisis hit violently, these youth were passing through an otherwise normal transition to adulthood. The convergence manifested itself for many in the form of a profound religious crisis. Among selected vulnerable layers of youth, the "religious crisis" became the opportunity for turning latent paranoia into a fully fledged synthetic terrorist identity at the hands of British intelligence's "sociologists."

The Church's intervention to found first Communion and Liberation, then the Popular Movement, aimed at maintaining the integrity of fundamental Catholic principles through this critical phase: the key organization being the Popular Movement, which superseded the less differentiated religious commitment of the early bodies and saw itself as a *political* strike force. Precisely what most Catholic students sought in their "religious crisis" was a sensuous mediation to adulthood through which to express *socially* their previously more *personally* identified religious commitment.

By the same token, Italian youth decide at approximately the same age to enter the PCI or its youth federation. These exceptional youth enter the Communist Party not, as Alberoni and Galli fool themselves, seeking a surrogate mother, but because they recognize the PCI as the hegemonic working class party and see in the working class the one social layer whose productive activity mediates general economic progress. Despite the romantic ideological veils

thrown over the PCI self-conception, the reality of the communist cadre's identity is the commitment to strengthening the country's productive forces to guarantee continued development. That commitment is identified in part with the Soviet Union and Comecon, and more readily with the partisan struggle during the Second World War to establish the Italian republic.

Thus, although Catholic and Communist workers, farmers, industrialists, and so forth may present themselves as distinct and even antithetical beings, their fundamental commitment to furthering social perfection establishes a knowable commonality of purpose. That commonality of moral purpose was made explicit by the Pope's extraordinary public initiatives during the Moro crisis, while Berlinguer mobilized the PCI cadres throughout Italy around it.

The Present Danger

While the British secret intelligence and its puppets Galli and Alberoni cannot comprehend the reality of social processes sparked by a reawakened sense of moral purpose, it is nevertheless important to understand why they succeeded marginally in undermining Italian political institutions by creating terrorists and their sympathizers in the Milan and Trento test-tubes.

The fact is that, as a journalist put the query to Cardinal Albino Luciani during the height of the Moro crisis, several months before he became Pope John Paul I, Red Brigades leader Renato Curcio was a Catholic. So also were Margherita Cagol, Marco Rostagno, and other leaders of the Red Brigades. Similarly, many of the lesser figures being arrested daily appear to be former card-carrying members of the PCI.

Sociologist Alberoni had stated in Trento that his purpose was to forge a new "collective movement" precisely out of Catholic and Communist currents in student society. Many small Catholic and "left-wing" political groupings in and around the Italian trade unions profess the same goal. The anticlerical Radical Party and the plethora of proterrorists extraparliamentary "left" grouplets have forged such an alliance in the fascist environmentalist movement, made up of ex-Catholics and ex-Communists.

The "religiosity" of these individuals could never have been sound. As the now defunct, but in the late 1960s mass-based, Marxist-Leninist Party demonstrated most typically, the ex-Catholics and ex-PCIers who swarmed into the Maoist counterculture and thence into terrorism came predominantly from backward areas of Italy's south. In that ambience of centuries-long economic degradation, the utter lack of meaningful change in the local society and family characteristically gives rise to social and psychological attitudes clinically termed *paranoid*. Irrational tendencies, usually overcome after infancy, become dominant in a world where the "outside" reality offers no sensuous link to the social process of progressive

Luciani On Capitalism And Marxism

The French daily Les Echos Aug. 28 reprinted remarks made by then-Cardinal Luciani in December 1976 on the subject of capitalism and Marxism. The French Communist Party daily L'Humanité published the same remarks.

We must fight and reject a certain capitalism, that which has been the source of so much suffering, injustice and fratricidal conflicts... I am asked if one Catholic can be a Christian Democrat, and another a communist. My first answer is yes. One can make different commitments, on the condition that the faith remains the same... I know the painful case of numerous people, even priests, who practiced Marxist analysis and ended up by losing faith. I add that far more dangerous than the Marxist doctrine are the Leninist and Stalinist tactics and strategies used by Marxism. . . .

change. Thus, the prevalence of persisting forms of magic, witchcraft, etc., in the most isolated areas of Italy's Mezzogiorno.

When this infantile irrationality persists in a society which is predominantly *Catholic*, the tendency to associate the madness itself with "religious feeling" is overwhelming. As the history of the dionysian cult shows, from its most ancient forms including the Donatist heretics of St. Augustine's time, whom the future pope Cardinal Luciani acutely identified as "Catholic terrorists" of the Red Brigades type, down to the modern forms of twentieth century "tarantism," in Lucania in southern Italy, masses of lumpenized, wretched outcasts have repeatedly been corraled into such cults as a form of social control.

Alberoni's transformation of former Catholics and PCIers into terrorists repeated the dionysian model. Just as Mussolini and his Futurist allies mobilized these social layers as dionysian movements against the Church, so Alberoni and Galli manipulated the paranoid tendencies of their victims toward rabid anticlericalism. The DC and PCI "churches" are presented as "dogmatic" institutions, corresponding in the paranoid, infantile mind, to the threat of necessary lawfulness in the universe. It is not Alberoni's "mother"-absolute against which the infant rebels, but rather against the world of reason which threatens the paranoid's total identification with the irrationality associated with the mother figure.

The healthy layers now organizing within Italy's mass Catholic organizations have nothing to fear from the implications of Trento. But what should be emphasized is the danger deriving from those organizations' — and the Communist Party's — vulnerability to sub-

version on fundamental economic policy issues, something which could have far-reaching political effects for those organizations and their international counterparts.

The vulnerability concerns some Catholics' and Communists' openness to zero growth propaganda. Although the problem carries overtones related to early Church movements of austerity and humility (e.g., the Franciscans, etc.), the real problem relates to recent Italian history.

During the boom of the early 1960s, no serious Catholic or Communist could feel guilty for the rapidly increasing living standards of the country. Guilt and doubt set in only when the boom ebbed and the world depression made itself felt first on weaker sectors — such as recently and only partially industrialized Italy. The zero growth propaganda unleashed on Italy through the Club of Rome and its conduits focused on the notion that Italians had "lived too well," and the crisis was to be received as a just scourge for presumed bathing in unmerited luxury. Zero-growth notions of "redistribution of existing wealth" and "reducing consumption" have thus taken hold — contrary to the actual basis of social self-identity of both Catholics and Communists.

The "imported" character of this Made in Britain zero-growth ideology is not sufficiently understood in Italy today. It is the propaganda corollary to the campaign — comprising political threats, financial warfare, and the continued blackmail of terrorism — which British intelligence launched this summer to bring about what some Italian papers touted as a "Rome-London Axis" *against* the organizing of a new world monetary system that began at the Bremen European Community Summit in July. In sharpest contrast to British zero-growth propaganda, Pope Paul VI's 1967 *Populorum Progressio* encyclical had outlined a strategy for global economic development through a new "World Fund" credit institution identical in thrust to that planned by the Bremen leaders around the "seed-crystal" of the European Monetary System, and specifying the necessity of industrializing the developing sector as the only guarantee of world peace.

The question is therefore not merely whether Italy's Demo-Christian-Communist alliance survives as a government formula in the immediate months ahead. The question is really whether the leaders of that alliance will mobilize the mass organizations which form their popular base around domestic and foreign economic policies which explicitly fulfill Pope Paul VI's earlier identification of spiritual with material progress. If that occurs, Italy's role in politically implementing the substance of the Bremen accords and in putting an end to Britain's global manipulations will far outweigh that country's apparent dimensions in the current fragile world strategic geometry.

—Muriel Mirak
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