

From Stand-Up Comedy To ‘Soft Fascism’

by Aureliano Ferri

March 32—The elections held in Italy on Feb. 24-25 have left the country ungovernable: The center-left bloc won an absolute majority in the Chamber of Deputies; but thanks to the complicated mechanisms of the existing election law, no grouping has a majority in the Senate. The center-right coalition was close behind, while the group led by outgoing Prime Minister Mario Monti received a harsh rebuke.

The principal factor that determined this situation was the somewhat unexpected success of the Five Star Movement (M5S), led by Beppe Grillo, a former stand-up comedian who has moved into the political arena. His movement won approximately 25% of the vote nationally, becoming the largest single party in the Chamber of Deputies. (The center-left coalition, which has the majority, is made up of two parties).

It is easy to see that the votes for Grillo represent the discontent among broad sectors of the population with the crisis and austerity policies imposed on Italy by the “Troika,” consisting of the IMF, European Central Bank, and European Commission. At the same time, the discontent was skillfully channeled by Grillo and his partners towards single issues and questions that are entirely innocuous in the eyes of the international financial oligarchy, to the point that he was even endorsed by merchant banks such as Mediobanca, Credit Suisse, Goldman Sachs,¹ Unicredit, and by the U.S. Embassy in Rome.²

On this point, Lanfranco Pace, a former fugitive

from justice, who once had contacts with members of the Red Brigades terrorist group and the Hyperion Center in Paris, during the kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro in 1978, published an article on March 6, in the neo-conservative daily *Il Foglio*. Pace wrote that Grillo’s model is U.S. President Andrew Jackson, identifying Jackson as the principal theorist and instigator of populism in democracy, as well as the inventor of the so-called Spoils System. In Pace’s view, M5S is driven by an American-style populism: In terms of the sympathy for inexperienced amateurs and the desire for an immediate and radical change at all levels, Pace finds that Jackson thought it possible to simplify politics and bureaucracy without destroying the democratic form of government. There is not a word on what Jackson did to destroy the Hamiltonian economic system.³

A Platform Based on Jacobinism

The M5S built its electoral platform on issues clearly inspired by Jacobinism. First is the accusation that the political class has destroyed the country; the party therefore proposes to abolish public financing of political parties, and then abolish the parties altogether, along with labor unions. The M5S is imbued with a strong greenie ideology, which abhors any infrastructure works, from nuclear energy, to the bridge over the Messina Strait, to new high-speed trains, as well as waste incinerators, liquefied natural gas terminals, etc.

The only electoral victories that the M5S had won prior to the recent elections were those in the city of Parma. In the hometown of composer Giuseppe Verdi, the *Grillini* are hiking the rates for public services and implementing harsh budget cuts, including for the Verdi Opera, along with the salaries of public employees, thereby earning the wrath of the population. Thus Grillo’s program doesn’t seem any different than what the Troika’s technocratic government has done at the national level.

Not only does the program make no attempt to hide its opposition to infrastructure development and the use of nuclear energy, it also promotes further deregulation of the economy through the elimination of all monopolies, including natural ones (e.g., electric utilities), providing a (reduced) “citizenship salary,” cutting the costs of government services, computerization of the public

1. The endorsement from [Goldman Sachs](#), pronounced by Jim O’Neill, the president of the bank’s management unit, is quite significant. O’Neill called the election results “quite exciting,” and said the country “needs to change something important,” and that the result of Grillo’s movement may be a “sign of the beginning of something new.”

2. Outgoing U.S. Ambassador to Italy David Thorne made the following appeal to a group of youth: “You young people are the future of Italy. You can take your country in your hands and act, like the Five Star Movement, for reform and change.”

3. See, Michael Kirsch, “How Andrew Jackson Destroyed the United States,” *EIR*, Dec. 14, 2012.



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While support for the Jacksonian populist Beppe Grillo (shown here at a rally in Bologna) reflects widespread discontent with the austerity imposed on Italy by the "Troika," it should be noted that his policies have also been endorsed by Goldman Sachs and the U.S. Embassy in Rome.

administration and schools, and a referendum on the euro.

On this last issue, that of the European common currency, on the one hand, Grillo and his movement have never taken a clear position, as they only call for a referendum, which would require amending the Constitution; on the other, they use the same intimidating techniques used by the EU and the Monti government to justify austerity. They say that the problem of Italy is the public debt which has exploded due to excessive public spending, corruption, and the costs of the state apparatus generated by a corrupt political "caste."

In this manner, they aim to deceive population, just as the technocratic governments do. Grillo doesn't oppose the cuts; rather, he says that the only resources available in the future will come from eliminating public works that he considers "useless," such as the new high-speed rail line connecting Lyon and Turin (TAV). So Grillonomics turns out not to be much different than what the European Union has carried out through the Monti government on behalf of the markets over the last 18 months (and more generally, in the last 20 years), only in a radical environmentalist version.

A 'Ready-To-Wear' Party

There are no other substantive indications in the M5S economic program, beyond some vague statements about relaunching small and medium-sized enterprises; no mention of industrial or energy policies, or what financial and credit system would be necessary for this purpose. And not a word about the need for banking separation and a credit system to support development, despite the fact that the members of the Movimento Solidarietà (Movisol, the LaRouche movement in Italy) have repeatedly attempted to bring the issue to the attention of Grillo and his supporters.

In the field of foreign policy, there is also a complete lack of content, together with the most foggy absence of any actual positions: On the wars in Libya and Syria, and on the Palestinian question, Grillo is as wavering as elsewhere. This can be explained by the fact that the M5S does not have a well-defined program, but is based on the opinions of supporters expressed via the Internet; a sort of prêt-à-porter (ready-to-wear) party, where everyone can find what he wants: the essence of populism.

The heterogeneous nature of the supporters of the M5S is quite shocking: Among the Parliamentarians elected with Grillo's movement, we find fanatical environmentalists, supporters of anti-growth theories, conspirophiles who believe that microchips are implanted under the skin of U.S. citizens, activists who focus on bank seigniorage (a form of taxation), and former communists and fascists. Grillo himself has stated that the neo-fascist group Casapound (which takes its name from Ezra Pound) isn't all wrong on some issues.

To give an example, recently the M5S party leader in the Senate, Roberta Lombardi, wrote on her blog that Italian Fascism wasn't at all bad at the beginning. It is this parallel with the origins of Fascism that is striking to an impartial observer. Some of Grillo's tirades against corrupt political parties, and the plan to abolish parties and unions, are very close to the positions of F.T. Marinetti, Gabriele D'Annunzio (both "artists" like Grillo, and leaders in the Fascist movement before Mussolini), and Mussolini himself. Too bad that those policies didn't lead to direct democracy as Grillo claims they will today.

Who Is Beppe Grillo?

Beppe Grillo, the son of an industrialist from Genoa, was a well-known television comedian, who appeared often on national programs in the 1980s. It is said that he was excluded by an order from then-Prime Minister Bettino Craxi, who apparently didn't appreciate his political satire. That presumed "persecution" was the beginning of his fame as a political victim, until Grillo showed up again in the '90s, in a new role with road shows focused social and environmentalist satire.

The success of this new format led him to create a successful blog together with the multimedia communication company Casaleggio Associati, which soon became the most widely read Italian blog in the world.

This blog, which became the starting point for the M5S, is where all of the ideas of the future movement were formed: saying no to globalization by using local products; no to nuclear power and oil, which should be replaced with wind and solar power; no to high-speed transport; praise of the Internet as the vehicle of "direct

democracy"; development and information following the model of Wikipedia(!).

Neither on the blog nor in the M5S program is there mention of international financial speculation as the cause of the global crisis, or the problems related to the euro, except in vague and populist terms, while great emphasis is given to the costs of politics and the presumed collusion between politicians and criminal activity. On the same wavelength we find the journalist Marco Travaglio (who is not formally a part of the M5S, but a propagandist for Grillo), who, for the past 20 years or so, has attempted to focus public discussion on the issues of corruption and the legal problems of Italian politicians as much as possible (notably aimed at former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi), presenting them as the cause of all of Italy's problems.

Travaglio, having been a disciple of the late Indro Montanelli (the dean of Italian journalism, known for his attacks on the late Italian nationalist industrialist Enrico Mattei, on behalf of the British), writes for the *Fatto Quotidiano* newspaper, whose communications are also managed by Casaleggio Associati, as are those of the Publishing Company Chiarelettere, which publishes Travaglio and Grillo's books.

What is Casaleggio Associati? It is useful to know that one of the shareholders is a certain Enrico Sassoon, from the well-known British oligarchical family linked to the Rothschilds, who, among other things, is the chairman of the Economic Affairs Committee of the American Chamber of Commerce in Italy.

A video produced by Casaleggio, on the future of the world, is circulating on the web: The vision reminds us of that of H.G. Wells, as described in his book *The Open Conspiracy*, or in the film "Things to Come": a world war lasting 20 years that wipes out most of the globe's population, leaving room for a world government based on the Internet. All we can say is ... that's quite a development project.

In one of his TV shows, Grillo praised George Soros as an example of "ethical capitalism," and today, Casaleggio's and Grillo's hostility towards Russia and China, support for a world government, insistence on the necessity (or "inevitability") of reducing the world's population to 3 billion, or even only 1 billion people, clearly make Beppe Grillo the spearhead of an anti-human and anti-scientific movement, following the Malthusian program of the Club of Rome, in a manner that is veiled, but fundamentally fascist and entirely compatible with a bankers' government.

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